

“Isaiah: Lose Dependency”

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I want to encourage you this morning to turn in your Bible to the Book of Isaiah. As you are turning to the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, this is a book that many have called the Bible in miniature. Let me give you an example. The Bible that you hold in your hands, from Genesis to Revelation has 66 books in it; the book of Isaiah has 66 chapters. When you look at the Book of Isaiah, as you study the Book of Isaiah, what we often do, and rightfully so, is that we divide Isaiah based on the message in general of what it presents. For example, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are doom and gloom; that the people of God are headed toward captivity. They are headed the wrong direction unless they repent of their sins.

Beginning in chapter 40 the message is if you turn and if you repent, this is what will take place in your life. I do not believe it is accidental; in fact I believe it is providential that your Old Testament has 39 books in it. What is the message of the Old Testament? From the very beginning, as humanity, we have sinned against God, we have rebelled against God and we deserve what we get and ultimately though the Lord says I will deliver you, when you show up to Isaiah chapter 40 and to the gospels, what happens? It's a message of hope. The Deliverer has come, the Redeemer has come and we can be saved, we can be forgiven.

So when we look at the person and the message of Isaiah, it's very easy to kind of overlay the Bible; the first 39 books, the first 39 chapters, the last 29 books and the last 29 chapters. If we were to study today the message of the Book of Isaiah that's exactly what we would need to do. However, what we're doing today is we're studying the life of the man, the prophet, Isaiah.

If you're a first time guest or visitor with us, what we've been doing all fall is walking through the Old Testament. We have been studying,

analyzing, and praying through these Biblical characters who model for us that which we need to lose in our lives so that we'll be in a better position to be utilized by God and to serve Him in our lives. We've talked about losing self-reliance, losing bad decisions, losing bad influences, losing compromise and all kinds of different things.

And today we come to Isaiah chapter 6 and if you were to divide the Book of Isaiah, not based on its message but based on the man, Isaiah, you would have to divide it in chapter 6 because the Isaiah of chapters 1 through 5 is different from the Isaiah of chapters 7 through 66. And what happens is in the first 5 chapters when Isaiah is communicating his message, when he's communicating to the people of God what God wants them to hear, he uses language such as this: "Thus saith the Lord," and "The commandments of God are this." Broad, general strokes and every one of them is absolutely true. If they continue the way they're going then this is what's going to occur to them. But it's almost third-party; it's almost as if he has stepped back and is saying this is just the way that it is. When you get to chapter 7 though, it's a little bit different. Rather than saying, "Thus saith the Lord," Isaiah says this: "The Lord said to me." Now there's a difference in "Thus saith the Lord," and "The Lord said to me." What happens is in chapter 6. Something happens in the life of Isaiah, something dramatic occurs in his life that changes him forever.

Before we read this passage of scripture, before we talk today about the fact that we need to lose dependency, that our absolute total trust needs to be on God and God alone, I want you to understand that this is the official missionary passage. This is it. As we prepare in a couple of weeks to come and give at our Global One Missions Offering, as we support the different mission endeavors that we do every day here at First Baptist, every missions conference, every course I've ever had in missiology, somehow, somewhere you get to Isaiah chapter 6. Because in Isaiah chapter 6 is that famous passage where God says who will go for us and Isaiah raises his hand without knowing the parameters and says, "Here am I, Lord, send me." But that's the message of a missionary.

A missionary is a perfect example of what we're dealing with today because they come to a point in their lives where no longer will they be dependent on their family, no longer will they be dependent on their friends, no longer will they be dependent upon whatever education or background they have; they will go out "in the field," and be completely dependent on God to provide for them. That is why this passage so resonates with missionaries; oftentimes people say Isaiah is the model missionary. What Isaiah shows us today in chapter 6 is what we need to lose so that we're totally dependent on God.

Isaiah 6:1-13: "1In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5Then 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. 6Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8Also 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. 9And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. 10Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. 11Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, 12And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. 13But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when

they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

In this passage of scripture, we mostly know it for the missionary calling of Isaiah. Oftentimes when we study it though, we don't read those last three or four verses and see what Isaiah actually was excited about doing. You know the Lord promised him that he would preach to people who wouldn't be converted; he would preach to people who wouldn't be healed. Yet, how many times do we only want to be involved with things of God that we see results from? Yet, that's the difference between Isaiah and most of us. Isaiah was willing to be whatever God wanted him to be, wherever He wanted him to be because we see in this passage that he was totally dependent on God and nothing else.

So what I want to do this morning from the Book of Isaiah chapter 6 is to ask two very simple questions that I think will resonate with each of us. The first question is how do we get what we really want? Now this is the Christmas season, right? This is about making lists and we adults are as good as kids are at making lists. And if you were to be honest with yourself, no matter how spiritual you are, no matter how much you walk with the Lord, down deep we all want a little something, right? So I want to share with you from Isaiah chapter 6 that what happens in Isaiah's life is he experiences everything you want. Now it's not a physical gift wrapped up in a package but if we were to sit down, one on one, if we were to really hammer it out, what do you really want out of life, what do you really want from God, then I promise you that one or more of these items is what you want.

The first one is this: you want a clear vision of God. Now I can prove this because I've had the privilege (yes, I said privilege) of meeting with who knows how many dozens if not hundreds of people who classify themselves as agnostics, atheists; the denial of an existence of God, much less the person of Jesus Christ. And anytime you get into a conversation with someone of that nature and it prolongs for a period of time, ultimately it's the question of faith, it's the question that they just cannot believe in that which they have not seen. They cannot believe in that which they have not touched or

smelled or whatever it may be. So ultimately, a statement is made of this nature: "If I could only see God face to face then I would believe." According to the Book of Revelation you will see God face to face, every one of us will. The question is have we believed on the right side of that experience?

But let me ask you, maybe you're here this morning and you're not an atheist or an agnostic, you're not asking questions. In fact, you're one of those individuals who has come to a place and point in your life where you've recognized that you're a sinner, you have gone contrary to the ways of God and realized that Jesus is the only means of salvation and forgiveness. You are what the Bible calls a believer in Jesus Christ; you are born-again. Would you be honest with me because I'm going to be honest with you: are there not times in life when you say, "Lord, I need to see something or I need to hear something"? After all, in 1 John 1:1 speaking of Jesus says that which we've seen, that which we've heard, that which we've touched. How many times have you said to the Lord, "Lord, I just need to see you; I just need to hear you; this walking by faith thing is hard"? How many of you want what Isaiah saw? "I saw the Lord high and lifted up."

I don't know about you but every night when I pray, when I look up do you know what I see? A ceiling. That's what I see because that's what's above me unless I'm out doors. How many of you wish if you really could have what you really want, you would really love to see God as He really is? How about the heavens open up, actually see the throne room of God, actually see all that we talk about, preach about and sing about, actually see what it looks like? I know this is what you desire because when times get tough and when life gets rough, here's what I typically hear from folks, including myself: "I just need to see God. I just need to hear God." That is what every one of us, down deep, really wants in life. We really, truly, down deep want to be able to tangibly see God.

Isaiah had that opportunity. He had the opportunity to see Him high and lifted up. It says that he literally heard the voices of the seraphim saying,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.” Let me ask you a question: if you could hear the seraphim sing today would it change your dependency issue? If you could literally see Heaven opened up, would you ever doubt God again? Isaiah was a different man after chapter 6. It used to be “God says,” now it is “God said to me.” Every one of us would love to have this. How many times have you talked to someone who said if I could have actually seen with my eyes Jesus crucified then I would believe? Jesus made the statement that greater are those who believe without seeing than those who believe with seeing. I think every one of us, deep down inside, wants a clear vision of God; we want to see Him, we want to hear Him, we want to be able to touch Him. Yet, Isaiah got to experience that.

I think there is a second thing every one of us wants deep down inside: we want a clear conscience before God. Do you know why? We know what we’ve done. We know what we’ve said. We know what we’ve thought. And I think every one of us understands Jesus offers forgiveness. I think every one of us grasps that concept, but do you know the hardest person to forgive is yourself? And what most of us really want is a clear conscience before God.

I want you to see what happens in Isaiah’s life after he sees the Lord. Look in verse 5. “5Then 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. 6Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.”

Now I just want you to think: what is that area of life that you’ve struggled in? What is that area of life that you’ve fallen in? What is that area of life that you’ve been addicted in? What is that area? Deep down inside, don’t you wish that every scar was removed? Don’t you wish that every consequence was gone? Don’t you wish that every memory was lapsed and that everything on Facebook was erased?

What you want to experience is really what my boys got to experience yesterday. No, I did not erase them; don't worry about that! But I had in my backyard, over the course of time where we had trimmed limbs, a brush-pile that was about 1200 cubic feet of brush. Now that's a lot of brush, if you don't know. My neighbor came over yesterday morning. He has three acres back behind us and he said that he had gotten a burn permit. And he said, "I've got the pit going today." I walked inside and said, "Traci, our plans have changed!" What we had planned on doing, we're not doing because we're going to do some burning today. Over the course of the next three to four hours our entire family including the dog hauled all that we could haul and it's a long way across those three acres. We took 1200 cubic feet of brush and as only the brilliance of a first-grader can say at the end of the day, "Daddy, it's gone!" It's gone. Where was it? Burned up - gone - no residue. If you drive by my house you'd never even know we had it. If you go by his house, it's all ashes in a pit. Isn't that what you want from your junk in life? Isn't that what you want from your past? Don't we just want it gone?

Yet, what happens to Isaiah is he says I'm a man of unclean lips. Now I realize that was probably a very generic statement, but notice how the Lord responded: a seraphim. By the way, you can do the research today, let me save you about five minutes; you'll never find any other place in scripture where seraphim show up. You'll find cherubim in the Garden of Eden when mankind is removed, there are cherubim that guard it. You'll find cherubim in Ezekiel guarding the throne of God. You'll find cherubim in the Book of Revelation around the throne of God. But here you find these holy ones, these angelic beings with six wings who literally take a coal off the altar of God, place it on his mouth and eradicate, clear it, and eliminate it. Wow! Wouldn't you just love, that with our eyes and ears, for the Lord to take that which is of our past, that which is our crutch, that which we have been sinful with and to just incinerate it and it be gone? I don't know about you, but I'm beginning to form the wish list of all of humanity: see God face to face, have all of our ills completely eradicated.

But it gets even better. Not only a clear vision of God, not only a clear conscience before God, but here's the big one that's making a lot of money in our culture: how about a clear calling from God? Knowing exactly what you're supposed to do, how you're supposed to do it, and who you're supposed to do it with. If you pick up the story in that famous verse 8 the Lord says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Now by the way, the Lord did not give details about what the mission was. He just said who is interested in being on the Lord's side and Isaiah said here, send me. Notice what the Lord says. Verse 9, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." What a calling of God!

Let me tell you what the calling of God on Isaiah's life is: you're going to preach, you're going to teach and nobody is going to give a rip! And did Isaiah gripe? Did he whine? Did he moan about it? Did he say, "But Lord, that's not what I want to do?" He said, "Where do I go God?" How do you respond that way? When you've seen God and you realize He's cleaned your sin out of your life then you can respond that way. He has a clear calling from God.

In fact, if you'll read in chapter 20 and this makes a great trivia question, particularly with teenagers and young people, and I do not suggest this to anyone because this was the calling to Isaiah, not you; the Lord came to Isaiah and said the people's ears are so hard I want you to walk around and preach naked – for three years and nobody cared. I would hope in our culture somebody at least would call somebody and say, "Did you see what I saw?" Nobody cared. Can you imagine being that dramatic and nobody listens. I'll be honest with you, if that's what the Lord called me to do, you wouldn't like it and neither would I. Yet, Isaiah said here I go, God, I'm good. And from chapter 7 to chapter 66, the pedal never comes off the floor! He says, "God, whatever you need me to do, I'm there without waver, without question."

Let me tell you how I know this is on your want list this season. Because

tens of millions of books are sold every year with titles such as: The Purpose Driven Life and Your Best Life Now. Do you know what every one of us really wants? We want to just make sure we're in the right place at the right time doing the right thing because we walk by faith and half the time we think, "I don't know!" What if today you could see God for who He really is, you could know beyond a shadow of a doubt that your sins are eradicated and gone, and know exactly where and what God would have you do in life, are you good with that? Then you're going to have to do what Isaiah did.

What did he do? Look up in Isaiah 1:6. I think it's one of the most powerful and most impactful statements in all scripture because we have to ask the question how did this event occur in Isaiah's life? All of a sudden he's going about his business and then he sees the Lord high and lifted up. Look at that first statement, "In the year that King Uzziah died." Now if you will study chapter 1, verse 1 you will know that there are actually four kings that Isaiah was a prophet under. He had a very long what we would call ministry. He does not say, "In the year that my child graduated high school. In the year that our country was better off than any other year. In the year that this country attacked this country." No; he said, "In the year that King Uzziah died."

You say why is that so important? If you look and do the genealogies in scripture, it is most likely that whom we know as Isaiah was the first cousin of Uzziah. Let me tell you what that means. When you're the cousin of the king then you're in good shape! You understand that Isaiah was a prophet. Do you know what the salary of a prophet was in Biblical days? Zero. Now when the people brought their tithes into the storehouse, they distributed them among the Levites and the priests but nowhere do you see the prophets getting any of theirs. If you study the life of the prophets such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah; it was a unique life at best. You say how did he survive? Much like the famous painters of our ancient days, they had benefactors. You can't make a whole lot of money being a painter; you can only make money as a dead painter! That's how you make money. So what happens is very wealthy individuals come into these people's lives,

they invest in them so they can live, eat, raise a family and they are able to paint. The same thing took place in a prophet's life. They didn't have a nine to five job; they didn't have a regular income, and the tithes from the storehouse did not come to them. Who do you think took care of cousin Isaiah? Cousin Uzziah; he's got all of it. Now what happens when Uzziah dies? The pipeline has just dried up; the resources you used to have don't exist anymore. All of a sudden you've got a real economic problem on your hands.

But it even goes further than that. What would people who wanted to now be the king do to the king's former relatives? They would eliminate them. Why? Because they're a threat to the throne. If you study Biblical history, you go even to Solomon. When Solomon passed away he had two sons; Rehoboam and Jeroboam. They so fought over who should be the king of Israel that Israel was split in two, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. Isaiah's message, by the way, is to the southern kingdom. So even in his own life, we see what happens when kings pass, when kings die, when they are killed: everybody's jockeying for position to become the king and people become expendable. You say what happened in Isaiah's life the year that king Uzziah died? The bank account went dry and there was a hit on his head.

Now let me tell you something: if that was the position you were in you could see the Lord high and lifted up, too, because you don't have anything else. And that's our problem because when we talk about losing dependency, no matter how faithful we want to say we are, no matter how spiritual we are, no matter how much we want to say I love Jesus, down deep we create safety nets in our lives. They may be financial safety nets, relationship safety nets. We know if worse comes to worst then I've got this in my back pocket. You know what Isaiah had in his back pocket? Rocks! He didn't have anything else. So you say, "I want to see God as Isaiah saw God; I want to experience God as he experienced God." You can – but you have to lose dependency on everything around you and trust God alone for everything. And that's a new concept; that's difficult and that's why very few people truly see the Lord high and lifted up.

Now let me be honest with you: today if you truly make a decision to lose dependency on others and other items, do I believe that when you pray today that the heavens are going to open up? Probably not. Do I believe that a six-winged seraphim is actually going to show up in your living room and touch whatever part of you that needs to be touched? Probably not. And are you going to have hand-written on the wall of your house when you get home exactly what you need to do tomorrow? Probably not. But I think you get the point here that when we lose dependency on everything else and gain dependency on God then He does an unbelievable, supernatural work in our lives and that's what most of us really want. The problem is we let everything else get in the way.

So I thought this morning I would give you an illustration of what this looks like. For those who listen to us on the radio or by internet, I know you do not necessarily have a visual, but I have before me just a simple rose. And I want this rose to just simply represent your life today. This is you because every one of us today has a decision to make, every one of us is at that proverbial crossroads. Do I completely depend on God or do I keep depending on other things? Do we lose dependency on the world and gain dependency on God?

Let me share with you how this works in the real world. This (rose) is you addressing and having a conversation with the Lord. "Lord, I really understand what I need to do but there are just some things at the office I really need to get cleaned up first. (Rose petals drop to the floor.) There are some people I need to call first. (Petals fall.) Once I get those phone calls made, I'll be dependent upon You. (Petals fall.) And Lord, you know I've got small kids at home and right now they need my attention and a lot of resources. (Petals fall.) So as soon as I get my kids a little more grown up then you can have every bit of me. (Petals fall.) Now that the kids are in high school, that's when I can depend on you, God because they can drive and get themselves around, they even know how to bathe themselves (that is going to happen in my life one day; please promise me!) and when that happens I'll have more time and I'll depend on You, God. (Petals fall.)

Well, we've got the kids in high school and I just thought little kids were a mess; boy, this is just a fiasco everywhere, we've got hormones raging, friends running around! (Petals fall.) I'll tell You what, God, when we get them all out of the house that's going to happen. (Petals fall.) Now I've got this thing called college tuition. Boy, this thing is killing me, God. (Petals fall.) When they're out of college and I get a raise, then I won't need to depend on that stuff anymore, then I'll have everything taken care of. (Petals fall.) Lord, they're out of college and I got that raise and things got a little better, but to be quite honest with You, I've got grandkids coming. (Petals fall.) And grandkids need stuff and I need to be the provider of that stuff. (Don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about! Petals fall.) So Lord, they depend on me and I depend on them so I need to keep doing that. (Petals fall.) So when the grandkids get a little bigger and they get in school, then we're going to take care of this. (Petals fall.) The grandkids are bigger, but you know, Lord, I really haven't had a whole lot of time to devote to You and I've just been dependent on all these other situations, but retirement! When my 401K hits a certain number, then I'm going to depend on you. (Good luck!) But Lord, when I do retire, no matter what that number is then I'm going to have time on my hands and when I have time on my hands then I won't have to worry about all this other stuff and You can have everything I am. (Petals fall.) And finally, Lord, I'm there in life and now everything I am, I can now completely depend on You. (The last petals fall.)

Or you can make a decision today wherever you are in life and it doesn't matter chronologically, which rose do you want to be one day? (One rose has a full bloom and one rose has no petals.) Do you want to be the one that was picked apart and depended on everything else in life but God or the one that said, "Okay God, take me and use me." If I were to ask you today which one of these flowers would you want to put in your home, I know which one you would pick. Which flower would you want to give to somebody else? I know which you would pick. The problem is, and I'm just going to be honest with you, most of us will leave today and pick this one (the flower with no petals) because we've got stuff to do, we've

got agendas to meet, we've got things to depend on and we've just got to get some stuff straightened out before we can totally depend on God.

Can I give you some words of wisdom today? Isaiah didn't have a service like this. Isaiah didn't go to church one day and in those days the priest didn't get up and say you need to get things in order because you need to depend on the Lord only. You know what happened in Isaiah's life? An event happened without preparation and he didn't have anything else.

In a moment we're going to have our time of invitation and you have a choice of which flower you're going to be. But I thought I would share with you a testimony today from someone I think is pretty special, my wife. We don't have her on video, but I'll never forget, just as Dr. Gene was up here last week, he spent fifty plus years in evangelism, when Traci was pregnant with our oldest child, Marshall, I was traveling the world as Dr. Gene does. I wasn't home much. There were months when I literally saw her maybe two days out of thirty. There were not a whole lot of financial resources coming in at the time; we were stressed and life was difficult. I was preaching a revival at our home church in central Texas. And I did not know it, but my wife had talked to the pastor privately.

At the end of the service when I had preached the sermon and done the invitation and the pastor got up and announced there was going to be a special testimony and it's my wife. Now I'm on the front row thinking I don't know where this is headed but it doesn't look good for me. And there was Traci about eight months pregnant. She got up in front of that church; she talked about my schedule; she talked about life. And at a ripe young age in her twenties, she made this statement that I'll never forget listening to her. "Folks, I've just come to realize the only thing I really have in life is God." And you need to get to that point. Let me give you some advice from Isaiah; let me give you some advice from Traci Meyers, and let me give you some advice from me: do you just trust God or are there a lot of other things competing for His attention because the difference is dramatic. Let's pray.