

# The Holiness of God part 1

By David Harrell

**Preached on:** Sunday, August 21, 2016

Please take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah 5. We'll use that as a launching pad and to Isaiah 6 here in a few minutes. I must say that over the next four weeks I wish to help us rediscover the distinctives of Calvary Bible Church, to help us remember our mission, our message, and to really rekindle our passion to worship and serve Christ and to this end, I would like to begin with a topic that we probably tend to take for granted all too often, one we seldom consider in our lives, and certainly one that has been discarded, even thought to be unnecessarily divisive and legalistic by the purveyors of evangelical pragmatism in our culture today, and that is the topic of the holiness of God. If you want to understand Calvary Bible Church, you must begin here and this will provide a necessary theological foundation to help you understand some of the exciting new areas of ministry expansion that we are going to be unveiling in the coming weeks, things that God is clearly bringing to us.

Most Christians have a holy Bible and unfortunately most Christians could not give you an accurate definition of what the term "holy" means, and most would admit that the concept has very little bearing in their life. The Bible uses the term "holy" in a variety of different ways. The primary meaning of the term "holy" is "separate." It comes from an ancient word that means "to cut; or to separate." Anything that is holy is set apart or it is consecrated; it is removed from, shall we say, the realm of the common and moved into the sphere of the sacred and it can be used to describe in the Bible persons, places, times, things and so forth. Anything that was associated with or consecrated to God was something that was sacred or something that was holy. In the whole testament, if you want to understand the holiness of God, you would examine the character of God and we see that over and over again in the Old Testament as we're going to see here in a few minutes.

If I could summarize it, think of it this way: holiness is the all-encompassing attribute of God. It is his hidden glory. Holiness speaks of his infinite otherness; his incomprehensible transcendence; his consummate perfection and moral purity; his eternal glory, and it stands alone as the defining characteristic of his person. And when we come to the New Testament, holiness is seen in the goodness, in the moral purity of the believer. Peter tells us that we are to be holy in all our conduct. We even know that the Holy Spirit is called the Holy Spirit, right? And he is the one that acts in salvation to make us holy, to set us apart from sin and unto God. He is the one that acts in our lives to infuse us with Christ's own likeness and to enable us to manifest Christ in our lives. And true holiness certainly includes our joyful dedication to loving and serving and

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worshiping God. But for many Christians, worshiping and serving God is just a tradition, just kind of a thing that we do. It's the thing that we do in the South, right? For many people, that's the end of it. So much worship, much service is done out of tradition rather than a profound, life-dominating understanding of the holiness of God.

People will say, "Well, yes, God is holy," but do you really understand, do they really understand that he is totally other; he is transcendent. His majesty should consume us but does it? His exalted loftiness, his infinite separation from us, his ineffable glory that exceeds the limits of our imagination should cause us to literally fall on our faces before him, but in most cases it really doesn't affect us that much. Paul tells us in Romans 12:1 that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. And instead of our lives manifesting that kind of separation from the world, we tend to manifest a likeness, even a love for the world. Dear friends, I would argue that if there is one primary thing that is missing from the lives of God's people today, it's the holiness of God.

Practically speaking, what is the most powerful means of evangelism that God shows or that God uses to show sinners the truth of the Gospel? Transformed lives. When people see lives that have been just radically changed, they don't know what to do with that. When a person is truly made a new creature in Christ, the old things pass away, the new things come, others look at that and think, "My goodness, what has happened?" Well, what has happened is that God has made someone holy. He has separated them from sin unto himself and suddenly those lives begin to blaze forth the purity and the moral character of a holy God, and suddenly they say as Paul said in Philippians 2:16, they prove themselves to be blameless and innocent children of God, above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom they appear as lights in the world.

Beloved, please under this: authentic holiness is infinitely powerful. It is what God uses to draw attention to himself and for this reason, Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." You see, holiness is the visible expression of the image of God. It is God-likeness wrought by God's saving and sanctifying power. But it's real easy for us to lose the wonder of all of that in our modern day, and I believe that one of the great failures of the church today is it's indifference towards the holiness of God, and as a result we see worldly Christians and we see man-centered churches, and certainly we have to guard against that here at Calvary Bible Church and in our lives. I'm deeply burdened by this concept. What we need today I believe is a soul-terrifying, sin-destroying vision of the holiness of God, one like God revealed to Isaiah in Isaiah 6 because, dear friends, without this we will never experience the soul-exhilarating joy and the power of a holy God in our life.

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The year was 739 BC. I'm taking you back 2,755 years ago. The place was Jerusalem, the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah. Israel was to the north, Judah to the south, the period of the divided kingdom. Judah was a kingdom that had developed into a strong commercial and military state. They enjoyed great wealth. They could be compared to the United States today. They perceived themselves to be militarily invincible because of their superior forces and their superior weaponry. I'm not going to take time to get into it, but they basically had what would be tantamount to a nuclear arsenal in that day. They were also convinced that God, Yahweh, was pleased with them because of their religious practices and because of his covenantal promises to them, and while it was true then as it is today that God will fulfill his promises to his covenantal people, they failed to rightly discern their true spiritual condition because God saw their heart and what he saw in those hearts was hypocrisy, religious externalism, empty ritualism, self-righteousness. Worse yet, many of the people were joining in with some of the pagans around them and worshipping idols. A supreme blasphemy to God.

In Isaiah 5, God expresses his anger towards them by comparing them to a vineyard that he had carefully planted with the choicest vine; he put them in the perfect place, namely in the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and he cared for them himself. Notice at the end of verse 2 of chapter 5, "Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones." Be'ushiyim in Hebrew, sour, inedible berries. After all of that, that's what he gets.

Down in verse 7, "the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed." In the Hebrew, it's a play on words. He looked for mishpat and he got mispach.

He goes on to say, "He looked for justice, but behold, a cry of distress." Again, he says, "I looked for tsedaqah and I got tsa'aqah." God is furious with these people, with his covenant people, and so God went on to pronounce judgment upon them for their high treason against his holy name.

As we read on in chapter in chapter 5, we see how he cursed them for their greedy materialism, their drunken dissipation, their defiant debauchery, their sinful defiance of his holy law, for redefining morality, calling good evil and evil good, for their haughty humanism that exalted tolerance over truth, and for their corrupt leadership. So he pronounces a curse on them. By the way, these are the very sins that are destroying our country today.

Soon, he would bring the Assyrians to invade them, and then later the Babylonians, but before his judgment would be carried out, he raises up a prophet to be his appointed

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spokesman. This man's name was Isaiah ben Amoz. God called and commissioned him to go to the people and to say, "Thus says the Lord." To confront their sin, to call them to repentance, to warn them of impending judgment. But that was a message they didn't want to hear, a message they totally rejected, a message that would eventually cost him his life.

Now, by further context, for 52 years Judah had enjoyed the reign of one of the better kings who had ruled over them, a man by the name of Uzziah, who had ascended the throne at the age of 16 but now he has died, and so it's a time of national mourning and it's also a time of great uncertainty because the wicked Assyrian monarch, Tiglath-Pileser is encamped on their northern borders, but in the sovereignty of God, he uses this time as his predetermined time to pronounce judgment on his people for having offended his holiness so profoundly. So he raises up his messenger, Isaiah, and in Isaiah's calling that we see here in chapter 6, we learn much about the holiness of God.

The earthly king has died so now God supernaturally transports Isaiah in ways that we cannot fathom into the presence of the supreme sovereign king, the Lord of glory, and this is where we pick it up at verse 1 of Isaiah 6, "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." Dear friends, this is both unspeakably glorious and unimaginably terrifying. You must understand what is happening here. The veil that separates sinful man from the presence of a holy God in the Holy of Holies is now withdrawn and Isaiah, who is a mere man, not even a priest, a man who would never dare gaze into the Holy of Holies, is now allowed to look inside and who does he see? The Lord. In Hebrew, Adonai, which means "the sovereign one." This is the supreme title for God found in the Old Testament. Moreover, when Christ is called Lord in the New Testament, it is the equivalent of the Hebrew Adonai; he is the sovereign one, the Lord of glory. In fact, John tells us in John 12:41 that it was the Lord Jesus Christ that Isaiah saw seated upon this throne. So please understand, Isaiah is now looking at the pre-Incarnate Son of God. This is the one who would later come as a babe and die in our stead to reconcile those who are separated from him due to sin and draw them unto himself.

So Isaiah sees the Lord. Now, while it is true that no one has ever seen God, John 1:18, because in his essential being he is spirit, nevertheless, what we see here is that the Lord condescends and allows some manifestation of himself to be visible to accomplish his purposes through Isaiah. So the message thus far is, "Isaiah, the sovereign one is still on the throne. Don't be afraid. I'm in full control."

And oh, dear friends, there is something else here that we don't want to miss. This is so precious to me. This is a preview of what Jesus has promised to all of us. Remember how he said in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will," what? "They will see

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God." And only God can make us pure in heart as he will do here with Isaiah. He alone can make us holy as he is holy.

So, here Isaiah has a preview of Israel's most hopeful benediction recorded in Numbers 6:24 and following. There we read, "The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace." Now, bear in mind, humans can never look upon the face of God and live, he is too holy. We would be utterly destroyed. But this is God's desire and this is his plan for us to do exactly that, and to be sure, this is the great longing of all those who have been made holy by his grace. I hope that is the longing of your heart.

I think of Moses who literally heard the voice of God. He witnessed the miracles of God, yet what did he desire more than anything else? He wanted to see God face-to-face in all of his glory. Remember in Exodus 33:18 we read, "Moses said, 'I pray You, show me Your glory!' And God said, 'I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.' But He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!' Then the LORD said, 'Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.'" And you will recall how even that greatly veiled exposure to God's glory that was so powerful, so penetrating, so transmissible, that when Moses came down off of the mountain, the people were terrified when they saw him because of the glory that shone forth from his face. It was so strong that he had to put a veil over his face. Why? Because it reflected the ineffable, dazzling light of his glory. He had been in the presence of a holy God and I might add, that the more time we spend in the presence of God in the limited ways that we have this side of glory, the more we will reflect that very glory. But think about it: if such a reflection could result due to a veiled exposure to God's backside, imagine what would happen if he had been able to bask in the radiant glory of God's countenance face-to-face? It's an amazing thought, isn't it?

Moses saw the glory of God in the burning bush. He saw it veiled upon the mountain. The Jews saw it in the Shekinah that hovered between the symbolic angels there over the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. They saw it in the pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night. Peter, James and John saw a glimpse of it coming forth from Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Paul saw a glimpse of it on his way to Damascus and later in his brief admittance into heaven. And we are able to see a glimpse of the glory, that holiness of God, through the eyes of faith as we look upon the glory of the Incarnate Son. And in the Gospel he is fully revealed to us and he appears as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. And John says, "And we beheld His

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glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But dear friends, what will it be like when we see him face-to-face? Is this not the longing of your heart? And is this not the promise that is ours, the promise that belongs to the redeemed? John tells us, "Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be but we know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is." He went on to say, "and everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure."

Well, next, Isaiah described the highest of all the angels. They are surrounding the throne of God, hovering like angelic helicopters waiting to do the Lord's bidding, and as the scene unfolds, we see these magnificent creatures forming two opposite choirs, basically in a semi-circle, and they are rendering antiphonal praise. "Antiphonal" means "responsive; going back and forth answering each other."

And notice what he says in verse 2, "Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings." Seraphim literally means "burning ones." We're not told how many there were, it could have been hundreds, we just don't know, but they're in a position of perpetual attendance of the Lord. They are hovering over him with expanded wings and the grammar and the language as well as the whole context here is a scene of perpetual motion, always ready to do the Lord's bidding.

He says, "with two he covered his face." Isn't it amazing, even these exalted beings, these exalted angels are not allowed to look upon the face of a holy God. Maybe this was to protect them from the unbearable effulgence of his glory.

He says, "and with two he covered his feet." I'm not really sure why, Scripture doesn't tell us, as we look at other passages, perhaps this is symbolic of their unworthiness to serve him as mere creatures that he has created. Perhaps it's symbolic of their disavowal of any intention to walk in a direction contrary to his will. We don't know for sure.

Then he says, "and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.'" Their song is called the Trihagion, which simply means "thrice holy; or three times holy." And this kind of repetition is a literary device in the Hebrew language that is used to denote special emphasis. We have some things similar to this in English. We might comment, for example, on a fighter jet and say, "That jet is really fast," or we might say, "That jet is really, really fast," or we might say, "That jet is really, really, really fast," and when we say it that way, what we're saying, "It is unimaginably fast." Dear friends, God is unimaginably holy. That's the point here. God is utterly other. He is infinitely transcendent and morally pure beyond anything that we can comprehend. And it's fascinating to note that nowhere in Scripture is an attribute of God stated three times in

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succession and thus elevated to the degree of the, shall we say, the super-superlative. We don't see that anywhere else. God is never described, for example, as merciful, merciful, merciful or love, love, love or faithful, faithful, faithful, even though he is all those things and more, but he is described as holy, holy, holy.

And notice the name of this thrice holy God, "the LORD of hosts." Notice LORD is in all caps and whenever you see this, you know that this is referring to the sacred name of God, the name by which he revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush. This is Yahweh. Normally it occurs only with the use of its four consonants: Y-H-W-H. You old theologians and some of us even today call this the ineffable Tetragrammaton. "Ineffable" merely means "too wondrous to even utter from the lips." "Tetra" means "four," "grammaton, letters." The too wondrous to utter from the lips four letters. In other words, the unspeakable four letters; the sacred name of God. And I might add parenthetically, dear friends, this is why it is so offensive to a holy God for us to say, "Oh my God" every time something surprising happens, or even, "Oh my gosh," which is just a sanitized version of the same disrespect. Beloved, God is unspeakably holy and yet he died for us and by his grace he saves us, reconciles us to himself and unites us together with him. Dear friends, this should affect everything we think, everything we do: how we speak, how we dress, how we worship, how we see, how we view his word, how we preach, how we do church. We're not a man-centered church, we're a God-centered church because God is holy.

You must ask yourself: do I have a profound awe for our holy God? What picture do you have of God in your mind? Because, dear friend, that picture will determine really who you are and you will either be a God-fearing person or a man-fearing person. You will either be Christ-pleasing or man-pleasing, self-centered or God-centered. It all depends upon your understanding of a holy God.

Will you also notice the contrast between the use of the sacred name of God in verse 3 and the sacred title of God in verse 1. Remember in verse 1 he is Lord but you have small letters, L-o-r-d, the sovereign one. Well, this contrast is very important. You see, Isaiah understands that in the hour of their national crisis, the crisis in the theocracy of Israel, Yahweh, L-O-R-D, is still on his throne as the sovereign one, L-o-r-d. There is the contrast. He understands that the thrice holy ineffable Tetragrammaton, the sovereign Lord of glory, is in full control and he deserves to be worshiped and to be obeyed. And dear friends, at this very moment as we watch our country descending into an abyss of unimaginable wickedness, know this, the thrice holy God, the sovereign Lord of glory is fully in control and he deserves to be worshiped and obeyed.

So Isaiah sees the seraphim worshiping the Lord, celebrating his holiness through this antiphonal praise and because of his infinite otherness, we read that, "The whole earth is

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full of His glory." And indeed we know that the heavens are declaring the glory of the Lord. We see it all around us.

I was reminded as I was thinking about this text of what John witnessed in a similar scene in Revelation 4, beginning in verse 8. There we read, "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.' And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him," by the way, that is symbolic of the church, that's referring to us, they "will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power.'" Why? "For You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

You see, dear friends, only a holy God could create this universe out of nothing when nothing existed. You start thinking about that and your brain will explode. Only an unfathomable transcendent other could create something out of nothing by the sheer power of his voice. You wonder today why there is such an attack on creationism and such an emphasis on teaching our children to accept the irrational, frankly insane theory of evolution, that everything was created not from nothing but rather by nothing. I mean, that is absurd. Think about that: nothing + nothing = everything. Talk about faith and that's just absurd. You see, friends, this argument has nothing to do with science, it has everything to do with the holiness of God. You see, man cannot stand the thought that God is the pre-existent, self-existent, uncreated Creator of the universe who is unfathomably transcendent and morally pure because his moral purity, his holiness, exposes our sinfulness and our responsibility to him. His holiness really renders us guilty before his throne of justice and that's what we see happening here with Isaiah.

Notice next he describes the inconceivable energy and intensity of worship associated with the shouts of the seraphs here in verse 4. "And the foundations," or the doorposts, "of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke." Smoke biblically is always symbolic of the purity of God, for indeed he is a consuming fire, as you are aware. By the way, it was for this reason that you will recall the children of Israel were not allowed to even touch Mount Sinai when God came to give the law, built a fence around it, don't even get near it, touch it, disintegration. And throughout Scripture we see how violent shaking is the customary reaction of the earth and all of creation when they are encountering the presence of God. That's why when you hear these people that say they went and they saw God and they talked with Jesus and all, friends, that is not true.

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But the foundations and thresholds weren't the only thing that were trembling that day, so too was Isaiah ben Amoz, and here we witness what happens when sinful man is exposed to the penetrating light of divine holiness; when we come in contact with the absolute majesty of God. Notice what he says in verse 5, "Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined!'" The term "ruined" in Hebrew is rooted in an ancient word that means "to cease; to cut off; to be destroyed." It's the idea of just disintegrating. You see, Isaiah is so overwhelmed by his guilt that he pronounces judgment on himself. That's what's happening here. He knows that's what he deserves and he thinks he's just going to disintegrate in the presence of a holy God. You see, he sees God in all of his purity and whenever we see God in all of his purity, we see ourselves in all of our impurity. Beloved, this is the stuff of genuine repentance here. There is no cheap grace here, no easy believism, no casual repeating of some prayer so that you will accept Jesus into your heart. He knows he has sinned and that he has fallen short of the glory of God, that he deserves justice, not mercy.

Notice how he summarizes his confession, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips." Really? Is that all? "Unclean lips," by the way, could be translated "dirty mouth." Because you've got a dirty mouth? I mean, who doesn't have a bit of a dirty mouth at times? I mean, what's the big deal here? Folks, the big deal is this: our words betray our heart and he's guilty as charged, as we all are. A dirty mouth is the number one indication of sinful heart. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 and following, "the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." He said, "The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

But notice Isaiah went on to confess, "And I live among a people of unclean lips." Now, folks, please understand he's not saying, "Hey, but I'm not alone here. You know, the rest of the people talk this way too, think this way, have those hearts." No, rather what he is saying is, "I tend to accept unclean speech in my society. I tolerate it. I join in with the culture. I say and think and have the same values as a lot of my friends. I make no effort to separate myself from it, I just join in." And of course, this intensifies his sense of guilt. The text doesn't say but Isaiah I believe by this time was probably on his face. I know I would be. In fact, I struggle even preaching this. I am so inadequate to tell you about this.

He's overwhelmed by the guilt of his sin, having offended a holy God, and his utter inability to do anything about it and why is he under such profound conviction? Well, it says here in the text, "my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Dear Christian, this is where evangelism must begin. We tend to begin in our evangelism with the love of God. Don't begin there, begin with the holiness of God. You see, a man will never

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understand the good news until he understands the bad news that he has offended a holy God, and most people's view of God is somewhere close to a rock star. They just don't see who he really is. In evangelism, we must begin with the violated law, not the promise of heaven.

Isaiah was desperate for mercy, not just for himself but also for his people, and God is always so merciful, isn't he, to those who cry out? Notice in verse 6, "Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs." Now, obviously, God had commanded him to do this. "He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.'" Why did he touch him on the lips with a hot coal? Well, I believe to demonstrate how God ministers to the sinner at the point of his confession.

And notice the two verbs that are used here: "has touched" and "taken away." This is so precious if you think about it. As quickly as God touched Isaiah, Isaiah's sins were taken away and he was forgiven. Isn't that just how the Lord works? And what a magnificent picture of the atonement. You will recall that atonement requires two things: satisfaction and substitution. The substitution is pictured in the coal that was taken, the hot coal that was taken from the altar of sacrifice where a substitute was given, and here we have the picture of the atoning work of the one that is actually seated on the throne, the one who would one day satisfy the justice of a holy God through his death as our substitute. This is all pictured here.

And I want you to notice something else: Isaiah contributed nothing, right? Salvation is all of grace. And what a picture of the pain of genuine repentance. This is something we tend to not think about very much. Also the purifying and pain relieving power of saving grace. You see, genuine repentance is painful. As we acknowledge who we really are in the presence of a holy God, genuine repentance produces an appropriate, an accurate sense of guilt that causes a man to beg for undeserved mercy and for forgiveness resulting in a change of mind and a purpose whereby a man turns from sin and turns towards God. This can be seen, you will recall, in the attitude of the tax collector in Luke 18. Remember he was so overwhelmed with his own sin and the holiness and the purity of God, his unworthiness to be forgiven. The text says that he was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner."

Now, I want you to also notice the immediate affect of the atonement. This is such a precious thing as well. What happens when atonement is made? Reconciliation. Instantly it's there. The war is over. We're suddenly at peace with God and that's what we see here. When we're at peace with God, God commissions us and we want to serve him and that's what happens in verse 8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" I believe he probably said

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# The Holiness of God part 1

By David Harrell

**Preached on:** Sunday, August 21, 2016

this very sheepishly. It doesn't say that. I don't think he was sticking out his chest dancing around like, "God, aren't you lucky for me to be on your team?" No, that wasn't the point. I think he said it with utmost humility, just overwhelmed at all that had happened, as if to say, "Lord, here am I. Send me. I'll gladly volunteer if you'll have a wretched old sinner like me."

And folks, what a picture and what a pattern of God's saving work in our lives. Do you remember when you came to Christ? Do you remember what happened? The Lord first revealed himself to you in some remarkable way and then you began to tremble at his holiness. You saw the reality of your sin. You felt just the judgment that you deserved. Then what did you do? You confessed your sin. You asked God to save you. And what did he do? He forgave you. He cleansed you. He restored you. He reconciled you unto himself and he sent you.

Do you realize that's what he did here with Isaiah? We don't have time for me to expound upon all of the rest of it but let me just read the text. In verse 9 God said, "Go, and tell this people," and here's what I want you to tell them, "Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand." He says, "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed." In other words, as an act of divine judgment upon them for having hardened their heart for so long against me, after all I have done for them, I am going to leave them in their state of unbelief and I am going to conceal the truth of your message to them. By the way, that's exactly what happened with Jesus' parables.

Isaiah said what I would have said, verse 11, "Lord, how long?" How long am I going to preach a message that they're all going to resent? "And He answered, 'Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people And the land is utterly desolate, The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. Yet,'" there's a bit of hope here with that word "yet," "'there will be a tenth portion in it,'" in other words, "I'm going to save a remnant," "'And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump.'"

You know, I've thought about this many times in my own life and ministry. I mean, think about it: how could Isaiah endure such a ministry? How could he devote his life to such a sorrowful task? How could he give up everything, eventually even his life? I might add that tradition has it that he met his death under King Manasseh by being cut in two with a wooden saw.

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How could he remain faithful to the Lord in light of the promises that the vast majority of the people are going to mock you, they're not going to hear this? Folks, I'll tell you how, I'll tell you how he did it: he had a soul-terrifying, sin-destroying vision of a holy God and, folks, without that, you will never be effective in Christian ministry. You will never be effective in serving Christ and living a life that is pleasing to him.

I want to close by reminding you that do you realize that that same Lord has commissioned us as well just like he commissioned Isaiah? Here's what he said in Matthew 28, the words of Jesus, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Dear friends, unless you have a proper perspective of the holiness of God, you will never be effective in fulfilling these things so you must ask yourself, "Do I have a reverential awe of God?"

You know, as a people here at Calvary Bible Church, as a church we do a pretty good job in this commission but, boy, could we do so much better. We could do so much better and certainly the elders have labored and prayed for many months as to how to make our ministries more effective, more efficient, how to expand them, especially given the uniqueness of this church that continues to draw people from kind of all over middle Tennessee. On September 11<sup>th</sup> we're going to unveil more of this. I'll be unveiling some of it between now and then but, folks, we've got to begin here. We've got to begin here. We must rediscover the importance of the holiness of God. In the next week when we're together, I want to focus on a biblical perspective of what that actually looks like in our lives and in our church because, dear friends, our joy in Christ, our power in Christian living and Christian service ministry, all of those things are directly related to our view of the holiness of God.

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Let's pray together.

*Father, we are so deeply humbled when we think of who you really are and we thank you that by your grace you have saved us and we don't fear you as some austere judge, but we love you as our heavenly Father, and we thank you that we have been adopted as your sons and your daughters. Lord, I pray that you will use the power of your word to impact each of us here at Calvary Bible Church so that we have the proper foundation for life and for ministry because, Lord, obviously when we understand these things, everything else becomes secondary, so we give you praise. And I especially pray for those that know nothing of what it is to be in relationship with the living Christ, who know nothing of what it is to really experience your presence in their life. I pray that by your grace you will overwhelm them with the guilt of their sin this day and cause them to understand the great truth of the Gospel, that you as a holy God have provided a way for them as a sinful person to be reconciled unto you through faith in his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on a cross to pay for their sins, for my sins and, Lord, to that end, we give you great praise for it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).