

Being Used By God

Sometimes, it seems we complicate the Christian life. Volumes of books are written on it. Christians run to and fro trying to find out, “What is God’s will for my life?” But the Christian life is really a daily walk with Christ. As we walk hand in hand with Him, the direction of our lives takes shape. As He is using us for His service, the Christian life takes on the gentle simplicity that it is.

But how does God use me? How do I find myself in the centre of God’s will, that He might use me? We are a busy, ‘doing’ people. Too often we are busy, but not busy being used by God. Today we want to look at a Scripture that describes what it means to be used by God. The portion is Isaiah 6: “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. ²Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. ⁴And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵Then 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, the LORD of hosts. ⁶Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken”

This portion is fairly familiar. Isaiah’s vision of the Lord – culminating eventually in his well-known volunteering for service – ‘here am I, send me’

To see the progression that God used to get Isaiah to this point, we need to see three things:

1) The Great I Am

In verses 1-4, Isaiah sees the Lord. He sees God. In fact, He sees God the Son – Jesus Christ – the Great I Am – Jehovah God. How do we know he saw Jesus? John 12:39-41: “Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. ⁴¹These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”

Isaiah sees the King of kings and Lord of lords in His glory. He is high and lifted up. He is not standing next to Isaiah like an associate. He is the Creator, the centre of the universe. Above Him are the seraphim: an order of angels. It tells us they covered their feet because of His awesome holiness. They worship tirelessly, crying Holy, holy, holy. Remember, these angels are moral creatures with a will of their own. They are not robots. These angels are not a broken record with no mind of their own. These are super-intelligent beings that, as they observe and comprehend the glory of God, they of their own free will cry out in worshipping the tri-une God – holy, holy, holy. Isaiah caught a vision of the Great I Am – of God.

We need to do the same. That doesn’t mean getting a physical, supernatural vision. It means seeing Jesus in His Word.

See, Christ is the living Word of God, and He is revealed in the written Word of God. God the Son reveals and explains God the Father. God the Spirit reveals and explains God the Son in the Bible – beautiful harmony.

The point is that the more we are in the Word of God, searching for an understanding of who God is, the clearer He will become. Proverbs 2 tells us that the knowledge of God comes when we seek for it with all our hearts. Unlike some today who teach that you must visualize Jesus in your mind, the Bible teaches we are to get a clear vision of God in His Word. To visualize God is plainly unbiblical, and even dangerous (2 Corinthians 5:16).

We are to learn who He is, what He has done, what He is doing. God will not hide away from one who is hungering for the knowledge of God. His love moves Him to reveal Himself. Are you in the Word? The extent to which you are in the Word reveals the extent to which you wish to know God – for God is revealed in the Bible.

The second stage in Isaiah's experience was

II. 'Who Am I'

Isaiah sees Christ- He sees His holiness, splendour and glory. What do you think Isaiah's reaction to this was? He gets out a tambourine and sings a happy chorus, right? No, according to verse 5, he was shattered.

His vision of God so profoundly humbled him that he cried out in shame, 'Woe is me, for I am undone'. The word *undone* means 'ruined'. It's amazing – the same reaction was experienced by others who saw God – Job in chapter 42, Peter in Luke 5:8, Ezekiel in 1:28, John in Revelation 1:17, Daniel in 7:14.

Seeing God's glory, or understanding His character in the case of Peter and Job caused the same reaction – absolute abasement, prostration and humility. Why?

I call it 'the Gap theory' and no, it has nothing to do with Genesis 1. When a human being understands even for an instant the glory of God it causes him to run in terror. Like creatures that live in caves fear the light, so our wickedness is highlighted in blinding fashion when we see God. The gap between us and Him is seen in enormous detail. We understand the sheer depth of our sin. Isaiah, a prophet, regarded himself as a man of unclean lips.

There is an unfathomable gap between the awesome holiness of God and wicked fallen man. To see it is the most uncomfortable feeling on earth, like being exposed, naked and vulnerable. As you for an instant understand this massive gap between God's righteousness and your own, all you want to do is flee, like Adam and Eve: hide. To stay there is a painful, humiliating scrutiny, it is like seeing all our sins magnified a thousand times. A real encounter with God in His Word always brings an acute awareness of sin. We cry out, "Who Am I, that you can look on me? Depart from me Lord! Who Am I, I'm wicked, selfish and rebellious. My words, thoughts and deeds are evil".

This is why one must be somewhat skeptical over claims of some that they physically saw God. They never seem to include the element of falling down prostrate before God: feeling wretched and sinful. It always seems to be about feeling bliss, joy and grace. That's not to say it won't be so, but in our natural state, an encounter with God brings

great terror, self-abhorrence and awareness of sin. Sometimes we create the God we want rather than the God who is. We define Him in comfortable, non-threatening terms. His demands are reachable, His ways become easily explainable, He becomes a doting grandfather type.

But the true God brings awesome conviction.

Notice then what happens in verses 6 and 7. Isaiah confesses his sin, and cleansing is immediate. I John 1:9 tells us that if we do so, God will cleanse us. Confession is to agree with God that we have sinned, to stop blaming others and claim ownership for our sin. But more than that, confession is to see sin the way God sees it, and that can only happen when we encounter God in His Word. Like Isaiah we see the wretchedness of our sin, we see the multitudes of our sins and we truly repent before God (Proverbs 28:13). God forgives and cleanses; the prerequisite is that we must be open to being convicted and willing to break before Him and confess.

The third stage of Isaiah's experience is

III. 'Here Am I'

Isaiah sees the Great I Am, which causes him to see his own sin : 'Who Am I' attitude, broken and repentant before God. Because he didn't hide or deny his sin, God cleansed him. Notice then verse 8. Now that Isaiah has been cleansed, he is eager to serve. That's how grace is, once you receive it, you are eager to continue in it. Isaiah had not cleansed himself, he was forgiven on God's terms. Therefore he is eager to love God back : to stay in this place of grace and mercy.

Service is always a reaction. It is a response to grace received. I John 4:19: we love Him, **because He first loved us**. Romans 12:1 "I beseech you **therefore, by the mercies of God**, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...". 2 Corinthians 5:14 "**the love of Christ constraineth us**"

The problem starts with sin: a selfish focus. We are not eager to see God, and so are not in His Word. As we're not in His Word, and do not experience that convicting mirror showing up our sins , we will go on and serve God selfishly. We will serve for conscience sake, for socializing, for occupying time, for conformity, but not for the love of God. It is only as we daily encounter God, endure the painful rays of His convicting light , and humble ourselves and confess that we are energized by the knowledge of the loving grace of God to serve Him.

Do you remember Christ's words to the Pharisee in Luke 7? A woman who was living a sinful life came and anointed Jesus' feet with ointment. The Pharisee was indignant, thinking that it was unacceptable to accept such a thing from a sinful woman. Jesus said: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little"

If we are in the habit of continually confessing our sins, we will begin to see how great God's grace is. Our problem is our fear of facing the truth about ourselves: seeing how sinful we really are. But if we are willing to do that- God's grace pours in, and His forgiveness brings motivation to serve , "Here Am I".

When our sin is unconfessed – our attitude is cowering in the shadows , living with guilt, covering our sins. It stifles our initiative, kills our desires, quenches our creativity. But love for God causes energy and a desire to love Him and be used by Him.

Have you seen Jesus lately in His Word? As you see the Great I Am – are you willing to say, “Who Am I”- see your sin as God sees it and confess it? When God gives the grace, we’ll even volunteer, take the initiative and cry out, here am I, Lord – send me!