

The Amazing Power of Eye-Opening, Tongue-Loosening Grace – *Isaiah 35:5-6a*

Introduction – As Jesus entered into Jerusalem, “drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen” (Luke 19:37). Miracles testified to whom Jesus was, but external miracles did not automatically bring forth faith. In fact, they testified that, without the power of the grace of God, even well-studied religious people will be blind and dumb as rocks (Luke 19:40). But with, and because of, the grace of God, people were being radically transformed. Are you?

Prophecies Fulfilled, But... - Isaiah is packed with prophecies about the coming Messiah and many, many times, we are instructed in the New Testament that Jesus fulfilled these. Isaiah 35:5-6a is just one example. Jesus Himself would quote this passage along with others (Isaiah 29:17-22, 61:1) as an answer to John the Baptist when, from prison, he asks if Jesus is the promised Coming One (Luke 7:18-23). John's doubts may have come from a wrong understanding of how Isaiah 35 was going to be fulfilled. There was a stumbling block to the fiery-zealots who expected the Messiah to come, bringing His kingdom in all its glory and splendor. But this Coming Judge first comes in humility to serve (Mark 10:45).

In addition, throughout Jesus' ministry, His run-ins with the Pharisees revealed that fulfilled prophecies did not necessarily bring forth faith. Once, He did just what these verses were promising, healing a demon-possessed blind and mute man (Matt 12:22-23) only to be questioned by the Pharisees if He was the ruler of demons (v24). Hard hearts won't believe. Blind eyes can't see. Ah, but that's the point of Isaiah 35.

The Amazing Work of God's Grace – What Isaiah was testifying to, and what Jesus' miraculous healings pictured, was something far more profound, eternal and amazing than any physical transformation or healing. Who were the persons God chose to see His glory, hear His Word, walk in His ways, and sing His glory? They were persons who were blind, deaf, lame and dumb.

The Glory of Unconditional Election – The kind of persons who are the followers of Jesus, are not the kind of persons who had it in themselves to be followers of Jesus. We were quite the opposite, hating God and turning from all His ways (Rom 3:9-18). “*The eyes cannot see...till we are united to Christ*” (Calvin). Paul summarizes all of what Isaiah is picturing by telling us that “*And you...who were dead...God...made us alive together with Christ*” (Eph 2:1-7).

The Glory of This Doctrine for You – You and I are proof of the living doctrine of unconditional election. By nature, we were just the same as all others, and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference does not lie in our favor. “*In very many cases, those who now 'rejoice in the hope of the glory of God' were the very worst of men*” (Spurgeon). If He had refused to choose dirty, wicked, rebellious, hypocritical, self-serving individuals, He never would have chosen you or me.

The Efficacious Work of God's Grace – But this prophecy teaches us more. What happens to the blind? They see: they behold the glory of God, they see and fear and rejoice and obey. What happens to the deaf? They hear: they listen to the Word of God and respond to it as though it was the very Word of Life, Food for their souls. What happens to the lame? They walk: they walk in love and in the light and in wisdom, they press on and finish the race. What happens to the dumb? They sing: they cannot cease from rejoicing with song and in calling the nations to join them. Remember, this was impossible for these people to do – but look at them.

The Grace that Justifies, Sanctifies – This grace is potent and radical. Partaking of this grace, it is impossible to say you love God while hating your brother or sister (1 John 4:20) and an offense to say you love God while disobeying His commands (1 John 2:3-4). We are liars if we think we have no sin, and we are Spirit-filled followers if we repent and confess those sins (1 John 1:8-9). This grace refuses to leave us alone. We cannot say that since this grace is so potent we can go on sinning even more and more (Rom 6:1-2) even though His grace covers all our sins. “*How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons, who declare themselves to be the children of God, and yet continue to live in sin...for wherever the grace of God comes, it makes men to differ from what they were before*” (Spurgeon). The grace that justifies, sanctifies. The grace that blots out transgression also removes our natural love of it and makes us long for and seek out the ways of the Lord. In this grace, there really are no plateaus; we are always in the process of our sanctification (Phil 1:6) from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18), higher up and deeper in.

The Kind of Grace Which Leaves Hope for Anyone – Some of you have been the kind of person who says, “You would never find me darkening the door of a church” and some of you know others who are like that now. No one is beyond the reach of this grace; no one is disqualified because of their spiritual disabilities. When confronted by the Pharisees for hanging out with sinners, Jesus said, “*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*” (Luke 5:32). These two things must both be held up: First, He only calls sinners. Second, when He calls efficaciously, sinners repent – and when they do, it is more amazing than a blind man seeing, a lame man walking, or a dumb man singing.