

A Lesson From the Sanctuary
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"In 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. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto 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 moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

As the prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord, he was amazed, and, overwhelmed with a **sense of his own weakness and unworthiness**, he cried, "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."

Isaiah had denounced the sin of others; but now **he sees himself exposed to the same condemnation he had pronounced upon them**. He had been satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in his worship of God. He had not known this until the vision was given him of the Lord. How little now appeared his wisdom and talents as he looked upon the **sacredness and majesty of the sanctuary**. How **unworthy** he was! how unfitted for sacred service! His **view of himself** might be expressed in the **language of the apostle Paul**, "**O wretched man that I am!** who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But relief was sent to Isaiah in his distress. He says: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

In the previous chapter Isaiah had pronounced a woe upon the people who had separated themselves from God: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope." Men may seek to strengthen their forces by confederating together, making, as they suppose, strong societies to carry out the plans they have formed. They may lift up their souls in **pride and self-sufficiency**; but the One mighty in counsel does not plan with them. Their **unbelief** in his purposes and work, and their **confidence in man** will not permit them to receive the messages he sends. They say: "Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!" But God says: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him."

The class here represented, in order to exalt their own opinions, employ **a reasoning which is not authorized by the word of God**. They walk in the sparks of their own kindling. By their specious reasoning, they **confuse the distinction that God desires to have drawn between good and evil**. The sacred is brought down on a level with common things. **Avarice** and **selfishness** are called by false names; they are called prudence. Their rising up in **independence** and **rebellion**, their **revenge** and **stubbornness**, in their eyes are proofs of dignity, evidences of a noble mind. They act as though ignorance of divine things were not dangerous and even fatal to the soul; and they **prefer their own reasoning to divine revelation**, their own plans and human wisdom to the admonitions and commands of God. The piety and conscientiousness of others are **called, fanaticism**, and those who practice truth and holiness are watched and criticized. They **deride those who teach and believe the mystery of godliness, "Christ in you the hope of glory."** The principles underlying these things are not discerned by them; and they go on in wrongdoing, leaving the bars open for Satan to find ready access to the soul.

All **self-exaltation** and **self-admiration** are the result of **ignorance of God and of Jesus Christ**, whom he has sent. How quickly will self-esteem die, and pride be humbled in the dust, when we **view the matchless charms of the character of Christ!** The holiness of his character is reflected by all who serve him in spirit and in truth. If our lips have need of cleansing, if we **realize our destitution**, and come to God in contrition of heart, the Lord will **remove the uncleanness**. He will say to his angel, "**Take away the filthy garments,**" and clothe him with "change of raiment." ["Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement." 5T472]

Let every soul who claims to be a son or a daughter of God **examine himself** in the light of heaven; let him consider the polluted lips that make him "undone." They are the medium of communication. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Then let them not be used in bringing from the treasure of the heart words that will dishonor God and discourage those around you, but use them for the praise and glory of God, who has formed them for this purpose. When the cleansing coal is applied from the glowing altar, **the conscience will be purged** from dead works to serve the living God; and when **the love of Jesus is the theme of contemplation**, the words coming from human lips will be full of praise and thanksgiving to God and to the Lamb.

How many words are spoken in lightness and foolishness, in jesting and joking! This would not be so did the followers of Christ realize the truth of the words, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Harsh and unkind words, words of **censure and criticism of God's work and his messengers**, are indulged in by those who profess to be his children. When these careless souls discern the greatness of God's character, they will not mingle their spirit and

attributes with his service. When our eyes **look by faith into the sanctuary**, and take in the reality, the importance and holiness, of the work there being done, everything of a selfish nature will be abhorred by us. **Sin will appear as it is**,--the transgression of God's holy law. The **atonement will be better understood**; and by living, active faith, we shall see that **whatever of virtue humanity possesses, it exists only in Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer**.

The seraphim before the throne are so filled with reverential awe in beholding the glory of God that they do **not for an instant look upon themselves with self-complacency**, or in **admiration of themselves or one another**. Their praise and glory are for the Lord of Hosts, who is high and lifted up, and the glory of whose train fills the temple. As they see the future, when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory, the triumphant song of praise is echoed from one to another in melodious chant, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." They are **fully satisfied to glorify God**; and in his presence, beneath his smile of approbation, they wish for nothing more. In bearing his image, in doing his service and worshiping him, their highest ambition is fully reached.

The vision given to Isaiah represents the **condition of God's people in the last days**. They are privileged to **see by faith the work that is going forward in the heavenly sanctuary**. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." As they **look by faith into the holy of holies**, and **see the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary**, they **perceive that they are a people of unclean lips**,--a people whose lips have often spoken vanity, and whose talents have not been sanctified and employed to the glory of God. Well may they **despair as they contrast their own weakness and unworthiness with the purity and loveliness of the glorious character of Christ**. But if they, like Isaiah, will receive the impression the Lord designs shall be made upon the heart, if they will **humble** their souls before God, there is hope for them. The **bow of promise** is above the throne, and the work done for Isaiah will be performed in them. God will respond to the petitions coming from the contrite heart.

The object of this great and solemn work of God is to gather together the sheaves for the heavenly garner; for the **earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord**. Then let none be dismayed as they see the prevailing wickedness and hear the language coming from unclean lips. When the powers of darkness set themselves in array against the people of God; when Satan shall muster his forces for the last great conflict, and his power seems to be great and almost overwhelming, the **clear view of the divine glory**, the throne high and lifted up, arched with the bow of promise, will give **comfort, assurance, and peace**.