

# THE CALL OF GOD'S PROPHET ISAIAH: THREE ELEMENTS NECESSARY TO SERVE GOD

## ISAIAH 06:01–13

### *Introduction*

Many are called but few are chosen (Mt. 20:16; 22:14). What exactly does this mean? Simply that many individuals have been called by God to minister to people, but few have ever responded to the call. Far more have rejected the call to service than have responded positively. When an opportunity to minister crosses our path, we should grasp the opportunity. We should meet whatever need there is lying in our path. We should never neglect a person or persons in need — whether hungry, impoverished, sick, hurting or otherwise, not if the person is truly in need. No matter what the call to service may be, if the call comes from God, we should surrender to the call.

In the year that King Uzziah died, the LORD gave Isaiah an extraordinary vision of Himself. Obviously, young Isaiah needed this very special encounter with the LORD. Why this was necessary is not specifically stated, but several reasons can be gleaned from Scripture. First, Isaiah's faith needed to be strengthened. He needed to know beyond any doubt who the LORD is and the extreme importance of the message being given to him. It was the LORD of hosts, the sovereign Creator and Majesty of the universe who was calling the young man to proclaim God's message to the world.

Second, Isaiah evidently needed to be humbled. He needed to be shown just what terrible sinners he and the people were, especially when seen in the light of God's glory and holiness (vv. 3, 5).

Third, Isaiah needed to be stirred with a renewed sense of urgency to proclaim God's warning of coming judgment. It was absolutely essential that the people repent, turn back to the LORD if they were to escape the coming judgment. If they failed to repent, God's execution of justice was sure to sweep down upon them.

Fourth, Isaiah evidently needed to be prepared for a challenging and difficult ministry. The people's hearts were hard, their ears deaf, and their eyes blinded to the truth of God's Word that He alone is the only living and true God. Therefore, they had to be charged to worship Him alone and to obey Him, living righteous and holy lives as His commandments stipulate.

Fifth, this was a critical time in the history of the nation. King Uzziah was either dying or else already dead. Under Uzziah's leadership the nation had flourished economically and militarily. The king had launched a massive program of public works and construction projects in addition to strengthening the military. As a result, there was little or no unemployment. The people were very successful in their businesses, agriculture and

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ranching ventures. Almost everyone had a prosperous lifestyle. However, in the latter years of Uzziah's reign, he slipped into sin and exposed a terrible flaw in his character. He was seen to be full of pride and self-importance. Shockingly, he had forced his way into the temple and assumed the role of a priest, God's appointed intercessor. Usurping the position of a priest was a very serious offense in the eyes of the LORD. For that reason the LORD had afflicted Uzziah with leprosy, and he was forced to live in isolation until his death. Left with no choice, King Uzziah had to put his son Jotham in charge of the government as his co-regent upon the throne.

Although unknown to Isaiah and the people of his day, Uzziah's death was to mark a major change in the history of the Jews. Following the reign of King Uzziah, the prosperity and peace that the nation had known began to decline. His son Jotham was a good king, but Jotham's son Ahaz was a terrible ruler. He led the nation in a downward spiral of wickedness and false worship. Although the tide was turned back to righteousness under Hezekiah's rule, Isaiah was to have a very difficult ministry. The prophet's ministry was launched in the year that King Uzziah died, the very period in which the utter disintegration of the nation began. Of course, the LORD knew the significance of the historical change that was taking place. He knew the desperate need of the people for a prophet who would courageously stand before them and proclaim the Word of the living LORD. To this end, Isaiah was being called. He was to minister to a nation that was declining, marching ever so rapidly down the spiral of utter disintegration and ruin. The people were given over to greed and covetousness, indulgence and drunkenness, lies and deception, pride and arrogance, and the mockery and persecution of the righteous. In fact, throughout Isaiah's entire ministry he faced a people with perverted values, a people who called evil good and good evil. Sadly, the society of his day turned away from the LORD and to false gods and false worship. The people were given over to sin and wickedness. Facing the death of King Uzziah and the resulting shift in government, Isaiah felt a desperate need to seek the face of the LORD. As always, when any genuine believer seeks the LORD, the LORD meets the believer's need. In Isaiah's case, the LORD gave him a very special vision of Himself. Isaiah actually saw the LORD sitting on the throne of God, high and exalted in the heavenly temple. Through this encounter with the LORD, Isaiah was set apart for the very special ministry to which he was being called. This is, *The Call of God's Prophet, Isaiah: Three Elements Necessary to Serve God*, 6:1-13.

- I. A vision of the LORD (vv. 1-4).
- II. A conviction of unworthiness: all are sinners and need cleansing (vv. 5-7).
- III. A surrender to the LORD, to His call and commission (vv. 8-13).

### ***I. Isaiah 06:01-04 Vision of the Lord***

In order to serve the LORD, a person needs a vision of the LORD. A person must know the LORD and understand who He is before he can adequately serve Him. This was true of

Isaiah and it is true of every genuine believer, especially the ministers and teachers of God's Holy Word.

1. The LORD gave Isaiah a vision of His exaltation and majesty (v. 1). Isaiah actually saw the LORD sitting on His heavenly throne, high and exalted. Obviously, this was the highest, most elevated throne Isaiah had ever seen or imagined. It was the throne of the King of kings Himself, the LORD Jesus Christ. The *Gospel of John* confirms this fact, for he clearly says that it was Christ sitting on the heavenly throne in all His glory and majesty (Jn. 12:41). The LORD was exalted as the sovereign God over the entire universe: above, before and over all that exists. Transcending everything, He was exalted above all rulers and governments throughout the universe. He held dominion, ruled and reigned, over all powers and principalities, both in this world and the spiritual world.

Isaiah also saw the LORD's flowing robes fill the heavenly sanctuary. Because of His majesty and royalty, no person was able to stand in His immediate presence or to gaze into His holy face. The train of His robe filled the entire temple.

2. The LORD gave Isaiah a vision of His holiness and glory (vv. 2-3). Flying above the LORD's throne was a number of spectacular creatures called *seraphim*, which are not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. The word *seraphim* (*sarap*) means burning ones, suggesting a burning purity and zeal for the LORD. Perhaps their presence suggests the burning, consuming fire of God's holiness in executing His justice and judgment. In appearance, the seraphim were apparently like humans in that they had faces, feet and voices. But they were unlike humans in that they had six wings.

=> With two wings they covered their faces, indicating their unworthiness and humility. They were not worthy to gaze upon the face of the Holy One.

=> With two other wings they covered their feet, perhaps indicating their reverence for the LORD. They are not worthy to stand before the LORD.

=> With the other two wings they flew or hovered above the throne of God, possibly signifying their continued ministry of proclaiming God's holiness and glory. However, their flying could also signify a readiness to undertake any task assigned by the LORD.

Isaiah saw and heard the seraphim's fervent, unbroken praise of God's holiness and glory (v. 3). Obviously, this was their primary ministry. With the deepest fervency possible, the seraphim called back and forth to each other: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts [LORD Almighty]: the whole earth is full of his glory."

The threefold repetition of *holy* emphasizes that holiness is the most essential characteristic of the LORD. Holiness is the very essence of God's being. *Holy* (*qadosh*) means to be set apart, separated, distinctive, different, transcendent. It also has the idea

of perfection, purity and moral cleanness. The LORD is totally set apart, entirely different from all beings throughout the universe, including mankind. From the very presence of God flows the blazing light of perfection and purity. The very nature of God is light, the brilliance and splendour of light, the most pure light imaginable. As Scripture says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5).

Being holy — the very essence and energy of pure light — God can have no part with evil or things associated with evil. Thus anyone who wishes to be associated with God must be holy even as He is holy. But since no person can achieve such holiness or perfection, a person must come to the LORD and beg for cleansing. This will be dealt with in the next point. For now, God's holiness is the focus. God's holiness shines forth as a witness to His perfection. In fact, the blazing glory of God's presence (His holiness and light) shines so brightly that there will be no need for a sun in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:23).

Note the second part of the seraphim's song: they declare "the whole earth is full of His glory." Creation — the heavens and earth — declare the glory of God. Wherever we look, whether at the starry sky at night or the astounding beauty of nature, the incomprehensible glory of God is evident.

3. The LORD gave Isaiah a vision of His power and presence (v. 4). As the seraphim cried out, the power of their deep voices shook the very foundation of the temple. Even the huge doorposts and thresholds trembled. Witnessing this would remind Isaiah of God's awesome power and of the angelic agents who were available to execute God's justice upon the earth.

Isaiah also saw smoke fill the temple. Most likely, this smoke was a cloud of glory that symbolized the LORD's holy presence. His cloud of glory, His presence, had led the Israelites through the wilderness journeys and had also filled Solomon's temple on the day it was dedicated (Exo. 13:21; 16:10; 1 Kng. 8:10-13). (John F Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Editors. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 1045.)

**Thought 1.** Any person who truly desires to serve the LORD must have a clear vision of the LORD. The individual must know the LORD and know who He is before he can serve Him as LORD. This is true for all genuine believers, but especially for those in leadership positions such as ministers and teachers of God's Holy Word.

- 1) To serve the LORD, we must see the Lord exalted, sitting upon the throne of the universe in all His majestic glory. If we do not know that Christ is LORD, how can we lead people to honour and worship Him, to surrender their lives to Him and obey His Holy Word? Unless we know that Jesus Christ is LORD, we waste our time trying to serve Him. Of what value is any ministry in His Name unless He is LORD? If Jesus Christ were not truly LORD, He would not deserve the worship or

service of any person. Therefore, God's Holy Word declares to us time and again the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ is the exalted, sovereign LORD of the universe.

**Mark 16:19** *After the LORD Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

**Luke 22:69** *“But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”*

**Acts 2:33-36** *Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make our enemies a footstool for your feet.”’ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

**Acts 5:30-31** *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead — whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

**Rom 10:9-10** *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

**Rom 14:9** *For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*

**1 Cor 1:9** *God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

**1 Cor. 12:3** *Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is ,Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*

**Eph 1:20-22** *[God's mighty power] which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.*

**Phil 2:9-10** *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.*

**1 Pet 3:22** *Who [Jesus Christ] has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

**Rev 5:12** *In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!”*



- 2) To serve the LORD, we must see the holiness and glory of Christ. If Jesus Christ were not the holy and sinless Son of God, He could not be the Saviour of the world. He would be as short of God's glory as we are and as guilty of sin as we are. He would need a Saviour as much as we do. But the wonderful truth is this: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, holy and sinless, the Saviour of the world. If we do not know Him as our Redeemer, how can we proclaim His salvation? If we believe Jesus Christ is only another man, guilty of sin, there is no value in lifting Him up as the Saviour of the world. He would be nothing more than a mere human being. But the unequivocal declaration of God's Holy Word is this wonderful truth: Jesus Christ is the holy, sinless Son of God.

**John 8:46** *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?”*

**2 Cor 5:21** *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Heb 1:9** *“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”*

**Heb 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

**Heb 5:9** *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

**Heb 7:25** *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

**Heb 7:28** *For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

**1 Pet 1:18-19** *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

**1 Pet 2:22-24** *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

**1 John 3:5** *But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

**Isa 53:6, 9** *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

3) To serve the LORD, we must know His power and presence. We must know that He has the power to deliver us from the bondage of sin and death, the power to deliver us through all trials and temptations. In addition, we must know that the LORD's presence is always with us, guiding and leading us victoriously throughout life. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about the LORD's power:

**Mat 9:6-7** *“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” And the man got up and went home.*

**Mat 18:20** *“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*

**Mat 28:18** *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*

**Mat 28:20** *“Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**John 17:2** *“For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”*

**Acts 10:38** *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*

**Rom 1:4** *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our LORD.*

**Eph 3:20** *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

**Heb 1:3** *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

**Gen 28:15** *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

**Exo 33:14** *The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*

**Psa 40:17** *Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

*Deu 20:1* When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.

*Isa 40:31* But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

*Isa 41:10* So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

*Isa 43:1* But now, this is what the LORD says he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

## II. *Isaiah 06:05-07 Deep Conviction of Unworthiness*

A deep conviction of unworthiness is necessary to serve the Lord. Confronted with the vision of the Lord in all His majesty and holiness, Isaiah was stricken with a profound sense of unworthiness. He suddenly realized the horrible nature of sin when contrasted with the majestic light of God's glory and holiness. How filthy, polluted, defiled, dishonourable and corrupt sin is. Because the LORD is so high and exalted, so pure and righteous, sin stinks within His nostrils. Thus, when Isaiah saw the holiness of God, he realized just how impure and unclean he was. Although he had placed his trust in the LORD years before, in this renewed call to the ministry Isaiah saw how utterly undeserving he was to serve the LORD. Feeling deep anguish within his soul, he cried out, "Woe" (v. 5). This is a cry of alarm, a sense that some terrible calamity is about to happen. Obviously he sensed that God's brilliant holiness was about to strike him dead. He cried out in distress, "I am undone" (*nidmeyti*). This word means to be ruined, cut off, destroyed, doomed to die. If God dealt with Isaiah in strict justice, he was a doomed man.

Flooding Isaiah's spirit was a deep consciousness of how far short of the glory of God he was. The LORD sat in all His glory and majesty high above the earth, ruling over the entire universe. All sorts of memories no doubt flashed through Isaiah's mind. He thought about his *sins of omission* — the times he had failed to do what he should or to be as diligent as he should — as well as his *sins of commission* — the times he had disobeyed the LORD's Word, His holy commandments. Sensing a desperate need to confess his failures, he cried out that he was a sinful man, a man of "unclean lips." Why did Isaiah refer to his "unclean lips" instead of simply saying that he was a *man of sin*? Probably because he was deeply aware of some recent sin he had committed with his tongue and knew that the root of sin went much deeper. Perhaps he had failed to speak a kind word when it was needed or



perhaps he had been silent when he had been given an opportunity to witness for the LORD. Or perhaps Isaiah had recently spoken words that were...

- harsh
- rash
- combative, argumentative
- divisive
- rude
- degrading

Whatever the case, Isaiah knew that his lips were guilty of failing the LORD, guilty of serious sin. An overpowering conviction of sin burned within his soul. And he felt the heavy weight, the total mass of sin that was exposed before the pure holiness and power of God. Having seen the *King*, the LORD of hosts (God Almighty), Isaiah knew that the Lord could strike out at any moment and destroy the human race. Thus he confessed the sins of the whole world, crying out that he lived among a people of “unclean lips” who constantly used language that was...

- foul or filthy
- threatening, full of malice and hate
- profane
- bitter or contemptuous
- irreverent
- off-coloured or immoral
- scornful toward God or other people

Obviously, Isaiah was very aware that the sins of the lips or tongue actually flowed from a sinful heart. Later in history, Christ was to express the truth as well as it could be stated.

**Mat 12:35-37** “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

**Mat 15:18-19** “But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

**Mark 7:20-23** He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”

Having fallen prostrate upon the ground in utter anguish of soul, Isaiah was crushed with a deep conviction of his sin. But the wonderful truth is this fact: the LORD never leaves His people bearing the weight of guilt and sin, not when they confess and turn away from their sins. Knowing the genuineness of Isaiah’s heart, the LORD met his need. Isaiah was cleansed from his sins. One of the seraphim performed the function of a priest. Flying over to the altar, he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs. Then flying over to Isaiah,

he touched the lips of the prophet with a hot coal and pronounced that he was cleansed from sin. The hot, burning coal symbolized the burning away of sin, the purifying and cleansing of sin. The fact that the hot coal was taken from the altar was a reminder that sin was forgiven through the blood of the sacrifice, the sacrifice that was always offered upon the altar. The seraphim actually pronounced that Isaiah's sin had been atoned for.

This act definitely symbolized God's atonement for sin. Sometime in the future, Christ was going to die to provide atonement for the sins of every human being. But for now, because Isaiah had confessed his sins, the LORD had the seraphim symbolize the cleansing of Isaiah's sin. Remember that a sensor full of burning coals had always been taken into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. It was taken before the LORD by the High Priest when the substitute sacrifice was offered to God on behalf of His people (see Lev. 16:11-14).

**Thought I.** A deep conviction of unworthiness is necessary for us to serve the LORD. We must not measure ourselves against one another, for we are all of the same flesh and blood. We are all guilty of giving in to temptation, sinning through acts of *commission* or *omission*. Therefore, when we measure ourselves against one another, we are as *good* as every one else. But to learn the truth about ourselves, we must measure ourselves against the LORD. When we see the LORD high and exalted, dwelling in the blazing holiness of His being, then we see the truth. We see just how far short of God's glory we are, how terrible our sin is when contrasted with His perfection and glory (Rom. 3:23). The result of this comparison is just what we need: a deep conviction of sin and of unworthiness. Hence, we are driven — or *should be driven* — to seek forgiveness from the LORD, the only source of true forgiveness. And when the LORD pardons us, we are truly freed. Guilt is erased, and our spirits are set free from depression, discouragement, self-accusation and the sense of failure. We are set free from the heavy weight of guilt that causes so many emotional problems, problems that far too often crush us and make us helpless, unable to function. Jesus Christ — He and He alone — can and will set us free if we will confess and repent of our sins. In addition, confession and repentance are absolutely essential before we can genuinely serve the LORD. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

**Mat 5:4** *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

**Luke 13:3** *“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

**Acts 2:37-38** *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

**Acts 3:19** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

*Acts 24:25* As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

*Eph 1:7* In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

*1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

*Psa 38:4* My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.

*Psa 51:3* For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

*Prov 28:13* He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

*Isa 55:7* Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

*Hosea 14:2* Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips."

### **III. Isaiah 06:08–13 Surrender to the Lord's Call**

Isaiah surrendered to the LORD's call and commission, an absolute essential in order to serve the LORD. A person must first hear God's call and then respond favourably before he can truly serve the LORD. This was true of Isaiah, and it is true of every genuine believer, but especially the ministers and teachers of God's Word.

1. Isaiah heard God's call and responded favourably (v. 8). As soon as Isaiah had been cleansed from his sins, he immediately heard the booming voice of the LORD calling for a volunteer to go forth to minister to His people. Without hesitation — not leaving time for the seraphim or anyone else to respond — Isaiah courageously offered himself: "Here am I! Send me." Having been forgiven his sins and sensing deeply that the LORD accepted him, Isaiah was filled with joy and thanksgiving. Therefore with no reservation, Isaiah leapt at the opportunity to serve his LORD. His immediate surrender reveals...
  - a spirit of *readiness*, both a desire and a willingness to serve the LORD
  - a spirit of *resolve*, a determination to go and bear witness despite the difficulties
  - a spirit of *trust*, leaving the success and results up to the LORD

Unlike so many who hesitate or even reject God's call, Isaiah readily, willingly surrendered to serve the LORD. Whereas Moses and Jeremiah both fought against the call of God, Isaiah offered himself without reservation or qualification.

2. Isaiah was commissioned by God, instructed to go and issue a threefold warning to the people (vv. 9-10). First, he was to warn the people about hearing God's Word but never understanding it. Obviously, many of the people were faithful in their worship attendance. They regularly heard the Word of God. But their repeated hearing was not leading to understanding. Instead of truly listening, their minds were wandering about, focused upon their own affairs or problems. They occasionally witnessed God working in the lives of other people, yet they never perceived that they themselves needed a work of God in their own hearts. Simply stated, when they attended worship service or heard the Word of God being taught, they became sleepy eyed, groggy and inattentive.

Second, Isaiah was to warn the people against having hard hearts, deaf ears and blind eyes (v. 10). Repeatedly rejecting the Word of God and His work in their hearts had a terrible impact upon the people. It hardened them and rendered them incapable of receiving and responding to God's Word. Time and again the people refused to hear the Word of God. Consequently, the more they rejected God's Word, the harder their hearts became and the more deaf and blind they became. Constant resistance resulted in less interest in the LORD. Thus the people were less able to receive Him. They became more and more callous toward God. Note that this experience is so common and so tragic that it is quoted six times in the New Testament (Mt. 13:13-15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; Jn. 12:40; Acts 28:25-28; Rom. 1 1:8).

Third, Isaiah was to warn the people against continuing to resist to the point of no return. The people could reach a point of never being able to repent, the point of never being able to escape the coming judgment (v. 10). People must be warned: the LORD is not playing a game with the human race. His Word must be taken seriously, not trifled with, ignored, neglected and certainly not disobeyed. Yet despite God's warnings, history has shown that people do harden themselves toward the LORD and His Word. They even deny God's existence and exalt man as lord over his own destiny. These individuals often harden their consciences to the point that they no longer sense conviction of wrongdoing. In doing so, they reach a point of ultimate resistance, a point of never being able to return to the LORD. In other words, a person can become so hardened toward the LORD that he will never repent. The result is sad and tragic, for the person will never be able to escape the coming judgment. He has doomed himself to spending eternity separated from God. It is not God who deliberately hardens the hearts of people, making their ears deaf and their eyes closed. Rather, it is the people who continually resist God's truth. It is the stubbornness of people's hearts, their repeated refusal to hear the Word of God and to surrender their lives to Him that dooms them to never accept the wonderful salvation God offers.

These were the three warnings Isaiah was commissioned to proclaim to the people. No matter how the people responded, he was to continue proclaiming the Holy Word of God.

3. Isaiah sensed that he was being called to persevere in a difficult, unpopular ministry (vv. 11-13). Therefore, he asked the LORD how long the people would resist the truth. God's answer was threefold, indicating that the situation was to get much worse before it would get better.
  - a. The people would resist the truth until the hand of God's judgment fell. Because of their hard hearts, the nation was to be destroyed and the people deported to a far land (vv 11-12). The situation would not get better until the Northern and Southern Kingdoms had been conquered and the people taken into captivity and exiled by the conquerors. (See notes, 2 Kng. 17:1-41; 25:1-30.)
  - b. The people would continue to resist the truth until only a remnant remained, but even this remnant would see the land invaded and wasted again (v. 13). Note that the remnant would be only about a tenth of the population. However, they too would experience further destruction due to the hardness of their hearts toward the LORD. This is a clear reference to the future destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (See notes, Kng. 25:1-30).
  - c. The people would go on resisting the truth until the *holy seed* arose from the stump. The "stump" represents the few survivors that will be left (v. 13). This is a wonderful promise, that a *holy seed* — a small number of true believers — will survive the coming judgment. It will be like the stump of a fallen tree that gives rise to shoots of growth. So it would be with the population of Judah and Jerusalem. There would be a stump, a few survivors of true believers, who would escape the coming judgment. People would continue to resist the truth until these days, so the warning must be issued by Isaiah and then others who follow him. So long as people continue to resist the truth, the warning of God was to be issued against them.

**Thought 1.** Before we can serve the LORD, we must first surrender to the Him. We must acknowledge Him as the LORD, as the high and exalted Creator of the universe, the Holy One who is to be worshipped and served. Second, we must confess and repent of our sins before we can truly serve the LORD. And then, thirdly, we must surrender to the LORD's call and commission.

We are not called to be successful, but we are called to be available. A spirit of surrender must grip our hearts. No matter the difficulty or hardship of the call, we must be ready and resolved to step forth for the LORD, trusting Him for strength and guidance. If we surrender to the LORD — show Him that our spirits are ready and resolved — He will send us forth in the power of His Spirit. Every step of the way will be directed by His Spirit, and we will be empowered to face any difficulty. No matter how hard the people's hearts may be or how strong the opposition, the LORD will overshadow us with His presence and empower us to complete the task. The one



request of us is not that of intelligence, ability or skill but that of surrender. God simply calls us to be available, surrendered to His call and commission.

**Mark 10:28** Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

**Luke 5:27-28** After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

**Luke 9:23** Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

**Luke 14: 33** "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

**Luke 18:29-30** "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

**Rom 12:1-2** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**Ga1 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Phil 3:7-11** But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my LORD, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ. And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

**Prov 23:26** My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways. ■