

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 6

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 6

**Theme: “Whom shall I send?”
saith the LORD.**

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 6:8 (KJV) “Also 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.”

INTRODUCTION

Being called into service by the LORD is the greatest privilege on earth after salvation. Every believer has been saved for service. Every believer has been given at least one gift to serve the LORD. There is no legitimate excuse for not serving the LORD. The LORD called Isaiah into a very specific service, which He had similarly called the Old Testament prophets into. They all had the twin ministry of forth-telling and fore-telling. The latter is to prophesy about the future whereas the former rebukes God’s people of their sins and reminds them of their need to return to the LORD.

Every prophet of the LORD is called to this special ministry. They cannot call themselves into the prophetic ministry. This specialised ministry requires courage,

perseverance, patience and faithfulness to do all that the LORD commands. A life of total sacrifice and absolute devotion to the LORD is indispensable. The prophetic calling is a fulltime ministry. There are no half measures in the calling of God, especially for those who are called into the fulltime ministry. Isaiah’s response to the LORD’s call is very instructive for all believers.

A believer who does not know his calling in life after salvation will live a wasted life. His life is aimless as he does not know what to do daily. He goes through the motion without purpose or goal. Every believer must find out from the LORD what his calling is and live accordingly by faith. Isaiah did. His life was not a trouble-free life. It was a life fraught with problems. Very often, his ministries were difficult and brought persecutions. However, the LORD saw him through all and Isaiah did not quit. He persevered despite the difficult circumstances because he was called and he knew his ministry was the purpose of his life and salvation. We must embrace this example of Isaiah to live an obedient and purposeful life for Christ!

OUTLINE

1. Throne Room Scene (vv.1-4);
2. “Unworthy” Reaction (v. 5);
3. Sanctification before Service (vv. 6-8);
4. Ministry Defined (vv. 9-13);

COMMENTARY

Throne Room Scene — 6:1-4

The year that King Uzziah died was about 754 B.C. This throws light on when Isaiah received the vision from the Lord. The name was not LORD (Jehovah) but the Lord (adonay). The emphasis here is not one of a covenantal relationship but a master-servant relationship. This encounter was based upon this thrust. Isaiah must respond accordingly as a servant or slave to his master. He could not reject but to accept and obey immediately and, from his heart.

The vision was definitely of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is confirmed by the apostle John in **John 12:41 (KJV)** “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” He saw Christ seated on a throne, high and lifted up. His train filled the temple. Christ was reigning on His throne. The description of Him seated on a throne demonstrates that He was in absolute control, regardless of what was about to happen to Israel and Judah on earth. The world may appear to be out of sorts, with the prevailing wars, calamities and injustices on earth. God’s servants must understand that their LORD Jesus Christ is seated on His throne high and lifted up. There is no one who could come near Him or touch Him. He is exalted above the heaven and the earth and all that transpires among sinful man on the earth.

His train (lit. The bottom part of His royal robe) filled the temple. It means that His presence covered the whole temple. The seraphims stood

above the throne where Christ sat. How many seraphims were standing above the throne was not disclosed. However, each of them had six wings. Two of the wings covered his face, two covered his feet and with the remaining two wings, he did fly. The third person masculine personal pronoun “his” was used to describe them implying that they were all males. The seraphims covered their faces so that they would not look at the face of Christ as a sign of reverence. They were ministering spirits and dared not look at the face of their Creator. The awe and reverence these seraphims showed to the LORD is instructive on what we, as believers, should observe to do during our worship of the LORD. There must not be any irreverence. Our conduct must be godly and dressing, modest to reflect our respect and awe of the LORD as we gather together for worship of the most high God.

The covering of the feet meant covering of more than the feet as it probably referred to the lower portion of their body. This was a sign of respect as their feet represented the inordinate parts of the body. Seraphims meant fiery or burning ones or copper coloured ones. The two remaining wings were used for flying to do the LORD’s bidding. The wings that flew characterised the swiftness of the seraphims to do the LORD’s will.

They cried one to the other, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of host: the whole earth is full of his glory.” This was the song of the seraphims. They worshipped the LORD by focussing on God’s holiness. They themselves were

holy and they were able to praise God for His holiness. This is a vivid emphasis of the purity and perfection of everything and everyone who were in the presence of the LORD! They now called Him the LORD! The covenantal name is used here to emphasise the identity of the LORD.

There was no sinner allowed near the LORD or in heaven! There was no sin that could be brought near or allowed in heaven. He is the LORD (use of the covenantal Name here to emphasise the covenantal relationship) of hosts depicting Him as the Commander in Chief of all the angelic beings! He was their Creator and Leader whose commands must be done with absolute submission.

The whole earth is full of His glory means that the glorying of the LORD remains intact despite the conduct of depraved sinners, the natural disasters and the abounding wickedness that is triumphing over righteousness. The LORD does not measure this world, and all that goes on in it, the way man does. He sees the world from His perspective and so do His seraphims. The refrain of His holiness is triumphantly declared even as the whole earth is full of His glory! This glory has to include the believers' life and salvation grace and their sacrificial service unto the LORD. The believers are found worldwide!

The posts of the door i.e. the frame of the door shook at the voice of the seraphims and the house was filled with smoke. This is a picture of the anger of the LORD! The LORD was angry at what was happening on earth

and in particular, at the idolatrous conduct of Israel and Judah. They were to be the visible manifestation of God's grace and mercy on earth. Instead, they turned to idols and refused to repent or change their evil ways and the LORD was about to remove Israel from the Land of Promise! The LORD had every right to be angry with His people, as He had given to Israel all that she needed to succeed and be the salt and light in a world that was in spiritual darkness. However, Israel failed the LORD miserably! Isaiah was called to serve the LORD under these very trying circumstances!

“Unworthy” Reaction — 6:5

Isaiah's response to this glorious and awesome vision was one of great sorrow and acknowledgement of unworthiness. He had no right to see this throne room scene! He was a sinner saved by grace; nevertheless, still a sinner. He admittedly confessed, “Woe is me!” There could be no other reaction apart from how Isaiah reacted. This is a godly response before a thrice-holy God.

He acknowledged that he was undone i.e. dumb and silent before God. He dared not and could not speak! His lips were unclean! He dwelt amongst a people of unclean lips! Isaiah did not say that he had an unclean heart or mind but only unclean lips! This is significant. The lips are the organs of praise. The seraphims were praising the LORD as holy, holy, holy! Isaiah dare not join their refrain! He was struck dumb! He could not speak a word! Who was he, a sinner, to

praise the LORD or to say a word before the LORD! Our lips like Isaiah's have been used to spew out many hateful and sinful words to hurt and destroy the lives of others! How dare we use this same pair of lips to praise the LORD! Isaiah realised that he had unclean lips and that he was in the midst of people with unclean lips. He was affected. Isaiah was so sensitive to the holiness of God, which was in contrast to his uncleanness, that he had to declare a woe on himself!

He said that his eyes had seen the King, the LORD of hosts! Who was Isaiah to stand before the LORD or even enter into His holy presence! He felt so unworthy. It is interesting that Isaiah called the LORD "King" here. He ministered to both the kings of Israel and Judah. However, he called Christ the King in this vision! By this address of Christ, Isaiah acknowledged that he was Christ's subject and citizen. He belonged to God's eternal and heavenly kingdom! He also called him the LORD of host like the seraphims did. By this inclusion, he placed himself on the same side as the seraphims, i.e. only a servant to the most high God!

Sanctification before Service

— 6:6-8

After Isaiah's confession of his unworthiness, one of the seraphims flew to him, holding in his hand a live coal that he took from the altar with the tongs. Fire has been used in the OT times as a form of sanctifying agent. **Numbers 31:23** (KJV) "Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified

with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water." [Emphasis added] However, in this instance, the coal of fire or live coal could point to the Word of God being the sanctifying agent here. **Jeremiah 23:29** (KJV) "*Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"*

The altar is the altar of burnt offering that was located at the front of the Tabernacle where the animals were killed and burned. The fire from this altar was lit by the LORD when the Tabernacle was completed. This fire must be kept burning forever. It was burning even when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and after they entered the Promised Land (see Lev. 6:12-13). Since the tabernacle and its entire sacrificial system is a type of Christ, the altar is also a type of Christ. It typifies the sanctifying power that is found only in Christ and His salvific works. The entire act of the seraph is one of cleansing and purification of Isaiah, in preparation for service of the LORD.

The seraph laid the live coal upon his mouth and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The cleansing of Isaiah's lips was based upon what Isaiah had confessed earlier. Now that his lips had been cleansed by the LORD, there was no reason why Isaiah could not do God's will and work. His iniquity had been removed and his sin purged. This is always the pre-requisite for service.

The servant of God must always begin his ministry on a clean slate. There must be no skeletons in the closets to be discovered later. He must fulfil all righteousness as he begins God's work. This was true of Moses as he went to Egypt to confront Pharaoh with God's message; the LORD nearly killed one of his sons because he was not circumcised. The LORD Jesus Christ needed to be baptised by John the Baptist before he began His ministry.

After the cleansing, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord (back to "adonay" instead of Jehovah) emphasising the master-slave relationship. It was not directed at Isaiah per se. It was like a general call to no one in particular. The call was simple and direct, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The use of the plural pronoun "us" points to the Trinity rather than the LORD and the seraphims. God was looking for a volunteer to do God's work. The ministry requires a holy and cleansed person and not so much a clever or rich one. Serving the LORD has to be from the heart and not coerced. Having heard the call, Isaiah responded by offering himself. He was empathic and serious in his offer of himself to serve the LORD. The use of the imperative by Isaiah in "send me," reflects this understanding.

Ministry Defined — 6:9-13

For the first time in the book of Isaiah, the LORD tells Isaiah to go and tell. In the previous five chapters, Isaiah merely received visions from the LORD describing to Him the present and future states of Judah and Israel.

There is sin that requires chastisement from the LORD. However, all is not lost as the hope of a bright future for Israel was also revealed to Isaiah in the form of the millennium kingdom. This is, perhaps, the reason why the call of Isaiah was recorded in chapter 6. He had been given a glimpse of what he was supposed to do for God's people before the LORD offered him the call to service.

The LORD was just as emphatic as Isaiah in sending him off to do God's work. The command was clear, "Go and tell this people." The LORD refused to call Israel "His" or "My" people. He deliberately used the demonstrative pronoun, "this" to describe his relationship with Israel. It is sad that the people of God have stopped reflecting the character and attributes of the God, whom they claim to believe in and, whose Name they claim to bear and honour.

The message seems a little contradictory, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make 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." Was Isaiah not supposed to go and turn Israel around and back to the Lord? However, this message from the LORD is one of evidential judgement. The preaching of God's Word by Isaiah will become the evidence that God would use to indict and condemn Israel for their sins!

This calling of Isaiah reveals to us another aspect of the Word of God. It is the aspect of condemnation. Apparently, Israel had already hardened her heart. Repentance from Israel was already a thing of the past. She would not repent. The Assyrians would soon come to punish and judge Israel and remove her from the Land of Promise, for the first time, since Joshua brought the people to occupy the Land some 700 years ago. However, on the part of the LORD, He would not stop giving Israel the Word no matter how vexed she would be by Isaiah's preaching! Isaiah had a very difficult ministry ahead of him. The ground that he was asked to minister to was hard and now judicially hardened by the LORD to the point of being beyond repentance, even salvation. Salvation here must not be confused with salvation of the individuals. This would be a national condemnation, which was meant for Israel as a nation, on the whole.

Isaiah would keep on preaching so that Israel would keep on hearing (the Hebrew construction of an imperative followed by a infinitive absolute of the same root points to this understanding). However, Israel would not understand. Isaiah must continually tell Israel to open their eyes to see (same Hebrew construction as the verb "go") but she would not be able to perceive. Isaiah's preaching would make their heart fat (lit. to make oily) i.e. to make it thick and resistant to chastisement. Their ears would be made heavy i.e. dull and not be able to hear clearly. Their eyes would be shut so that Israel would not be able to see.

This list of deafness and blindness and hardness of heart is frightening. These people were beyond salvation and heading in the direction of destruction. There was nothing about it that anyone could do as this was the work of the Almighty God.

The reason for God's actions was that lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed. It appears as if the LORD does not want His own people to repent and be saved! As mentioned earlier in the notes, judicial hardening has set in and the judgement of God upon the nation of Israel cannot be stopped or reversed! However, the preaching of God's Word must continue regardless of the response or lack of it from the people of God. This is a precious lesson to remember in the ministry.

Our duty is to preach the Word of God faithfully and to the best of our ability! The outcome or result is the Lord's domain, not ours. Whether people are convicted and converted or not, God's servant must be faithful and must keep on preaching until the LORD calls him home or returns!

Isaiah's reply was a question. How long was Isaiah's ministry of preaching and teaching to the hardened hearts to be? The time limit was "until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man and the land utterly destroyed." The destruction would be total and complete. Israel would be wiped off the face of the Land of Promise! She

would cease to exist! The land would remain but nationhood would be gone.

Isaiah did not live to see the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 586 B.C. The abovementioned words of judgement have to refer only to the northern kingdom of Israel. Isaiah was given a long drawn ministry by the LORD. He had to keep on preaching regardless of the people's response or the lack of it and he must persevere even as he witnessed the destruction of God's people in Israel. It must have been very painful for Isaiah to envisage the hopelessness in the lives of his own people when he knew that hope was only a fine line between repentance and condemnation! Isaiah could not decide on or define his ministry. He simply accepted the ministry handed to Him by the LORD regardless of the nature of the ministry. That is what it means by the words, "Here am I; send me!"

Many Israelites would be uprooted and exiled to distant foreign lands. The Land of Promise, once teeming with God's people in the days of King David, would now become a land of wilderness greatly forsaken. No one wanted it. Yet, to it the LORD would allow one tenth to return and be eaten i.e. consumed. This has to refer to the Babylonians coming to attack Judah via Israel from the north. The symbol to illustrate this destruction is a teil tree and an oak whose substance i.e. life giving abilities, is still in them even when their leaves fall in autumn. When they have shed all their leaves, these majestic trees appear as if they

are dead. However, when spring and summer appears they will blossom again. Israel is like these big majestic trees that will soon grow again even though she might be destroyed twice.

The basis for this everlasting existence is the fact that the Messiah will come forth from Israel. Israel has to remain an entity and cannot be destroyed like the other nations of old, which have ceased to exist or have been assimilated into the life of other nations. The Messiah will be born an Israelite.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The Call of God -- The call of every believer comes from the LORD. We must not take it lightly. To regard our calling lightly is to live our lives after salvation as if we are not saved. Once saved always saved is a blessed truth revealed to us by the LORD. However, many have abused this truth by living a profligate life after they professed Christ as their saviour. Christ must also be our LORD at the same time.

We have been saved for service. We cannot afford to live aimlessly. It is a grievous sin to waste our sojourn on this earth on things temporal. The pleasures of this life have dulled our spiritual senses. We have forgotten that our calling originates from the throne of God Almighty. It is our honour and privilege to be called by Him for service after salvation. Do not forget the call of God comes from God who is in heaven. It can only be carried out while we

remain on earth, in this earthen vessel. The moment we leave this earthen vessel, our service unto the LORD is over!

Woe is Me! – The believer must never be arrogant when he serves the LORD. It is a humbling experience to know that the LORD would even consider us worthy to serve Him, the thrice-holy God! Who are we sinners to serve the Creator and most high God! That he would allow and desire our service is, in fact, mind-boggling. He has all the angelic beings to serve Him and they are far more powerful than we could ever imagine. Yet, He calls His children to serve Him.

The only time we can serve is now. When we are on this earth, we can impact unbelievers for Christ. In this mortal body, we can earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. The moment our spirit departs this earthen vessel, our time of service ends. This is one very good reason why all of God's children must serve Him while it is still day for when the night comes, we can serve Him no more.

As we serve, we must serve with gratitude and humility. Christ must receive all the praise and glory in all that we say and do. We must approach God with reverence, not only in service, but also in worship and in prayer. As long as we come before Him and in whatever capacity, our attitude must be one of "woe is me; we are of unclean lips."

The cleansing power – There are only two things on earth that can cleanse us of our sins and sanctify our

minds and hearts. The first is the blood of Christ. Jesus says in **Matthew 26:28 (KJV)** "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The second is the Word of God. Jesus also says in **John 17:17 (KJV)** "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." These are the two most powerful cleansing agents on planet earth.

No other power on earth has the ability to cleanse our hearts from the filth of sins and all its accompanying guilt. This is necessary for salvation and for service. No one who is a depraved sinner can approach God, not to mention serving God. He would be cast aside even before he draws near to God. Anyone who desires to serve Him must first be a Christian. Next, the prerequisites for service are clean hands and a pure heart. Believers must realise that service is conditional upon a holy life. Therefore, without a holy life they are disqualified from serving God. Isaiah had to be cleansed first before he could be called to do God's work.

The Word of God is like a Hammer – In this chapter of Isaiah, we see that the Word of God does not bring conviction of sin but only condemnation of sinners. To those who have hardened their hearts and have already been condemned by the LORD, there is no repentance. The time for repentance is over. Judgement and condemnation await them. There is no recourse since judicial hardening of the hearts has prevailed. Do not be found in such a state. It is a state not to

be wished upon even our worst enemy!

Not withstanding the judicial hardening, Isaiah was still called by the LORD to preach. In this instance, the Word of God ceases to be a light unto the sinners' feet, to point them to the Lord, but is a sword to condemn so that they would be without excuse. The servant of God is reminded to take stock of this truth, as his service is to faithfully deliver God's Word and to always leave the result to the LORD. He can pray for the LORD to be merciful to save some. However, he must neither be motivated by results nor take pride in them, as salvation is not his work but the LORD's alone. He plods on regardless of the results or of any increase in numbers. He is constrained by the love of Christ as he serves and has no other motive whatsoever. AMEN.

2. In what way can a believer today approach God reverentially? Cite some practical examples.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 6:1-13;

TUESDAY: Isaiah 6:1-13;

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 6:1-13;

THURSDAY: Isaiah 6:1-13;

FRIDAY: Isaiah 6:1-13.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it would be good for you to have a glimpse of heaven like Isaiah or the apostle Paul? Why or why not.

3. Are you afraid if God is angry with you, now that you are a child of God? Should you be afraid at all? Please explain your answer.

4. What is your calling in life as a believer? Does a person's calling change with time or age?

5. What makes a man like Isaiah so obedient to the LORD? Is it possible for us to have the same quality?

6. Are there 'skeletons' in your life that must be dealt with before service can begin? Does this mean perfection before service?

7. Are you motivated by good attendance in service? Is it OK to number the weekly attendance and put them in the weekly?

8. Did you know that the Word of God could be used in this manner: to condemn, rather than to save? Can this scenario ever occur in our time?

9. Is there such a thing as judicial hardening of hearts today? If yes, please cite a scenario how that is possible.

10. Are there judgements today that are like that taught in Isaiah's time where there can be no reversal?

11. How long should the Word of God be proclaimed on earth? Do you think God's Word has impacted people in CPBPC? Explain your answer.

12. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
