

Isaiah 6:1-13; Revelation 1:10-19.

Address by Mr. W.J. Hocking. No. 21.

William John Hocking

online: 13.02.2023, updated: 13.02.2023

© SoundWords 2000–2023. All rights reserved.

All articles are for private use only. They can also be distributed privately without demand. Commercial reproductions of any kind are prohibited. Publications on other internet pages are only possible after consultation.

Hymn No. 29. Prayer. Hymn No. 123.

Isaiah 6:1–13. Revelation 1:10–19.

This chapter in Isaiah is very often used as an appeal to the sinner in his sins, and sometimes as a preparatory word for the evangelist, particularly in preaching the Gospel, but the chapter can be taken with other meanings, and perhaps more meticulously.

What we have here is the preparation of a servant of the Lord for a particular service. There is no doubt at all that Isaiah, when this vision, was granted to him, already knew the Lord, and was no doubt a pious young man. – But to be a pious young man is not altogether sufficient to be an effective servant of God. There are lessons to be learned, and there was a lesson that Isaiah had to learn.

Briefly, he had to learn two lessons – First, the GLORY of the LORD, and secondly, his own uncleanness, his personal defilement, and consequently his unfitness to be a servant at all. He had to have the simplest truths burnt on his very soul in order that he might be a fit vessel in the hand of the Lord to be used of Him, and I think therefore that the scripture has an application to us all, especially in our character as witnesses, servants for our Lord Jesus Christ in such a day as has never been before in the history of the Church.

Now just look a little at this chapter.

In the first place you see a note of time, given in the first verse. “In the year that King Uzziah died”. That was the occasion, and those brief words are very pregnant with meaning.

What was King Uzziah? He was a leprous King. One of the seed of David had become a leper, and he was shut out from the privileges that were his as a worshipper of Jehovah, and also from his priveleges as a king, and even from his privileges as a citizen in the holy Nation that God had called out for Himself. He dwelt in a house by himself. How did it come about? King Uzziah as a king was counted among those that had already reigned successors to David. The length of his reign exceeded the reign of David and of Solomon. He reigned 52 years, and they only 40 years. – Not only that, he ascended the throne with great promise. – A young man who determined to walk in the footsteps of his godly father, and he ruled righteously to a great degree, so that God prospered him mightily. The enemy nations round about were subdued, under him. He made great improvements in his nation and in the city of David. But he had not removed all the traces of idolatry from his kingdom. There were still high places in the land, and idolatry was winked at. There was the seat of mischief. Instead of his heart giving thanks and glory to God for the blessings that had accrued in his reign, he was lifted up with pride. The more he prospered, the prouder he became. Instead of giving the glory to God, he gave glory to himself. He presumed” even to interfere with what were the exclusive rights of the sons of Aaron, and although Nadab and Abihu gave solemn warnings to him of it again and again, he went into the holiest with incense.

He, the King? The High Priest and those valiant Levites who did not fear the wrath of the King, withstood him, but the greatest of all, GOD withstood him. In the Holy Place itself he became

LEPER – immediately under the stroke of God. The mark of leprosy rose up in his forehead, and men saw the rightful heir of David, of the promises of David, and the sure mercies of David, standing there before that company of priests, branded as a *LEPER*. – Unfit to be within the congregation of Israel. God had smitten him.

“In the year that king Uzziah died”. He lived for a long time, but what an ending to that reign! There is another aspect, of a Leper. – Like King – like people. If there is a leprous King on the throne, there will be leprous people in his Kingdom, and the blight of leprosy spread throughout his nation. You have only to read the preceding chapters of this prophecy, placed there for this very purpose, to show you what an immoral condition prevailed amongst the chosen people. There they were, full of good works, but abominable in the eyes of the Lord. What they did with their hands was denied with their hearts, and God looks not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart.

So Isaiah had lived for some little time with a leprous King, and amongst a leprous people. He was there. Isaiah, a pious young man, was sinful.

It is world-wise to be pious. . There are many pious young men who ask questions. – How does it come about that such a person should inherit the purpose given to David? How is it that this nation that God has chosen out of all the other nations of the world to be His people, that they should become like this, more corrupt, vile, than the very nations around? Is there any reality in it? – Pious young men! There are such today, thank God. They look upon the condition of things, and they see people who profess the name of the Lord, doing things that the world would be ashamed of. They say, “Why is it?” You find people perhaps even in their very families doing it. Why is it? Is there any truth in what they believe? Is there any good in salvation? Is there a Lord Who died upon the cross? Is there any power in the Scriptures after all?”

Many a young man has been turned aside. But God had His eye on this young man. He was to be His mouthpiece, to declare the most marvellous things that God ever declared.

But he needed to be educated. He needed to have a lesson taught to him in his soul, in his inner being. He had to learn something directly from God Himself, in order that he might be in the right touch with God, right relationship with Him to understand things from God’s point of view.

Beloved friends, – young friends – never read your Bible as you would read any other book. Do not say “I can master this, as I can master a book of ^{Euclid}, or a foreign language”. – When you come here, it is the voice of GOD, that breathes on every page. A voice that comes in its power and effect to those whose hearts are prepared to receive the voice as from Him. His voice speaks as we wait before Him until it is His pleasure to speak to us and to unfold His mind unto us.

Well, there is the fact, that it was “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple”.

He was withdrawn from the scene in which he moved. Those terrible idolatries that were surreptitiously carried on from one end of the land to the other.

He was lifted up in spirit to God Himself. – THE LORD. He saw Him. You will observe in what character he saw Him. He saw Him enthroned, exalted, “high and lifted up”, and the skirts of His glory filled the temple. The throne and the temple were united in the presence of the Lord. The Throne speaks of GOVERNMENT, the Temple the place of WORSHIP, and what is due to God.

So he learned that amidst the horrible condition of things that surrounded, the Lord was still upon His throne. –Still holding the reins of government, still unaffected in His power, and majesty, and glory, by what was passing through upon the earth.

It was a sight that he never forgot. It riveted his attention. He saw the LORD lifted up. It was the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate days. This we know from the Lord’s own lips. The Lord Jesus spoke, as we often find in John, of the time when Isaiah saw His glory. He delivered that message that was commissioned to Isaiah.

The Lord Jesus was there, but He was Jehovah of Hosts. You have only to look through the chapter itself to see that. The Seraphim acknowledge the One sitting upon the throne as the Lord of Hosts. LORD in capital letters. JEHOVAH. All the fullness of the Godhead there.

But it was the Lord Whom Isaiah saw first. Why was that? Because the Lord Jesus has been the centre of the hearts of His people from the beginning of time. It was as the “seed of the woman” that sinful Eve was told about Him. The Lord Jesus Christ from beginning to end that the disconsolate sons of man are told to look upon.

There is power in Him. There is Holiness with Him. There is Glory with Him.

I think we need to have this upon our souls at this very time. Scripture is full of the message of those times when iniquity is waxing worse and worse, and if we are left here another year, iniquity will be worse in a year’s time than it is today, and the declension in the professing Church will be greater in a year’s time than it is today.

Are you prepared? “What is it that we need to know? We need to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. The One to whom God has given the task of setting this world right. He sits high and lifted up upon His throne. No other power can touch Him there, and what is given Him to do He will perform duly in His own time. It is for you and me to have that firmly in our souls, that whatever may happen, the earth may tremble, the waters of the sea rise up in tempest, but Jesus sits firm, and no power can unseat Him there. He is your Saviour, He is mine. He is the Head of the Church, and He will come for His Church in His time. Therefore we need not fear or grumble. Therefore we need not think in terms of despair that He has gone. It is not so. The man or woman who would be a fit witness for Him in these troublous times must first of all have individual contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, somewhat in the way that is described here.

It was for that purpose that I read from the first of Revelation. The same truth is there. John in Patmos, sees the Lord in a way, so far as we know, he never saw Him before. He had seen Him walking in humility through this world with nowhere to place His head, had heard His words of sweetness and comfort to multitudes. He had learned somewhat of the LOVE of God from those lips that knew it all. But here he sees the Lord in His Majesty, as the Ruler, Governer, the One before Whom he falls dead. He has that experience because of the message that is to be committed to him. – The visions that came before him as are recorded in the Book of Revelation. – What heart could bear them! What soul could look unmoved upon the terrible things that are unfolded in the Revelation!

First of all he needed to feel upon his bowed head the hand of the Lord of Glory, telling Him to “Fear not”. Then he was strengthened to behold what the Lord showed him, and to learn those lessons, of the devastations that will come upon the earth, and the ending of it all, the new heavens and the new earth.

But do not think that because Isaiah, Moses, and Peter, too, had those special experiences of learning Who the Lord was, and learning something of His glory, that is not for you and me. It is for us all and most of all for those who assay to serve the Lord in this day. You may serve in the wrong way. Your message may not be such a one as the Lord would entrust to you. You must first be before Him in His majesty and in His Might.

Now, Isaiah saw the servants round about the Lord. “Above it stood the seraphim ...holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts”.

Well, that was a very beautiful description of praise to our Lord Jesus, as well as the confession of His Name and His Godhead. It was for the instruction of Isaiah. – But the thing that was impressed upon him was the thrice holy nature of Jehovah of Hosts. Why, didnt Isaiah already know it? I believe he did. I believe he had a very strong idea that everything connected with God was holy, but this is something superior, this is something beyond the ordinary experience of a person.

I may think “The Lord is holy”. – But what was the voice of those in the glorious train of Him Who sat upon the throne? –”Holy, holy, holy”. Thrice holy. He is holy in a way that mortal man cannot measure. It is a holiness that is beyond the conception of man. It is a holiness that included (?) the trinity of the Godhead.

That is what he has to learn. The excessive holiness of God. Do not think that is unnecessary part for us. I am sure we are not as scrupulous as wo ought to be in our dealings with the Lord. If we stand before Him, if we look upon Him by faith, as we draw near to Him in prayer, as we assay to worship Him. –

You say, “Oh, but the Lord is so good, so gracious”. – I know, we cannot measure His love, we cannot fathom His grace, but there is the other side of it.– Holy, holy, holy. Ought we to forget it? Ought we to be so overcome by the sense of the grace of Him Who dies for us that we forget that He is thrice holy, and that an unclean thought, an unsuitable thought within me is incompatible with the holiness of the One that I am addressing?

Is that so, or is it not? Think of it. I wouldn't put any christian in bonds, but I have the scripture before me, that the servant, even in the very presence of the One sitting on the throne, says, not to Isaiah, but to another of his fellow beings, "Holy, holy, holy". He said it for Isaiah to hear. It was meant that he should hear it, although it is the common thing among those high angelic inhabitants of the presence of the One lifted up upon the throne.- And if Isaiah needed to learn it, we need to learn it, by getting into the presence of the Lord and having it imprinted upon our hearts once and for all.- the intrinsic, spotless, wondrous holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, "The whole earth was filled".

Isaiah had seen the days of the glory of the Lord that filled the temple, the skirts of His glory had come down there, and it was filled, but here was another thing. The whole earth is full of His glory. The workings of the Lord extended throughout the whole earth, and the abominations that were excercised at that moment in the land of Israel were but for a moment. The time would come when they would all be swept away, and the uncleanness would be removed, the defilement taken away, and the unholiness of the people and the country they inhabited would disappear, and the whole earth would be filled with His glory. They looked forward to that. It says, "The whole earth IS" because in the presence of the Lord TIME does not count. The future is as present as we are before Him.

Well, now, what was the result upon Isaiah. "Then said I woe is me".

I can hear someone thinking "These are the words of an Old Testament Prophet. He did not know the wonders of grace as we do, and we couldn't say a thing like that". Then I am sorry for you. If a person can be consciously before the Lord, not in public, but in private, alone, and have a vision of the marvellous holiness, of God, and still be a pharisee, he does not know where he is, and he does not know what he is.

"Woe is me". He had learned that the people of Israel were exposed to the woes of the Lord. - Read the earliest chapters, and there you see the woes, one after another, because of their sins. Oh, says Isaiah, "Woe is me". - As I behold the glory of the Lord and think of myself, I am just like leprous Uzziah my king. He was a leper. "Woe is me, for I am undone". - That is, one susceptible to the stroke of justice, just as Uzziah was. "In myself dwelleth no good thing". When I come into the presence of the Lord my uncleanness is revealed as when Uzziah was in the presence of the Lord his uncleanness was made manifest, and men could see the uncovered place on his person, on his forehead. - There was the mark of leprosy.

So, when we come into the presence of the Lord we do not look upon our own foreheads, we look upon our hearts, and we say, if we are men of truth, "Woe is me, for I am undone", I am amenable to the judgment of God, I an in myself as much a leper as any other leper in Israel.

It was the truth about himself. He learned what he was in his own heart, as a man, as one, though he was born of God, yet still had the nature which was inveterate (?) in its position to God, full of uncleanness.

It is here we learn these lessons about ourselves. They are set out in detail in expository form

in the Epistle to the Romans. There we find God's provision for the sins that we have committed, but when we got to the 6th, 7th, and 8th chapters, we get there the sin that is within us. – Awful, treacherous thing that can never be cured. There it is. A troubled man who had been justified before God, but had to learn that so far as he is concerned, his case is hopeless. "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He finds no resource anywhere but in the One that sat upon the throne. – "I thank my God through our Lord Jesus Christ". There was the place.

This man says the truth about himself, he confesses his real state of heart in the presence of the Lord of Hosts. "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips". He SAYS it. – By the LIP. Out of the HEART comes evil thoughts, but it is with the spoken WORD which indicates what is in the heart. We are all liable to offend in WORD. The utterance declares the uncleanness that is within, and Isaiah, because he had this seed of uncleanness within himself, therefore some time or other it would escape out of his lips. His lips would be defiled.

It is so. The evil word embodies the evil or wrong thought which is offensive, and which needs to be purged, to be cleansed.

Isaiah was learning this lesson, and we have to learn the same lesson. It is something that he never would learn in the school of the Prophets. He would never learn from the law of Moses. No! He said "Mine eyes I've seen the Lord of Hosts. I have been before Him, and there I felt my need".

Was it not so with Peter, when he was in the presence of Jehovah of Hosts. Jehovah the Saviour, when he was in the boat and saw the fishes gathering at the word of their Creator and Sustainer, he fell down at His feet and said, "Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord". "The unclean word has gone out of my lips, I have doubted Who Thou art". – "Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord". He felt it. It was sincere from the lips of a man who was not a stranger to the Lord. It was not the first time he had come in contact with the Lord Jesus. But he had seen His power.

Job, when he had seen the Lord. – he had heard of Him before, with the hearing of the ear. – now he says "Mine eyes see Him", and he repented and confessed himself vile, in dust and ashes before Him. Job said that I – a perfect man, who was reputed never to have sinned with his lips – he says he is a sinful man!

Am I telling you something strange and unwelcome to your ears? It is the way of truth and holiness. It is the way in which we alone can be fit and efficient servants of the Lord. We have got to learn what we are in OURSELVES. – Not merely absolutely helpless.

We can face that. You see, it was not anything that Isaiah was going to DO. – That was not what was troubling him, but he had this vision, he had seen the transcendent holiness of Jehovah, and abhorred himself, and he said this to the Lord. It is not necessary to say it to others. Say it to the Lord, and then you will say what is true. You cannot be a hypocrite in the presence of the Lord.

There it was. – He made this confession, and then it was that “One of the seraphim flew unto me, having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar”.

How was Isaiah forgiven? We do not find that there was a sacrifice offered. There was no priestly work of offering up some burnt offering or sin offering for his case. What happened was that the seraphim took, a burning coal with the tongs, and took it in his hand to Isaiah, and he touched his lips with that coal. It was making contact with Isaiah’s lips, unclean lips, and with a sacrifice that had already been offered. The live coal, burning ember, was there a proof that the sacrifice had been offered, and that its efficacy still rose, as it were, and it was a sweet savour to Jehovah. There it was upon the altar. Isaiah was there, but there was need that the two should come together. – Isaiah, having confessed his case, then the contact was made, and so we see the same thing beautifully set out for us, as we all know, in the 1st John, 1st chapter. There we read of the sons of God “walking in Light, as God is Light”. They are walking in the light, as He is in the Light, and that light reveals to them their sins, and also their SIN, because “If we say we have no SIN, His truth is not in us”. We are deceiving ourselves. But there is the presence of sin within us, and of the actual sin that we commit, the unclean word we speak, there is the provision in the same place for us, because “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”.

SIN, for the believer, is that which makes him unclean, unfit for God’s worship and praise and service, and that needs to be removed. How is it done? “The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin”. It abides there in its untarnished efficacy and value.

But there must be the contact, and where does it come? It is at the moment of CONFESSION. Who makes the contact? The sinner? (I mean the believer who has sinned) NO. It is a power outside of himself. Who brought the coal and laid it upon the lips of Isaiah? It was no son of Aaron, no Levite in the Sanctuary, but it was a heavenly Attendant, the one in the presence of Jehovah. He came and out it on the lips, and then there was the assurance, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips”. – No-one else but the one who had confessed his sin. What was the result? The result of perfect atonement. The sin was taken away, and the iniquity expiated. It was gone.

The very thing that he needed was that this uncleanness should be removed, and it WAS removed.

Isaiah valued that work of the Lord on his behalf, and we should value it too. But I am disposed to think that sometimes we very glibly confess our sins, as if we were reciting a Litany. There is no heart work, no conscience work. We say “If we have sinned, we confess our sins”. We express doubt whether we have sinned or not, but what God wants is REALITY. The person who confesses his sins, is the one who says, like the prodigal, “Father I have sinned”. There is no excuse, no desire to escape its responsibility. He said the truth simply and absolutely. “I have sinned”. That was confession, and you must say the same, and I must say the same. It is only thus that we get real contact in the sense we have it here. We learn then the abounding treasures there are in the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ and what is the full efficacy, far reaching efficacy of His atoning work at the Cross. It keeps our hearts clean and meet for the master’s use.

Well then, you see, the one who had seen the Lord high and lifted up, hears next the voice of the Lord speaking to him.–”I heard the voice of the Lord.– not Jehovah, but the Lord, the One Whom he had seen, and to Whom he owed allegiance and obedience, saying, “Whom shall I send? and who will go for US?”

Striking expression! “Whom [shall](#) I send? and who will go for US”. The whole Godhead sends forth this man, Isaiah, who has been cleansed, chosen and prepared to speak the words of truth in the name of the Lord. He said “Whom shall I send....” “Then said I, HERE AM I”.

But he had said “Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips”, and a man who said “I am a man of unclean lips” says “Here am I”.

That was FAITH, wasn't it? He trusted in that word that came to him, “Thy sin is purged”–, and having had that brought home to him as a divine word, then he acts upon it in the presence of the Lord, and says, “Here am I, send me.” It doesn't mean so much “send ME”, because the emphasis is rather on the verb SEND me. That is, “Here am I, waiting. I am in the attitude of expectancy. I do not want to choose my service. I do not want to take up any particular service, but here I am, SEND me”. “Entrust me with the message and I will go”.

It was of all importance that Isaiah said this when his lips had been cleansed. If he had said it with unclean lips, what would have been the good? But having been cleansed he can speak the words that were fitting in the ears of God. Then he could respond. – Then he could, as it were, volunteer for service.– And the Lord said “Go, and tell this people. “

I take it that Isaiah had never taken up such a message as that of his own accord, because it was not a delivering message. It did not seem to be a message of hope or salvation. It was a judicial sentence, really. It was a message that would not be, so to speak, after his own heart, just like Jonah, who had a message given to him, but because he never had Isaiah's experience, he grumbled when he was sent, and he grumbled at the result of his service. He had not learned the personal truth that Isaiah had learned, and we do come across those peevish servants of the Lord, very often. I do not mean those who talk a lot, but those who are in little meetings, those who are in the corners, so to speak, where there is very little seen, less heard perhaps. – But they are there, as witnesses for the Lord. Lights in the world. Yet they get a little disconsolate, and grumble and complain.

What is the cure for it all? I think the cure is this. –I am in a certain place.– I ought to be there because the Lord has put me there. It is not a place I should choose, and the thing that I have got to say is not what I would wish to say. I may have to withstand brandishment from other people. It is not nice to do it, and I cannot do it, shall not do it unless I have learned that I am one who has neither eyes, ears, heart, feet, any part of my person, that is worthy of the service of the Lord apart from His cleansing and His fitting. It is He Who must give me my message. He must give me my job. He must show me where I must be and what I must be, and if I do not like it, well, I must rest in this. – The Lord has put me here and He has some purpose in it. I do not understand it. – I would much more like to be somewhere else. He has put me here and I must stay.

I think that was the position of Isaiah. It is a most striking thing that this man should have such a doleful message to preach, and that the result of his word would be to make their hearts fat, and their eyes heavy. Yet, strange as they are, they are very remarkable, because they are recorded in the four Gospels by the Lord Himself, and quoted by the Apostle Paul at the end of the Acts, as the word of the spirit for that day.

They are words of immense importance, and Isaiah's lips had to be cleansed in order to do it. – (But we cannot go on to the rest of the chapter). The subject is, I am sure, timely, and it can be pursued very much further into. If you look, for instance, in Paul's charge to Timothy before he left this world, he knew that the apostacy was coming, and that dark days were coming upon the Church, and in his first Epistle to Timothy you find that over and over again he refers to the Lord in His POWER, "The King Eternal", the "mystery of Holiness", the "Blessed and only Potentate", the "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords". You do not find that anywhere else. Why? Because he is looking at a day when the authority of God is not in men's thoughts at all. They despise Him and will not have His Word.

It is all the more necessary, therefore, that the saints while they should delight themselves, should learn His POWER, and that He is Ruler and Governor, Who has the reins of things in His hands, amidst all the tangle that exists, He will bring everything up to peace and righteousness here upon the face of the earth.

Let us see to it that we, then, take our commandments (?) from the Lord, – I do not wish anyone to go away with the thought that you can go home tonight and go into your own chamber, and that you can tonight, before you go to sleep, have this vision that Isaiah had. That is not the thought at all! It is not my thought; it is not the thought of the scripture at all. What I mean is this – and what scripture teaches is, that if my heart is sincere to do the will of the Lord, He will make Himself manifest to us, if we are able to bear it, and when we need it.

It is a thing to long for and wait for, and we ought never to be satisfied with just reading the scriptures unless those scriptures bring us into touch with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Many people, especially those who feel the responsibility to others, never seem to think they need the scriptures more than the other people ...(?) The scriptures are for ME, and it was because Isaiah had this message, this vision of the Lord that he was able to deliver those marvellous prophecies that we find throughout the succeeding chapters, the longest in the Bible, full of glorious truths about the Lord, in His exaltation and humiliation and sufferings, too.

It was worth the discipline, the experience that he went through in his own soul.

May the Lord instruct us, and educate us for that service He has in store for each one of us.

Hymn No. 294.

Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, E.C. 17th December, 1938

Typescript