

**Articles and Sermons :: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY****BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/22 12:07****BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY**

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 1 - The Answer To Disillusionment

“While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light. These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them” (or: “was hidden from them”). “But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again,
He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart;
Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart,
And should turn,
And I should heal them.

These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him.” (John 12:36-41.)

In this double reference to the prophecies of Isaiah, there is very little difficulty in relating the former of the two to the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 53 is taken for granted by most as referring to Him. We know the content of that wonderful chapter. But it has not been so commonly recognised that, according to the words that we have quoted from John’s Gospel, Isaiah chapter 6 is just as definitely related to the Lord Jesus.

That chapter, as we know, contains the commission of the prophet to go and do what is mentioned here: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest...” - and so on; and John says that Isaiah said these things, “because he saw His glory, and spake of HIM.” That One, “high and lifted up”, whose “train filled the temple”, was, if this Scripture is true, none other than the Lord Jesus. It is a most impressive statement, this, that Isaiah said these things - not “WHEN he saw His glory”, although that is true - but “BECAUSE he saw His glory”. The effect of the vision was seen in his utterance. What he saw became his life-work and message. In this event, or crisis, then, in Isaiah’s life, to which John refers, the prophet saw CHRIST’S glory. And so our occupation is to be with the vision of the exalted Lord: its character, and its effect or consequence.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/22 15:49**GOD’S ULTIMATE PURPOSE: THE SECURING OF A PEOPLE**

But before going further, I want to say something by way of bringing quite definitely into view what it is we have before us. It is something which needs to be said again, and with renewed definiteness and strength. It is a matter of the greatest importance that we should realise that, while the Lord is seeking to save people in this world, and to conform the saved to the image of Christ, He is all the time doing these things with the object of SECURING A PEOPLE AS A VESSEL FOR A CONSUMMATE PURPOSE.

The saving and the building up are not the ENDS to which God is working, as ends in themselves. They are but WAYS AND MEANS to an end. All through the ages - and this is a thing which, I should say, it is impossible not to see in the Bible throughout - God has been in quest of a people, with a view to making them a vessel and the instrument of a purpose which lies along the line of their salvation, and their constitution. If this truth, this fact, of an all-governing purpose is not recognised, there will always be a serious constitutional deficiency, weakness and limitation, in the Christian life and in the Christian work. There will be frustration and defeat in the Church, if it is not dominated by this outstanding reality, that God is doing everything in relation to a purpose.

So, while with all our hearts we are committed to evangelism, and committed with all our hearts to helping people in the

Christian life, if we have any more of 'heart' to add to that, it is in relation to God having a vessel, a people - not individual Christians, as saved and growing spiritually, but a PEOPLE - to serve Him in relation to that full purpose of His heart.

God's purpose, of course, has many aspects and many phases. God has moved down the ages in what we may call a 'phasic', or 'phaseal', way. The different parts of the whole have required, for their introduction or their recovery, particular instruments and special emphases. That is perfectly clear in the instruments that God Himself has chosen. The prophets represent different aspects of God's purpose. They are all, shall we say, different voices in the choir. Jeremiah, for instance, may be the profound bass, the deep rumbling of God's judgment, yet from a broken heart; Isaiah may be the tenor, clear as a bird; Ezekiel may be the baritone, between the two and combining the two. I think you will find that there is some truth in those definitions.

But they are all parts of the one great choir, and they are all occupied with one theme; and the one theme of all the prophets, all the voices, all the instrumentalities of the Scriptures, is: God's full thought concerning a people for His Son, a people by whom His Son will administer His eternal kingdom.

We must honour every voice, and every note, and every instrumentality that God raises up. We must recognise that God has variety. In His sovereignty he has a right to choose and to use what He will. There is no place for any rivalries or jealousies. But it is very necessary for us, as one instrumentality among many, to know what our note is, and just where WE stand in this sovereign 'working of all things after the counsel of His own will' (Eph. 1:11).

So, the word at the commencement of these meditations is this. We are not here just presenting some special message on some special subject, however good or valuable that might be. Our meditations are to be in relation to the whole purpose of God, and it is that purpose which must dominate.

Now, perhaps you do not recognise the point of that. It is possible - so possible, that it becomes in a very large way actual - to enjoy the teaching, and all the accompaniments of it, to enjoy the benefits and the values, and to say: 'Well, I find a great deal of help or blessing in that'; and yet not to have recognised the fundamental meaning of it, as to just why the help or blessing is found. Why do we find the Lord in it? Why the life? Why the light? Why all this that we are enjoying? It is not just something in itself. I venture to say that that very well might not be so, but for the fundamental purpose. It all springs out of that. And it is of the greatest importance that we should not just be deriving blessings and benefits, enjoying ourselves with the fruit, but should ourselves be part of the very ROOT of the thing, and the root of the thing should be in us.

So, if you can say to your own heart: 'Well, I have found blessing, I have found help; I like to read the messages; I meet the Lord in them', perhaps that may challenge you - and I hope it does - to ask yourself: Why? Why? Let me say again quite clearly: It lies in the very object for which this instrumentality has been brought into being by God Himself. We must understand that.

Forgive these solemn and somewhat fierce words, but we must get right to the heart of this. And so we are led to this vision which the prophet Isaiah had. We begin by taking some account of THIS instrument, THIS vessel - Isaiah himself.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/23 1:24

NOT MEN, BUT INSTRUMENTS

We need to realise that, when we are reading these books - the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others - we are not just reading history - either history actually, or history prophetically, predictively. You can read your Bible like that. You can be occupied with the phrase 'In the times of Moses', or 'In the times of the kings', or 'In the times of the prophets'... and so read it as history. Or you might read it as biography: Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and the rest. But I want to impress this upon you - YOU MUST NOT READ YOUR BIBLE JUST IN THAT WAY. After all, what is the real value of the Bible if it is no more than history or biography? You must read your Bible - and I am thinking at the moment particularly of Isaiah - in the light of INSTRUMENTALITIES IN RELATION TO ONE PERSISTENT PURPOSE. The purpose is one right from the beginning; it persists all the way through the ages; and these people - these men, and this nation - are only in view at all, they only have their being, their place, and their name, because they are instruments, chosen and raised up of God, in relation to that one persistent purpose.

We must be very clear about this. We must have it very definitely in our minds, when we read our Bible, that these are not necessarily 'men', AS SUCH, at all. They have a great name - yes: Abraham has a great name, and so has Moses, and so has David, and so have the prophets. They have a name, and we call them by their name. But we need to realise

that it is not the office, but the FUNCTION, that gives the value and the significance to anybody in the Bible. God did not just choose an Isaiah, as a MAN; God chose an INSTRUMENT for His purpose, and that instrument, shall we say, 'happened' to be Isaiah. It is not something official; it is something which represents a spiritual function, an instrumentality.

In the workshop of God - and it is a very big one - there are numerous instruments. God has His design before Him. And in relation to that design - for different parts, for different aspects, at different times, in different places - He selects His instruments. It is in relation to that particular part of the whole. Well, it does not matter whether He calls that instrument by a certain name, does it? That really does not matter at all. If you were in a workshop with a master-workman, he might point to something and simply say, 'I want that', without giving it its name at all. If you knew the names of these different instruments, he might mention the name and say: 'Bring me so-and-so'. But he would very likely point to the thing and say: 'I want that for the moment; give me that.' It is the purpose that it is to serve, not the name that belongs to it, that gives it any significance at all.

Do you see the point? In the workshop of God, the instrumentalities, and the purpose for which they have been brought in, are the things that matter. It is not the labels that you put on them, not the names that you give them - that is man's way of doing things. It is the purpose that they serve. And as for Isaiah - well, we must call him something; he must be known by some name, because he served the purpose; but it is not his biography, it is not his place in history - it is his spiritual function, his spiritual purpose, the SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE that he embodies, that is THE thing. Men try to make names for themselves, get a reputation, be placarded as of some importance. God is not a little bit interested in that: all that matters to God is the purpose that they serve. Our names are written in heaven, and that is the very best place for them. Men want to have them written up large on earth. God writes our names in heaven. We may not know our name until we get there.

But, when we have enunciated the principle, we do not forget that Bible names were so often a synonym for the bearers' work.

Now, when you come to this sixth chapter of Isaiah, you meet with a man. But, before long, you find yourself not in the presence of the man Isaiah at all: you find the man falling down, dropping away, as it were, and crying: "Woe is me". It is the exalted Lord who is in view: everything now is focused upon Him, everything now is related to Him. All is concerned with Him - "the Lord, high and lifted up". And all purpose is centred in Him, not in Isaiah or anyone else. He comes to dominate the situation.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/23 11:58

A TRANSITION FROM EARTHLY TO HEAVENLY

That may sound like a simple statement. But as we go on, we shall see that it is a fact of the greatest significance. Isaiah says: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord..." When we come to that presently, we shall see that this marks a tremendous transition. From something that was big, great, important, dominating, fascinating in this world, there is now a transition to something far greater - to Heaven itself.

The meaning of it all is - THAT WHICH IS ABOVE. The whole explanation of Isaiah or of any other man - be he one of the 'major' prophets, be he any great name in the Bible - is that Throne, that exalted Lord. And so the Apostle John wrote: "Isaiah said these things because he saw HIS glory". He said "these things". It was not just that Isaiah said SOME of the things that are contained here, in the commission of the Lord. The whole life of this man, and ALL his ministry, right on to the end, right to the end of this book, came out of his having 'seen His glory'. What a law that is for life, for ministry - 'because he saw His glory'!

We shall have more to say about that when we speak of the results. But what we are to be impressed with, right at the outset, is this: that it is not the men, not the instrumentalities, that matter; it is the purpose. And, from Heaven's standpoint, WE are greater or smaller, according to OUR oneness with that purpose. OUR significance is in proportion to OUR vital relationship with that purpose: that is, that His glory should fill the whole earth. That is, as you know, a part of the statement of the seraphim in the vision: "the whole earth is full of his glory" (Is. 6:3). As you will see from the margin of the Revised Version, the Hebrew is literally: "the fullness of the whole earth is his glory". The earth is the place for the fullness of HIS glory. That is God's purpose for the place of His Son. So the man must go out, become insignificant, and cry "Woe!" Any instrumentality that does not correspond to the glory of Christ must fall down and be adjusted.

'Because he saw His glory' - that explains Isaiah. The Lord never chooses persons AS SUCH, whoever they may be. The choice is governed by purpose. God does not choose anyone just as a person. He does not even choose instrumentalities as things in themselves. There is a sovereignty about God's choice. Very often He chooses something that is altogether without reputation, or standing, or acceptance; something altogether rejected by men. He has His purpose in view.

w all the time.

And if He does choose a man like Paul, with great natural gifts and abilities, He will deal with that vessel in such a way as to make him know - whatever other people may say about him or think about him - that before God he is nothing. It is not what other people say about a person: it is what that person knows himself or herself to be in the presence of God. There is no man, I think, who was more in agreement with Isaiah in crying: "Woe is me", than the Apostle Paul. For indeed he did cry that - "Woe is me" - "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24). It is not that God is looking for big men or important people, AS such. He needs men, He needs women, He needs people; but He is looking for an instrument - an instrument that is in perfect harmony with the purpose that He has in hand.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/24 2:28

INSTRUMENTS SHAPED TO THE PURPOSE

That carries us a bit further. The instrument must be one that is shaped according to the purpose. It has had to be forged and formed in fire; shaped to the purpose for which it has been sovereignly chosen. And that means a long secret history between God and His vessel. You cannot just go out and preach "truths", give out in a second-hand way about the things of God. The Lord have mercy upon us all in this; it explains so much. But when real purpose IS governing, the thing has got to go through us, and we have got to go through it. The instrument has to be shaped and formed according to the purpose of its election.

And I am not thinking only of individual instrumentalities. It is equally true of collective instrumentalities - a people. If they are vitally related to the purpose, they will go through the truth, and it will go through them. They will not get away with mere doctrine, mere mental grasp of things. They will go through it. And they will either draw out, because it is too hot and too difficult, or they will yield, and allow God to form according to the purpose. To be a part of such a people, such an instrument, such a vessel (and it does not mean that you need all be in the same place, but wherever you are), means that God is going to keep very close accounts with you in the light of purpose. And this thing is going to reach into your life, wherever you are; and you are going to have experiences - strange experiences - that you would never have, but for that purpose.

When the Lord chooses vessels - be they individuals, or be they collective - they may go through experiences of very deep perplexity, of great disappointment, of much disillusionment, even to the point of utter hopelessness. It was true of the prophets, it was true of Paul. Everything may at times appear to be hopeless, and that is no exaggeration. The measure of your vision will determine the measure of your experience. To see in great dimensions is to have experiences of great heights and GREAT DEPTHS. Paul knew what it meant to "despair of life"; to touch great depths of death in order to touch the greater depth of the power of his resurrection.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/24 10:48

GOD MAKES ALL PROVISION

But note: although such vessels or instruments may go that way - and I am keeping close to the book all the time - He meets those vessels with what is necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose of their election. Here is Isaiah: I ask you, why five chapters of tragedy before chapter 6?

Why was the vision given? It was given because the situation, from every human standpoint, was a hopeless one. Man could well despair when king Uzziah died. The tragedy of king Uzziah! We will speak about him again in a moment. And the state of things in Uzziah's day! It brought this prophet to utter despair. And then, just think what it is that he has to do: "Make this people's ears heavy... close their eyes... lest they should see and hear, and understand and believe, and return..." (6:10). What a life-work! What a hopeless prospect!

To be able to face a situation like that and go through with it, a man needs some vision of a throne above. This vision was God's meeting of the need of a chosen vessel, in relation to His purpose, in a day when things were as dark and as well-nigh hopeless as they could be. Yes, God meets the need, which arises out of the very situation to be dealt with; God has His provision, and He makes it. Sometimes, with our biggest questions, our most awful disillusionment, our deepest despair and hopelessness, we seem to touch bottom, and we say: "Is it possible, this great purpose of God concerning the Church? Is it really possible?" And then the Lord gives a new opening of the eyes of our heart concerning His Throne, His position above all, His glory, and we go on again - until it all comes back, and we touch bottom once more! Tha

t is the history of such a vessel.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/24 16:00

THE PERILS OF BLESSING

Now, all this is contained in this incident in chapter six. Isaiah's life, up to the time of the vision, had been entirely related to king Uzziah (otherwise known as Azariah). Perhaps for at least twenty-five years - the last twenty-five years of Uzziah's life, out of the fifty-two years of his reign - Isaiah was completely under the shadow of this man. You can read about it in 2 Chronicles 26. What a beginning Uzziah had! - a grand beginning, a great beginning; so full of promise. Everything seemed to be set fair for a glorious period of history. Isaiah was brought up in that. The triumphs of Uzziah brought the nation and the kingdom, geographically, almost back to the limits of Solomon's reign - that is, to the limits of the covenant made to Abraham. It was a wonderful reign.

As I say, there is no doubt that this young man - you can see from his writings that he was an idealist - was under the fascination of this great man, this wonderful man, Uzziah; he overshadowed everything for him. Isaiah's life was wrapped up with that of the king. God blessed Uzziah, and prospered him, and gave him victory, and gave him territory: "his name spread far abroad, for he was marvellously helped..." And then... and then... tragedy of tragedies - read it: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against the Lord his God; for he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (2 Chron. 26:15,16).

How much we could say about the perils of prosperity, the perils of popularity, the perils of blessing - even God's blessing! And how much we could say about the unsafety of the best of men. How unreliable we are - I mean 'we men'! How dangerous it is for God to entrust us with blessing! There is much in that. The point is that there came this moment, this turning-point in Uzziah's life, when, with all the good that there had been, with all the blessing and enlargement that God had given him, he assumed something - and then he presumed.

It is like so many things, and so many people - yes, so many instrumentalities: a good beginning, bidding fair to accomplish some great thing for the glory of God, with much Divine blessing, and much Divine enlargement; and then... at a certain almost imperceptible point, it becomes something in itself, and begins to trade upon its position, upon its reputation - even trade upon the blessing of God! There comes in a secret pride of having become something - of course for the Lord, and by the blessing of the Lord; assuming that the blessing of the Lord overlooks secret sin, and presuming upon that; spiritual pride creeping in. That is the history of Uzziah; and that is the history of many a greatly blessed and used instrumentality of God.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/25 2:07

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Uzziah, then, presuming upon his position and God's blessing, as we see, committed this presumptuous act: he went into the Holy Place, where the Altar of Incense was, to offer incense. The high priest, with eighty other priests, implored him, begged him, warned him, telling him in most definite terms that that was neither his place nor his office. The priesthood saw through the act to the spiritual significance - presumption. And then, as he stood there, censer in hand, ready to offer the incense, with his anger rising, God smote him! The leprosy broke out upon his face, and the priests made haste to thrust him out of the Temple; and from that day to the day of his death he lived in a leper house - a leper!

What about Isaiah? - the man who had been living, fascinated, under the shadow of all the preceding glory; to whom Uzziah had been the very model, the life dominating his whole horizon? Here is his idol shattered! He knows that that man is in a leper asylum for the rest of his life!

Do you see the significance of this vision? "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord..."

For a ministry like this, to serve God's full purpose, you must be horizoned by nothing less than that One on the Throne. You must have no other vision; no fascination or heart-captivation with that which, under testing and under trial, will break down - and will let you down. It is very necessary, in order to fulfil this purpose, that we get away from earth and from men, and get to the only Man - the Man in Heaven. Everything for Isaiah was saved by that vision. How he might have been shattered! How devastating this whole thing would have been finally for this young man, if he had not seen Another, whose glory eclipsed the human glory which, up to that time, had been the greatest glory of which he knew. Such a vision

n is a tremendous thing for our deliverance in the day of disillusionment.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/25 17:06

DELIVERANCE IN DISILLUSIONMENT

For we shall all undoubtedly suffer much disillusionment as we go on. There may be great Bible teachers, and great figures in the Christian world, whom we admire. I have done that: I have been a young man, and have done my hero-worshipping of the great Bible teachers, the great leaders, the great Christian statesmen, and so on. And I have lived to know that you dare not put your trust in men - in "princes". You will find, sooner or later, that, at best, that is not safe ground. And while, in many cases, it is not a matter of sin, yet, in many cases, the Lord does allow these "idols" in the end to pass out under a shadow.

The point is that you may come to a time when you are disillusioned, when you discover the human weaknesses and defects in those you thought were absolutely trustworthy and reliable. And many people today are out in the shadows, out in some backwater, in their Christian lives, because of becoming disillusioned or disappointed with certain Christians, or certain things. They looked for, and thought they had found, perfection, and they discovered they had not.

Now this is a contingency, a possibility, that we have got to face. If we have not really seen the Lord Jesus as the answer, if our anchorage is not firmly in Heaven with Him, we shall be shattered in that day, and our faith will break down. What we need is this seeing of the exalted Lord and His glory; and this seeing is essential to our salvation, not only as believers in God, but for those of us who are Christian workers, in order to get us through. If we have not seen the significance and the meaning of the Man in the Throne, we shall just go to pieces under the duress of disillusionment and disappointment.

That does not mean - God forbid! - that we should develop a spirit of mistrust about servants of God, and be always looking for their faults, watching where they are going to break down. God forbid that there should be anything of that. At the same time, whatever we may think about God's servants, let us remember that they are but frail vessels, and that, if we are to go through and fulfil God's purpose, it is necessary that we should have seen the only infallible One, the only One who can really be relied upon never to disappoint. The Lord Jesus will never be the occasion of a disillusionment - never!

Now, you see, Isaiah had been related to Uzziah in this way: enamoured, fascinated, captivated. And then he became involved. Disillusioned, stripped and denuded, in such a day he needs something: he needs saving, he needs rescuing, he needs hope; he needs, in the midst of the wreckage, to see purpose. The purpose has not gone; it is not all in vain, not at all hopeless. The God who had called him in relation to His purpose, met his need; and so the vision was his salvation - and his ministry.

We leave it there for the time being. Let us remind ourselves that we are not talking about Isaiah, we are not talking about Uzziah; we are not talking about the prophecies of Isaiah, we are not talking about the vision that Isaiah was given. We are talking about Another, whom John says Isaiah saw: "he saw HIS glory" - the glory of our Lord Jesus.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/26 0:39

Chapter 2 - The Purpose Of God

Keeping in mind the passages that we have been considering (Isaiah 6, 2 Chronicles 26, and John 12:37-41), let us try to summarise what we have been saying so far.

GOD REQUIRES A PEOPLE OF PURPOSE

We have noted, firstly, that, in relation to His full purpose, God is ever found seeking and taking up a people in whom that purpose has been revealed, and whose life is constituted according to it. God's saving work, and God's conforming work, are governed by a purpose, which is centred in His Son. Nothing that God does is, in His mind and intention, something in itself, or an end in itself; all is related to His clear and definite purpose. The Bible throughout shows us that God is ever in quest of a people who have seen what that purpose is, and who are under His hand to be constituted according to that purpose, to serve Him in it. That is the explanation of the whole Bible, and that is what lies behind this passage in the sixth chapter of Isaiah in particular.

I hesitate to pass on from that, lest its real significance and value should be missed. I used a phrase earlier which I think touches this question quite directly and seriously. I said that, unless Christians are governed by this consciousness of purpose, in their being saved and in God's dealings with them, there is lacking a constituent, and there is a constitutional lack, in their Christian life. We know that, in the physical realm, if a person has a constitutional deficiency, he or she is always open to, a prey to, the many maladies which are floating about. They lack resistance to the germs that are in the air. They are caught this way and that way; they have no defences against these things; and so they are the people that go down whenever there is something about. It is a constitutional deficiency.

Now, if there is a 'constitutional deficiency' like that in the Christian life - whether it be of an individual or of a company, or of the Church as a whole - that individual or Church will be in a state of weakness; it will be suffering from many maladies, and it will be caught by all sorts of things that are floating around. How true that is of many Christians - they seem to be caught by anything that's going! First they go off on this line, and then on that, and then they are caught by something else. You never know what is the next thing that is going to get them! They lack this central, unifying, defensive thing - the knowledge and consciousness of THE purpose of God concerning the Church, concerning His people. God is ever looking for and seeking a people that He can take up as an instrument in relation to His ultimate and full purpose.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/26 9:28

ONLY GOD'S PURPOSE CONFERS SIGNIFICANCE

We went on to say that it is not the person or the persons - it is not the instrument, be it individual or collective, AS SUCCESS - that are the primary factors. There is sovereignty in this, and you never know what God is going to take up. He defeats all our calculations and judgments as to what He will use. It is not the vessel or the instrument or the person or the place; it is the purpose, the purpose of God's sovereign choosing, which gives significance to anyone or anything. We are not called because of what WE ARE. We are 'the called according to His purpose.'

Is it not an impressive thing to see how many of the great vessels that God used had a strange end to their ministry? Take Moses: God buries him, and no man can find his place of burial (Deut. 34:6). You can never put up a stone over the grave of Moses and say anything about HIM - what a great man he was. God just buried him.

What of Isaiah? We are entirely dependent upon tradition as to what happened to Isaiah. It is said by tradition that he is the one referred to in Hebrews 11:37, as having been "sawn asunder". But that is mere tradition; the Bible tells us nothing about it.

Think of Jeremiah. What a man Jeremiah was! While we have said what we have about the vessels, nevertheless these men did a great work, and suffered greatly, and took on a very great significance, because of their function. But Jeremiah - what a man! What about his end? Does anybody know what happened to Jeremiah at the end? No, it is all guesswork. No one knows. He may have died in Egypt with the last company that went over there (Jer. 43:6, 44:1-30). But we don't know - he just disappears. How strange of the Lord to let a man just go out like that!

What about Paul? A great servant of the Lord - no doubt about that; but, so far as the Bible is concerned, he is just left in prison in Rome, and that is the end of the story. Surely he was worthy of something more than that at the end!

Do you see the point? God is not building a memorial to the name, to the instrument. Jeremiah - wherever he is, or wherever he has gone, we don't know. But the Bible does say this: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus (2 Chron. 37:22; Ezra 1:1). It is the FUNCTION, it is the PURPOSE, that God has laid hold of. The man just sinks into the great vocation; it is that that matters. And if the record leaves Paul in prison, tradition may say much about his death, but there he is. Ah! what about the purpose that he has served? God has looked after that! After all, it is true that with all these, and so many others, they are only known to us now because of their service to the purpose of God. In a certain sense, that is their immortality.

Yes: significance is not attached to any name, person, or instrumentality; it is only attached to God's purpose concerning His Son. And you and I will take on value only in the measure in which God's Son is truly served, and comes into His place, by means of us.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/26 12:10

GOD MEETS ALL NEEDS FOR HIS PURPOSE

We further went on to point out that God is faithful to His purpose, and - given that there is no deliberate unbelief or pride - He meets all the needs for the realisation of His own purpose. That was the real meaning of this vision that came to Isaiah. We showed in what a devastating situation Isaiah, as a young man, found himself, at the time of that vision. There was as the tragedy of Uzziah; there was the state of the people. Read those first chapters of Isaiah's prophecies, and see what a state existed. It was enough to put any young man off the ministry - enough to be utterly disconcerting. It was sufficient to bring complete despair, hopelessness; to make him feel, 'Nothing is possible'.

But then, God is not a God of circumstances, in this way; God is the God of purpose. And so, because of the purpose with which this man Isaiah was related, God came in with the vision, the saving vision, and by it delivered him - and what a vision it was! God meets the need of His own purpose - provided, as I have said, that there are not those things that always stay the hand of God - deliberate unbelief, or pride. God can do nothing where there is pride. But, given there is an openness of heart, a purity of spirit, toward Himself, with all the tragedy, with all the human weakness, with all our own failure, God meets the need of the purpose, and works all things for good in those who are called according thereto.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/26 17:06

THE PURPOSE OFTEN INVOLVES DISILLUSIONMENT

Further, we pointed out that this ministry, this calling, this function, concerning the purpose of God, is often fraught with deep experiences of disillusionment, of disappointment, and of breakdown, in the realms in which we had great expectations and upon which we had set our hopes. So it was with Isaiah over king Uzziah. Isaiah's whole life had been bound up with Uzziah. God had blessed him, God had used him; there is no doubt about it, the Lord had been with king Uzziah; he had done a great work for God. What a devastating thing it is to our hearts and to our confidence, when we see something, or someone, which has been so evidently and wonderfully raised up and used and blessed of God, just coming to spiritual tragedy. It makes us feel: 'Then, who can be saved? Who can go through? Can we hope that we shall do better? Can we hope that the thing with which our lives are bound up will have a better end than that?' We feel there is always the terrible possibility that it will go that way with us, and with what we have given ourselves to.

There will be disillusionments, there will be disappointments, there will be heartbreak. But note - the thing that saved Isaiah, in a day like that, was that God established a relationship between him and something that was above it all: 'I saw the Lord, high and lifted up' - the anchorage in Heaven. We never cease to wonder, do we, at that end of the Apostle Paul. It constitutes a problem - but it is a glorious problem. If ever there had been a man poured out for God, it was Paul; if ever a man was jealous for God's highest and fullest, he was; if ever a man suffered in the interests of God's purpose, Paul did. And now, at the last, the churches throughout Asia, who owed their spiritual life to him, had turned away from him; friends around him had left him; he sees his work apparently falling to pieces. Your amazement is that the man himself doesn't go to pieces. You think that if ever a man ought to be in the slough of despond, really cast down and under things, Paul ought to be. Here he is, a lonely man, taken out of his lifework, shut up in prison; converts and friends, and even fellow-labourers, turning away from him - 'Demas hath forsaken me', he says. If ever a man ought to be down, he ought to be.

But look - his link is with Heaven! He has seen 'the Lord high and lifted up', and that has saved him in this terrible hour. 'These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory...' Oh, that we might be so strongly and clearly and positively related with the One in Heaven, that all these things which could break our hearts, and send us right down to the bottom, just do not have that effect. We may have our dark hours - I have no doubt that these men had their dark hours; we may have our times of despondency. But - but - there is something that is more than that. It is the One who is above - we have seen HIM.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/27 2:39

EXPERIENCES RELATED TO THE PURPOSE

Next, such an instrument, related to the purpose, is brought into experiences that definitely bear upon that purpose: that is, they are constituted ACCORDING TO the purpose of God. The purpose of God, in relation to His Son, is that Christ shall ultimately fill all things, and all things shall be summed up in Him. He is to be the universal Lord, and what is true of Him, characteristically, is to become true of the Church: it is to take its character from Him, in order that, so doing, it may be the very vessel and instrument of His government in all the coming ages. If that is so, then a very great deal has got to be done in us to make it possible!

For this is not just an official thing: it is not that God just takes us up and puts us into an official position, willy-nilly, as though it didn't matter what sort of people we were. Oh, no - a lot has got to be done to bring a people there. And so we find that in such instruments, as we have them in the Word of God (and they are only indicative of God's abiding methods and principles), the thing to which they were called was wrought into their very being. Isaiah meant this when he said: "I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel" (Is. 8:18). He had given his sons certain names, and those names were descriptive of the very things that God was doing. To Ezekiel, the Lord said: "Say, I am your sign" (Ezek. 12:11). "When you see God's dealings with me, what God is doing in me, the way God is leading me, then you will see what God is after." That is an essential thing for any instrument of God.

Let me repeat: You cannot just go and retail Divine truths. You may give good addresses, clever addresses, even brilliant addresses, on Bible subjects; you may give very impressive discourses on the Bible; and people may say they enjoyed it - even go as far as to say that, for the moment, they were helped by it. But you must remember that that is not good enough for the Lord. What the Lord is seeking to do is to create a CONSTITUTION. I do not of course mean a system of laws and regulations, such as when one speaks of the 'Constitution' of a nation. I mean what we mean by 'our constitution': how we are made, what we are made of; our make-up; the very substance of our being. And God is seeking to make a constitution in a people. Any instrument that He is to use must have that constitution, and it has got to come right out of what God has done in us. That explains a very great deal.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/27 9:55

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Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/27 15:10

EVERY MEMBER AFFECTED

Perhaps you may be thinking, 'How does all this apply to me? How does it affect me? This seems to concern some ideal instrument, perhaps some ideal people, for ministry; or some visionary conception of a church like that. I'm a very simple, ordinary individual: surely I, with a great many more like myself, don't come into that?' Let me say here, with very great emphasis, that such a vessel, such an instrument, is not just made up of public speakers, outstanding personalities, particular ministries and ministers. If you gather with others for prayer, your very coming together with others in that way, even if you do not pray audibly, but are just there in the spirit of prayer and cooperation, makes you as vital a part of that purpose as any particular ministry.

Remember: though there may be men who minister the Word, those whom we point out as 'ministering servants of the Lord' - we would call them 'the Lord's servants' - remember, they will never fulfil their ministry unless you are behind them in prayer. Paul was very, very sure about that: he let us know quite definitely that even he (of course HE would not have said anything like that - 'even I'; but we say, 'even he') could not have fulfilled his great calling, his elect ministry, unless there had been praying people behind him all the time. They were fulfilling the ministry.

That is only one aspect of the whole matter. In a corporate thing - I do not mean an organized thing, but an organism - every part matters; the whole is affected by the least part. And so you are affecting this matter in some way. Even if you are not functioning at all, you are affecting the whole thing. We are called into something that involves us in responsibility.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/28 1:09

NEED FOR ABIDING

Let us now go a further step in this summary. We are not actually touching the record and the narrative; we are drawing out the lessons. When we think of the tragedy of Uzziah, we must recognise that the way of safety is the way of abiding deeply in God - abiding under the heavenly government. What a different story would have been told about the end of Uzziah, if he had not taken things into his own hands and sought to become something in himself; if he had not presumed, or assumed, that God's blessing and God's using of him gave him the personal right to take hold of the things of God. But pride found a place in his heart. Until he became 'strong', he was greatly blessed; but then he became lifted up in heart, even through the blessing of the Lord, and the story began to change: it became tragedy in the place of glory. If only we would abide in that place of utter dependence, utter submission, where we are not on the throne, but the Lord is, the story might end so differently; spiritual power would remain to the end. How necessary it is for us to keep in that place of abiding, in that place of deep meekness and humility.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/28 14:59

A CRITICAL EPOCH IN WORLD HISTORY

Now, with this summary before us, let us look at this vision: because it is the vision, itself, that covers all that we have said, and more.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Is. 6:1-4).

The reference to the time factor is emphatic: "In the year that king Uzziah died". Yes, it was a very, very crucial and significant time. If we could grasp this, we should have a new and wonderful opening up of heavenly meaning. For the death of Uzziah was not merely an incident or an event in the history of Israel: it took place at a period when some of the greatest changes of all time were taking place in this world. It may well be that the present time goes beyond it, in this respect; but that century, eight hundred years before Christ, was the most critical century of the history of this world, and especially in the history of the things of God. The final departure of the glory - the FINAL DEPARTURE of the glory from Jerusalem - was about to take place. Jerusalem had been the place of the glory, the place of His feet, the place of His government. Jerusalem had been the seat of the Divine and heavenly operations. It was there that the glory was, in the Temple

e. And now, the glory was about to depart for ever from Jerusalem.

Shortly after Uzziah's death, Rome was founded - the great power which would eventually be the doom of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. When the glory goes, see what begins: Rome is born. The government departs from Jerusalem. The throne becomes empty, and has never been occupied again. The priesthood, corrupted, has been dismissed; it has never been there since. The glory, the throne, the priesthood, all go at this time. Everything that was here of that old system has now come, or is coming, to its close. What a critical time this was! The temple forsaken; the glory departed; the throne permanently vacated; the priesthood corrupted and dismissed. "In the year that king Uzziah died" - the time factor is tremendous - "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train" - and that word is the word for the High Priest's garment - His high priestly garment fills the temple.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/29 0:26

THE HEAVENLY COUNTERPART

But it is a heavenly temple; it is a heavenly throne; it is a heavenly priesthood. We have leapt suddenly out of the old dispensation into the time in which we live. John understood all this when he said: "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory; and he spake of Him. We are in the day of the throne on high: "...far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name..." (Eph. 1:21). We are in the day of the heavenly priesthood: "He ever liveth to make intercession" (Heb. 7:25). We are in the day of the heavenly temple. And none of us would say that the exchange has meant loss. It is tremendous gain. When everything here has broken down; everything has proved a failure and a disappointment and a tragedy; everything here has gone: then that which abides for ever, a throne, a priesthood, a house, a temple, comes into view. You see, this brings us right over to the present time. This vision is not a vision that belonged to a certain prophet who lived eight hundred years before Christ; it is not just a bit of history belonging to an age far back in the distant past. This is something that is right up to date. Jesus has fulfilled all this - He IS the fulfilment of all this - the Throne, the Priesthood, the spiritual House. Do you see? WE are in this vision, or ought to be. And it ought to be more than a vision: we ought to be in the reality of it. This belongs to us, not to Isaiah; it is ours.

Is it true? Well, is it true that the earthly ceased? That the glory departed, the nation was scattered, the throne was vacated, the priesthood ceased to be of any value? Is it true? Of course it is true. Is it true that the glorious heavenly counterpart of that has come in? - that there is One upon the Throne, far above all? Is it true that He is exercising a heavenly Priesthood on our behalf? Is it true that there is a spiritual House? "His train FILLED the temple." You see what we are brought to - a tremendous spiritual reality. It is an immense comfort and encouragement to know that, when the earthly breaks down, the heavenly never collapses. When there is everything of disappointment down here, it goes on.

That is why Paul survived his disappointments; that is why he got through those last terrible days or months of his imprisonment, with everything down here going to pieces - why he got through triumphantly: because this vision of Isaiah was a reality to him. The Throne was not empty; the Priesthood was not set aside; the House was a reality. Has it sometimes constituted for you a very real problem: that here is a man, alone, cut off from his life-work, the churches forsaking him, spiritual decline setting in, things all going wrong, error and false prophets creeping into the churches - and Paul gives us that matchless presentation of the glorious Church, and its unity and its oneness!? You are inclined to say, Paul has surely, surely lost his reason; he is in the realm of pure imagination and wishful thinking!

Oh, no. This is of very great practical importance to you and to me. Look at conditions in the Church today on this earth. Look at it, if you dare! Is it not enough to make one say, "What nonsense to talk about this Church, as presented in the Letter to the Ephesians! It is not being practical, it is not being real, it is not facing facts! The facts are these: divisions, and schisms, and conflicts amongst Christians and Christian bodies, and all this awful state amongst individual Christians. THESE are the FACTS; Ephesians is fiction!" Ah, but it was while facing that situation, and being alive to it and knowing what was happening and what was coming, that Paul wrote that letter. He was not mad, not imagining things. He was not saying: "This is how things ought to be. They really are like this, but this is how they ought to be." No, he is saying: "This is it."

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/29 14:17

THE PURPOSE SECURED IN HEAVEN

I don't know what has got to happen to us, but something must happen to us, to get us to that position where we refuse to accept things as they are down here, but hold on to things as they are in the mind, intention and purpose of God; where we see through to something else. That is the real force of this vision. Everything is secured - not down here, but up there. 'High and lifted up' - it is secured up there. Do you ever have some doubts about your own getting through, about your own salvation? Whether spiritually you are going to win through? Whether you will survive? Have you any questions or doubts about that? Do you sometimes wonder whether you will finish up out of things?

Well, now, you will accept this about your salvation: that it is secured in Heaven. Your salvation is secured in Christ in Heaven, and is not therefore subject to conditions down here. Why not believe that GOD'S WHOLE PURPOSE is just as secure in Heaven, and not subject to things down here? It is so easy to sing: 'God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year' - oh, yes, we can sing it; but do we realise that this whole purpose of God is secured in Heaven? That is what Paul saw. It CANNOT be defeated, because God cannot be. It cannot fail, because that Throne cannot be vacated. It CANNOT break down, because that Priesthood is an eternal priesthood, and will not cease. 'He EVER liveth' - that is the point; the emphasis is upon the 'ever' - 'He EVER liveth to make intercession'. 'He is able to save to the uttermost' - and that word means, as you know, 'right on to the end'.

If that is true about our salvation, because it is secured up there, 'high and lifted up', it is true about the purpose, His purpose. It is secured - not in Uzziah, thank God. It is secured in Jesus Christ. It is not secured in an earthly temple at Jerusalem; it is secured in a heavenly temple, a spiritual house - 'in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus'.

I hope that you are beginning to see - that the vision is becoming yours. This is our vision, not Isaiah's vision. It is carried right over to us: 'He spake of HIM'. And all this - all the ministry of Isaiah, and of Paul, was 'because they saw His glory'. Oh, that it might be true in our case - their persistence, their going on, their surviving, their triumphing, their effectual witness, their ministry, their service! These were the fruits, the effects, of seeing His glory. Would that we might be brought again, in a new way, to see the Exalted Lord - the EXALTED Lord; that the effects of that might come upon us as they did upon Isaiah.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/30 2:36

Chapter 3

'Woe!' - 'Lo!' - 'Go!'

Reading: Isaiah 6:1-5; John 12:41; Isaiah 6:6-14.

'These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him.'

John was referring to the Lord Jesus - Jehovah of Hosts!

We have seen that what took place at the time of Isaiah's vision was related to the entirely new order of things into which WE have come. It was the end of an earth-centred system, the end of the earthly seat of Divine government and priesthood; and the introduction of the heavenly and the true, the abiding, the eternal. It was not only a vision of the pre-incarnate glory of the Lord Jesus, but it was a prophetic forecast of the new order, the new economy - what we call the new dispensation. He, our Lord, would be exalted far above all rule and authority: the seat and centre of government would be - as it now is - in Heaven with Him; the priesthood is continued by Him; the house is now a heavenly house. That came in, in its beginnings, with this vision.

We have spoken of the tremendous things that happened in that eighth century before Christ. Now WE are in the time of that vision's real fulfilment. That vision is, or should be, the vision of the Church, the people of God, now; and in the light of that vision the Church ought to be fulfilling its ministry, as did Isaiah. Because Isaiah, as we have pointed out and stressed, is not just a historic figure or a representative of a certain period in this world's history: he is a representation and embodiment of a permanent, Divine function, in relation to bringing the people of God to God's thought and fullness in Christ. And that function is as much here now as it was in the days of Isaiah: the function of the prophetic ministry remains. There may not be a people whom we today call 'prophets', in the Old Testament sense, but the function of the Holy Spirit is being carried on in this dispensation: the function that seeks all the time to keep in view God's full end and purpose before the people of God, and to bring them into that purpose.

If we are a part of the Lord's people, then these two things apply to us: first, the vision of the exalted Lord; and second, the ministry that issues therefrom. These two things belong to US. Whether we are in the good of them or not may be an other matter. But that is why these messages are being given: it is the Lord's occasion for telling us about it - what we ought to see, and what we ought to do.

For brevity's sake, I am going to gather all this up into three little words:

Verse 5: "Then said I, Woe...!"

Verse 7: "He touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo..."

"And he said, Go..."

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/30 11:49

'WOE!'

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips..."

Isaiah was not what we would now call an 'unsaved' man. He was a chosen servant of God, and, as we now know, a very, very valuable servant of God. And, seeing that this vision was given to him, and all this happened in his experience, as a servant of God, it quite strongly says that these are the things which go to constitute such a ministry - a ministry in fellowship with God concerning His purpose. Yes, and - one says it deliberately - a part of the very foundation of such a ministry, of the very preparation of such a vessel, is this word, 'Woe!' The sinner not knowing the Lord, coming under conviction of sin, might utter that word. It ought, indeed, to be the very first word of a sinner coming to the Lord. But here it is the word, the expression, of a prophet, the exclamation of a chosen servant of God.

Now, remember that the man himself was in this condition before he cried, 'Woe!', and had probably been in it for a long time. Things around him, too, as you will see, were in a pretty bad state, and had been like this for a long time, and he was involved in them. Yet it seems that he had not been stung into the realisation of his own state, and of the real state of things around him. No doubt he had deplored it, no doubt he had felt bad about many things; no doubt he had grieved over the evident declension; but it would seem that not until this moment did he become fully alive to his own condition and the condition around him. What was it that did it?

You know, it is quite possible for us to have much to say about the evils and the wrongs in the world around us, to be quite prepared to admit that we ourselves are anything but perfect, that there is indeed much that is not right about us, without that being an adequate basis for our serving God in this sense - that is, concerning His full purpose. The full purpose of God requires something deeper than that. And so it had to be brought home to the prophet. And what was it that did it?

Well, of course, he 'saw the Lord'. And he heard: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts". And when he really came into touch with the Lord, in this vital way, the first effect was a realisation of the awful state of his own heart, and of the nation around him. And we shall not be of much use to the Lord unless that double sense is with us in an overwhelming way. We must come into touch with the Lord.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/31 0:33

Now, we have been talking about 'vision', but let us for the moment forget that word. It is a word that, for most people, conjures up all sorts of things, and might provoke such questions as: 'What do you mean by a vision of the Lord? I have never had such a vision. Am I to have a vision of the Lord? Are you expecting ME to have a vision of the Lord? Do you expect something like this to happen to ME?' Instead of speaking of 'vision', let us simply speak of 'coming, in a living way, into touch with the Lord.'

For after all, that is what it amounts to, and that can happen without any objective visions. A real touch with the Lord will inevitably result in this. It is the declaration of a fact, and it is also a test of our relationship to the Lord. Those who really are in touch with God, those who really have this living relatedness with Him, those who really walk near to Him, are the people who carry with them this - not temporary, desultory, occasional ejaculation, but - abiding consciousness of the WOE of their own state - put that in many ways - their utter worthlessness! "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Any complacency, self-satisfaction, insensitiveness to sin; any absence of an agony and an anguish

over evil, means distance from God. The further you get away from God, the less are you troubled by the sense of sin. The nearer you get to God, the more acute becomes this consciousness. And if He draws near, if the Lord comes into any place or any life, this is the thing that happens.

Now look! 'This One', said John, 'this One whom Isaiah saw, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up - this One was the Lord Jesus; and He came down from that throne. This One, this same One, is "Holy, holy, holy"; it is this very One. 'Oh, is it not overwhelming that the One about whom the seraphim were crying "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts - that that One was Jesus! But if He left His throne in glory, if He has come out of Heaven to this world, He has not left behind His holiness. Look! He is here, and His very presence has the effect of creating a spontaneous outburst. His enemies - they cannot remain quiescent; the evil powers - they cannot remain silent; sinners - they come to His feet. His presence, without His saying anything, means that men begin to make confessions. Sincere, honest people begin to seek Him. Sinners, stricken with the consciousness of sin, say: "Depart from me - I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The evil people cannot bear this presence, they cannot endure the presence of His holiness. The presence of God is like that!

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/31 12:48

Look again! Here is Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee: 'as concerning the righteousness which is of the law, found blameless' (Phil. 3:6). That, he tells us, was the verdict of his contemporaries. Not much room for consciousness of sin there, is there? On his way to Damascus he meets Jesus Christ; he sees the Lord high and lifted up. What does he say? The erstwhile self-congratulating, righteous Pharisee writes to Timothy: "...sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). He has seen the Lord, and that is the effect.

Job, all through those long chapters of the book which goes by his name, is trying to justify himself, and his friends are saying so: 'Job is all the time trying to justify himself - to put himself right with God and man.' It is a long and terrible story, until the Lord meets him. When his friends at last are silent, the Lord comes in and says: "Who is this that darkeneth his counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: ...declare thou unto me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?...?" (38:2-4). And so on. He meets the Lord. What is the end? "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, WHEREFORE I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:5,6). He has seen the Lord, he has met the Lord, he has been in the presence of the Lord.

We have quoted Peter. Peter was a very self-assured, self-confident sort of fellow. But one day, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, something of that majesty broke in upon him, and he cried "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). It is just that; it is a real test. A life that is really in touch with God can have no pride, no conceit, no arrogance, no self-complacency; it cannot be hard and cruel toward people who are faulty and failing; it knows its own heart too well. That is essential in a ministry that is going to lead to spiritual fullness.

A simple little story is told of a girl who started a little class amongst slum children, poor little be-grimed girls, ragged and dirty, who never knew much about soap and water. She gathered them together, and wondered how she could give them some sense of another kind of life. And so she brought along a beautiful, white lily; a large, white, perfect lily. They gathered round; she didn't say anything; she held it up in front of them; then she passed it round. 'Would you like to feel it? Would you like to look into it?' A grimy little girl, in all her mess and tatters, reached out a grubby hand to touch the lily; and as it got nearer the flower, she suddenly saw herself. She saw the contrast between the hand and the lily, and drew back. She rushed out of the meeting, ran home, sought out all the soap that she could find, washed herself, put on some cleaner clothes, did her hair, and came back. And not a word spoken!

That is only a very simple illustration. But a little touch with the real thing, a real touch with the Lord, should shock us, should really show us ourselves. The background and basis of any real spiritual value to the Lord is a sense of His holiness and the contrast between Him and ourselves. It must begin there; there can be no rushing in.

For I must remind you that Uzziah forced his way into the Holy Place, and took up the censer to offer incense unlawfully. Something that had no right to do so pressed into the presence of God, and God smote it. And the leprosy which broke out upon his countenance was only a symbol of what was in his heart. When Isaiah cried: "I am a man of unclean lips", do not forget that he had seen Uzziah, and had heard the leper calling: "Unclean, unclean" For it was a part of the law that all lepers must do that, to let everyone know; he had to pronounce his own uncleanness. It was that to which Isaiah was referring: "I am a man of unclean lips" - 'I am really no better than Uzziah: I am a leper.' That is the first phase: 'Woe! Woe! Woe is me!'

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/1 1:38

Look again! Here is Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee: 'as concerning the righteousness which is of the law, found blameless' (Phil. 3:6). That, he tells us, was the verdict of his contemporaries. Not much room for consciousness of sin there, is there? On his way to Damascus he meets Jesus Christ; he sees the Lord high and lifted up. What does he say? The erstwhile self-congratulating, righteous Pharisee writes to Timothy: '...sinners; of whom I am chief' (1 Tim. 1:15). He has seen the Lord, and that is the effect.

Job, all through those long chapters of the book which goes by his name, is trying to justify himself, and his friends are saying so: 'Job is all the time trying to justify himself - to put himself right with God and man.' It is a long and terrible story, until the Lord meets him. When his friends at last are silent, the Lord comes in and says: 'Who is this that darkens his counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: ...declare thou unto me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?...' (38:2-4). And so on. He meets the Lord. What is the end? 'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, WHEREFORE I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (42:5,6). He has seen the Lord, he has met the Lord, he has been in the presence of the Lord.

We have quoted Peter. Peter was a very self-assured, self-confident sort of fellow. But one day, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, something of that majesty broke in upon him, and he cried 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord' (Luke 5:8). It is just that; it is a real test. A life that is really in touch with God can have no pride, no conceit, no arrogance, no self-complacency; it cannot be hard and cruel toward people who are faulty and failing; it knows its own heart too well. That is essential in a ministry that is going to lead to spiritual fullness.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/1 16:01

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Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/2 6:07

'LO!'

'And he touched my mouth... and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'

There is a very great deal implied in this whole symbolic setting. One of the seraphim, on hearing this cry of woe, this confession of need and undone-ness, went to the altar - evidently the GREAT altar - and, with tongs, took up a live coal, brought it over and touched the prophet's lips. Remember that the lips are always the symbol of the heart, for it is out of the heart that we speak. He touched his lips with that LIVE coal. It was not from the sacrifice of last week - that would have been dead coal; it was not even the sacrifice of yesterday - that would have been dead coal, too. Right up to the moment, the coal was still burning: evidently the sacrifice had just been offered, the altar was drenched with blood.

You have here three things: an altar, a burning coal, and (by implication) shed blood - everything that goes to make up the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It is not a little impressive that, in that scene in Heaven in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation, where the Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne, the literal statement is: 'as though it had JUST been slain' (v. 6). Right up to the moment, right up to date, this thing is still alive, it is still virtuous, it is eternally efficacious. It was an up-to-the-moment thing that happened. In the symbolism of the burning fire you have the Holy Spirit, operating on the virtue of the Blood and of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, creating the basis of this service. This kind of service, in relation to God's full purpose, requires that all this shall be in the experience of a man or a woman, right up to date: a knowledge of the tremendous efficacy of the Blood of Jesus.

The real servant of God does not make light of the Blood. He makes a very great deal of the Blood, knowing that that Blood needs to be permanently efficacious for him. "The blood of Jesus" - you know the words of the text - "the blood of Jesus his Son KEEPS ON cleansing us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The true servant of God, one who is related to His full purpose, rests upon the continuous, moment-by-moment, up-to-the-moment efficacy of the Blood of the Lamb, and upon the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, as fire. He rests, too, upon the separating work of the Cross. Remember that that word 'holy' (the seraphim cried: 'Holy, holy...') literally means 'separate'. He is separate. The statement about Jesus is: "separated from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). The Cross is the place of the separation, the dividing; that is its meaning. And the separation is not only a separation from the world - it is our separation from ourselves.

It is, then, the EXPERIENCE of those mighty energies of the Blood, the Cross and the Spirit, on the part of the Lord's people, of servants of God, that is foundational to true ministry. It is not the doctrine, the theory, the truth, objectively or mentally held. We may know all that the Bible has to say about the Blood, about altars, about the Cross, about the Holy Spirit, and yet the reality may not be a deeply applied thing in our being. And that is the tragedy of many a life, even of servants of God today. They may be able to give you all that the Bible has to say on these 'subjects', and yet it may mean nothing; it may be mere cleverness or interest. What God wants is men and women who have been TOUCHED in their inner being by the power of the Blood, by the power of the Spirit, by the separating work of the Cross.

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/2 16:44

'GO!'

"Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go..."

Go! You never get that opportunity given by God Himself unless these other things are true. You may take up Christian work, but a Divine, 'apostolic' commissioning does rest upon these other two things. (Do not misunderstand my use of that word 'apostolic'. I am only interpreting: it just means being 'sent'. We all ought to be 'sent ones'; the Church ought to be a sent body.) But thank God for His response to the prophet's "Woe is me!" The seraph said, "Lo!" That was grace! A man like that, who is not exaggerating his condition - it was true, far more true than perhaps he realised, although he cried "Woe!" - a man like that could be visited in this way, and commissioned. Oh, mighty grace! If you had asked Isaiah in the ensuing years how he came to be God's servant, he would say: 'Just by the grace of God - that is all! If you knew what I came to know about myself, you would realise that this would never be the place for me, but for the grace of God! Marvellous grace!'

For, although it sounds so elementary and simple, it is nevertheless profoundly true; that anything that we are allowed to do in relation to the Lord and His purpose must bring to us an overwhelming sense of the grace of God. When we are young men and women, we are all ambitious to get into God's work, to be preaching, speaking, and all that sort of thing. But as we go on, that kind of thing has a strange way of changing, and we come to the place where we say: 'God forbid that I should ever be on a platform, unless - unless - He puts me there. As long as I can keep off it I will; I will only be there because the Lord makes me get there. Because - who am I? Who am I, that I should talk to other people? What am I that I should seem to be standing before them?' That will grow as you walk with God. It is bound to be like that. It will be of the infinite grace of God that you will have any place at all in His purpose.

Here, He says: 'Go!' And the 'Go!', as you see, is following upon this sense of sin, and the overwhelming of Divine grace. And then - "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The Lord put it in the form of an interrogation. "Who will go FOR US?" Do you get that? 'WE are in need!' - the triune God! It is the plural, "for US". 'We have need of helpers; We are in need of someone to go.' "Who will go FOR US?" This tests the motive for all service. What is it for? a reputation? self-gratification? Or is it 'for Us'?

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/3 1:50

‘For Us!’ There is far more in that than it sounds. I always come back to this great man, Paul. I am perfectly sure that he would not have gone on very far in his work, if it had been for himself; to make a name for himself; to find gratification for himself; or for anything, other than that his heart had been absolutely captured by the Lord. ‘For to me to live is Christ’ (Phil. 1:21). The Lord had ‘got’ him! It was a great love relationship. It is true, from one standpoint, that we are chosen. The Lord said: ‘Ye did not choose me, but I chose you’ (John 15:16). We are chosen and apprehended. In one sense, we cannot help ourselves; we are the prisoners of Jesus Christ. That is one side of it. But there is another side that is equally true. It is that the Lord asks for our hearts: He appeals to us as to whether He can have us. He has chosen us, but can He HAVE us? Even though it is true that we are under the mighty constraint, will we voluntarily go with Him and for Him?

There was a day when David, tired, weary and thirsty, made an ejaculation, not perhaps intending that anyone should hear. Somehow David was a man who was always making ejaculations. If you look at the Psalms, you can see that he is always just breaking out about something: ‘Oh that men would praise the Lord!’ Oh! this... and Oh! that...! He seems to have been a man like that. That is how it was on that day. He just gave expression to a sigh, putting a thought into words: ‘Oh for a drink of the water of the well at Bethlehem!’ And some of his men who were standing near him heard. They took their swords, broke through the encompassing hosts of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David. What did David say? He poured it out before the Lord, and said: ‘This is the very life of the men who drew it; I cannot drink that!’ (1 Sam. 23:14-17).

You see the point. These men had such a loyalty, such a devotion to their lord, that he only had to ejaculate something, and they would risk their lives for him; they would take their lives in their hands for his satisfaction. Is not that what is here with Isaiah? ‘For Us! For Us!’ The Lord is saying: ‘Oh, for somebody like this!’ ‘Who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.’ And the Lord replied, in effect: ‘You are the man I want! That is what I want - a man with this experience, a man with this basis. Go! Go!’

Re: BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/3 14:10

Now, if you are feeling that all that I have said is not really necessary for the Lord’s service; if you think I have been ‘piling it on’ rather heavily - ‘Surely we can be servants of the Lord without all that!’ - if you think I am making a lot of it, making the Lord’s service complicated, difficult, involved, laying down more than is really necessary: read what follows - read the commission, and I venture to say that, if you had to do the work that Isaiah had to do, you would never do it without Isaiah’s foundation.

‘Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed.’

That was carried right on to the days of the Lord Jesus. John said: ‘This thing that Isaiah was told to do is here with us today.’ ‘Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah... might be fulfilled’ (John 12:37,38). Right along there in the days of the Lord Jesus, the work that Isaiah did stands. Of course it carries a very solemn message, and perhaps it carries a very big problem for us. But it simply means this - that these people had persistently, and hitherto with impunity, resisted the Word of God by the prophets; and it is a terrible thing to do that. If you do that long enough, there comes a time when you will not be able to believe when you want to, you will not be able to understand when you want to. You have brought your own judgment upon you. That is a terrible thing! It is the explanation of Israel’s doom.

But let us leave that aside. Here is a man who has to ‘go’, and the effect of his ministry is only to be the hardening of many people. That is not pleasant ministry! It is going to create a good many enemies. The Lord said to Ezekiel: ‘Son of man, I send you not to a people of a strange language and tongue, that you cannot understand: if I sent you to them, they would believe, they would receive your word; but I send you to the house of Israel, and they will not listen! that is where your difficulty lies’ (Ezek. 3:4-7). Very strange! The come-back is so often from Christian people themselves. The real fight arises in that realm, more than in any other. The hardest work of all is the work of having to deal with ‘traditional Israel’. It is not easy.

But Isaiah was vindicated! ‘A remnant shall return’ (7:3, marg.). That is the great word that springs out of his ministry. There were millions that went away into captivity under this judgment, but only forty-two thousand and a few more came back. ‘A remnant shall return’, indeed - but he was vindicated in the remnant!

And God always has a remnant. We must leave the others. I do not expect, for one moment, that all Christians are going

to accept God's full revelation as to His purpose. It would be folly to think that they will - they will not! You will find your main resistance from Christians, strangely enough. It is true! But, the vindication is in a remnant: a remnant shall return. Compared with the millions, the forty-two thousand may be very small; but the word of the prophet is: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10).