

Intro Read Isaiah 6:1-13

What is your story of how God saved you? The story of how God saves a sinner has come to be known as that person's personal testimony. How often do you tell your story, give your testimony? In the midst of religious complacency, confusion and error, the story of how God's truth intersected with and changed a real person in real time is a powerful message.

The message of Isaiah is profoundly simple. God saves sinners. Chapter 6 of Isaiah records the story from Isaiah's perspective of how God saved him. It is a powerful story. It is 'God saves sinners' on steroids. Isaiah's testimony has it all . . . a vision, smoke, trembling, angels talking, pain, awareness of sin and even God talking. You would pay to get into an event where Isaiah was telling his conversion story. Imagine what it would sound like if he embellished it just a bit!

Isaiah's 'being saved by God' story serves both as a motive for our telling our stories and a model to measure our stories against. God focused, truth saturated, judgment pronouncing and grace filled testimonies are crucial for the advancement of the gospel in our community and world.

Isaiah's story is recorded at a point in the story line of this book to make clear or provide a model to the readers of how God saves sinners. It is easy to become discouraged and distracted by the apparent contradiction of life as both we and Isaiah experience it. A truth saturated 'God saved me story' simply provides a picture of God in action in a world where it seems he is rather weak and inept.

Isaiah's story comes at a time when . . .

- Religious ceremony is valued over authentic living.
- God's truth is acknowledged but seems so far away, irrelevant to present life.
- Opinions of 'how God saves sinners' are many and diverse.

Isaiah's story establishes a pattern for us to follow and use to evaluate our own experience with God. Isaiah's story is told as a series of crisis events. Crisis simply means that he found himself in a related string of predicaments and tight spots that he had to deal with. Out of this string of crises, God saved him.

Let's compare our 'God saving' stories with Isaiah's for two reasons, first to bolster and build our confidence that God has saved you. Second, to refresh our courage and skill at telling our stories so that others may hear and know this thrice holy God who saves and transforms people.

Five crises/predicaments found in a 'God saves sinners' story:**1. A crisis of life experience.****6:1**

'in the year . . . '

The year that Uzziah died is a way of painting a symbolic backdrop to Isaiah's story of being saved by God. The year that the King died could be described as a crisis time in these ways . . .

- In terms of prosperity and complacency – Uzziah has a long and prosperous reign and was considered one of Judah's more godly, successful Kings. His death stirred up security issues.

1. A crisis of life experience.

6:1

‘in the year . . . ‘

- In terms of safety and uncertainty – Assyria was a growing world threat. That match-up with Judah was significantly lop-sided. Judah would certainly be forced to seek help from someone.
- In terms of disappointment and distrust - Uzziah did not finish well. Even with all his success and desire to please God, he disobeyed God by taking on more power than assigned and God saw fit to judge him for it. He died of leprosy from the hand of God for his personal rebellion.

That year symbolized the overstepping of God’s boundaries in many ways and the inevitable judgment coming from God. Isaiah found himself in a predicament where he had to land somewhere regarding the question ‘who do I trust?’

The crisis of life experience common to all ‘saved by God’ stories may appear different but it has a common theme. ‘Where can I put my trust?’ and ‘where is my hope?’ are questions that God uses to prepare our hearts to meet him. Typically something is used by God to stir us from our complacency, self reliance and security before God reveals himself to us in a saving manner.

2. A Crisis with God.

6:1-4 ‘my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!’

Isaiah’s seeing God (1, 5) describes the crisis of his being confronted with the truth about God. This experience of the transcendence and uniqueness of God is expressed both in who God is and how you know that about him.

Who God is . . .	Ruler King	high and lifted up 1; worshipped by angels 2
	Supremely holy	unique, distinct and transcendent 3
	Stunningly important	reality and glory fill the whole earth 3-4
	Self-revealing	reveals and explains himself 3, 7

The crisis with God leaves you in a jam because you either have to ignore or explain away what you have seen or allow the truth claims about God to influence your thinking. Remember that God saves sinners only if they change their minds about him.

Everyone who is saved by God comes to the crisis of understanding God. It is an immense issue. Saved by God people are convinced that their understanding of God must be changed to conform to his self revelation in Christ and the scriptures. Cmp I 2:5 cmp Matt 6 hallowed be your name

A significant observation about many ‘saved by God’ stories that we hear is that God still appears and is described as quite small. Isaiah helps us grow our appreciation for the King, the LORD of hosts. If there is anything boring about your life and worship, it is not due to God being less than spectacular.

3. A Crisis with yourself.

6:5

‘woe is me’

This observation could be called a crisis of sovereignty. Who is king? Isaiah’s self talk upon being exposed to both God and the explanation of God is nothing short of amazing. Only as he understood who God is did he understand who he was. He becomes suddenly and brutally aware of himself. Note the reactions and self pronouncements of Isaiah’s new self awareness . . .

- He sees himself as under the judgment of God. woe; 5:8, 11, 18, 20

- He feels crushed by his smallness. Lost, undone, ruined – unraveled
- He owns his rebellion against God. unclean lips

This is a huge quandary, especially for professing Christians. Be careful, if you find yourself backing away from Isaiah-like self talk as recorded in verse 5, you distance yourself from authentic salvation by God. cmp Lk 5:8 Peters conversion story

God saves those who know, feel and express the fact of their own sinful self awareness. Jesus came to save the lost. The cause of his exclusion from God’s presence is his uncleanness while the consequence is judgment. The point: you do not see God and walk away unchanged in your view of him and yourself.

4. A Crisis with grace. 6:6-7 ‘flew to me and touched my mouth’

Notice that even after Isaiah recognizes his own peril before God, he does not plead, bargain or promise to get God to deliver him. He seems to genuinely consider his case hopeless. Grace is pictured and explained in Isaiah’s story by the thought of an angel appearing through the smoke with a purifying coal.

Note the descriptions of the kindness and effectiveness of God’s saving grace in Isaiah’s story:

- God initiated the saving work. 6
- God provided the substitute sacrifice. From the altar
- God forgives and cleanses sin. 7

Arrogant self-sufficiency is the ultimate issue of every human heart. God’s grace must be accepted and appreciated by surrender and trust from the heart. The person confronted with his or her inability to work, earn, plead for, bargain for or make a deal with God regarding their eternal salvation is faced with a significant crisis. Surrender or cooperation . . . which is it that God requires for you to be saved?

5. A Crisis with obedience. 6:8-13 ‘heard the voice of the Lord – here am I’

It makes complete sense, but remains such a battle. Think of it, a person believes with certainty that without rescue he would be crushed by the holy wrath of God. Having received an unmerited, gracious cleansing, what else could or would he do than commit himself to living for the pleasure of the one who saved him? The immediate effect or result of the atonement/cleansing of sin is reconciliation. The relationship is changed between you and God.

- You hear God and talk to him. He was far off and you were silent.
- You serve God with your life. Go and say
- You obey God regardless. 11 how long?

Here’s the jam that many find themselves sin. It is an eternally important crisis. Some claim to be saved by God but have not surrendered their lives to serve him in the way he has commanded them to. Their salvation story ends too early to be real. It all connects together, those who are not serving God or need special coercion to do so do not understand the immensity of God’s grace and holiness.

Five crises/predicaments found in a 'God saves sinners' story:

1. A crisis of life experience.
2. A crisis with God.
3. A crisis with yourself.
4. A crisis with grace.
5. A crisis with obedience.

Summary/Conclusion:

1. Praise and thank God that he saved you in Christ. Your heart is overflowing with a new song as we have rehearsed this model 'saved by God' story. Rejoice and sing!
2. Refresh and use your story of how God saved you. God saves sinners so they can tell sinners that God saves sinners. Please write out your testimony using the 5 crises found in Isaiah's story. Send it to an Elder or the church office. Practice it with your small group. Your story needs to be refreshed and told.
3. Seek help for the crisis you are in presently. Connect with people who know God for help with your questions and concerns. You are currently in a jam or quandary about sin, grace, judgment, satisfaction or submission. Get some help today.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Isaiah 6:1-13 together as a group.
2. Review and refresh your memory regarding the 5 crises that gives shape to a salvation story.
3. Evaluate your 'saved by God' story and share with the group how it compares with Isaiah's.
4. Have some group members share their 'saved by God' stories and discuss them per the five crises.
5. What would help or encourage you to use your story or parts of your story more frequently with others?
6. How can the group pray for each other to share 'saved by God' stories with specific people?