

# Strategy of God

#0385

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—May 19, 1978

Our text this evening is in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, the sixth verse. Jesus is by the Sea of Galilee with a great multitude to whom he's been ministering, healing, teaching. The sun is nearing the western horizon. These people have had nothing to eat all day. The question is what to do. What to do with 10,000 people who haven't had anything to eat all day.

Jesus turns to one of His disciples and says, "Philip, where shall we find the bread? Where shall we buy the bread to feed these people?"

And then comes my text:

"And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do" John 6:6.

The strategy of God is what we're going to look at this evening for a little while. God is a strategist.

If you didn't like what He did, you might say, "He's a schemer."

But He's not a schemer. He's a strategist. He lays plans. Now, He could carry out His plans without us, but that's not His plan. His plan is to involve us. He wanted to involve the disciples. In fact, He did involve them very much in solving this problem.

But you notice that He raised a question, hoping to draw out some expression of faith in a practical solution. And yet, Christ's answer was not that He didn't know what to do. He knew exactly what was going to happen, and He knew what He was going to do about it. But He gave human beings, as He usually does, an opportunity to think with Him, to plan with Him, to act with Him.

"Where shall we get the food to feed these people?"

And as the text says:

"And this he said to prove him..." John 6:6.

Other translations say "to test him." Philip didn't know it, but there was an examination going on right then. The man that was being examined was Philip. Sorry to say, Philip didn't meet the test. Instead of thinking of the solution, he thought of the difficulties. Instead of thinking about how the problem could be solved, he thought of why it couldn't be solved.

Now, you look at it, humanly speaking, you wouldn't blame Philippians. If somebody would ask *you* how to feed 10,000 people and there was practically nothing around, I suppose that you would think of the difficulties. It's a very human thing, a very natural thing. But it wasn't the way Jesus wanted the disciples to react, and it isn't the way He wants us to react.

Our first question when we meet a difficulty is not to show how to get *out* of it. It's how to go through it. Not how to avoid the problem, but how to solve it. God's strategy is to involve you and me more and more *with* Him in solving problems, not evading them or avoiding them.

The world is full of problems, friends. It's almost trite to say it. Every nation, every part of the world, every race, every group in society is up to its ears in problems. God wants you and me to be problem solvers.

Daniel was in Babylon. Joseph was in Egypt. The remnant are to be problem solvers in this last generation. But they must understand how God works and how to work with Him. What is God's strategy? God's strategy is to use circumstances rather than letting them be the reason why we can't do something.

A friend of mine was telling me the other day about a man who asked his friend as he met him, "Well, how are you getting along?"

"Well," he said, "under the circumstances..."

And the man cut him short. He said, "What are you doing down there anyway? Under the circumstances? What are you doing down there anyway?"

Where does God want us to be? On top of the circumstances. But, of course, that means climbing. And that means faith, my dear friends. What is your attitude when unexpected problems come into your life? Or when you come to unexpected problems?

This was a problem that Jesus found Himself in, and involving the disciples, He gave them an opportunity to think through what they might do, but all the difficulties arose.

And then Jesus said, "Well now, look at what you have."

And they looked all around, and all they could find was a boy that had five loaves and two fishes.

And Jesus said, "Bring them to Me" [a paraphrase of Matthew 14:18].

And He blessed them and started using them. Not to feed Himself, not to feed the disciples, but to feed the multitude. Before they got through, everybody was fed. And the disciples had more when they got through than they did to start with.

"Well," you say, "that was a miracle."

Indeed, it was a miracle. God loves to work miracles. But He's not interested in working miracles for those whose first thought is to feed themselves. Neither is He interested in working miracles for those who only see difficulties in problems and who see reasons why this means they can't do things.

The strategy of God is to confront us with problems more difficult than our human foresight can see the way through. And He wants us to look to Him, to cry to God, and to recognize that He is at work.

Suppose an angel should bring you in the morning a golden card, and on it, God had written out your program for the day. Wouldn't that be wonderful? A program written out on a golden card brought by an angel, penned by God Himself.

Now, that doesn't happen, but friends, I want to tell you something. It's a secret. I'll let you in on it. God has planned your day just as definitely as though He sent you the golden card. He doesn't tell you all about it at the beginning of the day. The disciples that morning, when they got up, hadn't the slightest idea they would be feeding 10,000 people before the sun went down that evening. They hadn't any idea of that. But it was on the card, on God's card. God held it.

Every day you and I are given the opportunity of recognizing the providence of God. Turn to Matthew the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, the 28<sup>th</sup> verse. I want you to see how Jesus put it to His disciples. Christ is sending His disciples out to labor for Him. He knows they'll meet all kinds of problems, difficulties, opposition, persecution. In fact, they'll be threatened with death, and in some cases, they'll be martyred. But He says:

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" Matthew 10:28.

Don't be afraid of people that may threaten to take your earthly life. They can't touch your eternal life. Don't worry about it. Leave that with God. And then, to give the lesson, He says:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows"  
Matthew 10:29-31.

Does God look after the birds? Does He arrange for them to have something to find to eat? Yes. But you're worth more than they. And then, to get down to the most minute thing, He says:

"...the very hairs of your head are all..." Matthew 10:30.

What?

"...numbered..." Matthew 10:30.

“...numbered...” Matthew 10:30.

That is to say, there is nothing in your life so small to be outside the divine notice, the divine attention. It isn't merely that God knows as a matter of information how many hairs you have. Of course, He does, but that isn't the point. He's arranged it. He's numbered every one. He's numbered every one.

The more we study the mysteries of physiology and anatomy, the more amazed we are at the intricate processes of the body, the marvelous arrangement of the cells, and the constituents that make up the cells.

David says:

“I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...”  
Psalm 139:14.

The point is, God has looked after the arrangement of my body from head to foot. But the same God who has numbered the hairs of my head has numbered the minutes of my day. He knows at what hour the sun will rise and when the sun will set. He knows when the thing I have planned will come to pass, and He knows when the thing that I didn't plan at all will break upon me unexpectedly.

He knows when that experience which will thrill my soul with joy, will come to me. And He knows when that unexpected sorrow, that sudden bereavement will break my heart and send me weeping to my knees.

“For God hath marked each sorrowing day  
And numbered every secret tear...”  
“Blessed Are They That Mourn”  
by William Cullen Bryant.

And what's it all for? What's it all about? Is life just a kaleidoscopic changing picture? No. Life is the unrolling of the scroll in which the divine providence is laying before us opportunities to work with God.

You know, those who look upon human willpower as futile, no chance to do anything about it. They're fatalists, we call them. They have some things, some arguments. It often looks as if there are things that we have no control over whatsoever that affect our lives. But thank God for the Bible that shows us that Jesus has given His life to give us opportunity to exercise this power of choice. But in doing it, friend, He does not surrender His sovereignty. He does not abdicate His throne. He does not give up His rulership. He's watching over everything.

Now, how both of those things can be true at once, that's God's mystery. God's running this world just as much as if I had no power of choice at all. But it's also true that I *have* the power of choice as truly as though God *weren't* running the world. The fact is it's because He is running the world that I have the power of choice. If it were left to blind chance or to the power of Satan, I wouldn't have any opportunity to choose.

But thank God, He is running this world in order to *give* me an opportunity to choose. And everyday circumstances are arranged in advance, as if, as I said, they were written on a golden card. Everything is arranged in advance for the purpose of accomplishing something in my life. This is the divine strategy.

Now, if I believe this will I complain? No, I won't complain. I *can* complain, of course, but I can't complain and believe that all in the instant. If I believe it, I won't complain, and if I complain, I don't believe it. You all see that, don't you?

I was interested in a statement here that brings this out, *Volume 3*, page 67:

"It is dangerous to contend with the providence of God and to be dissatisfied with almost everything, as though there had been a special arrangement of circumstances to tempt and destroy...We must go through the furnace until the fires have consumed the dross and we are purified and reflect the divine image. Those who follow their inclinations and are governed by appearances are not good judges of what God is doing. They are filled with discontent. They see failure where there is indeed triumph, a great loss where there is gain; and, like Jacob, they are ready to exclaim, 'All these things are against me,' when the very things whereof they complain are all working together for their good"  
*Testimonies for the Church, Volume 3, page 67.*

You know that text this refers to in Romans 8:28. Will you say it with me?

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God..." Romans 8:28.

Do you believe that? Paul says we *know* that. All things do what?

"...work together for good on the other them that..."  
Romans 8:28.

Do what?

"...love God..." Romans 8:28.

And the strategy of God is to bring us into experiences that test and develop our faith in that divine assurance. God is on His throne. He's at work. And these circumstances that look so difficult are either arranged or allowed by God in order to bring me an experience that's of infinite value, of infinite value.

Wouldn't you feel disappointed if you spent several weeks getting ready a beautiful present for some friend, perhaps a birthday present, and when you took it to him, and he opened the package, he burst out crying? Wouldn't you feel disappointed?

God has prepared a wonderful present for you each day, a planning of your day. When you open the package, either in the morning or through the day, what do you say? What do you say? What do you usually say when you get a birthday present? Thank you. And so the scripture says:

“In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

Now, this does not mean that we passively accept everything that happens as God’s will, with nothing for us to do. Oh, no. Oh, no. Someone was telling me a little while ago about finding a snake in the road. Well, what’s the providence in that? Well, the providence is to kill the snake. That’s what it’s for. I mean, if it’s a bad snake, of course, and this one was a poisonous snake.

So, many providences are for the purpose of not causing us to lie down and do nothing about it. They are to call us to action. They are to arouse us to a reaction. And all the way through our daily experiences, this is so. But if we murmur, we shall miss the blessing.

The strategy of God, I was struck with an experience that I was reading about the other day that Sister White had back in 1890. Many of you remember that in the great Minneapolis conference in 1888, the message of righteousness by faith came to our people in a special way. And during the next two years, Sister White spent much of her time, along with Elder A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner and others, in holding meetings on this wonderful subject.

In the latter part of 1890, a week of prayer, special blessings were coming to our church in Battle Creek, and Sister White was holding meetings in Washington, D. C. Soon after these meetings closed, she went to Baltimore, and she was to go on to Philadelphia. But something happened. She got sick. The prophet of God got sick. And it seemed that her heart was affected. And so, it was decided that she’d better go back to Battle Creek where she could be at the sanitarium.

So, after the meeting in Baltimore, instead of going on to Philadelphia, she went back to Battle Creek. And when she got there (watch, now), when she got there, she found out that just the Sabbath before while she was in Washington, there was a most wonderful meeting there in Battle Creek in the large tabernacle and the Spirit of God had come in. Many confessions had been made; repentance manifested. Some had fallen on the Rock and been broken. And there was need for earnest efforts to follow that up and to help some who hadn’t yet made their confessions.

And Sister White recognized that God had brought her back from Baltimore and Washington on purpose to have a part right there at that time and to help some of those that needed special help. And do you know, she never had any more trouble with her heart. That’s right.

And if you’re interested in reading the story, you’ll find it in this book *Through Crisis to Victory* by A. V. Olson on pages 92, 93 and 94. Just let me read you this sentence in a letter she wrote at that time:

“The Lord sent me here I fully believe, and that threatened difficulty of the heart did not trouble me at all after we reached Battle Creek” *Letter 32, 1891.*

She went earnestly to work, and the Lord blessed her in helping some souls to surrender that needed special help.

Now, I was meditating on it. Here was the messenger of God to the remnant. God was giving her visions from time to time.

Why didn't He just give her a vision over there in Washington and say, "It's time for you to go back to Battle Creek."

Couldn't He have done that? Sure, He could have done it. There are many ways He could have done it. The point is, He allowed a sickness to come upon her and a threatened heart attack, and He used that as His strategy to get His servant back where He wanted her in Battle Creek, the strategy of God.

Look at the strategy of God in getting Joseph where He wanted him. Here he is, a young boy, 17, in his father's tents there in Canaan, growing up for God, a model of deportment, a beautiful character. But God is planning through him to let the whole Egyptian nation know of God's rulership. He's planning to use that boy to save the growing nation of Israel. And how will He do it?

I will not say, for that would be wrong, that God inspired those brothers to do the wicked thing they did in selling him for a slave. Oh, no. But I want you to turn to the last chapter of the book of Genesis and see how Joseph expressed his understanding of it after it was all over, 50<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Genesis, wonderful concept, and the 20<sup>th</sup> verse, talking to his brothers who were burdened and fearful:

“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” Genesis 50:20.

Oh brethren, can we recognize even in the wrong actions of others as far as they affect us, the strategy of God in accomplishing His purpose in our lives? Unless we can, we will hold revengeful feelings. We'll have malice, we'll have hatred, or at least we'll have doubt and lack of brotherly love.

But Joseph, recognizing the strategy of God, could put his arms around those brothers that sold him as a slave and nourish them. And of course, their hearts were melted, and they were all drawn into a fellowship that was a foretaste of heaven.

Brother, sister, how do you react when somebody treats you in an unjust or unchristian way or in a way that you can't understand? Do you recognize the strategy of God? God's testing *you*. God's proving *you*. God is seeking to find out what you will do about it, what you will do about it.

Suppose I had two glasses here. One of them has some water in it, and one doesn't. And I take my hand that way and knock them out. What's going to happen here on the platform? Well, there'll be some water spilled. Which glass did it come out of? The one that had it in it. That's all, that's all.

And my dear friends, if rough treatment brings out unkindness, malice, revenge, evil speaking, criticism, complaining, murmuring in you, it's only because it was in you. That's all. The circumstances brought it out. It didn't originate it. It didn't create it. So, don't forget the empty glass. You can turn it over as many times as you wish, and there isn't a drop.

You know what Jesus said about the Devil coming to him?

“...The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me”  
John 14:30.

Didn't the Devil turn him over every way? Didn't he knock Him around literally, scourge Him, chastise Him, tell lies about Him, everything that men and devils could invent to disturb his peace. And not one angry word came from His lips, not one thought of malice, not one threat, not one angry look. Not one. Why not? Because there was nothing in Him but love.

Friends, I want that experience. What do you say? But unless I understand the strategy of God, I *will* come to that, you see.

But if I say, “Dear Lord, I know You're on the throne, and all things are working together for Your glory and my good, and so I will accept the assignment. I'll simply look to you as to the best thing I can do in this situation.”

And will God give us wisdom? Oh, yes.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering...” James 1:5–6.

I'm to ask, and I'm to believe that God will help me to work with Him to make the circumstances accomplish what He had in mind. As the servant of God says, “Oh, I wish I could help our people to have more faith.” Faith is simply believing God.

“...Then be content, poor heart!  
God's plans like lilies pure and white unfold.  
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,  
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold...”

“Sometime”  
by Mary Riley Smith

Let's give God time to work out things, to bring the bud to blossom and the bloom to fruit. What do you say? Let us believe with hearts of faith:



“...that all things work together for good to them that love God...” Romans 8:28.

And we can choose to love Him, and we can choose to accept the providences.

“That which you cannot understand, commit to Him”  
*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 518.

If there’s something that God can impress your heart to *do* about a set of circumstances, do it. If you can find nothing to do, then as my dear old friend Elder Luther Warren used to say, “When you don’t know what to do, then you know just what to do.”

That’s pray and wait on God. There were times when Jesus could do nothing but pray. There were times when Paul could do nothing but pray. There are times that you and I can do nothing but pray. But if we find ourselves in that situation where the circumstances have us shut in like an iron wall, we can pray until God either miraculously opens the way or helps us to find a crack in it that we can slip through.

“Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet” *Desire of Ages*, page 330.

Oh, that God may give us the spirit of Caleb and Joshua. Think of it, friends. You remember that Moses, in answer to the requests of the multitude, had twelve spies appointed, and they went in there to look over the land of Canaan. And then, they came back. They all agreed it was a beautiful land. Lovely crops, great bunches of grapes, one bunch so great that it took two men to carry it home and all that. And the multitude were so happy.

But then, ten of them began to tell about the terrible giants that were up there and the great walled cities and the iron chariots. And they told the truth, friends.

But two of them said, “God will help us because He’s promised to lead us in.”

But the ten said, “It’s too much for us. We can’t do it.”

And the interesting thing is friends, they were both telling the truth.

The ten said, “We can’t do it,” and they couldn’t do it.

Unbelief will never scale the walls of opposition. Unbelief will never slay the giants. Unbelief will always be cowed and defeated.

But faith says, like Caleb and Joshua, “We are well able to do it.”

And 40 years later, they *did* it while the multitude that disbelieved lay, their bones bleaching there in the wilderness.

Friends, what is the strategy of God in your life? Has God allowed circumstances, problems, difficulties to test your faith? What is the answer of your heart?

Can you say with Jesus, “My heavenly Father is with me.” He’s not left me and I’ll always do those things that please Him” [a paraphrase of John 8:29].

Can you say with Paul, “I’m ready to be offered. I’ve fought a good fight”?[a paraphrase of 2 Timothy 4:6–7].

Can you say with Job:

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him...” Job 13:15.

“But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” Job 23:10.

Let’s spend a little time now in witness. We have ample time for all who wish to speak, I think. And let our words be right to the point of the response of the invitation of Jesus.

[Testimony service followed.]

Dear heavenly Father, how we thank Thee for guiding in our lives. We thank Thee, heavenly Father, for Your great strategy and Your plan that You laid down from the foundation of the world to guide and direct Thy erring children, to bring each one of us, Lord, to that eternal home that You prepared for us.

Help us, heavenly Father, to grasp the reality of the fact that You are leading, that You have all things under your control, that all things obey Thy will. And help us, Lord, to have the assurance that You are guiding, that You care for us and no matter what the temptations, or the situations, or the circumstances that come upon us or befall us, Lord, we have faith that You will make a way of escape, that You will make a way to go through these times of stress and trial.

Oh Lord, now please dismiss us with Your blessing from this house of worship but not from Thy presence. We ask in Jesus’ name, amen.

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