

Isaiah 6: The Prophet's Response

Read Isaiah 6:5-8

At the sight of God's overwhelming holiness, what is Isaiah's immediate, instinctive reaction?

"Woe is me, for I am ruined!" (v.5). Isaiah is overcome with shame, dead, and despair. He pronounces doom on himself. Seeing and experiencing God's holiness and awesome reality, he is gripped by the uncleanness and unworthiness, not just of himself but of his entire people. Having seen God, he has truly seen himself for the first time, and the reality is gut-wrenching.

This one realization will color Isaiah's entire ministry. The greatness of God and the sinfulness of people are no longer vague, abstract concepts. They flow from a deep, burning, unforgettable memory.

Why does Isaiah focus on his lips as being unclean? Why not his thoughts or his hands? We're not told, but consider these passages from the New Testament:

- *The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell...No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.* (James 3:6-8, NASB)
- In Matthew 15, Jesus said that what comes out of our mouth comes from our heart. Our lips are a sure sign of what's in our heart (vv.10-11, 17-20).

God responds to Isaiah through one of His seraphim. He flies to Isaiah with a burning coal from the altar. When it touches Isaiah's lips, his sin is taken away and forgiven.

God's cleansing can take an unclean, self-condemned sinner and make him worthy, not only of standing in the holy presence of God, but of serving as His messenger, carrying God's holy Word in his mouth. When Isaiah hears that God needs someone to go and speak for Him, Isaiah responds enthusiastically, *"Here am I. Send me!"* Having seen God and experienced His deliverance, He wants to go and share His message.

Our holy God doesn't push us away in our neediness. He draws us near. He cleanses, calls, and uses us.

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