

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DIVINE CALL FOR MISSIONARIES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING APRIL 22ND, 1877, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."—Isaiah vi. 8.

BRETHREN, the heathen are perishing, and there is but one way of salvation for them, for there is but one name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved. God in the glorious unity of his divine nature is calling for messengers who shall proclaim to men the way of life. Out of the thick darkness my ear can hear that sound mysterious and divine, "Whom shall I send?" If ye will but listen with the ear of faith ye may hear it in this house to-day—"Whom shall I send?" While the world lieth under the curse of sin the living God, who willeth not that any should perish but that they should come to repentance, is seeking for heralds to proclaim his mercy; he is asking even in pleading terms for some who will go forth to the dying millions and tell the wondrous story of his love—"Whom shall I send?" As if to make the voice more powerful by a threefold utterance we hear the sacred Trinity enquire, "Who will go for us?" The Father asks, "Who will go for me and invite my far-off children to return?" The Son enquires, "Who will seek for me my redeemed but wandering sheep?" The Holy Spirit demands, "In whom shall I dwell, and through whom shall I speak that I may convey life to the perishing multitudes?" God in the unity of his nature crieth, "Whom shall I send?" and in the trinity of his persons he asketh, "Who will go for us?" Happy shall we be to-day if earnest responses shall be heard in this house—"Here am I, send me." It is ours, at any rate, very solemnly to put the matter before you, brethren in Christ, and while we shall try to plead Jehovah's cause we trust the Holy Spirit may be here, saying of one and another, quite unknown to us, "Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them." Yea, may the constraining voice of the special call of grace come to the ear of some here present who shall respond like young Samuel and say, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

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First, we shall this morning consider *the vision of glory* in reference to the offer of service made by the prophet : the vision which he saw ; and secondly, *the vision of ordination* which he did more than see, for his lips were touched. Thirdly, we will speak upon *the divine voice* ; and conclude by dwelling upon *the earnest response*.

I. Reverently, and with all our hearts attent, let us gaze upon THE VISION OF GLORY which Isaiah saw. It was necessary for him to see it in order that he might be brought into the condition of heart out of which should come the full consecration expressed in—"Here am I, send me." Observe what he saw. He saw, first, *the supreme glory of God*. "I saw Adonai," saith he, "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Was it Jesus that he saw? Was this one of the anticipations of his future incarnation? Probably so, for John writes in his twelfth chapter, at the forty-first verse, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him,"—referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. We will not, however, insist upon that interpretation, for the word Adonai, doubtless, included at times the whole God-head, and therefore the vision may have represented the Lord himself revealed in visible form. As to his absolute essence, eye cannot behold the Lord, but he chooseth to make an apparition of himself ; appearing among men in such a form as may come under the ken of their senses. Now, brethren, we know of nothing that will supply a better motive for missionary work, or for Christian effort of any sort, than a sight of the divine glory. This is one of the strongest impulses a soul can feel. Behold, O believers in the divine word, at this day the Lord God, even Jehovah, is not dethroned, but sitteth on the throne of his glory. Some know him not, and others deny him and blaspheme him, but he is still God over all blessed for ever.

See the patience of his infinite majesty,—he *sits* in calm glory upon his eternal throne. The nations furiously rage and imagine a vain thing : "he that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh ; the Lord doth have them in derision." Still are his purposes fulfilled, and his soul abides in its serenity ; he is the same and of his years there is no end. He sitteth as a King, observe, *upon a throne* ; he never renounces his sovereignty and dominion. All things still feel the omnipotence of the reign of God. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." The rebellions of men, can they ever shake his firm dominion? No, but out of their wildest uproar he fashioneth order, and by their most violent resistance he worketh his own purposes. After all the Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice, let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof. Still, despite all the hurly-burly of war, and all the wickedness of men in the dark places of the earth, and the detestable blasphemies of the heathen against the Most High, the Lord sitteth on a throne which never can be shaken.

Nor is it a mean throne either, nor one of little dignity ; it is "high and lifted up." It is not merely above all other thrones by way of greater power, but over them all by way of supreme dominion over them, for he is King of kings and Lord of lords. I wish, dear brethren, we could get a glimpse of the glory and power and dominion which belong to the Most High, for if we did, though it would certainly humble us in the very dust, yet it would fire us with a consecrated indignation against

those who set up other gods ; it would fill us with a sacred courage to do and dare anything against these blind, and deaf, and dumb deities to whom it is almost too great an honour to pour contempt upon them ; and it would make us feel confidence in the ultimate success of the cause and kingdom of the living God. Since even now, while he restrains his hand he sitteth upon a throne high and lifted up, and is even now the Governor among the nations ; surely the day shall come when all nations shall behold his throne and bow before it, and God shall be seen to be Lord over all. The God whom we serve is able to give victory to his own cause. Here is *an impulse* for us in all warring for his cause and crown.

If you choose to take the text as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, what a delight it is for us to think that there is no more for him the thorny crown and the cruel lance and the contemptuous spittle, but he who bowed his head to death has left the dead, no more to die, and ascended to the right hand of God, even the Father ; God having highly exalted him, so that he now sitteth upon a throne high and lifted up. This, in fact, is the origin of our commission—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Because all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, therefore we are to go forth and subdue the people under his feet. O when will his church fully believe in the glory of her Lord, and rejoice therein, so that his power shall fill her, as his train aforetime filled the temple. If we cannot behold his greatest glories, yet we pray that his presence by the Holy Spirit, like the perfumed smoke and the resplendent skirts of his robes, may be known among us and fill us with adoration. Did the posts of the door move at that august presence? Let our hearts be moved also as in lowliest adoration we bow before him who is Lord and Christ.

But then Isaiah saw also *the court of the great King* ; he beheld the glorious attendants who perpetually perform homage, nearest to his throne. He says, "Above it (or rather above him) stood the seraphims," not implying that their feet rested upon the earth, or upon any other solid substance, but that they were stationary around and above the great King, poised in mid air in a circle, like a rainbow round about the throne, or as a body guard surrounding the throne of majesty. There were they, waiting to know his pleasure, on the wing ready for any errand, and adoring while they waited. These seraphim may furnish us with a pattern for Christian service : as the throne of God becomes the impulse to that service, so let these serve us as *the model*. They dwell near the Lord, and even so should we ; he is their centre and their bliss, even so should he be ours. But I specially note that they were burning ones, for such is the meaning of the word seraphims, a term applied in the Hebrew to the fiery flying serpents of the wilderness. These courtiers of the great King were creatures of fire, ablaze with ardour ; all glowing and shining they worship him, "who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire." Jehovah, who is a consuming fire, can only fitly be served by those who are on fire, whether they be angels or men. Hence that solemn question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. xxxiii. 14). None can do this but the man on fire with love divine.

In the presence of that consuming fire, it is not possible for lukewarmness or indifference to exist, they would be utterly burned up. To act as courtier before the burning throne of God requires a seraphic or burning spirit, and if we become lethargic and soulless we shall not be counted worthy to be employed on divine errands. Far hence, then, let all coolness of love and slumbering of spirit be removed. May the Lord make us, like John the Baptist, burning and shining lights.

These courtiers of God were burning ones, and they are also pictured to us—for remember these are only representations of things actually invisible, and seen only in vision—as having six wings. Such are his servants, full of motion, full of life. Some that I know of who profess to serve the Lord seem to have no wing at all, but are stolid and inactive, more like the sloth than the seraph, having more weight than wing. Those who come near him should be all in motion, quick, active, willing, awake, energetic, ready to fly upon the Lord's business with a mighty swiftness; in a word, sixfold should be their wings, that they may not tarry nor tire, nor linger nor loiter in the way. Have we such readiness of mind as this?

Having life and motion, these glorious spirits use their powers with prudence and discretion. They use not all their wings for flight, but with twain each one covered his face, for even they cannot gaze upon the dazzling brightness of Jehovah's throne, and therefore in humble shamefacedness of awe they adore with veiled countenance! "With twain he covered his feet," or his body, or his lower parts, for the seraph remembers that even though sinless he is yet a creature, and therefore he conceals himself in token of his nothingness and unworthiness in the presence of the thrice Holy One. The middle pair of wings was used for flight, for mere bashfulness and humility cannot offer complete adoration, there must be active obedience and readiness of heart for service. Thus they have four wings for adoration and two for active energy; four to conceal themselves, and two with which to occupy themselves in service; and we may learn from them that we shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverend and humbled in his presence. Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigour, adoration must exceed activity. As Mary at Jesus' feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving, so must sacred reverence take the first place, and energetic service follow in due course. The angels do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word, and thus they excel: our excellence must lie in the same direction—the union of worship with work in due proportions. The covering of the face is as needful as the flight; the burning one is as seraphic in the veiling of his feet as in the stretching of his wings. Let us pray the Lord to fill us with the divine enthusiasm which is the work of the Holy Ghost, and so make us burning ones; and then when he has winged us with sacred energy may he make us humble in mind, removing from us all vain curiosity, so that we shall not attempt to gaze with uncovered eye on the great Incomprehensible, and taking away all unhallowed presumption, so that we use no proud bravado, but cover our feet in the solemn presence of the Holy One. Let us ask God to make us ready to every good word and work, swift to go anywhere and everywhere, as he may call us, being as it were six-winged in the service of our God.

Again, another part of the vision of Isaiah in the temple was *the perpetual song*, for these sacred beings continually cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Brothers and sisters, let us take this cry to be the life song of each one of us. Adore ye the holy God, perfection's self. Whatever he shall do with you, bless him, and call him holy still. Find no fault with his dispensations; never dare to quarrel with any of his ways. Holy, holy, holy, is he in all things. In creation, providence, and redemption he is holy, holy, holy. Praise him with ardour; be not content to call him holy once, but dwell upon the theme. Extol the Lord with all your might; raise again, and again, and again the sacred song. Adore not alone the Father, but the Son, and the ever-blessed Spirit: let the Trinity in Unity be the object of your perpetual adoration.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
 Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
 Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
 God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!"

While you praise his holiness do not forget his power, but adore him as "Jehovah of hosts." He is as great as he is good, as high as he is holy, as potent as he is pure. He created the heavens, and the earth, and all the host of them. Legions of angels do his bidding; hosts of intelligences wait his call; all forces of nature, animate and inanimate, march at his command; from the crash of thunder to the flight of an insect all things are at his beck. Hosts of birds migrate at his direction, hosts of fishes swarm the sea at his call, hosts of locusts and caterpillars devour the fields at his order. His armies are innumerable, and all living things are in their regiments a part of his camp, which is very great. Men also, whether they will or not, shall be subservient to his supreme dominion; their armies and their navies fulfil his decrees even when they think not of him. He is Lord of all. Exult in this, and let your hearts be brave because of it.

And then dwell, that you may feel a missionary spirit, on that last part of the song, "The whole earth is filled with his glory," for so it really is in one sense. "Jehovah of hosts is the fulness of the whole earth." God is glorious all over the world; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of his glory, everything adores him except that wandering, wayward creature, man. Turn this ascription, for it may be so read, into a wish: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Read it, if you please, as a prophecy: "The whole earth shall be filled with his glory," and then go you forward, O ye servants of the Most High, with this resolve, that in his hands you will be the means of fulfilling the prophecy by spreading abroad the knowledge of his name among the sons of men. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and he must reign over it. Are you going to succumb to the modern theory that the world is never to be converted to God? Is human history to end with the triumph of the devil over the church of God? Is the Lord about to give up the present battle of good with evil with feeble men as the instruments, and are the conditions of the conflict to be changed altogether? Is the Holy Spirit to fail until an earthly kingdom is set up for the Lord Jesus? Is the gospel never to spread among the

heathen? Is Christ to come upon an unenlightened heathen world, with Mahomet the false prophet still unconquered, and the harlot of Rome still upon her seven hills, and all the idols in their places? Is the battle which now glorifies God by the weakness of man to be fought out in another manner? You may believe it if you will, and go to the beds of your inglorious sloth; but methinks there is something more worthy of faith than that, namely, that God will be victorious all along the line in the present battle and in the present style of conflict. By his church, his word, and his Spirit he means to win the victory; by the testimony of weak, feeble men to the gospel of his grace he means to conquer the powers of darkness. Foot to foot with Satan has he stood since our Lord went up to heaven, near these two thousand years, and he will not end this wrestling match till he has given his foe a deadly fall, and the shout shall go up from a ransomed world, "Hallelujah! hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Our prayers will never be ended till we see the desire of pious David fulfilled when he said, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; amen, and amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." We are looking and labouring for that consummation, and we believe that we shall realize it, though it looks most improbable, especially just now when the heathen are converting our missionaries instead of the missionaries converting the heathen, when we have had bishops turned into Zulus instead of Zulus into Christians, and several other instances less known to evil fame. We believe in the conquest of the world because we believe in the omnipotence of God. Nothing short of "dominion from sea to sea" dare we ask in prayer or seek in service for our Lord Jesus. The idols must be utterly abolished, error and sin must fly before the light of truth and holiness, the ends of the earth must yet see the salvation of our God, and the whole earth must be filled with his glory.

II. Let us now turn our thoughts to THE VISION OF ORDINATION. This man Isaiah was to go forth in Jehovah's name, but in order to preparation for so high an embassy he must undergo a process peculiar but necessary. He was brought into a state, which to human judgment would seem to disqualify him for all future usefulness, crushing the courage out of him, and leaving him like a bruised reed. By reason of the glorious vision which he saw there was no strength left in him; he was cast down as low as he could well go with a sense of his own utter unworthiness, and felt himself to be less than nothing. In the presence of God he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." "Alas, alas, alas," saith he, "woe has taken possession of my soul; I am destroyed by it." Yes, dear brother, and this is our way to success: God will never do anything with us till he has first of all undone us. We must be taken to pieces and made to undergo a process very like destruction, and then we shall be new-fashioned according to a nobler mould, more fit to be used by our great Lord. I shall not regret if every brother here called to the work of the Lord shall feel as if he could not go on with it, and shall mourn daily his incapacity, his unworthiness, and failure; for it is good for us to be laid in the dust. Downward in breakage, in crushing, in grinding, in making into dust we must go, for this is the way to be made strong in the Lord,

and in the power of his might. The death of self is the life of grace. When we are weak then are we strong. We can only rise to ability for the noblest errands by being emptied of all self-sufficiency, and filled with the all-sufficient Spirit.

Observe, next, that *he made a confession of sin while thus prostrate*. He said, "I am a man of unclean lips." Why does he lament the uncircumcision of his lips rather than the evil of his heart? It was partly because he longed to join the seraphim in their song but felt his lips unfit; and yet more because he was a prophet, and therefore his lips were the instruments of his office, and he was most conscious of sin where he felt most the need of grace. I know not that Isaiah had ever kept back any part of the truth, or that he had spoken in uncomely tones, or that in his work of prophecy he had in anything been unfaithful, but yet he felt his shortcomings. There was nothing about him that you and I could have seen to find fault with, but *he* saw it, and felt it, and what minister is there that God has ever sent who does not when he surveys his ministry feel that he is a man of unclean lips? Often and often does our soul say, "Oh that these lips had language; they are poor, dumb things that will not speak aright. O that instead of flesh they were flame, that we might let fall a burning torrent of persuasions, entreaties, and solicitations which should run amid multitudes of men like fire in dry stubble." But it is not so with us: we are often chill and lifeless, and so we are made to mourn that we have unclean lips. Who that ever saw the glory of God, or the love of Christ, would refuse to join in this confession?

And, then, this man of God *felt also a deep sense of the sin of the people among whom he dwelt*. He cried, "I dwell among a people of unclean lips." I do not think a man can be a good missionary if he winks at the sin that surrounds him. Unless it stinks in his nostrils, unless it makes his soul boil with holy indignation, unless like Paul his heart is stirred in him, how can he speak as he should speak the message of his God? Familiarity with evil too often takes off the edge of tender feeling; men readily cease to weep over the sin which is always before their eyes. You may look upon the superstitions of Rome till you almost admire the gallant show, and I suppose you may regard heathen temples till the majesty of their architecture may make you forget the infamy of their purpose; but it must not be so: we must feel that we dwell among a people of unclean lips, and we must bear their sin upon our hearts, repenting for them if they will not repent, and breaking our hearts over them because their hearts are as adamant against their God. Only in such a frame of mind shall we be fit to go forth in God's name.

And do you notice that *he had a sacred awe upon him because of the divine presence*? You see how bowed down he was because his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of hosts. O favoured servant of God! Esaias, thou art honoured above thy fellows to behold God's throne and glory! What would not you and I give if we might but have stood in the temple and peered within the doorway, and gazed into the smoke, and have seen some glimpse of the brightness; but *he* never exulted in it, on the contrary he cried, "Woe is me!" There is no thought of the dignity to which the marvellous sight has lifted him, but deep in the dust he

cries, "I am undone, for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Now this awe-full sense of the divine presence is necessary to make a man serve the Lord fitly and acceptably. Forget that God is all around you, forget that you live in his presence and are his servant, get away from him, and you can be careless, you can restrain your zeal and your conscience may be at ease; but let a man only feel that God sees him, and know that he is under his immediate guidance, and he will be aroused at once to do the will of the Lord on earth after the fashion in which it is done in heaven. He will put forth all his energies, because God should be served with our best; but conscious that when he has done his best he has fallen short of the glory of God, he will be very humble, as those should be who are in such a presence. O Lord Jesus, by thy Holy Spirit give us an overpowering sense of thy presence now. If thou wilt but do this we shall be a tabernacle full of worshippers first, and of workers afterwards, and shall cheerfully adore thee and labour for thee.

In this second part of the prophet's vision the most notable thing is *the way in which God met and removed his servant's infirmities*. His unclean lips were his great impediment; where he most needed power he most felt his infirmity, and so there came a seraph with the golden tongs or snuffers, and took a burning coal from off the altar, and touched his lips with it. What does this mean? We have the explanation: "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Fellowship with the great sacrifice, the application of one of the coals which consumed the ever blessed Jesus is the way to make our lips ready for preaching. I believe that most of my dear hearers have the application of the live coal to their hearts so as to have been purged therewith, for we do believe in him who died for us; so that we are resting in his great sacrifice. But in order to be prepared for service we want to have that word yet again touching us till we feel the fire. We need fellowship with the pangs and woes of Christ; we need to feel as if we too wished to be consumed for others, as he was consumed for us. The disinterested love which made him die must come and influence us, that we may be willing to die for others too. We want just that. Did it not make you feel joy in your fellow men the other day when you read of the poor men in the pit, and of their gallant deliverers? One rejoiced that manhood could exhibit such heroism. "We can do no more," said some, "it is death to go into the pit again: we cannot rescue the poor fellows, and it is idle to throw away life for no purpose." The brave men who had been toiling there in the bowels of the earth, finding themselves in the presence of almost certain death, might well have stood back; but not so the bold Welshmen. One said, "If it is death to go and save them, I will go, death or no death," and then others came forward and said they would go also. Had I been there I should have been ready to weep, because, being unskilled in the miner's craft, I should have been helpless to assist, but they should not have lacked my heartiest cheers and most ardent prayers, nor ought else that I could have done. Assuredly since Jesus Christ has died for us, we need to be touched with something of that same zeal for the rescue of others from eternal ruin. A coal from off the altar where he was consumed must be laid on us that we may feel willing to make any sacrifice for his dear

sake and for the souls of men. That touching of the lip was the Lord's way of setting the prophet on fire where the fire was needed. He wanted lips blistered with the griefs of Christ, and burning with love to men's souls, and he had such lips bestowed upon him by his God, and so was he fit to go and preach in the name of the Lord.

Here, then, is the true ordination for a Christian worker. Yourself nothing, lying in the dust with confession of sin; but yourself purged by the great sacrifice of Calvary, and your tongue compelled to tell the tale because you have felt such royal mercy, such free mercy, such unspeakable mercy, that if you did not speak of it the very stones in the street would cry out against you. You want this for your preparation, and if you have it, my brother, you have obtained your ordination from the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, and you need no other.

III. When a man is prepared for sacred work he is not long before he receives a commission. We come then to think of THE DIVINE CALL. I feel in my soul, though I cannot speak it out, an inward grieving sympathy with God, that God himself should have to cry from his throne, "Whom shall I send?" Alas, my God, are there no volunteers for thy service! What, all these priests and sons of Aaron, will none of these run upon thine errand? And all these Levites, will not one of them offer himself? No, not one. Ah, it is grievous, grievous beyond all thought, that there should be such multitudes of men and women in the church of God who nevertheless seem unfit to be sent upon the Master's work, or at least never offer to go, and he has to cry, "Whom shall I send?" What, out of all these saved ones, no willing messengers to the heathen! Where are his ministers? Will none of these cross the seas to heathen lands? Here are thousands of us working at home. Are none of us called to go abroad? Will none of us carry the gospel to regions beyond? Are none of us bound to go? Does the divine voice appeal to our thousands of preachers and find no response, so that again it cries, "Whom shall I send?" Here are multitudes of professing Christians making money, getting rich, eating the fat and drinking the sweet, is there not one to go for Christ? Men travel abroad for trade, will they not go for Jesus? They even risk life amid eternal snows, are there no heroes for the cross? Here and there a young man perhaps with little qualification, and no experience, offers himself, and he may or may not be welcomed, but can it be true that the majority of educated, intelligent Christian young men are more willing to let the heathen be damned than to let the treasures of the world go into other hands. Alas, for some reason or other, I am not going to question the reasons, God himself may look over all his church, and, finding no volunteers, may utter the pathetic cry, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

But there were the six-winged seraphim. Why did not the Lord send them? Ah, brethren, that he might have done, but it is not according to the order of the gospel dispensation, for he is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and the preachers must be men like the rest of mankind. It is great condescension on his part that he has chosen men, and unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak, but he has given this honour to us, putting his treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the

power may be all his own. We ought to rejoice in this, but it is sad, surpassingly sad, that from amongst myriads of willing seraphim God's cry should come to unwilling men, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

I call to your attention again the fact that this is the voice of the one God, and it is also the question of the sacred Trinity: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The Father, Son and Spirit thus question us, shall not the threefold voice be regarded?

Notice the particular kind of man for whom this voice is seeking. It is a man who must be *sent*, a man under impulse, a man under authority—"Whom shall I send?" But it is a man who is quite willing to go, a volunteer, one who in his inmost heart rejoices to obey—"Who will go for us?" What a strange mingling this is! "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," and yet "taking the oversight of the flock of God not by constraint but willingly." Irresistible impulse and cheerful choice, omnipotent compulsion and joyful eagerness most mysteriously combine! We must have a mingling of these two. I do not know that I could put into so many words that wonderful feeling of freeness and overpowering impulse, of necessity and freedom, but our experience understands what our language cannot express. We are willing, and yet a power is over us; we are willing in the day of God's power, coming forth as freely as the dew-drops from the womb of the morning, and yet as truly the product of divine power as they are. Such must God's servant be. I wonder if I echo and re-echo the voice of God this morning whether it will find out amidst the thousands in this house, and the thousands that may read this word, some loving responses in at least a few chosen hearts? "Whom shall I send?"—it is Jehovah's voice. "And who will go for us?"—it is the voice of the bleeding Lamb, it is the voice of the loving Father, it is the voice of the ever blessed Spirit. Does no one leap up at this moment and freely offer himself? Must I speak in vain? Ah, that were a light thing—must the voice from heaven be in vain? Did the child Samuel reply "Here am I, for thou didst call me," and will no full-grown man answer to the voice of the Eternal? With your hearts and consciences I leave it.

IV. Now comes the last point, and that is THE EARNEST RESPONSE. The reply of Isaiah was "Here am I; send me." I think I see in that response a consciousness of his being in a certain position which no one else occupied, which rendered it incumbent upon *him* to say, "Here am I." There was no one else in the temple, no one else saw that vision, and therefore to him the voice of the Lord came as directly and personally as if there were not another man in all the world. "Here am I." Now, brethren, if at any time the mission field lacks workers (it is a sad thing that it should be so, but yet so it is), should not that fact make each man look to himself and say, "Where am I? What position do I occupy towards this work of God? May I not be placed just where I am because I can do what others could not?" Some of you young men especially, without the ties of family to hold you in this country, without a large church around you, or not having yet plunged into the sea of business, you, I say, are standing where in the ardour of your first love you might fitly say, "Here am I." And if God has endowed you with any wealth, given you any talent, and placed you in a favourable

position, you are the man who should say, "Perhaps I have come to the kingdom for such a time as this; I may be placed where I am on purpose that I may render essential help to the cause of God. Here at any rate I am; I feel the presence of the glorious God; I see the skirts of his garments as he reveals himself to me, I almost hear the rush of seraphic wings as I perceive how near heaven is to earth, and I feel in my soul I must give myself up to God. I feel in my own heart my indebtedness to the Christ of God; I see the need of the heathen, I love them for Jesus' sake; the fiery coal is touching my lip even now: *here am I!* Thou hast put me where I am; Lord, take me as I am, and use me as thou wilt." May the divine Spirit influence some of you who greatly love my Lord till you feel all this.

Then you observe that he makes a full surrender of himself. "Here am I." Lord, I am what I am by thy grace, but here I am; if I am a man of one talent, yet here I am; if I am a man of ten, yet here I am; if in youthful vigour, here I am; if of maturer years, here I am. Have I substance? here I am. Do I lack abilities? Yet still I made not my own mouth, nor did I create my infirmities; here I am. Just as I am, as I gave myself up to thy dear Son to be redeemed, so give I myself up again to be used for thy glory, because I am redeemed, and am not my own, but bought with a price. "Here I am."

Isaiah gave himself up to the Lord none the less completely because his errand was so full of sadness. He was not to win men, but to seal their doom by putting before them truth which they would be sure to reject. We read, "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 convert, and be healed." Thank God ours is not so hard a task; the Spirit of God is with us, and men are turned from darkness to light. Ought we not to be all the more eager to go? It is a point of great weight, an argument most telling. Do not refuse to feel its power, but yield yourselves up to God, seeing that he calls you to the most happy and blessed work which even he himself could commit to you.

Then comes Isaiah's prayer for authority and anointing. If we read this passage rightly we shall not always throw the emphasis upon the last word, "me," but read it also thus, "Here am I, *send* me." He is willing to go, but he does not want to go without being sent, and so the prayer is, "Lord, *send* me. I beseech thee of thine infinite grace qualify me, open the door for me, and direct my way. I do not need to be forced, but I would be commissioned. I do not ask for compulsion, but I do ask for guidance. I would not run of my own head under the notion that I am doing God service. *Send* me then, O Lord, if I may go; guide me, instruct me, prepare me, and strengthen me." There is a combination of willingness and holy prudence—"Here I am; send me." I feel certain that some of you are eager to go for my Lord and Master wherever he appoints. Keep not back I pray you. Brother, make no terms with God. Put it, "Here am I; send me—where thou wilt, to the wildest region, or even to the jaws of death. I am thy soldier; put me in the front of the battle if thou wilt, or bid me lie in

the trenches; give me gallantly to charge at the head of my regiment, or give me silently to sap and mine the foundations of the enemy's fortresses. Use me as thou wilt; *send me*, and I will go. I leave all else to thee; only here I am, thy willing servant, wholly consecrated to thee." That is the right missionary spirit, and may God be pleased to pour it out upon you all, and upon his people throughout the world. To me it seems that if a hundred were to leap up and each one exclaim, "Here am I; send me," it would be no wonder. By the love and wounds and death of Christ, by your own salvation, by your indebtedness to Jesus, by the terrible condition of the heathen, and by that awful hell whose yawning mouth is before them, ought you not to say, "Here am I; send me"? The vessel is wrecked, the sailors are perishing; they are clinging to the rigging as best they can; they are being washed off one by one! Good God, they die before our eyes, and yet there is the lifeboat stanch and trim. We want men! Men to man the boat! Here are the oars, but never an arm to use them! What is to be done? Here is the gallant boat, able to leap from billow to billow, only men are wanted! Are there none? Are we all cravens? A man is more precious than the gold of Ophir. Now, my brave brethren, who will leap in and take an oar for the love of Jesus, and yon dying men? And ye brave women, ye who have hearts like that of Grace Darling, will not ye shame the laggards, and dare the tempest for the love of souls in danger of death and hell? Weigh my appeal in earnest and at once, for it is the appeal of God. Sit down and listen to that sorrowful yet majestic demand, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and then respond, "Ready, aye ready; ready for anything to which our Redeemer calls us." Let those who love him, as they perceive all around them the terrible token of the world's dire need, cry in an agony of Christian love, "Here am I; send me."

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus iv. 1—6;
10—18; Jeremiah i. 6—11; Isaiah vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—145 (Song I.), 189, 964.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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