

# A Prayer of Confession and a Plea For Help

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our gracious Father in heaven, we bow our heads as we come before you to worship you in your house.

We thank you, Heavenly Father, for this unspeakable privilege that we, this species that brought the curse into the universe, are commanded to come into the courts of your house to draw near to you and to worship you.

Oh, we thank you, Heavenly Father, for the grace that is in the Lord Jesus. We thank you, Heavenly Father, for your word which we have just read together.

Oh, we bless you, eternal God, for the truth, for the relevance, for the power of the gospel.

We have just sung it, eternal God, that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[ 1 : 23 ] We thank you, Heavenly Father, that when we, the human race, turned our back upon you in the garden, when we decided to go it alone to do our own thing, we thank you that you did not instantly abandon the whole human race to a lost eternity.

We thank you, Heavenly Father, that what we find written in your word is that you so loved the world, that you gave your only begotten Son, so that whoever, whoever would believe upon him would not perish but have everlasting life.

Oh, we bless you for your grace, eternal God. We thank you, you are holy. We thank you, you're full of majesty.

We thank you, you're full of power. But above all, we thank you, you're full of mercy. Gracious God, as we come now into your house, receive our worship, we humbly pray, as we seek to do it through the name of your dear Son.

We do humble ourselves before you, eternal God, and we ask that you would be pleased to bless us as we come together into your house to worship you.

[ 3 : 05 ] We thank you for the blessing that is promised if we gather together. And we thank you, you have spared us to do this once more today, our Father in heaven.

We ask, O Lord, that we might come before you humbly, that we might come before you confessing our sin, that we might come before you with genuine repentance.

But above all, we pray that we come before you with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that faith which saves the soul.

Gracious God, bless us today. around your word, we pray. Teach us to seek your face. Teach us to desire your favor.

Teach us to keep your precepts. Help us to walk in your ways. We pray, Heavenly Father, that at the very least, at the very least, we would desire these things.

[ 4 : 20 ] O Lord, O Lord, draw us. Teach us your will. Work love in our hearts. Give us gratitude for Christ.

sending him to the horrors of crucifixion so that we could be forgiven, so that we could be with you at last, so that we could have a good hope that would not perish.

O Lord, we thank you for Christ. we thank you for your house. We thank you for your people.

We thank you for your word, which informs us, enlightens us, instructs us, teaches us. We thank you for your gospel, gracious God, the good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of which we all are.

we thank you for your Holy Spirit, who is present. May not one of us grieve him, quench him, resist him.

[ 5 : 40 ] We thank you, Lord, for this privilege, then, of worshiping you together. And as we do so, we would remember our brothers and sisters in the suffering church, in the persecuted church

worldwide.

O Lord, we thank you for the grace that you have given them. We thank you, Lord, for their determination to persist in worshiping you, despite what it may cost them.

Our gracious Father in heaven, we pray for the nations of the world that know strife, warfare, oppression. We cannot name them all, gracious Father, because we do not even know them all. But we think of Afghanistan, the poor people there, and your church there. We think of the situation, especially amongst the young in Yemen.

We think of war-torn Syria. O gracious God, we pray for them. We pray for all who know the suffering of volcano, earthquake, floods, tsunamis.

[ 7 : 02 ] gracious God, remember the children of sorrow and oppression. We ask, heavenly Father, that you be with us in our own nation, who are largely escaped many of these tragedies.

But O Lord, you have spoken. You have spoken from heaven. The pandemic is global, and we have not escaped.

O Lord, you have sent it. You are speaking. You are speaking loudly. But our Father in heaven, we're very, very deaf.

We are not hearing you. We're not seeing you. We are not humbling ourselves. We're not turning to you.

O gracious God, forgive us. Forgive us our national sins in removing every remembrance of your word from our statute book.

[ 8 : 11 ] Forgive us these sins and turn us again. Turn us, O Lord, we pray thee. We ask that it would please you to raise up in church as well as in state those who would lead us back to your word and your ways.

Give our politicians wisdom how to control the many issues that confront us nationally and globally. May we humble ourselves before you and listen to the voice of the Lord our God and what you have given us in writing your word.

We thank you for our carers. We thank you for our NHS. We ask, O Lord, that you would strengthen them, encourage them, guide them, bless them, be with them.

We pray, Heavenly Father, that you would remember those who are bereaved, heavy laden, burdened with sorrow. Lord, pour in the oil of joy for mourning.

We ask that you would remember those who are seriously ill. We pray that you would bless medication, treatment, therapies, etc. Where they are available and where they are not available, may it please you to heal apart from any human means.

[ 9 : 41 ] Now, Lord, we ask that you would bless the word as your word as we read it together. We ask that you would hear our prayers.

We pray that you would bless the gospel as it goes out. We ask that you would convict, that you would convert, that you would reveal yourself to us, that you would direct us, that you would empower us.

We pray that you would encourage those who are discouraged. We pray that you would enlighten those who are in darkness.

We pray that you would strengthen those who are weak. are there any hungry souls here listening in? Oh, Lord, you please feed the hungry with your truth, your word, your spirit.

Are there any backsliding souls? Oh, Lord, restore, restore. Stretch out that long arm of yours and reach those that are far off and bring them back to the fold.

[ 11 : 08 ] Gracious Father, remember what we've forgotten to pray for. And now, keep us in your love, keep us in your fear, wash all our sins away in that fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, for sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Hear us in mercy, answer us in peace, as we pray only and all, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Now, let's turn in our Bibles to read two short portions of Scripture.

First of all, in the prophecies of Isaiah chapter 64. We'll read the whole chapter and then go on to read from Jeremiah chapter 18.

First of all, Isaiah chapter 64. Isaiah 64.

[ 12 : 26 ] Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence, as when fire kindles brushwood, and the fire causes water to boil, to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence.

When you did awesome things that we did not look for you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence, for from of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear.

No eye has seen a God beside you who acts for those who wait for him. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways.

Behold, you were angry, and we sinned. In our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away.

[13:58] There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our potter.

We are all the work of your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please, look, we are all your people.

Your holy cities have become a wilderness. Zion has become a wilderness. Jerusalem, a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, have been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins.

Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord? Will you keep silent and afflict us so terribly?

[15:17] Now, let us turn to the prophecies of Jeremiah, the next book, Jeremiah chapter 18, and we'll read the first six verses.

Jeremiah chapter 18, the first six verses.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.

So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel, and the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

Then the word of the Lord came to me, O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done, declares the Lord.

[16:45] Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

May God bless to us the very reading of his truth. As God would help me, I would like to concentrate on three verses that we read in Isaiah 64, verses 6 to 8, so I will read them once again. Isaiah 64, verse 6, we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our potter.

[18:14] We are all the work of your hand. God. The prophet Isaiah is desperate for converts.

His ministry has not been accepted. Most of you will be familiar with the first words of chapter 53 of his prophecy, where he says, who has believed our report?

You see, God's people were in a desperately low spiritual condition at this time. Desperately poor spiritual condition.

God had come to them several times and said, look, all can be forgiven if you just confess and repent your sins.

All can be forgiven. But Israel had forgotten how to do that. Israel had forgotten effectively how to pray.

[19:40] They'd forgotten how to return to God. What a sad condition. What a sad plight. But that's the situation when Isaiah prophesied to them.

And so Isaiah is here teaching Israel how to confess their sins to him and how to get right with God once more.

That's what he's doing effectively in these three verses we've read. So as God would help me, I would like to look at these three verses under two headings.

First of all, the prayer of confession. How to Isaiah teach them how to confess their sins before God.

And then secondly, the plea for help. The situation looks terrible. The situation seems one of despair but it is not.

[ 20 : 48 ] It is not. And he teaches them secondly, where to go for help. How to ask for blessing and mercy.

First of all, the prayer of confession in verses six to seven. We have all become like one who is unclean.

That is not the way God made us. God created humans. God made man upright but we have perverted that which is right.

We have, as our text tells us, become, become sinful. We are all as an unclean thing, it could be said.

Now the important thing I want to highlight is this. It's not so much what Israel had done that they've to learn to confess.

[ 22 : 03 ] It's what Israel was. It's what Israel now are. We are sinful. all. And they're being taught here, you to confess your sinnership.

You're to confess your sinfulness. Not simply this odd thing I've done or that other thing I keep on doing. It's what we are.

What we do arises because of what we are. And we are being reminded yet once more you and I do not fall into sin.

Adam fell into sin. You and I are born into sin. You and I are born with a bias and a prejudice against God.

Against anything godly. It's in us by nature. nature. We don't need practice. It comes naturally.

[ 23 : 17 ] And we're being taught here. We're to confess before God our tendencies, our very inclinations. The New Testament has a word which has gone out of fashion and we don't use today.

concupiscence. What does it mean? It means our preparedness to sin.

Our readiness to sin. We're willing. We're content to do it. It comes spontaneously to us.

Born in sin. Shapen in iniquity. That's the root. That's the start.

But it develops. We read next. Our righteous deeds are like polluted garments.

[ 24 : 27 ] Think of your account with God as a balance sheet. think of it in accountancy terms. Our account with God has not to be in the all clear.

Our account with God has to be in the credit balance. And it's interesting to note or it's important to identify Christ's death paid for the sins of all God's people, of all who repent, of all who believe, their sins are all paid for, and their account balance is brought up to the all square level.

But that's not enough. We have to be in the credit balance with God. We have to have righteous deeds. That is where Christ's life is applied to us.

His death pays for our negative value. his life puts us in the credit balance. Because when we give Christ our sins, Christ gives us his righteousness so that our sins are paid for and his righteous deeds are put down to our account.

our righteousnesses, the things that we think we do well and we gain favor with God are not actually pluses.

[ 26 : 07 ] They're actually minuses. And you see, the situation is we continue, we continue to behave that way.

In his earlier part of his prophecy, Isaiah speaks in the beginning of chapter five about a vineyard.

And he says, you, my people, are like a vineyard.

Let me sing you a song. I have, my beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it, he cleared it of stones, planted it with choice vines, he built a tower in the midst of it, he hewed out the wine vat.

He looked to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. It didn't yield no grapes, it yielded wild grapes.

That's you, that's me. We can't do anything up to God's standard to pleasing. It's not in us. Our righteous deeds put us further on the negative.

[ 27 : 28 ] That's the state we're in. That's the condition, the human race is in before God. God. It goes on.

We're adding and adding to our account before God. The root is as an unclean garment. Even our righteous deeds make our situation even more serious.

And then we read thirdly, we fade as a leaf. We fade as a leaf. What's the principle there?

Deterioration. Deterioration. Our situation gets worse. We're fading like a leaf.

Worse, we get worse, not the better by age. Young people often think, well, it'll be easier when I'm older.

[ 28 : 39 ] Will you please hear an older man speaking? It gets harder. As you get older, it's harder and harder to turn to God because you're in a rut.

We spontaneously sin against God. The nature of sin is to spread and to deepen.

That's the nature of it. Fading like a leaf. And there's this also. You only have so long.

You have only so long to put it right. Fading like a leaf. in a few months, it won't be there. The situation gets worse.

We're looking at the condition of Israel and therefore the condition of the human race before God.

We read, our iniquities have taken like the wind.

[ 29 : 50 ] Take us away. the end of verse six. Our iniquities take us away. There's three or four things in principle there. Separation.

Isolation. Alienation. Foreign. We've gone away. Away. We've cut ourselves off.

We've cut ourselves off from the source of reference. We've cut ourselves off from the source of supply. We've cut ourselves off from any contact.

You know very well the strategy of war. Isolate the enemy. Surround them. It's only a matter of time.

No contact. No supplies. Only a matter of time. our iniquities have taken us away and isolated us and alienated us from God.

[ 30 : 59 ] And we've done it ourselves. We have separated ourselves from God. We have turned our back on God.

God. And there's one other thing actually that's quite important here. The original word that's translated take us away at the end of verse 6.

The original term is actually over 600 times in the Bible. but 14 times it's translated armor bearer.

Now that's strange, isn't it? What does that mean? Isn't it telling us this? We sinners, we build an armor plate around ourselves so that when the truth comes it just bounces off us.

We put an armor plate around ourselves. We don't want to hear God. We don't want to know the truth. We cannot face reality.

[ 32 : 17 ] That's the state we're in. That's the condition we're in. Anything that comes to penetrate to try and get through to us, it just bounces off the armor.

Our plight by nature is very, very serious. There's one other thing. One other thing before we change the subject and go on to our second head.

No one calls on your name. God will be forgiven. You see, serious although the condition is, it can all be forgiven if you just call on God.

Do you know that? Do you realize that? Do you believe what the Bible says?

whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That's divine words.

[ 33 : 30 ] That is a divine promise. That is where hope is. All can be forgiven if you just call on God.

God. It's in the Old Testament and it's repeated twice in the New Testament. Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That's good news. But what's our text say? By nature no one calls on the Lord.

No one calls on his name. Isn't that tragic? Isn't that pathetic? Would that not lead one to despair?

And you see that's why God has said come to us as he came to Israel many a time said look all the past can be forgiven.

[ 34 : 37 ] I know God has said I know that you cannot keep the commandments up to my standard. I know that. Therefore here's another way to get to heaven.

Here's another way to be forgiven. Instead of doing things absolutely perfectly up to my standard just depend on my son.

Just believe when he died at the place called Calvary he was dying there to pay for the sins of everyone who will be in heaven.

Just believe that when he died that Friday afternoon on that cross he paid God for the sins of everyone who will believe on him.

that's the way out. That's the way out. That's why your greatest sin here is not drink, drugs, pornography, sex, gambling.

[ 35 : 44 ] That's not your greatest sin. Your greatest sin is unbelief. You don't believe God can forgive instantly through faith in Jesus Christ.

No one calls on your name. Would that not lead anyone to despair? It may, but it must not.

It must not. Do you know Satan can convict of sin? Do you know that? But do you know why?

Do you know why he convicts of sin? To get you to despair. To get you to say there's no hope for me. To get you to say my plight is hopeless.

It's a lie from Satan. Oh, your plight is serious. Your plight as an unbeliever is desperately serious, but it is not hopeless.

[ 36 : 59 ] You must not despair. Which leads us to the second thing we're taught here, how to plea for help. Verse eight, but always look in the word, in the Bible, for that word, but best word in the Bible.

The Bible pictures the plight, the terrible plight of the human race, but, but, despite that, there's still hope, but, now, oh, Lord, you are our father, we are the clay, and you are potter.

my friend, that's good news, that's great news, that's the truth, that's why we read, and I say it in Jeremiah 18, oh, house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done, declared the Lord, behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

All your plight is every bit as bad as he spelt out, but it's not hopeless, you're in the hands of the potter, the potter, God is the potter, we read there in Jeremiah what God did, he had this clay pot, misshaped, marred, spoiled, did he throw it away, did he put it in the trash bin, what did he do, he remade it, he remade it, that's what God does, that's why he sent Jesus into the world, to remake the spoiled, marred pot of clay, he does it, you see, it seems a genuine confession is not merely a lament, it's not only a complaint, it's not all negative, because there's another version of the Bible, and it says, without faith, without faith, impossible to please God, you could discover all that we've said, and say it to God, but without faith, you're not pleasing God, you must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all who diligently seek him, you must believe that the potter delights to remould, reshape the clay, do you find yourself nothing but marred, spoiled piece of clay, you're in the hands of someone who wants to remould, reshape, and that is why, my friend, you're greatest, maybe you're here tonight, this morning, maybe you're listening to me, and you think, your greatest problem, this one sin that you can't conquer, no, no, no, no, your greatest sin is you don't believe God can change you,

[ 41 : 12 ] God can make you a new person in Christ, that's the biggest sin, that's what you have to get over, God can change you here, today, this morning, and not only that, but he wants to do it, the real question is, do you want him to do it, that's the real question, isn't that the story of the New Testament, what does the potter do when he comes across the spoiled, marred clay, what did he do in the Old Testament, with the people we find, what did they do with Jacob, remember Jacob, you know there's something terribly sad about Jacob I find, didn't

Jacob double cross his own father on his deathbed, that's pretty low, eh, that is pretty low, double crossing your own father on his deathbed, that was Jacob, but God said, I've chosen Jacob, I'm going to remold him, I'm going to reshape him, I'm going to make him a new person in Christ, and he did, Jacob's in heaven, Jacob's in glory, he remolded the spoiled, marred clay, you can go further in the Old Testament, King Manasseh, do you remember King Manasseh, do you remember who he was first of all, the son of a godly father, the son of a godly father, what was the first thing he did when he got onto the throne, do you know what it was, to undo the godly reforms of his father, that's pretty low, that's pretty spoiled, that's pretty marred,

Manasseh, first thing he does in the throne is undo, undo the godly reforms of his father, then he stops worshipping God, Yahweh, and he worships the sun and the moon, the stars, that doesn't do anything either for him of course, so what does he turn to then, turns to the occult, he has seances with wizards, dabbles in the unclean darkness of the bottomless pit, and eventually he turns to the pagan God, and to please him, he burns his child in the fire of the valley of the son of Hinnom, that's pretty low, that's pretty bad, but Manasseh's in heaven, Manasseh's in glory,

God remoulded Manasseh, God changed Manasseh, God made him a new creation, and he's the same God today, he's the same God here, he turned to the New Testament, Simon Peter, what kind of man is he, what kind of disposition has Simon Peter, well, you know, a weak, watery wimp, that hadn't the courage of his convictions, oh, but you know, remember, when Christ spoke to him, he looked at him with that eye, and he said, you are Simon, but by the time I'm finished with you, Simon, weak, watery wimp, you will be strong as the rocks and the cliffs of Harris, and a secular history records, no reason to question it, when Peter was being persecuted, according to secular history, it's not in the scripture, but according to secular history, they were crucifying him, and he said,

I am not worthy to be crucified, to die the same way as my savior, crucify me upside down, and according to secular history, that's what happened, Christ changed him from a weak, watery wimp of a man, to a strong person that gave his life for Christ, Saul of Tarsus, we often think the most difficult person to convert is a, is a atheist, wrong, apparently, according to psychologists, the most difficult person to change, is a dyed-in-the-wool religious bigot, such as Saul of Tarsus, documents in his pocket on the Damascus road, to imprison Christians, such was his inveterate hatred to anything

[ 47 : 06 ] Christian or anti-Jewish, but in one moment, Christ met him and made him a new creation, he, the potter, remoulded the clay.

Mary Magdalene, what do you think of when you think of Mary Magdalene? I always used to think, what a lovely, sweet, young girl. Do you know what she was when Jesus made her?

She had seven devils, but Christ made her a lovely, sweet, gentle woman of faith.

He remoulds the clay that's spoiled and ruined. The woman of Samaria slept around. Christ makes her in a moment, he remoulds her, reshapes her into one of the first evangelists of the gospel.

That's Christ. That's the gospel. That's the potter. That's what the potter can do. Everything we've said in the prayer of confession is true, but you must not despair.

[ 48 : 32 ] There's a potter. You're in the hands of the potter. He remoulds, he reshapes. It's the difference between your junk folder and your trash can.

You can take things out of your junk folder. You put them there by accident. God can visit you.

God can reach you. God can remould and shape you and make you a vessel of honor in his hand.

Our time's up. Just in conclusion, two things. God has gone on oath. God has gone on oath to save all who call upon him.

Of course, genuinely, sincerely, but he's gone on oath to save all who call upon him. Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[ 49 : 52 ] is that true or is it not? Finally, 1 John chapter 5 verse 1.

The Bible tells us everyone, everyone, everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

And we can say born again of God. Do you want to know, are you born again? Listen to 1 John 5 1. Everyone, everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ, that is the Messiah, the Savior, the Savior, the only Savior of the world.

That person, even though it's you, is born again of God. That's the gospel. It's the only gospel I know, and by the grace of God, the only gospel I'll preach.

[ 51 : 08 ] May every single one of us know the truth of it. believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

Let's bow our heads. Our Father in heaven, please take the things of Christ, and make them ours today, here, in this place, for your glory.

Hear us in mercy, answer us in peace, because we pray in Christ's name, and for Christ's sake. Amen.

We conclude our service by singing from Psalm 32 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 32 in the Scottish Psalter.

That's on page 244. And we sing verses 5 and 6. There's four stanzas. Psalm 32 at verse 5.

[ 52 : 19 ] I thereupon have unto thee my sin acknowledged, and likewise my iniquity I have not covered. Down to verse 6, the last part of it.

Surely when floods of waters great do swell up to the brim, they shall not overwhelm his soul, nor once come near to him.

Psalm 32 verses 5 and 6, to God's praise. I thereupon have unto thee my sin acknowledged and has Christ said.

am one form best come to Come to the Lord.

My trespass is set high And all my sin and freedom Are given iniquity For this child and the only one Is greater victory And such a time he shall be seen As the unknown may end thee

[ 54 : 32 ] Surely when the soft waters may You shall not to the brave They shall not hold their well Now what shall we do The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with us all Now and forevermore Amen Amen

Amen Amen