

PREPARING TO STAND

Number, 2 — February 2008

“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-05

It Really *Is* OK to Prepare to “Flee to the Mountains”

—a study on practical faith and works—

by Jim Buller

I keep running across comments like: “I don’t need to prepare for the end-times, Jesus has promised to take care of me, I just need to trust in Him.” And, “Isn’t doing things to prepare for the end-times actually evidence of a lack of faith in God?” It seems that in the minds of many, the ideas of preparing for the end-times, and trusting in God, cannot exist together. But is this really true?

The best way I know how to answer this is by looking at Noah’s example. This is especially appropriate for this study, because Jesus said that the end-times would be like it was “in the days of Noah.” Matthew 24:37. So let’s look at a verse that talks about Noah and his faith in God. Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household...” It was *because* Noah trusted God that he prepared for the things God had warned him about. To my knowledge, there is nowhere in the Bible where Noah is rebuked for building the ark because it was evidence of a lack of trust in God. On the contrary, building the ark is held up as an example *of* his trust in God. So, preparation and trust in God *can* exist side by side! In fact, Noah’s faith was shown *by* his work in building the ark. (See James 2:17-26).

Somehow we’ve gotten the idea that if God is going to do something, then we don’t have to do it, or if we do something, it somehow leaves God out of the picture. The reality is that we are to be co-workers *with* God. (See 1 Corinthians 3:9.) Notice this quotation from *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 95, “All that man could do was done to render the work perfect, yet the ark could not of itself have withstood the storm which was to come upon the earth. God alone could preserve His servants upon the tempestuous waters.” Even though it was “God alone” who preserved them, Noah still did all he could to make the work on the ark as “perfect” as possible. In *The Signs of the Times*, 2-27-1879, it says “the labor of building that ark was great and expensive,” and that Noah, “invested in the ark all that he possessed.” Building the ark, preparing for what God had warned him was coming, wasn’t a sideline with Noah. Noah put his all into preparing the ark. Because of his faith, he did all he could to prepare.

Doing our part to prepare is not necessarily salvation by works. “Cheap grace” would have us believe that we just need to have “faith” and trust in God’s mercy, that God will take

care of everything else. On the other hand, “Legalism,” or “salvation by works,” would have us believe that we need to somehow earn our salvation by what we do. What they both have in common is that they spring from what the Bible calls “enmity,” sinful human nature’s desire to keep a distance between ourselves and God. In contrast to both of these, God’s word teaches “faith *and* works” which results from being “co-workers with God,” and allowing Him to work “through” us. (See James 2:17-26, 1 Corinthians 3:9, and John 3:21).

To illustrate what we are talking about, let’s take Noah’s example a little farther. Before the flood, there were probably also people who “just trusted” God’s mercy and didn’t feel they needed to do anything to prepare for the flood —if it was even going to be all that bad. There were also probably those who tried to save themselves from the flood in their own boats. But these boats were not built in response to God’s warning, and to be sure, they were not built according to God’s plan. Noah’s example stands in stark contrast to both of these positions. He had “faith *and* works.” Because of Noah’s faith, he believed God’s warnings *and* allowed God to work through him to build the ark perfectly according to *God’s* plan.

So, it really is OK to prepare to “flee to the mountains.” From *Early Writings* page 56 it is obvious that we should not stash supplies out in wilderness, and by extension neither should we set up “places” for ourselves out there. But, it would be wise to at least learn what we can about living in the wilderness, and become familiar with how to get around out in nature. Since we tend to want to “flee” to a place where we feel safe, we should also spend enough time in nature that we feel safe there. Let’s not be like Lot and his family, who didn’t feel safe away from civilization and begged to go somewhere else when the angels told them to “flee the mountains,” see Genesis 19:17-20. We would also be wise to put together a light weight equipment pack, and become experienced with the use of our equipment.

In closing, let’s look at a couple comments on two other Bible stories to help us understand how faith and works go together. (All emphasis is supplied.)

Patriarchs and Prophets page 290

God ... might have saved [the children of Israel at the Red Sea] in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. The people were weary and terrified, yet if they had held back when Moses bade them advance, God would never have opened the path for them. It was “by faith” that “they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.” Hebrews 11:29. In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God as spoken by Moses. **They did all that was in their power to do**, and *then* the Mighty One of Israel divided the sea to make a path for their feet.

The Desire of Ages page 535

“Take ye away the stone.” [closing Lazarus’ tomb.] Christ could have commanded the stone to remove, and it would have obeyed His voice. He could have bidden the angels who were close by His side to do this. At His bidding, invisible hands would have removed the stone. But it was to be taken away by human hands. Thus Christ would show that humanity is to co-operate with divinity. **What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do**. God does not dispense with man’s aid. He strengthens him, co-operating with him as he uses the powers and capabilities given him.

My Story and “God’s Three Lines of Defense”

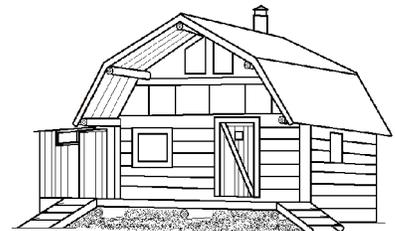
by Jim Buller

Thanks to all your encouragement, there will be more issues of “Preparing to Stand” coming out. Therefore, I think I should let you all know where I’m coming from regarding country living and wilderness survival. That way you will better understand why I share, what I share, (and don’t share,) in this paper.

Even though my family lived in town when I was young, my parents managed to pass a love of nature on to me. I remember reading Euell Gibon’s classic, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, when I was probably 11 or 12, and being fascinated at the possibilities of eating wild plants. When I was 12 or 13, our family was able to move to the country. And as a teenager, I also remember day-dreaming about going out and surviving with only my machete. So, I’ve been exposed to country living and had wilderness survival in the back of my mind for quite a while.

In the mid 1970’s my wife, Becky, and I got a hold of Ellen White’s book *Country Living*, and started making our own plans to move to the country. But at that time, our idea of “living in the country” was basically a city lifestyle *located* in the country —with the addition of a garden, an orchard, and farm animals. Looking back now, I believe God didn’t let us move to the country then because He had something else in mind, (see Isaiah 55:8-9).

During the early 1980’s we spent just under a year and a half at “Sanctuary Ranch” a former self-supporting school several miles out of Chetwynd, British Columbia in Canada. At the time, the school property had no electricity or running water, so we lived in a log cabin, heated and cooked with wood, hauled our water in buckets from a shallow well, planted gardens and got a lot of experience in simple country living.



our log cabin in Canada

The summer of 1989 found us on a piece of family property. It was an excellent location for self-sufficient country living—an old homestead with a good climate, the last place at the end of the road, with a river running through the back side of the property. However things just never came together for us. The week before Christmas, due to faulty chimney construction, the house even burned down. In praying and re-evaluating over the next several months we realized that God had other plans for us. So, to make the long story short, due to several providential happenings that following summer I re-entered school to get my teaching credentials, graduating in 1992 with most of the tuition and living expenses being taken care of.

Before we go on with my story, let me offer some conclusions regarding country living. Many people, like ourselves, when they embrace the country living message, start thinking and planning. One of the things we all realize fairly quickly is that it costs more to live in the country than it does to live in the city. Due to the amount of land, property costs more. Water systems, and bringing in power can be expensive. Getting set up with alternate energy is not cheap either. And if nothing else, longer distances make commuting more expensive. All this requires *more* cash flow.

But, there is something really wrong with this picture. One of the main reasons for living in the country is because we will not be able to buy or sell during the time of trouble unless we receive the mark of the beast. (See Revelation 13:17 and the quotations following this article.) During that time we will need to be able to function without *any* cash flow. So it doesn't make sense to set ourselves up in an expensive situation that requires *more* cash flow just to function. Like other groups in church history, I believe Satan is trying to trick us into thinking that in order to do God's will we have to be rich, but Jesus said that He had come to "preach the gospel to the poor." (Luke 4:18.)

I am convinced that this whole problem, and therefore also the answer to this problem, revolves around lifestyle. Trying to maintain our typical urban based lifestyle in the country is naturally going to be more expensive. This lifestyle was designed for the city. A large part of the problem is that most of us don't know any other lifestyle. We have grown up in it. Our culture hands it to us, and constantly holds it, and all its comforts, up in front of us. Unfortunately, since this lifestyle is based on cash flow, most people will give in to the pressure of not being able to buy or sell rather than give up their lifestyle. We are all being set up to receive the mark of the beast.

Subconsciously, we realize that living in the country without an increase in our cash flow, especially during the time we will not be able to buy or sell, means some major changes in our lifestyle. Thus, our dilemma actually results from our unwillingness to give up our lifestyle. I suspect that convenience and comfort are really the main goals of many. But remember Jesus warning, "Remember Lot's wife." Luke 17:32. We are told that if it wasn't for his wife, "Lot would not have remained in Sodom." (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 174.) She didn't want the self-sufficient country life, she wanted the convenient, comfortable city lifestyle. So the real answer is not to increase our cash flow, but to willingly simplify our lifestyle. If we are wise, we will do this now, voluntarily. Otherwise we may have to do it suddenly in a time of crisis like Lot and his family did—and look where they ended up.

Those that I know about who are actually *doing* country living fall into two categories. Either they have a lot of money and are able to set themselves up with "all the comforts," or they live very simply. (The best source of information I know of for this latter approach is the book, *The Good Life*, by Helen & Scott Nearing, ISBN 0-8052-0970-0. Though this book was not written from a Christian perspective, the principles it sets out are a surprisingly close match to the principles of country living in Ellen White's writings.)

Going back to my story, since God had brought us back, so to speak, from an "ideal" country location, we were wondering: "What do we do now with all the counsel regarding country living?"

Years earlier, I had read a little booklet called *God's Three Lines of Defense*, a study from Ellen White's writings pointing out: 1. Outreach ministries need to be in the city, (that's where the people are that need to be reached) —this is the first line of defense. 2. But like Enoch, God's people should live in the country, not in the city —this is the second line of defense. And 3. Like the Waldenses, God's third line of defense has always been remote mountainous places. (See the quotations at the end of this article.) Although I no longer have the book, I've always remembered the concept of God's Three Lines of Defense.

So, since we were brought back from our home in the country, and I didn't want to end up like Lot, the next "line of defense" would be the wilderness. Therefore, since that time I have been trying to learn all I can about living in the wilderness. God has also given me a

burden to share this knowledge. Especially since I have realized that there *are* other ministries sharing information on country living, (see the list at end of this article). But there are *not* many who are teaching wilderness survival from an end-time Adventist Christian perspective. So, although we still believe strongly in country living, and have had quite a bit of experience with it, what you will mostly hear from *me* will be about wilderness survival.

Country Living, page 30

The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, "Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God's people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth." —*Letter* 182, 1902.

S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 1, page 1087-1088

He [Enoch] did not make his abode with the wicked. He did not locate in Sodom, thinking to save Sodom. He placed himself and his family where the atmosphere would be as pure as possible. Then at times he went forth to the inhabitants of the world with his God-given message. Every visit he made to the world was painful to him. He saw and understood something of the leprosy of sin. After proclaiming his message, he always took back with him to his place of retirement some who had received the warning. Some of these became overcomers, and died before the Flood came. But some had lived so long in the corrupting influence of sin that they could not endure righteousness (MS 42, 1900).

Country Living, pages 9,10

Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one.

The Great Controversy, page 65-66

Behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains—in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed—the Waldenses found a hiding place.

Ministries providing information on country living:

Back to Enoch Ministry

<http://www.backtoenoch.org>

Mountain Media Ministries

<http://mountainmediaministries.org>

Turning The Hearts Ministry <info@turningthehearts.org>

<http://www.turningtheheart.org/>

You Can Survive

<http://www.youcansurvive.org>

"Preparing to Stand"

Jim Buller

jabuller@juno.com

Don't spend your time and energy on the things that perish,
instead spend them on things that last —eternally. John 6:27 paraphrased
