

stark contrast to the clothing of salvation and righteousness that believers will wear in God's future kingdom (61:10)" (Smith 2009: 690-91).

"This is a believer's heart: one that does not deny the grief and even the anger that stem from God's hiddenness, yet all the time waits with glad expectancy for the sure moment when he will reveal himself" (Oswalt 1998: 627).

"Does this prayer have any significance for modern believers? Does this lament create an example that people today should pray? If it does, why do people seldom hear their pastors or fellow believers praying to God like this? Is praying to God mainly just a series of requests for physical healing, or is there more to it? Is praying just about me and my relationship to God, or is there still a valid reason for offering prayers of intercession that bring the needs of the community to God? Although the "pastoral prayer" used to play a significant role in many church services in the past, fewer and fewer churches are including it in the upbeat consumer-oriented programs of today" (Smith 2009: 696).

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Do you "strive to lay hold" of God (v. 7)? How do you do this?

Is your life characterized by "waiting for God"? In what ways is it not? How can you increase your ability to "wait"?

How can this prayer assist you in a time of personal suffering?

### SOURCES CITED

John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, NICOT, 1998.  
Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary, 2009.

## ISAIAH 64: WAITING FOR GOD'S DELIVERANCE

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 40-66

- III. The Holy One of Israel is sovereign over the restoration and salvation of his people (40:1-66:24).
  - A. The Holy One of Israel vindicates his glory over idols by predicting the restoration of his people from Babylon (40:1-48:22).
  - B. The Servant of the Lord will suffer to save his people (49:1-55:13).
  - C. The Holy One of Israel will return blessing to the righteous and retribution to the evil (56:1-59:21).
  - D. The Holy One of Israel will restore his people to a glorious new home (60:1-66:24).
    - 1. The Lord will bring his glory to the people and city of Zion (60:1-63:6).
      - a) The Lord will be the glory of Zion (60:1-22).
      - b) The Servant of the Lord will bring righteousness to Zion (61:1-62:12).
      - c) The Lord will judge the nations in the winepress of his wrath (63:1-6).
    - 2. **The nation prays for redemption of heart and home (63:7-64:12).**
    - 3. The Lord responds to the nation's prayer with the promise of a new heart and home (65:1-66:24).

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 64

- I. O Lord, come down and judge the wicked! (64:1-5a)
- II. But we are guilty too! (64:5b-7)
- III. Yet your promises are our hope for salvation. (64:8-12)
  - A. Because we are your children (64:8-9)
  - B. Despite the way things appear (64:10-11)
  - C. Lord, we wait (64:12)

## NOTES

Those praying are very confident of some things. They don't doubt that God is beyond the earth. They don't question the fact that he is all-powerful. They know that he has done great things in the past. He is the God of the nations. This is all important given the present state of things (seen clearly in verses 10-11). This prayer demonstrates great faith; they believe all these things about God though they do not see evidence of it at present.

v2 "Throughout the Bible, from Gen. 3:24 through Exod. 3:1 and Acts 2:3 to Rev. 20:9, *fire* is intimately associated with the presence of the holy God. In no book is that more true than this one (Isa. 4:5; 6:6; 9:4 [Eng. 5]; 10:16; 29:6; 30:27, 30; 31:9; 33:12, 14; 66:15, 16, 24). If God were to come among these people and apply his fire to their unclean lips and hardened hearts, as he had to Isaiah in ch. 6, the brushwood of their lives would burst into flames, and the tepid water of their souls would break into a roiling boil" (Oswalt 1998: 621).

v4 "But what one thing is it that puts the Holy One beyond compare? Is it the power to split the heavens and smash the rocks (cf. Ps. 18:7-15)? No, for Baal could do that, or at least such things could be attributed to him. What truly distinguishes God from the gods in the prophet's eyes is that he is the Savior" (Oswalt 1998: 623).

v4 "He is the only one who will act on behalf of *those who wait for him*.... In many ways, [this] is at the heart of what the book is about. Biblically speaking, "to wait" is to manifest the kind of trust that is willing to commit itself to God over the long haul. It is to continue to believe and expect when all others have given up. It is to believe that it is better for something to happen in God's time than for it to happen on my initiative in my time" (Oswalt 1998: 623).

v4 "The book is about waiting for a God whose face is hidden to reveal himself to his people (8:17); waiting for the restoration of a people from long before they were even exiled; waiting for a

Servant to deal a death blow to sin; waiting for a Messiah to establish his kingdom forever. But as Isaiah and his people wait, they know one thing: unlike all the gods, God will act on behalf of those who wait for him (cf. esp. 25:9; 30:18; 33:2; 40:31; 49:23)" (Oswalt 1998: 623).

v5 "The thought of v. 4 is expanded here. Waiting on the Lord is not passive but active. It is to do *righteousness* (cf. 56:1) with joy, which is, in effect, to *remember* God's ways. Thus to wait for the Lord is to live the covenant life, to commit the future into God's hands by means of living a daily life that shows that we know his ways of integrity, honesty, faithfulness, simplicity, mercy, generosity, and self-denial. The person who does not do these things may be waiting for something, but he or she is not waiting for the Lord" (Oswalt 1998: 623-24).

v6 "It is interesting, and highly appropriate, that he equates *our iniquities* with the *wind*, because just as the dead leaf is helpless before the wind, so the human spirit becomes captive to its sins and is no more able to choose its course than the leaf. The sins come to define us and determine the directions that our lives take. God is the giver of life, and those whose sins cut them off from him as the source will find themselves blown away. The same point is made in Ps. 1, using the figure of chaff" (Oswalt 1998: 626).

v6 "Sin had so pervaded their lives that even the things that most people would usually regard as righteous deeds were in fact more like filthy menstruation rags. This is an honest appraisal of the filthiness of sin, which is relatively rare in the past or today. Too often sin is deemed a slight mistake, a small or relatively minor infraction that is not really significant enough to confess. It is all too easy to overlook sin, forget it, or excuse it, assuming that it will not have a major impact on anyone's relationship to God. Instead, the sinner should follow the example of the person confessing sins in this passage. Sin is a dark and destructive act that makes a person an enemy of God. The sinner is more repulsive than a vile and rancid menstrual cloth. This graphically repulsive imagery is a