

## Lift up Your Eyes on High!

*Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. The things seen are temporal: the things not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).*

Isaiah in chapter forty, urges upon us a conception of God and the purpose of life that is overwhelming in its immensity. If we can by supreme effort, get in tune with his viewpoint, present things shrink into their true insignificance-

*“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure?” (v. 12).*

*“Behold the nations are as the small dust of the balance” (v. 15).*

*“Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding” (v. 28).*

*“Lift up your eyes on high and behold Who hath created these things . . . by the greatness of His might, for He is strong in power” (v. 26).*

This is the scale of conception that it is wholesome to dwell upon, and get away from the pettiness of our present surroundings. It is strengthening. It is uplifting. It engenders a sober, Godly frame of mind.

This is the *true* state of affairs. The world is but a handful of dust-its troubled history an insignificant fraction of eternity-the seemingly real and actual present but a brief interlude that will pass like shadows before the rising sun.

This is the sphere of thought that is comforting and worthwhile. Keeping our minds in *this* channel will result in a course of action in harmony with these things and will fit us for a place in them.

We are told by well-meaning but worldly-minded counselors that if we want a better position we must fit ourselves for it. We must fill our thoughts with its responsibilities and requirements. We must, as it were, mentally live in that sphere and accustom ourselves to it.

Now of course, this is entirely out of the question for those whose minds, in obedience to the counsel of the apostle, are wholly given to *better* things-they just haven't the time for it. But it illustrates the effort we must make on a higher and more satisfying scale. Often, sadly enough, the children of this world show more wisdom and initiative and energy in their aspirations than the children of light do in those things which are eternal.

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The human mind is not bound to its immediate surroundings. If it were so, life would often become unbearable. But consciousness is largely made up of memory and anticipation, beside that which is present to the senses.

Many people choose their solace by living in the past, comforting themselves with reminiscence and recollection, escaping monotonous or unpleasant reality by an absorption in what has gone.

Most are wrapped up in the immediate present and the very limited future which comes within the scope of present undertakings. But such a course does not satisfy the contemplative mind.

“Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die,” is the universal doctrine, but only the shallowest, dullest minds can find merriment satisfying under such circumstances. Such an attitude requires the cruelest, bitterest form of self-deception and wilful blindness.

But, in the mercy of God, there is a third alternative for those who feel the need. How is one brought to feel the need? By a recognition of the sadness and perversions of the present dispensation, due to the incapability and inhumanity of man.

Is this brought home to us easily or quickly? Usually not. At first the world is a place of bright promise, of comradeship and love, a gay and thoughtless adventure. This is the common first impression in the innocence and buoyancy of inexperience.

How do we learn differently? What prompts us to turn for comfort and satisfaction elsewhere? Usually it requires the rough hand of misfortune and disillusionment to make us fully appreciative of the vanity of present things. We are aware, it is true, in a vague, theoretic way, of the vast preponderance of sorrow over joy in the world, but we feel nobody’s troubles as keenly as we do our own. This is in the very nature of things. Our minds can only work on what is being continually presented to them in some form or another. Unless constantly reminded either by circumstances or direct efforts of our own will, we soon forget and our attention is taken by other things.

This, too, demonstrates why we must constantly supply our minds with material for thought from the Word of God. If we do not, our minds will feed on other and unwholesome things that so easily present themselves to them.

What is the course of mental satisfaction that is offered to counteract the depressing effect of present considerations?—

*“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity is pardoned.”*

Such are the opening words of the reading from Isaiah 40.

*“Her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity is pardoned.”*

These things have been recorded for over twenty-six hundred years and the end is not yet. Some may be reminded, perhaps a little bitterly, of the statement by Paul to the Romans (4:17) that—

*“God calleth those things which be not as though they were already.”*

Clearly there could be no more striking example.

To speak assuringly of warfare being over when it still had a cruel course of over 2,000 years to run may seem poor and misleading comfort-but is this the truth of the matter? A thoughtful consideration will show that this is but a narrow and unreasonable viewpoint.

Comfort depends upon the state of the mind.

The comfort offered by the Scriptures is not dependent upon immediate fulfillment. It is the assurance of an ultimate reign of peace and good, that is separated from no individual by more than the brief span of a human life-time. Its comfort is not that distress is *finished*, but that distress is a controlled and necessary ingredient of the final result.

This is the viewpoint that prophet and apostle exhort us to maintain. We must live in patience and godliness, buoyed up by hope. We must center our minds resolutely upon that which is to come and face all present trouble in the confidence of this expectation.

“Sorrow endureth for the night,” says the Psalmist (30:5)-and the night may be long-“*but joy cometh in the morning.*” The course of wisdom is not to ignore or belittle the sorrow, but to balance the whole picture. We shall not be overwhelmed by the one if the other is kept rightly in mind.

Thus we can enter into the spirit of these words of Isaiah and reap the comfort intended. We are not to regard the delay with skeptical impatience or lagging faith, but we are to build our lives and hopes upon these things in the quiet and calm confidence that they represent the realities and that in God’s good time all will be accomplished. Verse 6-

*“The voice said, ‘Cry’. And he said, ‘What shall I cry?’”*

What good tidings are there?

*“All flesh is grass . . . the grass withereth . . . surely the people is grass.”*

Where is hope?

This is the thoughtful but purely natural view. It sees things only as they appear and leaves out the most important feature.

Verse 8 answers: Truly “*the grass withereth*”-truly present things are a shadow-

*“But the word of our God shall stand forever . . . Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid!”*

*“Say, Behold your God! . . . Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand. . . and His reward is with Him.”*

Then the chapter breaks into the long, exalted eulogy to the power and greatness and unchangeableness of God, of which we have spoken. What is its purpose?

To raise and broaden the mortal conception of the meaning and purpose of life. To train the mind into channels that give a balanced, proportioned, spiritual outlook.

The human mind can be engrossed in the meanest and most trivial matters, or it can be devoted to the highest and loftiest considerations of divinity and holiness. The natural tendency of gravity pulls it downward, but the mighty divine magnetism of the Spirit draws it upward.

As the mind thinks, so it becomes. A man is but the aggregation of his own thoughts.

Every spiritual thought is an ingredient of the new creature-a strengthening of the spirit-a step towards life. Therefore, says Paul (Phil. 4:8):

*“Whatsoever things are true, lovely, gracious and just, think on these things.”*

-and thereby become gradually like them.

(Taken from “Be Ye Transformed” Volume 2 pages 125-128 by Bro. G. Growcott)