

Self-Importance: An Unbiblical World-View

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SELF-IMPORTANCE has a way of creeping into our hearts. Once there, it secretly influences every thought, even our spiritual desires and prayers. There comes a tendency to assume that we have an especially significant role to play in the Kingdom of God. Surely if the Lord is about to do something important in the world, it will be through our church, our nation, our theological party. Thus, even prayer for revival is salted with self-interest, with the conviction that we will be near the focal point of God's working in our generation. "Revive America, revive the Baptist churches," we pray.

As a corrective to such a frame of mind, the Lord once said through Isaiah: "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me: I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I; Here am I'" (Isa 65:1). This glorious announcement came in answer to a cry from Judah asking the Lord to work in its nation again.

Our Lord delights to disclose Himself to those who have made no effort to seek for Him and have no inclination to please Him. Nothing brings more praise to His sovereign grace than God's taking the initiative to draw men to the gospel. When the one to whom He reveals Himself is an unlikely candidate for saving grace because he is hostile or uninterested, more attention is directed to the free mercy of God!

Each of us was converted after this sort. We came to the Lord Jesus, but it was because the Father drew us (Joh 6:44). We believed on the Savior but only when God was pleased to reveal His Son in us (Gal 1:16). We repented of our sins, but it was after He took the first step of giving us repentance (Act 5:31). Our chief distinction is that we are living specimens of sinners wholly disinclined to worship God who nonetheless were sought out and found by Him.

So, too, was this the historic origin of Israel. Abram was called out of a family and nation dominated by unbelief and the darkness of false religions. Jehovah made the first move. The Most High initiated a friendship with Abram! He made a choice exhibit of God's sovereign grace.

But beyond the experience of individuals, sovereign initiative is the centerpiece of the Lord's strategy in spreading the gospel. Highlighting the freeness of His saving goodness pleases the Almighty so very much. Therefore, His saving might frequently

runs to the most unexpected places. Isaiah 65:1 was alerting the Hebrews to His intention of extending the gospel privileges to the heathen nations.

As we read about nations of tens of millions with societies wholly ignorant of the Scriptures and wholly committed to the worship of false gods, our natural response would be to feel discouraged. There are regions of the world where the population's collective back is turned toward God. Is there any hope for them? Nothing is more plain in Scripture than the fact that our Lord is determined to launch a knowledge of Himself in heathen regions. He will implant true religion in His enemy's regions, to the praise of His remarkable grace.

Should not our acquaintance with the Lord's delight in showing His sovereign grace excite us to hope for the darkest corners of the earth? As we meditate on the Lord's strategy of saying, "Here am I" to those who are strangers to true worship, will we not give, go, and pray for the evangelization of the regions now hostile to our Savior? Should we not expect that fresh displays of grace will capture the attention of our generation? When our attention is lifted above our own situation, we must admit that the gospel is making remarkable inroads in difficult places. It must continue to do so.



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