



• How does Isaiah pray?

We continue looking at the way in which Isaiah invites us to pray for the coming of salvation. Today we might call it 'praying for revival'. There are more ingredients in his praying at this point.

1. He pleads for mercy

1. He pleads for mercy.

*<sup>15</sup>Look down from heaven and see.  
Look down from your holy and beautiful house.  
Where are your zeal and your might?  
Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us.*

• God seems to have abandoned His people

God seems to have abandoned his people. The temple is in ruins – it had not happened in Isaiah's own time but he knows it will happen. He pleads for God to look down upon them in mercy.

*<sup>16</sup>But you are our Father,  
though Abraham does not acknowledge us  
or Israel recognize us;  
you, O Yahweh, are our Father,  
our Redeemer from of old is your name.*

• But they realize they still have a relationship with God

Although the people are so defeated, yet they realize they still have a relationship with God. If no one else recognizes them, God must acknowledge his own children.

2. He confesses their need

2. He confesses their need.

*<sup>17</sup>Why, O Yahweh, do you make us wander from your ways  
and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?*

• God can punish us by letting us get hard

Sometimes we realize that we have wandered from God and are hard towards him. But then we realize that it is God who has handed us over to this hardness! God can punish us by letting us get hard – until we realize how much we need his grace to retain a soft heart towards him. If our heart is hard, only God's return can bring about any change.

*Return for the sake of your servants  
the tribes that are your inheritance.  
<sup>18</sup>For a little while your people possessed your sanctuary,  
and our enemies are to trample down your sanctuary.  
<sup>19</sup>For a long time we have been as those over whom  
you did not rule,  
over whom your name was not called.*

• God and His people are meant to be close

• The people must confess their great need

God and his people are meant to be close. The people are meant to be an inheritance for God, a people owned by God whom he enjoys. But Isaiah knows the day will come when much of this will be lost. The Land will be devastated. The people – in Isaiah's preview – have become almost the same as pagans. They must pray, confessing their great need.

3. He pleads with fervency and emotion

3. He pleads with fervency and emotion. There is urgency and emotional pleading in this prayer. God help us if we pray coldly and without feeling!

*<sup>1</sup>Oh that you had rent the heavens and that you would  
come down,  
that the mountains might tremble at your presence*

• God help us if we pray coldly and without feeling!

<sup>2</sup> - as when fire has set twigs ablaze  
and as when fire causes water to boil —  
to make your name known to your enemies  
and cause the nations to quake before you  
<sup>3</sup>while you do awesome things that we did not expect.  
Come down,  
that the mountains might tremble at your presence.

• Isaiah wants the presence of God so much!

Isaiah wants the presence of God so much! He wants God to descend so as to become near. He wants mountains (the symbol of that which cannot be moved) to tremble. He wants fire to burn and water to boil. These are his ways of picturing the powerful presence of God in his own life and among the nations.

4. He recognizes they are experiencing God's anger

4. He recognizes they are experiencing God's anger.

<sup>4</sup>Since ancient times no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

<sup>5</sup>You meet with the one who is rejoicing and  
doing righteousness,  
those who remember you in your ways.  
Behold, you were angry and we sinned.  
We have been in our sins for a long time,  
and shall we now be saved?

• They have no other God to turn to – if He does not act, their situation is desperate

They have no other God to turn to. But he requires prayerful patience<sup>1</sup>. He requires righteousness<sup>2</sup>. But now in his anger God has handed his people over to their own sins (note the precise thought of 64:5c, which is like 63:17a–b). If God does not act, their situation is desperate<sup>3</sup>.

1 64:4  
2 64:5a–b  
3 64:5d–e

• There is uncleanness, dryness and instability

There is uncleanness and dryness and instability.

<sup>6</sup>All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;  
we all shrivel up like a leaf,  
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

• There is prayerlessness

There is prayerlessness.

<sup>7</sup>No one calls on your name  
or strives to lay hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us  
and made us waste away because of our iniquities.

• Loss of God's presence – spiritual weakness

God's presence has been lost. The people are collapsing in spiritual weakness.

5. He pleads again for mercy and forgiveness

5. He pleads again for mercy and forgiveness.

<sup>8</sup>But now, O Yahweh, you are our Father.  
We are the clay, you are the potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
<sup>9</sup>Do not let your full anger come upon us, O Yahweh;  
do not remember our sins for ever.  
Behold, please look upon us,  
for we are all your people.

6. He puts to God the desperate situation which God alone can change

6. He puts to God the desperate situation which God alone can change.

<sup>10</sup>Your sacred cities have become a desert;  
even Zion is a desert, Jerusalem a desolation.  
<sup>11</sup>Our holy and beautiful house,

*where our fathers praised you,  
has been burned with fire,  
and all that we treasured lies in ruins.*

• **What can they do but pray?**

In prophetic preview Isaiah is in the times of the exile. What will they be able to do at such a time except pray?

*<sup>12</sup>In view of all this, O Yahweh, will you hold yourself back?  
Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?*

• **The situation may be desperate, but we can ask God to come back to us**

Isaiah's prayer ends at this point. When our situation is desperate and we have brought the calamities upon ourselves by our own sinfulness, we can do nothing except present it to God and ask for his mercy. Will God punish us beyond measure? Surely not. The situation may be desperate but we can ask him to come back to us.