

Life of Faith and The Reconciling Grace of God

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[0:00] Let's turn together to the prophecy of Isaiah to chapter number 6 and we can read at the beginning of the chapter. Isaiah chapter 6 and at verse 1.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

And so on down through the following verses. I guess the best thing that we can spend our time studying in life is how to become a Christian and how to live as a Christian.

And I want us in the weeks that are to come and the times that we are together to look at something of what Isaiah has to say about becoming a Christian and being a Christian.

I think it's fair to say when we read our Bibles, there are three particular things that are repeated throughout the whole of the Bible. And the first of these is that the Bible speaks about our personal condition.

[1:09] Where are we? What are we like? The Bible speaks about our personal condition. That's what happens here. The second thing the Bible does, it compares what we are like now to what we should be.

And God has made us for himself. And when he tells us what we're like now, the Bible compares that to what we should be, what God has made us for. And the third thing is that there is always a remedy.

So that if what I am does not correspond to what I should be, then there's a remedy. And of course we know the remedy is the Lord Jesus. These three things are crucial.

As you read our Bibles, what does God say about me where I am? What does God say about where I should be? And what does God say about getting me from where I am to where I should be?

And that's exactly what we have in this prophecy of Isaiah. There's a story here about people. God describes them in chapter 1 as his own children. And he raised up children and they rebelled against him.

[2:18] They are not what they should have been. And down through these first chapters, there is the sense of God reminding them of that. And there is also the sense of God drawing their attention to the remedy that he will provide.

That there is a new norm that he will create because of his love and because of his grace. And in many ways, chapter 6 sets the scene for us as we look at what God has to say through Isaiah. And when you read this chapter, we can see it as a sign of the times. Uzziah is a sign of the times. King Uzziah died. He started off well as a king. God blessed him as a king. But later on, he grew proud and unfaithful.

And he died a leper. He is a sign of the times. He started well. He finished badly. And Isaiah is brought before us here as a person through whom God is going to show how he's going to change the condition of the people.

[3:30] So as surely as Uzziah is a sign of the times, Isaiah is a sign of the grace of God in our lives. And bearing that in mind, I want to think today of the life of faith and the reconciling grace of God.

I want to think first of all of the revelation. And clearly, that's what we have here. Something is made known that was not previously known and not being known by the people.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

I saw the Lord. I saw the Lord. In this case, not the Lord who is the covenant savior of the people of God. In this case, it is Adonai, the Lord who has sovereignty over the whole of creation.

The vision that he sees, the revelation that is given to him, is the revelation of the sovereign God of the universe who sits upon his throne and who is there for the purpose of judging the peoples of the earth.

[4:42] And whatever norm Isaiah had before all of this, suddenly his horizons change and suddenly there is a channel open and he is face to face with the Lord, the sovereign God who sits upon the throne.

And as the God sits upon the throne, there is that sense of his glorious presence because we see in version number four that the house was filled with smoke.

And when I read that in the Old Testament, I see God reconnecting with the world. I see Mount Sinai where God came down to speak to Moses.

There is a reconnection. The mountain was wrapped in smoke. God is reconnecting. I see it in the life of Solomon when he builds the temple in all of its glory and he prays and God comes down and fills the temple with his glory.

God is reconnecting with his people in the days of Solomon. And then we come into the New Testament and we see the same thing happening in the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6:02] John tells us that we have seen his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. God is reconnecting with our world through the passion of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's where we're at today. However marvelous it was that God reconnected with Israel in the days of Moses and with Israel in the days of Solomon, God has reconnected with us, with our world, by sending his Son to be our Savior.

And there is that sense in this picture of reconnection in the midst of the chaos of the days of Isaiah. That there is this reconnection in the midst of that chaos to reverse the decline and to bring about change. We are here to worship God.

We are here to have a sense of where we are and what we are doing. We are here to discover, perhaps for the first time, that the God who is far above what we are and can even begin to think about is also the God who is here with us.

[7:25] He shall be called Emmanuel, God with us. God is here. And God wants us today to look through the furnishings and to look through the buildings and to look through everything that is around us and to recognize that we are in the presence of God.

And as you read on in version number two, the sense of the glory of God and this revelation is filled with movement, with a dynamic that speaks of an activity around the throne of God that is engaged in the reconnection process.

And we see that the seraphim, in version number two, above him stood the seraphim, each hath six wings, with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

They are the burning ones. They are the ones who are protecting the throne of God. There is reverence. They cover their faces. There is a sense of unworthiness.

They cover their feet. There is a sense of submission to God in the same way they are covering their feet. And there is that sense of readiness to go and do what God wants them to do.

[8:45] With two, they were going to fly. There is a movement that brings about an expectation here around the throne of God.

And they are a heavenly choir. They are singing in the presence of God. They are calling out to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is filled with his glory. God is everywhere. And that is the message that God is giving to Isaiah.

God is in the worship of God. God is in our everyday lives. God is in our homes, in our families, in our workplaces, in our school.

Wherever we go, God is everywhere. And I may have mentioned it before, but there is a picture of what Isaiah's world was like and what our world is like.

[9:51] And it's taken from a book called Rewind Sinners to Reclaim. And there is a picture of life living in a house or a home where there are no skylights.

And all the light that I get into this home is from the windows in the side. It's all horizontal. So everything arriving in this house comes from what's out there.

And because there is no skylight, there's nothing comes from above. And through this revelation given to Isaiah, that's how the people of God were in the days of Isaiah.

They were listening to what was out there in the world. They were conforming to what was out there in the world. And they weren't receiving anything from God, the God who was their God, who was their covenant Lord and covenant Savior.

Heaven was closed and their hearts were wide open to the world in which they lived. And here now, God is reopening that channel.

[10:53] He's recreating that channel of communication. He's reconnecting with Isaiah and with the people in order to speak into their everyday experience. And how like my life and how like your life is that picture?

Even when we come to worship God, how keenly are we aware that there is a channel from God's throne that speaks to us? How much do we spend worship and life thinking horizontally and not connecting with God?

And God today wants to show us that he wants to break through this windowless roof of our lives and to cause his light to shine down so that we will hear from him.

The revelation. We are coming to worship God, to see what God is like, and so that God will show us what he is like.

Secondly, there is reconciliation. And the revelation creates two responses.

[12:16] And the first response is one of crisis. And the crisis is on the side of Isaiah. And we hear him crying out in verse number five, Woe is me, for I am lost.

When I read the words, woe is me, it speaks of the judgment of God coming. We read the previous chapter and the words I use time after time to show the way in which God was coming to judge the people.

And the first thing that Isaiah is conscious of. And the first thing that Isaiah is conscious of in the revelation given to him is that God is coming to judge him. And because of that, that he is actually lost.

As if he was saying, I am already as good as dead. The revelation of the glory of God. The revelation of the glory of God.

Floored Isaiah completely. And more or less took away his whole sense of life and of living. And that was the case simply because his eyes had seen the king, the Lord of hosts.

[13:28] You and I can look at an object. As I look at the clock right now, I'm just a glancing look. And that's a done.

And we spend so much of life doing that. We glance at the Bible. We glance at things happening around us. But the seeing here is one of being captivated. It's one of being engrossed.

It's one of having our eyes fixed entirely. Of being aware that this is the most important thing around me. And that everything else is forgotten about. That's where Isaiah found himself.

He was alone with his God. And he sensed that he was alone with his God. And he could see no one but God. And in that moment of being captured by the glory of God, he found himself lost.

Because of his sin. I am a man of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. He was unfit to sing with the heavenly choir.

[14:39] Later on in this prophecy, and Jesus quotes these words in the Gospels, that God was angry with his people because they were drawing near to him with their lips. But their hearts were far away.

And suddenly, in this moment, Isaiah discovers his own personal sin as well as the sin of the people of God.

He, in other words, comes to confess his sin. It's the sense of having my conscience awakened in such a way that I sense that what I've done wrong against God deserves the wrath of God.

It's a light bulb moment because it's something that comes only when we see the glory of God. And we can go through life with any troubled conscience in any way, and we journey on day by day, and life is plain sailing.

But when we are in the presence of God, it's not so. Because my sin deserves his judgment. When I see his light, my conscience tells me I'm guilty.

[15:58] And the first thing I'm going to do is to confess my sin to this God. And today, God wants you to have that response.

He wants you to let his light shine not around you, but in your conscience. And in shining into your conscience, to let you see where you do go wrong.

And to let you see that that wrongdoing is sin against God. And to bring you to the place where, as a sinner against God, you confess your sin.

Because you know God knows it. And you take God's view of your sin. What is your condition? The condition is that we are sinners. That God says so.

And when I come to confess my sin, I'm taking God's view of me and making it my own and saying to God, yes, you say I'm a sinner.

[17:02] I'm acknowledging before you that that's exactly what I am. And that's a huge first step on the pathway to becoming a Christian, to becoming the child of God.

And reconnecting once more with the picture of the house without skylights. In that same book, there's the sense of two things happening. And that is that sin is being redefined by the world out there.

And the world out there may speak about sin without any reference to God. And when I do wrong to my neighbor or wrong to the person next to me, then the world will say that's sin.

I've wronged my neighbor without any reference to God. And of course, that is a sin to wrong my neighbor. But if I am no other reference but the person next to me, then I've excluded God from the picture.

And that's what you and I must ensure that never happens. We want to take this image here and to let the light of the holiness of God shine into our hearts and to shine upon our sin and to understand that what we have done wrong is against the Holy God who is our creator.

[18:26] And that is alongside of that the whole cultural movement to eliminate sin from our vocabulary altogether. So that you and I can go and live life today and tomorrow and why should we worry about sin?

It's removed from the vocabulary of the society around us and that society wants to remove it from our vocabulary as well. And we need to retain that sense of sin, that sense of sinfulness and that sense of sinnership with reference to God.

It is the God who is holy that shows me my sin. And it is to him I must say, yes, I'm a sinner. I do confess my sin. That was the response of Isaiah.

But thankfully, that wasn't the only response. There is the movement at God's throne.

That imagery following the confession of Isaiah, the seraphim are flying around in submission to God, humble before God, waiting to fly out at God's command and suddenly the command comes from the throne of God and there is a seraphim that moves into action.

[19:55] And that's what we have in verse number six. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongues from the altar.

The seraphim with the burning coal taken from the altar and making his journey towards Isaiah. We don't know exactly what the image was or what the coal was, but we do know this much that in God's temple there is an altar where sacrifice is made to take away sin and there is an altar where there is prayer offered to God on the basis of sin being taken away.

So there is death for sin, the punishment of sin, and then there is a place where we have peace with God. And when I see this image in the temple before Isaiah and the seraphim comes to take a coal of the altar, he's not taking the coal of the altar where sacrifice was made.

He's taking the coal of the altar where peace is declared and where God is reconciled to the people. And that's a crucial difference when I see this seraphim coming towards Isaiah.

It's not to condemn him for his sin, it's to bring him the good news that sin has been removed and that there is now peace with God. What a journey.

[21:23] That in the invisible realm of heaven there is this moment in the invisible world of Isaiah himself that then there is heaven moving towards him with the seraphim to come to where he is found.

And the journey is one for the purpose of reconnection, of reconciliation. He touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips.

Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for. This has touched your lips. I can touch something with a hard touch.

I can touch something with a gentle touch. I can touch my children when I sleep to comfort them and to encourage them to go to sleep.

It's the gentle touch. And when I read touch here, it's not the hard touch. It's the gentle touch of a heavenly father.

[22:36] And the gentle touch of a heavenly father is the touch through which there is forgiveness and there is reconciliation. We can remind ourselves of the story of the woman who came to Jesus in Luke chapter 8.

She was in the crowd and she came believing firmly that if she touched with the garment of Jesus, she would be healed. And she came and touched him.

Nobody knew that. And Jesus stops the conversation, someone has touched me. Who has touched me? And of course the disciples are saying, how can you ask that question?

With the crowds around us, how can you ask who touched me? Everyone is touching you. But Jesus said, I recognize that power has gone out from me.

That's the reconnection. That's the reconciliation. That's the peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And in this moment today, as we reflect upon this revelation and where God's word finds us and where God wants to take us, here we see Isaiah taken from the place of condemnation and taken to a place of reconciliation, of peace with God through this dynamic movement from the throne of God that touches his lips and his sin is taken away.

[24:14] We can perhaps begin to imagine something of the transformation in Isaiah's experience and we'll see as we read on. But in that moment of touching, power has gone out from God, from Jesus, through Jesus, by the Spirit of God and our sin is taken away.

And today we are thankful that in the Lord Jesus our sin is taken away. Isaiah speaks powerfully in chapter 53 of the very way in which the Son of God, the servant of Jehovah is coming to suffer in our place, to bear our sins, to be a sacrifice for our sins and to raise us up into newness of life. And we come today with the guilt of our sin and with our sense of being condemned because of our sin. We come to put our trust in the Lord Jesus where Paul tells us there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

The great reconnecting grace of God. And in the invisible world of your heart and life, perhaps in this very moment, heaven's dynamic power is moving toward you to place the hand of God upon your heart, to wash away your sin and to give you peace with him through the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot invite that. You cannot demand that. But the Lord who sits upon his throne, that's how he works, to save people like you and like me.

[26:10] he comes in this invisible way to change us in our hearts, take away our guilty conscience and give us a sense of his peace.

The reconciliation, fundamental, basic to being a Christian and from there we go to live life as a Christian.

So we have revelation, we have reconciliation and thirdly and finally we have responsibility and Isaiah did not shy away from the responsibility that God called him to.

And we see the responsibility because God has a mission and God's mission is for this people, his own people. He has a ministry, he has a message for them.

And we hear this message coming out in verse number eight. I heard the voice of the Lord saying whom shall I send and who will go for us?

[27:22] One becomes three. And the God who is speaking, suddenly there are three people, there is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who will go for us?

We have this mission to save the world. We have this mission to save the people in the days of Isaiah. After all that God has done for Isaiah, who now is going to go for us?

The sound of the voice of God because of the mission of God and because of those who have not yet experienced what Isaiah experienced.

Who will go for us? And for every person who becomes a Christian, for every person who becomes the child of God, it's the moment of beginning to serve.

It's the moment of God calling us to himself to be at peace with him and from that peace to be ready to go and serve. And of course, there is a central element to our salvation, to us becoming Christians, that is very personal.

[28:39] It changes who we are and we have the joy of the Spirit of God because of our new relationship with God. But that moment, as personal as it is, it is preparation, it is equipping, it is getting us ready to serve God.

and to be his disciples. And we see the immediate response from Isaiah when the voice goes out, who will go for us?

Then I said, look at me, here am I, don't look any further, send me. I will go wherever you want me to go.

Jesus said to the disciples, as the Father has sent me, so I send you. God is calling us today to the revelation of his glory in the gospel and the passion of Jesus Christ.

He is calling us to embrace the reconciliation that we have in the gospel, and having done so, he is calling us to serve him, to be the light of the world, to be the salt of the earth.

[29:54] God calls us to serve. It may simply be going back to school this week, somebody who has learned about Jesus, and who goes to school serving the Lord Jesus, sharing what you have learned about the Lord Jesus.

That's what God, that's what Jesus calls you to do. If you have received the blessing, then you are to share it with those who are in school with you.

You go back to studying at university or college, go back to the workplace, we are here to serve.

We are called upon to show our appreciation of what God has done by being just like Isaiah, here am I, send me.

And so that with the spirit of Isaiah, with the spirit of the gospel, with the spirit of the discipleship, whatever there is a need, God is calling you and me to fill that gap and to fill that space and to ensure that we are serving God in accordance with God's call upon us.

And the call can be, as I said, something very local and something that perhaps we would dismiss. But the call may also be to a more full-time focused service in the church of Christ.

[31:34] And God may call us to serve in school and to serve in university and college and to serve in a workplace. But God may also call you, even today, to serve him in the full-time ministry of the gospel where there is a need.

And wherever God has a claim upon our lives, then here is the response of discipleship. Here am I. Send me. Are you willing to go for Jesus, to speak for Jesus, to serve Jesus, and to show your appreciation of all that God has done for you in Jesus by reconnecting with you and by giving you that peace of God to dwell in your heart.

May God bless his word. Let us pray. Most gracious God, we rejoice in you. You are the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have given your Son to be our Saviour.

You have made yourself known to us, especially in him and through him. And we pray that you will bless our hearts today with a sense of the revelation that you have given to us in the Lord Jesus, with a sense of having peace with you through your saving grace and with a sense of being ready to follow you and to serve you all the days of our lives.

Help us to have that humble obedience in response to your saving grace. Guide us and bless your word as we pray. We pray these things for Jesus sake. Amen. So closing psalm is psalm number 24 of the Scottish Psalter.

[33:13] It's on page 230. And we're going to sing from verse 7 to the end of the psalm. It's a great psalm about the glory of the king. And we want to sing these verses together.

And the tune is St. George's Edinburgh. And verse number 7. Ye gates lift up your heads on high. Ye doors that last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter may.

We stand to sing from verse 7 to the end of the psalm to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Ye gates lift up your heads on high.

Ye doors that last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me.

But who of glory is the king? The mighty Lord is this.

[34:34] In! He in that same Lord that great in might and strong in heart in live.

Ye gates lift up! He is that to last foray be up that saw the king of glory enter me. me. But who is he that is the king of glory?

Who is this? The Lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is the Lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen, Amen, Amen.

I'll go to the main door after the benediction. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

[37:27] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.