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“I Saw the Lord...” (Isaiah 6)

Study 8
Answering the Call
(Is. 6:8-9)

Here in West Virginia we have a citizen legislature. This means our lawmakers are part-time and come from a wide variety of backgrounds and careers. These careers are also called vocations. “Vocation” comes from a Latin word that means “to call”. This hails from a time when your job was considered a “calling” from God. Certainly, there was a different calling for those in ministry, but every person was seen to be called by God to their particular occupations and roles in life. For this reason, a person could find joy in their work by seeking to labor for the glory of God.

You have a calling in your work. You have a calling in your role as a father, mother, or family member. Many of you believe it a calling to serve as a legislator or elected official. In Isaiah 6 God gave Isaiah a marvelous vision of His holiness and glory, and called him into service as a prophet. While most of you will never be called into ministry, we can all learn much from Isaiah’s experience about God’s calling in each of our lives.

We have spent several weeks looking at Isaiah’s marvelous vision from God and his resulting repentance:

In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said,

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵ Then I said,

*“Woe is me, for I am ruined!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”*

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

Now we see God’s call of Isaiah and his response:

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!” ⁹ He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’

God’s Call to Isaiah

God extended His call to Isaiah in a general sense: **“Who will go for us?”**¹ God gave it as a question rather than a command, giving Isaiah the opportunity to respond

willing. Isaiah did so instantly, even before he knew the exact nature of God’s call. Why did Isaiah respond the way he did?

Isaiah Recognized God’s Holiness, Sovereignty and Authority.

Isaiah saw God lofty and exalted, sitting on His throne. He gained a new sense of reality of God’s absolute sovereignty and authority over all things, including himself. So, if God asked him to go – of course he would willingly submit to the glorious King of Kings.

We should seek to remember and recognize daily God’s sovereignty and authority over our lives. We need to seek day by day to surrender to His will. This may mean many of the choices we make or the sins we forsake.

Isaiah was Joyful that God had Cleansed Him and Considered Him Worthy of Ministry.

When Isaiah got a glimpse of God’s glory and holiness, he realized how sinful he truly was. **“I am a man of unclean lips”** was his mournful response. Then God illustrated how his sins were forgiven by sending the angel to touch his lips with a coal from the altar and declaring those blessed words, **“your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven”**. What joy Isaiah experienced to know this infinitely Holy God had forgiven him and cleansed his sin. Of course, he would willingly and joyfully serve the One who had done so much for him!

God’s Call to Us

God called Isaiah to serve Him as a prophet to the nation of Judah. Not many of you here in the statehouse will be called to any kind of full-time Christian ministry (although a few of you also serve as ministers and

pastors). However, we should ask what every believer might learn from Isaiah's call.

God Calls Us to Salvation

Isaiah was first called to believe in God and worship Him. The word "called" is used many times in the New Testament to refer those who follow Christ. Most often it describes the fact that believers are those who are called to salvation and who respond in faith to the gospel message (Matt. 22:14; Rom. 1:6; Rom. 8:28). Jesus' call to every person is to **"repent and believe in the gospel"** (Mark 1:15). With Isaiah, we see the infinite holiness of God. We recognize our sinfulness before Him. We understand the sacrifice that was made for us by His Son upon the cross. Jesus calls us to turn from our sin and trust in Him for our salvation.

God Calls Us to Sanctification (Holiness)

Isaiah, even though a believer, saw that he was sinful and needed forgiveness. Throughout the rest of his ministry he urged the people of Judah to holiness as he must have pursued greater holiness in his own life. Paul urged believers to **"walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received"** (Eph. 4:1). As he urged believers on to lives of greater holiness and moral purity, he reminded them **"God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification"** (1 Thes. 4:7). God has forgiven those of us who trust in Christ and made us holy in His sight through what Christ has done for us. Now He calls us to live up to that position as we pursue holiness in our daily lives.

God Calls Us to Service

Isaiah was called to serve God as a prophet and he responded joyfully and willingly. Even if we are never called to any kind of Christian ministry, every believer is called to serve God in their daily lives.

Every believer is called to live their lives to bring glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Every believer is called to humbly serve others (Philippians 2:1-11).

Every believer is called to be a good testimony for Christ and share the good news with others (Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:15-16). Certainly, as legislators and elected officials you are called to see laws and policies enacted that glorify God. However, your ultimate calling in the capitol is to be a good witness for Christ before those who do not know Him!

Every believer is given a spiritual gift – an ability – and is called to use it to serve in a local church (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:7-16).

Every believer is called to serve in their employment to the glory of God. Ephesians 6:5-9 reminds both employees and employers that they are ultimately working for the glory of a higher master.² This helps us see why believers in the past saw occupations as a "vocation" – a calling from God.

God Calls Us to Suffering

Isaiah served over 50 years in a ministry that showed little or no visible results. God told him at the outset the people would not understand or respond to his message. Tradition tells at the end that the evil King Manasseh had him sawn in two. Every believer is called to a life of suffering and trial. Peter wrote to believers who were suffering greatly and encouraged them with these words: **"...You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps..."** (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus told His disciples **"If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you"** (John 15:20). Paul informed us that **"all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"** (2 Timothy 3:12). James challenged us to **"consider it all joy...when you encounter various trials"** (James 1:2). Understanding this will greatly affect how we respond to the circumstances and trials God in His providence brings or allows into our lives.

Conclusion

If you have never trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, then will you answer His call to repent and believe in His gospel?

If we are believers we should answer God's call to sanctification to service, and to suffering every day. With Isaiah, as we recognize God's glory and all He has done for us through Christ, we should seek to respond,

"Here am I, send me".

The Divine Master has left the scene of His own toil — but He has given to every disciple, his work. Each has his mission — something to do for souls, something to accomplish for the Savior, some glory to bring to God. Realizing in some degree what a debtor to the Lord he is; what he owes to the love that chose him, to the blood that ransomed him, to the grace that called him, to the Savior that gave Himself a sacrifice — the believer exclaims from the depth of his grateful heart, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" And now, to labor for Christ is his highest desire and ambition; be the service home or foreign, pleasant or self-denying, distinguished or obscure, to rule an empire or to sweep a crossing.³

¹We should not fail to notice that here in God's call we see a reference to the Scripture's teaching on the Trinity, that there is One God existing in three Persons: "...Whom shall I send, and who will go for **Us**?" (vs 8).

²Paul uses the terms of "slaves" and "masters". What was taking place in his time better fits our idea of employees and employers than that of slavery which we might think of from our country's history.

³Winslow, Octavius. *Christ is Ever with You*. Kindle Edition. Loc. 229.

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays

8:00 House Government Org Conference Room (East Wing)

12:00 Noon Treasurer's Conference Room (EB54)