

## LET US DRAW NEAR - Biblical Worship and the Warming of the Soul – Part two

Sunday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2073

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“OPEN THE EYES OF MY HEART, LORD. I WANT TO SEE YOU” – ARE YOU SURE” (continued)

**Isaiah 6:1-8** - “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. [2] Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called 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 shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. [5] And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of 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, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’ [8] And 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.’”

Last week we considered two points from this great text. The first was that before it is anything else, **worship is being freshly impacted by God's throne**. Isaiah's experience doesn't have a cuddly bone in it. It is an experience stretching and stunning with God's authority - His right to rule everything. Nothing is allowed to compete with the rule of God. Isaiah's assignment from that throne is anything but pleasant. He has to deliver a message of God's coming wrath and coming judgment. And people didn't like that picture of God **then** anymore than they like it **now**.

There is not a bone in Isaiah's body that is naturally **inclined** to obey. But that's all irrelevant. Isaiah knows instantly his own wishes don't even enter the picture. That's why God's throne is described in stark simplicity as being **“high and lifted up”**(1).

The second point we studied was the need for **diligence in worship**. In **verses 2-4** we noted the repetition of the expressions of these angelic beings. They called out to each other - **Isaiah 6:3** - “**And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”**

They are **unceasing** in their dismantling of pride as they cover their faces. This is so important. Because our natural love for **place** and **independence** never totally fades we must **continuously** and **deliberately bow** before this throne of God. Once and a while won't cut it. In this whole text - just as their worship is again described in John Revelation - there is never any **stopping point** in their corporate worship. And if **they** sense this need for ongoing bowing before the brilliance of the holiness of God how much more should **fallen** and **redeemed** persons like you and I.

Today we consider points three and four from this text:

### 3) **SCRIPTURAL WORSHIP IS A PURIFYING AGENT IN OUR LIVES**

This whole process is described in graphic terms. And the terms are graphic because there is no **gentle** path to a clean life. Isaiah can't **reform** himself. He can't **grow** out of this uncleanness.

**Isaiah 6:5-7** - “And I said: ‘Woe is me! For **I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips**, and I dwell in the midst of 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, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: ‘**Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.**”

I think it's important to point out the obvious. **Isaiah is no spiritual slouch**. He's a holy man. He's a divinely called, genuine prophet of Almighty God. However the term **“prophet”** gets lightly tossed about today, there are no prophets like Isaiah in today's world. God used Isaiah to write a book of the Bible.

But for all of that, and **because** of all that, I love what we read next. Isaiah felt keenly **unworthy** before God. The text says, in Isaiah's own, carefully chosen words, he felt **unclean**. That means, he felt **dirty before God**. In other words, He felt his uncleanness **precisely when he approached God**.

Can you relate to that? The more I think about it, the more I'm convinced there is a **good** sense of feeling unclean, and there is a **bad** sense of feeling unclean.

The **bad** sense is when I feel unclean because I don't believe the blood of Jesus, God's Son, actually cleanses me of my sin and sustains my forgiveness before God. This, of course, is basically **unbelief**. I don't honor God by minimizing the provision He has made for my cleansing through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

But there is also a **good** sense of feeling unclean before God. It doesn't stem from unbelief, or any doubting of God's gracious provision in Christ. Rather, there should be the constant awareness of **not having arrived yet** in terms of my pursuit of my upward call in Christ. A **constant dependence** would be another way of describing it.

I think there is a sense in which I should still feel **incomplete** in terms of all that God has for me. There should still be a **holy restlessness** in my pursuit of God. I take this also from Paul's words in **Philippians 3:12** - **"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."**

Do you see the paradox in those words? Paul knows **with certainty** he has been **made Christ's own** - **"...Christ Jesus has made me his own."** And yet he's equally dogmatic he hasn't **obtained** this fully yet - **"Not that I have already obtained this..."**

If you're like Paul, or Isaiah, you constantly find the need for fresh cleansing in your life. You want **fresh** grace. You want God's work to go deeper. You find your hunger for deliverance from every trace of sin turning into an **obsession** the longer you follow the Lord. And this is intimately tied to the cry and passion of your worship.

Here's what I see in this passage from Isaiah: ***Draw near to God. Focus on His throne - His rule - His holy Kingship - persist in mindful, passionate worship.*** And here's what should happen almost automatically. God will be faithful to make you aware of the **points of need** in your life. This simply has to happen. It's only natural that the closer I get to the light of God's blazing holiness and purity, the more the light of His very Being will illumine the stains and spots on my heart.

This is not a lack of **assurance**. It's not **unbelief**. It's the devotion of a new heart longing to go deeper and deeper into expressing Christ in every part of life - **Romans 6:16-18** - **"Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? [17] But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."**

That phrase ***"obedient from the heart" (17)*** is the key phrase. Obedience that increasingly flows from the **transformed affections** and less and less from **bare duty**. That's the key to a growing walk in the Spirit.

And here's the beautiful side of this whole truth. God doesn't show these things to His worshiping children to **destroy** them. He reveals these things to **deliver** them. That's always the beautiful surprise of God's purifying presence. Worship is tied to power and cleansing. It's not just a divine, mystical nap. Spiritual work gets done.

This is almost surprising. What would you think a **red hot, burning coal** placed on your lips **should** do? It should **burn** and **blister**, and **destroy** tissue. You would think that experience would ruin you. But that is never the case with God's work in our worshiping lives. Just at the very point you see yourself at your **worst** - just at the point where nothing of your own craftiness remains as an excuse between a Holy God and your ugly sin - ***right at that point of greatest awareness of need - wholeness and restoration and healing comes.***

Learn this lesson about worship earlier rather than later. When you're in His Presence, don't resist His exposure of your sin. Don't fight tears of remorse or regret. Don't hold back or pretend. **Worship** and **honesty** can join hands. You can open up before this King. He's there to free you. He's there to restore you. Don't shy away from the work He wants to do.

Why did the angelic being touch Isaiah's **lips**? Was there nothing but perfection in every other part of his being? No. Rather, God went to work **at the point of Isaiah's confession**. Where we come clean, where we allow God to do His best work in our worship focusing on His throne, ***that's where the miracles begin. Labor for the death of pretense when you come in worship.***

#### 4) THROUGH WORSHIP COMES FRESH FIRE FOR MINISTRY

**Isaiah 6:7-8** - "And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.' [8] And *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.'"

Worship is always a **doorway**. It **leads** into something else. Isaiah isn't just singing songs. He **hears the voice of the Lord**. God **speaks** and **deals** with worshipers and no one else.

Where does the strength for your ministry come from? What is it that fuels service for the Lord? Of course, there needs to be **knowledge and understanding**. Paul talks about the uselessness of faith and zeal that isn't accompanied by understanding.

Then, there needs to be **training**. Anything you and I do for the Lord should be sharpened by the best efforts we can produce **and** the best experience we can glean from others.

There is also a measure of **practice** needed. Whether you preach, usher, sing, or play, you will improve as you **use** the ability God gives. Many people drop out of ministry, never staying with it long enough to find **freedom** in what they do, simply because they **never try long enough to develop a fluency in what God has called them to do**. It's not that they weren't **called**. They simply **quit** too soon.

But there is something else on top of all these ingredients. Worship involves **hearing**, not just **expressing**. You need to **come to the throne of God**. Repeatedly. With diligence. With the fellowship of other worshipers. You need to have **Him** do something to revive and cleanse your soul. Notice how **passive** Isaiah is in this text. All he **does** is come to the throne and confess all that he **isn't**. God and His angels do everything else.

If there is one thing I've proven over and over in times of stress and sheer fatigue in my own ministry it is this - **worship quickens ministry**. It has nothing to do with an emotional tickle or a good time that by-passes discipline and knowledge. But worship does **add God's fire to everything else we bring of our own preparation before the Lord**.

We all know life can be demanding. Spiritual life even more so. We mustn't glamorize this text. We used to sing the chorus, loosely taken from some of these words, **"Here am I, send me to the nations..."** But the plain fact of this text is **God was calling Isaiah to the last thing in the world Isaiah wanted to do**.

Sometimes God still does that. You won't always respond favorably to His call without the preparation and cleansing of your heart in worship. Worship gets you **ready** for God's call. Isaiah needed this vision of God because God wasn't calling him to evangelism of the lost. Read the last part of the chapter. God was calling Isaiah to **pronounce judgement - irreversible judgement - on His people**. And Isaiah knows reaching out to the **lost** is far easier and rewarding than **rebuking God's people**. Nobody will embrace **that** call unless he hears it clearly coming from a **throne**.

But the lesson is still precious. Whatever God calls you to do, worship prepares you for doing it. This places the **context** of Biblical worship on a totally different footing. It really isn't about feeling blessed, though there are times of great blessing and refreshing. Worship is more about establishing **availability** before God. First, if you remember last week's teaching, worship reveals the **throne** of God. Then, after that throne is revealed, worship creates a heart that **bows** before that throne.

Stay before the throne of God. Maintaining a posture of worship isn't a **charismatic** thing. It's a **Bible** thing. It's a **God** thing. Set your heart on honoring the King. Let worship bathe your being in the sovereign will of Father God. He will give you the strength for whatever task He calls you to.