

CALLED TO HOLY SERVICE
(ISAIAH 6)

WARNING! DANGER!

**APPROACH HOLY GROUND WITH EXTREME HUMILITY!
CONFESSION OF SIN REQUIRED BEFORE ENTERING!**

*In preparation for service
Isaiah was called before a
holy God, as we are.*

**Order of preparation for
faithful service ...**

- 1) holy God, 2) lost sinner,
- 3) cleansing, 4) commissioning.



OUTLINE ... (Isaiah 6:1-13 ESV)

1. See the Sovereign (Adonai-Lord) high and lifted up, 6:1-4.

- (Isaiah 6:1-4 ESV) 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.

2. See the lost ones with our filthy lips, 6:5-7.

- (Isaiah 6:5-7 ESV) 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.**"

WHY THE LIPS?

SEE PAGES THREE AND FOUR OF OUR STUDY SHEET.

3. Answer the call, 6:8-13.

- (Isaiah 6:8-13 ESV) And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." 9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive." 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." 11 Then I said,

"How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, 12 and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. 13 And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Typically of Isaiah,
hope is the
unexpected fringe
attached to the
garment of doom
(J. A. Motyer).

Commentary by John Oswalt ...

SEEING GOD AND SERVING GOD. It is foolish for us to think that we can somehow serve God until we have come to the end of ourselves. As long as we think there is some hope of a human solution to our problems, there is little chance of our genuinely seeing God. Nor is there hope for any of us becoming servants of the living God without there first being an adequate understanding of who he is. [Oswalt, J. N. (2003). *Isaiah* (p. 130). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.]

Only when we come to the end of ourselves are we ready to see God, and that vision is absolutely essential to genuine service. ... We have made God our "good buddy" in the sky, or a blind, half-senile grandfather ... So much of our worship is ultimately about us ... [Ibid. (pp. 130-131).]

As a result, God's grace has become horribly cheapened. It is something he all but owes us, since he knows that basically all of us are pretty good people who just can't help messing up once in awhile. **How we need a vision of the blazing holiness of God. How we need to be crushed under the awareness of a Being who is greater than the entire known universe. How we need to come face to face with a white-hot moral perfection in the presence of which sin cannot even exist.** [Ibid. (p. 131).]

When we have seen God in that way, we will know that God owes us nothing. We are not "basically nice folks with an unfortunate tendency to mess up." **We are proud, arrogant, self-centered, perverse, cruel, violent rebels in whom the stain of sin and sinfulness goes down to the last atom in the last molecule. We do not just "mess up." We "sin".** [Ibid. (p. 131).]

WHY THE LIPS?

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "**Behold, this has touched your lips**; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

(Isaiah 6:6-7 ESV)

WHY THE LIPS?

Why is it necessary that the burning coal of God's holiness touches our lips?

Because without God's cleansing we are totally incapable of speaking in a way that is honoring to God and reflective of his holiness! And without this sense of awe and the consequent cleansing, we will not be true to God and his gospel.

1. **WE NEED THE BURNING COAL ... to cleanse our lips from our natural inclination to lie and deceive.**

- (Psalm 12:2-4 ESV) Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?"
- (Psalm 17:1 ESV) Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!
- (Psalm 34:13 ESV) Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
- (Psalm 59:12 ESV) For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride. For the cursing and lies that they utter.
- (Psalm 120:2 ESV) Deliver me, O LORD,

from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

2. **WE NEED THE BURNING COAL ... to reveal to us the grave danger of using words which belong to the old life of hostility and alienation and are contrary to our new position in Jesus Christ.**

- (Colossians 1:21-22 ESV) And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, **in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.**
- (Ephesians 2:1-2 ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—**
- (Psalm 140:1-3 ESV) Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually. They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps. Selah
- (Proverbs 10:18 ESV) The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.
- (Proverbs 12:22 ESV) Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight.
- (Proverbs 17:4 ESV) An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a



mischievous tongue.

- (Proverbs 18:7 ESV) A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.
- (Proverbs 26:24–25 ESV) Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart; when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart.

3. WE NEED THE BURNING COAL ... to cleanse and clear the conduit through which God's message is to be delivered.

- (2 Corinthians 7:1 ESV) Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, **bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.**
- (1 Thessalonians 3:11–13 ESV) Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, **so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father,** at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.
- (2 Peter 3:11–12 ESV) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!
- (Hebrews 12:14 ESV) Strive for peace with everyone, **and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.**
- (1 Peter 3:9–10 NLT) Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult

you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies."

4. WE NEED THE BURNING COAL ... to emphasize the importance of our stewardship to faithfully communicate the truth of God's word.

- (Malachi 2:7–8 ESV) For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. **But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,** says the LORD of hosts.

5. WE NEED THE BURNING COAL ... to defeat the sinful duality of our tongue (our lips) for the integrity of the message of blessing.

- (James 3:6–12 ESV) And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.** Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

WHY THE LIPS ...

... a related possibility is that having just heard the golden tones of the seraphs, Isaiah knows that his lips, having been used to praise himself, put others down, and generally serve his own ends, could never be used in such holy service (J.N. Oswalt).