

God's Standard of Values

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the intrinsic value of small things from God's perspective, contrasting it with human standards of greatness.

Duration: 28:55

Scripture: Haggai 2:3, Zechariah 4:10, Malachi 3:16-17

Topics: "Values"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on Christ in everything we do. He mentions the slogan 'Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God,' and explains that it signifies God's attention and involvement in our lives. The speaker refers to the book of remembrance in which God records the names of those who fear Him and have a vision for His purposes. He also highlights the prophecies of Zechariah and their connection to the Lord Jesus, emphasizing the eternal significance of His kingdom.

Transcript

The prophecies of Zechariah, prophecies of Zechariah chapter four, first part of verse 10. For who hath despised the day of small things? Prophecies of Haggai chapter two, verse three. Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing yet? And the prophecies of Malachi chapter three, verses 16 and 17.

Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another. The Lord hearkened and heard. The book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that caught upon his name.

They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, even mine own possession in the day that I make. And I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Who hath despised the day of small things? This is among many matters which it is very necessary for us to have made clear in our hearts and in our minds to have our mentality adjusted just as a ship after a long voyage spend some time in having its compass adjusted because of interferences and variations.

So it is with us on our way it does become necessary from time to time to stop and think again get our minds corrected and to be free from those influences that upset the balance and the poise and the right appreciation. This matter then of greatness and smallness is an important matter. A good deal of confusion about this and that confusion can result in our missing the way entirely being found in an

altogether false position.

We need to know what we mean by greatness and what we mean by smallness. It's quite evident from the scriptures which we have read that a certain kind of appraisal a certain kind of observation resulted in a false judgment which brought the people perilously near to calamity. The Lord reading their hearts used this word as to their attitude and their reactions despised despised the day of small things and if you look carefully into these prophecies you will see that from God's standpoint it wasn't as small as they thought.

An altogether different point of view about the matter. You see we have a way of confusing bigness with greatness and they are two entirely different things. Bigness may be in outward dimensions and bulk and the impression that a thing makes upon your senses.

Greatness may have none of those characteristics at all. You may not even be able to take its measure or see any measure in it from human standpoints and in God's sight it may be very great. There's a lot of difference between bigness and greatness from God's standpoint.

Just as there is a great deal of difference between littleness and smallness. I know that's going to give our friends who are not familiar with the English language a good deal of trouble. You know you can be a little person.

Things can be so little, so petty, so paltry, so mean, so despicable. Little but they can be quite small and of tremendous value. You would sooner have an ounce of gold than a ton of iron.

In intrinsic value. Some of you may have read the life story of Madame Curie, the discoverer of radium. You have, you remember, the tons and tons and tons of by-products from the guestworks unloaded in her backyard.

Working upon this mountain of stuff and out of it the smallest particle of radium. There's your comparison. Big and great.

In that almost imperceptible speck of radium the immense qualities, values, potentiality, all subtracted from this great mass of stuff. The difference between bigness and greatness isn't there? Well you see what I mean when I say it is so necessary for us to get adjusted in our mentality about things lest we go astray. Smallness we may judge merely in an objective and outward way.

They owe it so small and despise it and yet here this day of small things may be a tremendously potential day. Fear not, little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you. There's something little that is immensely potential and you have only to run your eyes through the bible see again and again what God made of apparently little things that would have been despised and set aside, overlooked, scorned by those who always had this mentality of bigness.

Now look at these passages and you will see that there was something here that was very precious to God although in their natural judgment the people were calling it so small. The last passage which we read on the end of the old testament an end time finds God saying in another translation and version they shall be mine saith the Lord in the day that I do make a peculiar treasure. They that feared the Lord, just that little company who feared the Lord, spake upon his name, fought upon his name, were occupied with him.

Something so precious that our translation doesn't convey how valuable it was to the Lord. You know these two words the Lord hearkened and heard. It's not just a repetition of two words or the same word in

two different forms.

The first word signifies the Lord bent down, inclined. The Lord said here's something to take note of, here's something to which to listen, here's something to hold our attention, God's attention. The Lord inclined, listened.

Her and the picture is the Lord saying here get the book, the great book, the book of life and put this down, put the names of these people in. The book was kept, the book of remembrance. Those that feared the Lord, that fought upon his name, they shall be mine saith the Lord in that day that I do make even a peculiar treasure.

And that was right in this same setting as you know, this section of the bible including Haggai, Zechariah. What was it that made for this greatness over against what people were calling so little and despising as such? What does the Lord look for? Well here it's quite clear, this little company comparatively was a disciplined and chastened company. They had come out of the fires of Babylon, they had been through all the disciplines of those years in exile.

They were of those who had hung their harps upon the willows. He said how can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? Songs of Zion. See where their hearts were? And then the day came when the proclamation was made you can go back, you can all go back to Zion.

The vast majority decided that their position was a very much more comfortable one than it would be back there in Zion and decided to stay. And this little company with all the hardships, the difficulties, the sufferings, the toil and much more involved in going back went back because their hearts were in Zion and Zion was in their heart. See the heart relationship to the Lord and to that which is dearest to his heart.

So they were always thinking upon his name, talking together about his interest. They're a little company comparatively, a despised people. I expect all those who stayed behind thought they were fools.

Well be it so, what did the Lord think? That was the matter. That was the point. And this is what the Lord thought.

A chastened, a disciplined people whose hearts were for the Lord. Small, if you like, read the prophecies of Jeremiah. What a book that is.

Oh, what a time it takes and what patience it takes to work your way through the whole of Jeremiah's prophecies. What a big book. And what little books these are.

Malachi and Haggai. We call them the minor prophets. But what have you got for the Lord in Jeremiah? A major prophet, if you like, but there's nothing for the Lord in it.

Little minor prophets about something very precious to the Lord. The discipline has taken place. The chastening has been carried out.

The heart has been searched. The Lord has got something. You say small.

Oh no, not in the eyes of the Lord. Something very great. That is what is precious to the Lord.

That is what he is looking for. And that is what he calls great. Though looking at it with natural eyes and the eyes of man always judging by outward size and appearance made this time.

From the Lord's standpoint there's much intrinsic value and with him everything is a matter of intrinsic value, not bulk. For Jesus has put his finger upon that principle in another connection. If the salt has lost its salt, what's the good of it? Bulk.

Tons of it. It's useless. You'd better throw it out in the street.

It's useless. A teaspoonful of salt with its savor in it is of more value than tons of savorless salt. It's intrinsic value.

It's a divine element. The sting of God. The vital quality.

And unto that there has to be suffering. There has to be chastening. There has to be discipline.

The heart has to be searched. The work has to go very deep. A people in line with God's abiding intention.

God was there in figure, in type, in the temple, represented. God's heavenly and abiding age-long thought. The place of his dwelling amongst his people.

It's an eternal thought. All the world was, that was in God's mind, to dwell with men. All the way through the Bible is just that.

God's with us. Right on to the end of the Bible is the tabernacle of God is with men. He should dwell with them and be their God.

God's everlasting thought concerning his house, his dwelling place in the midst of his people. There's the figure. There's the type.

We know the reality. Spiritual reality. And here are people in line with God's thought.

In Babylon, God's thought did not obtain at all. That was not his place. Here it is.

And the Lord always calls that spiritually great. When you are wholly centered upon the thing that he has ever had in mind. A people right in line with God's eternal thought.

A people right in touch with himself as to what it is that he ever desires to have. He's got that. Let that people be small from outward standards and despised by men of distorted judgment.

God says that's great. Don't you despise them. Who has despised? Who has despised the day of small things? It's a rebuke that's in that interrogation.

It's a correction. Pause and adjust your judgment, your standards. A people still still with the vision in their hearts of what God intended and would have.

May have been discouraged, greatly disheartened, perplexed about it all as to the possibility of it, and very, very tried as to the realization of it. Nevertheless, it was in their hearts. They wept.

Look at the context. They wept over the situation. They were distressed that what was was so much less than what they knew the Lord wanted.

A troubled people about this. And their perplexity and their distress even led them sometimes to drop their hands in despair. And for the time being suspend operations.

Plenty there as a ground for discouragement. Plenty there to give point to saying it's hopeless. But you know you never feel hopeless if you've never had hope.

A person who's never known what hope is doesn't know what hopelessness is. They're just dead things. These people were troubled, heartbroken, distressed, and even if they did despair for a time and say it's no use, no use, that was simply because they were in their hearts troubled about it.

If you like disappointed, and you cannot be disappointed unless you've had a kind of appointment. Simply there deep in their hearts was the vision. And they were suffering in relation to the vision.

And that's what God is looking for. People who in their hearts through all trial and testing still have the vision of what God is after. And are suffering in their hearts concerning it.

That's something precious. He writes upon that. He says we take note of that.

Put that down in the book. Don't let that be forgotten. Have that in remembrance.

It's going to come up in the day that I make. I'll have that then. So we must revise, must we not.

And get away from these temporal ways of viewing things to the eternal standards and standpoints. Yes. For all this leads us to what? To the Lord Jesus.

To the Lord Jesus. Here in this very fourth chapter of the prophecies of Zechariah has a recurrence in the book of the revelation. The two olive trees standing before the Lord of all the earth.

You know where they comes in the book of the revelation. Something here of eternal significance. Lord Jesus is brought into view in these prophecies.

It's here in Haggai that the prophecy is first uttered yet once again. And I will shake the heavens and the earth. And the desire of all nations shall come.

That's quoted in the letter to the Hebrews isn't it. The things which can be shaken. The temporal things.

The big things according to man's mind. They'll be shaken to their foundations. But the things which cannot be shaken shall stand.

And you know that the letter to the Hebrews is all centered upon the Lord Jesus. And his heavenly kingdom. Receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken.

That comes out of Haggai. As for Malachi. Why Malachi dwells much upon the Lord Jesus.

The messenger of the covenant. And his forerunner. Malachi the last book of the bible of the old testament introduces the Lord Jesus in a very real way.

It's all focused upon him. And you know that when God sees things focused upon his son. He's all alert and alive.

Listening and watching and recording. It amounts to this. Value from God's standpoint is always a matter of how much of his son is in effect.

Wasn't much of Christ in the major prophets as they looked on toward the captivity. Anything of Christ in the major prophets look beyond the captivity. And these minor prophets are beyond the captivity.

Or these end prophets are beyond the captivity. And Christ is in full view. And God is all alive again.

About this matter. So we sum it all up by saying the test of everything is how much it represents Christ. How much of Christ is there.

Not how big and impressive it is from man's standpoint. Let us get our balance again. Of course God is a great God.

And we expect a great God to do great things. A slogan was introduced with the great Edinburgh missionary conference in 1910. Attempt great things for God.

Expect great things from God. Yes. All right.

All right. But be sure you know what greatness is from God's standpoint. And that you are not confusing greatness with bigness.

Intrinsic value with outward bulk. See what the Lord is after. The values of his son.

They are the eternal. Who hath despised the day of small things. But these seven shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.

And from that point you're moving on the positive line.

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