

## The Herald's Qualification.

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"Send Me." Isaiah 6:8.

I remember once, during a day of tempest, hearing the song of a bird. The little warbler had taken refuge among the thick foliage; and in the momentary hush between the peals of thunder, sent forth his voice, which in contrast with the harsh sounds that preceded it, seemed to vibrate with singular sweetness. And, I am reminded of this, whenever I come to this book of Isaiah. Here the whole horizon of Truth is black with the storm-cloud of impending judgment. Heaven and earth stand in awe-stricken audience while with uplifted hand Jehovah impeaches His people for their unfaithfulness. "Hear, O heavens and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken." Then, as in mute despair the nation waits the sentence of its doom, one obscure singer (for we know but little of the Prophet Isaiah beyond what is told us in the Word) breaks the silence with a note of hope and promise, ringing out the cheering assurance, that despite their unfaithfulness, God never forsakes His chosen.

The prophecy of Isaiah holds four great facts. First, God's personal interest in His people. Second, His cognizance of their sin. Third, His purpose to help the sinner, and Fourth, that He is ever sending heralds to proclaim that help. To-day, we shall concern ourselves chiefly with the fourth fact—the sending of the heralds. In this connection, the chief thought of the text, seems to be the Herald's Qualification. From the personal experience of the Prophet as revealed in the Vision, we learn what it is that can fit a man to bear the message of the Lord. There are in this experience four things which I wish to notice.

### A VISION OF GOD.

I. It is here that the experience of every God sent worker begins. Each one who claims to be divinely appointed to service in the Kingdom, must be able to write as the first clause of his commission, "I saw the Lord." This is true of every one of God's workers named in the Scripture. The call of Abram was definite and imperative because the Lord appeared to him. The work of Moses as the leader of Israel, really began in the vision of the burning bush. Paul learned his message of help to the Gentiles, from the personal Christ whom he met on the road to Damascus, and John got the Apocalypse from the lips of Him who walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks. And so it must ever be. No man can truly bear the Lord's message unless he has first received it from the Lord.

But notice further, that it was a vision of God in His Kingship. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne!" So every worker must behold the Lord as King. Here as elsewhere in the Bible we are met by the old doctrine of Sovereignty. Man may vainly try to obscure it, for although the tendency of much of our latter day teaching is to pluck the crown from the brow of the Eternal, and put it upon the forehead of poor sinful man, yet if we give up the doctrine of Sovereignty, we must surrender the Truth itself, since the whole system of Divine Revelation centres in the Heavenly King upon His throne. And not only does all the Truth centre here, but all has to do with Christian service. The Lord in His Kingship over souls, has the supreme right to call, to appoint, and qualify for His own work. And thus it is ours to go, not only when he calls, but exactly where we are sent.

This leads to another thought. It was a definite vision. The Prophet was called to a special work. I want to especially emphasize this thought, because there is, to my mind, a great looseness in the teaching of to-day concerning this special call to service. We see this in the modern ideas about the call to the ministry. Why, not long ago I read from a famous American divine, otherwise orthodox, a statement something like this: "The call to preach is the ability to preach so that men will come to hear." Come to hear! Why men will come to hear almost anything in this age. It takes very little to draw a crowd. Let a man stand on a street corner for ten minutes and look at the sky and a crowd will gather to see what he is looking at. So in the public performances of the age, it is often the greatest fool that has the greatest crowd. Brethren, in the ministry we need some greater qualification for our work than the mere ability to draw and amuse the people. We need our souls filled with the vision of the Lord upon His throne commanding us to go and bear his message to lost men.

And this thought applies to the matter of salvation as well as service. The Christian life must have a definite beginning. Our assurance of salvation must have its beginning in the vision of the enthroned Christ, speaking in His Sovereign right the word which none other can speak. "Thy sin is forgiven thee."

But again it is a personal vision. The call is individual. Because service is individual. We who have been under teachers know something of the crowd-spell, if I may use the term, by which the greater personality influences the lesser, and thus leads and moulds it. Thus God deals with men. He touches individual natures with the force of His Own infinite personality, and thus moulds them into His likeness; that they may know His will and do His work.

Still further, it was a humbling vision. The Prophet was humbled by beholding it. So it is by beholding the glory of the Lord that we truly learn the smallness of self. And this is a necessary experience for every worker. We

are apt to think sometimes that we are of great importance in the Kingdom of God. We wonder how our pulpit could be filled, or what would become of our Sunday School class if we should drop out. When thus tempted, let us look up and behold the glory of the Lord. Isaiah saw the Throne surrounded by the Cherubim. He was humbled in beholding the bright beings which the Lord could command in His service. So may we take the lesson. In holy reverence let us stand in the presence of the Lord. With deep humility, let us seek to veil all within us that savours of worldliness and self. Yet let all the wing power of spiritual impulse within us, be held in readiness to do the will of God.

It was an inspiring vision. If the Prophet saw what great beings the Lord had at His service, He beheld likewise, what great forces were with him in the work of the Kingdom. Think of it, my brother, when foes surround your soul till like Elisha's servant at Dothan, you may behold the mountains garrisoned with heavenly chariots sent forth for your deliverance. Think of it in temptation, till like the Saviour in the wilderness, you shall be conscious of angelic ministry. Think of it in the Gethsemane of especial trial, when as human nature struggles with the cross, the air shall become vibrant with the rustle of a shining wing as the Covenant Angel appears to strengthen you.

"They slumber not nor sleep,  
Whom Thou dost send O God of light,  
Around thine own the living night,  
Their watch and ward to keep.

They leave their seats on high,  
They leave their everlasting hymn,  
Where cherubim and seraphim,  
Continually do cry.

"They come to guard the bed,  
Whereon while others wake or weep,  
Thou givest Thy beloved sleep,  
And hover round their head.

"They come to us by day,  
As young or old, through joy or woe,  
Along our daily course we go,  
To guard us on our way."

In concluding this point, let me say, that in the vision, the Cherubim stood above the Throne. Thus we have the thought of the Lord stooping between Cherubim to speak with man. Let us grasp this truth in all its comforting power. God commands the Cherubim, but he stoops to call the man. O the Divine condescension. What an exhibition of love in that call. Shall not each heart to day gladly answer to this pleading of the Lord for workers? Shall we not gladly repond "send me?"

### A VISION OF SELF.

II. The vision of the Lord upon His throne, filled the prophet with penitence. So we cannot behold God without feeling a deep conviction of sin. We cannot see the Lord in His glory without in some measure beholding self in its weakness. As only the light can disclose what is hidden by the darkness, so the glory of God shining into the soul alone can reveal how weak and vile human nature really is.

And it is this revelation that brings the great crisis to every soul. When we behold that vision, we are forced to do one of two things. Either we must turn from God and go into deeper darkness, or we must turn to God and confess our sins and be saved.

This vision is indispensable. We must have that view of God that convicts of sin, before we can enter into the joy and power of the Kingdom life. This thought needs especial emphasis to day, because there seems to be a great many loose ideas on this point. What, to day is to be regarded as the worst tendency of the age? Some would doubtless answer, "Disbelief in a God." No that is not the worst tendency. It is bad, but not the worst. Real disbelief in God is an impossible thing to any rational man. He may affect infidelity, but he cannot wholly rest in it. Divinity has so left its impress on the creature originally made in its Own image, that belief in a God can never be wholly driven out of any human heart. Man must believe, even though he refuses to obey and worship. Others might define the worst tendency of the age, as disbelief in the inspiration of the Bible. Many seem to fear that the old fortifications of Revealed Truth will ultimately fall under the ceaseless cannonade of the Godless scholarship of the age. Personally, I have no such fear. Why brethren, I am no more of infidel criticism upsetting the Bible, than I am that a fish hawk perched on one of the sandhills that bound our coast will upset Prince Edward Island. The bird may build her nest in sound of the wave and hatch her squalling brood, she may dive down into the gulf and catch a few fish, but long after both she and her brood are forgotten, the rock will remain. So infidel science may nest beside the ocean of time, it may dive down and catch a few fools, but long after its champions are buried in endless oblivion, the truth will stand.

What then is the worst tendency of the age? I believe it is the tendency to think lightly of sin. Instead of that dreadful, deadly thing on which the wrath of God perpetually rests, we are apt to regard it much as the keeper of a menagerie might a pet snake, as a creature a trifle dangerous, but safe enough if carefully handled. The true character of sin needs to be emphasized in our preaching to-day as much as ever it was in the past. The great and painful contrast between the old preaching and the new, is that

the new Christian Ethics have largely taken the place of repentance. Such preaching can never make men truly better. It is not so much ideals of conduct that men need, as power to attain them, and that power comes only by repentance and faith in the Crucified One. We start a man wrong, either towards character or heaven, from any other starting point except, the Cross. To preach mere morality to an unsaved soul, is about as sensible, as to go into an orchard in the springtime and hang upon the trees, a beautiful picture of ideal fruit, instead of using the sprayer to kill the insects that sap and poison the crop in its very beginning.

Thus this vision of our own sinful self, is indispensable to us, both in the matter of salvation and service.

### III. A VISION OF HUMAN NEED.

This is ever the worker's inspiration. It was when the prophet saw the need of those that surrounded him, that he cried out, "send me." So today, fellow workers in the kingdom, let us look around us that we may discover the needs of the world.

First, the need of doctrinal teaching. This is an age when false creeds are being multiplied as rapidly as novelties in the show-window of a variety store. The clamor of the masses is for the new creed of no creed at all. The godless of higher criticism not only has a temple in every part of Christendom, but a chair in many of our theological colleges, and hosts of her worshippers are ready to drown out the preaching of the cross, with a revised version of the old cry,—"Great is the new Diana of the latter day Ephesians." And this of all ages, is characterized by a spirit of compromise for the sake of courtesy at the expense of truth. Years ago persecution took the form of a lion, and tried to tear the truth in pieces by brute force. Failing in that, because of the deathless vitality which truth holds, the devil has changed his shape to that of a boa constrictor, which having crushed the truth by the folds of superorganization, is licking it over in a false courtesy, that he may swallow it whole. So one great need of the age is a more definite doctrinal teaching.

Second, the need of better discipline in our churches. This is one of the problems of this age, and one that is too frequently handled with kid gloved diplomacy at the expense of righteousness. So many "wheels within wheels," characterize our social and religious machinery, that when we contemplate discipline, the question ever is, where will the matter stop? Thus we have magnified the gospel doctrine or charity to sinners, into the ungodly creed of charity to sin. For however we may interpret (or rather misinterpret) the word about the wheat and the tares growing together till the harvest, the fact remains that the Lord has given his church a judgment right in matters of faith and practice, and thus obligated her aim to set right all that is wrong in her membership. This lack of discipline is killing spirituality in the church because neither a church nor a Christian can be spiritual that refuses to obey God, and further it is the effectual stumbling block in the way of the unsaved. The Infidel's Bible is an unfaithful church membership. God's children are to be "living epistles known and read of all men," thus it behooves us as churches and individuals, to write a true gospel that the world may not stumble or be led astray. We need more definite church discipline.

Third, the need of evangelization. Looking out today over our home and foreign fields, we see great opportunities for religious work. Our own Dominion is receiving thousands of immigrants from all lands and classes among whom the untaught and unsaved largely predominate. God has given his church in Jesus Christ, the heathen for an inheritance, and we have been so slow in taking possession of this legacy, that God is forcing it upon us by sending the heathen to us. So now we have no option in the matter, but we must care for them and give them the gospel. And let us think too, of the foreign field, from which a thousand Macedonian voices are calling for help and light. Can we, dare we, disregard them? As Britons we are anxious to plant in every land our flag of empire. As a business race, we desire that our commerce extend from ocean to ocean. But as followers of Jesus are we as anxious that all lands shall behold and follow the banner of his cross, and enter with us into the riches of his grace? Let us today look around us and behold this vision of need, let us look upon our enthroned Lord and mark his enquiry, "whom shall I send and who will go for us?" And chiefly let us joyfully make answer, "send me."

### A VISION OF DIVINE HELP.

IV. The hopeless outcry of the Prophet: "I am undone," found its answer in the heavenly fire that touched his lips. Here was a symbol of the worker's sanctification or setting apart to service. And with this anointing came the sending as the pledge of special guidance. So every worker must be qualified by receiving that grace which brings the conscious victory over sin, and that sense of special guidance which alone can inspire him in the Kingdom work.

We hear a great deal to-day about the equipment of workers, and while I will not say that we lay too much stress on the external qualification of God-sent men, I believe that there is a danger of making too little of the spiritual qualification. An engine without steam is the most useless thing in the universe. It may have every part in place, it may be carefully oiled and polished. But without the steam it will rust in pieces on the track. A wheel-