

Isaiah 6:1-8 God's Glory Alone 6/24/18

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, 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 seraphim 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!”

(Pastor prays)

Soli Deo Gloria. To the glory of God alone.

This is the last and perhaps the most difficult message in the “Five Solas” series. We are saved by God's *Grace* alone through *Faith* alone in *Christ* alone according to the *Scripture* alone to the *Glory of God* alone. God's glory. It is the glue that holds this series together and it is the promise that your life and your struggles, your hurts and your failures, your dead ends and your bankruptcies and broken hearts did not happen in vain.

John Piper said that God's glory is the infinite excellencies of the divine essence, that God's glory is God's holiness on display. Tom Shriners says that to glorify God means to see the supremacy of God in everything, that God is King. And if God is not the all-glorious creator and redeemer, then this world is random chaos, life is meaningless and human destiny is just a graveyard.

Paul says in I Corinthians 10, whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. All of it. But to reckon with God's glory we must wrestle with His holiness.

Glory and holiness, that's what we see in this famous passage, Isaiah 6. Here we watch Isaiah reckon with the new hierarchy that promises nothing but worry and confusion. It can be so crazy to feel like you've been knocked off-center and can't quite get your footing. Today I hope to show you how the glory of God rearranges and changes us, how His glory cleanses and sustains us, how His glory in Christ centers and settles us so that by *His* grace and for *His* glory you can face anything and do so reflecting honor back on the name of God. You are made to glorify God.

Hard Times Are Here for God's Glory

Let me show you where I get that. Notice how the passage begins: in the year that King Uzziah died. Now that little phrase is telling us something. Uzziah was the King in Israel for 52 great years. The economy was good, the military was strong and the people were happy. Everything was stable. Things were happy and hopeful under Uzziah's reign as king. People had peace of mind, families were sturdy, and the nation prospered.

And when Uzziah died, hope died with him. The Assyrians in the North were threatening, the priesthood was weak and with Uzziah gone, Isaiah's world fell apart. With the king dead, there would be questions and real anxieties about the future. Some of you have felt the sudden disorientating shock of a loss. Many of you suffered back in the years 2008 through 2009 when the economy crashed. You lost almost everything. Or you have a friend die.

Isaiah's got a great big hole right in the middle of him. Have you ever been knocked on your back so hard that you can't breathe? Isaiah was. Look what he saw in verses 1-2. "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up." Israel's King dies but Israel's God still lives. Uzziah dies in a hospital but the King of Kings sits on a throne. Every symbol of Isaiah's vision is significant. The word Lord is a title, *Adonai*. The Lord is sitting on His throne in His lofty position, the robe filling the temple, all of this speaking to God's complete and ultimate sovereignty over all things.

This is "big God" theology that gives us strength. I want you to see God on His throne. He transcends all priorities, He rules over all governments. See the Dominion of God

ruling over every seemingly bad situation, high and lifted up above all competition and contradictions.

But why? Why did Isaiah see this? And why do I need to see it? What good is that to you?

I'd like to answer that a couple of ways based on Isaiah's context. Sorrow and loss and pain and panic—they empty us so that we can be filled with the vision of God's glory and sovereignty. Because of hard pain or real loss our unchanging God stands out more clearly, draws us more nearly, and becomes more dear. In the text, if the throne of Israel had not been empty, Isaiah would not have seen the enthroned God.

And so, it is with all of our losses and pains and tragedies and frustrations and sorrows and disappointments. All of those negative bad hurtful things have one mission, even the struggles with sin. Their mission is to reveal to us the enthroned God. The car wreck, the break up, it had a mission to reveal to you the enthroned God. That termination, bankruptcy, and loneliness has a mission. Their mission is to lead us to see the glory of God. When all other props are taken away, we lean our weight upon the goodness and glory and grace of God alone.

When Uzziah dies, God becomes visible. We must not waste our griefs and sorrows; the pains are there to draw back the curtain so that we might see the glory of God.

There's something else I want you to see before I move on. Uzziah sat on the throne of Israel, God's people. It's known as the throne of David and, although he lived a long time, he died just like every other king who sat on the throne of David. His death is a reminder of the true and better King who died, not on a throne, but on a cross to redeem sinners.

But this King, King Jesus, He didn't *stay* dead. God raised him and now He alone sits on the throne as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He is sovereignly working through the events of your life so that you will turn from your sin and by faith turn to Christ. Hard times are here for God's glory and seen most fully at the cross.

God's Glory Is Also God's Grace

Let's go back to the scene and see it in its entirety. Let me read it and then we can walk through it. *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated*

on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, 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;
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⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

At this sight, Isaiah receives the grace of conviction. Look at Isaiah in verse 5. At this sight of this Holy God, Isaiah feels his sin most profoundly and he's rightly afraid that the fire of the Lord is going to break out and consume him. He feels the corruption of his own soul, he feels the corruption of the culture.

Jesus said in Matthew 15, *But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.* In verse 5, Isaiah is saying, “I'm a man of unclean lips, I'm a foul-mouthed sinner and I deserve to die. This God is three times holy - perfectly holy, infinitely holy, eternally holy and I shouldn't be here.”

Isaiah is doing what few people do anymore. Isaiah is taking real responsibility for his sin, realizing that a sinner without Christ has no place in the presence of God and no right to praise God. He has no excuses before God and no hope from God.

I think this is an Old Testament picture of a New Testament truth. You see it in verses 4 and 5. In every conversion there is an agony of the soul. The stab of your conscience, the shame of your inward uncleanness, the remorse of sin, the sensation of being lost and alone. This sounds strange and harsh because American “folk religion” has forgotten the holiness of God that is mitigated only by the grace of God. Watch what happens when Isaiah comes to the end of himself.

You might not be converted because you haven't come to the end of yourself. Isaiah did and watch what happens in verse 6-7. *Then one of the seraphim 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.” A live coal from the altar of incense that burns in the presence of God. Only the fire of God can take away our guilt. But behind the love of God that takes our guilt and the forgiveness of God that atones for our sin is the cross of Jesus Christ.

In verse 6, the fiery coal that touched Isaiah’s lips was from the altar. The altar in the Old Testament was the place where the holiness of God was satisfied by the death of a substitute. A live coal from the altar encapsulates the idea of atonement. Sins are paid for by the death of another. It is the idea of *propitiation*. Jesus takes the punishment for sinners and thereby satisfies the anger and judgment of God. It's the idea of expiation, that through Jesus the guilt and shame of sin is gone. It's the idea of reconciliation, that you can sleep at night because through Christ you have been made right with God.

Listen to what happens in verse 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.”* As soon as the coal touched his lips, guilt was taken away and sin is atoned for. The work of grace is done by God. Jonathan Edwards said, “We don't bring anything to Salvation except the sin that makes it necessary.” And notice that God ministers where the sin is. Verse 7 says 2 things are removed. Guilt - that's the inner shame and can be really hard to live with. The glory of God's grace is that at the cross of Jesus, that guilt and shame are both taken away. Also in verse 7, the sin is atoned for. If guilt is the inner corruption that is taken away, then sin is the outer damage.

When God forgives, He restores. He redeems the whole person. That is important in our sexually damaged world. At the cross of Jesus, people are made new. And this redemption has real and immediate effects, effects on our marriages and in our future. Because it's only after the transforming power of God in Christ that Isaiah becomes ready in verse 8 to hear from God and then become useful to God.

You are made to glorify God. The hard times are here for God's glory. God's glory is also God's grace. *Grace* alone through *Faith* alone in *Christ* alone according to the *Scriptures* alone to the *glory of God* alone.

(Pastor prays)