

The remedy for wrath

Reading Isaiah 64

- Imagine the scene
 - God is above,
- Perfect - not a hint of wrongdoing or unrighteousness -
 - His righteousness is as far from wrongdoing as east from west or light from darkness
 - Everything He does is just
- He is Pure - not a hint of corruption, uncleanness, or pollution.
 - There is no brightness in our world that could compare.
 - He is Holy - He stands against, and apart from all iniquity and sin.
 - He is not just sad at sin, but angry at it.
 - Righteously angry - we call it wrath.
- But down on earth
 - Mankind is corrupt, unholy, and unrighteous from the beginning of the world.
 - They suppress the truth.
 - Even though they knew God in themselves, and from the things that God made.
 - So they have no excuse for their sin.
 - Instead of worshipping their Creator, or being thankful, they became dark and imagined vain things to idolise.
 - They worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.
 - They thought they were wise, but they were really fools.
 - So God let them go their own way to become unclean, and defiled.
 - To believe lies.
 - Their mind became twisted, to desire wicked things,
 - becoming covetous, full of envy, hatefulness, pride, and disobedience to those above them.
 - They broke promises, lied, committed sexual sin, schemed, were selfish, without understanding, without natural affection or kindness.
 - And even though they knew the judgement of God, that those who are like this deserve death, they not only carried on, but approved of others who do so.
- To a greater or lesser extent, this has been, and is, all of us with God.
 - We are certainly not perfect - and heaven is a place of perfection.
 - There's only one other future, unless God saves us, and it is a place of eternal suffering.
 - A place for debtors who can never pay, so never get released.
- The prophet Isaiah, speaking the words of the holy God, cries out for what should be done about all this.
- Imagine a great tear in the division between the spiritual and the physical. -
 - Between heaven and earth.
- Like when a King tears his robes out of displeasure.
 - Then God comes down in fury, touching the great things of the world like touching the tops of the greatest mountains.
 - Like on Mount Sinai.
 - His holiness burns against sin, so the mountains immediately erupt into volcanos, and the rock turns into lava flowing down to the wicked nations of men, who are like the churning seas.

- Immediately they feel the burning heat of His displeasure, and holy wrath in their consciences like the seas boiling as the molten rock hits the waters.

- Lets read

Isaiah 64

1. Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest 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.

- Men have not only been sinners from the beginning, but have not heard, seen, or understood, about God by themselves.
- It is only because God Himself works in their minds and hearts to show many of them what He has prepared for all those who trust, and wait for Him, instead of running after the world.

- Lets read again:

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.

- In those that meet God in faith like this, God works righteousness,
 - and they rejoice, and look into the Scriptures for the way to live.
 - They remember to go to God's house, to pray, to walk in His ways.
 - In this there is hope

- It reads:

5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways:

- God was full of righteous anger, but even so, He continues to hold out His hand in mercy.
- He continues to proclaim the Gospel to people week by week, waiting for them to submit, to admit their foolishness, sin and guilt.
- To repent, and believe.
- And if they do, they will surely be saved.

- We read it here:

behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those (we can read- "despite this, there") is continuance (a continued offer of mercy), and we shall be saved. (A promise, if we call upon God for salvation)

- Men think they are clean.
- They wash the outside, but inside they become more polluted, impure, and corrupt, by the day.
- They continue to watch more extreme things, more unclean entertainment, learning to love and depend upon them.
- More addicted to sin, more prone to believe lies.
- So their actions make their spiritual garments dirty as time goes on.

- See, it says it:

6. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;

- Instead of flourishing, and all our natural God given abilities being used to bear fruit for Him, we try to use them for our own glory, and indulgences.
- But time takes its toll, and we fade.
- All the things we take pleasure in drifts out of reach, and we are taken away by the whirlwind of the consequences of sin.
- All the things people glory in - their looks and physical abilities fade, and they have nothing to live for.
- Pleasures lose their taste, life loses its colour, and we lose any potential we had to be the people God designed us to be.
- We are like a grape vine, that has leaves that wither, and can never produce grapes as it's supposed to do.
- I have an old cherry tree in my garden.
 - It's dying. It produces beautiful blossom every year, but no fruit.
 - Now some of its branches have no leaves anymore.
- v6 b says

and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

- Without God's work no-one would ever pray to Him, or start to seek Him, or reach out for Him.
- In our sin, and unbelief, God opposes us, and refuses to reveal Himself to us.
- He hides, as it were, because of our attitude and actions.
- He hides Himself from our understanding, and allows us to decay, and we dig our own grave, as it were!
- Look again:

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.

- But if we find God, through Christ, God will be like a good Father to us.
- He will mould us like clay, working us into the people we have potential to be.
- Vs 8:

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.

- If we pray a simple, sincere prayer, acknowledging our desolation, asking for salvation, see what God will answer.
- It's here:

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

- Even in the uk we used to be a country that experienced great revivals in Christianity. - “our fathers praised thee” as it were.
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- The Covenanters in Scotland - where it was said that the whole land was converted even to a man.
- The Great Awakening with great preachers preaching the Gospel to thousands outdoors, spreading to America, saving multitudes, and improving society greatly.

- Spurgeon, the pastor of this Church, in Victorian England remonstrating with sinners, young and old, who thronged this place, anxious to hear the way of salvation.
- But the majority of the young can't be bothered to attend a Gospel service today in our culture.
- Why?
- Well, look what happened in the 1950's - the idea of the teenager was born.
 - Before this, you were either a child, or a man.
 - People, instead of growing up into young men, just grew into big children.
- In the 60's they decided to throw away pure standards in a sexual revolution, counter culture, and a permissive society that allows anything except teaching restraint and Godliness.
- In the 70's, 80's it declined into corruption and excess,
- In the 90's addiction, pollution and uncleanness,
- 2000's social media and the internet- the world has reduced life down to the size of a mobile screen, and contained the young in a virtual prison in their heads.
 - Then it has pumped all the poison, and false realities online and 'mainlined' it into their minds.
 - Your generation is the result of an unlimited diet of the world.
- Is it not time for a return?
 - You can be the revival generation.
 - Our culture has long forgotten God and we are consumed like fire
 - no simple pleasures, or wholesome fun can be easily enjoyed.
 - They can't enjoy a simple walk, or a conversation, because they can't feel, unless they are holed up in a dark room with bright screens, loud explosions, flashes, music, rhythm, show, and overstimulation.
 - Like shining a light directly into your eyes, you can't see clearly and the colours are bleached out, burned away.
 - So when they emerge the world seems grey, and they can't enjoy normal life.
 - It's all burned out.
- As it says in vs 11 - The house of society, of the soul, that God made beautiful - **is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.**
- So the question hangs on the air to end the chapter.
 - Will God be merciful to us?

12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

- I don't know
- I don't know about you.
- I don't know your hearts.
- Only you do, and God.
 - But I do know God promises to save, and bless those who truly call upon His Name.
 - And God ALWAYS keeps His promises,
 - He never breaks His word like we do.
 - Don't trust in yourself, trust in Him.
 - We let ourselves down, but God will never let us down.
 - Where we will fail, He will forgive.
 - This is what we need.

- It is common for non believers to think Christians don't understand something that the non believer does.
 - But think more carefully;
 - Is it not that Christians are likely to understand something that non believers don't?
 - After all, Christians weren't always Christians.
 - They were non-believers once as well.
 - So who has seen both sides - non belief and belief? - Christians have.
 - Non Christians only know one side.
 - So it is likely they are the ignorant ones - believing a lie.
 - Thinking they have secret pleasures, or are better than others.
- Don't let Satan fill you with such false confidence that keeps you from the truth that will set you free.
- Such thinking is haughty, and proud.
 - It is like people in the next chapter
 - We'll take a quick look at the negative, but end on a positive.

Isaiah 65:3-10

- These are- *A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face;...Which remain among the graves,... Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou*
- They think they are holier than God! But they are amongst the corrupt - amongst the graves!
- Such mad thinking!
- But I've heard people proudly criticise His Word like they know better, and are more just!.
- It goes on:

These are a smoke in my nose,

a fire that burneth all the day.

Behold, it is written before me:

I will not keep silence, but will recompense,

even recompense into their bosom,

...Thus saith the LORD,

[But] As the new wine is found in the cluster,

and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it:

so will I do for my servants' sakes, (who intercede in prayer for others)

that I may not destroy them all.

...for my people that have sought me.

- Be those people. God's people.
 - Seek Him like that, and you will escape the wrath, and be given Christ's righteous life to clothe you, and His death to shield you from that lava flowing down.
 - You see, He takes the wrath for you.
- There was a volcano called Mount St Helens
 - And it was showing signs it was going to erupt.
 - The warnings went out, and all the people living on, or nearby evacuated.
 - But there was a certain man who had lived on the side of the mountain a very long time, who refused to leave his house - saying everything would be fine, nothing bad had happened to him yet.
 - So those warning him couldn't convince him to leave.
 - The Mount eventually exploded with so much force that half the mountain side collapsed and came down.
 - The man was never seen again.
- That's like the warning to flee the wrath to come.
 - But we can't just leave this life like leaving the mountain.

- We need the 'house' of our soul to be shielded.
- Imagine an impregnable dome all around us as protection.
- The heat and lava outside, but it cannot come near us, because the impregnable dome takes it all.
- That's Christ for us if we ask Him to be our saviour, our atonement cover, our propitiation.

Lets pray.