

The Burden of the Valley of Vision (Isaiah 22:1)

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Reading: Isaiah 22:1

The word "burden" here just does mean a load or weight, as much as a man can carry. Thus the Prophets felt what the Lord had shown them to be something that weighed heavily upon them and often overwhelmed them.

The prophetic function is brought into operation at a time when things are not well with the people and work of God, when declension has set in; when things have lost their distinctive Divine character; when there is a falling short or an accretion of features which were never intended by God. The Prophet in principle is one who represents, in himself and his vision, God's reaction to either a dangerous tendency or a positive deviation. He stands on God's full ground and the trend breaks on him. That which constitutes this prophetic function is spiritual perception, discernment, and insight. The Prophet sees, and he sees what others are not seeing. It is vision, and this vision is not just of an enterprise, a "work," a venture; it is a state, a condition. It is not for the work as such that he is concerned, but for the spiritual state that dishonors and grieves the Lord.

This faculty of spiritual discernment makes the Prophet a very lonely man, and brings upon him all the charges of being singular, extreme, idealistic, unbalanced, spiritually proud, and even schismatic. He makes many enemies for himself. Sometimes he is not vindicated until after he has left the earthly scene of his testimony. Nevertheless, the Prophet is the instrument of keeping the Lord's full thought alive, and of maintaining vision without which the people are doomed to disintegration.

While it has so often been an individual with whom the Lord has deposited His fuller thought and made His prophetic vessel, it has also very frequently been a company of His people in which He has been more utterly represented. Such companies are seen scattered down the ages. They were the Lord's reactionary vessels. Such, surely, are the "Overcomers" of every "end-time." The mass of Christians may be too taken up with the externals and accepted ways of Christianity; too spiritually satisfied with the lesser; too bound by tradition and fettered by the established order. The Lord cannot do His full thing with them because He does not put His new wine into old wineskins; the skins would burst and the life be wasted, not conserved to definite purpose. He finds Himself limited by an order which, while it may have been right at a certain time and for a certain period to carry His testimony up to a certain point, yet now remains as the fixed bound, and for want of an essential adjustableness His fuller purposes are impossible of realization. So it was with Judaism, so it has become with Christianity, and so it is with many an instrumentality which has been greatly used by Him. There is no finality with us here, and it is dangerous to the Lord's interest to conclude that, because the Lord led and gave a pattern at a certain time, that was full and final and must remain. Every bit of new revelation will call for adjustment, but revelation waits for such a sense of need as to at least make for willingness to adjust.

The Lord needs that which really does represent His fullest possible thought, and not those who are just doing a good work. But it costs; and this is the "burden of the valley of vision."