



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

Six Pioneer Holiness Sermons

By

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COALS OF FIRE

by G. D. Watson (also known as: "Apostle to the Sanctified")

The Scripture to be expounded in the present chapter, is found in Isaiah vi. 1-8. The items under which all the ideas may be classified, are as follows:

- I. **The time of Isaiah's purification.** "In the year that king Uzziah died." According to our best authorities on chronology, this experience of Isaiah occurred two years after he began his prophetic ministry. It would be utterly inadmissible to suppose that he was an unconverted man when he began to prophesy, and the only rational conclusion is, that the purifying baptism which is recorded in this chapter, was subsequent to his regeneration.

He does not give us the date of his conversion, which probably occurred in his youth; but his entire sanctification formed such an epoch in his experience and ministry, as to morally necessitate a public record of it. But this is in perfect accord with many other Scriptures.

When the Jews crossed the Red Sea, they sang a song of deliverance; but when they crossed the Jordan into the Canaan of rest, God commanded them to build a monument of stones, which should be a memorial forever of their entering into the land (Joshua iv. 7). Also, in the case of the disciples, we have no record as to the exact time when each of them were converted, but the day when they received the sanctifying baptism of the Spirit has been made memorable for all time. To this, also, agrees the experience of believers; for while it is true that nearly all Christians know the time of their conversion, and more especially if the doctrines of pardon and adoption have been distinctly preached to them, still, to those who have experienced the witness of the Spirit to entire sanctification, there is in the latter experience such a marvelous distinctness, such a pungent consciousness of the work wrought, such a

profound and complete change in all the inner nature, as to render it the most memorable epoch in the soul's history up to that time. In saying this, I do not minimize in the least the most remarkable experience at conversion.

It is likely that persons who have not experienced the witness to heart purity, may disagree with these statements; but those who have received the full baptism of the Spirit, will confirm their truthfulness.

II. **Isaiah's vision.** The vision which God gave the prophet was the means of bringing him to see his need of entire holiness. The features of this vision were such as belonged within the "second veil," where the high priest alone could enter. Isaiah was not a priest, and hence had never had the privilege of entering into the second veil; but God revealed all the mysteries of the most holy place to him in a vision. The items of the vision are worthy of separate notice.

1. **"I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up."** This was doubtless none other than the Lord Jesus, manifesting Himself as he had promised unto Moses in Exodus xxv., saying, "I will meet thee and commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims." It is by clear and distinct views of God to the soul, that it apprehends its own corruption, its own dissimilarity to God, and its infinite need of holiness. The Greek motto was. "Know thyself" ; but the Bible motto is, "Know God." Alas, that so many professed Christians should put the aphorism of man above the aphorism of God. A creature mind can only know itself and all things, truly, as it knows God. There is no true light except what comes down from Jesus to the soul. A clear vision of the person and purity of God, will enable us to discern our own inner being, and also the character of those around us.
2. **"Above it stood the seraphim."** The term "seraphim" is synonymous with "cherubim." The word cherub signifies "shining one"; the word seraph signifies "burning one." A common error, almost universal, is to confound these beings referred to here, with angels. There is no place in Scripture where the word angel is used interchangeably with cherubim or seraphim; neither are their works or office described as the same. Perhaps the ablest explanation of the terms cherub and seraph, is found in Mr. George Smith's "Harmony of Divine Dispensations." He argues that the seraphim refer to redeemed men fully baptized of the Holy Ghost. The proofs are, in brief, - The cherubim on the mercy-seat was composed of the same piece of gold that formed the lid of the mercy-seat, and upon which the blood was sprinkled, identifying the creature with that which is redeemed.

Again, Moses was commanded to make no image of that which was in Heaven above, or earth beneath; but if the forms of the cherubims represented angels, that would be a breaking of that law; but if they represented redeemed men under the Holy Ghost dispensation, they were prophetic images of future facts.

Again, there is nothing in the whole imagery of the temple to represent the fruit of redemption, except the cherubim. These, with many others which cannot be here mentioned, have led me to accept of his views as being the true Scriptural idea.

3. **The theme of the seraphim a declaration of God's holiness.** "And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." All true preaching of the Gospel must consist largely in proclaiming the nature, purity, and character of God. It is impossible for men to form any estimate of righteousness or holiness, of experience or practice, except it is furnished by a revelation from the character and conduct of God. The revelation of God through Jesus Christ, is our only standard of inner life and outward behavior. It is lamentable to notice what an infinite amount of stuff is palmed off on the generations as Gospel, which has to it no glowing back-ground of the holiness of God. It was this declaration and vision of the Divine purity, which caused Isaiah to perceive the necessity of his "perfecting holiness in the fear of God"; and the same spiritual law applies to other believers as well.
4. **The glory of God filling the earth.** "The whole earth is full of his glory." This expression must have reference to the sanctification of God's people throughout the earth. There is a parallel passage in Numbers xiv. 21. When the Jews turned back from entering into Canaan, God declared that though that generation should die in the wilderness, yet as "truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"; from which we learn that the glory of the Lord is identified with having His people enter upon their full privileges. So in this passage from Isaiah, the seraphim, elsewhere called the "living creatures," representing the fire-baptized heralds of salvation,

intimate that when the holiness of God is proclaimed and accepted, this will fill the earth with His glory. Another thought may be gleaned from this passage, that those who are in a state of holiness, and look out upon the world from God's standpoint, see the fulfillment of God's purposes, through a different medium from those who look through the medium of the carnal mind. Isaiah at this time saw the earth filled with carnality and desolation; but these flaming ministers of grace saw the possibilities and achievements of grace in human hearts, through the glowing atmosphere of the Holy Ghost.

Where ever sunlight falls upon the edges of leaves, chips, or grains of sand., there are beautiful sunbows, with all the colors of the rainbow; but our eyes are too coarse to see them. If our vision was fine enough, on any sunny day we would see the whole earth literally bespangled with the seven-fold colors of the "showery arch.," The spread of holiness is the true glory of God.

5. **The supernatural motion of the temple.** "And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried.," The margin says, "the thresholds moved." There is both a scientific and spiritual significance to this verse, both of which are intensely interesting. The scientific thought is briefly this: It is an established fact that all the particles of matter, everywhere, are constantly in a vibratory motion; just as on a larger scale the pulse of animals, the tides of ocean, and the rolling of spheres, are unceasing. Sound, itself, is only a mode of motion; different substances have a different key and rapidity of vibration, so that when certain notes are struck, all particles of matter near by, whose vibrations are in the same key with the note, will be accelerated in their motion by the striking of the note. This can be proved by a thousand illustrations.

A lamp chimney will ring at the touch of a certain key in the piano; deaf persons can read music by placing their fingers on the instrument when being played, and by the vibrations in the wood read the tune through their fingers, etc.

If the voices of the seraphim were pitched in concert with the molecular motion of the temple, then, as a simple scientific fact, the pillars and threshold would tremble at their songs, as churches do from an organ. I have not time to trace this thought out in its vast results; except to suggest, that the sounding of the "trump of God" may be so connected with the molecular motion of the dust of the dead, as to be a factor in the resurrection.

But this verse has a still higher signification. There is a shaking of our whole nature, in connection with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul, in Hebrews xii, in drawing a contrast between Pentecost and Mount Sinai, mentions this fact of the two shakings, which must be understood as having relation to the church and soul, as well as to material nature: "Yet once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven; and this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Now to prove that this refers to the soul and to experience, he goes right on to say, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom [in the present tense] which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Our sinful life must be shaken by the power of conviction and regeneration, and our spiritual life must be again shaken by "the consuming fire" of sanctification till that which "cannot be shaken" is left in unmixed stability.

6. **"The house was filled with smoke."** Throughout the Scriptures, smoke is an emblem of that which proceeds out of the heart of man through his mouth. The breathings of the heart in prayer is compared to the smoke of sweet burning spices; on the other hand, the blasphemies of the ungodly are compared to the stifling stench of burning sulphur; hence we see at the dedication of the tabernacle by Moses, and of the temple by Solomon, the prayers of the people, and God's glorious answer, were symbolized by smoke.

III. **The third general feature of this Scripture, was Isaiah's confession.** "Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." By close examination, we find there are four items in this confession.

1. **"Woe is me, for I am undone"** [margin, I am cut off] That is, he perceived the vast distance between the hidden and within him, and the holiness of God. In explaining these words, we must remember that it is not the confession of a man living in open and actual sin, but of a true servant and child of God, and that the confession pertains to that hidden and subtle sinfulness of nature, which is a source of intense anguish to the child of God, until he finds complete deliverance. In nearly all the printed sermons and comments upon this passage, the Scriptures are grossly perverted, and Isaiah is represented as an unjustified sinner seeking justification from guilt.

There is a great lack of properly dividing the Word of God, so as to distinguish between different species of character, and different degrees of grace. It is a lamentable fact, that multitudes of religious teachers recognize no form of sin except overt and actual, and hence never seem to know how to explain those passages of Scripture which deal with the great sub-spiritual facts of original evil which cleaves to the soul after regeneration. and which is to the devout soul a separate realm of woe, apart from actual guilt.

One of the wisest sermons ever preached or written, is that on the "Repentance of Believers," by Mr. Wesley, in which he so minutely describes the painful and depressing emotions of sin in the believer.

That sermon is an elaborate comment on this confession of Isaiah. When a sinner apprehends the guilt of his sins, he feels an unspeakable woe; and when the enlightened believer, who has enough spirituality to see through his own heart, discovers the deep-seated malignity of his own fallen nature, and the gulf between that sinful nature and the God whom he longs to resemble, and the dishonor which this inward sin brings upon his Lord, there is a feeling of woe, different in kind from the former, but, if anything, more heart-rending and poignant, because seen in a stronger light.

2. **"I am a man of unclean lips."** Inward depravity does not always manifest itself alike in all persons. With Isaiah, it was probably rash, or bitter, or uncharitable speech; he may have been, like Wesley, naturally a man of cutting sarcasm, a man whose words would wound like a saw. He certainly had a thousand provocations to use the most merciless and denunciatory terms, in which he would not likely discover the amount of self and depravity, until he saw the meek and gentle and holy temper of his Lord; but in that pure radiance he would see a mass of impurity attaching to his denunciations, which made him loathe himself in the sight of God.

Whether this were true in the case of Isaiah, or not, it has been true in thousands of instances, with God's true and earnest, yet not fully sanctified ministers. Has not every minister, as well as every child of God, many a time, discovered a vast amount of self-will, self-planning, rashness of spirit, harshness of words, subtle animosity, censoriousness of spirit, towards the sinfulness or sluggishness of our fellow-beings? almost as much gall as love, mingling with our zealous words and religious performances; laying the blame of the church's sterility on others' defects, and not on our own secret, subtle depravity? Has not the interior vision of these things, driven thousands in shame to their closets and their knees, and made them cry, "I am a man of unclean lips"? Such experiences are painful, yet nevertheless are the Gethsemane-path to the crucifixion of self, and the being baptized with all the mind that was in Christ.

3. **"I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."** He saw in the transcendent light of this vision, the true complexion of the character of the people around him. There is here a very important suggestion. Ministers are liable to go to extremes with regard to the sins of the people around them.

A large class of nominal or professional preachers, have in all ages made light of the sins of the people; have preached smooth things to please their hearers have utterly shunned from showing the people their sins. The Universalist teaching that God is too good to punish sinners: the Unitarian teaching that human nature is too fine and good to be punished; the Plymouth Brother teaching that all manner of sinfulness is easily covered over by the white mantle of the so-called "finished work"; the semi-Swedenborgian and naturalistic preachers, teaching that sin is only a sort of sour sap, which will mellow into goodness in the autumn of life; the time-serving ritualist, who is too dainty-tongued to even read God's words respecting hell and the judgment; and, last of all, the backslidden Orthodox, with whom preaching has become a mere profession by which to make a living; who goes on in a beaten track, and will not warn the people respecting their coming doom. Isaiah belonged to none of these: he saw the peoples' sins, their responsible and punishable sins.

There is another class, much smaller than the former, who go to the opposite extreme, and do nothing but denounce sinners and declaim against the imperfections of God's people. They denounce in unmeasured bitterness every branch and organization of the visible church. In public, in private, and in print, they excoriate the ministers and servants of God. They think they must use insulting and abusive language to their hearers; they magnify the ordinary faults of good people into the most heinous sins; their speech is filled with gall and sulphur; but their eyes shed no tears "over the slain of the daughter of my people."

They fancy that the height of their piety is measured by the extent of their denunciation; they think they are

foreordained to be "sharp threshing instruments, having teeth," but overlook entirely the "gentleness and meekness of Jesus."

Between these two extremes was Isaiah, the pattern of the true minister of God. He had one trait which neither of the above class exhibit: he confessed his own corruption of nature in connection with that of his people, seeing both in the same light, but unbosoming his own depravity first and that of his people afterwards. A parallel example is found in Daniel ix. 21: "While I was speaking in prayer and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, etc." It is impossible for us to properly expose the sins of the people as Jesus did, unless we are filled with the same spirit that filled Him. To attempt to imitate the example of Christ in any given thing, without having the "same mind that was in Him," is gross machine service, and makes havoc with the work of God.

4. **"For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."** He attributed the light by which he saw his own defection, as coming directly from the Lord. It was not the result of natural acuteness of perception; it was not a philosophical analysis; it was not a deduction of reason; it was not the mere emotional whim of low spirits; it was not a "blue-Monday" conclusion of his temporary feelings; but it was the broad, cloudless, serious, sober, thorough revelation of all the inner facts of his nature, produced by the strongest of all causes, -his seeing the Lord of hosts. In this confession we have no account of his weeping, or his praying, but that which includes and goes beyond mere sighs and petitions; namely, an utter and unlimited confession of the whole heart. How few understand what is a perfect confession to God! It is, as it were, the turning of the soul inside out, without any apology or excuse for its contents. So much is involved in complete confession, that upon it God conditions both pardon for all actual sins, and cleansing from all unrighteousness (1 John i. 9).

IV. **Isaiah's complete sanctification.** "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The items in these verses needing special notice, are:

1. **The agency of the seraphim.** He did not sanctify Isaiah, neither did he create the sanctifying agent; but in harmony with the idea that the seraphim represent the office of the apostles or evangelists, fully anointed for work under the Spirit's dispensation, acting as God's agent in first proclaiming the holiness of God, and then conveying to the earnest seeker those fire-charged and spirit-illuminated promises of truth, through which we are sanctified. If we carefully collect all the passages referring to the cherubim, the seraphim or the living creatures, and examine their activities, we find them to correspond with the zeal and functions of the apostles and evangelists as exhibited in the Acts of the Apostles.
2. **Having a live coal in his hand.** This live coal is the word, the truth, the promise of God, set on fire of the Holy Ghost. The mere written word of Scripture, apart from the accompaniment of the Holy Ghost, is like anthracite coal, lying dark and chill in the mine; but when the Scripture is applied to the heart by the personal agency of the Spirit of God, it is like the same anthracite coal, glowing white with heat in the furnace.

The written word, in and of itself, does not save us; the mere "letter killeth"; the spirit gives both heat and light to the written word. Whole chapters of Scripture may be committed to memory without penetrating the heart; but if only one brief verse is laid on the heart, hot with the Holy Ghost's presence in it, there will be a supernatural shock, sufficient to make the dead leap into life, and the leprosy of hidden sin vanish into nonentity. When the coal from the mines is brought out and set on fire, it drives the machinery of the world; and when the written word is preached and applied by the burning and luminous touch of the Spirit, it impels the souls of Christendom along paths of holy conquest. He took the live coal from the altar, the altar where the sacrifice had been offered; the altar where the blood flowed, and the sacrifice was burned. What can this mean but that all Scripture is not only from Him who is the Word of God, but from Him crucified? The live coals of Divine promise which God's baptized heralds extend to the people, cannot be gathered from the frozen regions of science or poesy, but must be taken from the altar-cross, baptized with His blood, glowing with that sacrificial flame. If the word of God we handle is not taken hot from that altar, it will never convert sinners or sanctify believers.

3. **And "he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips."** The sanctifying remedy is applied to the diseased spot. Isaiah spoke of unclean lips, and hence to the lips the fire must needs be applied. God's

sanctifying grace is as various in its virtue as are the defections and needs of the soul; each one needs a touch of fire at the spot of his besetting sin.

4. **"Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."** It does not say thine iniquities or thy sins, as would have been the case had he been an unjustified transgressor; for "although his actual sins had been as scarlet, they had been made as white as snow" (chap. i. 18).

That which was cleansed away now was not a something in the plural number, but a unit principle of evil, latent within him. In all this Scripture there is no intimation of Isaiah being an actual sinner.

It is not a voice of pardon, but of purification.

"Thine iniquity." The word iniquity means inequality, up and down. There is in every believer an up-and-down experience in his faith, his peace, and obedience; an unevenness, an inequality in his inner life, which is never brought into a straight, even stream of faith, and hope, and love, till the subtle crookedness is taken away, and the inward sin purged.

V. **The results of the sanctifying touch.** "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me." Here are two or three marvellous effects specified, as the direct fruit of the baptism of fire.

1. **He heard the voice of the Lord.** Up to this time there is no account in the vision of his hearing the Divine voice, but only hearing the voice of His flaming messengers. According to a multitude of Scriptures, there are five spiritual senses, as really as the five physical ones; but these spiritual senses are folded, blunted, impaired, by the existence of inbred sin.

Regeneration restores life to the spiritual senses, but they are not fully opened and clarified for full exercise till all the carnal mind is extirpated, and the inner man filled with the Holy Ghost. There is a spiritual ear in the heart, and when the wax of depravity is removed under the full baptism of the Spirit, how acute is its hearing! Then it is true in a high sense, "My sheep hear my voice." When Isaiah's spiritual hearing was perfectly healed, he could catch the gentle voice of his God, even though that voice came through the sound of singing seraphim and shouting cherubim, with a swiftness and distinctness of accent never heard before. It is not the loudness of the voice, but the affinity which the ear has for it, which renders it heard with ease. A fully sanctified soul will have its spiritual senses opened, and energized to hear, see, touch, taste, and smell, spiritual facts, spiritual truths, spiritual sensations, utterly unknown before; and almost utterly discredited by those who are yet partly carnal. As St. Paul tells us. "strong meat belongeth to them that are perfect, to those who by a habit of perfection, have their spiritual senses exercised to discern (Hebrews v.14, margin). How many go on guessing at the Divine voice, often confounding it with self or Satan, when, if the wax were purged from their spiritual ears, they might catch the articulations of the Holy One, and distinguish it in storm or calm, from the mingled sounds of earth.

2. **His soul discovered the blessed Trinity:** "Who will go for Us?" This is the only verse in this chapter where God is spoken of in the plural. Here we discover that He who is One, is also more than one. Jesus told the disciples that when they received the abiding Comforter, they should know the Trinity, not as a dogma, but as an inward revelation to the heart. "The Spirit of Truth shall be in you, and ye shall know that I am in my Father" (John xiv. 17-20).

What ineffable experiences of the revelation of the Trinity to the hearts of perfect believers might be collected from the history of the saints! Isaiah's discovery of the voice as coming from a plural God-head, is a clear intimation that he discerned the sacred personalities and saving offices of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. **"Then said I, here am I: send me."** Prompt, willing, unreserved, individual, glad and unquestioning response to the Divine will. This is the fruit of the sanctifying baptism. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the service of the partially and fully sanctified Christian, but there is in that of the former a reserve, a questioning, a hesitation, an element of coercion, or forcing one's self along, a waiting for others, which does not characterize the believer when filled with the Holy Spirit.

There is a celestial ring in the very words of Isaiah, a boldness, an individuality, an aggressiveness of spirit in the "here am I: send me," which proves that the touch of the live coal had gone all through his members, melting his

heart, opening his senses, clarifying his perceptions, purifying his nature, thrilling his will, sweetening his temper, enrapturing his love, and bringing him in such blessed union with God as to clothe him with light and fire, and put such wings to his obedience as to virtually transform him into a seraph, whose mission it should evermore be to go through time and eternity singing Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.

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