

Experiencing the Presence of God

Isaiah 6:1-8

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Certainly it's apparent to you if you're a Christian as it is to me that we live in a profane, godless, secularized and for the most part atheistic culture. Even our religion is a kind of atheism, for it attempts to erase the true God and substitute in its place a God who makes men comfortable. And whenever I read that 50 million people in America are supposed to be born again, and I see in comparison with that statistic the constant ever-increasing secularization of our society, I find that the two don't go together very well. We're supposed to be a Christian nation. It's even popular to be born again. Yet the impact of Christianity on our country seems to be weak, seems to be shallow, it seems to be superficial, it seems to be saccharine. Being a Christian may be in but it doesn't seem to be having much of an impact. We are caught up in a kind of self-indulgence and self-centeredness that even views God only in terms of what He can do for us. And God becomes sort of a utilitarian genie, you rub your little theological lamp, He pops out and says three wishes.

People are preoccupied with relational things. The person who criticizes the teaching of the Word of God by saying, "Well, it's too strong, it alienates people," is really saying, "We want a God who makes us comfortable." And I guess what I really see in Christianity as I look at it across our country is the absence of a theology. It just seems to me that there isn't one. There's a lot of talk about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but in terms of a substantive definition of the trinity and an understanding of theology, it just really isn't there. We're really big on relationships and we certainly don't really understand the source of all of them, God Himself. And I guess if there's one element of theology that we really don't understand it is the theology of God, theology proper it's called, we don't understand God, God's nature. The fundamental fact of our faith is God. And the fundamental fact about God is that God is holy, God is awful, if you want to use that sense, God is majestic, God is fearful, He is mighty, He is awesome, He is transcendent.

In fact, in Exodus 15:11 it says He is glorious in holiness. The beauty of the Lord is the beauty of holiness. I don't think we understand the holiness of God. Now I would also want to add that I don't think we can understand fully the holiness of God but I think we can understand it a lot better than we do. We tend to not want to understand it at all.

And I want to share with you tonight some things that the Spirit of God has just been running through my heart for the last couple of weeks about the holiness of God. I confess at the very beginning that I don't really understand the fullness of His holiness but I'm sure working at it. I confess also that it shouldn't be a sermon, it ought to be a long series but I want you to gain whatever you can from our time tonight. The central thing I want you to see about God is that He is holy. And that weighs very heavily on our hearts if we understand it.

In order to help us focus on that I want you to take your Bible and turn to the sixth chapter of Isaiah...Isaiah chapter 6. And I want us to examine the first part of the chapter and then if time

permits, the remaining part. And I want us to see the holiness of God as Isaiah relates it to us here.

Just a little background. Isaiah was a prophet. Not just any prophet, some feel perhaps the greatest prophet of Israel. Isaiah was a man who was a statesman, who spoke for God to common people and also to kings. He was known in the palace. In fact he was a consultant to the monarchs. He prophesied during the reign of four kings, a time of great crisis, a time of great chaos, a time of moral decadence, a time when God's people were turning their backs on Him. In fact during the time of Isaiah's prophecy the northern kingdom Israel was taken captive by invaders. The southern kingdom, Judah, was attacked by Assyria. These were unstable times, difficult times and he had a very strategic ministry.

In the midst of these days of Isaiah there came along a king in Judah who compared to the others was a man of some influence, some goodness, some excellence. His name was Uzziah. He is mentioned in verse 1. Uzziah reigned for a long time...52 years. And he was generally a successful king and brought benefits to his people. In fact he subdued most of the hereditary enemies of Judah and brought them some time of peace. He was able to turn Jerusalem into a fortified city, well equipped with arms for its own defense and he gave the people a great sense of security. According to 2 Chronicles chapter 26, he developed agriculture and he developed commerce for the nation until it became extremely prosperous.

The sad story of Uzziah is that in the end pride lifted up his heart. He looked at all the things he'd done, given them a time of peace from their enemies, fortified Jerusalem, brought security, developed agriculture and commerce. He was filled with pride and God gave him terminal leprosy.

Now in spite of how he ended up, his time of reigning in Judah provided a season of peace from all of the chaos. And when he died, apparently there was a certain feeling of panic that began to set in. "What are we going to do now? Uzziah has died." They became fearful.

I believe that the fear was probably greatest in the heart of the God-fearing Jews who through all these years had maintained a true devotion to God. Because they knew that through the time of Uzziah there was an ever-increasing moral decadence, there was an ever-ascending disobedience, there was a defiant kind of idolatry. And it was almost as if as long as Uzziah was around, he sort of preserved the whole thing from coming apart at the seams. And in chapters 2 through 5 of Isaiah, Isaiah chronicles some of the terrible sins of the people of God.

But in the midst of their sinning they were so secure because of Uzziah that they just kind of went on with it all. But then he died. And they panicked. And they were afraid. There were some events that made them afraid. Five years before Uzziah died, Tiglath-Pileser, the ambitious warrior king of Assyria, suddenly appeared on the horizon in the near east. And he had a grand design to conquer all the kingdoms between the Euphrates and the Nile and to establish in their place the great Assyrian empire. Naturally all of the target nations, the nations that were imperiled by his designs, began to seethe with apprehension and revolts broke out. They began to form alliances against Assyria. They began to plot political intrigues and sabotage and rebellion. The kingdoms of Samaria and Judah were tottering on the brink of doom, not only because of Tiglath-Pileser but because of the spiritual moral rot that was internal. Instead of turning to God as Isaiah had told them to do, the people were caught up in a frenzy of self-indulgence and dissipation and moral decadence. In fact, in Isaiah 22, Isaiah says, "And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, but behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we

die."

Instead of turning around to crying and mourning, they said let's really live it up, it may all end tomorrow. That's how it was when Uzziah died. The leader was dead. Among all of the God-fearing Jews who may have sought the face of God was the prophet himself, Isaiah. And he goes to the temple in chapter 6, let's pick it up there.

The king is dead and Isaiah goes to the temple. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and His robe filled the temple." Now stop right there. I saw the Lord, he says, I saw the Lord. Incredible statement. Think about the situation. You'll notice the word "Lord" there, whenever you see in the Old Testament "Lord" with an upper case L and lower case letters, it's reflective of the Hebrew word Adhonay, when you see it, for example, down in verse 3 where all the letters are upper case, or capital, it is reflective of the word Yahweh. Yahweh has reference to God's essential nature. Adhonay has reference to His sovereignty.

Now with that in mind you'll understand verse 1. "In the year that we lost our human king, I saw the real King." There never can be much panic set in when you know God is still on the throne. It may have looked to Isaiah as if the whole thing was falling apart, but Adhonay is a title meaning the sovereign one. The human king was dead but history doesn't depend on human kings but on the absolute monarchy, the supreme Lord Adhonay, God Himself. His kingship is infinitely superior to that of Uzziah or anyone else. And so God in the midst of the crisis to let Isaiah and his people know that all is not lost makes a personal appearance. And Isaiah sees Him. And he sees Him sitting upon a throne.

Isn't it great to know that God hadn't abdicated? That when the whole world falls apart and everything seems to be going to pieces, God's still there on the throne...exalted it says, high and lifted up and His robe filled the temple. And this, of course, is a picture of His majesty and His exaltation, His glory and His power. And by the way, make a little note in the margin of that verse, write down John 12:41 because in John 12:41 the writer tells us that this was Christ, really a preincarnate Christophany, an appearance of Christ.

Now look at verse 2. As Isaiah sees this vision it says, "And above it...that is above the throne...stood the seraphim, each one had six wings with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly." Now what is a seraphim? Or what are seraphims, since it's plural? Apparently they are a certain group of angels whose personal calling and design by God was to attend to God's holiness. They are fiery guardians of the holiness of God.

Now why do they have three sets of wings? Well, have you ever noticed that when God makes anything, He makes it to do what He expects it to do? He makes it functional. And if they had six wings, it wasn't just that God got carried away with the idea of making wings. There was something very purposeful in that. Notice it says that with two, at the end of the verse, he did fly. Apparently these marvelous, incredible, supernatural, eternal creatures had the capacity to hover like some kind of a celestial helicopter around the throne of God which was high and lifted up. And upon some occasions as indicated in verse 6 would do the bidding of God as the one who flew with the live coal. But they hovered around the throne of God. Amazing.

And then it says, "They had two more wings with which they covered their feet." Why? There are

several possibilities. Some say that was a sign of humility, of lowliness, of humble service. There may be that thought but that might be stretching the point of the angelic role. Perhaps it's better to see it this way. Do you remember that Moses was up on a normal plain old dirt hill one day, probably a hill he had walked many times. But he turned around and he saw a burning bush and a voice came to him out of the bush and said...do what?...take off your shoes, take off your shoes, Moses. Why? "For you're standing on...what?...holy ground." Now your reaction to that might have been, "Huh? I've been here a lot, same old stuff." But whenever the divine presence appears, everything is immediately sanctified. This was holy ground not for any virtue in and of itself but because God was there and His pervasive presence sanctified the earth under His feet. There may be a sense in which whatever kind of ground there is in glory, whatever kind of place angels land is a place so sacred that they cover their feet for it's holy ground.

Then it says they had two wings with which to cover their face. That's a little easier to understand. If they hover around the throne of God, they're exposed there to His full glory. You remember in Exodus 33, Moses said so brashly to God, he says...God says to him, "You're going to be My man, go lead My people. And Moses says, I'm not going to do it alone. Who's going to go with me?" And God says, "My presence will go with you, I'll go with you." And Moses said, "That's a nice promise, God, but I'd like some proof. I mean, I appreciate You saying that but would You just prove it by showing me Your glory?" And God gives him a very good answer. He says, "No man can see My glory and...what?...live." No creature could withstand the sight of the blazing fullness of the glory of God.

God promises proximity but never full revelation. So God says to Moses, "I'll tell you what, I'll tuck you in the cleft of a rock and I'll let My...and the Hebrew means...My hind quarters, My back parts." I like to think of it as afterglow. You can't see the whole deal, but I'll let you see My afterglow. I think maybe that's why the angels covered their face, I don't think they could have existed in the full effulgence of the glory of the holiness of God. Incredible creatures.

But the most incredible thing about them is not what they look like, it's what they said. It's what they cried. Verse 3, "And one cried unto another," they had an antiphonal thing going, back and forth, "and they said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." Now can you imagine just flying around forever saying that? No you can't because you don't understand the worthiness nor the holiness of God and neither do I, but that's what seraphim do. Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of Your glory.

Why holy, holy, holy? You say, "Well, that's because that's the way the song is written." No, no, no. The song came later. Why holy, holy, holy? Somebody says it's the trinity, one for each member. Certainly the trinity is thrice holy. But the Jews had a figure of speech, a device they used when they wanted to emphasize something. They had many literary devices they could use but one of them they commonly used was repetition. And that can be illustrated many many places in the Bible. Very frequently before Jesus would say some very important truth, He would say two words, what were they? Verily, verily. Why didn't He just say verily? Or truly, truly? You know what that word is? Amen...amen, amen, amen. Now you say, "Now wait a minute. You're supposed to wait till the end to say that." That's right. In fact in the Hebrew congregation the rabbi stood up and the rabbi would teach and the people in response would endorse his teaching by saying, "Amen, amen." Jesus did not wait for such endorsement. He started out by saying Amen, amen first and then He spoke because He didn't need any humans to validate what He said. But when He said it twice He was affirming by repetition the significance of what He was to say, emphasis is the issue. And when the

Bible says "holy, holy, holy" what it's trying to do is emphasize the holiness of God. We don't even know that God is holy, let alone holy, holy, holy.

By the way, do you know that that is the only attribute of God in all of the Scripture that is spoken of in repetition three times? Never does the Bible say God is love, love, love. Never does it say God is light, light, light, truth, truth, truth, mercy, mercy, mercy, wrath, wrath, wrath. But it says He's holy, holy, holy. This is an absolute priority, people. It is impossible to understand the fullness of it and yet you must understand as much as the Scripture gives us. The absence of a clear understanding of God's holiness is the reason for our shallowness, it is the reason for our impotence, it is the reason for our selfishness, it is the reason for our weakness, it is the reason for our disobedience. We don't really understand how holy God is that's why we compromise, that's why we are the worst kind of pragmatists who do only what fulfills our desires.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

One day the disciples came to Jesus, you know it, they said, "Teach us to pray." He said, "Here's how to pray. Our Father who art in heaven...what?...hallowed be Thy name." You know what hallowed means? Holy. You want to pray? Start out by a recognition of the holiness of God. God is holy. R.C. Sproul(?) made an interesting statement, he said, "Any attempt to understand God apart from His holiness is idolatry." It's true. This is affirmed in the Ten Commandments where we are to have no other gods before us and under no circumstances are we ever to use the name of the Lord God in vain. He is holy, holy, holy. The entire earth is filled with His glory and we have to acknowledge that.

Now let's see how Isaiah reacted in verse 4. First of all, "And the posts, or the pillars...or perhaps it's best...the foundations of the door moved at the voice of Him who cried and the house was filled with smoke." Now this is getting pretty dramatic. The place begins to shake. The whole vision is Mount St. Helens, everything begins to move. It's like an erupting volcano. The foundations of the place begin to shake and fire and smoke which could either be emanating from the altar or could be a manifestation of the fiery presence of God as at Mount Sinai. In other words, we begin to see a holy God of judgment. This is not a manifestation particularly of God's mercy, but of His tremendous majestic holiness. It is awful, it is fearful, it is like Sinai, it is a statement to Isaiah and His people that God is a consuming fire and you can't toy around with God. You'll be consumed.

What was Isaiah's reaction? Verse 5, what was his reaction, did he say, "Hey, I have had a vision, I'm going to get myself a new wardrobe and go on the road?" Well what did he say? "Now, what I want to do is analyze this thing. This needs some analysis. Got to think this through categorically?" Or did he say, "Boy, now if you didn't think I was a true messenger of God, let me tell you now, folks, I've seen Him?"

None of the above was his reaction. Verse 5, "Then said I, Woe is me." That's enough, folks, if he didn't say anything else, to get the whole picture. That's not just a sign of despair, although I think there's despair in it. It's far more than that. You see, in the Old Testament prophets gave pronouncements, they gave announcements, sometimes called oracles. And their prophetic announcements were very often preceded by the statement, "Thus saith the Lord." And their

statements could be positive or negative. When they were positive they'd often say, "Blessed." When they were negative they would often say...what?... "woe, woe." Isaiah uses the word "woe" at least ten times in his prophecy to refer to God's judgment on others. Jeremiah used it. Ezekiel used it. Nahum used it. Amos used it. Habakkuk used it. Hosea used it. Zephaniah used it. Zechariah used it. Micah used it. Jesus used it in Matthew 24, He said, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees." And the angels of judgment in Revelation use it. It is a word of cursing. And here is an amazing thing, a prophet of God pronounces a curse on himself. Incredible...incredible. This is the best man in the land. This is a servant of God. But when he sees the holiness of God, he can but pronounce a curse upon his own head. He can only see his defilement, not his goodness.

And then he says this, "For I am undone," nehmethee(??), from a root word which means in the passive to be lost or to perish or to be annihilated, or to be destroyed. I am destroyed. I am devastated by the holiness of God. I'm wiped out. I'm falling apart. I'm coming loose at the seams. I'm disintegrating. Why? Because he saw God and when he saw God for the first time in his life he saw Isaiah. And he knew how wretched he was. He may have been a secure fellow before this. Everybody honored him, patted him on the back. Everybody who was godly said he was the best of men, spiritual leader, voice of God, obedient saint, servant of the Lord. One glimpse of God's holiness and the man was a wretch in his own eyes.

What was the most important element of a prophet? What was the most important instrument of a prophet? His mouth, right? His mouth to speak. Look what he says. "I am a man of unclean lips." You know what that means? I have a dirty mouth. Me, the prophet of God who should open my mouth to speak of God, I have got a dirty mouth and I dwell in the midst of a people who have dirty mouths. How do you know this? "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts and for the first time I see myself. I'm a dirty man, have a dirty mouth. I've seen Yahweh of hosts."

Beloved, no one can stand in the presence of God without becoming profoundly and devastatingly aware of his own wretchedness, sinfulness. That's why I'm telling you. If we don't understand the holiness of God, we don't understand our sinfulness. And we don't understand how heinous it is and we don't understand the consequences of it. To see even the smallest glimpse of God's holiness is to be devastated...devastated. Isaiah would never be the same, never. Neither would anybody else.

Let me give you some illustrations. Look at Habakkuk. Habakkuk, that wonderful prophet, if you can't find it, don't worry, just listen. Habakkuk was second guessing God. Oh, we do that. "God, You know, I've been...for a long time with this burden and I keep telling You, God, to come down here and do something. Please, God, revive Your people, come down here, God, and do it. I don't understand this, God, You're supposed to be a God of love, a God of mercy, a God of forgiveness. Come down here, God, and do something." In chapter 2 he really kind of gets to the place where he says, "I'm just going to...I'm just going to sit here until God gives me an answer. Come on, God." So chapter 2 verse 1, "I'm going to stand on my watch, I'm going to set myself upon the tower and I'm going to watch to see what He will say unto me and what I shall answer when I'm reprov'd." I know I'm going to get it but I'm going to stick around for the answer. God, I want an answer. Verse 2, "And the Lord answered me." God gave him an answer.

You know what happened? When He got all done with the answer, Habakkuk was a wreck. That's right. Because God was thundering like lightning and fire in the recitation of the history of what he had done. And you finally come down to chapter 3 verse 16, God gives him this long answer and then you have Habakkuk praying and then you have this, "When I heard," 3:16, "my belly trembled."

When is the last time you trembled in the presence of God? "My lips quivered at the voice. Rottenness entered into my bones and I trembled in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble, when He cometh up unto the people and He will invade them with His troops." Man, he says, when I heard the voice of God and I heard Him speak, I shook from top to bottom and I long to rest in the day of trouble.

You know, it's just...to me it is so superficial today when you hear all these people who sort of fancy that they would love to go through the Tribulation. That is the most silly kind of folly imaginable. Apart from the theology of whether we will or won't, that kind of silly preoccupation betrays the absence of an understanding of the holy wrath of God. Any of us that had any sense at all would run from that, not seek it as if it were some glamorous experience. Look what happened. His belly trembled, his lips quivered. Why? Because God spoke. And when he knew he was in the presence of God, he almost fell apart.

Look at Job. Job, just before Psalms, and eventually, you know, through all this book you come to chapter 38, Job is finally to the place where he says, "All right, God, what's going on? I mean, I've heard all the answers from all of these friends I've got, the total of which adds up to nothing, and I want an answer, Lord, what is the deal?" Chapter 38 verse 1, "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind." You want an answer? Here it comes, "God spoke." And then you know what happens, folks? Job gets the worst browbeating in human history. God literally bats him from pillar to post. "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? What ignoramus stands before Me? You better gird up your loins like a man cause you're going to get it in this answer. And I want one back? Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Huh? Where were you when the morning star sang together? Who shut up the sea with doors when it broke forth?" And He does this chapter after chapter after chapter...where were you? Where were you? And after a while he's saying, "I...ah...I...I was...." what am I going to say?

Chapter 41, "Can you draw out Leviathan the sea monster with a hook? Can you control the animal world? Can you control the rain, the clouds, the snow, the vegetation, the movement of the stars? Where were you? Can you do this? If you can't, Job, be quiet." And when it was all said and done, chapter 42 verse 5, "Job said this, God, I've heard about You by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees You." I always had heard what You were like, now I know. What's his reaction? "I abhor myself, I repent in dust and ashes."

No one ever comes before the holiness of God without devastation. Look at Luke...two passages, chapter 8, Luke chapter 8 verse 22, "It came to pass on a certain day, Jesus went into a boat with His disciples and said to them, Let's go over to the other side of the lake. They launched forth. As they sailed He fell asleep and there came down a storm of wind on the lake and they were filled with water and they were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and woke Him saying, Master, Master, we perish, we're going to drown out here. He arose, He rebuked the wind and the raging of the sea and they ceased and there was a calm." Took care of it. "And He said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being...what?...afraid marveled saying one to another, What manner of man is this for He commandeth even the winds and water and they obey Him?"

You want to know something? They were ten times more afraid when they saw His power than when they saw the sea raging because instantly they knew they were in the presence of God. And that's cause for panic. They would take the storm rather than that. They were shattered because they knew their hearts were open books to His omniscience.

Back up to chapter 5 verse 1, "It came to pass as people pressed on Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee, same thing, saw two boats standing by the lake but the fishermen were gone out of them washing their nets. He entered into one of the boats which was Simon's and asked him that he would thrust out a little from the land and He sat down and taught the people out of the boat. When He had ceased speaking He said to Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for draft. Simon answering...he always had an answer, didn't he?...Master, we've been fishing all night and we haven't caught any, I mean, there's no fish around here. Nevertheless at Your word I'll let down the net. And when they had done this they enclosed a great multitude of fish and the net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners who were in the other boat they should come and help them and they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. And Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees and said, O thanks so much for the fish...is that what he said?...what did he say?...Depart from me, go away, get out of here, go away." Why are you telling Him that? "I'm a sinful man, O...what?...Lord." He realized in that moment by that incredible miracle that he was standing in the presence of God. He said go away, I don't want to be so exposed. He was astonished. He knew God was there.

You remember Manoah? The angel came to Manoah, said to him, "You're going to have a son, his name is Samson." And then the angel went up to heaven in a fire and glory. And Manoah cried out in Judges 13:22 this statement, "We shall surely die because we have seen God." You see, these people understood the holiness of God.

Beloved, can I tell you something? It is a...it is literally the grace of God that you and I are not this moment consumed by the fire of His wrath. People say, "Oh, why is it that there's so much trouble in the world? If God is a God of love, why...?" Listen. If He weren't a God of love, only one sin by one individual one time would be the end of everything. We want a God who is non-threatening. That's not the God of the Bible. They're afraid of Him. You want to know something? I have a godly fear in my heart. When I would fall into a sin, I sense God's holiness and He hates evil. And I don't want to pay the consequence.

All these people we read about just now, they're afraid in the presence of God, and so should you be. And here we Christians come along and we say, "Well, the world doesn't like a God like that, you'll alienate them. We want a God who is sort of nice," and so we come up with a washed out, watered down, inoffensive substitute for the gospel that is pervasively humanistic, doesn't speak about fire, wrath, holiness, vengeance, hell, punishment. Sure, men love darkness rather than light so let's just not give them a whole lot of light cause they won't like it. You want to know something? The light of God terrifies them just like when you turn over a rock and the bugs scurry. The holy has always and will always threaten the unholy.

And even Christians, we want our little superficialities. We're constantly playing little silly church games, compromising all over the place, disobeying whenever we feel like it, right in the face of a holy God. Would to God that we could see Him and if we saw Him once like Isaiah did, I question if we'd ever do it again.

Let's go back and I just want to...I'll just wrap it up right now. We'll cover some more of the chapter some other time. What happened now? Look at this, verse 6, this man is devastated. This man is shattered. Is God going to leave him that way? We can't leave him that way. Verse 6, "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off

the altar." Now watch this. "He laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged."

You know what it takes to get to that point where you're purged? It takes a broken and a contrite heart in the face of the holiness of God. He was there. No cheap grace here, folks. No easy believism. There is pain involved in true redemption. The lips sensitive, tender. In fact, in expressing affection to one another we use the lips because of their tenderness and sensitivity. And it is to that very part of the body that the angel places a live coal and sears the flesh. I believe that true salvation is painful. There is a wrestling. There is a pain.

But his iniquity was taken away and his sin was purged. I always think of John Bunyan who said that before he had the sense of knowing Jesus Christ, he agonized over his sin for no less than 18 months. It was painful, it's not easy. It takes a broken and a shattered heart and the pain of giving up sin and embracing the sovereign God.

But once it's done, then verse 8, this is so wonderful, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I...get this ambivalence...Here am I, send me. You? You're undone. You're woeful. You're wretched. You've got a dirty mouth. You hang around with people with a dirty mouth. Yeah, but I've been cleansed, see."

The last statement he made was a declaration of his lack of worthiness and now he says, "Lord, You need anybody? I'll go...I'll go." The only way a man is fit to serve is when he's cleansed by the grace of God. I'll go.

Verse 9, "And He said...what?...Go." Let's stop right there. He said go...a purged man. Beloved, I think all of this looks at the cross, don't you? I think all of this looks at the cross. I think the cross is the live coal that touches our lips. The cross is the thing that purges us. You see, you and I could never stand in the presence of a holy God, we would be consumed. That's why the Pharisees had to kill Jesus. I mean, they had to kill Him, He ruined the average. He came along and He was God and His holiness was so real that their supposed holiness was exposed and they had to kill Him. And when He died He died not because they had to kill Him, but because God had to let Him die for our sin. The cross touches us and makes us pure.

That's why we come to His table, isn't it? If you will remember tonight just this, He died because God is holy and had to pour His fury on someone, it's either you or Him, He took your place. Is that cause for rejoicing? Let's pray.

Father, in these closing moments tonight, You've taken little extra time to prepare our hearts, that this brief time at Your table might be meaningful to us. We pray that it will be indeed so. O God, we know You're holy. May we not be so foolish as to toy with Your holiness. We know also that there is no greater manifestation of Your holiness than at Calvary. We see a great hatred of sin that caused You even to take the life of Your own Son, may we see there, too, Your grace. May we see the cross as that live coal that touches our unclean lips and makes us pure so that we can hear Your call. Speak to every heart.

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