

LIVING AS A BELIEVER IN DIFFICULT TIMES

A LESSON FROM ISAIAH



Note: The main idea for this lesson comes from teaching by Dr John Barnett.

More information can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzaaoGFwMfQ>.

When we look around us, things are getting progressively worse for believers in Jesus Christ. Many countries are declaring the spreading of the gospel illegal, Christian websites are being closed down, and it has become illegal to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ as Saviour on the streets. This is a combined and active effort by the evil one who controls governments, to stop the spread of the truth and to allow false teaching and deception to become the norm. The book of Isaiah gives us some insight as to how we should live in these perilous times.

Isaiah 6 is already some way into the narrative of the prophet. He has already been called to serve as a prophet but from this chapter onwards, his ministry is elevated to a higher level. He now has a vision of God in heaven:

¹In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ²Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. ⁴And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. ⁶Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. ⁸Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. ⁹And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ¹⁰Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. ¹¹Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, ¹²And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. ¹³But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof. – **Isaiah 6:1-13**

The work of the prophet was never easy. They were mocked, scoffed at, hated, and often killed. Yet it was important that the word be spread. Isaiah did just that. How did he manage to do this, and can we apply this in our day to ourselves as believers who are also mocked (Matthew 20:19), scoffed at (2 Peter 3:3), hated and often killed (Matthew 24:9)? This is the message Isaiah has for us:

REMEMBER THE HOLINESS OF GOD

³And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. – **Isaiah 6:3**

We should never lose sight of the holiness of God. Isaiah had the vision and he saw the Lord on His throne. He saw the seraphims and they worshipped God. When we look around us, we see how people are irresponsibly mocking God, pretending that He does not exist, all because they themselves want to be their own God. The Bible is very clear in its warning not to mock God:

⁷Be not deceived; **God is not mocked**: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. – **Galatians 6:7**

If you realise that your worship of God is lacking, seek His face today, repent and be prepared to enter His holy presence through prayer.

REALISE YOUR SINFULNESS

⁵Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. – **Isaiah 6:5**

Isaiah compares the holy state of God to his own sinful life. Even as a prophet, Isaiah was still a man, full of sin and in need of a Saviour. He says that his lips are unclean – that he speaks the wrong things, and he moves in the circle of people who do the same. He says disaster (woe) is his part because in his sinful state, he has seen the King, Jesus!

⁸**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. – **1 John 1:8-10**

Repentance of sin is an ongoing process. Do not let the sun set on unrepented sin.

How do we set an example to the world around us? Ensure that your actions always conform to the Word of God so that those around you will be positively affected.

RECEIVE HIS CLEANSING

⁷And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. – **Isaiah 6:7**

Isaiah is touched by the seraphim in a very special way, and it is a picture that we cannot fully comprehend. When he says his lips are unclean, the seraphim takes a burning coal from the altar, using a tong, and with that he touches the prophet's mouth, and he is declared clean and his sin taken away.

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from

all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. – **1 John 1:8-10**

The same New Testament verse is used here because it is as applicable as for the previous heading. It is important to understand that when we confess our sins, we are forgiven completely. God does not think of our sins anymore:

¹²**As far as the east is from the west**, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. – **Psalms 103:12**

Do you need your sins to be not only cleansed but completely removed today? Call on the name of Jesus, repent your sin and move on. You have been forgiven.

How do we set an example to the world around us? Watch what you say. If you cannot say anything positive, rather keep quiet.

RESPOND TO HIS CALLING

⁸Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. – **Isaiah 6:8**

God called Isaiah to a difficult ministry, but he immediately accepted the calling. However, it is immediately made clear to him that this would not be easy and even if he spreads the message of salvation, people will not listen to it. God never said that it would be easy, but that it would be worth it in the end.

¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? **and how shall they hear without a preacher?** – **Romans 10:14**

Paul makes it clear that the unsaved world can only call on God if they believe, and they can only believe in Him if they hear the message. They can only hear the message if someone speaks it. While our actions are good, people need to hear the message.

How do we set an example to the world around us? Spread the Word! This is Paul's message to Timothy:

²**Preach the word**; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. – **2 Timothy 4:2**

Have you given up on your calling? God has not given up on you. Ask Him today to renew the passion you once had.

REMAIN FAITHFUL

¹¹Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, ¹²And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. – **Isaiah 6:11**

Isaiah was told he had to spread the message to people who would not listen, but this did not mean that he had to stop his preaching. He asks how long he has to preach and be a prophet and the answer comes that he has to continue until there is nothing left! Up to and including the very last person alive, the message of salvation has to be spread.

¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached **in all the world for a witness unto all nations**; and then shall the end come. – **Matthew 24:14**

How do we set an example to the world around us? Remain faithful in what you do. This is God's calling for your life. Have you lost your passion for the gospel? Have you lost your passion for the Word? Repent of this today. Here are Jesus' own words:

¹¹Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
– **Revelation 3:11**

CONCLUSION

Continue doing good – **remember, realise, receive, respond and remain** – no matter how society around you seems to fall apart. You are still the light and salt:

¹³**Ye are the salt of the earth**: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. ¹⁴**Ye are the light of the world**. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. – **Matthew 5:13-14**

The world needs your influence and your guidance.