



Key Notes

GOOD GRIEF

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord... (Isaiah 6:1)

Uzziah was one of the “good” kings of Judah. In some 400 years of history, the nation only had eight kings that were called “good.” During his reign of 52 years the nation of Judah experienced prosperity and security. His death precipitated a crisis of national proportions. The foundations were shaken. Everything seemed to be up for grabs.

Yet *that* was the context in which Isaiah had his greatest spiritual experience! He saw God the clearest when his pain was the greatest.

Americans have been conditioned to think that pain and suffering are “bad.” We believe “the pursuit of happiness” is an “inalienable right” to which we are all entitled. To experience pain is almost, well, unpatriotic! We, therefore, invest millions in pain relief. Through medication, entertainment or mind-numbing narcotics, we do everything possible to be free of pain.

The Bible, however, sees pain in a very different light. For example, look at how the psalmist viewed suffering.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word... it was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees... I know O Lord, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me... (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75)

What about you? Are you hurting this morning? Is there something causing pain in your life? It could be a physical challenge, a relational rupture, an emotional meltdown or a spiritual disappointment. Could I make a suggestion? Before you ask God to give you a spiritual narcotic, pause and ask Him what His purposes are in permitting this crisis in your life. Perhaps He wants to use the pain to give you a new vision of Himself!

We may envy Isaiah’s vision of God and wish that we, too, could see the Lord as clearly as he did. But remember: enlightenment came only in the year that his world fell apart! I wonder how many others would have a testimony similar to Isaiah’s.

- In the year of my divorce, I saw the Lord...
- In the year of my cancer, I saw the Lord...
- In the year my son went off the deep end, I saw the Lord...
- In the year my mom died, I saw the Lord...
- In the year of my unemployment, I saw the Lord...

There are gifts that God wants to give us that can only be discovered in the valley of adversity. These “treasures of darkness” (Isaiah 45:3) may well be His greatest blessings.