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Sermon Notes

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God's Passionate Response to Sin Draws Forth Intercession (Part 2)

Isaiah 63-64

I. An Urgent Call for Intercessors

A. God Calls on Us to Call on Him

Isaiah 62:6-7 I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, ⁷ and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

B. The Encroaching Danger Could Not Be More Extreme... the wrath of God on sinners

C. These Two Chapters are a Wake-Up Call first to the Church... then through the Church to the world

D. These Two Chapters Teach us HOW to Pray in Light of God's Coming Wrath

II. The Lord's Terrifying Day of Vengeance on His Enemies (63:1-6)

A. This Passage Pictures God as a Mighty Warrior Striding Victoriously from a Bloody Battlefield

Isaiah 63:1-4 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." ² Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ³ "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.

B. The "Year of the Lord's Favor" Comes to an End... and the "Day of Vengeance" Comes at Last

C. Christ is Unashamed of His Actions in Judgment

D. Christ ALONE Can Work Salvation... AND Vengeance

Isaiah 63:3-6 "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. ⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. ⁶ I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

III. Persistent Intercession and Lamentation by God's Watchman (63:7-64:12)

A. The Intercessor Recounts the Lord's History of Love (63:7-9)

Isaiah 63:7-9 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us-- yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. ⁸ He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Savior. ⁹ In 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.

B. The Intercessor Confesses Sin (63:10)

BUT tragically, Israel's history was one of consistent rebellion against the grace of God.

Isaiah 63:10 Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.

Israel's rebellion against God, from the desert after the Red Sea crossing, through the history under Joshua, the Judges, and the Kings, was deeply grievous to God. The Lord mourns over the sins of his people, just as he suffered because of their afflictions in Egypt. Because of Israel's rebellion, God became their enemy and fought them. All of the punishments the Lord has ever meted out in Israel's history was because of the truths recounted in verse 10.

So... in this chapter, last week we saw the powerful striding of the Lord in wrath after slaughtering his enemies, represented by Edom... we saw how this wrath is RIGHTEOUS and HOLY, and that it is terrifying slaughter. We also saw how no one but Christ could address God's wrath at the cross,

and no one but Christ will have the right to pour out God's final wrath at his Second Coming... he TROD THE WINEPRESS ALONE.

We saw the attitudes and words of a WATCHMAN on the walls of Jerusalem, interceding for the people and for the nations in light of this coming wrath. We have begun to see how to GIVE OURSELVES NO REST AND GIVE GOD NO REST in prayer... NOW, we'll finish the lessons of these two chapters...

C. The Intercessor Prays Based on the Lord's History (63:11-16)

Isaiah 63:11-14 Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, ¹² who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, ¹³ who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. ¹⁴ Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.

1. The foundation of this prayer is God's astonishing track record of marvelous deeds on behalf of his people

The Intercessor is following God's own command in Isaiah 62:7-8 to remind God of his past actions and to give him no rest until he saves his people.

2. The "remembering" of verse 11 is unclear... either God remembered, or the people remembered
 - a. If it is God remembering the days of old, it's as if God's wrath in verse 10 had covered his mind powerfully... then suddenly, he remembered the days of old, when he delivered Israel through Moses

Isaiah 63:10-11 they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. ¹¹ Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people.

- b. Either way, it doesn't matter... this is the very way that Moses prayed for God not to destroy Israel at Mt. Sinai

Exodus 32:11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

Exodus 32:13-14 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars

in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" ¹⁴ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

c. And again, when Israel rebelled at the Jordan River, when the ten spies returned from the Promised Land

Numbers 14:11-19 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? ¹² I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." ¹³ ¶ But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, ¹⁴ and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, ¹⁶ 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' ¹⁷ And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, ¹⁸ 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' ¹⁹ Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now."

d. And many Psalms do the same thing: reminding God of his mighty acts in the past

e. Perhaps the most poignant parallel is found in Habakkuk:

Habakkuk 3:2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

3. The issue here is WHY DON'T WE SEE THAT MIGHTY GOD NOW?

a. God is immortal... his power is undiminished

Isaiah 59:1 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

b. If that is so, where is his great power now, when we need him again?

- i. The context seems to be the Babylonian exile... how the Lord just kept his mighty hand hidden within his cloak and never pulled it out

Psalm 74:1-7 Why have you rejected us forever, O God? Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture? ² Remember the people you purchased of old, the tribe of your inheritance, whom you redeemed-- Mount Zion, where you dwelt. ³ Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins, all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary. ⁴ Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs. ⁵ They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees. ⁶ They smashed all the carved paneling with their axes and hatchets. ⁷ They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.

Psalm 74:11-13 Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them! ¹² But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth. ¹³ It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.

- ii. The intercessor prays to the God who did the Red Sea crossing... a mighty God who can split the sea to the depths and save his people any time he chooses
- iii. He prays saying WHERE IS THE GOD OF THAT MIGHTY WORK?

Isaiah 63:11-13 Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, ¹² who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, ¹³ who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.

- 4. Here is the request:

Isaiah 63:15 Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me.

- 5. The intercessor pleads based on God's unshakeable covenant commitment:

Isaiah 63:16 For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

- a. Even though Israel's sins are so great that Abraham himself might disavow all knowledge of them, still he knows God will never leave them or forsake them

b. Just as he said earlier:

Isaiah 49:14-16 *Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."
¹⁵ "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! ¹⁶ See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands*

This is the basis of our prayers as Christians as well... God, our heavenly Father, you made an unbreakable covenant with us and sealed it in the blood of your Son, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. You have done the infinitely immeasurably difficult work of atoning for our sins and justifying us in your holy sight... now do the lesser thing of completing our salvation... enable us to finish this dangerous journey through this world of sin:

Romans 5:9-10 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

D. The Intercessor Laments Over the Lord's Disciplines (63:17-19)

Isaiah 63:17-19 *O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. ¹⁸ Your holy people held possession for a little while; our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary. ¹⁹ We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name*

1. He begins by lamenting the very sinfulness and wickedness that has led to all this agony and distress
2. They have WANDERED from God's ways into sin; they have HARDENED their hearts against the Holy Spirit... they don't fear God
3. What's really amazing here is that the Intercessor seems to be finding ultimate responsibility for this in GOD HIMSELF... why do you MAKE US WANDER? Why do you HARDEN OUR HEARTS?

Now this passage had not yet been written in Isaiah's day, but it was true then as it is now:

James 1:13-15 *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

4. God never makes people sin... our sins are our fault; BUT Isaiah knows that our hearts are naturally so wicked that unless God intervenes by his sovereign grace, we will inevitably wander from the paths of righteousness and have harder and harder hearts
5. The result of this grievous wandering and hardness of heart for the Jews was the destruction of Jerusalem, including the Temple... it was as if the Jews were nothing special, as if God had never dwelt there in a cloud of radiant, brilliant glory
6. The prayer here seems especially focused on the restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land after the Exile to Babylon:

Isaiah 63:17-18 Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance. ¹⁸ For a little while your people possessed your holy place, but now our enemies have trampled down your sanctuary.

Isaiah the prophet, writing these words more than a century before the Babylonians would destroy the temple writes from the prophetic perspective of the event having already happened, and the people already taken into exile. He is giving future Intercessors the words to say at that time, perhaps a man like Daniel who would pray confessing Israel's sin and pleading with God for her restoration (see Daniel 9). So also these passionate concepts should be employed by Christians in every generation who are lamenting their sins and the disciplines that their righteous Father has lovingly laid on them as a result.

Now as we turn to Isaiah 64, the spirit of intercession reaches an even higher level

E. The Intercessor Pleads for God to Descend (64:1-4)

Isaiah 64:1 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down...

1. Oh if only you would RIP OPEN the heavens and come down, O Lord!!
2. We know that God sits enthroned on a lofty throne in the highest heavens, but we are pleading that God would rip open the barrier between us and him and descend in terrifying power to deliver us from our enemies
3. Concept... the circles of the heavens... the first heaven is the sky, the second heaven is outer space, but the third heaven is the spiritual realm where God dwells
4. Paul speaks of this

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know-- God knows. ³ And I know that this man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- ⁴ was caught up to paradise.

5. John travelled through it

Revelation 4:1-2 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

6. There is around us at all times a barrier separating the visible physical world from the spiritual world in which God is openly glorious and ruling on his throne
7. The Intercessor wants God to RIP IT OPEN and come down
8. He is asking for a mighty warrior, the wrath-filled God to descend and destroy Israel's enemies... to make the mountains shake and the waters of the sea to boil:

Isaiah 64:1-3 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! ² As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! ³ For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.

The image is overpowering... a God who can shake the earth and make mountains melt like wax before his awesome power... we love the idea of God intervening and protecting us like this... stepping in and saving the day!!

All over the world, Christians are persecuted and suffering greatly... The worst persecuting nation on earth is North Korea, from the godless Communist government... second is Iraq, from Islamic extremists; third is Eritrea, along with Sudan and Somalia; also Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.... in many places, Christians CRY OUT and yearn for God to rend the heavens and come down to rescue them!!

Perhaps the most perplexing thing to a Bible-believing Christian who sees God's people suffering all over the world is, "Why, O Lord, if you are omnipotent and if you tenderly love your children, why do you seemingly do so little to rescue them from their vicious enemies?"

Amazingly, this dramatic plea is fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ, in both his first and second Advents. At the baptism of Jesus, the heavens were torn open (Mark 1:10),

Mark 1:10-11 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

but amazingly, instead of a God of terror throwing lightning bolts to ravage the wicked of the earth, a single dove descended peacefully and landed on Jesus, the Lamb of God! What an awesome answer to Isaiah 64:1! God did tear the heavens open, but instead of wrath for sin, the world received a dove-like Spirit and a lamb-like Savior who would bear God's righteous wrath and save his repentant children from their sins.

The heavens were torn open again when the martyr Stephen was being stoned to death by a vicious group of unbelieving Jews. But instead of a wrath-filled God Stephen saw Jesus standing to receive him into heaven,

Acts 7:55-56 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Filled with his dove-like Spirit, Stephen's dying words were, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." (Acts 7:56–60) Since one of God's elect, Saul of Tarsus, was there giving approval to his death, Stephen's prayer was answered in Paul's conversion.

9. The desire for God to rip open the heavens and come down is GOOD... but we need to understand his tender mercies and saving purposes

The desire for God to rend the heavens and come down is right and good, as long as we recognize that, were it not for the blood of Jesus, we would be swept away in the terrifying wrath that would accompany such a visitation. We would be the brushwood that would be ignited, we would be the water that would boil. We would be God's enemies, and the nation that would tremble at God's presence. (vs. 2)

God's seeming reluctance to "tear the heavens open and come down" in terrifying judgment is completely explained by Peter:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10. We MUST pray for God to rip open the heavens and come down... but not in wrath to destroy but in tender mercy, to save the elect

the Intercessor *should* pray, indeed he *must* pray for God to tear open the heavens and come down in the power of his Holy Spirit to do more saving acts for the sake of his elect. This is a prayer for the sovereign intervention of God to do “awesome deeds that we did not expect.” (vs. 3) In light of the Great Commission, and Jesus’ commitment to build his church from the elect of the nations, this is a prayer for revival, for God to transform them from seething enemies to delightful children of God.

Many prayers for REVIVAL have used this verse, Isaiah 64:1, as a focal point!!

11. God’s awesome power celebrated

Isaiah 64:4-5 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. ⁵ You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.

We Christians believe in a God who INTERFERES with human event, who actively guides human history, who shapes people as a potter shapes the clay

We are not DEISTS who think God made the universe like a clock, wound it up, and lets it run... prayer is a plea, a cry for God to get involved in the distressing terrifying deeds of our day, to work his saving plan

F. The Intercessor Confesses Sin Again (64:5-7)

Isaiah 64:5 You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?

God actively answers prayer for the GODLY, for those who GLADLY DO RIGHT, the ones who delight to remember God’s ways

Psalms 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

1. The Intercessor knows that each one stands guilty in the sight of God... none of us is righteous enough to pray, for God to hear our prayers
2. So HOW THEN CAN WE BE SAVED??
3. The best thing he can do is confess his sins, and the sins of the people:

Isaiah 64:6-7 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. ⁷ 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 sins.

- a. These are some of the most famous verses in Isaiah concerning our sins
- b. We cannot stand before God on the basis of our works... for none of our works are perfect enough to survive God's careful scrutiny
- c. Even our best works are like a disgustingly defiled rag in God's sight
- d. Paul, so proud of his Jewish resume of piety before his conversion came to this opinion afterwards:

Philippians 3:7-9 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

It is a great grace for us to realize that, APART FROM CHRIST all of the best works we could ever present to God would be seen this way

Why? Because works done by unconverted people are never done for the glory of God by the power of the Spirit, completely free from human boasting... so they are repulsive to God

BUT what about works done by Christians? Is this referring to that? Obviously home base for this section is the intercession done by a godly man or woman (like Isaiah or Daniel) for the establishment of Jerusalem... to make it radiant and glorious, the praise of all the earth. For us as Christians, it is for the building of the New Jerusalem... we must acknowledge that, even now, as Christians, our best works are imperfect... done from mixed motives, done partially from our own strength, needing much grace from God to be accepted as "good" works

If the Intercessor were to stand before God on his own merits, confidently asserting his own righteousness as the basis of his access to God for prayer, he would be swept away. All of God's people on earth "wither like a leaf" and our "iniquities carry us away like the wind." (vs. 6) That is why Jesus Christ, our Mediator, must ultimately be the Intercessor whose prayer alone God the Father will answer. For his righteous acts are perfect in God's sight. And all of us who would intercede for God's purpose on earth find the cleansing of our hearts and our works in the blood of the cross. Then, in Jesus' name alone, and by faith in Christ alone, can we fulfill the role of Intercessor. Apart from the work of the Spirit, none of us intercedes, none of us strives to take hold of God. Apart from the work of

the Redeemer, God would most certainly hide his face from the most righteous Intercessor we would choose from our number.

AND these words represent the true confession of sin of the people by Daniel:

Daniel 9:5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

Daniel 9:8 O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you.

Daniel 9:11-13 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. "Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. ¹² You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³ Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.

e. In Redemptive History, Isaiah 64 is giving Daniel the right words and prayers to pray for such a sinful nation, that God would move in history and rebuild the destroyed city of Jerusalem

f. For us Christians, it's more to pray with deep humility about the sins of the church... that we have so often failed to do what God has called us to do, and that we have committed sins that he has forbidden

the faithful prayer warriors among the church must intercede for God's elect with humility and total reliance on the finished work of Christ, whose body has become for us a "new and living way through the curtain" into the very presence of Almighty God. (Hebrews 10:20)

G. The Intercessor Pleads for God to Act (64:8-12)

Isaiah 64:8-12 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹ Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people. ¹⁰ Your sacred cities have become a desert; even Zion is a desert, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹ Our holy and glorious temple, where our fathers praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasured lies in ruins. ¹² After all this, O LORD, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?

1. Summary:

This paragraph completes the entire section, the ministry of the Intercessor on behalf of his people. The focus of the entire prayer has been, “O Lord, we, your sinful people, desperately need you to cover our sins and act on our behalf! Please, O Lord, tear open the heavens and come down to destroy our enemies, despite the fact that we deserve all the judgments you have wisely meted out to us! Please, O Lord, no longer be silent or restrain your affections for us. Act, O Lord!”

So the Intercessor turns again to God the Father (who has adopted us), to God the Potter (who has shaped us), to act on behalf of his sinful people. The Intercessor does not fail to confess sin, but asks God that he not be terribly angry or remember the sins of his people any longer. (vs. 9)

2. Two great images! Our God is the FATHER who has adopted us, and the POTTER and who has shaped us... we are the clay... we are ALL the work of His hand... he shapes us and molds us as he alone sees fit
3. This sovereign God is the shaper and molder of human history as well... therefore, it is right for us to PRAY to him, for he can shape every human heart on the face of the earth!
4. Amazing also that the Intercessor asks God to have a SELECTIVE MEMORY!
 - a. Earlier, he asked God to REMEMBER his mighty deeds in the past and his covenant with his people
 - b. Now, he asks God NOT TO REMEMBER their sins!

Isaiah 64:9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.

5. See also how powerfully Isaiah predicts the destruction of Jerusalem... speaking as if it had already happened, when it would not occur for another century:

Isaiah 64:10-12 Your sacred cities have become a desert; even Zion is a desert, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹ Our holy and glorious temple, where our fathers praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasured lies in ruins. ¹² After all this, O LORD, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?

Isaiah as the first Intercessor is writing from the supernaturally empowered vision of a prophet over a century before Nebuchadnezzar’s rage-filled troops would fulfill these words and burn Jerusalem and the temple with fire. Yet by the power of the Spirit, he is able to drop himself ahead in time into the moment in redemptive history when he could pray for the remnant to be restored to the Promised Land, to rebuild the rubble-filled

city of Jerusalem and reestablish a holy temple where his people can again praise God. So the Intercessor pleads with God to stop restraining himself, to stop being silent. Amazingly, this is the very Hebrew word used in Isaiah 62:1 in which Christ said "For Zion's sake I will *not be silent!*" In effect, the Intercessor is showing him his writing and urging him to keep his promise!

IV. Applications

1. From last week:

The first application of these chapters is to stand in awe and trembling at the wrath of God against his enemies. The image of a blood-soaked warrior striding in great power after the slaughter of Edom is terrifying when we realize that we all deserve to be included in the slaughter.

Furthermore, we must embrace that this is very much the purpose of the Second Coming of Christ, for he will come to "trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty." (Revelation 19:15) Scripture is not ashamed to declare this openly about God and about his Christ, and when he executes this slaughter, it will be done with perfect righteousness. So neither should we Christians now be ashamed of the wrath of God or the future trampling of the godless.

2. Warn people to come to Christ while there is time

2 Corinthians 6:2 "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

3. Intercede!!!

Isaiah 62:6-7 I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, ⁷ and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

We have seen a pattern of intercession for God to perfect Zion in holiness.

A Christian may well take up this challenge (although it is so overwhelming, given our weakness and desire for rest!), but may say, "Lord, I don't know what to pray for." Isaiah 63:7-64:12 gives a wonderful answer to that question. Pray like this! But pray from a New Covenant perspective, based on the finished work of Christ.

Pray

- 1) based on God's history of love toward his church, especially now in light of Christ's saving acts toward the church (63:7-9);
- 2) pray with genuine and humble confession of sin, that our sins have grieved the Holy Spirit (63:10);
- 3) pray based on Christ's resurrection from the dead as the fulfillment of the pattern of the Red Sea crossing (63:11-16);
- 4) pray with a deep lament for our wandering ways and our hardened hearts, knowing that only in the New Covenant and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit can the heart of stone be removed and the heart of flesh given (63:17-19);
- 5) pray for God to tear open the heavens and come down—in gentle, saving love toward his elect now (revival!), and in wrath toward his enemies at the Second Coming (64:1-5a);
- 6) acknowledge that even our best acts would be unclean apart from the blood of Christ, and that we are pathetically weak in intercession (64:5b-7);
- 7) and ask God to *move out powerfully* on behalf of his elect people, saving the unconverted, and transforming the converted from often sinful to increasingly holy people. (64:8-12)