

have to move on and briefly discuss the passage of blessing which follows it.

Chapter 6 presents the third extensive passage of blessing, which, in this case, is God's promise of personal blessing to the prophet who is to be His spokesman. The chapter contains the inaugural vision of Isaiah -- a wonderful experience. It is most likely that he had this experience before he wrote the contents of the five chapters that precede it. It is one of the great exalted visions of the Bible. The prophet is in the temple, and there he sees the glory of the Lord and hears the seraphim proclaiming God's holiness. His reaction is exactly what the reaction of every true man ought to be in such a situation. He realizes his own unworthiness to stand before the King, the Lord of Hosts. He sees, as everyone who is not cleansed by the Lord should see, that he is out of place in the presence of God, and deserves nothing but punishment at the hands of the Just One.

Before Isaiah could volunteer for service to the Lord, it was necessary that he be cleansed and purified, so that God could use him. One of the seraphim brought a live coal from the altar and touched the lips of Isaiah and cleansed him of his iniquities. Only coals from the altar, representing the sacrifice which God provides for sin, can make any one of us fit to appear in God's presence.

Thus there was figuratively presented to the mind of Isaiah the necessity of that sacrifice for sin which he would later describe so beautifully in Isaiah 53. After Isaiah is purged from his sin, he hears the voice of the Lord asking who will perform a necessary service for Him. The one who is truly born again and cleansed inevitably seeks a way to serve God. True faith always expresses itself through works.

Now that Isaiah has received the wonderful blessing of this remarkable vision from God, has been purged of his sin, and has volunteered for service, he receives a terrible commission from God. He is told to go and harden those people who turn away from the commandments of the Lord. The emphasis here is upon the aspect of rebuke and punishment contained in the message of Isaiah. The tenth verse describes what will be the reaction of the people as a whole to his message. We find that this reaction was also true in later times, for our