

Sin: Its Sinfulness

Westview Church | Isaiah 6:1-7 | Pastor Brett Toney | September 27, 2020

Into the Blazing Light

You have perhaps had this same experience I recall having as a kid. I went to a movie one summer afternoon with my family in Texas. At the end of the movie, instead of going back through the main entrance, we ducked out the door straight from the theater to the parking lot. As I stepped out the door, I was shocked by the blazing brilliance and heat of the sun. Going from the dark and highly air-conditioned theater immediately into mid-day light was a complete shock to my senses. It stopped me in my tracks. It was so disorienting.

I imagine this is but the smallest taste of what it may be like to be in the presence of the unhindered glory of the Triune God. The light and heat and sensory overload would knock us down, as seen when God or one he sends in his place shows up. Think of Moses at the Un-Burning Bush, or the shepherds hearing the angelic declaration of the birth of Jesus, or Paul's encounter on his way to Damascus. This visible, blinding brilliance—God's glory—is the outward display of his inner perfections. Catch that? This visible, blinding brilliance—God's glory—is the outward display of his inner perfections. And no human has encountered his glory in *unhindered* form—you cannot see his face, the full display of his glory, and live (cf. Exodus 33:20). It's like the Christian film that maintains upmost biblical faithfulness, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—the Nazis look on the glory seat and their faces melt. I think Kirk Cameron was in that one somewhere.

Why is this? Why can't divine image bearers bear to see the image of the Divine? What is it about the revelation of God's inner perfections that is so unbearable by people, even those redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus? The problem is not God or his inner perfections. The problem is how sinful our sin is. The problem is on display here in Isaiah 6.

Glorious or Holiness? (v.1-3)

The scene is set for us—Isaiah is ushered through a vision into the very throne room of God. In the midst of political uncertainty and governmental transition, Isaiah has this vision when the heir of David, king of Judah had died. He is saying that even in an election year, the true King of All Creation remains seated on the throne. Isaiah beholds the Lord's majesty, supremacy, all-surpassing excellency. No king is like this king. This king has fiery, six-winged angelic servants standing at the ready to do his bidding. These are like no other courtiers any other throne room has before seen.

Isaiah wants us to behold this display of God's glory. And so, the seraphim open their mouths to make plain what it is that Isaiah, that we, are witnessing. And they say one to another, "Glory, glory, glory is the LORD of hosts!" No. No, here at the display of God's inner perfection, the threefold summary of who he is is not keying in on his *glory* but his *holiness*. And as his holiness goes forth, as it is revealed, as it is put on display in the full throne room of all creation, it is his *glory*.

Yet let us understand that the holiness of the Triune God is not merely his sinlessness, his moral purity, or his internal righteousness. Thinking of God's

holiness in those terms sets us and our pervasive sinfulness as the reference point. The Triune God is uniquely holy, holy, holy because he is perfectly self-sufficient. He is eternally independent. He is absolutely deficient in nothing. He is perfect in all his attributes. You've experienced a glimmer of genuine love? God is infinitely more loving. You've seen displays of real justice? God is infinitely more just. You've benefited from a friend or spouse's faithfulness? God is infinitely more faithful. God is set apart in regards to *everything*, not just in reference to sin.

But what then of God's moral purity? On what do we base our understanding of his sinlessness? As the uniquely holy, holy, holy Triune God, he alone is of infinite worth. Uniqueness translates into worth. Diamonds, specific website addresses, certain breeds of animals—the fewer there are of something, the more value they have. Some company owns "westviewchurch.com" and wanted \$2,000 for it—"westviewchurchmn.com" was \$15. Uniqueness translates into worth. The only self-sufficient, infinitely perfect God of the Bible is of infinite worth. And this God is devoted to his own worth. He must be. If this holy, holy, holy God valued something more than himself, that thing would be supreme and worthy of all worship. If God valued the perfect ideal of "love" above all else, that ideal is what would be most worthy of our worship. But he doesn't—he values himself supremely. So, what is good is what God values. What is sinful is what is opposed to what God values.

Kids, this is a lot. I hope you're picking up some of it. Do any of you have a special blanket or stuffed animal? Or did you when you were younger? What

makes that blanket or stuffed animal so special is that it is the only one like it. Maybe grandma made it or your parents gave it to you. But it has been worn down in just the right spots to make it so soft. Even if you could buy another like it, it just wouldn't be the same, would it? It wouldn't be your special blanket or animal. That item is special because it's the only one. That's why we're Christian, why we worship God—he is special because he is the only one like him. So, when you snuggle your special blanket, remember: Why is this blanket special? Because God is holy.

Sinfulness of Sin (v.4-5)

Now, this has been a lot on the character of God, on the holiness of God. Isn't this a sermon series on sin? Yes, and one of the biggest and easiest problems to give ourselves to is not grasping the sinfulness of sin. Too often we don't think about just how sinful we are, how sinful the things we do, say, or think really are. Sometimes that's because we don't know that those things are sinful. But more often I think it is because we don't really grasp just how holy God is. Last week, Pastor Haakon helped us consider how sin has tainted and defiled everything—our hearts, bodies, and minds. Sin's cursing reach is broad. But sin's cursing reach is O so deep. As challenging as it is for us to grasp just how holy God is, so also it is unfathomable how great an offense our sin is!

Coming face to face with the holy, holy, holy God, Isaiah responds the only way a sinner can, "Woe is me!" (v.5). "Woe" is an old-sounding word that we don't really use anymore. It is an exclamation of pain and sorrow, what

today may be like a lamenting groan, "Ugh!" Isaiah recognizes that he is lost, he is undone, he is to be destroyed. He perceives the holiness of God in his bones and knows he has no standing.

Can you recall when you last lamented your sin to this kind of depth? I don't mean being sorry over the consequences of your sin. I don't mean feeling guilty because of a sin you've committed. I mean feeling anguish in your soul because you are sinful to the core? "Woe is me! I am finished." We perhaps don't go to those depths because we don't consider the boundless heights of God's holiness. We don't view our sin, we don't view our sinfulness, in the light of his blazing other-ness. I don't think of my sinful acts as an affront to his majestic, infinite splendor.

"I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you [the Holy God], you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:2-3). Will you go to those depths in lamenting over and repenting of your sin, of your sinfulness?

The Lord's Table (v.6-7)

I pray you do because it is in those depths where mercy is found. Isaiah is ready to receive the just penalty for sin. And it is because God is holy that he moves towards Isaiah to redeem him. It isn't explicit in v.6, but the seraphim moves on God's behalf to remove Isaiah's guilt. It's taken away. His sin is atoned for. Isaiah did *nothing*. The Holy One took the initiative to address the problem, to remove the very barrier between the Creator and creature. Just like God

acted to speak the promise of the Serpent-Crushing Son, just like God moved to sacrifice an animal that the shame of our first parents would be covered, just like God extended mercy and did not execute judgment for sin on the very day they ate of the fruit, so also here God is the one who takes decisive initiative to atone for Isaiah's sin.

And so it is the same that he has done for you and me and all who hope in God the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy One condescended, taking on human form, to address the very depths of our depravity. It is that God-Man that Isaiah beheld. That's right, the King of Glory, the holy, holy, holy God is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. John 12:41 tells us that Isaiah wrote what he did because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him.

Friend, you cannot come to this table if your sin is not atoned for, if it is not taken away. Step into the blazing brilliance and heat of holiness of the Triune God. In stark relief, see the magnitude of your sinfulness and flee to the Holy One that your sin might be atoned for through the death and resurrection of Christ.