

Seeing the Lord and Seeing Ourselves

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeing the Lord to recognize our true spiritual condition and fulfill God's purpose for a remnant people.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 26:1, 2 Chronicles 26:16, Isaiah 6:1-53, Matthew 16:24, Romans 6:6, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Spiritual Pride", "Humility Before God"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks delves into the story of King Uzziah, highlighting his rise to power at a young age, his initial righteousness, and his downfall due to pride and self-sufficiency. The narrative of Uzziah serves as a mirror to reveal the spiritual condition of Israel and its prophets, emphasizing the pervasive leprosy of self-life that hinders God's work. Through the prophet Isaiah's vision of the Lord, we are confronted with our own uncleanness and inadequacy, leading to a deep sense of unworthiness and the need for a death to self in order to align with God's purposes.

Transcript

And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his father. Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name also was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper (2 Chron. 26:1-5).

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God. Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from

thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

So Uzziah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the field of burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead (2 Chron. 26:23).

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 it 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 shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because 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, Jehovah of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and they sin forgiven. And 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. And He said, 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 (Isa. 6:1-10).

This is a very impressive and striking story, and it circles round the matter which has been brought before us at this time, namely, that of spiritual sight. "I saw the Lord"; "mine eyes have seen..."; and everything gathers around that.

What arises from the whole incident is this, that king Uzziah was spiritually and morally a representation of Israel, and of Israel's prophets to a large extent. That is the significance of the double statement by Isaiah the prophet - I am a man of unclean lips, and I am your prophet; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And that, as is very clear, connects with Uzziah; for you know that a leper had to put a cloth upon his upper lip and go about crying, Unclean! The significance of the words: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" is just that: we are all lepers. Isaiah is saying, in effect, What was true of Uzziah is true of us all, prophet and people. You do not realise it, and I did not realise it until I saw the Lord. We were all terribly, deeply, impressed with what happened in the case of Uzziah: we have been living in an atmosphere charged with the awfulness of that thing, we have been speaking under our breath about it, saying what a terrible thing it was, what an evil thing Uzziah did, and how awful that our king should turn out to be like that, and have an end like that, what a horrible thing leprosy is; and we have been speaking hard things about Uzziah and thinking many thoughts, how grievous his case was, but I have come to see that we are all in the same case. I, who have been preaching to you (do not forget that five chapters of prophecy have preceded this sixth chapter of Isaiah, this is not the commencement of a preacher's life, but somewhere in his life when he wakes up by a new revelation), I who have been preaching and prophesying, I have come to see that I am no better than Uzziah. You people, going on with your round of religious rites and ceremonies, you attending the temple, you, offering the sacrifices, you, using your lips in worship, you are in the same case as Uzziah: we are all lepers. You may not realise it, but I have come to see. And how have I come to see? I have seen the Lord! "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." "I saw the Lord... high and lifted up." I say this is very

impressive when you think about it.

Well, what are we going to make of it? Perhaps we would do well just to steal away and be quiet with that a little while, just think it out.

Let us dismiss one thing immediately. It is a popular idea which somehow has sprung up, and by which most of us have been caught, that it was this vision that made Isaiah a prophet or preacher. We have heard that, perhaps we have said that. Oh no! Why, if the Book is inspired and governed by God, should it come long after he had been prophesying so much? Look at those five chapters of prophecies. What tremendous things are in those chapters. No, it was not this that was making him the prophet, the preacher. God was dealing with a man, not a prophet; God was dealing with a people, not with an office. He is getting down to what we are in His own sight. So we cannot just transfer it to a class of people called prophets or preachers, and feel that some of us are not involved because we are not in that class, we are just ordinary simple folk who do not aspire to be prophets and preachers. It is not that. The Lord is getting down to people here and seeking to make clear to them how He views them in themselves, even though they may have been preaching a lot; what they are, after all, in His sight, in themselves. Sooner or later that reality has to break upon us to safeguard everything and to secure His end.

What God Is Seeking

What is God after? If you can see, if you can have your eyes opened to see what God is after, then you will understand His method, and why He employs this method. Chapter 5 makes clear what God is after; He is after a people who satisfy His own heart. It is called a remnant. It is called that simply because such a people will be but a remnant. He knows quite well that the whole people will not conform to His thought. He has foreseen that history of His people right up to the days of the coming of His Son, and what this very people will do with His Son. He knows their hearts. That is why He tells Isaiah those terrible things that he is to do: make this people's heart fat, close their ears and their eyes. He knows.

But nevertheless, there will be those who will respond. They will be but a remnant, and that remnant is mentioned specifically at the end of Chapter 6 in these words - And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

In the stock that has been felled - and you notice what precedes is the felling of the tree; Israel would be felled by the nations whom God is going to call to cut down Israel, to use as His instruments of judgment, and they would fell this tree of Israel, but the stock will remain - and in the stock, there will be a tenth, there will be a remnant, a holy seed in the stock when the whole tree has been dealt with. God is after a company, even out from the whole general company of His people, who will satisfy His heart, and to secure that remnant He lays hold of Isaiah and deals with him in this way, and gives him this vision. Beloved, in order that God should get His end, we have to be thoroughly disillusioned and have our eyes opened to see very clearly what we are in ourselves in the sight of God. Terrible revelation! Anything which is a suspicion or a suggestion of self-satisfaction, self-complacency, of having attained or being satisfied with our present condition, will disqualify from being in the remnant or in any way instrumental toward God's end, God's purpose.

So, after this man had set out to speak of the wide ranges of the sovereign judgments of God in the first five chapters of Isaiah, suddenly it seems God arrests him. There is a crisis in his own life and in his own ministry. God takes him to the depths of an eye-opening as to what he is, and what the people are, in His

sight. He and they who had judged and condemned, and spoken those words with bated breath about the terrible thing that had happened to Uzziah, were shown to be just as bad; there was no difference. In God's sight, they were all with the cloth upon their upper lips, called upon to cry, Unclean, unclean!

The Leprosy Of The Self-Life

And what was this leprosy? Oh, we say, of course, sin. Yes, sin; but what is this? Let us have a look at Uzziah and see what leprosy meant, what leprosy represented or betokened in the case of Uzziah. "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done", and while he walked in the ways of the Lord, the Lord made him to prosper. A man blessed of the Lord, walking in the light of the Lord and knowing the Lord's favour, and, alongside, that deeply rooted thing which is in every man's heart, always ready to rise up and turn the very blessings of God to his own account, to make a name for himself, to get a position for himself, to bring himself aggrandizement and glory and power and influence and satisfaction, to give him a reputation and a position. That is it. What is leprosy? What is this thing which is an abomination to God? It is just that self-life which is in us all, which is ever even coming into the things of God and seeking to make them of personal advantage and account. The Lord blesses, and we become somebody in our own secret hearts because the Lord has blessed. We forget that the very blessings that have come to us have come through grace and the mercy of God, and secretly we begin to think there must be something in us to account for it. It is our ability, our cleverness, something in ourselves. We begin to speak about our blessing, our successes. Oh, it is that thing down there, the leprous germ in us all, the self-life in its manifold ways which produces pride, even spiritual pride, and causes us, like Uzziah, to press in to holy things in self-energy, self-strength, self-assertion, self-sufficiency. Yes, the leprosy is the root of self, selfhood, however it may express itself.

Therein - and it is another branch of things for which we have no time now - therein lies the peril of blessing and prosperity. Oh, how necessary it is for us to be crucified in the midst of our blessings! How necessary it is for God to make safe His blessing of us by continually showing us ourselves, and that it is all of grace, and that if He has given us any kind of blessing, any kind of success, any kind of prosperity at all, it is not because there is something in us in His sight, whatever men may think. Whatever we may be among men, in God's sight we are no better than lepers, and what matters is not how we get on amongst men, but how we get on with God. We might arrive at some very high eminence in this world, but whether we arrive with God or not is the thing that matters.

Now perhaps this goes past most of us, because we are not all too conscious of having been blessed and prospered and having much to boast about. Most of us know the opposite, a good deal of emptying and humiliating. But let us get to the heart of this thing. Even down there in the depths there is a craving in us which is a self-craving, there is a revolt which is the revolt of this self-life. Well, Uzziah is brought to light here in order to show that that is the thing in people and prophet which makes it impossible for God to reach His end; and it has to be dealt with, exposed; it cannot be overlooked; it must be dragged out, and we must see.

The Attainment Of God's Object - The Fruit Of Seeing The Lord

And so I just come at once and directly to this point, which is that God should get the end upon which His heart is set, a people, though it be but a tenth, a remnant, a people answering to His own heart-desire and satisfying Him in the full purpose of His will. For Him to get that, there must be a seeing, and one thing to be seen, which will do all the rest, is the Lord; and to see the Lord, as this makes so clear, is to see

holiness; and when we see holiness we see leprosy where we never suspected it, in ourselves or in others. When we have seen the Lord, we see the true state of things in ourselves and in those around us, even of the Lord's people. To see the Lord is the need, in order that we should be in the way of that end toward which He is pressing.

"I saw the Lord"; "mine eyes have seen". What is the result? Well, it is revealing of ourselves to ourselves, and it is a revealing of the spiritual state around us. When we have seen the Lord, we cry, I am undone! If you look at that word "undone," you will find that it just means this (but this it does mean), I am worthy of death. That is exactly the meaning of the Hebrew word there - worthy of death, I am worthy of death! You and I will see the need for union with Christ in death if our eyes are open to see the Lord; to see that there is nothing else for it, it is the only way.

Now, this is not just language, these are not just words and ideas. What I want us to see is this, for one thing, that the work of the Spirit of God in us, by which our eyes are opened to see the Lord, will result in our feeling that the only thing for us is to die, the best thing for us is to die, to come to an end. Have you got there? Of course, Satan will play on that ground, as indeed he has with many people, trying to drive them to make an end of everything, to work upon something that the Spirit of God is doing and turn it to his own account and create a tragedy. Let us keep in the spiritual realm, and recognise that the Lord will work in us for His own glory and for glorious possibilities, by bringing us to the place where we feel deeply and terribly that the best thing for us is to die. Then He has got us in agreement with His own mind about us. I am undone! - and the Lord might well have said, And so you are: I have known it all the time, I have had difficulty in making you know it; you are undone.

Well, now, when you come to that place, you have come to the place where we can start. While we are there, pressing in all the time, occupying the place like Uzziah, coming into the temple, into the house, into the sanctuary; busy, active; we in ourselves, what we are; while we are filling the temple, the Lord is not able to do anything. He says, Look here, you will have to go out, and you will have to come to the place where you hasten of your own accord to go out because you see you are a leper. That is put in there about Uzziah. "Yea, himself also hastened to go out". At last he realises that this is no place for him. When the Lord has got us to that place - I am undone, this is no place for me! - then He can start on the positive side, He has the way open. This seeing is a terrible thing, and yet it is a very necessary thing, and in the outcome it is a very glorious thing. The commission came then.

The Reason For The Necessary Experience

I will just add this one thing. Do you see how necessary it was that a thing like that should happen with Isaiah? What was he going to do? Was he going to preach a great revival? Was he going out to tell the people, Everything is all right, the Lord is going to do great things: cheer up, there is a great day just about to dawn? No! God, make this people's heart fat, close their ears, shut their eyes! This is not a very joyful kind of work. What does it amount to? Well you see, the Lord knew the state of the people's hearts. He knows quite well that they do not want to see in reality. In reality they do not want to see. If they wanted to see, oh, they would be taking different attitudes altogether. They would be free of all prejudices, all suspicions, all criticisms; they would be reaching out and inquiring; they would be showing their signs of hunger and longing; they would be investigating, and they would not be readily put off by other peoples' judgments and criticisms. But He knew that in their heart they did not want to see, they really did not want to hear, whatever they might say about it; and this prophet will say later on, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. 53:1). The Lord knew, and judgment always comes along the line of a people's heart. If you

do not want, you will lose the capacity for wanting. If you do not want to see, you will lose the capacity for seeing. If you do not want to hear, you will lose the capacity for hearing. Judgment is organic, it is not mechanical. It comes along the line of our life. You sow a seed of inclination or disinclination and you will reap a harvest of inability, and one effect of a ministry of revelation is to draw out the people's inclination or disinclination unto their own judgment, and you will find that a ministry of revelation and life only makes some people harder. The Lord knows it is there.

Now, to go on with a ministry like that is not a very comfortable thing. You have to be a crucified man to do that, you have to have no personal interest. If you are out for a reputation, for popularity, for success, for a following, then it is best not to go this way, not to see too much, best not to have insight into things; better put blinkers on and be an incorrigible optimist. If you are going the way of the Lord's purpose, of a people who really do answer to His thought, it is going to be a way which is cut clean through the mass who will not have it, and who let you know they will not have it, and you go a lonely way. They may think they have a case, but the fact is that they are not hungry and desperate enough even to investigate, to inquire at first hand. They are easily turned aside by the slightest criticism of you, or of your position, of your ministry, and you have to go on with the few, the handful who are going on. It is the price of vision, the price of seeing. Isaiah had to be a crucified man in order to fulfil a ministry like that, and in order for you and me to occupy a position with God, we have to be crucified to that which was in Uzziah, a craving for position. Not satisfied with kingship, he must have priesthood. Nay, more than that, not satisfied with the blessing of God, he must have the very place of God. What a contrast is this! - on the one hand, king Uzziah; on the other, "mine eyes have seen the King."

Can you follow this? It is searching, it is tremendous, but oh, beloved, it is the way of the full desire and thought of the Lord. It is a lonely and costly way, and the effect is really to bring out what God sees in the heart of His people, and in order to do that - which is going to mean that we suffer for our revelation, for our vision, for seeing; we have to pay a great price for it - in order to do that, we have to be well crucified, to come to the place where we say, Well, I am undone, I am deserving of death; there is nothing for it but that I should pass out! The Lord says, That is all right, that is what I want - for you to pass out; I wanted Uzziah to pass out: then I could fill the temple! Uzziah is self, it is man as he is, and God does not co-occupy His house with man, He must fill it.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/seeing-the-lord-and-seeing-ourselves/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net