



PREPARING TO STAND

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“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 3-21-1905

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “TRUST WHOLLY IN GOD?”

by Jim Buller

Was it OK for Noah to build the Ark? Of course. God told him, “Make yourself an ark.” (Genesis 6:14.) And according to Hebrews 11:7, how did he build it? “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household.” So: if it *was* OK for Noah to build the ark, and if he was acting “*by faith*” when he “prepared” it, why do many people nowadays consider it a *lack* of faith to prepare for the things God has *warned us* about?

This is cause for special concern, as it has always been Satan’s goal to twist our thinking so that we will believe the exact opposite of the truth. This is what he did with Eve at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, deceiving her into thinking *good* would result from eating the fruit. (See Genesis 3:4-5.) And nowadays, he has succeeded in twisting the thinking of many of us regarding what it means to trust God for our physical necessities during the Time of Trouble.

Satan’s ultimate goal is to *totally* twist our thinking, as this is a chief characteristic of those who commit the unpardonable sin. For example, look at the story connected with the classical verses about the unpardonable sin in Matthew 12:22-32. Here, a demon possessed man, that is also blind and mute, is brought to Jesus. Jesus casts out the demon, and heals the man so he can both see and speak —clearly a display of the *Creator’s* power. However, in an attempt to discredit Him, the Pharisees claim He did this by “satanic” power. Something that was obviously God’s doing, they attribute to Satan. In reply, Jesus pointed out the danger of their thinking, as it was bordering on the unpardonable sin.

The reason this totally twisted thinking is “unpardonable,” is not because God is unwilling to forgive. The Holy Spirit may still be reaching out with God’s grace and forgiveness. But if our thinking becomes so twisted that we think God’s Spirit is something evil, we will flee from our only source of help, and God is no longer able to reach us. “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” Isaiah 5:20-21.

Eve should have trusted what *God* told her about the fruit on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the same way, we need to find out what *God* has to

say about things in our time. Let's be honest and humble, and not rely on the way things may seem to our human reasoning. Otherwise, we may end up believing the exact opposite of the truth, and doing the exact opposite of what we should do.

Probably, a big reason many people nowadays consider it a *lack* of faith to prepare for the end-times, is a misapplication of a statement by Ellen White regarding making provisions for the time of trouble, together with a misunderstanding of what it means to "trust wholly in God." Both this statement and this phrase about trusting God are found in the same paragraph on page 56 of *Early Writings*.

The statement is in the first sentence of a section entitled, "Duty In View of the Time of Trouble." It says, "The Lord has shown me repeatedly that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble." Apparently we are told *not* to prepare, that the Lord has even repeatedly shown that it is "contrary to the Bible" to do so.

So, if you want an excuse to avoid having to make any preparations, here you have it. However, is it ever safe to build your case around just one verse from the Bible, or just one sentence from the Spirit of Prophecy —especially since there *are* other passages that clearly indicate some form of physical preparation is appropriate? For example: (as mentioned earlier) Noah preparing the ark; the five wise virgins, who *brought extra* oil in Matthew 25:1-13; and a quotation from *Country Living*, pages 9-10, which states, "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."

In the same way that the different passages in the Bible explain themselves, (see Isaiah 28:10), we have been told, "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture." *Selected Messages Book 1*, page 42. So we need to study the rest of the paragraph, and take a look at some other passages on this same topic. We'll start with the full paragraph.

"The Lord has shown me repeatedly that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites."

Notice that the main subject of this paragraph is food. This is interesting, because in the dictionaries, we find essentially two sets of definitions for the word "provisions." The first refers to *all* the things we need. The second, refers primarily to things that get used up as we use them —*particularly* food. For example, according to the second set of definitions, "provisions" would be: water, but not necessarily a bottle

that we might carry the water in; toilet paper, but not necessarily the toilet or sewer system; or food, but not necessarily the stove and utensils to cook it with. The first set of definitions, on the other hand, would include all of these things. Since the quotation states “it is contrary to the Bible to make *any* provision for our temporal wants,” it might seem that we should go with the first set of definitions. However, looking at the paragraph as a whole, we find that its main subject is simply food, which would actually fit best with the second set of definitions. This is also supported by looking at other places where the author uses the word “provisions,” such as the *Country Living*, pages 9-10 quotation mentioned earlier, about God’s people locating in the country where they “can raise their own provisions.” Here we find that food is also primarily what she in mind.

Let’s look next at another quotation with very similar wording as the passage from *Early Writing* page 56, found on page 181 of *Maranatha*.

“The Lord has shown me in vision, repeatedly, that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints have food laid up by them, or in the fields, in the time of trouble when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it will be taken from them by violent hands, and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water would be sure at that time, and we should not lack, or suffer hunger. The Lord has shown me that some of His children would fear when they see the price of food rising, and they would buy food and lay it by for the time of trouble. Then in a time of need, I saw them go to their food and look at it, and it had bred worms, and was full of living creatures, and not fit for use.”

This paragraph is not just about food, it is about *stocking up food* for the Time of Trouble. This is significant, because the first thing most people, (Christians or non-Christians), think of when faced with the-end-of-life-as-we-know-it, is stocking up some supplies! The first sentence in a paragraph is frequently a “topic sentence.” Therefore, if we understand the phrase, “to make provisions,” to mean essentially the same as “stocking up supplies,” particularly food, a lot of pieces fit into place. Rather than these statements being sweeping prohibitions against *any* physical preparations for the Time of Trouble, (as some would have us believe), the obvious message of both of these quotations, when taken as a whole, is that God’s people should not try to stock up enough food, (or, water or toilet paper for that matter), to last until Jesus comes.

But, it is even more important that we recognize the *real issue* in these paragraphs. The *reason* we are told not to “make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble,” is because, “then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God.” The *real issue* here is not so much “provisions,” as it is *trusting wholly in God*.

Some would have us believe that trusting *wholly* in God means doing absolutely *nothing* on our part, because anything *we* might do would take away from it being *wholly God’s* doing. This apparently goes along with the interpretation of these

quotations to mean that we should not do anything to prepare for the Time of Trouble. And, from the stand point of human reasoning this all appears to make sense.

However, Proverbs 3:5 states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and *don’t* lean on your own understanding.” Isaiah 55:8-9 also tells us, “‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” And Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Can we trust our human reasoning, or trust what might *seem* right to us? —No! For example, how many times, after things didn’t turn out so well, do we shrug our shoulders and think something like, “Well it seemed like a good thing to do at the time?”

As noted earlier, Satan’s goal is to *totally* twisted our thinking. He is able to do this only as we “lean on our own understanding,” for when we are relying on God and His wisdom he does not have power over us. Therefore, it is important that we don’t trust the way things might seem to us. Instead, we need to find out what *God* has to say, and build our thinking around what *He* has said regarding what it means to trust *wholly* in Him.

Noah gives us an excellent example on this subject. *The Signs of the Times*, February 27, 1879, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 95, tell us, “Noah did not hesitate to obey God. He urged no excuse, that the labor of building that ark was great and expensive. He believed God, and invested in the ark all that he possessed.” “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.”

Preparing the ark was not easy, neither was it convenient or inexpensive. Noah spent a *lot* of his time, energy, and *all* of his resources on the project. The workmanship on the ark was even “perfect!” Yet in spite of doing all that he did, “*God alone* could preserve His servants upon the tempestuous waters.” Even though Noah made *extensive* preparations, he was still trusting *wholly* in God.

But according to human reasoning this doesn’t make sense. Why should Noah have to spend, “all that he possessed?” Why would he have to “labor” diligently—for one hundred and twenty years!—if it was “God alone” that could get him through the flood? Suppose, based on the way this “seems” to human reasoning, Noah had said something like, “I just don’t understand why I should have to spend all my time, energy and resources preparing an ark. God has promised to take care of us, so when the time comes I’ll just trust wholly in Him. Besides, there are all these people that need to hear God’s message, and so many hurting people that need to be ministered to. I just don’t have time to prepare an ark.” If for whatever reason Noah had *not* built the ark, what would have happened to him? —he would have died in the flood. His “end” would have been “the way of death.”

Jesus said, “As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” Matthew 24:37. And 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, “All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.” Among other things, God had Noah prepare the ark as an example *for us!* Apparently, the human reasoning that tells us, “If *we* do *anything*, then it is not

wholly God's doing," is just that —human reasoning, and not the ways or thoughts of God.

In looking at Noah's example, we find several significant points: First, it is *not* necessary to *do* nothing, or *have* nothing to be trusting in "God alone." Second, like Noah, we may have to spend a lot of *our* time, energy and resources preparing for the things God has warned *us* about —and these preparations do not necessarily *detract from* trusting "wholly in God." However the third point is, it is *very important* that whatever we do be done "*by faith*" —as there were many things Noah *could* have done in preparation for the flood that would *not* have been "by faith," none of which would have actually helped him make it through the crisis.

Let us look at another example that illustrates these same points for, "In a multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 24:6.) The following is a description of the experience of the Israelites at the Red Sea from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 290.

"God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them 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 great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, 'Go forward.' We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, 'Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;' but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things."

Notice that, God "might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to *test their faith* and *strengthen their trust* in Him." By this experience He was teaching the Israelites to "trust wholly in God" Did you also note the last sentence of the first paragraph? "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." So, trusting wholly in God includes *doing all that is in our power to do!* If the Israelites had relied on their own understanding, and thought, "If we do *anything* then it won't be *wholly* God's doing," and expected God to take care of them while they did nothing, "God would

never have opened the path for them.” Again, it was very important for them to be acting “*by faith*” as they “did all that was in their power to do,” as there were other things they could have done that would *not* have been “by faith.” But because they obeyed the command to “Go forward,” trusting wholly in God, He made a way of escape for them.

Notice also that, “The great lesson here taught is for *all time*.” This same lesson applies now, and will continue to apply to our experience throughout the Time of Trouble. In other words, the “rules” don’t change after the Close of Probation during the second part of the Time of Trouble, as some have suggested. They have thought that: We *have* been told to do specific things to prepare for the first part of the Time of Trouble, such as having a place in the country where we can raise our own provisions. However, from their wilderness context, and the way the author uses the term “the Time of Trouble” at this point in her experience, it is evident that the quotations from *Early Writings*, page 56 and *Maranatha*, page 181, refer primarily to the *second* part of the Time of Trouble. Since these quotations tell us not to, “make any provision for our temporal wants,” there must be a change in God’s policy at the Close of Probation. Although we have an active part to play up until then, during the second part of the Time of Trouble we are to do essentially nothing and just “trust wholly in God.” But this quotation from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 290 shows that this is not the case. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8.

Let’s look at another example, this time from the New Testament. It is found in Matthew 6:26. This verse is quoted in the commentary below found on page 123 of *Steps to Christ*.

“In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught His disciples precious lessons in regard to the necessity of trusting in God. These lessons were designed to encourage the children of God through all ages, and they have come down to our time full of instruction and comfort. The Saviour pointed His followers to the birds of the air as they warbled their carols of praise, unencumbered with thoughts of care, for ‘they sow not, neither do they reap.’ And yet the great Father provides for their needs. The Saviour asks, ‘Are ye not much better than they?’ Matthew 6:26. The great Provider for man and beast opens His hand and supplies all His creatures. The birds of the air are not beneath His notice. He does not drop the food into their bills, but He makes provision for their needs. They must gather the grains He has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests. They must feed their young. They go forth singing to their labor, for ‘your heavenly Father feedeth them.’ And ‘are ye not much better than they?’ Are not you, as intelligent, spiritual worshipers, of more value than the birds of the air? Will not the Author of our being, the Preserver of our life, the One who formed us in His own divine image, provide for our necessities if we but trust in Him?”

Did you notice where it said, Christ taught His disciples “*precious lessons* in regard to *the necessity of trusting in God?*” This quotation is on our same subject as our study. Note that it also said these lessons “were designed to encourage the

children of God through *all ages*, and they have come down to *our time* full of instruction and comfort.” The lessons found here, about the “necessity of trusting in God,” are for *us* during the end-times.

To teach these lessons, Jesus points us to the birds, and how the Father provides for them. But, “*He does not drop the food into their bills.*” The human reasoning mentioned earlier makes it seem that during the final part of the Time of Trouble God would do just that. But here we are told that this is *not* God’s way of doing things, even in the end-times.

There is a similar passage found in the *Review and Herald*, September 18, 1888 that adds a key thought. It says, “He does not drop the food into their bills, but he makes provision for their needs. They must *exert themselves* to gather the grains he has scattered for them.” (Emphasis supplied.)

Maybe Laodicean laziness is the real problem! We like the idea of not having to *exert* ourselves. Our selfish desire for comfort and convenience, which has been heavily reinforced by our modern culture, would like to have us believe that, without any effort on our part, we can just “trust wholly in God” and our stomachs would be filled and we would be at ease even in the wilderness! After all, aren’t we promised that, “He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites.” (*Early Writings*, page 56.) Doesn’t this promise imply that we don’t need to worry about preparing? —that all the exertion we will probably ever have to do is just reach up and take the food as the ravens hold it out to us?

If we are tempted to think this, let us be careful that we don’t overlook the first two words of that sentence about the ravens and manna. It says, “*If necessary* He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites.” Does, “*If necessary*,” tell us that the ravens and manna are God’s main plan for providing for us? —or are the ravens and manna His *back-up plan*? Let’s be honest, “*If necessary*,” is *back-up plan* language!

So, if the ravens and manna are His back-up plan, what *is* His main plan? To find out, we only need to look back at the phrase just before this sentence. It states, “God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness.” To fill out the meaning of this phrase, we need to put it together with a similar quotation from *The Ministry of Healing*, page 200, which states that, “The mountains and hills are changing; the earth is waxing old like a garment; but the blessing of God, which spreads for His people a table in the wilderness, will never cease.” By saying God’s blessings, which, “spread ... a table in the wilderness, *will never cease*,” it means these blessings will always *be* there, in the same way that they have *always been* there. In other words, the same blessings that *have* “spread ... a table in the wilderness” for God’s children, the native peoples who have lived off the land for thousands of years, are *still there*, and *will still be there for us* when we flee to the wilderness.

Although this may be a comforting promise, we need to think about how the native peoples obtained God’s blessings. They had to do the same thing as the birds. They had to “*exert*” themselves and go out and gather the things God provided for them, (that’s one reason they have been called “hunter-gatherers”). Therefore, God’s main plan during the second part of the Time of Trouble is that *we will exert ourselves*

to gather and craft the things we need from the natural resources He has provided for us in the wilderness, in the same way as the birds and the native peoples. (However if these things are not available, due to the upheavals of nature during the Seven Last Plagues, we have the promise that “if necessary” He will send the ravens or rain manna.)

As we understand the principle, of doing all that is in our power being included in trusting wholly in God, we start finding it throughout the Scriptures. The only place I know where God told the people, “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord,” is in 2 Chronicles 20:16. Apparently they didn’t have to exert themselves except to stand there and watch God act. However, if we look at the larger picture, we find that for a couple of generations the people had *already* been doing all that was in their power to prepare for just such an invasion. (See 2 Chronicles chapters 14-17). Thus they were as ready for the crisis as they could be.

Yet, like Noah, in spite of all they had done, they realized that their preparations were not enough. They still needed to rely on “God alone.” As they cried out to God for deliverance, He saved them from their enemies. (See 2 Chronicles 20:3-30).

Many have interpreted Early Writing page 56 to say that we should not do anything to prepare for the Time of Trouble. However if we are honest, based on the wording of this very same paragraph, we’ll recognize that we *will need* a certain amount of knowledge, skills, and some basic tools to be able to make use of the things God provides for us in nature. This will be true, both for when we are living in the country raising our own provisions in the first part of the Time of Trouble, and when we flee to the wilderness during the final part of the Time of Trouble.

A big part of our problem is, if we ask any child where food comes from, he/she will probably answer something like, “the store.” Unfortunately, this has been the case for a couple of generations now, (helping to set us up for the Mark of the Beast). We are not used to getting our food, (or other necessities), directly from nature, trusting nature’s God for the things we need. Therefore most of us don’t have the knowledge, the skills, or the basic tools for this type of lifestyle. When faced with “every earthly support” being “cut off,” (see *The Desire of Ages*, page 121), and the-end-of-life-as-we-know-it, we naturally think of stocking up, as that is all that we know how to do. However, the quotations from *Early Writings*, page 56 and *Maranatha*, page 181 clearly state that we should not do this. Instead, these quotations and the other counsel we have been given regarding the Time of Trouble, point to a time when we will be getting our necessities directly from nature, trusting the God of nature to provide for us. It appears that as a part of our final training for Heaven and the New Earth, God wants us to get used to depending on Him, rather than “the store” for the things we need —as this *is* what we will be doing for the rest of eternity.

So, if we are wise, we will prepare for both our country and wilderness living experiences. We will acquire as much of the knowledge, skills and basic tools for getting our necessities directly from nature as we can. It would also be a very good idea to practice country living and wilderness survival as much as possible, so we will

know from our own experience that we can indeed trust God to provide for us directly from nature.

If we don't prepare, where will that leave us? Suppose for example, when we flee to the wilderness that God leads us to a cave that is surrounded by many oak trees. Their nutritious acorn are falling all around us. God has indeed "spread a table for us in the wilderness." We gather some up, and try to eat them, but the unprocessed acorn are very bitter! Eaten in quantity they could make us quite sick. If we have not learned the simple process of leaching out the tannic acid to render acorn edible, would it be God's fault, or our own fault, if we go hungry?

Acquiring these skills, knowledge, tools, and experience in preparation will not necessarily detract from trusting wholly in God. Like Noah and the Israelites, both at the Red Sea and in 2 Chronicles 20, we know that even though we do all that is in our power to do, it will still not be enough. As we raise our own provisions during the first part of the Time of Trouble, we will still need to trust that God will give us agricultural wisdom, and cause our plants to grow and provide us with a good harvest. During the second part of the Time of Trouble, as we wander in the wilderness searching for our necessities, we will claim the promises, "Seek and you will find," and "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure," trusting that God will bring us to the things we need. (Matthew 7:7, Isaiah 33:16.)

Because faith and works go together, (see James 2:17-18), God can not bless inactivity. Can we expect God to open the path for us if we don't do all that is in our power to do—even in our preparations?

This brings us to the question, "How can we know whether what we are doing to prepare is being done in faith or not?" A simple answer is found in Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with *all* your heart" —"Trust wholly in *God*," especially trust in *His* way of thinking and doing. "Don't lean on your own understanding" —Don't just do what *seems* right to human reasoning. "In all your ways acknowledge Him" —Here is where it gets practical. Check in with Him before you do anything, to be sure you are thinking and acting according to His ways and thoughts. Ask Him, "What do You want me to do now?" and, "How do I do this Your way?" Doing this will require spending some serious time in God's Word, searching out how God thinks about things, and how He does things. To be acting "by faith" we need to be sure we are following God's instructions and doing things His way. "And He will direct your paths" —If we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct our paths and work things out for us. Like Noah, He will preserve *us* "upon the tempestuous waters."

We have been told, "While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. ... Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 95. Therefore, rather than showing a lack of faith, our preparations, like Noah's, will be a demonstration *of* our faith.