

The Work of His Hands

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Date: 06 October 2022

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[0 : 00] Now as the Lord enables us, let us again turn to consider words we have in the prophecy of Isaiah and chapter 64.

And we may focus on verse 6 as our text, but I hope to bring in more than that in what I want to say.

Isaiah 64 verse 6, but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.

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 now, O Lord, thou art our Father, we are the clay, and thou art potter, and we all are the work of thy hand.

[1 : 25] One or two thoughts on these words. You remember that Isaiah was sent to prophesy to the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

We find that in Isaiah chapter 1. The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

And in chapter 6 of this same prophecy, we find that in the year King Uzziah died, that Isaiah, the prophet, saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

And the result of that revelation of the Lord to Isaiah, resulted in Isaiah saying, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

The Lord, at the beginning of the prophecy, reminds us how the people to whom Isaiah was sent, with the Lord's message, how they were now living.

[3 : 05] It says in chapter 1, verse 2, Hear, O heavens, give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel does not know, my people doth not consider.

These are people for whom the Lord had done so much down through the centuries. Nevertheless, in Isaiah's day, they were still rebellious.

And in chapter 6, the Lord sends Isaiah to them. And in chapter 6, verse 9, the Lord says, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, and understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

[4 : 21] He was sent to a people who didn't want to hear, to a people who did not want to bow, to the authority of the Lord. And we find in chapter 53, these famous words at the very beginning of the chapter, Isaiah saying, Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

If one were to measure Isaiah's, or the success of Isaiah's ministry, by the number of converts, I don't think he would have been very high, on the scale of successful prophets.

But there's much more involved, in being faithful to the Lord, than being able to count heads. And here in this chapter, which we have read, chapter 64, we find Isaiah, with a continuing burden, for these people.

And at the beginning of chapter 64, we find him at prayer, Oh that thou wouldst rain the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, and so on.

I'd like to say one or two words, under this first heading, that here we see, Isaiah's fervent prayer. And secondly, in the verse particularly, that I highlighted, as our text, verse 6, we see an honest confession.

[6 : 02] We are all as an unclean thing. And thirdly, we find, after he has finished petitioning the Lord, he is resigned to being, in the hands of the Lord, as the potter, who is able to shape, the clay that he is, and the clay that is, this nation, of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem.

It's as if he leaves himself, and the people, on whom, on whose behalf he's praying, in the hands of the Lord. This is what Peter said, isn't it, when those who were, listening to the Lord Jesus Christ, telling, that unless they ate of, the flesh of the Son of Man, and drank of his blood, that he had no life in them, and some started going away, not following Jesus anymore.

And Jesus said, to the disciples, you also go away. And Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words, of eternal life. And it's of the same kind of, mindset we have here, with the prophet.

He leaves, his affairs, in the hands of the Lord. And he calls him, O adieu, Father, we are the clay, you are the potter. And so on.

One or two words then, first of all, on this fervent prayer, that we have, recorded in chapter 64, at the beginning. And he begins, with that word, O.

[7 : 42] We find that word, in various places, in the scripture. We find Job, opening one of his own petitions, with that word, O.

O that I might know, where I might find him, I would come, unto his place. And we find here, this man, also, revealing the same, burden of spirit, as Job did in his day, and for different circumstances.

But here we have, this man of God, saying, O, in the presence of the Lord, he has come, as it were, to the end of things, in himself, and looking at the nation, he sees no hope for them, apart from, an intervention, from heaven.

And this is what he says, that thou dost rend, the heavens, that thou dost come down. Maybe we feel that ourselves, in our present day, that we feel that in our nation, and in our society, there is so much gone wrong, and people are living, so much for themselves, and pleasing themselves, and paying little or no attention, to what the Lord says, in his word, or even in his providence.

Because the Lord speaks to us, in his word, and in his providence. And so few people, take note, of what the Lord is saying. And the people of God, often, come to, the throne of grace, with this same kind of petition, in the presence of the Lord, asking him to rend the heavens, and that the wouldst come down.

[9 : 28] Of course, the people of Israel, had seen demonstrations, of the Lord's intervention, down through their history. Think, for example, of the way the Lord intervened, when he was, redeeming the people, out of the land of Egypt.

The way he opened, the Red Sea, and in such an amazing, and marvellous way, led all his people through, and all the Egyptians, that followed them, were completely drowned.

Also, when you go to, Mount Sinai, the Lord Jesus, in a sense, round the heavens, at that particular point, and got the attention, of all of the people, presenting to them, this law, that they were, about to be given, and, for them, to live, according to what, this law said.

And then, of course, when you come, to the New Testament, and I'm not quite sure, if, Isaiah has an eye, to the coming, of the Lord Jesus Christ, or not, in this particular verse.

But really, the heavens were rent, when the Lord Jesus, was being baptised, by John the Baptist, at the River Jordan.

[10 : 51] The heavens were torn open, as it says in the original, and the Lord, in the Holy Spirit's person, came down, and dwelt upon, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And of course, at the day of Pentecost, there was also, a clear manifestation, of the Lord's, coming down, in great power, among the people, and so many, were saved, on that day.

And this is the kind of thing, that Isaiah, in his own time, and in his own circumstances, is praying for, and looking for. That the Lord, would intervene, in the sad, sad situation, that prevails, among the people, of Judah, and Jerusalem.

That they would, astray in the heavens, and come down. That the mountains, might flow down, at your presence. The mountains, of sin, and iniquity.

The proud hearts, the provoking spirits, of the sons of men, seeking to do, their own thing, and turning away, from the Lord.

[12 : 04] Despite the fact, that he has repeatedly, called them to himself. Even in the opening, verses of this, particular prophecy, he says, come now, let his reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins, be as scarlet, they shall be, as white as snow. Though they be, like crimson, they shall be, as wool. The sins, of these people, were like, mountains, and heaps, as it were, blocking, blocking, the light of God.

If we can use, that picture, that the mountains, might flow down, at your presence. As when the melting fire, burneth, and fire causeth, the waters to boil, to make thy name, known to thine adversaries, that the nations, may tremble, at thy presence.

When thou didst, terrible things, which we looked not for, thou camest down, and the mountains, flow down, at thy presence. And there are so many, incidents, in the history, of these people, where the Lord, clearly, intervened, on their behalf, in a miraculous way.

Since the beginning, of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived, by the ear, neither hath the eyes, seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared, for him, that waiteth, for him.

[13 : 26] Thou meetest him, that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee, in thy ways, behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned, in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

The words at the end of verse 5, in those is continuance, expositors are of the view that, that has to do with, the way the Lord, deals with his people, that there is a continuity, in his covenant, in his covenant, commitment, to them, to do them good, despite the fact, that they have sinned, against him, nevertheless, he continues, in his covenant, commitment, and love, to them, and that's why, the prophet says, at the very end of verse 5, and we shall be saved, there is no other hope for us, but in the covenant, God, dealing with us, in covenant, mercy, and grace, and grace, and grace, I'm sure the people of God, in Tolstain, and everywhere else, are petitioning heaven, that the Lord may, rend the heavens, and come down, that the clouds of sin, would be parted, and that the sunshine, of God's grace, and love, and peace, may descend upon us, that the summer, of God's fellowship, and blessing, might be known, in our congregation, in our own hearts first, in our congregations, and communities, in our presbytery, throughout our land, to the ends of the earth, and we need to continue praying, prayer is, found to be very, very hard, by many of God's people, because the devil is out, to trip you up, and to divert you, from going to the place, where you do business, with the Lord, but ask him, to give you strength, and grace, in order that you might, petition him, and as it says elsewhere, give him no rest, until he establish Jerusalem, and make it a praise, in all the earth, that's what we want to see, the establishment, of Christ's cause, and his name, to be honoured, and magnified, throughout our communities, that's the first thing, a fervent prayer, secondly, and this is verse six, he comes to a heartfelt, and honest confession, it says here, we are all, as an unclean thing, all our righteousness, is done as filthy rags, we all do fade, as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away, and so on, what an amazing verse, this is, when Isaiah himself, includes himself, in this petition, we are all, as an unclean thing, he had discovered that, in chapter six, when the holiness, and the glory of the Lord, was revealed to him, on that particular day, and he says,

I am a man, of unclean lips, and I dwell, among a people, of unclean lips, for my eyes, have seen the king, the Lord of hosts, we are all, as an unclean thing, you see, sin defiles, sin dirties, sin contaminates, you remember, that that was true, concerning all the lepers, in Israel, under, the dispensation, of the law, that they must, call repeatedly, unclean, unclean, nobody must come near them, because they were, ready to contaminate, or in danger, of contaminating others, with the same disease, that they themselves had, and that's what sin is like, we are all, as an unclean thing, the uncleanness, that sin, makes us be, how do we, recognize, our uncleanness, many people, would contest, what the prophet, is here saying, not everybody, is unclean, no, not everybody, is, as it were, pictured, like this verse, describes us, well, you have to come, to the light, to see, what you really are like, it's like, like a house, that's, full of dust, dust, and you don't see, the dust really, until you open, the curtains, and then when the sun, shines in, you see the number, of dust particles, that are floating, in the air, and so it is, with the word of God, when the Holy Spirit, shines, the light of the word, into your mind, into your affections, into your heart, into your very soul, you realize, that you're not as pure, as you thought you were, maybe you were comparing yourself, to other people, and you say, well I'm better, than that person, and I would never do, what they did, and so on, but you see, when you compare yourself, with the standard, of absolute holiness, in the word of God, you realize, how far short you come, and Isaiah here is saying, this is the way, we all are like, we are all, as an unclean thing, and then he says, all our righteousnesses, are as filthy rags, it's an interesting use, of the word righteousnesses, in that,

I think it points, to the fact, that these people, they were, in a sense, and to a certain degree, attending, to the things, of, of the temple, and the tabernacle, they were coming, with their sacrifices, and they were going, through the motions, of the worship, that the Lord, had appointed, to be observed, in the Old Testament times, they were doing that, but then the Lord says, you're coming, like that, doesn't really mean anything, if your heart, is not right, all your, righteousnesses, are as filthy rags, do you remember, the two who went up, to the temple, to pray, in the New Testament, scriptures, one a Pharisee, and the other a publican, and the Pharisee, proudly, spoke, so loudly, about his own attainments, and achievements, and that he was, not like this other man, and so on, and so forth, and so forth, and so forth, he was fully righteous, in his own eyes, but the Bible, says of him, that it's the other man, who went down, to his house, justified, the poor man, who said,

God, be merciful to me, the sinner, he went down, to his house, justified, because he was, leaning, on the righteousness, of Christ, not leaning, on his own, good works, and all his, own righteous living, like the Pharisee, was, we have to, question ourselves, and examine ourselves, when we come, and go, from the house of God, are we, happy enough, with just going, through the motions, these people, were happy enough, going through the motions, but the Lord, says, the fact that you're, coming and going, like that, doesn't mean anything, because I see, all your, righteousnesses, as filthy rags, your heart, is not in the right place, you are, people, who want, their own way, and who want, to do their own thing, rather than the things, that God, commands, and then it goes on, to say, we all do fade, as a leaf, all do fade, as a leaf, sin has, the effect, of debasing, a person's character, just like you see, a leaf, at this time of year, starting to fade, and crumbling, and eventually falling off, and going right, onto the ground, and then becomes, part of the earth, once again, that's the effect, that sin has, upon a person's life, it may look, beautiful for a while, but because sin, operates, in that person's life, it degrades, the quality of his life, you see that happening, in the beginning of history, when Adam, and Eve, fell from the estate, in which they were created, they fell, just like, the fading of a leaf, they had actually, walked with God, until such time, until such time, as they sinned, and once they sinned, sin, dominated their thoughts, their affections, their will, and they fell, out of favor with God, and they fell, in sin, because the wind of sin, had blown, right into the soul, and chilled them, to the very marrow, we are all, he says, fading, as a leaf, only the grace of God, can arrest, that fading, of the leaf, the grace of God, in a day of great power, of gospel power, intervening, into the heart, and life of individuals, bringing new life, and new beauty, and then it goes on, our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away, taken us away, from God, we see that, going back to Adam, and Eve, you remember, how graphic, the scripture speaks, of the way,

[24 : 44] God dealt with them, at last, he sent them, forth out of the garden, the garden, wasn't their place, anymore, because sin, had blown them, as it were, away from the presence, of God, and that's what, sin still does, it comes like, a gale, into our life, into our thinking, and separates us, from God, and from a godly life, if sin has its way, in our soul, in our soul, our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us, away, and then it goes on, in verse seven, 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, iniquity, there is none, that calleth, upon, thy name, what a sad, sad, ending, to that verse, what a sad, report, about a people, that none, calls upon, the name of the Lord, they apply to this, they apply to that, they apply to other things, these people, in Judah, and Jerusalem, they were looking, to other nations, to help them, in whatever needs, they felt they had, but they weren't, calling upon the Lord, and we have to be careful, as a nation, and as communities, that we don't depend, on other sources, of health, and strength, and encouragement, first and foremost, call upon the Lord, call upon him, look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else, our hope is in him, and everything, everything that we need, we find in him, isn't it sad, that, no one was praying, for the good of Jerusalem, according to the words, of this verse, there is none, that calleth upon thy name, and none was, seeking the Lord's help, for people, whom they saw around them, who needed, some kind of help, that they went, here, there, and everywhere, and never, never, ever, called in prayer, in faith, upon the Lord, in heaven, who has, our life, in his hands, our times, are in his hands, he is our God, of providence, he is able to do, for us, and in us, exceeding abundantly, above, what we are able, to ask, or even think, but we are exhorted, to ask him, and he will do it, ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and you shall find, knock, and the door, shall be opened, unto you, there is none, that calleth, upon thy name, stirreth up himself, to take hold of thee, this is, an honest confession, of sin, he doesn't leave himself, out of the confession, neither did Daniel, when he was praying, in Daniel chapter 9, he prayed, and confessed, the sins of his people, and his own sin, as well, he knew, what he himself, was like, because the light, that enlightens the mind, in the knowledge, of our sin, had shined, into his heart, and given him, to realise, his own need, as well as the need, of the people, on whose behalf, he was praying, but then finally,

we see here, the prophet, leaves, the affair, in the hand, of the Lord, verse 8, but now, O Lord, thou art our father, we are the clay, thou art the potter, we are all work, of thy hand, the prophet, the prophet, acknowledges, that God, is the father, of these people, he, fathered them, from a way, way back, he is the God, who gave them, identity, he is the God, who gave them life, he is the God, who made covenant, between him, and them, and he is the one, who is able, to provide, for all of their needs, and Isaiah knows that, and he sees it, thou art our father, isn't it an amazing, title, that the Lord has, the father, of his people, in Isaiah chapter, 9, and verse 6, we have this, marvelous verse, unto us a child, is born, unto us a son, is given, and the government, shall be upon, his shoulder, and his name, shall be called, wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting, father, and the prince, of peace, and Isaiah, highlights, that very point, thou art our father, the everlasting, father, the father, who gave you, being spiritually, as well, as physically, we are all, his children, in a physical sense, but his people, are his children, in a spiritual sense, because they are, adopted into his family, and, like the father he is, he cares for his children, he cares for his people, and he is able, in the way that he deals with them, to bring them on, bit by bit, until at last, they are made perfect, in holiness, and rejoice, in his presence, in glory, thou art our father, we are the clay, and thou art potter, we are the work of thy hand, isn't that an amazing, picture that the Lord gives us,

I have never worked with clay, but I have seen, programs of people, who are actually expert, in making, in making vessels, with clay, on a wheel, and it's amazing, the way, they put their hands, around it, and inside it, to bring the shape, to what they wanted to be, and the Lord, through all of these experiences, that these people, were having, in Jerusalem, and in Judah, in the days of Isaiah, all the time, he was shaping them, he was teaching them, lessons that were hard, to be learned, teaching them, in such a way, that at last, they would bear, the image, that he wanted them, to bear, and that's the way, he is still, with his people, they will bear, the image, of Christ, in perfection, at last, oh, there are many difficulties, there are many turns, of the wheel, but every turn, is significant, and every turn, is necessary, and if you were to ask, the potter, or the vessel, he was making, what did you feel like, when you were being formed, and he would say, well, the vessel might say, well, it was a difficult, difficult experience, but then the potter, would say, well, there's another stage, now what stage is that, or the vessel, that has been formed, in such a meticulous way, with the hands of the potter, has to go into the oven, it has to be tested, it has to be heated up, and only after, it's been heated up, will it set, in the permanent, shape, that it must bear, and that's the way, it is for the people of God, the hands, of the potter, are careful, but sure hands, and the program, that the potter, is working to, is a perfect program, and the end point, is, that the people, with whom he is dealing, will at last, bear the image, of Christ, in a holy, and perfect, soul, and, latterly, body, and soul, for the souls, of believers, at their death, made perfect, in holiness, to immediately, pass into glory, their bodies, being still united, to Christ, to rest, in their graves, until the resurrection, but at the resurrection, believers, are raised in glory, shall be openly, acknowledged, and acquitted, at the day of judgment, shall be made, perfectly blessed, in the full enjoying, of God, through all eternity, we are all, the work of thy hand, be not wroth, very sore,

O Lord, neither remember, iniquity forever, behold see, we beseech thee, we are all, thy people, the prophet, pleads, with the God, of covenant, who remembers, we are your people, although we have sinned, and also come short, of your glory, nevertheless, we are your people, you are our God, you are our Father, be merciful to us, for your own, namesake, well these three points then, the fervent prayer, the honest confession, and at the third point, he is completely resigned, to leaving his affairs, in the hands, of the Lord, for his eternal benefit, amen, may God bless to us, these words, let us pray, help us Lord, to be thankful, for, the kindness, that you show us, and we praise you, for, the words, which we have, been considering together, and we thank you, that, you hear, the prayer, of the afflicted, who come to you, and that you are able, to answer them, in peace, we praise you,

O Lord, for faithful men, and women, who pray, who continue, to petition you, even in our day, and generation, when we are so, needy, of, the heavens, once again, being rent asunder, like they were, in days of old, throughout our nation, and, in our island here, Lord, remember us, we pray, we are, just as needy, today, as they were, in years gone by, and we thank you, for having known many, who did, taste, taste, of the blessings, of these times, of revival, in the islands, down through the years, we pray, for your blessing, to be upon this generation, this congregation, every home in it, and every individual, with every circumstance, they have, in life, remember the children, pray that you would, raise them up also, in the fear, and the nurture, of the Lord, and that they may, grow up to be, shining lights, in their own day, and generation, bless us now, as we sing your praise, in conclusion, and forgive our sins, in Jesus name, and for his sake,

[37 : 45] Amen. We'll bring your worship, to our close, at this time, singing, from Psalm 130, Psalm 130, Lord, from the depths, to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear, unto my supplications, voice, give an attentive ear, Lord, who shall stand, if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet, with thee, forgivenesses, that fear, thou mayest be, I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word, more than they, that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord, I say, more than they, that do watch, the morning light, to see, that Israel hope, in the Lord, for with him, mercies be, and plenteous redemption, is ever found, with him, and from all his iniquities, he Israel, shall redeem, and from all his iniquities, and from all unrighteousness, may we do so,

Lord, from the depths, to thee I cry, my voice, Lord, to the hearer, and to my supplications, now duck Jessom's voice, give thou compassion, till the hearer, or to shall stand, live thou, O Lord, Jesus, my giving will need, I'll get with thee forgivenesses and fear that mayest be.

I wait for God my soul that will, my hope is in His Word.

More than day that God barred me, watch my soul whisper the Lord.

I say, Lord, now may I do watch the morning light to see.

[41 : 07] Let Israel open the door, for within there she's been.

And plenty of redemption is ever found within.

And from all his iniquities he is their child redeemed.

Amen. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.