

December 16th, 2018
"O Lord, You are our Father"
Isaiah 64

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Dec 9 Ephesians 1-3	Dec 13 1 Thess. 1-5
Dec 10 Ephesians 4-6	Dec 14 2 Thess. 1-3
Dec 11 Philippians 1-4	Dec 15 1 Timothy 1-6
Dec 12 Colossians 1-4	Dec 16 1 Timothy 1-4

Lesson Introduction: Our passage this week is a continuation of Isaiah 63. Last week, we saw Isaiah go before God, interceding on behalf of the Israelites in light of the stunning depiction of the wrath of God found in **63:1-6**. This week we will dive deeper into Isaiah's plea to God for mercy, considering how he patiently waited on the Lord, understood the stunning depth of our sin, and recognized God's sovereign goodness in the midst trial.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- There is none like the LORD (V. 1-4)
- The LORD mercifully works on behalf of His people (V. 4)
- Man is completely sinful, unworthy of God's mercy (V. 5-7)
- God is our Sovereign Father during all circumstances (V. 8-12)

Isaiah 64

1 Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence—
2 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!
3 When you did awesome things that we did not look for,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your
presence.
4 From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
5 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?

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.
7 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.

8 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.
9 Be not so terribly angry, O Lord,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.
10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness;
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
11 Our holy and beautiful house,
where our fathers praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become ruins.
12 Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord?
Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?

Discussion Section 1: A Plea for God's Power (V. 1-4)

-What do **verses 1-3** reveal about Isaiah's mindset as he cries out to God?

-Have you ever found yourself in a position where you have cried out to the Lord to work powerfully?

-What does **verse 4** tell us about God? How do we see Isaiah exhibit faith in this verse?

Note: This passage begins with Isaiah passionately crying out to the Lord to "**rend the heavens and come down.**" He recognized that Israel's only hope in the face of her oppressors was for God to intervene in miraculous power. In these first 4 verses, we see Isaiah asking God to work in the ways that He has worked in the past to bring about freedom for His people. Isaiah was confident that the Lord could bring about the salvation that Israel so desperately needed, yet he clearly realized that, at that moment, God was not moving in the way that he was asking him to.

Many of us may have found ourselves in a similar position. We are confident that the Lord has the power

to do all that needs to be done to alleviate our current situation, and we plead with Him to do so, yet, He waits. We remember ways He has acted on our behalf in the past, and we look to the stories recorded in Scripture, and in our moments of desperation we cry out with Isaiah, **“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down!”** In these moments of desperation, it is vital that we as Christians remember the truth of **verse 4**. It is there that we learn that, **“no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.”** Even as he cries out in desperation, wishing that God would tear open the heavens and come down to grant salvation to His people, Isaiah stops to recognize that there is none like the Lord, and expresses his faith in God to act on behalf of His people. Many of us may be experiencing a season of darkness, where it feels like God is withholding His power from our current situation. May **verse 4** serve as a reminder to us that He has not abandoned us, and that His power is promised to the one who waits on Him.

Discussion Section 2: An Honest Look at Who we Are (V. 5-7)

-Why does Isaiah bring up the sins of God’s people?

-Do you ever feel like God owes you something?

-How do these verses (specifically **V. 6**) highlight the depth of our sinfulness?

-How would better understanding the depth of our sin change the way we approach God with our requests?

Note: These verses are some of the clearest in all of Scripture concerning our depravity. It is interesting that, in the midst of pleading with God to make Himself known by displaying His power through delivering His people, Isaiah chooses to suddenly focus in on the complete sinfulness of mankind. In bringing this depravity into the conversation, Isaiah is proclaiming that he is fully aware that Israel is unworthy of God’s power which he is so desperately pleading for.

The description Isaiah uses to describe man’s sinfulness is a graphic one, stating that even the so called **“righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”** This sentiment is echoed in **Titus 3:4-6**, where we see that, **“...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our**

Savior.” That passage, along with **Isaiah 64:6**, shatters all assertions that we can do anything in our own power to make ourselves clean before God. The best of our deeds will never save us and are indeed as polluted garments in contrast to the holiness of God.

Isaiah included himself amongst the unclean people in **verse 6**. He recognized that, even as God’s chosen mouthpiece, he was unclean, and unworthy of God’s mercy (**Isaiah 6:5**). As we approach God with our requests, may we never lose sight of the fact that the only thing He truly owes us is eternity separated from Him in Hell. The fact that He has saved us from our complete depravity by His grace is infinitely more than we could ever ask or deserve, yet He encourages us to approach Him with confidence because we are covered in Christ’s righteousness (**Hebrews 4:15-16**). In all our trials, may we never lose sight of the fact that God has saved us from the depth of sin. If He does not move in the way we see fit, we have no right to question Him, for He is holy and good, and we are but polluted rags apart from His grace.

Discussion Section 3: Our Good Father and Potter (V. 8-12)

-What do we learn about our relationship with God from Isaiah calling Him both **“Father”** and **“potter”**?

-How does viewing God in these ways bring peace even when everything around us seems to be falling apart?

Note: Our final section of Scripture opens in **verse 8** with Isaiah acknowledging the Lord as both **Father** and **potter**. In referring to God in these 2 ways in the midst of trial, the prophet proclaims that God is both our caring Father, and our sovereign creator. Paul tells us that we have the privilege, as children of God, to cry out **“Abba! Father!”** by the Spirit in our time of suffering. When we suffer, we have nothing to fear because we have a caring Father who does what is best for us (**Romans 8:14-17**). **Romans 9:14-23** uses the imagery of God as the Potter, and states that we have no right to question our creator when things do not go the way we see fit. Having both aspects of God in view when we face trials of various kinds is vitally important. He is both loving Father, and sovereign Molder. Indeed, it is out of His fatherly love that He often shapes our paths toward discipline and suffering (**Hebrews 12:7-11**). As we close this lesson may we find comfort and hope in knowing that our loving Father is working and molding all things for our good (**Romans 8:28**).