

The Vision of God

by Chuck Smith

The sermon highlights the importance of recognizing God's holiness and our unworthiness while responding to His call with availability and trust.

Duration: 35:12

Scripture: Exodus 3:11, Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah 6:7-8, Jeremiah 1:6, Luke 5:8, Romans 3:10

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Isaiah chapter 6, where Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord asking who will go and be sent by Him. The speaker emphasizes the need for servants for God's work in these last days. They highlight the importance of recognizing our own inadequacies and offering ourselves to God for His work. The sermon also emphasizes the humbling experience of seeing God's holiness and our own sinfulness, and how it is only through God's grace and righteousness that we are qualified to serve Him.

Transcript

Let's pray. Father, we're so grateful that you have brought us to that place of putting our trust and hope in you. And Lord, as we're living in a day of uncertainty and men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth, we thank you, Lord, for the stabilizing power of the faith that we have in Jesus Christ that keeps us, Lord, and sustains us through the dark hours.

And we ask now, Lord, your blessing upon the study of your word, upon your people, Lord, as we've gathered in your name, looking to you, Lord, for guidance and direction from your word as we, Lord, seek to obey your voice and to follow your will for our lives. Speak to our hearts. Call us, Lord, we pray, into the work that you would have us to perform for your glory.

In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated. Tonight, we will be continuing our journey through the Bible in Isaiah chapters four through seven, and we encourage you to read them over.

Read through the Bible. Study the Bible. Find out what God has to say about himself and about his love for you and about how you can know the power of that love in your life.

This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the sixth chapter of Isaiah. There in verse eight, Isaiah said, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then I said, here am

I, send me. I think that often God does cry, who can I send? Who will go for me? Here in chapter six, we find the call of God and the response of Isaiah to that call of God.

What is important is to notice not just the call, but the things that preceded the call of God upon his life. God has chosen to use human instruments to accomplish his work here on earth. But God does not always choose those that we might think, oh, how wonderful it would be if they would commit themselves to serve the Lord.

They have such great talents, such great ability, and they could do so much for the Lord. But those are the persons that the Lord often passes over, and he chooses just the simple people to accomplish his work. Here with Isaiah, in verse one of chapter six, we read, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his glory filled the temple.

Uzziah was the king over Judah. He reigned for 52 years. He was just 16 years old when his father Amaziah died, and he was brought to the throne.

He had a very successful reign. Under his leadership, the nation became powerful. They were able to conquer their enemies.

We are told that as long as he sought the Lord, God made his ways to prosper. We are told he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He had defeated many of the major cities of the Philistines, and he had broken down their walls, their defenses.

He had fortified the city of Jerusalem, building towers for defense, as well as fortifying several of the cities of Judah. He had a well-equipped army of over 300,000 men. He was popular.

He was a very strong leader, and the nation prospered under his reign. We are told twice that his name spread abroad throughout all of the land. Everybody was talking about Uzziah.

Everywhere, people are saying, oh, isn't he just a wonderful king, and oh, Uzziah is this, and oh, Uzziah has done that, and oh, and his name was just on the lips of all the people. Under him, people had a great sense of security. We don't have to worry.

We've got a sharp, powerful king. He'll take care of it, and they felt very secure under the reign of Uzziah. They looked up to him and felt as long as he's on the throne, we've got nothing to worry about.

But when he died, it had a very debilitating effect upon the minds of the people, the sense of apprehension of the future. What are we going to do? Uzziah is dead. The throne is empty.

What's going to happen to us now? How often, when there is a strong leader, do people begin to put their confidence and trust in that leader? Uzziah was such a man. He was strong. He was wise.

He was powerful. But that can be a stumbling block because people get their eyes upon the leader rather than upon the Lord. And when that leader is taken from them, then there is that apprehension and that fear that arises in their hearts.

God wants us to look always to him for our security and for our strength and comfort. And oftentimes, God will remove the idols so that we can see that God still reigns. Such was the case.

Isaiah had idolized Uzziah. He was looking as did the other people unto Uzziah and feeling that strength and that comfort and security knowing that Uzziah was on the throne. Now that the throne is empty, there is that emptiness.

What are we going to do? And it causes us really to begin to seek the Lord. And so Isaiah said, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and sitting upon the throne and his glory filled the temple. God had to vacate Uzziah from the throne in order that Isaiah might discover that the throne is not empty.

God still reigns. And how important it is for us to know and to understand that God reigns. Not man, but God who reigns.

And to put our confidence and our trust in the fact that God does reign. He will often use human instruments in the accomplishing of his work. But behind that instrument is God who does reign.

He wants you to know that. The human instrument can fail. And surely, in his later years, Uzziah had a great failure.

Uzziah had entered into the temple to offer incense. That was not the job of the king. That was the appointed job of the priest.

And when Azariah, the priest, came in and saw him, he rebuked him and said, you don't belong in here. That isn't your task, offering incense. And Uzziah became upset and began to rebuke the priest.

But his body was covered with leprosy and he remained a leper the rest of his life. He died as a leper and thus great failure in the end of his life. And so often we get our eyes upon man, an instrument God has used mightily, but then that man fails and we become all just upset and just don't know what to do.

The one that we've been trusting in has let us down and he has failed. But God reigns. We need to know that.

It is God's work and God does reign. Years ago, I was pastoring in Huntington Beach. There was a little old lady in the church in her 90s who had a tremendous gift of exhortation.

And whenever I would get discouraged, I would go over and visit her because she was always such an encouragement to me. And her encouragement was always the same. When I would go and I would just pour out my problems and the things that were going on and all, she would say, well, Charles, God still reigns.

He's on the throne and God will take care of it. And I would go with a renewed vision that it's God's problem. God reigns.

He's going to take care of it. Human instruments will come and go. Human instruments will pass from the scene, but it's important that we realize God rules and God reigns.

In seeing the Lord getting the idol out of the way, Uzziah is now dead. He now sees the Lord high and lifted up sitting on the throne, the glory of God filling the temple. And in seeing the glory of the Lord, the seraphim around the throne of God, as they are worshiping, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord.

He suddenly sees himself in a new light. He sees himself in the light of God's glory. And it is a total shock unto him.

We often are comparing ourselves with others. And that's a great mistake. If I compare myself with you, I think, well, I'm not too bad.

If I compare myself to some of you, I say, hey, I'm pretty good. But that's a mistake. You are not the standard, nor am I the standard for righteousness that God will accept.

And so often we feel as we look around, well, I'm pretty good. I haven't done too bad. And you know, I'm surely better than that fellow over there.

And we have that tendency of comparing ourselves with others. Paul wrote about that. He said, we do not dare make ourselves like those who compare themselves with others that are like themselves.

For they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise. In the days of Jesus, the scribes and the Pharisees were looked upon by the people as the most righteous men on the face of the earth. These men spent their entire life trying to do the righteous things, seeking to keep the law to perfection.

They devoted themselves to that. And one day Jesus said to those that were there, unless you are more righteous than the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. I'm certain that that came as a tremendous shock to those people.

I'm sure that Peter thought, oh no, I'll never make it. How can I be more righteous than those men who spend their lives in seeking to do the right thing according to the law? But it is true. Your righteousness, no matter how good you are, your righteousness will never gain you an entry in to the kingdom of heaven.

I'm not the standard. Jesus is the standard for righteousness. And unless your righteousness meets that standard, you'll never make it into heaven.

You say, well, then I can never make it. Well, no. The gospel tells us that by your faith in Jesus Christ, God will account to your account the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

For God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of Christ through him, through faith in him. So that righteousness of Jesus is imputed to me, is accounted to my account because of my faith. And that's the glorious gospel.

My righteousness, no. I could never make it into heaven with my righteous deeds. But it is the righteousness of Christ.

You remember in John 16, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came, he would testify to the world of righteousness. He said of righteousness, because I ascend unto my father. Now, what does the ascension of Jesus unto the father have to do with righteousness? Just this.

The ascension of Jesus into heaven was God's declaration to the world that this is the righteous standard that will be accepted into the heavenly realm. Anything less will never make it. So unless you, in comparing yourself to Jesus Christ and say, well, I'm as righteous as he ever was, you can never make it.

Now, we need to see ourselves not in the standard of those around us, but we need to see ourselves in the standard of God's holiness and God's righteousness. And when we do, then we will begin to realize the truth about ourselves. As Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, he said, woe is me, for I am undone.

I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. Seeing God's holiness and seeing yourself in the light of God's holiness, it just is a very humbling experience because suddenly you realize how unrighteous, how vile you actually are. Daniel was a man of God, probably as close to perfection as a man can get.

And yet, when Daniel had the vision of the Lord, he said, there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned into corruption. That which was valuable or worthy or worthwhile in me, I saw it as just corrupt in the light of the vision of God. When St. Peter saw the miracle of Jesus, he fell on his knees before the Lord and said, depart from me, O Lord, I'm a sinful man.

We need to realize that there is nothing in us that is acceptable or could be acceptable by God. It is only through the work of God's grace transforming me and imputing the righteousness of Christ to me that makes me at all qualified to serve the Lord. Isaiah, when he saw himself and the truth about himself, I'm a man of unclean lips.

He saw one of the seraphim, an angelic being, take a coal from off of the altar, a live coal. And he flew down to Isaiah, and he touched his lips with that live coal. And the seraphim said unto him, your sin is taken away, your lips are purged.

It was at this point that Isaiah heard the Lord saying, whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And Isaiah responded, here am I, Lord, send me. Here is where he heard the call of God into the ministry. Of course, we'll read the prophecies of Isaiah and we'll read how God used him in very special ways.

But this is the call into the ministry. We notice the preparation for the call, the stripping. God had to strip away his idol, King Uzziah.

His trusting in the king kept him from seeing his need of the Lord. He felt secure as long as Uzziah was on the throne. God had to remove his security.

We often find security in things. We find security in a good job, a solid career, a healthy bank account. And sometimes God removes those things in which we are looking for security so that we will realize that nothing of this world is truly secure.

There is only one thing that will guarantee security for you, and that's a trust in the Lord, putting your trust and confidence in him. God had to strip him of his own self-righteousness. And this was accomplished by his vision of God and the holiness of God.

As the Seraphim were declaring, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory. He needed to see himself in the light of God's holiness.

If you can ever figure out why God should use you to do his work, then you'll probably never be used by God. He uses those who recognize and realize their own inadequacies, those who are always surprised at the fact that God would use them. Here he is saying, oh, I am a man of unclean lips.

I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips. He was recognizing his own unworthiness, but then came the cleansing, and then came the call, and then came the response to the call. It's interesting that those men in the scriptures who were mightily used by God were men who felt that they were not qualified for the task to which God was calling them.

When God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, Moses kept offering one excuse after another to the Lord of why God couldn't use him. When God called Jeremiah to the ministry of a prophet to Israel, Jeremiah began to offer his excuses as to why God couldn't use him. Paul the apostle, talking about the people that God has called and God has used, said, brothers, think of what you were when God called you.

Not many of you were wise or mighty or noble, for God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and the things which are despised has God chosen, and the things which are not to bring to naught things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence. Things that often we think disqualify us from being used by God are actually the things that do qualify us.

When we realize, well, I'm not very smart. I really don't have a great education. I'm afraid to stand in front of people that God can wipe out those excuses in a hurry.

In fact, you're sort of qualifying yourself. God is saying, that's exactly why I'm calling you, because you're not very smart and because you're not very well-educated and you aren't very talented. You're pretty dull and run-of-the-mill, but that's why I want you, because you have enough sense to know that when I work, it isn't you that's doing it, but it is my work and I will receive the glory for the work that I want to do.

You see, God is desiring and is always desiring to do a special work, but he uses human instruments to accomplish his work. But when he uses that human instrument, the last thing that God wants is for that human instrument to be lifted up and to begin to take glory for the work that God has done through their lives. To God be the glory for the great things he has done.

And so that's why God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Rarely will you see a PhD being used mightily by God. They have too much confidence in themselves and in their own education.

And they would soon be writing books about the keys to success and so forth and what I discovered and what I have found and what I have learned and so forth and beginning to take the glory for the work that God does. So God sort of bypasses them and he speaks to plain, ordinary, common individuals and he'll say, who shall I send? Who will go for me? And here is Isaiah stripped now of the sense of greatness or whatever, conscious of his own sin. Woe is me.

I'm undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. But now that work of God's spirit in the cleansing and when he hears the call, he says, well, Lord, here am I. Send me.

And the Lord then began to tell him of the ministry. He was going to have a difficult ministry, not really successful ministry. He was going to just be an instrument of God to harden the hearts of the people so that no one would question the judgment of God when he brought their enemies to destroy them.

Today, there is a great need for servants, for the king. There's a great work that needs to be done in these last days. And even as God in the time of Isaiah said, who shall I send? Who will go for me? God is looking for people that will say, Lord, here am I. Send me.

Recognizing your own inadequacies. Just offering to God what you are. That God might do his work in you and then do his work through you.

It is well been said that God is not looking for ability. He's looking for availability. Those who will say, here am I. Send me.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of serving you. Lord, we thank you for the work that you have desired to do and do desire to do. We thank you, Lord, for the call.

Who will go? Who will I send? Lord, we again respond. Here am I, Lord. Send me.

Use me, Lord, if you see fit. I'm available, Lord. I will serve you because I love you.

And Lord, we ask that you would use us in the accomplishing of your work here on earth. In Jesus name. Amen.

Shall we stand? Many years ago, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, who will go for us? Who shall I send? And I respond, well, here am I, Lord. Send me. It's been a thrill to see what God had in mind.

The work that he wanted to do. Surely I wasn't qualified for it, nor am I qualified for it. But here I am now over the hill, not nearly as strong and all as I once was, but yet it's still the same.

When God says, who shall we send? Who will go for me? My response today is the same as ever, Lord. I don't have what I once had. I'm not the man I used to be.

But if you can use an over the hill, decrepit old man, here am I, Lord. Send me. And God can use every one of us in the accomplishing of his work.

As I said, he's just looking for availability. And I would encourage you to avail yourself to him. It may be that God is speaking specifically to some of you today.

The message hit home. Maybe you've been stripped of the things that you were trusting in, the securities that you had, and you're sort of in a desperate situation. The rug has been pulled out from under you and you're wondering, oh, Lord.

And the Lord has taken away those things that you might see him and find him. And in seeing him, realizing your own unworthiness, and yet recognizing the cleansing power of God in your life. And you're hearing God saying, who will we send? Who will go for us? And maybe God is waiting for you to respond today.

Lord, I'll go. Here am I, Lord. Send me.

If God's been working in your heart, I would encourage you as soon as we're dismissed. Come on down. These men here are here to pray for you.

They each one have heard the voice of the Lord saying, who shall we send? Who will go for us? And they've each responded. And God is using them. And God wants to use you.

If you will just make yourself available. I can remember the night that God was speaking to my own heart. I was standing at a summer camp with other high school kids.

And I was singing, I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, or mountain or plain or sea. I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord. I'll be what you want me to be.

And I meant it from my heart. God's looking for men and women who will go, who will say, Lord, here am I. Send me.

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