

Woe, Lo, and Go - Part 1

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon calls for a deep personal confession, divine cleansing, and an urgent response to God's commission in the face of spiritual apathy.

Duration: 28:59

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-3, Isaiah 6:5, Isaiah 6:7-13

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by describing a vision in which the posts of a door moved and the house was filled with smoke. He then acknowledges his own unworthiness and sinful nature in the presence of the Lord. A seraphim approaches him with a burning coal and purges his sins. The speaker then hears the voice of the Lord asking who will go and he responds by offering himself to be sent. The sermon also touches on the importance of different versions of the Bible and the impact of the presence of God in a community.

Transcript

We've had the enviable pleasure the last few weeks of having a rich gift of God among us. The Raven Hills have been here for several weeks now. Leonard's been preaching four and five times a week, and it's been wonderful.

It's been glorious. Our prayer meeting attendance, which we thought was good to begin with, is up four to five times now. It's a number, and the meetings have gone extended now for several hours, some of them, as the Spirit of God has been wooing and stirring and ministering to us.

The idea for Leonard's coming here was given to me by the Holy Spirit. I had heard of him before. I'd read two books, I believe, one of them on the wide Revival Terries, and then one several years before that.

And I knew of him from various and sundry places, but I'd never met him. And this last year, I had an opportunity to meet him while in Kansas City and to go to lunch with him. And as we were sitting there, the Lord said to my heart, this is a treasure, and I want to pour it out among you.

So I blurted out, hey, could you come and see us for a few months? Fully expecting him to say no. And within hours, he came back and said, yes, I can, and it'll be a very important meeting. And so we've lived with that excitement in our souls for the last few months, waiting for him to come.

There's many things I could say about him that would probably embarrass him. We've learned to love him not only as a preacher and a man who has fire in his bones, but as a friend. His tenderness to us privately is just beyond belief.

His fierceness when he gets behind a microphone is also beyond belief. Somewhere between the two places is the man, I think. And we've learned to love him.

Let's welcome Brother Leonard Ravenhill. Well, if a friend says I'm fierce, what do my enemies say? No, I want to, first of all, thank God for putting in the heart of John to have this conference. And secondly, that he obeyed the Lord.

And thirdly, that he had the wisdom to call me. I was just saying to Carol there, you know, if anybody ever says to me, do you believe Jesus fed the 5,000? They'll say, well, John Wimber did it. Okay.

Today there are many, many versions of the Bible. My son David says there are 10 versions. Five are wise and five are foolish.

You know, the Bible says do things decently in order. Don't see anybody decent around here. So why should I wear a tie? So now you can tell people you were there when I got rid of my bondage.

Well, I'm going to read a scripture from the NIV version. Just a minute, just a minute. The NIV is the never improved King James.

So now I got you. I'm like the old lady in England. She said it was good enough for the apostle Paul.

So it's good enough for me. Okay. The prophet Isaiah chapter six.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims. Each one had six wings.

With train or with two, he covered his face. With two, he covered his feet. And with two, did he fly.

And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that spoke.

And him that cried and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, woe is me for I am undone. For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me with the light cold in his hand, which you take with the tongues from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this has touched thy lips.

Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I. Send me. And he said, go.

There are three simple words. They're very simple. Verses five, seven, and nine.

They're so simple you can remember them even if you've been to college. In verse five, the word woe. In verse seven, the word lo.

And in verse nine, the word go. The first is a word of a man. The second is the word of a seraphim.

And the third is the word of God. The first is a word of confession. Woe is me.

The second is a word of cleansing. Lo, this has touched thy lips. And the third is a word of commission.

Go. I must tell you college people something else. If you have a notebook, put it down.

If not, get the tape. Because I want to tell you there are 66 books in the Bible. Did you get that? There are also 66 chapters in Isaiah.

The Old Testament has 39 books, so that's the main division in the scripture. The first 39 chapters in Isaiah divide the book. In chapters 1 to 39, there are no less than 12 references to the holiness of God.

Then from the 40th chapter to 66, there are 17 references to the holiness of God. This scripture is very carefully dated for us. In the year that King Uzziah died, Esau saw the Lord.

I don't know, but many of the scholars tell us that Isaiah and Uzziah were very close friends, and that Isaiah was a kind of aristocrat in his generation. But there's a crisis in his life. In the year that King Uzziah died, he saw the Lord.

The one obstruction to him seeing the Lord was his closest friend. The closest business partner was his chief blockage, if you like, for him seeing the King in his beauty. If you want to get a slight rundown on the life of Uzziah, we find it here in the 26th chapter of the second book of Chronicles.

I'll just skip through it very quickly here. Two Chronicles, chapter 26 and verse 1. Then the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was 15 years old, and made him king in the womb of his father. Now that's very interesting, isn't it? I mean, what's your 15-year-old doing, apart from collecting baseball cards? Here is a man at 15 years, a boy at 15 years of age, who has to take command of a great nation, a very, very powerful nation.

I guess in our day, we call this boy a whiz kid, because everything he did was, he turned to prosperity. He took over the economy, and it began to blossom as it had never blossomed before. He took over agriculture, and that came to its greatest peak in the period when he was in authority.

Then he went and took over the military, and we have a description here of the army. Let's read verse 5 here. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

Verse 7 says, God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gilbeyah. Verse 8 says, the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah, and his name spread abroad even to the entering of Egypt. Verse 10 tells us how he digged towers, irrigated the country, made everything that he touched just come to perfection in due course.

In verse 12 it says, the number of the chiefs of the fathers of the mighty men of valor were 2,600. In the next verse, it gives you the number of people, 207,000 that were fighting for him. Verse 15, he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men to be put on the towers, otherwise there were huge catapults, and they hurled great big rocks and crushed the wooden walls of the cities that they attacked.

So everything on every level is getting on fine. But then something happened. He made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones with all.

And his name spread far abroad, for he was marvelously held until he was strong. But when he became strong, his heart lifted up to destruction. You know, many more people can stand adversity than can stand prosperity.

Everything this man has, his towers, are fabulous. His name is known to the dead known world as a genius. On every level he's never fallen flat on his face.

It seems like the scripture, everything that he doeth shall prosper. But then suddenly a little thing came into his heart, a thing that we call pride and self-confidence. And when God, when man comes in like that, God goes out.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to destruction. He transgressed against the Lord his God. And he said, look, I took over the economy, I took over education, I took over the army, I took over everything, and so I'm the man you need.

I'm the man in authority, and I'm going to take over the ministry. He knew very well the dangers about that. And it says in his verse 16, his soul was lifted up to destruction.

He transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the temple and the Lord to burn incense on the altar. Now look at this, Azariah, the priest, went in after him with four score priests, 81 people, 81 strong men tried to stop him. In my opinion, this man's demon possessed.

How can he fight single-handedly 81 men that are going to stop him from getting to the altar? But that demon power in him overcame and he went forward and he started doing the job. And Azariah, the priest, went in after him and with him four score priests of the Lord who were valiant men. And they tried to restrain him.

Then verse 19 says, Uzziah was wroth. He had a scent in his hand to burn incense. And while he was wroth, the priests' leprosy covered him, overcame him, and so he was defiled.

There's a very fascinating part of history. One of the great Caesars, we have a city in England where the Caesars are in models, Julius Caesar, Tiberius Caesar, all the other Caesars there in the town. And the most, the best known, I suppose, is Julius Caesar.

Well, when Julius Caesar was in his prime, he had a man by the name of Pompey who was a superior general and they became very contentious and envious of each other. And so the best thing that Julius Caesar could do was ship this man to a far country. And that happened to be the other end of Mediterranean.

And so he sent this fellow Pompey there. And when he arrived, Pompey arrived true to his name, pompously. Soldiers got off their boats.

They had wonderful horses with saddlecloths. You know, you see the old style in England where the saddlecloths come down to their knees, these beautiful horses. And the soldiers had helmets and everything stunned them.

They took him around the town to show him what Jerusalem was. They pointed various historic places to him. Then finally he said, what's that building? Oh, they said, you can't go near that.

You're regarded as a heathen. He said, no, I'm one of the most powerful men in the world. No, you can't go near to it.

Why not? Because God is there. God? We've hundreds of gods in Rome. What God is this? Name that God.

And they told him it was Jehovah God. He made heaven and earth. He hung the stars in the sky.

He put the light there. He governs everything. This is the God, Lord, God Almighty.

As we would say, God immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light, inaccessible, hid from our eyes. This man was furious. I have a right to go in there.

You can't go in there. Well, he said, tomorrow afternoon I shall enter that temple. And they said, you won't.

So he came down Main Street there in all his panoply and all his soldiers, behind him 2,000 people. And Caesar, this fellow was actually going, Pompey was going to the temple. And people made a barrier, but they were crushed down by the horses.

And they said, you can't go in there. That's dangerous. God is there.

Do you know it's dangerous here tonight because God is here? Do you know God's going to plunder this place tonight? Do you know this one meeting is going to reach the ends of the earth? People say to me sometimes, Rainhill, you've wasted your time. I prayed for revival 66 years. You're wasting your time.

God's finished with our generation. America's had more lights than a nation in the world. She has more Bible schools.

She has more printing presses. She has more broadcasts every day. God's through.

My rebuttal to that is this. And I say with some anger, I say, listen, when I was a boy in years back, even before that, the population of the world was 5 million. That's at the time when most of the great missionary societies were launched, when the world was a family of only 5 million people and God loved it.

Are you telling me that God doesn't love the world now it's 5 billion people? The situation is a thousand times more difficult, a thousand times more challenging. I don't know when this army of, what do you call it now, Joel's army is going to start, but I'll tell you what, remember it's an army. It's not a picnic.

It's not a tea party. It's a warfare. I believe we're going to move into a situation that's never been known in the history of the world, but God's going to raise up his men.

This man goes barging into the temple and he refused to be driven back. But when he got there, he was spinned by leprosy. He came as doctor, I was going to say Dr. Chaucer.

Dr. Criswell is one of the great old guys. He's like me, he's pretty old and so he's very good. And he has a little paperback book on the prophecy of Isaiah, which I think is very beautiful.

And I looked it up on this chapter and he says, here is this arrogant man coming. I have military power. I have money.

I have the Roman empire behind me. Who is God? I'll show you what I can do. Again as he goes in, they stand against him.

He comes sweeping through the outside part of the temple. There's a very brilliant young man here, knows all the Jewish traditions and whatnot. I'll check with you after Mike.

If I'm wrong, don't say anything. So as a good old doctor says, this panoply, this great display of power that had never been seen in that part of the world. They'd never seen men with breastplates and plumes.

They'd never seen men on horseback. They'd never seen all this panoply and they stood aghast to see coming down the street, moving towards the sacred place. And then he says, Pompey came through the outer court of the Gentiles.

Then he came to the court of Israel. Then he came to the court of women. And then he came, as he says, to the courts of priests.

He came to the division in the temple. What's the first place? The holy place. Went a bit further, broke his way through there.

Came to the holy of holies with a curtain. How thick was it? Six inches? Something like that. And there's that tremendous curtain.

I don't see anything different here. These different courts mean nothing to me. No.

God is behind that shield of a curtain. The holy one. Elsewhere, you remember, he's called a high and lofty one who inhabits eternity.

And this arrogant man says, I don't care. There's nothing sacred to me. I'm going in there.

I've come all this way and I must see your God. You can't go in. He dwells in light.

If you step into his presence, you'll go blind with the kind of glory. If you get in there, you'll be the most uncomfortable you've ever been in your life. The majesty of God is there.

But he still persisted and he went in. He comes through the outer court. There was nothing.

The Gentile court. Israel's court and whatnot. Now he comes up against this barrier.

Just one great big curtain. And behind it, God almighty lives. So finally, he told men, you take your swords and cut through there.

I'm going in. And they pulled the curtain on one side and it was pitch dark. And he burst into anger.

He screamed, you lied to me. You told me it was blinding light and it's darkness. You told me a living God is there.

There's nobody there. You liars. Your gods have no more power than my God.

I translate that this way. We went to a church a few years ago to preach. We told the big shots came over from England.

And the church was 35 acres of land. There were tennis courts and I don't know what kind of courts were there. And I visualized, instead of this brilliant young military man coming here into the temple of old, some young people in America come.

They come to the outside. They pass the tennis courts and everything. And finally, they come into the temple and they say, where is your God? Is that what people are asking today? Where is the Lord God Elijah? The prayer meetings this week have been terrible.

The first week, I thought they were good. The second week, they got better. But this week, there's been despair.

I believe this meeting is historic. There's never been a prayer meeting in American history like this. There have never been millions of prayer.

Never been tens of thousands of people fasting in different parts of the world for this week. It's too late to delay any longer. We've waited too long.

We need to see the salvation of our God. People have been crying all that thou wouldst render heavens. Last Friday morning, we had a prayer meeting.

There were two women there. One prayed. And I thought, I would like to pray after that.

The majesty of God was there. I would like to pray. Another woman prayed after that.

And it was terrible to listen to. I went home. I said to Martha, I haven't heard praying like this since the revivals in 1930.

That's 60 years ago. What is God birthing? Then we went to the prayer meeting at the end of the day. Friday night, we weren't trying to beat the clock, but we prayed till almost midnight.

I think it was Friday night, was it? And suddenly a man about half past 11 stood up. I've never heard a man in 50 years with holy anger. He was just blasting the powers of the devil.

Why is the devil running loose in America? Why are our girls, before they get to women, the girls giving birth to girls? Why are boys captivated by lust and drink? And so he went on, and there was a holy anger there. I fully expected a flash of lightning from eternity. You see, there's this consuming desire.

Let me tell you nakedly, because I'm a bit of a rough boy. Vicious, my friend says, so I have to live up to my reputation tonight. The first week, one young man said this, oh God, if this thing that we have is Christianity, it's a pitiable thing.

After saying that, after Gethsemane, after Jesus gone to hell and back, as it were, after he shattered death and brought life and immortality to life and delegated to us, not to seraphims and cherubims, but he's delegated to us authority over all the power of the enemy. I don't care what disease or diabolical disorder the mind has, Jesus Christ conquered it. Whatever was brought into the world by the first Adam was answered by the last Adam.

There wasn't a second Adam. If there was a second Adam, he could have a third and a fourth. But the last Adam did the job.

I tell you the moment that Jesus rose from the dead, there was panic in hell. I like to think, thank you, now follow your father. You know that the greatest, one of the greatest operas, I call them uproars, that was ever presented, but was, was it Verdi's Aida? And he celebrated in the great theater, the La Scala, in Milan, Italy.

When he finished, the character, you know, that's dead, laid out, and he was supposed to be dead, the whole place went shrieking mad. They shouted, they whistled, they clapped. At 11 o'clock at night, they were still there at one, they were still there at two, they were still there at three, they were still there at four, shouting Verdi, Verdi, Verdi.

You know, the most awful thing in America tonight is not sin. As we think of it, drunkenness and abortion. I believe the greatest hindrance in the world tonight is unbelief.

We do not believe God. And that's what he asked of us. The disciples didn't believe the Lord Jesus Christ.

If they believed him, they'd have been lining up at the, at the tomb. But they weren't lining up at the tomb. They were far, far away.

I think the most amazing thing and disgusting thing in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ was that morning, when he woke up from the resurrection, there wasn't a single person there to meet him. He told them over and over again, I'm going to rise from the dead. But they just ignored him.

But he rose. And I believe it was then that Psalm 45 was shouted by millions of angels in heaven. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, for the King of glory shall come in.

We have to recapture the majesty of Jesus Christ. I quoted this morning in the early prayer meeting, John Wesley, Charles Wesley said, oh, for a trumpet voice and all the world to call. But then he followed that by saying, my heart is full of Christ, and longs this glorious message to declare.

He didn't say, my head's full of theology. Over and over again in his wonderful diary, John Wesley says, I went to London, or I went to Birmingham, or I went to Manchester, and I offered men Christ. He didn't offer them forgiveness.

He didn't offer them pardon. He didn't offer them peace. He didn't offer them wealth.

He said, I offer you Christ. Christ is entirety as your Lord and your master to direct and control your life. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We're stacked up with theology today. But where is the living Christ? I fully expect this place to rock in the power of God this week. Now let's go back a minute here to Isaiah chapter six.

I call him Isaiah, or whatever you want to call him. Isaiah, good English. In a year that continues out, let's take these divisions which are automatic.

In verse five, the word wall. In verse seven, the word low. And in verse nine, the word go.

The first is a word of a man. The second is a word of confession. And the third is a word of cleansing.

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