

Isaiah 6:1-8 (NIV)

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

23-06-01-Empowered for Holiness

Pentecost, Holy Spirit, heart cleansing, consecration

Isaiah 6:1-8

To serve a holy God, we must be touched by fire from God’s altar.

INTRODUCTION:

–Until Pentecost, the disciples were unprepared for ministry. One of their needs was to be **empowered for holiness by the Holy Spirit**.

–When Peter preached to the Gentiles, Pentecost seemed to happen again– Acts 10:45-47. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” (Later, in describing this event, Peter pointed not to *speaking in tongues* or *prophesying* as the signs of Holy Spirit filling, but said, in Acts 15:8, “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he **purified their hearts** by faith.” In Peter’s mind, the central sign was *heart purity!* **Holiness!**

–OT stories often illustrate NT truth. Today’s text from Isaiah shows why we all need to experience Pentecost: **HOM.idea**. *The text tells of..*

I. An Awesome Presence (the *proper response* was praise– **it was...***)

- A. ***Seraphic praise**– v.2, Above him were seraphs... [seraphim = “burning ones”] *burning* in their love for God ... on fire with God’s love.
- B. ***Energetic praise**– v.4, At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook... (Heavenly worship is lively!) [At Pentecost, the place was shaken by the Holy Spirit’s awesome presence!]
- C. ***Trinitarian praise**– v.3a, “**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD Almighty...” (Jehovah, the 3-in-One God, speaks in the singular and the plural – v.8, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” [Evil King Manasseh used this part of Isaiah’s vision as a *pretext* for executing him, because the Law said no one could see God and live. But John quotes from this passage, saying that in this vision, Isaiah saw Jesus before His incarnation– John 12:41, Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.]
- D. ***Evangelistic praise**– Isaiah’s vision was of God’s heavenly glory, but Heaven’s vision is for God’s glory to be declared worldwide.

TRANS: Truly *seraphic, energetic, Trinitarian* praise will result in the

evangelistic spread of that praise. But Isaiah felt inadequate to join in, to be part of this worship of the Holy God, for he felt that he was in...

II. An Awful State (but v.5 shows he maintained proper responses):

- A. consternation: “Woe to me!” (He knew seeing God meant death!)
- B. contrition: “I am ruined!” (He felt a desperate sorrow over his sin.)
- C. conviction: “I am a man of unclean lips” (He realized personal guilt and his spiritually defiled state, without offering excuses!)
- D. confession: “I live among a people of unclean lips” (He acknowledged where he’d been living and how it had affected his lifestyle.)

TRANS: Satan condemns; the Holy Spirit convicts. **Notice:** there was no condemnation from God. Just being a sinner in God’s holy presence was enough to convict Isaiah, and his conviction led to...

III. An Awesome Cleansing– v.6-7a, Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth...

- A. God uses fire to symbolize both His holiness & cleansing work–
 1. The holy God wants holy servants– Mal 3:2-3, But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.
 2. The fire on the altar in Isaiah’s vision illustrates how the Spirit applies the double work of Christ’s Cross– v.7b:
 - a. “your guilt is taken away” (We are justified by spiritual new birth.)
 - b. (NKJV) “your sin purged” (We are sanctified by spiritual baptism.) [Richard Watson, an early Methodist, wrote: “Our altar is the cross; the propitiatory sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God; by the merit of His death, and the baptizing fire of His Spirit, are the guilty and polluted pardoned and sanctified to God.”] (Salvation brings both pardon and purity!)
- B. Where did God begin making Isaiah holy?
 1. Isaiah couldn’t join in with the angelic praise with “unclean lips”
 2. The mouth is the gateway of the heart– Mat 15:18, But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’
 3. Our need of a mouth cleansed by holy fire was dramatically manifested by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost– Acts 2:3, They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

TRANS: Our walk should match our talk, but our talk should also match our walk. How we use our tongue is so crucial! The holy fire that touched Isaiah’s mouth is also our need, for he had and we have...

IV. An Awesome Job– v. 8, Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

- A. We may have many questions for God, but His questions for us are more personal, more precise, more pressing....
- B. God asks if we want to be Kingdom ambassadors (He’s not after sanctified robots, but voluntary servants [God’s kingdom is volunteer service with earthly blessings and everlasting benefits. Yet some are quicker to join human programs asking for volunteers, than they are to answer God’s call.]
- C. Why do we hesitate to speak for God? (Do we feel unworthy, as Isaiah did, standing in the presence of a holy God?)
- D. Only by being empowered for holiness by the Holy Spirit with His heart-cleansing fire can we courageously answer the call of a holy God by saying, “Here am I. Send me!”

CONCLUSION:

–**To serve a holy God, we must be touched by fire from God’s altar.** Few people get a fiery baptism that lasts a lifetime. Often we let the fire grow cold, and we need refilling. Even if the Holy Spirit once touched us powerfully, most of us need to be retouched by His holy fire.

–We may feel sinful and inadequate, yet our awesome God still calls us to the awesome job of speaking for Him. How can he do it? By being **empowered for holiness** by the awesome cleansing of His Holy Spirit.

–Following the pattern Isaiah experienced, we need to seek this Spirit-filled empowerment for holiness by:

- 1) Getting into God’s presence (quietly meditating on His holiness).
- 2) Seeing our unworthiness (acknowledging if we’ve had “unclean lips” and confessing the shortcomings in our lives)
- 3) Asking for cleansing fire from off the altar (realizing that God is more willing to empower us for holiness than we’re ready to seek it)
- 4) Being ready to speak up for Him (“Here am I. Send me!”)