

Isaiah 6 and 2 Corinthians 4

The Lord God Almighty, His Forgiveness and Calling.

Isaiah 6.

We will focus on i. Isaiah's encounter with the holy God and his experience of forgiveness of sins, (vv. 1-7) and ii. Isaiah's call to be a prophet (v. 8).

Vv. 1-4. After the death of King Uzziah – Isaiah meets the true the **King of Israel, 'the Lord Almighty'**. **'I saw'** - no-one has ever seen God (Jn. 1:18) yet God can make Himself 'visible' in vision form and ultimately in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1). In Isaiah's vision the Lord is both high and exalted, and He also fills the earth. There is a marked contrast between God's universal presence and Holiness and Isaiah's realisation of his own unworthiness.

Vv. 5. Recognises his own unworthiness Isaiah cries out, 'I am ruined' – derives from the word 'to be silent', because of his *'unclean lips'* (his sin), likewise the people. Isaiah does not need nor is he given a new or novel revelation of God. Isaiah is confronted by the One who has always been *'The Lord Almighty'*

Vv. 6-7. The Lord Almighty Himself takes the initiative to deal with Isaiah's guilt and sin. Isaiah's identification with the people in sin opens up the possibility of atonement for them as well. The burning coal is taken from the altar where holiness is accepted, and was satisfied by, the death of the substitutionary sacrifice (Lev. 17:11). [Under the New Covenant Jesus Christ is the substitute for human sin in his death on the cross. We remember and celebrate his substitutionary death for us when we partake in Holy Communion].

Vv. 8. Isaiah's commissioning. 'Then I heard the voice of the Lord' – Isaiah is now ready to hear from the Lord to whom he has been reconciled. [Only after we acknowledge both God's holiness and sovereignty and our sin are we ready to hear from and then respond to God].

Isaiah's sin had silenced him but now he can speak in response to God's forgiveness. [All believers need to learn how to listen to God and this is equally true for Ministers. It is because of both our sinfulness and God's greatness that we need to listen to Him.

Isaiah needed to learn as we do that it is God who calls and commissions, *'whom shall I send?'* – It is **God's mission** that we are being called to join, *'who will go for us'* – This repeat adds the element of challenge – who will be **willing to go?**

2 Corinthians 4

V. 1. Paul affirms that 'his ministry' is from God (2:17; 3:5-6); because of 'God's mercy'. Paul does not deserve to be exercising this ministry; rather it is because of the mercy of God (see Acts 9:1-19; 1 Cor. 15:9-10). This echoes the reading from Isaiah 6. What is the core of the message that Paul preaches?

V. 4. Paul describes the heart of his message as the gospel – the good news about and of Christ, who is the **'glory of God'**, the true **'image of God'**. [This is what all preachers, Ministers are called to emulate. We are to preach this gospel because it displays the 'glory of Christ' – he is the one in whom we see the glory of God because he is the true *'image of God'*].

V. 5. Paul emphasises that he does not draw attention to himself, his gifts and abilities. **Rather he preaches Jesus Christ as Lord.** [Whether we are great preachers or wonderful pastors as Ministers we are called to glorify Jesus Christ in all we do. And we are to exercise our ministry as the 'servants' of His people. As a Minister you will need to take a leadership role but always as a servant leader, as one leads because of God's mercy.

V.6. 'the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ'. It is God who makes His light shine in our hearts – that is He enables us to know God's glory in the 'face of Christ'. To be in fellowship with Jesus and to serve him as our Lord is to experience the glory of God in Christ. [A faithful Minister is one who not only proclaims Christ and serves their people but also is one who keeps close to Jesus. Paul in Galatians describes this as 'keeping in step with the Spirit']

V. 7-9. The power that can be seen in Paul's ministry is from God, but this power is expressed through the weakness of Paul and his co-workers (1:9). This is illustrated in the contrasting statements in verse 8-9. The power to remain faithful in our ministry and in your call to Ordained Ministry is solely dependent on God.

Reflection/Response. How do we know God's forgiveness and His enabling power to serve Him and His people?

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