

(Remnant Meeting 2013) Testimonies by Pam, Brenda, Alan Message

by Brian Long

Brian Long shares powerful testimonies of transformation through a genuine relationship with God, emphasizing the importance of prayer and community support.

Duration: 54:02

Scripture: Numbers 23:9, Psalm 4:2-3, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Remnant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the journey of the prayer meeting over the past five years. They express the struggle of trying to settle down and take root, only to be uprooted by God's guidance. The speaker emphasizes the holiness of God and how He sets apart a holy people for Himself. They also share personal experiences of turning the glory of God into shame and seeking falsehood. The sermon concludes with a reference to Isaiah 6, where Isaiah sees the Lord on His throne and realizes his own unworthiness, but is cleansed and forgiven by God.

Transcript

I get overwhelmed at what I'm going to share tonight. I'm overwhelmed because of the wasted years that God has... God has changed my heart. He's listened to me.

He's had mercy on me. So I'm going to start with... I think I've made a lot of people uncomfortable at times whenever I say I've been delivered from religion. But I have.

I have been delivered from religion. And I don't apologize for that statement. It's only been until recent years, I thought the more I knew about what a denomination required for membership, the more I would know about Jesus.

But I had it backwards. The more I've learned about Jesus, the more I've learned about His church, His spotless pride. Also in recent years, our pastor has preached truth to us.

Not only is the way narrow, but it seems to have gotten narrower. Growing up, we weren't taught the fear of the Lord, that God is an all-consuming fire, and that from earth to heaven His thoughts are higher than my thoughts. Psalm 50 says, these things I have done, these things you have done, and I have kept silent.

You know, during that silent time, I wasn't finding favor with God. I was busy doing. I was the busiest church member, and I wasn't finding favor.

He was keeping silent, but it wasn't because I was finding favor. You thought I was altogether like you, but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

Whoever offers praise glorifies Me. And that's what I want to do. I want to praise God for having mercy on me.

Praise Him for His love, and to Him who orders His conduct aright, praise God, I am a new creation. Old things have passed away, and I will show the salvation of God. Matthew 17 says, when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

My life changed with a question. And the question, the person that asked the question, was my sister Pam. She said or asked, what if what we thought we knew really wasn't how it was? That was the question she asked me, and it was about four years ago.

It was a work day at my mom's. It seemed like we do a lot of that. We were both weed eating.

It was hot. It was Oklahoma. And we were taking a break.

And Pam asked me that question. You see, I'd seen a change in her and Alan, but I didn't know what was going on. I knew that a prayer group had started meeting at their house, but that was all I knew.

Getting back to the question, I looked at Pam and said, what do you mean? And she said it again. I am just saying, what if what we thought we knew wasn't how it really was? And I remembered looking at her, and then I was really hateful and an ugly person. And I said, no way.

And that's the last we talked about it. But that question stayed in my mind. I grew up in church.

Pam and I were there every time the door was open with our parents. I said the prayer just like everyone else and went forward, walked the aisle. I thought I was doing what I was supposed to be doing, and now I'm hearing that it might not be what we thought.

And you might think I would have pursued what Pam was saying, but I am ashamed to say that I thought Pam had lost it. Two years went by, and I watched Pam and Alan change. They were different.

They had more family time. They had time for us. But they also had a passion I had never seen before.

And the question she asked me was ever present in my mind. You see, God was doing a work. Remember that I said they had a prayer group meeting in their house? Well, they were praying for me.

God was pursuing me. And I can only praise the Lord. Matthew 7, 13.

Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life, and only few find it. And then I want to read.

This is 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not

prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? And I will tell them plainly, I never knew you.

Away from me, you evildoers. Was that me? I thought I knew the Lord. God has changed my heart.

My whole life has changed. My prayer life has changed. I am a result of prayer.

They didn't give up praying for me. I have a family who I don't know where they stand. We've all been in the religion part of it.

I don't know. We've talked to them. We've been shunned.

We've been, not disowned, but they kind of roll their eyes and go, you guys are crazy. Well, maybe. But I'm on a mission now.

I'm on a mission. And I know that never give up. When you're praying for somebody, never give up.

I am the result. Father, thank You. Thank You for what You've done in my life.

Thank You for someone that never gave up on me, for a prayer group that prayed for me and they didn't know me. I just thank You, Father. Thank You.

In Jesus' name. Well, that was a mistake. I'll let the girls go first.

I don't know what I was thinking. This may be a little scattered because I've heard brothers and sisters sharing today. I've been adding and changing things on my testimony.

Pam and Brenda asked me if I was nervous about this. I'm not a bit nervous about giving my testimony. I'm really not.

It doesn't scare me a bit. I know how imperfect I am. I know what my faults are.

What scares me to death is handling the Word of God and being in fear of Him because He is so holy. And I get that holy fear that I may say something amiss. So, you bear with me.

I'm going to use the Apostle Paul's words and I'm going to modify them just a little bit for my testimony. Brian asked me to share a little bit about my journey. If I wanted to, I could go back and I could tell you about drugs and alcohol and fornication and living for myself and living like the devil, but I don't want to go there.

That was my past. That's not who I am. I'm a new creation.

But I wanted to share a little bit about what this journey's been like over the last, say, five years. And now that I look back, it's easy to see what God was trying to tell me now, but then I didn't understand it. Psalm 4, verse 2, it says, How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? And that's what I was doing in the church.

I was doing all the things that make you a good church member. But I was turning the glory of God into shame and I was loving worthlessness and I was sought falsehood. So that's kind of where my journey, if you want to say, began.

I didn't understand what the Lord was trying to tell me, but I look back and I see it now. In Acts chapter 26, Paul says this of himself, so I'm going to add a couple of commas in here to break it up. Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things.

And Paul goes on to say, contrary to the name of Jesus, but I want to stop. I thought I must do many things. As Pam said, I was very busy in the church.

And I was proud of myself. And guess what? My wife was proud of me too. But I found out as I look back, most of the things I did were contrary to the name of Jesus.

They had nothing to do with Christ whatsoever. In Romans chapter 10, Paul says, not so much of himself, but about the church. He says, for I bear witness, and I'm going to make this personal, for I bear witness that I had zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for me being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish my own righteousness, not having submitted to the righteousness of God.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. I wasn't seeking Jesus for my righteousness. I was trying to do that for myself.

Galatians chapter 1, Paul says this, and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my father. And I say this to my shame. One of the pastors I sat under said, God must have you on the fast track.

But I say this to my shame because I did. I outdistanced many of my contemporaries in the church. I grew in knowledge.

I knew a ton of things about God. I did. I didn't have any understanding and no spiritual significance to it at all.

But I outpaced many of them. But I yearned for the traditions of that faith. I found out, as I look back, I was off that narrow way, as my wife talked about.

The more we get closer to Jesus, the narrower that way seems to be. And I was off the narrow way, and I was going down a very dangerous path. Paul says, As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

I didn't do it that way, but I was committing people, committing other Christians, committing them to bondage by being the example of a good Christian, that you've got to work really hard and do your best and all those. I was setting that example. So if you don't want to say it, I was helping them be put in prison.

But I praise God in 1 Timothy. It says, Paul says, Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and unbelief. And I praise God that he saw that.

It was unbelief on my part. I obtained mercy. Along the way, before the journey really began for me, somehow or another I got confused.

I confused reliability with faith. Scripture doesn't read without reliability is impossible to please God. It says without faith it is impossible to please God.

And God had to strip everything away from me to show me that I was counting on my reliability and I wasn't counting on faith to please God. I was the most reliable person I knew. I was one of the lowest, had the little bitty tiny drop of faith.

You know, say I had faith as a mustard seed, it was probably even less than that. But things happened, say five years ago, and I don't say this as a brag, but I'll just kind of let you know how it was. Pam and I were teaching probably the biggest Sunday school class in church.

One weekend it was 24 members. The next weekend, and this is no exaggeration, the next weekend it was zero exactly. We went from 24 to zero.

For the next four weeks it was zero exactly. It went away. God took that away.

It took no glorying in that anymore. Discipleship training, I couldn't even keep the faithful six or seven. It went from six or seven that when the doors opened they were there, it went to zero, completely zero.

God started stripping everything away from me. I was a doer though. I was one of these people.

My wife is a prayer person. Prayer was for Pam. Alan is a doer.

I was a doer. God took everything away from me but prayer. He made me go from being a doer to a prayer-er I guess.

But then I began to understand over this journey and I'm still coming to grips with it. Let's say it started somewhere about five years ago and I was talking to Brian. We're meeting in our fourth location in five years.

The prayer meeting is in its fourth location in five years. God continues to... We start to get settled in. We start to take roots and God pulls us up and says, No, we're not there yet.

But then I look at the holiness of God and see when I see this small body out here tonight, this remnant, but as Brother Frank shared, there are millions out there. But right now just to see it here, I got some encouragement from the Scripture I shared earlier. In Psalms 4, 2 it says, How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood? That's in verse 2. And here, listen to verse 3. But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself Him who is godly.

Him who is godly. That's how I know He's a holy God. He sets apart a holy people for Himself.

I want to share Numbers 23, chapter 9, because it's even... Actually, I'll start in verse 7 because this, again, talks about the holiness of God. This is Balaam speaking. Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Maram, from the mountains of the east.

Come curse Jacob for me and come denounce Israel. Balaam answers, How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced? Far from the tops of the rocks I see Him, and from the hills I behold Him. There, a people dwelling alone, not wrecking itself among the nations.

And as a remnant church, that's who we are. We're that people that are dwelling alone. We seem, as you talk to most people in this group here at times, we feel very alone.

But we're not alone. We have a holy God, and He sees us afar off. A holy people not wrecking themselves among the nations.

God is a holy God, and He wants a holy remnant to be set apart for Him in His glory. So my journey has been to escape working out my own righteousness, my own salvation, to seeing the holiness and the beauty of God, and to allow Jesus Christ to have preeminence in my life and in everything I do. I would say that I've known God all my life, or I knew of God all my life, but I didn't really care.

I really didn't really care about God. I knew who Jesus was, and I believed it, but I didn't really care. And these last five years, as this journey continues, I see Him more and more, and my focus stays more and more on Him.

I praise God that my sister-in-law said we prayed for them, but you don't know how much it strengthened my faith to see God answer a prayer like that. Because for me, again, I wasn't a prayer person. I just didn't really expect God to answer a prayer or not answer a prayer, but He did.

And we've been so blessed. As Brian has shared before, we've seen so many answered prayers, direct answers to prayers. There was no mistaking them.

And even as my sister-in-law shared, I'm actually an answered prayer as well because somebody had to have been praying for me because I had no desire for God, no desire for the things of God, but here I am today. Thank you. What a perfect introduction to the message I think the Lord's put on my heart tonight.

Some of it He actually took the words out of my mouth, the very same words. Let's stand together, brothers and sisters. I want us to pray.

And I'd like for you to turn, if you just have your Bibles as we're standing, let's turn to Isaiah chapter 6. Isaiah chapter 6. Father, this has been such a precious time in Your presence and fellowship with brothers and sisters. Lord, I feel that I could have just drank and drank and drank as Brother Frank has just shared and shared and shared and others have shared. And I share the same fear that my brother Alan just mentioned of opening up Your holy Word, Lord, and standing in this pulpit.

And I don't know if I've ever been so gripped with the awareness of the impossibility of preaching Your Word adequately, especially, Father, when it comes to a text like this and what You're really wanting to say and what You're really wanting to reveal to us. I'm so mindful that it can only be done by the power of Your Holy Spirit. There is no other way.

It is impossible for man to do. I do not deserve to stand here, Father. I don't deserve to open Your holy Word.

But I believe in Your amazing grace. And I'm thankful for Your grace, Father. And I'm thankful that I stand here by the righteousness of Jesus Christ and His shed blood alone.

Lord, we're not here to play religious games. We're here because we really want to know You more. We want to know Your heart.

And we want to hear from You tonight. We want to hear from You in a way that will absolutely change us forever. I'm asking You, Lord, God, to strip away everything that is fake.

I'm asking You to remove everything, Lord, that would just be a religious facade. And I'm asking You to remove this veil that we may behold Your glory tonight and we will be changed. It is our part, Lord, to behold Your glory.

Would You help us to do that? And then, Father, it's Your job to change us. And I'm asking You to do that tonight. Have mercy upon me in this pulpit and anoint me with the power of Your Holy Spirit, I pray, as You will also anoint the ears of the hearers to hear directly from You.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Let's read the Scripture together before we sit, please. Isaiah chapter 6. I'll read it.

You follow along with me. 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. 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. And one cried to another and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.

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

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. And he touched my mouth with it. And he said, Behold, this has touched your lips.

Your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged. Be seated, brothers and sisters. The Scripture we just read begins within the year that King Uzziah died.

And I feel like it's so important for us to understand why he died. Why did King Uzziah die? He died, brothers and sisters, because he had forgotten God. And there's a burden on my heart for Christendom today.

Because I wonder how much of Christendom, how much of the church in the West has forgotten God. In Jeremiah 2, you hear from the heart of God when He says, Can a virgin forget her ornaments or a bride her attire? Yet My people, not the world, My people have forgotten Me days without number. That's a burden on my heart that much of the church doesn't really know God.

Pam shared this Scripture in Psalm 50 where God said, You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself, but I will rebuke you and set you in order. You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself. How much of the church today thinks that God is just pretty much like us? How much of the church today believes that God is no more, as somebody said earlier, a genie in a bottle or some spiritual Santa Claus or some grandfather figure up in the sky? Brothers and sisters, that's not Him.

And those who speak of Him that way have forgotten who the true God, the Holy One, the Most Holy One, the One that Isaiah saw, really is. But I have a greater burden than even that. You know what my greatest burden is? It was in tears a while ago just thinking about it.

My greatest burden is for some day, and I would rather die. I would rather die. I would rather the Lord take me out and take me home now for this to ever happen, but I know how easily it can happen.

My greatest burden would be to stand in a pulpit like this having forgotten God, having forgotten the true God of the Bible, and to begin to misrepresent Him like is happening in so much of Christendom today.

Misrepresent the Most High, the God of the Bible. I've heard the Lord say to me, yes, Brian, you're burdened with Christendom, but don't you forget, don't you forget who I am.

My people have forgotten me days without number. I tremble at the thought of that because I know how easily it can happen. It can happen this easy.

All you have to do is neglect the prayer closet for just a little while. All you have to do is neglect the prayer walks for just a little while. All you have to do is neglect this holy book, the Word of God, for just a short season.

And you know what happens? Self immediately gets big. Pride sets in. And your vision of yourself begins to increase.

And your vision of God begins to decrease. Christ who was once everything to you, just the thought of Him would bring you to tears. The thought of holy God would put you on your knees or on your face in worship.

But little by little, you've neglected prayer. You've neglected time alone with Him. You've neglected His holy Word.

Little by little it sets in. And instead of Him increasing and us decreasing, we increase and He decreases. Not that you can decrease God, but your thoughts about God can decrease.

And you can develop, even in ministry, this unholy familiarity with God and with the presence of God to where you're just flippantly speaking His name. You're flippantly speaking about treasures from His holy Word. You're rushing and being brash and rash in His presence.

And you've forgotten that He is the Holy One of Israel. He is the Almighty God. He is vast.

He is awesome. He is terrible. He is awesome.

He is terrible. He is terrifying. Yes, He's good.

We saw that last night. But He's also severe. He's also severe.

He's also awesome. In the year that King Uzziah died, why did he die? He had forgotten God. This was not a man who never knew God.

This was a king who once knew God. And he once knew God well. He started his reign at 16 years old.

A young man. And as a young man, he was very dependent upon God. He knew God.

He reigned for 52 years as king. He did all that which his father Amaziah had done. And as long as he sought the Lord, the Scripture said the Lord made him to prosper.

And this king prospered because the favor of God was upon him. He took out nations. He conquered nations.

He conquered the Philistines. And he was a good king. Probably the best king up to that point that Judah ever had.

And yet the Scripture says in 2 Chronicles 26, verse 16, after telling all these wonderful things that King Uzziah had done, we come to verse 16 which says, but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. When he was strong, he increased and God decreased. His vision of God decreased.

His heart was lifted up to his destruction for he transgressed against the Lord, his God, by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Now why was that such a serious sin against God? To burn incense in the temple before God was a duty that was only given to the priests. Only the priests were allowed to do that.

And what happened was, again, King Uzziah got so familiar with the presence of God. And he got big in his own sight. He had forgotten the true God, the Most High.

And he thought, I've conquered nations. The hand of the Lord has been upon me. I've known the favor of the Lord for 52 years.

You guys are burning incense in the temple. I can do that. And he rushes into the temple, even though he had some 80 priests warning him, Uzziah, don't do this.

I wonder if one of them didn't say, King Uzziah, you're a great king. God has been with you. But have you forgotten who He is? Have you forgotten that He is holy? That He is the Holy One? Have you forgotten, King Uzziah, this duty was only given to the priests to be done, and yet King Uzziah got angry and furious and he wouldn't listen to the rebuke of some 80 priests.

And he goes to offer up incense in the temple and God strikes him with leprosy. Leprosy breaks out across his forehead. Behold, therefore, both the goodness and severity of God, the holiness of God, you cannot trifle with a holy God and get away with it ultimately.

Leprosy breaks out upon his forehead. He sees what's happening and rushes out of the temple. The priests are pushing him out of the temple.

And King Uzziah dies a lonely leper. In the year that King Uzziah died, why did he die? He forgot God. And if it can happen to a king who knew God and knew Him well, it can happen to me, it can happen to you.

Brothers and sisters, beware of forgetting God. Tozer said the essence of idolatry is to have thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. Beware of forgetting God.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. I saw the Lord, Isaiah says. I saw the Lord.

Who did he see? He saw, according to John 12, the Lord Jesus Christ pre-incarnate. Theophany. He saw Jesus in all of His glory and majesty.

He saw the Lord. John 12 He saw the One whose eyes are like fire. He saw the One whose face shines brighter than a noontime sun.

He saw the One whose voice was like the sound of rushing waters. He saw the One who wraps Himself in light that no man can approach unto. He saw the Lord.

He saw the very One that one day all of us must appear before at the judgment seat of Christ. He saw God. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne.

The Lord is supreme and sovereign. This God we worship, this God we serve, this God we know and belong to is never anxious. He's never fretting.

He's never confused. He never has to scratch His head and wonder what He's going to do next. He never has to say oops.

He's never at unrest. There is nothing out of His control. He is sitting on a throne.

He says in Psalm 46:10, Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in all the nations.

Be still. He is sitting upon a throne. Supreme and sovereign.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up. Now, how high? Brother Frank was talking to us earlier today about the vastness of God. And one of the ways that we can get just a tiny glimpse of how big and awesome and vast our God is, is to simply look at His creation.

David said that, didn't he? The heavens declare the glory of God. When I consider the heavens, the work of Your hands, the moon and the stars, what is man that You're mindful of him? How vast is this universe that God created? How high really is He? This One who is sitting upon a throne high and lifted up. Well, He says this, Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.

Where is the house that You will build for Me? And Solomon was gripped by that truth. He went to build God a house, a beautiful, magnificent temple, and then it hit him, Lord, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How can I build a house for You? One of the Psalms says that not only does God have to stoop down to look at the earth, but He has to stoop down to look at the heavens.

Isaiah 57 says, Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity. That's vast. He inhabits eternity.

His name is Holy. Eternity. You cannot box Him in.

You cannot figure Him out. You cannot manage Him. You cannot make Him palatable for everybody.

He's not a tame God. He's a good God, but He's not a tame God. He's an awesome God.

And He's high and lifted up. Created the heavens and the earth. Frank was talking about just how far the nearest star is or how far away the sun is from the earth.

I did a study on that one time and put together sort of a model. And I figured out that 25 pages in this Bible, which was about the thickness of the Gospel of John, if that would represent the distance from the earth to the moon, which is a long ways, the earth to the moon, and 25 pages in your Bible represented that distance, do you know how high a stack of Bibles, how many Bibles this size, you would have to put side by side to represent the distance from the earth to the nearest star? You'd have to start stacking them up right here in Barnsdall side by side. Go all the way down Highway 11, down 75 to Tulsa, and all the way to the other side of Oklahoma City.

Over 150 miles. If the distance from the earth to the moon is 25 pages in your Bible, the distance from the earth to the nearest star is from here to Oklahoma City. Bibles stacked side by side.

We are small, and God is big. He is great. He is awesome.

He is vast. Just consider the moon and the stars. This star called the sun.

Consider for a moment, brothers and sisters, how much energy it would take to light up a city like New York City. The electricity, the power, the energy it would take to light up a city like that. Now take that and pile it on top of Houston and Chicago and L.A. and Dallas-Fort Worth and Oklahoma City.

Let's just take all the cities in the U.S. All the small towns. Now take them all over the globe and all the energy it takes to bring power to light up all of those cities. Did you know that the sun puts off more energy in one second than mankind has produced from the time of Adam and Eve? This sun that burns 27 million degrees Fahrenheit and is so big, when you consider the earth and how long it took you to drive from Michigan to Barnesdall, and how long did it take you to drive from Wisconsin to Barnesdall or fly from San Diego? Long time.

How long would it take you even to fly around this earth? Do you know how many of these earths would fit in the sun? Over a million. Over one million earths would fit in the sun. And yet that sun is only one of a hundred billion stars in our galaxy.

But then scientists and astronomers say that our galaxy is only one of a hundred million galaxies. It boggles the mind. We're talking about the One who is incomparable.

We're talking about the One who is vast, who is sitting upon a throne high and lifted up. Words fail us. High and lifted up.

This vast, awesome, almighty Creator. He is high and lifted up. He inhabits eternity.

He created all things, and by Him they all consist. He is an awesome God. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

This is the incomparable One. And it says, the train of His robe filled the temple. That speaks of His glory, His splendor, the glory and splendor of God.

You cannot contain the glory of God. Again, you cannot box Him in. You cannot make a formula out of Him.

You cannot make ten steps to God and all this nonsense. He's God. His glory fills the temple.

But the seraphims say, no, not just the temple. They go on to say, the whole earth is full of His glory. And there will one day come when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover this entire earth, even as the waters cover the sea.

His glory filled the temple. And then Isaiah saw something else. He said in verse 2, above it stood seraphim.

What are these seraphim? Someone said they're angels. They're not angels. They're angelic beings.

They're creatures that God had created. Seraphim means fiery ones, burning ones. These are sinless creatures.

Probably some of the most holy of all God's creatures. And I say that because of their proximity to the throne. They're so close to the throne of God.

These awesome creatures that if you and I were to see one, it would take our breath away. The glory and the majesty and the magnificence of this seraphim would cause us to fall down on our faces. And yet, these seraphim, John saw them and he said that each one had six wings, and with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Even the seraphim, these sinless creatures, could not look at this awesome, holy God. They cover their faces in worship. They cover their feet in modesty.

He said, one cried to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory. And when they cried, the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of Him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

Think about the power that's coming forth just from one of these seraphim. And yet, they can't even look at this awesome God of ours. But they cry out, Holy, holy, holy.

The only attribute that I'm aware of in the entire Bible that is emphasized like this three times. Holy, holy, holy. Why is that? In the Hebrew, anytime something is emphasized or repeated three times, it's done for that purpose, to emphasize it.

This is an intensity. They're wanting us to get this. God is holy, holy, holy.

That is His nature. It is His attribute that permeates every other attribute of God. His love is holy love.

His mercy is holy mercy. His wrath is holy wrath. His kindness is holy kindness.

What does it mean that God is holy? It means that He's totally set apart from all that is not God. He's totally set apart from all that is not God, from all that is created. He's set apart from man.

He's not altogether like us. He's set apart from the angels. He's set apart from the seraphim.

He's set apart from all powers and principalities. He's set apart from all of creation. And if all of creation were to dissolve in one moment, and God could make it happen if He wanted to, then God would remain.

And He would be totally sufficient and of Himself. He is a holy God, set apart from all. He is holy means that He is the absolute absence of any imperfection.

There is not even a hint of wickedness in God. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Not a hint of any kind of evil or darkness.

He is absolutely perfect and pure and holy. That is His nature. God is a holy God.

I feel so... so... words fail me. That's why you see in Revelation how many times John, as he's pinning it, uses the word like. Or in the same way, he's using all this symbolism because everything he sees and all that he sees about the throne of God, he can find nothing to describe God.

So he has to constantly say He's like this or the throne was like that. It was like a rainbow and like this. All this symbolism.

Because we're talking about the God who is beyond compare. And that's what He says to us in Isaiah. To whom will you liken me? Who will you compare me? God says.

He is incomparable. He is holy. And what happens when we have an encounter with a holy God? Isaiah, what did he feel? Did he feel goosebumps? Did he feel warm and fuzzy inside? You see a man who is absolutely undone in the presence of God, brothers and sisters.

It cut him to the quick. It shook him to the very core of his being. He says, 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.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever had an encounter with God that absolutely shook you to the very core of your being? This goes beyond just hearing about God or what somebody else told you about Him. But having an encounter with God to where you were absolutely undone in His presence. The holiness of God always illuminates the sinfulness of man.

When the sun rises, the stars disappear. And every speck of dust is exposed. And even our brightest white is only dingy gray in the holy bright white presence of God.

Everything is illuminated in His presence. Isaiah is suddenly convicted of his very specific sin. Unclean lips.

Unclean lips. And living among a people of unclean lips. He's totally undone.

He's torn apart. Have you ever been there? Where you cried out, Oh, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death? And you wept and you wept until there were no more tears to weep.

And you shook and you heaved. And you cried maybe like someone cried I heard in one of the revivals, Hell is too good for me. That's how this man felt.

And we would have considered him a very godly man. A prophet. A preacher of the Word of God.

And he cries out, Woe is me. I'm undone. I'm finished.

He's just waiting to be consumed by the consuming fiery presence of God. He's a holy God. And we must never forget it.

And we must never forget that no one will change Him. And He will never change. And I'm glad He'll never change.

And we must never lose sight of who He is. But here's what really grips me about this passage. What do you do with such an unapproachable God? The One who dwells in light that no man can approach unto.

The One whom we've been separated from because of sin. Where is mercy now when I so desperately need it? I think Isaiah was just waiting to be dissolved like wax before the sun. Waiting to be cut off for all eternity because he's so consumed with the seriousness of his sin.

And yet this same holy God is a God of indescribable mercy. The Scripture says He is slow to anger, but He is rich in mercy. And somebody wrote a song and sang a song entitled Mercy Came Running.

In this case, it came flying. Mercy came flying to Isaiah in the form of a seraphim. Verse 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.

And he touched my mouth with it, and he said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged. How do you think Isaiah the prophet felt? He knows what he deserves.

He's seen the holiness of God. And yet the mercy of God comes running to him because God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from His way and live.

Mercy came flying to Isaiah. And he gets to hear those words, Your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged. Do you know the mercy of God came running to us? Not in the seraphim, but in the Son.

In the Son of God. In the Son of God. There's only one place in the Scripture that I'm aware of that gives a picture of God running.

And it's in the parable of the prodigal son. And it's when that father sees his repentant son coming home, and he doesn't wait for Him. He runs to Him.

And I see the same thing here. God, the moment a man gets off of his high horse and he's not as important as he thought he was, and he gets rid of his unworthy thoughts about God, and he comes back to that place of seeing that he's nothing, but Jesus is everything. And that moment when he cries out, woe is me, I'm undone.

It doesn't take a week or ten hours. Immediately, God is there. Immediately, the seraphim flies with a coal in his hand, because God loves to show mercy.

And that's what He does to Isaiah. And that's what He's done to us. He says in Isaiah 59, the Lord's hand is not short that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your sins have separated Him from you.

Sin has separated you from God. Some of you are here tonight. Separated from God.

The Lord in His mercy has brought you in tonight. Your sin has separated you from a holy God. And the mercy of God, the mercy of God is seen in God so loving the world that He gave His Son, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

The mercy of God came running when Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth, took on human flesh, went all the way to the cross, stretched out His arms, and took upon your sins and mine and died in our place. And now, brothers and sisters, because of what Christ has done, the sacrifice that He's made, you and I can hear the same words that Isaiah heard, only it's not a live coal. It's not behold, this live coal has touched your lips.

It's behold, the blood of Jesus has touched your lips. The blood of Jesus has washed over your mind, that filthy mind, and made it clean. The blood of Jesus has washed over your heart.

The blood of Jesus has touched you and broken every chain and every sin and every iniquity. Behold, the blood of Jesus has touched you and your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged. That is the Gospel we preach.

That is the good news of Jesus Christ. That is the good news that God is proclaiming to some of you tonight. This is a remnant meeting.

I sense a burden of the Lord that God in His mercy has brought some of you in tonight to hear that God... He's not who you thought He was. He is a holy God. But maybe you didn't know He was also a merciful God.

And mercy comes running. Mercy comes running when Jesus has come to save. He's come to seek and to save that which was lost.

What kind of response to this demand when someone has an encounter with holy God and then experiences the mercy of God and the cleansing blood of Jesus? There is a reconciliation that takes place. God reconciles us to Himself through the blood of His Son. And the relationship that God wants with all of us is restored, is brought back together like this.

And Isaiah at this point is so close to God that he can overhear God speak when God says, Now who will go for us? Whom shall I send? He wasn't talking to Isaiah. Who will go for us? Whom shall I send? And Isaiah immediately says, Lord, here am I. Send me. Send me.

Some of you are hearing that. I can see it on your faces. That's what mercy does.

That's what redemption does. That's what the love of Christ does. It compels us to go.

That a holy God who could have easily wiped us out and dissolved us like wax before the sun, instead wants to show us mercy and redeem us and make us His own, demands a response of repentance, of obedience, of going and telling, demands a response of worship, worshiping our God. And I would just like to do that, Aileen. Would you come? And I want us to sing.

You sang it the other night about the holiness of God. Hallelujah. Would you lead us in that one? As she sings, let's all stand before God.

I pray tonight, brothers and sisters, as we just turn our eyes to the Lord and begin to worship Him in spirit and in truth. And some of you, if God is speaking to you and dealing with your heart, then this altar is a place to come and pray. It's a place to do business with God.

It's a place to kneel before the Lord, to turn from our sin, to call upon Him for His mercy, to surrender everything that is within you, to obey Him. You don't come to the altar to get something. You come to the altar to lay it all down and hear the Lord say, Now, My child, rise and go.

I want to invite you just to worship the Lord with Me. Worship the Lord, the God of the Bible, the one Isaiah saw, the one who is high and lifted up, the one who is holy. Let's worship Him and just respond in prayer, in repentance, in whatever the Lord is leading you to do.

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