

A Great Vision

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above Him were Seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory." At the sound of their voices the door-posts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am. Send me!" Isaiah 6:1-8.

He Had a Vision

A tribe of Indians had decided to select a new chief. The old chief, realizing that his days were numbered, had wisely decided that his successor should be chosen while he was yet living. So, he proposed this test to the 3 most promising young braves. "Go and

climb the distant mountain and bring back the most beautiful thing that you can find from the top of the mountain. Which ever one of you succeeds will be the new chief of these people." The 3 young braves set off to meet the challenge of their chieftain. Early in the afternoon the first young brave returned and eagerly the old chief inquired, "Did you go to the top of the mountain? And what is the most beautiful thing that you have brought back?" This first young brave said, "It was very difficult to climb that mountain and so I did not go all the way to the top. As I started climbing the mountain, I came to this lovely golden leaf tree and as I saw it in all of its beauty, I knew that there was no use to go even one step further. There could not possibly be anything on top of that barren mountain any more beautiful than this golden leaf that I picked from the tree on the side of the mountain." He handed that golden leaf to the old chief. The old chief said, "We'll wait and see."

Late in the evening the second young brave returned. He was obviously worn out and the old chief eagerly asked him, "Did you go to the top of the mountain? And what is the most beautiful thing that you have brought back?" This young brave said, "I almost reached the top of the mountain. The climb was terribly difficult and I was exhausted, but just before I climbed those last few hundred feet, I chanced to stumble across this nugget of gold and realizing the priceless value of gold and the fact that it is indestructible, I knew that it wouldn't make any difference about climbing those last few hundred feet to the top because I couldn't find anything more beautiful or more priceless to bring back to you than this wonderful treasure of a nugget of pure gold." The old chief took the nugget and said, "We'll wait and see."

Late that evening, long after sunset, the third young brave returned. He was so completely exhausted that he collapsed at the feet of the old chieftain and was unable to speak a word. The old chief allowed him to rest for a while and regain his breath and then he eagerly asked the brave, "Did you go to the top of the mountain? If so, what is the most beautiful thing that you brought back?" This young Indian brave sat up, breathed deeply, and said to the old

chief, "I climbed to the very top of the mountain. It was terribly difficult and there were times when I didn't even know if I was going to make it. But, I did reach the top of the mountain and then I was disappointed because I didn't know what to bring back. I couldn't decide what was the most beautiful thing that I had seen climbing to the top of the mountain. But, in that moment of disappointment, I lifted up my eyes and looked to the west, all the way to the great ocean. And as I viewed all that land, I had a great vision. A vision of our people becoming strong enough and numerous enough to possess all of that land to the west of us and that is the most beautiful thing that I saw on the mountain."

Well, I think that you know without my carrying the illustration any further that is the man that was chosen to be the new chief of the tribe and he was chosen because he was a man with *a great vision*.

In Proverbs 29:18, the Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I want us to examine anew, this great vision that Isaiah had.

He Saw the Lord

I. In the first place, I want you to notice how Isaiah saw the Lord. He said that he lifted up his eyes and he looked and he saw the Lord sitting upon His throne. What a magnificent sight this must have been as Isaiah saw the Lord in all of His divine glory and wisdom and majesty and power. If we want to be busy as fruitful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ in His vineyard, I dare say that each one of us needs to lift up our eyes as did Isaiah and look upon the Lord. I am afraid that most of us do not do that. We talk about God. We think about God, but do we really see Him through eyes of faith? I mean do we see how great He is, how good He is, how powerful He is?

How Big is Your God?

Dr. Henry Norris Russell, the famed Princeton University astronomer, once gave a lecture in which he talked of the Milky Way and its millions of stars. He told how many of these stars are far larger than our sun and how the still more distant heavens swarm with stars innumerable. When he finished his address a troubled woman came up to him and inquired, "Dr. Russell, if our world is so little and the universe is so great, can we really believe that God pays any attention to us human beings as small as we are?" The noted astronomer answered, "That all depends, madam, on how big a God you believe in."

Dear friends, the immense magnitude of this universe all about us demands a bigger God than most of us know. We have to stretch our minds and our souls in order to even touch the edge of God's greatness. Nothing will deepen our Christian faith and enlarge our reverence for God more than contemplating how great God is. Since we have such a great God, isn't it sad that we spend so much time formulating small plans. A recognition that the resources of this great God are at our disposal will elicit from us greater expectations.

If God Is Your Partner Make Your Plans Big!

In Assumption, Illinois, there lived a man of God named Leroy Trulock. I first became acquainted with Leroy about 32 years ago. At that time Leroy was the owner and operator of the world's largest machinery fair. Brother Leroy Trulock was a self made millionaire and he was called "God's businessman." I shall never forget the first time I heard Leroy Trulock speak. It was a men's meeting and he was speaking about tithing and he was trying to tell all of us men what a joy it is to tithe your income to God. He told about his early days in business and how he promised God that he was going to be a tither. He described the great joy that he had

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in bringing one-tenth of all his income to God every Lord's Day. Then, Leroy Trulock, in the joyful way he could speak and tell things, said he got to thinking, "Well, if I am having this much fun giving ten percent, I wonder how much joy I would have in giving twenty percent of all my income to God?" He said that he got so happy that he could hardly stand it. He again started thinking, "I wonder if I could have any more fun if I gave thirty percent?" So, Leroy started giving thirty percent and he said, "Oh, my joy increased. I was so happy all the time that I could hardly contain myself."

He then said that he got the bright idea that he was going to outgive God, "I was going to give more to God than God could give to me." But he said that was impossible because "the more I would give, the more God would bless me and it became a major problem how I was going to distribute all of God's money." To make a long story short, Leroy Trulock liquidated his business, took all of his assets and gave the entire amount, 100%, to God. He put the money in a non-profit corporation that he called "Church Builders."

Since that time Brother Leroy Trulock loaned money to little churches all over the world so that they could build church buildings. He primarily loaned this money to congregations that would otherwise not be able to have a church building. In many parts of the world where I have gone to proclaim the gospel, I have been able to send those people money as a loan from Leroy Trulock because he made me a promise that wherever I traveled and found the need of congregations needing a church building, if I would just tell him about it, he would make the arrangements to loan the money. He has fulfilled that promise many, many times.

I was holding a revival meeting some time ago at Moweagua, Illinois. That is 5 miles from Assumption and Brother Leroy Trulock would come every night to the revival meeting. He was such a happy man and he would always go out the door each night, shake hands, and tell me some funny story. This one particular night Leroy went out the door, shook hands with me and said, "By the

way, Reggie, do you know my motto?" Leroy Trulock started out with a motto years ago: "If God is your partner, make your plans big." Any of you that have ever gotten a letter from Leroy Trulock have noticed that motto at the bottom of every letter that he wrote. "If God is your partner, make your plans big." When Leroy asked me that question, I responded by saying, "Sure I know your motto, 'If God is your partner, make your plans big.'"

He said, "Reggie, that's right! Now let me tell you a story about my motto. The other night I was speaking to a group of Christian men in southern Illinois and they decided to have a testimonial service, so each man would stand up and testify. Some of them were quoting their favorite scripture and some of them quoted John 11:35 and John 3:16." One man jumped up and said, "My favorite verse in the Bible is 'If God is your partner, make your plans big.'" Brother Leroy Trulock said that he was embarrassed to think his motto had become so famous that some people equate it with scripture. I said, "Well, Leroy, it is a good motto."

I was in a Sunday School class one day and I heard someone say, "We have twice as many this morning as we had last week." If a church is growing like that, you need to have bigger plans. "If God is your partner, make your plans big."

Let us lift up our eyes as did Isaiah and see the Lord in all His greatness, in all His power and realize that if we are serving God, with Him nothing is impossible. Do you want to have a bigger attendance? Do you want to build a new church building? Do you want a larger missionary budget? Do you want to win more souls to Christ? *Then, make big plans! God is a big God!*

II. He saw himself a sinner. But then Isaiah lifted up his eyes and he saw something else that made him terribly sad. In fact it made him weep. He looked at himself and he saw that he was a poor lost sinner and he began to cry, "Woe with me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Oh, what a shock when Isaiah looked at

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himself and saw how wicked that he was. Isaiah was probably one of the most holy men to ever live in the history of the world and yet when he looked at himself he saw that he was a poor, lost sinner. I wonder, how many of us are willing to take this second look, this inward look at ourselves to see what kind of men or women that we are? That is the look that most people try to avoid. Most of us look at our neighbor and we compare ourselves with someone that we judge to be not quite as good as we are and then we pat ourselves on the back and we say, "My what a good boy I am, or, my what a good girl I am. I don't cuss like my neighbor over there. I don't get drunk like my neighbor down the street. I don't tell lies like my neighbor over there. I don't cheat like my neighbor down this way. I am a very good, outstanding, law abiding citizen. I provide for my family. I am really a pretty good person. I go to church quite regularly if I don't have a picnic to go to or something like that. I even pray when I get in trouble." That is the way that most of us see ourselves.

Isaiah didn't look at himself in comparison with other people, Isaiah looked at himself in comparison to God. He saw how holy God was, how righteous God was, how perfect God was; that God had never made a mistake or never committed a sin. As Isaiah compared himself to God he could not help but see his own imperfections.

Please notice that God did not condemn Isaiah; it was Isaiah who condemned himself. Are you willing to take that honest soul-searching look at yourself as did Isaiah? If so, you will say the same thing that Isaiah said, "Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips."

The Apostle Paul took that honest look at himself and then he cried, "I am the chief of all sinners." Are you willing to be that honest with yourself?

III. He saw himself forgiven. I want you to notice that after Isaiah lifted up his eyes and saw the Lord, he looked within and saw himself. Then he took a third look in his great vision and he

saw something that made him really glad. He saw himself forgiven of every sin. "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'" What a happy, joyful moment in Isaiah's life that he could rejoice and know that all of his sins had been removed as far as the east is from the west and that those sins were forgiven and forgotten.

Have You Been Forgiven?

Have you, my friend, ever experienced that cleansing that can come only from the Lord Jesus Himself? Have you known the joy of turning over to Jesus all of your sins, all of your heartaches, all of your mistakes, everything wrong that you have ever said, thought, done, or felt, and known the joy of full cleansing because of His blood that He shed upon the cross of Calvary? Jesus has promised this cleansing to you if you want it. In Mark 16:16 He promised it in these words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

His same promise was made to Saul of Tarsus, who had persecuted the Christians, imprisoned them, and put them to death. When Ananias said in Acts 22:16, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." After the Apostle Paul had been converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and his sins had been washed away in the blood of Jesus, he was able to say in Romans 8:1 & 2, "Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

IV. A vision of others. After Isaiah saw the Lord, saw himself a poor, lost sinner and then saw himself cleansed from every sin, he was able to lift up his eyes and see the needs of others. He heard

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the voice of the Lord. The Lord was saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" Isaiah was now in a spiritual condition that he could respond to that invitation of God and he was able to say, "Here am I Lord, send me."

Have you reached a point in your life that you can hear the voice of the Lord calling for workers? Who is going? There isn't anybody to go in your place. God is calling you. There is a need for every worker in the vineyard of our Lord. There is a place of service for you, a place that nobody can fill but you. Have you been able to hear the voice of the Lord? Have you reached the point that you can lift up your eyes and see that there are needs everywhere and that the Lord needs you to minister to others? Have you reached the point that you can say, "Lord, here am I, send me"?

Judge Hathcock Saw the Vision

When I first went to East Point, Georgia to preach the Gospel, I became acquainted with a wonderful man of God. His name was Judge T.O. Hathcock. He was 82 years old when I first met him. It was Judge Hathcock who first had the vision for Atlanta Christian College. It was Judge Hathcock's own personal, heroic, sacrificial efforts that resulted in the establishment of Atlanta Christian College. It was Judge Hathcock who invested his life, his talents, his fortune to build Atlanta Christian College. If you ever go to Atlanta, Georgia, be sure to go to East Point and visit the lovely 27 beautiful acres of rolling hills and pine trees where they have built the magnificent campus where more than 300 men and women are studying every year for the ministry of the Gospel for Jesus Christ.

The point I want to make is this: There never would have been Atlanta Christian College had there not been a Judge Hathcock who dreamed it, who saw it as a great vision and invested his life's fortune to make it possible.

Dr. Pruett Saw the Vision

I remember years ago I was holding a revival meeting in Kentucky. It was 1948. A country, preacher boy by the name of Denny Pruett from Junction City, Kentucky came to visit this revival meeting at Perrysville, Kentucky. He introduced himself and invited me to go flying in his airplane the next day. I had never been in an airplane and I was frightened. But I couldn't get out of it. So, I drove over to Junction City, Kentucky the next afternoon and went flying in Denny Pruett's old Piper Cub. The thing rattled and shook so badly that it seemed to me it was held together with bailing wire. We got into a windstorm and landed in some farmer's cow pasture. I was so frightened, I got out and kissed the ground. I said that I would never fly in an airplane again! While we were sitting there waiting out that windstorm, Denny Pruett told me of a great vision that he had. He dreamed of the day when he could go to medical college and become a qualified surgeon and then go to Africa as a preaching doctor and build a hospital out in the bush country of Africa and reach the souls of the African people through medical evangelism. After I listened to this dream of Denny Pruett's, I went back to Perrysville, Kentucky shaking my head in disbelief and inside myself I said, "That guy will never get any further than Junction City, Kentucky with a wild dream like that."

But you know the story. Denny Pruett sacrificed along with his wife Lucy. He was able to get through medical college. He did become a qualified surgeon. (I am thankful that he did because he operated on my daughter, Teresa, one night at midnight while we were in Africa several years ago. We tease Teresa to this day and say that she is the only member of our family that left a part of herself in Africa.) We really thank God for the many great things that Denny Pruett has done. He went to Africa. He built not one great Christian hospital, but 2 great Christian hospitals and since then has helped to build a third one in India and is now making plans to go into many other countries of the world building Christian hospitals to carry on this program of medical evangelism around the

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world. Thousands upon thousands of souls have been brought to Jesus because a country preacher boy in Kentucky had a great vision and he was willing to invest his life, his talent, his fortune, everything to see that the vision was fulfilled.

What is Your Vision?

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

