

Winning your brother - church discipline

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[0 : 00] Let's just start this way. The Christian life, as we claim to be Christians, many of us here this morning, and as we're a Christian group, a body of Christians, what expectations do we have? What are we aiming at? I do fear that for some people who would say they were Christians, Christianity is just on the edge of life because the main thing is the business of whatever, making money, that's the main thing.

Or the main thing is really enjoying what this world has to offer, that's the main thing. Or raising a family, I mean some of these things are not bad in themselves, are they? But is Christian faith just on the edge and isn't the main thing, is just on the edge? Is that what Christianity is about? Or is Christian faith actually a bigger thing than that and part of a far, far wider purpose, part of a bigger picture?

Tantalizingly, Jesus said to his disciples, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

[1 : 27] I think he had a bigger picture in mind. And something of that we'll find in Isaiah chapter 6, which is a huge chapter.

Here's my plan for tackling it. First of all, I want to remind us of how this fits into the rest of the book. Then I want to do the seeing bit, the bit that says my eyes have seen the king, which is verses 1 to 7.

Then I want to do the going bit, which is 8 to 13. Then I want to just take a look at where that puts us, what's the total strategy, and then finish off.

So that's the plan, such as it is. So let's first of all remind ourselves of the flow of the book of Isaiah. We have seen in the first five chapters two jarring, clashing themes.

One is the theme of extreme judgment. The prophecy written all those years ago, the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw during the reigns of Isaiah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

[2 : 38] And Israel was not being what she was intended to be. She was intended to be light to the nations. She was not doing what she was intended to do.

She was supposed to do mishpat, which means justice, order. She was supposed to do tzedek, which is righteousness, high ethics, high moral behavior.

She wasn't doing that. And instead she was learning and following the ways of the nations. She was learning how to do idol worship and learning how to be inhuman.

And the chapters keep on coming back to this powerful picture of the certain fire of judgment. And there's the city on fire, smoke coming out of it.

There's the Assyrian army who are going to be invading, as Isaiah predicts. And the reason because it is a city full of blood. We have that extreme judgment and we have extreme promises.

[3 : 49] That God is determined that Israel's city, that's to say Jerusalem, Zion, in other words, and her people do have a future and will be holy.

I will restore your judges as in days of old. Afterwards you will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

And the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains and all the nations will flow to it. So the nations will, instead of teaching Israel their wrong things, will come to Israel, come to the city of God, to learn and follow the ways of the Lord.

And there's the city in its glory with the nations flowing to it. And those were the two themes that we have. And we ask, how can those two themes meet?

How can judgment ever turn into the fulfillment of those promises? It's a big question. If there is judgment, and we looked at it last week, if you remember, a reasonable judgment, a specific

judgment, a future judgment.

[5 : 06] If there is a judgment from the Holy One of Israel upon those people who were sinful, arrogant, human worshipping, unholy people.

And those people who put God on the margin and built themselves up. If there is judgment, how can they possibly become right with God because they've sinned?

How can they possibly teach the nations as they were meant to do? And the answer seems to me, or an answer or part of the answer is found in Isaiah chapter 6.

Because it's answered specifically for Isaiah himself. He meets the Holy One. His sin is taken away. And he is now in a position to teach God's word as he is meant to do.

So Isaiah sort of stands for the whole nation. What he learns is applicable to the situation of the whole nation. And therefore, I think we could say he's applicable to us.

[6 : 15] He's a sort of case study. So that's where it sits in the book. And all the streams of thought that have been going on through chapters 1 to 5 have a meeting point in chapter 6, which makes it such an important chapter.

So let's look at it now so that we're in point 2 and doing the seeing bit. And we'll just go through it verse by verse.

In the year that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted.

And the train of his robe, that means the bottom edge, the sort of cuffs of his robe, that bit, filled the temple.

So let's see what's being said here. It's the year that King Isaiah died. Now you might remember from a little bit of history that we did that the reign of King Isaiah was, one could say, generally speaking, a period of wealth, of peace, of stability.

[7 : 22] Certainly not without Isaiah's challenge to how that was all working. There's some sort of dubious spirituality to it. But it was stable. And this is what happens in the year that he dies.

A year in which perhaps people were thinking, what's going to happen next? What's going to happen next when we have a new ruler, a new king?

And he says, I saw the Lord. Now please notice the spelling of Lord, L-O-R-D, not capital letters. Because capital letters, L-O-R-D, is God's sort of distinctive name, Yahweh. This is lowercase O-R-D, Lord, meaning master.

Adonai, the master. I saw the Lord in the sense of the master. In that year, I saw the real master.

[8 : 24] I saw the real person who's in charge. I saw the Lord. I saw him dwelling on his throne. Isaiah's going to say, I dwell amongst a certain people in a minute.

But this is where the Lord dwells. He's going to use the same word. I saw the Lord. And where is the Lord dwell? I saw him on his throne. That's where he is.

That's where he belongs. And this throne is high and exalted. And it compares with what Isaiah has denounced previously as people who lift high towers, lift high military machinery, lift high the trees that they worship.

And he says, no, this is the real lifted high. This is the master who is high and lifted up. And when people try to describe the glory of the Lord, you notice this, that they can never focus on the Lord himself.

All they can manage to grasp is the bits around the outside. And in this case, he says, and of the Lord's, whatever glorious clothing he had, all I can tell you is that the very bottom bit, the very sort of edge of his robe, the bottom bit, that filled the temple.

[9 : 59] He couldn't begin to say how the substantial glory of God is. He just says the very bottom bit, the very edge, that the train of his robe filled the temple.

He doesn't say the Lord filled the temple. He doesn't say his glory filled the temple. He says the bottom of his robe filled the temple. And there's something else going to be filled in a moment in verse 5.

But there's a little bit of filling going on. And the temple of which he speaks uses a word to say, it's a royal word, like the palace. I saw the master high and lifted up, dwelling on his throne.

The train of his robe filled his royal palace. It's a glorious vision. It's just a few words, but they're words of tremendous weightiness.

How awesome to see the king in his majesty. I suppose we would say what comfort to say the master has died, the king of Zaire has died, but actually he is the real master.

[11 : 17] Untroubled by the ups and downs of human politics and mortality. He is the master. It's a great comfort to us, isn't it, to know that the Lord is on the throne.

It's a great comfort in the book of Revelation, isn't it? The Lord is on the throne. And when the nations come and go and this and that happens and persecution arises or whatever, the Lord is on his throne.

It's a great comfort to us this morning, isn't it? Whatever is going up and down in our lives, the true everlasting king is untroubled on his mighty throne.

And also, of course, what a challenge. Because in the next chapter, in just the next chapter, in just, as it were, a few words time, the nation is going to be plunged into crisis.

The Assyrian, as a threat to do with Assyria. And the question is going to be, if God is on his throne, am I going to trust him for the particular crisis of tomorrow?

[12 : 32] So what is the question for people who claim to be Christians, isn't it? We love singing the songs. We love saying we trust the Lord. But the issue always comes with the particular thing that comes up today or tomorrow in which we think, oh, oh dear.

But here is the challenge that the next chapter is based on. The Lord is on his throne, isn't he? So I can face the challenges of tomorrow with its problems large and small, as the song says.

I'll trust the God of miracles. Give to him my all. Let's continue on. So we now see the seraphs or the seraphim. Seraphim is plural.

They stand above him. I can't quite work out if he can't see the top. How does he see that the seraphs are above him? I'm presuming that he probably means like hovering around or something like that.

Seraph is an unusual word. It's to do with burning. It's to do with flame. It's a sort of flame angel or a burning angel.

[13 : 48] And there's a sort of three-stage connection between that word, apparently, my computer tells me, and the word for live coal.

What have we got? What does it say? Live coal? Live coal. So we've got burning angels, and we've got a burning stone, which we're going to see in a moment. But there's quite a lot of fire going on, so let's put some burning.

They look a bit like, they're not supposed to look like that. The nearest I could get. They're sort of fire angels. And we're going to get fire.

We're going to get smoke. So just be prepared. This is a fiery vision of God. And these seraphs, we're told that they have wings, six of them, which I haven't drawn, so got a bit difficult.

With two wings, they cover their faces. With two, they cover their feet. And with two, they fly. And presumably, they cover their feet out of modesty.

[15 : 02] I don't know whether you like to show off your feet. You might like to keep them covered. I don't know. You might like to, you might go and have them specially beautified. Anyway, these angels just say, well, we'll just cover our feet in the presence of God.

And they cover their faces out of modesty before the Lord. And they fly, ready to do God's bidding. And they call to one another.

And what a fantastic thing they call out. Holy, holy, holy.

The Lord Almighty. Godosh, Godosh, Godosh, Godosh. Holy, holy, holy. Is the Lord Almighty. That is God's proper name, Yahweh. And the almightiness means, literally, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies. And the three times saying holy, in Hebrew, if you say something twice, it's like saying very.

[16 : 11] Very, so, if the day you eat this fruit twice, dying you will die, meaning you will definitely die.

And here, holy, holy would be twice, definitely holy, but it's three times. It says, you just cannot measure how holy God is.

He is three times holy. They call this to one another. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

Glorious, majestic picture of the Lord of hosts. The master seated on his throne.

And at this, we have the response of things. So, inanimate things. And the things, which are the doorposts and the threshold, they shake.

[17 : 19] I'm not quite sure why he particularly notices the doors. And I think perhaps the threshold or the foundations is a bit where the doors sit. I don't know. But whatever the architectural details,

the whole thing shakes at the sound of their voices.

Like being in an earthquake. I've never been in an earthquake. I don't think I know anybody who has been in an earthquake. Anybody here been in an earthquake? Okay. Is it frightening?

Yeah. So, this is the experience that he has. Viewing the Holy One. Hearing his praise.

Described by these creatures calling to one another. The whole, what does it say? The doorposts and threshold shook.

And the house is filled with smoke. So, that's, oh, that didn't work. Did it work? Yeah. Yeah, okay. The house is filled with smoke.

[18:26] And where does the smoke come from? I don't know. People speculate. Was it from one altar or another altar or what? But I think what we're meant to pick up from this is you have fire and you have smoke.

And here it is, the smoke. This fills the house. It's a picture of God's holy power and his holy majesty.

We live in a world where nothing much is taken seriously. You look at the selection of things on the news.

Presumably, they select the things that are to be taken most seriously. Loss of life is taken seriously. Brexit is taken seriously.

But here is the ultimate seriousness. What matters most in this world? Who matters most?

[19:33] Of whom should we stand in awe? Answer, the Lord. High and lifted up. The one, the train of his robe fills the temple.

It's a picture of his holy power and majesty. And it impacts the spiritual world with awe because the seraphim say, holy, holy, holy.

It's the Lord of hosts. Heaven and earth is full of his glory. And it impacts the inanimate world with trembling. And the created world trembles at the glory and majesty of God.

And we end up with, I think, a mystery, really. What's this smoke? Where does it come from?

What's it meant to teach us? I don't really know. I suppose you could probably guess at lots of answers.

But we're just left with a sense of this vision is too great to comprehend and too great to sort of itemize into tick boxes.

[20:33] Just the whole thing is filled with smoke. We can't see any more. It's sort of end of attempt to try and bring it down into anything that we can handle.

So let's move on to how this impacts Isaiah.

So we've seen the impact on the spiritual creatures. We've seen the impact on creation. So now we're going to look at the impact on Isaiah. And he says, notice what he does say.

He says, woe to me. I'm ruined. This vision puts any thoughts that he had about how brilliant he was, how worthy he was, how useful he was.

It just reduces all of that to zero. I stand in the presence of this God. All I can say is, I'm nothing.

[21:51] I'm ruined. Woe to me. Remember in the previous chapter there were six woes, weren't there? Slightly different word. But there was woes upon the society around.

And then Isaiah says, actually, the reality is that's me. Woe to me. Woe to me. Woe to me. And specifically he says, I am a man of unclean lips.

I dwell. I dwell. Notice I dwell somewhere. I dwell. I live among a people of unclean lips. And my eyes have seen the king.

The lord of hosts. The lord almighty. And that's his response to seeing the king. It's his lips that are the problem and his eyes that have seen.

This response doesn't change. God's holiness doesn't change. Human sin doesn't change. The response to seeing the lord, the king, is to be convinced of our own sin.

[23:09] Typically when people see the lord, they fall down and worship. I mean in the bible. They fall down. I was wondering whether to do the short prayer of Peter.

I didn't in the end doing it. The short prayer of Peter. When seeing Jesus doing a particular miracle. Depart from me. I'm a sinful man.

To see God's holiness. Truthfully. To get a grasp of that. See I suppose even a splinter of it is to say. Where does that leave me?

I'm ruined. Yes it was Peter in Luke 5.8. Go away from me lord. I'm a sinful man. The thing of particular interest is.

He doesn't say I've got an unclean heart. Or an unclean mind. He says the problem is my lips. Lips equals mouth equals language equals words.

[24 : 13] That sort of thing. The problem was with his lips. The cold touches his mouth. So we're all in the same sort of area. Why does Isaiah say this?

I think it's because. The lip. The mouth. The language. The tongue. Is the bit.

Whereby. He. Isaiah. Would talk to the lord. And talk for the lord. And he says. I live amongst a people of unclean lips.

And I wonder whether what he's saying is. Here we had. Our commission from the lord. To be a light to the nations. To teach the nations. The ways of the lord. That was a ministry of our lips.

And we have just totally failed in that. We. You know. That the nations would come to. To hear the word of the lord. To hear. The teaching of the lord.

[25 : 12] The law of the lord. From Mount Zion. And we have totally failed to communicate that.

We're. Non-starters in communicating that. Where people have unclean lips. And I think. That's why he says.

This. That's what we were here for. To speak for the lord. And that's where we are. We've totally fallen down on this. Woe is me.

And what happens next. Verse six. Then one of the seraphs. Flew to me. With a live coal. A burning stone. There's one of the seraphs.

And he has. Now does it say in his hands. I've put. Having in his hand. Yes it does say in his hand. Hmm. Interesting.

Okay. Which it says. He had taken with tongs. Tongs from the altar. Now the tongs. Are not a commoner garden tongs. They're tongs that were used. In the whole sacrificial system.

[26 : 09] I'm not sufficiently. Clued up about. What you would have used the tongs for. When you were sacrificing. Animals. And stoking the fire. And cutting animals up.

But anyway. You use tongs. And it was tongs like this. That he. Had. To. With the. The coal. The burning stone. And he caused it.

To touch. My mouth. And he said. See. This has touched your lips. And the. The effect of it is remarkable.

Your evil. Or your guilt. Is sent away. And your sin. Is covered. Atoned for. It's a huge.

Effect. From this. Burning coal. Touching the lips. Now I just want to give a health warning here.

Don't try this. At home. Okay. We do.

[27 : 03] In our house. We have an open fire. Not many houses do. We've got an open fire. Maria went down to. B&Q.; Or somewhere. And bought some coal. And when it was very cold.

The past few days. We had a nice fire going. Next time we have a nice fire going. Please don't come and knock at our door. And say. Pastor. I've got a problem.

With. With sin in my life. Can I have one of your coals. And I'll just sort of. Bung it on my heart. It doesn't work like that. Burning coal.

Does not take away sin. But. This. Did. Something rather special about this. Isn't there. And let's just think. What it's getting at.

I don't think it's. Completely revealed. And completely clear. I think we have to go on to Isaiah 53.

To find out. Really. What. God. Does.

[27 : 57] To take away sin. When. We have the suffering servant. Who gives. Gives his life. By his wounds. We are healed. We like sheep.

Had gone astray. Who turned everyone. To his own way. But the Lord has laid on him. The iniquity of us all. That's where it. Becomes clearer. But. At this point here. The altar. Is a place.

Where the fire. Of judgment. Is in a controlled environment. So you have an altar. The fire doesn't spill out. All over the temple. Everywhere. It's in a controlled space.

For a particular purpose. It's for the offering of sacrifice. And. The seraph. Takes. This. Controlled. Judgment. Thing.

And. Touches it. To Isaiah's lips. And. He says. This. This brings you. This brings you.

[28 : 53] The removal of. Guilt. And. A covering. For your sin. Now. I'm not. Going to direct you. To your nearest.

Coal merchant. To take away. Sin. Today. There is no. Christian. Altar. There is no. Christian. Coal merchant. But there is a place.

Where God's. Fire of judgment. Came in a. Controlled. Fashion. It didn't spill out. Everywhere. As one day it will. But it came into. One particular place.

Which was the cross. Of Jesus. And. There is no. Tongue. That you can pick up. A bit of that. And take it. And touch your lips.

With it. But there is. Faith. By which. The power. Of. The blood. Of Jesus. Can touch. People's lives. [29 : 46] And I want to invite you. Today. To put your trust. In the promises. And. Of the work of Jesus. Where he.

In that controlled environment. Endured the. The fiery judgment. Of God. And. To bring that. To your sin. As you trust. In the power.

Of his blood. His blood. Can cleanse. Take. His blood. Takes away sin. Trusting.

In his blood. But here is Isaiah. And he. Has the. Coal. Brought to his lips. By the seraph. And we. Receive. Those. Benefits. In our day. By believing in Jesus. So what happens next. Then I heard. [30 : 41] The voice of the Lord. Saying. Whom shall I send. Send. So the Lord. Questions. Whom shall I send. And who will go for us. And the.

Ransomed. Healed. Restored. Forgiven. Isaiah. Says. I'd love to do that. I want to serve you. You've done this for me. Here I am at your disposal. I give myself to you. Do with me as you see fit. Here am I.

Send me. The Lord. The Lord. Sends him. Have you. Got to that point.

Where you have so. Received. The forgiveness. Of Jesus. That you would. Willingly. And totally. Say. Lord. Wherever you want me to go.

[31 : 40] I'll go. Whatever you want me to do. I'll do. I know I've had my plans. I know I've had my. Boundaries. Of what you can touch.

And you can't touch. But I'm just here. By laying that whole thing down. Giving that to you. Whatever you want me to do. I will do. Whatever it costs. It's cheap at the price.

There are no areas in my life. Where I say. You can't touch this. You can't touch that. You can't tell me what to do there. The whole thing is open to you. Have you ever got to that point. Of saying that. Here I am. Do what you want with me. That's the authentic Christian position to be in. We yield our whole lives. In willing service to the Lord.

And. Isaiah says. Here am I. Send me. And the Lord says. Right. Go. And now we find a bit more about the going. Go and speak to this people.

[32 : 40] So it's not particularly as yet. A ministry to the nations. But a ministry to his own people. And please note. With care. And with awe.

And with reverence. What he says. So. Taking it a step at a time. He says. Hear. Hear. So it's a two. It's a repetition of hear.

NIV translates it. Be ever hearing. I think you could translate it. Something. Really hear. It's a choice. Hear. Hear. But.

You don't understand. Same thing with the seeing. See. See. But you won't perceive. But never perceiving. So I think we have a genuine attempt. To communicate. In an accessible way. [33 : 44] It's not. An obscure. Puzzling thing. That Isaiah is sent to say. He's not sent to. To. To give them cryptic crosswords. To work out.

Can you do cryptic crosswords? Son in law. I can't do cryptic crosswords. He. It. Is. Very clear. Hear this. And very clear.

See this. And still they don't get it. Still they don't. Perceive it. Still they don't understand it. And the final effect.

As God. Is fully aware. Because he sees the end from the beginning. Is that they will be worse off. After this. Than they were at the beginning. The final effect. Will be the opposite.

Of the plain intention. Plain intention. Is that they should hear. Plain intention. Is that they should see. But. In God's. Sovereign. Understanding. Of all causes.

[34 : 37] And effects. He sees that in the end. They will be. Well. Let's see what it says. A little bit like Pharaoh. Who is the.

One of the prime examples. Of somebody. Who got a hard. Heart. Moses went to say to him. Let my people go. Pharaoh. King of Egypt. Who had the people. As his slaves.

Said I won't let them go. And. Very. Reasonable. Offers were made to him. But as he turned down. Every reasonable offer. He got a little bit better. At saying no to God.

So that. As the process went on. And more and more was said to him. He got harder. And harder. And harder. It's a terrible thing. And in a moment. I'm going to say.

Please don't let that happen to you. Please don't let it happen to you. That you get. That as God. Makes you reasonable offers.

[35 : 33] And reasonable. Negotiations with you. That you get better and better. At saying no to God. God. It just starts off in a little way. You say a little no. And then you get a bit better at it.

You say. A slightly bolder no. And then. As things go on. You get really quite good at it. Oh no. God doesn't mean anything to me. I'm just going to ignore him completely. It's a process of hardening. And God says. That's what's going to happen. Isaiah. To the people to whom you minister. And I say. Make sure it doesn't happen to you. And in verse 10.

He says. This is what will happen. You will make. The heart of these people. Well it says callous. The word is to do with being fat.

And sort of. Unresponsive. It says. Make their ears. The word is heavy. In English we have heavy eyes.

[36 : 38] Don't we? Their eyes were heavy. Do you have heavy eyes. When you're about to fall asleep. Well here. If I've got the translation correct. Their ears are heavy. There's an ear. And it becomes a heavy ear.

And make their eyes blind. So there's an eye. And it becomes closed. And clogged. And unable to see. So that. He says. The end result.

Will be. That they. Otherwise they might. NIV says. Or lest they should. See with their eyes. Hear with their ears.

Understand with their hearts. And turn and be healed. He says. That's just what's not going to happen. They're not going to see with their eyes. They're not going to hear with their ears. They're not going to understand with their hearts.

Here's somebody. I couldn't draw. I think drawing a heart would have given you the wrong idea. But here's somebody perky and responsive. And they end up sort of sleepy. And hard. And unresponsive.

[37 : 35] He says. And what they miss out on. Is that they are now incapable of turning. And therefore they are. Can't think of the word.

It is impossible for them to be healed. They've got themselves in the position. Where they are incapable of turning. And they are beyond healing.

Now. People. Friends. Listeners. Maybe. You haven't got to that. Bad situation yet.

Maybe you're still listening. And the listening. Is so that you can turn. And the turning. Is so that you can say.

Lord. I was sort of walking away from you. In a rather haphazard sort of way. But I was. And I want to turn. Towards you. And I want to keep turning. Being turned.

[38 : 32] Towards you. And that is the way to be healed. He's not talking about healing your bad back. He's talking about. He's saying. The whole thing of salvation. Is put in terms of.

The disease that God can heal us of. That's what ought to happen. That's what Isaiah is set. To say to his people.

See. Listen. Hear. Understand. Take it to heart. Turn. Be healed. But God says.

I know. It won't happen. It won't happen. It's a sad thing. Isn't it? God. Presides over.

This hardening process. Jesus commented on it himself. The exact same thing. Happening in his own day. But let's come to that in a moment. The true.

[39 : 30] Genuine. Word. In this case. Hardens. Sinners. And you think. That can't be right. What sort of plan of God is that?

And the answer challenges us. Because we quite readily think. That God's only purpose. Is to save as many as possible. In the sense that.

If people don't. If people don't. God has failed. Let me repeat that. We have got it into our heads. That the only way.

That God can be glorified. And his only purpose. Is to save as many as possible. And if that doesn't happen. God has failed. And this part of the Bible says.

God does want to save people. But the fact. That people are hard. Does not mean. God is a failure. God. the master is on the throne.

[40 : 38] He's not obliged to rescue every sinner from their sin, is he? He's not obliged to make it as if human sin was nothing.

When he saves us by grace, it's not something he's obligated to do. And he says, I'm going to speak to these people, hear, hear, see, see.

If they don't, it shows their sin. God says, it does not make me a failure. So notice there is a genuine call to hear and see.

And the genuine call has the effect of closing a door when that call is rejected. God does have a saving purpose, which we will see.

But his mysterious plan apparently includes within it a tide of unbelief and rejection.

[41 : 51] Because the way forward in the book of Isaiah is through this rejection. How long for? Well, until the cities are destroyed.

Really? Got to go as far as that? As long as that? Yes. And then and then only will the next phase of the plan come into operation. And our saviour, the Lord Jesus, says exactly this.

He quotes this exact passage in his own ministry. And he wasn't a failure, was he? He found this fully worked out. Actually, he quotes it in relation to his most popular teaching, which was his teaching when he told people stories and parables.

And he said to his disciples, The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. This is why I speak in parables.

Though seeing they do not see, this is Matthew 13, 13. Though hearing they do not hear or understand, in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. You will be ever hearing, but never understanding.

[43 : 01] You will be ever seeing, but never perceiving. For the people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears. They have closed their eyes, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.

Jesus says it's being fulfilled here and now. It doesn't stop Jesus saying, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. But there's a sense in which God, in his wonderful sovereignty, issues this invitation, finds it results in hardness, finds it results in rejection, finds that results in judgment, and finds that results in blessing for the world.

Of course, that was true, wasn't it? When the vineyard was taken away from Israel, in Jesus' day, it was lent out to other people.

That's us. So that hardness led to blessing for us. A little bit like when Jesus was rejected in one village, it was blessing for the next village, because he went on to the next village.

It's very mysterious, but it's taught here very clearly, isn't it? And I ask the question, how is God's word working in your life? How is God's word working in your life?

[44 : 22] Is it, are you listening to God? Are you saying, speak? Your servant is listening, so that you are getting better at responding, or you're willing to come back and start again, when you trip over and fall over.

Lots of false starts and trippings over, but getting back on track, or are you actually getting better at saying no to God, and finding that the things that once troubled you spiritually, you can actually cope with now, and brush off fairly easily.

You see the thing? And let's look at the total strategy. So coming back to the end of this chapter.

How long until cities lie ruined, without inhabitant, the houses are left deserted, and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away, and the land is utterly forsaken.

And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste, as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they're cut down. So the holy seed will be the stump in the land.

What's going to happen? Everybody going to be revived? Actually, no. It's going to go on to its ultimate conclusion of exile.

[45 : 46] The people will be conquered and exiled. And even if there's a tenth left, now, why have I written that? Verse 15.

Verse? Which? 13. 13. Ah, is it the laid waste? I'm wondering about the burning bit.

Yeah, I think it must be something in the text that I've now forgotten, because I did it on Thursday. See how long a memory I've got. He says, it'll be like trees cut down, like an axe laid to the root of the tree.

It'll just be cut down. But, now the but is very important. But, there will be a regrowth.

The stump remains, the stump remains, but the stump is not dead and finished and hopeless. He says, the stump is the holy seed in the land.

[46 : 58] There will be a sort of stump-like remnant, and there will be holiness in that remnant. He calls it the holy seed. So, there's the axe. There's the trees.

There's the stump which is going to, whoops, grow a shoot with fruit on it. That's what's going to happen, he says.

It will shoot up and bear fruit. And, oh, yes, like trees cut down. Only the stump remains. The stump is the holy seed. So, let's just think about the holy seed.

The holy seed. What does he mean? So, seed can mean horticulture, where you have seeds that you plant. Seed can mean reproduction, be the same sort of word in a sense, reproductive seed. Making babies. And, it can mean babies because Abraham and his seed is his descendants. And, he says, this is where this is heading.

[47 : 58] seed in perhaps all of these senses. Through Abraham's seed all the world will be blessed. Meaning, a baby born from Abraham's line.

Or, we are going to find in a couple of chapters the virgin will conceive and her son will be Emmanuel on the, on, he will reign on David's throne.

He will be called wonderful counselor mighty God to us. A child is born unto us, a son is given. The next chapter is going to have lots of babies in them. It could be the seed of which the suffering servant is said, he will see his seed and be satisfied.

There's lots about this seed. And, this chapter just touches on it, just touches it once and then, I'm just touching that button as it were. The seed is a hugely promising line that goes on.

It's a line of hope and brothers and sisters, it's the only promise in town. If we're not involved with that seed, then we're one of the stumps that gets cut down.

[49 : 08] If we're not in, relating to, blessed by, this seed, through this seed, all the families on the earth will be blessed.

And, of course, we can see with hindsight that the growing point of the kingdom is Jesus himself. He's the seed of Abraham. He's the son that the virgin will conceive.

In this way, we bear the fire of God's holiness, the weight of his glory and the promise for the best possible future. So, how will the Holy One bless the nation?

Despite the failure of his servants, as Isaiah shows us by bringing his servant into his holy presence, by showing his servants their desperate sin, it doesn't have to be as dramatic as Isaiah. With the woman at the well, she recognized the sin and it wasn't a big drama. She just said, yeah, that's me. I'm a sinner. But it has to be recognized. By applying the fire of controlled judgment to us.

[50 : 20] So, like with Isaiah, a cold to his lips. And that results in his willing servants being sent into the world to speak for him. So, my question, have you seen, have you been in the presence of the Lord of glory?

Have you seen the King? Question, have you been touched by the thing that can take away sin and say, your guilt is taken away, your sin is atoned for?

If you haven't, ask. Touch me. Take away my sin. And are you ready then, as Isaiah was, to go and to be in the world what he wants us to be?

To be the city set on a hill that can't be hidden? To be the light that shines? To be the salt of the earth. Let's sing together.