

ISAIAH'S CALL

Personal Revival and Evangelism

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

Introduction:

1. The need of the hour. Highlight the dearth of labourers in the harvest field.
2. Context and occasion – death of an earthly king. Uzziah died approx... 740 B.C. after a reign of 52 years. Overall, he was a good and godly king but he suffered from a common human failing; success went to his head! His downfall is described in 2 Chronicles 26:16. (V. Buksbazen)
3. "Isaiah 6 begins with an empty throne in Israel but an occupied throne in heaven." (J.M. Riddle) The earthly king was dead but the Eternal King was still on the throne.
4. There are **four clear steps** we can trace in the passage that led Isaiah down the path of personal revival and toward usefulness for God.

I. ISAIAH'S VISION (VS. 1-4)

We know from John 12:41 that this vision was of the preincarnate Christ. God often gave His men glimpses of His glory when He called them to special service. Look at what Isaiah saw! **He was confronted with:**

A. The Highness of God (Vs. 1)

Isaiah saw God as He is – exalted far above all.

1. Exalted in His Sovereignty (Vs. 1a)
 - a. The whole picture here is that of a King on his throne (See Vs. 5). It is a scene of indescribably grandeur, splendour, majesty, sovereignty and Divine power.
 - b. The Hebrew word for 'Lord' here is 'Adonai', a title that emphasises God's absolute authority and sovereignty.
 - c. We need to be restored to a high view of the God we serve in a day when most of Christendom is trying to "lower" God down to our level.
 - d. Eph. 4:6 "One God and Father of all, who *is above all*, and through all, and in you all."
 - e. John 3:31 "He that cometh from above is **above all**: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all."
 - f. Isaiah 57:15 "For thus saith the **high and lofty One** that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is Holy*; I dwell in the **high and holy place**, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

2. Exalted in His Majesty (Vs. 1b)
 - a. The word 'train' comes from the root meaning "to hang down" A train is an extension of a robe or gown that is drawn along behind the person in a formal procession. "It is said that the importance and glory of oriental monarchs was displayed by the extent of their garments." (Riddle)
 - b. Illustration: A bride's train.
 - c. The Lord's train filling the temple highlights his infinite majesty and sovereignty and King of kings.
 - d. Psalm 104:1-2 "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:"

B. The Holiness of God (Vs. 2-4)

The holiness of God is the major emphasis of the vision. The holiness of God is emphasised in:

1. The Seraphims' Posture (Vs. 2)
 - a. The word 'seraphim' has the idea of "burning one". The same Hebrew word is translated 'fiery' in every other place in the O.T.¹ These creatures shine and glow in the holy presence of Almighty God.
 - b. These pure, heavenly creatures reveal a posture of profound awe and reverence for their God. Even though they are sinless, they cover their faces and feet in God's presence. Even as sinless, holy seraphs, the holiness of their God so impacts them that they will not gaze directly upon Him.
 - c. "With two wings they covered their faces, in awe that dared not gaze at the glory. With two they covered their feet, in acknowledgement of the lowliness of their glorious service. With twain they were flying or hovering. The verbs are in the imperfect tense, describing what they were doing continually." (W.E. Vine)
 - d. **Where is the holy awe and fear of God in our day?** The God we serve is Adonai, Almighty, All-powerful, Before all things, Beautiful, Creator, Everlasting, Ever Present, El Shaddai (God Almighty), Elohim (God of power & Majesty, Creator), God, Glorious, Holy, High, Immutable, Immortal, Invisible, Indescribable, Unchangeable, I AM, Just, Jehovah – Jehovah Jireh (The Lord will provide), Jehovah Rapha (The Lord who heals), Jehovah Nissi (The Lord our Banner), Jehovah Shalom (The Lord is Peace), Jehovah Raah (The Lord our Shepherd), Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord our Righteousness), Jehovah

¹ See Num. 21:6,8, Is. 14:29, 30:6

Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts), Jehovah Mekoddishkem (The Lord Who Sanctifies You), Jehovah Shammah (The Lord is There), King – King of Israel, King Everlasting, King of kings and Lord of lords, Marvellous, Majestic, Never Changing, Omnipotent (all-powerful), Omnipresent (everywhere present), Omniscient (knows all things), Only Wise God, Perfect, Pure, Powerful, Potentate, Provider, Ruler, Redeemer, Self-existent, Self-sufficient, Sovereign, Sinless, the Same yesterday and today and forever, Victor over sin, death and the grave.

2. The Seraphims' Praise (Vs. 3-4)

a. The Audience of their Praise (Vs. 3a)

Their cry of praise is directed:

- i. To the Lord. They are magnifying God's holiness in His presence. Compare with Revelation 4:6-9.²
- ii. To each other. Notice the emphasis here on the fact that they were crying out to each other as if to keep the truth of God's holiness continually before each other.
- iii. Remember! Singing in the church is to the Lord and to each other. It is for the exaltation of the Saviour and the edification of the saints. It is for Christ and Christians.

See Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16

b. The Anthem of their Praise (Vs. 3b)

i. The Holy Character of God – “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts”.

1. The holiness of God is the focus of their cries of adoration in God's presence. Of all attributes of God, this is the attribute that captivates the hearts of these holy beings. “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy**, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” (Rev. 4:8)
2. Holiness is the only attribute of God that is repeated in this manner in the Bible. There are many truths about God in the Bible, and we need to cherish them all, but God's holiness could be called the chief of his attributes.
3. The emphasis of the vision is on the absolute purity of God. Holiness speaks of the “otherness” of God and his “aboveness” over all His creation. There is none like Him in all the universe. He is God alone.

² We believe these are probably the same creatures described in Isaiah 6.

4. The vision made a huge impact on Isaiah. Interestingly, his favourite designation of God was **“the Holy One”** or **“the Holy One of Israel”** (30 times in Isaiah). In fact, apart from several references in the Psalms and a couple in Jeremiah, the title “the Holy One of Israel” is unique to Isaiah.
5. If you could have asked Isaiah “what is God like”, he would have immediately said without hesitation, **“God is Holy!”**
6. Psalm 99:1-3 “The LORD reigneth; let the people **tremble**: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved. The LORD *is* great in Zion; and he *is* **high** above all the people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *for it is holy.*”
 - ii. The Glory of God – “the whole earth is full of his glory”. In Creation, we get a glimpse of God’s glory if we have eyes to see. See the crash of ocean waves, the wind rustling through the trees, the stars twinkling in the night sky, and you will get some sense of the infinity and immensity of God. See Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:20.
- c. The Aftershock from their Praise (Vs. 4)
 - i. There was a shaking of the house (Vs. 4a). If the pillars of the temple were moved at the mention of God’s holiness, how our hearts and lives should be moved and stirred when confronted with the Holiness of our God.
 - ii. There was a filling of the house (Vs. 4b) This is the cloudy smoke so often associated with the Holy Presence of God in the Bible. The house of God was filled with the glory of God.

II. ISAIAH’S CONFESSION (VS. 5)

Note the word ‘then’ in Vs. 5 & 6. We have now described the effect this powerful vision had upon Isaiah. The vision of His God enthroned in His indescribably majesty and glory had a profound and lasting impact upon Isaiah. When Isaiah saw God for who He was, he saw himself for what he was. Isaiah confessed:

A. I am Undone (Vs. 5a)

1. The word ‘undone’ is a powerful word meaning “to be destroyed, done away with, perish, be cut off”. It is translated ‘perish’ (Ps. 49:12, 20), “brought to silence” (Is. 15:1), “cease” (Jer. 14:17, Lam. 3:49), “cut off” (Jer. 47:5, Hos. 10:7) and “cut down” (Zep. 1:11). Isaiah gained a deep sense of his nothingness and unworthiness in

God's presence. He came to the end of himself. Self was put to death in the presence of God, not inflated in the presence of God.

2. This was a death-to-self experience for Isaiah and was the key to his subsequent usefulness for God. God's ways are the total opposite to the world. God does not puff us up in pride, self-confidence and self-esteem. He lovingly smashes our self-confidence that we might become God dependent.
3. "At the cross I see that I'm ended, not mended" (Roy Hession).

B. I am Unclean (Vs. 5b)

1. "I am a man of unclean lips" = Isaiah was conscious of his sinfulness in a general sense but note that he specifically refers to the uncleanness of his lips. This is fitting given the fact his calling was to be a mouthpiece for His God. He is acknowledging his sin and his unworthiness to speak for God. How can sinful lips proclaim a sinless God! Only when cleansed by God!
2. "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" = Isaiah was conscious of the sin of his people. Note the order of his confession – himself first, others second. The holiness of God not only produces a soberness about sin in one's own life but also a sharpness to the sin of the nation. The desensitisation of this generation to the gravest kinds of sin is one of the great blights of our time. We are living in a day where Christians laugh and excuse sin more than they mourn over sin. **The cure? Personal revival produced by a fresh view of God's holiness applied with power to our hearts by the Spirit of God.**
3. Note that it was the sight of God on His throne that produced this contrition and confession in Isaiah – "for mine eyes have seen the king, the LORD of hosts."
4. Summary: We will not be truly usable for God until we have a sense of our corruptness, nothingness and unworthiness to say or do anything for God. We need to come to a place of deep **humility** and **brokenness** before God. Self must die that then we might live and serve in resurrection power.
5. Gospel application: The first step to salvation is to admit you are an unclean sinner before God, then plead for cleansing.

III. ISAIAH'S CLEANSING (VS. 6-7)

Take note of the second 'then', revealing the blessed outcome from Isaiah's confession. Confession brought cleansing and ultimately equipping.

A. It was Fast Cleansing (Vs. 6a)

1. One of the Seraphims, undoubtedly sent by God, flies to Isaiah with a live coal from the altar. Note that he couldn't touch the coal

personally but had to use tongs. Isaiah was touched on the lips with this coal, but the angelic being did not touch it himself. We have the immense privilege of experiencing the direct touch of God's grace on our sinful lives, cleansing and transforming us.

2. The swiftness of the answer reveals the grace of God and His readiness to cleanse in response to true contrition and confession.

B. It was Fiery Cleansing (Vs. 6b)

1. This coal was taken from the altar of sacrifice. Here, the lambs would be slain, their blood would be poured out, and then burned with fire on the altar. The work of Christ on Calvary is the basis of cleansing for His servants.
2. Cleansing is available for salvation.
3. Cleansing is also available for sanctification and service (1 John 1:9).
4. Confession and cleansing take place in God's holy presence.

C. It was Focused Cleansing (Vs. 7)

1. Notice that the cleansing was applied to the specific area of need. Specific confession brings specific relief and restoration.
2. The word 'purged' comes from the Hebrew word translated repeatedly as 'atonement' in the Old Testament.
3. God's men need God's special touch on their lips to give them the words to speak and the power with which to speak them. They need their lips fired with fire from the altar!
4. Jeremiah 1:9 "Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

IV. ISAIAH'S COMMISSION (VS. 8-9)

Observe 3 truths about Isaiah's commission:

A. The Sequence leading to the Call (Vs. 8a)

1. The sequence of events in the passage is significant. There is a definite link between personal revival and a call to service.
2. Notice that the commission did not come until there had first been a deeper work of spiritual revival in Isaiah. He only heard the call after he had dealt with the blockage of sin in his life. While the lives of God's people are clogged up with sin and compromise, they will not be in a position to hear the call of God for service.
3. Andrew Murray wisely observed, "Great advances in missions are always connected with a deep revival of spiritual life, and a higher devotion to the Lord Jesus."
4. Why are so few hearing the call to preach in our day? Because we are laughing about our sin instead of confessing our sin. While our young people continue to drink from the sewers of social media,

there will be few labourers. Why would someone surrender to God's call when they love sport more than the Saviour? We need revival from the pulpit to the pew – a revived view of God's holiness that leads to humbleness over our sin.

5. **Personal testimony:** Rededicating my life to God's call came after a season of personal revival. After a season of getting right with God as a sixteen-year-old, the Spirit of God moved in my heart afresh concerning my call to preach. I would not have heard that call if I had persisted in my rebellion against God and my parents. I would not have heard it if I was still pursuing my own lusts and sinful desires.

B. The Sensitivity to the Call (Vs. 8b)

1. Isaiah is now allowed the privilege of hearing the voice of the Triune God speaking, and he hears the question that is upon the heart of the Eternal God, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?"
2. That same Divine question comes ringing down to us today. God is still searching for willing hearts who will go for Him. Note that God did not send the Seraphims to preach His Word! God uses men – saved, cleansed sinners.

C. The Surrender to the Call (Vs. 8c-9)

1. Notice that God did not directly address Isaiah. He simply allowed Isaiah to hear the Godhead express the searching questions, "Whom shall I send?" and "who will go for us?". Isaiah must voluntarily surrender for such a task. God would not force him.
2. Isaiah responds with those now-famous words, "Here am I; send me."
3. You can't say "Here am I send me" until you have first confessed "I am undone and unclean".

Conclusion:

1. What is your view of God? Have you lost the awe, wonder and reverence?
2. What is your view of yourself? Do you see yourself for who you are in God's presence? Are you God-reliant or self-reliant?
3. Will you, like Isaiah, surrender to God and say "Here am I send me?"