

Appealing to God for salvation

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] Well, good morning everybody. Welcome to this meeting at Calvary Evangelical Church, being recorded in advance for the meeting on the 3rd May.

! My name is Philip Wells, I work for the church as part of the eldership team. And I'm leading this morning on the subject of prayer to God for salvation.

As you can see from the notice by my head this evening, my fellow Elder Ben Alltimes is leading us in a consideration of Matthew 21.

And prayer meeting as usual, and no doubt Steve Ellicott will be sending out the invitations and updates in the usual way, or the way that we've got used to by now.

So, I'm going to lead us off today, and these are the things that we're going to be doing. We're going to be thinking about the steadfast love of the Lord, that's a very important ingredient in what we're thinking about today.

[1 : 13] We've got songs and a Bible reading, which is the same Bible reading actually that Julia kindly did for us last week. And I'm going to be talking about this appeal to God for salvation.

So, last week was, we had quite a lot of things, and a little bit longer. Maybe this one will turn out to be a bit shorter. We will see. So, again, welcome to everybody. If you're just dipping in, you're very welcome.

If you're a regular, you're very welcome. And let me pray. Lord, this is, as you see and as we know, an unusual way of meeting together.

But nevertheless, will you please be glorified? Will you do the work of your Holy Spirit amongst us and for us and to us and with us as we meet like this?

And help me as the speaker to speak rightly and to click all the right buttons. And we pray it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm 136 says, The psalm has as a refrain that the love of the Lord lasts forever.

[2 : 49] There's a special word for this sort of love, which some of you will know. Heseb, a Hebrew word meaning steadfast love, promised love, the sort of love that you can depend upon.

And that's in Psalm 136. And this is Isaac Watts' take on that psalm. And we're going to sing this. This is number 136 in our book.

And this is number 136.

1, 2, 3.

CONGREGIST■ CONGREGIST■ CONGREGIST■ CONGREGIST■ CONGREGIST■

CONGREGIST■ CONGREGIST■ Give to our God eternal grace, mercy and truth out of His ways.

[4 : 21] Wonders of grace to God below, and beat His message in your songs.

Give to the Lord of those renowned, the King of kings with glory crown.

His blessings ever shall endure, when lords and kings are known no more.

He built the earth, He spread the sky, and thinks the starry lights of pie.

Wonders of grace to God below, and beat His message in your song.

[5 : 28] He built the sun with morning light, He builds the moon direct the night.

His message ever shall endure, when suns and moons shall shine no more.

He sent His Son with power to save, from guilt and godless hands the great.

Wonders of grace to God below, and beat His message in your song.

Through this vain world He joins our feet, and leads us to His heavenly seat.

[6 : 35] His mercy ever shall endure, when this vain world shall be no more.

Apologies, I had a couple of wrong button clicks there, and the sound didn't work. But I'm just going to press on, because I'm not a professional broadcaster.

Yes, the many good things He has done for the house of Israel, according to His compassion and many kindnesses. He said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me. And so He became their Saviour. In all their distress He too was distressed, and the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and mercy He redeemed them.

[14 : 10] He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. So He turned and became their enemy, and He Himself fought against them.

Then His people record the days of old, the days of Moses and His people. Where is He who brought them through the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who set His Holy Spirit among them, who sent His glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them to gain for Himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country they did not stumble, and like cattle that go down to the plain they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.

Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. But you are our Father. Though Abraham does not know us, or Israel acknowledges us, you, O Lord, are our Father. Our Redeemer from of old is your name.

[15 : 25] Why, O Lord, do you make us wander from your ways, and harden our hearts so we do not revere you? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance.

For a little while your people possessed your holy place, but now our enemies have trampled down your sanctuary. We are yours from of old, but you have not ruled over them.

They have not been called by your name. O that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you, as when fire sets twixt a blaze and causes water to boil. Come down to make your name known to your enemies, and cause the nations to quake before you. For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.

Since ancient times no one has heard, nor ear perceived, nor eye has seen any God beside you who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.

[16 : 31] But when we continue to sin against them, you are angry. How can we be saved? 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. 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.

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay. You are the potter. We are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord.

Do not remember our sins forever. O look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people. Your sacred cities have become a desert. Even Zion is a desert and Jerusalem a desolation.

Our holy and glorious temple, where our fathers praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasure lies in ruins. After all this, O Lord, will you hold yourself back?

[17 : 36] Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?

Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure? It's a wonderful prayer, calling on God to save, to tear the heavens and come down, to do what only God can do in his grace and in his almightiness.

We've got one more song about the faithfulness of God. It's this very familiar song. It uses the old-fashioned these and those, but I'm sure we can work our way around that.

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with thee. Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not.

As thou hast been, thou forever will be. Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed, thy hand hath provided.

[19 : 05] Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Let's go. The faithfulness of the right Father, there is no shadow of heaven within.

Thou changes, Lord, thy compassion, they fail not. There's the last thing that forever will be. Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, to message I see.

All I have needed, thy hand hath provided. Where is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me?
Shower and printer and stringed by our fathers, Some men and stars in their courses alone.
[20 : 59] Thy little picture in manifold witness, Do I have faithfulness, mercy and love?

Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, to message I see.
Morning by morning, to message I see.
Morning by morning, to message I see.

Morning by morning, to message I see. All I have needed, I have provided.

[22 : 48] Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

We're going to think about this passage of scripture, which begins in chapter 63, verse 7.

I will tell of the kindness, in other words, the steadfast love of the Lord. Let's pray first.

Lord, help us to hear your word, and help us to hear you speaking to us as a group, as a church, and as individuals.

In the name of Jesus we pray, amen. Amen. Well, if you have a Bible there, or if you can lay your hands on a Bible, please turn to Isaiah 63, verse 7.

[24 : 09] And these are the verses we're going to be thinking about. johnny cash has a song um i think my own personal jesus i think it's a satirical song because he's making fun of the thought of jesus as my own personal savior jesus as my own personal savior is a catchphrase that um bible believing born again evangelical christians sometimes use to mean what it is to be a christian uh it's not a quote from the bible the bible doesn't use those words and it uh it can actually give the wrong idea gives the idea that johnny cash was making fun of that jesus is not actually my personal genie who gives me three wishes and just is at my whim to do whatever i ask him to do that's certainly not the way the bible sees salvation but this phrase does have a right understanding it's a true insight into the deep idea that people human beings and god are capable of having a person to person relationship in other words human beings were made in the image of god to relate to him he is a person and we are made people and we can have a person to person relationship with god so that's distinct from a relationship with a set of rules and it's distinct from simply moods and experiences which are impersonal it's distinct from the works the sort of the works the sort of relationship with a list that you tick the things off when you've done them or a time sheet which you try to fill that's not what the bible talks about but it is a relationship which includes all the personal things like trust dependability love authority structures submission gratitude gratitude meaningful actions perhaps you've had a birthday card sent to you or something like that it's a meaningful action within a personal relationship joy things that make one happy things in the relationship that make one sad and this sort of quality that we ascribe of being near near to god near to one another being close and one of the particular ways that person to person relationships work is in the matter of conversation because it will not have escaped your attention that alone amongst god's creatures we are capable of speech and that the god of the bible is a speaking god and to have such conversation uh... christian terms uh... or indeed in any religion is uh... comes under the heading of prayer and that's what we're going to look at this morning a prayer to god for salvation and uh... this is the last section of isaiah's great prophecy just in a nutshell his heartfelt concern has been to see faithless zion uh... transformed into faithful zion and isaiah lays hold of and describes for us that this is god's settled plan and purpose he will have a city a holy city and it will not be an uninhabited city but uh... human zion has failed so deeply and chronically because it is human because the people in it are human and uh... the prophecy asks the question how

will this ever happen how will god's purposes be fulfilled and what will it look like uh... what will faithful zion look like and uh... we come more and more to the conclusion that it's not just old zion with different bricks it is a reimagining if you like a reconstituting um...

a re building of this city and the fulfillment of this mission might look different to one's earthly expectation and indeed that's what the new testament tells us is exactly the way it's fulfilled and then isaiah's been asking this question and who exactly will make this happen and uh...

as we've been through we've asked this question who's going to do it and uh... if you like to one might summarize the book of isaiah and say there are characters depicted in the three sections of isaiah in part one we have the child king unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders he will be called wonderful counselor mighty god everlasting father well that person uh... the angel said at the birth in bethlehem is jesus uh... he will he is this child that's born to us we have in the middle part of isaiah this mysterious and uh...

vivid depiction of the suffering servant who was bruised for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was upon him by his uh... wounds he will justify many and uh... the new testament is very clear that this suffering servant is none other than jesus and as he goes to the cross and is crucified he is fulfilling exactly what these ancient scriptures have foretold and in this latter section that we're in at the moment where we have the character of the single-handed lord undertaking salvation or the single-handed anointed undertaking salvation uh...

[30 : 26] this duality this person with two identities if you like uh... and jesus says this is him as well there are multiple prophecies which are all fulfilled in jesus of nazareth as he goes to the cross he goes to gethsemane and praise and it's striking that everybody runs away and leaves him he does do it single-handedly and it is the claim of the passage that we read last time 63 verses 1 to 6 that there is one person who will wrap up history there is one person who will have the final word on everything and that person is jesus he is the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end the savior and the judge and uh...

we might add to that question what will be achieved and as we come to this chapter there's an interesting emphasis on the idea of salvation so 63 verse 8 so he became their savior and uh... verse 9 the angel of his presence the word literally is face the angel of his face saved them and this great heartfelt question 64 verse 5 we continue to sin against your ways you were angry how then can we be saved this is the really deep significant important question is not the question how can we be rich it's a very superficial question doesn't help anybody really how can we be stress free well people in the west would love to be stress free but the bible doesn't tell us that it tells us how to be saved and uh...

how can we be healthy again a first world problem how can we be healthy the bible doesn't guarantee us health in this life although it guarantees us health on god's timetable in the resurrection but the question is how can we be saved and this section is a prayer how can we be saved will you reach down from heaven and save almighty god so let's um divide it up into these sections and they've got an r in them if you want to try and remember uh...

the first one is remembering to god about god from 63 7 to about verse 14 uh... the second uh... is return asking for god to return to his people around about verse 15 to 64 3 and then recognizing the roots of the problem not remembering returning and recognizing 64 verse 4 to about verse 7 and then his people returning to god 64 8 to 12 and i've copied that pretty much exactly from from david jackman so um...

[33 : 48] credit to him for that and as we go through this although we're looking on the large scale of hundreds and probably thousands of years of history and miles and miles of geography these verses are actually very personal and this teaches us that we're not to think of god's salvation as something outside of us and worked only on the large canvas of history but something which comes down to the soul of individual people what people have in their hearts and in particular the cries the prayers that individuals pray and i might just say to you this is a prayer for all of us we pray along these lines maybe not in the exact same detail but this is prayer and maybe this prayer is special for you i don't know are you a praying person could you say that your relationship with god is one of prayer you speak to him one to one well that's the authentic experience of every true believer and may it be so for you so let's follow through these sections first of all remembering to god about god so i'm looking at 63 verse 7 i will tell that the kindnesses of the lord so i'll stop on the word tell because it is recount or something like remember and that idea of remembering is in a number of words it's in verse 11 then his people recalled the days of old that's a remembering word and it's in 64 verse 5 if you come to the help of those who gladly do right who remember your ways and there's something that is asked not to be remembered which is in 64 verse 9 oh lord do not remember our sins forever so we've got quite a bit of remembering and here there is a remembering of the kindness of the lord now time and skill don't permit me to enlarge on this as it deserves to be but what a wonderful character sketch of the god of israel let me point out some of these rich key words so verse 7 kindnesses it's that word hesed put into the plural many acts of kindness any acts of steadfast love many acts of faithfulness the word in verse 7

I will tell of the many good things he has done for the house of Israel word tov good the good things god is a god who does good things not evil things not malicious things not horrible things but the god who does praiseworthy things the god who does admirable things and and then we have the word compassion verse 7 according to his compassion and many kindnesses so kindness the steadfast love word hesed but compassion rahan linked to the word for womb it's the womb like

feeling of a mother for her child now somebody on our house has been watching call the midwife and it's a regular feature of that call the midwife tv show that the mother so much loves the little baby that she gives birth to and here god is celebrated for his womb like mother like tender feelings towards his people verse 9 in their distress he too was distressed a little bit of a tricky translation there so

I'm told but let's take it at face value here is a god who cares about what happens to his people he feels for his people it's brought to its high point in the priestly work of Jesus Christ who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities has been tempted like we are so that he can give grace and mercy to help in our time of need the god whom we worship is not a god who doesn't know what it's like in their distress he too was distressed and i move very swiftly on to verse nine where in his love and mercy he redeemed them again a very wonderful rich word to redeem to like a family member digging into his own pockets to help out somebody who's got in a family member who's got into hard times somebody who shells out to deliver when you're in a hole and this it says

God plays the part of this kind uncle to his people and then in that same verse verse nine what did God do he lifted them he carried them in all the days of old you can you can see you can imagine I'm sure a father going out for a walk with a little toddler and the toddler can't walk as far as dad can and dad lifts the little one in his arms and carries the little one on his shoulders and this is characteristically what God does to his people he lifts them and carries them so here is the good God and this is talking to God about himself reminding him reminding the listener this is who God is and he is so good and that's why these other verses jar so much verse 10 they rebelled and grieved his

Holy Spirit if God wasn't a good God I suppose you could sort of be forgiven for not liking him and rebelling against him but his goodness is so kind we're very unkind and very ungrateful when we rebel against him and we say to him your way is not a good way I've got a better idea how very ungrateful of us to rebel against such a good God and how startling to find that this good God is so offended so persistently offended so deeply offended that the only action that is available to him is in verse 10 he turned and became the enemy he himself fought against them they wouldn't learn the easy way so they have to learn the hard way and here is remembering to God about God verse 11 more remembering then his people remembered the days of old now those days of old crop up here in quite a number of guises sometimes translated ancient days and the same word can mean everlasting it depends a bit on the context but we have a lot of references to these days of old and translated in different ways so verse 9 he carried them all the days of old those ancient days the days you look back upon and verse 11 his people recalled the days of old those days in which [42 : 05] God revealed himself as we shall see and verse 16 you O Lord are our Father our Redeemer from of old is your name it's not a new transient thing you don't reinvent yourself you are from everlasting to everlasting and 64 verse 4 since ancient times no one has heard same thing from since ancient times no one has heard and as I say this word crops up and God is God is not changeable he doesn't reinvent himself he doesn't let us down by saying one thing one day and a different thing the next he's a very great God is he not and this teaches us that his character is embedded in history as a foundation story what is

God like well he's the sort of God who did things in the days of Moses and his people he brought them through the sea as the shepherd of his flock and these are the lessons that refresh and strengthen God's people it's good to remember our own stories but our own stories only have validity insofar as they fit in with the great stories the stories of old and here they are depicted for us what did God do of old well he pulled his people out of water verse 11 he brought them through the sea out of the waters and verse 12 he divided the waters before them he brought them through that threatening impossible lethal barrier he brings people out of deep waters he's the shepherd of his flock the great shepherd we have new testament well we have we have psalm 23 the lord is my shepherd and we have new testament testimony where jesus says i am i am the good shepherd god is the giver of the spirit in verse 10 they grieved the holy spirit in verse 11 he set his holy spirit among them verse 14 they were given rest by the spirit of the lord so although there's a distinct teaching about the spirit in the new testament spirit is not absent in the old testament there is a very generous gift of the spirit in his characteristic work of being given of caring and of leading and god in verse 13 is the leader he leads them through the depths and you get the horse and the cattle being led and he is the rest giver they were given rest verse 14 by the spirit of the lord the sort of comforting rest jesus said didn't he come to me and i will give you rest for your souls jesus wasn't

speaking at random when he said that he was making a very great claim to be the rest giver and so we're reminding god about god or remembering who god is and all these characteristics and actions combine together to describe the lord's name what name does he have well in verse 12 he gains himself an everlasting name i know it says renown but in the original it says name and verse 14 you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name and verse 16 you oh lord are our father our redeemer from of old is your name so this is the character of god it's if you like his character reference it's his cv and if you're going for a job interview they look and say what sort of person is this can we trust them can we entrust them with these tasks and god says well look at my cv my curriculum v type my record of achievement and we're invited to look again at the things god has done the name that he has carved out for himself and won for himself and afresh to say this is the god i'm depending on this is the god i'm seeking and are we not glad that this god is our god could we think of a better god to be our god can we think of a more trustworthy god to be our god isn't it a great thing to have this god is our god so here was the first point remembering to god about god and this is surely the beginning of prayer this is remembering who we're talking to perhaps we stop and remind ourselves of who we're talking to before we actually talk to him or perhaps as part of our praying we make it a reflection on who god is and what he's done but the first thing then and as we pray we can ask him to do surely what is characteristic of himself you're the great guide guide me you're the great provider provide for me you're the great shepherd be my shepherd and so on second thing asking for god to return to his people and i'm going to pick up on a word for return in a moment it's in verse 17 why o lord do you make us wander from your paths return for the sake of your servants meaning to turn or return and this is a prayer to god to do that now there are a number of requests in this prayer in verse 15 removed from reminding god about god or reminding ourselves about god to actually addressing god look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne holy and glorious look see verse 17a return return for the sake of your servants the tribes that are your inheritance 64 1 oh that you would tear heaven and come down come and do something we can't do it only you can do it and it needs a mighty work of god come down from heaven and act so there are these very strong requests of god and what when the prayer is answered it might actually look quite down to earth but the reality the spiritual reality is that god has rent the heavens and come down and there are reasons to implore god verse 15 where are your zeal the zeal of the lord of hosts will accomplish this where is your might why do you look like a god who is impotent and can do nothing where are your tenderness and compassion why are they withheld will you not demonstrate that you are such a god of tenderness and compassion verse 17 why oh lord do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we do not revere you now

I just need to say something about blame and responsibility I don't think this verse is blaming god and saying it's your fault we're sinners but it is asking god to take responsibility and there's a difference between responsibility and blame!

for example you might ring the road it's not the council's blame they didn't strew the litter did they but it is genuinely possible to say well could you take responsibility for this could you tidy up the mess and you see blame isn't the same as responsibility and here the prayer is lord we've sinned we've made the mess but we're not capable of tidying it up please could you take the responsibility to tidy this up what would be the alternative well if you don't do this we will wander why do you make us wander and if you don't do this our hearts will be hard please don't let our hearts get hard don't let that be the case and it's put in this very stark language isn't it why oh lord you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we do not reveal you don't let that happen don't let us go in that direction please the sin is our fault but the salvation must be yours and it must be to your credit you get the apostle

[51 : 39] Paul picking up on that sort of credit to God so that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus I'm quite interested in these upcycling videos Facebook keeps on telling me that I want to see them and I'm such a sucker I click on them and here's somebody upcycling a rusty old bicycle or a rusty old vintage lamp or something and making it wonderful wonderfully new cleaning it up oh it's a wonder to behold these people who do upcycling and mending broken stuff and how much more glorious is the God who finds people like us in the gutter and takes us and renews us and refurbishes us and makes something beautiful out of the most unlikely material it is to show the incomparable riches of his kindness his grace his creativity his the wonders of his love asking God to return to his people and this request in chapter 64 oh that you would rend the heavens and come down and the mountains

would tremble before you do something really powerful it's mountain shaking it's earth quaking when God acts in this way it's radical and awesome the mountains quake verse 64 verse 1 it's like when water boils and fire ignites and verse 2 the nations quake before you and verse 3 you did awesome things we did not expect you came down and the mountains trembled before you well what does this look like when God does this

I'll just pause to say I think it was Martin Luther or was it Augustine who said that it takes more power to save a soul than to make a world and when God saves a soul and comes down from heaven and saves a soul there's more power there than to make a world well that was Luther or Augustine's speculation but you can see where he's going with that and this is the sort of thing that Isaiah is saying because honestly this new thing that you need to do is going to be unparalleled since ancient times verse 4 no one has heard no ear has perceived no eye has seen any God beside you who acts on behalf of those who wait for him you're totally unparalleled in this you're totally unique you're totally in a class of your own when you do this amazing powerful thing from heaven and people hadn't seen anything like it or heard anything like it and quite remarkable the Apostle Paul should quote this exact verse he adds some other words to it as well but I'm in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 8 where Paul has been talking about the wisdom of the cross it doesn't look very wise and it doesn't look very strong but actually it's the wisest thing this world has ever seen and the most almighty thing that this world has ever seen and the word about it is wise beyond any other wisdom and in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 8 he says none of the rulers of this age understood it if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory but they did crucify him and what a thing that was as it is written no eye has seen no ear has heard nor mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him but God has revealed it to us by his spirit he says

I think speaking about the cross that was a mighty act of power a mighty intervention God came down the mountains quaked well they did wasn't there was an earthquake at the cross of Christ wasn't there and well we haven't seen the half of it yet but the things that have been seen in Christ are God's amazing and awesome intervention and we're told there's more to come so let's move from that last section to recognising the roots of the problem we've talked about reminding God of God asking God to return and now recognising the roots of the problem and here again we have this reference to the absolutely intractable problem of human sin intractable as I understand it meaning there's nothing that human beings can do about it it is just a problem that can't be solved and here in these chapters we're looking at human nature in its raw state its untouched state and in 64 verse 6 he says all of us have become like one who is unclean that is human nature in its raw natural state verse 6 all our righteous acts all our

I can't think of the word all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags it's a very polite translation because what it actually says is blood stained garments and the blood referred to is menstrual blood it says that's what our righteous deeds are like they're in your sight God unclean and repellent and that's human nature in its raw state and you might like to ponder the idea of history as one long experiment to see or indeed to see whether human beings can generate their own salvation and to prove time and again that they can't so if you think of Moses and the Torah can the Torah save people well no it can't it's weakened nothing wrong with the Torah the law that people are weak and they can't keep it and you end up with well instructed sinners you think of the monarchy and you could in a very broad brush say well you had the monarchy and that failed too you had well organized sinners led by corrupt human beings and they couldn't solve the problem either and if you turn away from

Israel to the Gentiles well just a total loss aren't they with all their creativity and with all their human imagination they just make up gods that are a complete insult to the real god and they are lost sinners in their own way and you think of our western world with its technological advances and its do-it-yourself spirituality and our western world is just full of lost sinners too there is the intractable problem of human sin this too has got to be personal we are not saying ok I agree with this as a thing in a textbook I agree with this as an abstract proposition we haven't got the point until we say that's me in my untouched state in my raw state as I am in myself I am a lost sinner and I need a mighty intervening gracious saviour so we were remembering

[59 : 41] God asking God to return and recognising the roots and now the roots being the roots of the problem being sin and now we're going to look at people turning to God and we've got to verse 8 we were told no one calls on your name no one strives to lay hold of you you've made us waste away because of our sins that's the root of the problem is our sin turning to God in verse 64 verse 8

yet O Lord you are our father we are the clay you are the potter we are all the work of your hand do not be angry beyond measure O Lord do not remember our sins forever look upon us we pray for we are all your people and here's the prayer it's put into the mouths of God's ancient people it would suit them looking forward to exile it would suit them in their exile it would suit them coming back from exile but this declaration of total dependence

Lord you have to do it you are the potter we are the clay if you don't do it we are sunk total dependence and total submission I suppose the clay says to the potter I am in your hands make of me what you will that's what a believer says isn't it make of my life whatever you will make of my life whatever you will if you want me to be single mighty potter I am the clay in your hand then I shall be single if you want me to be married then in your hand I shall be married if you want my life to be one of quiet duties I will do the quiet duties if you want me to have a very public profile then let me do what you ask of me if you want me to be here you are the potter I am the clay I shall be here if you want me to be somewhere far away you are the potter

I am the clay I shall be far away if you want me to live a life of comfort then you are the potter I am the clay or if you want me to live a life which is right on the edge of coping you are the potter I am the clay whatever wiring you give me we are wired up differently aren't we some of us are extroverts some of us are introverts some of us breeze through life some of us are anxious at the fall of every leaf some of us are optimists some of us are pessimists and we're wired up in certain ways and the Lord can take that wiring and make of it what he will us wishing for introverts that we were extroverts or whatever but we can be how we're wired up in the Lord you are the potter I am the clay make of me what you will and there's a calling out for mercy here isn't there do not be angry beyond measure

O Lord do not remember our sins forever look upon us we pray after all this will you hold back verse 12 is an asking for mercy now it's important to understand what mercy is it's when you've got no negotiating power so there's an example of a mother in the Napoleonic wars who went up to Napoleon her son had been deserting abandoned his post as a soldier and the mother cried to Napoleon her son was due the death penalty and she said to Napoleon oh please show mercy on my son and Napoleon said to the woman well give me one good reason why I should show mercy and the woman said if there was a reason it wouldn't be mercy I was asking for that's what mercy is when you've got no negotiating power and here are here are these people crying to

God to show mercy to show mercy do not deal with us as our sins deserve do not remember our sins please verse 9 for reasons not in us for reasons to be found elsewhere do not remember our sins well the people in this chapter could simply implore upon God's mercy and on his past track record in the New Testament we have a stronger reason to say we can see a place where sin was paid for a place where you did not count people's sins against them but counted them against Jesus for his sake do not count our sins against us for his sake show mercy to us and we find an appealing for compassion look at the state of the people look at the state of us look at the state of the people who ought to reflect your presence and your glory so we have it in verse 10 your sacred cities look they should show your glory but they're a desert even Zion is a desert

[65 : 15] Jerusalem a desolation the temple the place which ought to be the number one place for people coming to meet God a house of prayer for all nations it's been burned with fire it's rubbish it's failed it isn't working and all that we treasured lies in ruins verse 11 all these treasured precious gifts to humanity are as it were on the scrap heap now certainly Israel can pray that with particular poignancy and no doubt still can but the church too can pray this can't it can take these prayers the things that should show your glory do not do so as as it should there are portions of your church that completely miss the point and actually act as false prophets in a world that needs true prophecy and none of us are going to claim that we reflect

God's glory into this world as we should Lord have mercy Lord act Lord change things Lord uphold your cause and your kingdom and surely we can pray this as individuals Lord in my life I don't reflect you as I should look at my inconsistencies look at the sin that clings to me look at what goes on in my heart I can't possibly be self righteous about that I ask for mercy and I ask you to change me to keep on changing me and to make me a temple a member of a community that reflects you and so on and here's this question right at the end after all this oh Lord will you hold yourself back will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure so it ends up as a question it ends up as a question well we get an answer in chapter 65 and

I think we have to wait a couple of weeks to get into that answer but it is a prayer it's a prayer for salvation it's remembering God to God it's asking!

God to return it is about people returning to God and it ends up with this question and I can say where is the guarantee is there a guarantee of an answer and I'm going to stick with the question it remains a question there isn't a guarantee in the sense there's a piece of magic here you just say the right words and you're bound to get the answer as I said right at the beginning it's a person to person thing you have to you can't just read this off and say okay I've done it now it has to be in the heart it has to be you doing business personally with the Lord that's how you become a Christian and of course that's how we a real person to person engagement remembering who God is beseeching him asking him for his favour recognising the roots of our own problem and every day returning to God now I say there's no guarantee but I say there's very much encouragement because I don't think there's a single person in the history of the world who came truly to God and asked for mercy who was refused not a single one and so if that's you you ask seek and you will find says God knock and the door will be opened and for those of us who have done that and who are living in the light of that surely this is a daily encouragement for us constantly to be turning back to God the God who is is the God who saves!

[69 : 31] And we're going to finish our time by having that song He is the God who saves Come praise and glorify our God the Father of our Lord in Christ he has in heavenly realms his blessing on us poured for pure and blameless in his sight he destined us to be and now we've been adopted through his son eternally and and his son and his son has been on son!

He has his son and son his and son! son He has and glory by our God the Father of our Lord in Christ he has in heavenly realms his blessings on us poured for pure and blameless in his sight he destined us to be and now within our God take through his son eternally to the grace of your glory to the grace of your mercy and grace to the grace of your glory you are the God who saves the praise and glorify our

God who gives his grace in Christ in him our sins are washed away redeemed through sacrifice! in him the grace of his will!!!!!!!!!!!!

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[71 : 44] !!!!!!!!!!!!!

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