

Series: Isaiah
Title: Pray for God's Presence
Text: Isaiah 64: 1-12
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Place: SGBC, New Jersey

This is the last sermon you will hear in 2015. I can think of no text more fitting than Isaiah 64.

In Isaiah's day, the nation of Israel was in this terrible condition. It reminds us of the condition of Israel when Christ came the first time. It reminds us of this world's condition right now. Isaiah did what needed to be done—he prayed for God's presence.

Our subject is an exhortation: Pray for God's Presence

The one thing the true church of God needs more than anything else is the presence of God.

First, we see Isaiah's prayer for God's presence—**Isaiah 64:1: Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, 2: As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! 3: When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. 4: For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.**

Secondly, we see the reason the whole nation was being judged and why God's elect remnant were being chastened in the midst of that judgment—**Isaiah 64: 5: Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. 6: But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7: And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.**

Thirdly, our one remedy—**Isaiah 64: 8: But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. 9: Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. 10: Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11: Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. 12: Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?**

PRAY FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

In this awful condition, what is our one real need? We need God's presence. Listen to Isaiah's prayer—**Isaiah 64:1: Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence 2: As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!**

Why do we need the Lord's presence? "That the mountains might flow down at thy presence..." "The mountains" are great, tall, immovable objects. The mountains represent the hard, haughty hearts of all God's enemies, who are our enemies: false religion, corrupt rulers and kingdoms of this world, God's enemies and our enemies.

But when the Lord makes his presence known—"the mountains [shall] flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth." God's presence shall melt men's hearts like fire melts the candle. "[As] the fire causeth the waters to boil." God's presence shall cause the power of our enemies to evaporate like boiling water.

Our own nation is under judgment—full of enemies and surrounded by enemies. And the church—God's true, elect remnant—suffers in the midst of this judgment. We are surrounded by enemies in our day—within and without. We cannot conquer anyone ourselves! Politicians cannot! Military cannot! Vain religion cannot! We cannot effect revival in the church. We could not revive ourselves from spiritual death and we cannot revive God's church.

Only God's presence can conquer our enemies, conquer our own hearts and work revival in his church! So, believer, may our earnest prayer be, "Lord, make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!"

CONFIDENCE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE FUTURE

Our reason for hoping that God will make his presence known is the fact he has done it in the past—**Isaiah 64: 3: When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains**

flowed down at thy presence. “Terrible things” means great, wonderful, marvelous things. When he says “things which we looked not for” it means the things God did were exceedingly greater than anything they expected God to do. The apostle Paul said, God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” (Eph 3: 2)

In verse 4, he explains this—**Isaiah 64: 4: For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.** The apostle Paul quoted this verse when he spoke of what Christ did for his people on the cross and how God revealed this mystery in our hearts by the Spirit of God--

1 Corinthians 2: 8:..Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9: But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10: But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Our text says this is by the Lord Jesus “coming down”, “the mountains flowed down at THY PRESENCE.”

Throughout time, we look to the past and see what Christ has done. Christ has always been the one Mediator between God and sinners. It is Christ our God and Mediator who has built up and thrown down nations and kingdoms throughout the ages. Christ came down and melted Adam’s heart in the garden. Christ came down and melted Abraham’s heart into faith in him. Christ came down and spoke to Moses in the burning bush and sent him and conquered the largest nation in the world, Egypt. Christ came down and melted literal Mt. Sinai when he gave the law to Moses, making the mountain quake and flow down with fire. Christ came down and delivered political Israel into the hands of Babylon to chasten his people; then Christ came down, using King Cyrus, to redeem Israel from Babylon.

When Christ came down in the flesh he did exceedingly abundantly above all that we ever thought. God was made flesh and dwelt among us. The GodMan was made sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The GodMan was made a curse and redeemed us from the curse of the law. The GodMan was made higher than the heavens and as glorified Man was given all power over all things, to be Head over the church in all things. These are all things which we never looked for.

After Christ’s resurrection, Christ came down in 70AD, not in the flesh but in Spirit, like he has in providence throughout the ages. Christ ruled the heart of the Roman, Titus, whose army totally destroy Jerusalem and the political nation Israel.

Christ is doing the same now to his enemies in this world, as he builds and plants his people. He said,

Jeremiah 31:28: And it shall come to pass, *that* like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.

So as we look to the future, we remember what Christ has done in the past. Christ shall continue to work mightily in the midst of his church and in this world. And Christ shall do the same when he comes in person in the second-advent to separate the wheat from the chaff, to judge this world in righteousness and give his people our eternal inheritance. Our reason for hope of his work in the future is because of his work in the past. And it shall certainly be more than we could ever expect.

THE REASON WE ARE IN THIS SHAPE

What is the reason this world is in the current state it is in? Why is the Lord’s church suffering in our day? It is the same reason as Isaiah’s day. Now follow Isaiah’s line of reasoning. It will take a minute to get to the point of why we are in this shape we are in.

Isaiah said of God—**Isaiah 64: 5: Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways:...**

Look at the last first—God meets—gives communion—to those who remember God in his ways. It is God’s ways his people remember. God’s ways are manifest in the person and work, the life and death, of Christ. “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily...And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” (Col 1: 19; 2: 3, 9, 10)

In Christ we see God’s ways. He alone worked righteousness, rejoicing in God’s ways in perfection. But he did it for all his people. Christ is God’s holiness and righteousness for his people, God’s wisdom and redemption for his people. Christ is God’s grace, love and longsuffering toward his people. Christ is God’s justice and wrath poured out on his people in our substitute. Christ is God’s justification and forgiveness of his people in Christ and for Christ’s sake. When we are born of God we behold Christ and we know God’s ways

and we remember God's ways by knowing and remembering Christ. Then God meets us, in communion in Christ.

1 John 5:20: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Now, look at the first part of verse 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." Those who remember God's ways in Christ—rejoice and work righteousness. The love of Christ for us fills our hearts with rejoicing over him—believers rejoice in Christ. Therefore, for Christ sake, constrained by his love and his grace, the believer's chief desire and motive is to work that which God says is right.

And God delights in those who rejoice in his ways in Christ, who are constrained by his love alone to honor him in this world. So God meets him—the believer—who by God's grace, by God's work in the heart, is born of God, who remembers Christ, who rejoices in Christ and who does all to honor Christ in the earth—God meets him and works this then God continues to meet him and have communion with the believer in Christ.

But here is the problem—**Isaiah 64: 5...behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those** [in our sinful ways] **is continuance, and** [by God's grace alone] **we shall be saved. 6: But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7: And *there* is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee:** [here is why we are helpless] **for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us,** [here is why God has done so. It is because of our sins, alone] **because of our iniquities.**

The point here is that they sinned against God. So God hid his face. Yet, rather than turn to God, without God's presence, we go on further into sin. Look back to Isaiah 57.

Isaiah 57: 11: And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid *it* to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? 12: I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee. 13: When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away;

Our text says, "our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Though God chastens us, if we do not have God's face shining upon us and working in us, we will only go further into our sins.

Isaiah 57: 17: For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth,

God was wroth and smote us for our sins, what was the result of not having God's presence to turn us. Here is what God says we did.

Isaiah 57: 17...and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

Here is amazing grace! God says,

Isaiah 57: 18: I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

God shall save his people, despite our sin and rebellion against him, but God works this way to teach his people this important lesson.

Isaiah 57: 19: I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that* is far off, and to *him that* is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

So put all this together and we see our problem: God meets the believer who remembers Christ, rejoices and works righteousness. But we only do so by God's presence working in our hearts. Apart from God's face, we will only continue in our sins; we will not stir ourselves up to call upon him. God will save all his elect people, but God will bring us to confess with Isaiah, "We are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And *there* is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."

Isaiah was saying this about the whole political nation because the Mosaic covenant promised national blessings if the nation obeyed God. It was purely a legal covenant. God made no such covenant with our nation today. But our nation today is obviously under the judgment of God as a nation like Israel was. More importantly, we say this of us—all God's elect—we have sinned. So our prayer is Isaiah's prayer, "Lord, come down, we need your presence to turn us, to make us remember thy ways in Christ, to rejoice our hearts, to constrain us to work righteousness, that we might have communion with you."

Psalm 80:3: Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

OUR ONE REMEDY

When God brings his child to confess our sins, God brings us to submit to God our Father because he is our only remedy—**Isaiah 64: 8: But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.**

We sing it

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

But we need to ask God from the heart as Isaiah did. We are not the Father—God is our Father. We are not the potter—God is the potter; we are the clay. We are not the work of our own hand—we are the work of God's hand.

When God brought Isaiah to submit to him, then Isaiah also asked mercy from God our Remedy, not only for himself but for all God's elect—**Isaiah 64: 9: Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.**

God will not be angry very sore with his people because God poured out his fury on Christ in our place—but God will make us ask it of God. Neither will God remember our iniquity forever because Christ put away all our sins and washed us in his blood—but God will bring us to ask it of God.

Isaiah saw the state of God's physical temple; we see the state of God's spiritual temple—**Isaiah 64: 10: Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11: Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.**

Today, there are a few churches here and there—a remnant of God's elect people worshipping him in truth. Yet, many assemblies that once preached the gospel and believed on Christ in spirit and in truth are now into the third and fourth generation—the gospel has been long since rooted out by free will, works religion. We need a revival in our day that only God can work.

You hear of these so-called one-day revivals in local conferences. Those are not true revivals. We see a lot of man-made revivals but not of God.

Only God can revive his church. When he does he does it for a season—it is movement God creates like in the days of the reformation, like in the days of the great awakening in this country, like in 1950's in this country with Brother Rolph Barnard and Henry Mahan.

Knowing he needed God to work revival, Isaiah asked in his day and we ask in our day—**Isaiah 64: 12: Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?**

When God has brought us to pray for these things from God alone then God has manifest that he will not refrain for these things because only God can bring us to cry for mercy from God.

Amen.