



• A prayer for the gospel to arrive, or for revival

Isaiah 63:7–64:12 must qualify as one of the great prayers of the Bible. It is a prayer for the gospel to arrive. In our days it is rightly used as a model in praying for revival. a For what is 'revival' but the gospel rising to influence and prominence?

1. True prayer always begins with God

1. **True prayer always begins with God.** See how Isaiah begins.

7I will tell of the never-failing mercies of Yahweh, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all Yahweh has done for us – yes, the abundant goodness towards the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many mercies.

• Start with worship

Before Isaiah starts requesting anything he bows in worship before the goodness of God. This is always the way we should pray. Our spirit must be right before we ask for anything!

2. It is good to meditate upon the way God saved us and has no plans to abandon us

2. **It is good to meditate upon the way God saved us and has no plans to abandon us.** Why should God answer our prayers at all? One reason is: God is incredibly faithful to his own people.

8He said, 'Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me'; and so he became their Saviour.

• God is incredibly faithful to His people

Isaiah is actually thinking of the time when Israel was delivered from Egypt – the exodus, as we call it. God looked at the people in their distress. He hoped that they would live up to what he was about to do for them, by showing faithfulness to him (a hope that was not realized immediately!). He deliberately chose to save them.

• He chose to save them from exile in Egypt

9In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

• He sent the 'angel of His presence'

God saved his people by the blood of the lamb, and sent the 'angel of his presence' to be with them. It was 'the angel of Yahweh' who first appeared to Moses¹. The angel represented God himself. God was revealing himself, although the actual 'stuff' which was appearing was angelic. 'He makes his angels into winds; he makes his servants into flames of fire'². Often the glory of God would appear, represented by an angel. Later the angel of Yahweh appeared in a cloud protecting the people from Pharaoh³. Later still God said, 'My angel will go before you'⁴.

¹ Exodus 3:2a

² Hebrews 1:7

³ Exodus 14:19

⁴ 32:34a

• God's actions demonstrate His love for us

It is here that we have the only place where the noun 'love' appears in Isaiah (but see 43:4; 61:8 where the verb is used). God's love is seen in the trouble he takes to redeem his people, the way he prevents us from falling too severely, the way he carries us when we are too weak to walk. As Isaiah prays he knows that God has always been like this. God has a consistent and unchanging record of love towards his people.

• God had to be severe at times because of the people's ingratitude

But the people were so ungrateful, and God had at times to deal with them severely.

10But they for their part rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.

*So he turned and became their enemy;
he himself fought against them.*

• His anger didn't last for ever

However, his anger did not last for ever.

*¹¹Then he remembered the days of old.
He remembered Moses! He remembered his people!*

• God always remembers His commitment to you

God would remind himself that he had chosen these people and committed himself to them. There was no way he could abandon them. If you have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb God will not leave you. He **cannot** leave you. You may at times forget the commitment you made to him. He always remembers the commitment he made to you.

3. It is our confidence in God's faithfulness that leads us to be bold in prayer

3. It is our confidence in God's faithfulness that leads us to be bold in prayer. Because God has shown so much love to Israel, Isaiah is ready to pray boldly for God to send the salvation he promises. He asks God to do again what he has done before.

*Where is he who brought them up out of the sea,
with the shepherds of his flock?
Where is he who set
his Holy Spirit among them?*

• Isaiah asks God to give them His Holy Spirit again

He gave them his Holy Spirit before¹¹. Can he not give them his Holy Spirit again? He rescued them and their shepherds before. Can he not rescue them and their shepherds again?

63:10

*¹²Where is he who made his beautiful arm
to be at work at Moses' right hand,
who divided the waters before them,
to make for himself an everlasting name,
¹³who led them through the depths?
Like a horse in open country,
they did not stumble;
¹⁴like cattle that go down to the plain,
they were given rest by the Spirit of Yahweh.
This is how you guided your people
to make for yourself a glorious name.*

• Blessings God gave them before – power, rescuings, steadiness, rest, guidance and the honouring of God's Name

These are the blessings God gave them before: power, dramatic rescuings, steadiness, rest, guidance, the honouring of God's name. Can God not do again what he has done before? This is how we are to pray for revival! When God remembers his people, his people remember him, and they begin to pray as they have never prayed before.

• We need to pray as Isaiah taught us to pray

Do we not need such praying today? The Christian faith is spreading powerfully all over the world, and yet the type of 'Christianity' we are seeing is often so weak, so devoid of the Bible, so lacking in any sense of our utter dependence upon God. Sometimes it is almost as money-obsessed as the world, and it uses the world's techniques! Do we not need to pray as Isaiah taught us to pray? We begin with God himself and his goodness. We recall what God has done for us in days gone by. We realize that we cannot by our own cleverness bring down the authentic power of God – although it is easy to pretend! And we pray as we have never prayed before: 'Where is he who made his beautiful arm to be at work . . . to make for himself an everlasting name?'

Note

a. See the masterly expositions along these lines in D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (Marshall Pickering, 1986), chs. 20–24.

Dr Michael Eaton (1942-2017) was highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. Born in the UK, he lived for many years in Kenya where he became a citizen. He was one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship in Nairobi. His *Preaching through the Bible* books are highly popular worldwide, written in a clear and down-to-earth style but underpinned by rigorous scholarship. Some of these books have been reformatted as individual sheets for personal and group study and preaching. The New Testament volumes have been re-edited and combined in the Branch Commentary. The Old Testament, including previously unpublished material will follow. More details: www.slices.org.uk.