

WOE TO ME!

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” —ISAIAH 6:5

Isaiah is, of course, one of the major prophets in the Old Testament. In chapter five of Isaiah, he gives a whole list of woes to the people. “Woe to you for this sin and woe to you for that sin”, but after seeing a vision of God, it suddenly becomes, “Woe to me!”

Isaiah saw the Lord, seated on a throne high and exalted. Above Him were seraphs, calling to one another; “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). To see the one true King is to see ourselves in all our sin and failure. People can commit sin with a clear conscience, but once they experience a personal revelation of God, they suddenly discover, “Woe is me!”

The “woe to you” message comes from those who may have their doctrine right, and have a genuine concern for the world, but are standing outside it, claiming, “You are in trouble,” rather than coming to the point of saying, “Woe is me”. 1 Peter 4:17 says, “It is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” In other words, if judgment begins with us, it will have its rippling effect that filters throughout the world.

Isaiah tells us, “Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for’” (Isaiah 6:6-7). Isaiah is shocked to discover he had ‘unclean lips’, and is greatly humbled before the holiness of God. He then hears the voice of the LORD saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” He responds, “Here am I. Send me!” God then said, “Go and tell His people...” (Isaiah 6:8-9).

Very often the area of our sin, which we have acknowledged and confessed, becomes the area of our ministry. Isaiah’s mouth has become a sanctified mouth. What had been unclean has now become holy and is going to be the means of his ministry. This is what redemption is about. Sometimes we fall into sin, get ourselves into trouble, and cry out to God. We feel so acutely embarrassed, but God may redeem that very sin, and make it an equipping to bring blessing to other people. As it was with Isaiah, we are deeply and utterly transformed by the revelation God gives us of Himself.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, may the lesson of Isaiah keep me humbled and repentant before You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Have I been able to help others through previous experiences of sin in my life?