

Overwhelmed: Overwhelmed with the Chaos of the World
Isaiah 6:1-8

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Text Introduction: We have been examining this theme of being overwhelmed for several weeks now. We have moved into a phase of our study now where we are examining a series of topics common to all of us that leave us feeling overwhelmed. Today, our topic is being overwhelmed with the chaos of the world. For our Biblical example, we turn to Isaiah 6.

Text: ¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:

“ Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth *is* full of His glory!”

⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ So I said:

“ 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 my eyes have seen the King,
The LORD of hosts.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said:

“ Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged.”

⁸ Also 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.”

Introduction: Isaiah lived in uncertain times. The first phrase of our text underscores these chaotic times: “In the year that King Uzziah died.” The book of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles reveal that Uzziah reigned for 52 years as King over Judah. Remember that kings in this period of history were recorded as either good or bad according to their record of obedience to God. Uzziah is recorded as a good king. He was a strong military leader. He had weapons that were advanced for his time that shot arrows and hurled large stones from towers. In sum, Uzziah’s reign was a good reign. His death brought uncertainty. Would the next king bring this same kind of reign? Would the new king lead the people closer to God or farther away from God? For a person like Isaiah who earnestly and eagerly sought after God, these were difficult times.

You don’t need me to tell you that we live in difficult times. Any day’s newspaper or newscast is evidence enough. Maybe the worst story of the week is the story that came out of Waycross, Georgia. Just when you think you have heard it all, you hear this story of the 11 third graders who plotted to kill their teacher. They made assignments right down to the person who was going to clean up.

You don’t need me to tell you that we live in uncertain times. You don’t need me to tell you that we live in an age when it seems that we are moving farther and farther away from God and His Word. But, perhaps, you do need me to show you in God’s Word that as believers we need not be overwhelmed.

3 Keys for Chaotic Times:

1. Look Upward!

Where does Isaiah go in the midst of these chaotic and uncertain times? He is in the Temple. He is in worship. As Isaiah worships, He encounters God. As he encounters God in worship, Isaiah is reminded of ...

- God’s Sovereignty—Where is God? He is seated on the throne.
- God’s Holiness
- God’s Presence

The sum of what Isaiah experiences is that although King Uzziah is dead, God is very much alive.

Have you noticed that we are in a Presidential Election year? Most folks are worried sick over who is going to be the next President. May we be reminded that our hope is not in Washington or Baton Rouge. Our hope is not in a party or platform. Our hope is in the fact that God is in on His throne. One of our favorite Bible verses ought to be Psalm 20:7 which says, “7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember (that is “trust in”) the name of the LORD our God.

Our Pastor Emeritus often signs his letters and ends his phone conversations by the signature phrase “Keep Looking Up!” In the midst of uncertain times, we can do no better than to keep looking up.

2. Look Inward!

Recognition of Sin

Times of uncertainty ought to cause us to look within. Actually, for Isaiah, this is a by-product of his upward look. Because Isaiah sees the holiness of God, his attention is taken from the situation around him to the sin within him. Notice the first part of his confession: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips.” Isaiah enters the Temple trembling concerning his situation, but in meeting God, he trembles at his sin.

Only after Isaiah acknowledges his own sin does he mention the sin of the ones around him. We usually get this backward.

Recognition of Grace

At this point, you may be ready to ask, “How does this recognition of sin in my life cause me to feel better?” The answer is discovered in verses 6 and 7. Isaiah sees God as the one who is cleansing his life from sin. Notice how God is the one who is purging from sin.

(Illustration) Saturday, March 29, 2008, was Expungement Day in New Orleans. The event, sponsored by the Orleans Parish public defender's office, drew some 400 people eager to get their criminal records cleaned up. The idea was to clear the records of those who feel they have been falsely charged or otherwise dealt with but the charge was still on their record.

Consuello Anderson took advantage of the day. Consuello had a good job as a personal care attendant in which she cared for the elderly and sickly. Then, a background check revealed a quarter-century old charge against her for theft and she was fired. The fact that the thief was actually her baby did not matter.

On Expungement Day, Consuello presented her evidence and told her story. Back in 1984, as she was leaving her pediatrician's office with her 14 month old son, the child grabbed an otoscope, the lamp used to examine children's ears, and carried it with him. She was holding him in one arm and the baby bag in the other as they were rushing to get into the elevator at Charity Hospital. She was late for work and sprinted down the sidewalk, just making her bus. She noticed her son was carrying the otoscope--"he was at that age where they pick everything up"--and she meant to return it.

The next time she thought about it was when the police knocked at her door. She was 17 years old. She gave the scope back, but the cops arrested her. She says she didn't get the best legal help and was convicted of theft. It was a minor rap, she said Saturday, but getting fired recently "made me feel like I got a lifetime sentence without parole." A lawyer helped her file for expungement.¹

Every person can have an Expungement Day when it comes to our sin. Maybe the circumstances of our world is just what some need to recognize first sin , but then to recognize the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Look Outward!

Finally, in the midst of uncertain times we need to look outward. In this experience of being in the Temple, God ultimately calls Isaiah to be a prophet. God needs people in uncertain times to speak a word in the mist of the chaos. The truth is many are overwhelmed. Many are looking to see if there is any hope. Many will look to the church, but only see similar panic and chaos.

Notice the progression for Isaiah.

- (1) Eyes on Himself
- (2) Eyes on God
- (3) Eyes on himself, but now on his sin
- (4) Eyes on God, but now leads to confession
- (5) Eyes on himself, but now for others

Can you say, "Here I am!"?

Do you remember back in 1999 what was called the Y2K Panic? Many prophesied doom and gloom when computers could not recognize the year 2000. I remember the panic. I remember some telling me to take all my money out of the bank. Others stocked up on food. Churches cancelled their New Year's Eve activities. You know what bothered me most about the Panic. Some in the church sort of led the panic. Of all people, as Christians, people ought to see us as people of peace not people of panic.

What do people see when they see you? Peace or Panic?

¹ Joe McKeever, April 30, 2008 Blog.