LORD COME DOWN

ISAIAH 63:15-64:12

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1) (All Scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted)

In Isaiah 63, the prophet expressed and praised the goodness of God and the assurance of His covenant with His people. From Isaiah 63:15-64:12, the prophet pleads with God to visit His people as He had before confronting their sin, expressing His holiness, and causing things to tremble in His presence. The key verse is Isaiah 64:1. As when God gave the law and Mt. Sinai quaked while Moses was in God’s presence receiving the Ten Commandments, the prophet is requesting for God to manifest himself to the people that the mountains may quake again and the people of God be put in fear, reverence and awe of God, realizing His holiness and their sinfulness.

“On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.” (Exodus 19:16-20)

RESTORE WHAT IS MISSING

“Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me.” (Isaiah 63:15)

This section of Scripture opens with a plea to God to look down from His dwelling place upon His people and restore what is missing in their lives. It is a plea for God to intervene in the lives of His own people. Isaiah is asking God to look from His lofty viewpoint to see man in comparison to God’s holiness not in comparison to other men. Isaiah is not concerned with a horizontal viewpoint but a vertical viewpoint from above. Isaiah had experienced a vertical experience once and it had a tremendous impact upon his life. In that experience Isaiah was looking up. In this passage Isaiah is requesting for God to look down but to achieve the same purpose eventually, a change in the lives of God’s people.

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is
me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:1-5)

Isaiah had seen the dwelling place of God. He now requested God to look down from His throne of holiness and splendor, His dwelling place of glory. Would God be pleased with what He saw? Isaiah was not requesting God to be compassionate and overlook the sins of His people. He was asking for God to take inventory and make the necessary changes in the hearts of His people. Four questions are asked or implied by Isaiah of God concerning His people. Where is the passion? Where are the mighty works of God? Where is the noise and stirring in man’s heart? Where is the burning love for others?

PASSION

Passion has many synonyms which help to define the word: fervor, ardor, obsession, infatuation, enthusiasm, craze, delight, zeal. The ESV uses the word zeal. To understand its use, other Scriptures are noted.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7)

“For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 37:32)

“The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war He stirs up His zeal; He cries out, He shouts aloud, He shows himself mighty against His foes.” (Isaiah 42:13)

God has a passion for His kingdom as seen in the coming of the Messiah. God has a passion for His people as seen in the remnant or band of survivors from captivity. God has a passion against sin and those who propagate anything contrary to God. Christ came to die. Christ came to give life. Christ came to defeat the devil and sin. That passion seen in the purpose and ministry of Christ should also be evident in the lives of His children. Isaiah was questioning where was the passion for God in the lives of His people?

In New Testament terms, this thought might best be exemplified in the Lord’s message to the church at Laodicea. “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:15, 16) The believers at Laodicea were faithful to attend church, act the part of being a Christian but had no real passion for God. They were in a state of spiritual apathy, believing they needed nothing from God, not seeing the truth of their condition. “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:17) They needed a good dose of spiritual awakening like Isaiah experienced. They needed a fresh vision of the holiness of God that would allow them to see their tepid faith. The believers at
Laodicea were not dead but neither were they on fire for God. They just existed, having a faith that revealed no proof of a love for God, a dependency upon God, or a concern about godly things. Christ reprimanded and encouraged the church with these words, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” (Revelation 3:19) They were to be passionate concerning living a life that was holy and sensitive to the truth of sin in their lives. Their lives were to be lives of gratitude zealous to live exactly as God desired of them. Paul rehearsed with Titus the gift of salvation and the goal of the Christian life based upon Christ’s gift, “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)

The question should be asked today, where is the passion for God? May God pierce through the façade of Christian ornaments to the very depths of the believer’s soul and move an apathetic spirit toward an intense zeal for God and His purpose, works and glory.

MIGHTY WORKS

Throughout Scripture writers have rehearsed the mighty works of God and desired that those same works be performed again. The Scripture says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8) What God did in the lives of the people of Israel God has done in the history of the church and God will still do and does in today’s church. The psalmist wrote consistently of the works of God noted by the following examples.

“Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power.” (Psalm 21:13)

“Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all His praise?...Yet He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make known His mighty power.” (Psalm 106:2, 8)

“Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness!” (Psalm 150:2)

How would one describe the mighty works of God?

- Works that are beyond the ability of man
- Works that cannot be explained by the wisdom of man
- Works that confound the understanding of man
- Works that cannot be replicated by man
- Works that cannot be overcome by the power of man
- Works that cannot be denied by the faithlessness of man
- Works that cannot be stopped by the hostility of man
- Works that cannot be destroyed by the ferocity of man

While on his first missionary journey Paul preached in Antioch of Pisidia, rehearsing the mighty works of God in the history of Israel. In that message he cited a quote from Habakkuk which is still true today. “Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.” (Acts 13:41) As someone has said, “If it can be explained
then it is not of God.” The prayer for the church today along with a renewed passion for the things of God is for God to do His mighty works in her midst in such a way there is no denying it is the work of God. The church needs a recurrence of the event cited by Luke in Acts 3 with the lame man sitting at the Beautiful Gate. “And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and his ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” (Acts 3:4-10) From the beautiful habitation of God mentioned in Isaiah to the Beautiful Gate of Acts 3, God’s mighty works are awesome. May God do His mighty works today. Though the signs and wonders of the apostles have not been evident since their days, there are still the works of God to be manifested through His people, causing awe to come upon every soul. “And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.” (Acts 2:43)

STIRRING OF HEARTS

The word for stirring is a word that in most instances means tumult, great sound or noise. Isaiah’s question can be where is the noise of the heart for God? The word is from a root word in the Hebrew that refers to a stir, a commotion, a roar. Though not the word which Isaiah uses, the thought of causing a stir is seen in a familiar refrain. “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!” (Psalm 100:1) The old line, “If that does not stir your fire, nothing will” or other similar expressions can be compared to this idea.

The sin of the people had caused the stirring of the heart to be quieted. God had actually restrained His passion and compassion toward the people because of their sin. This was not God moving away but rather the sins of the people causing God to not be noticed by them. Their sin had severely dampened their sensitivity concerning God, thus there was no enthusiasm or passion and zeal for God or anything pertaining to God.

At times it seems that many a Christian has allowed the fire to be extinguished. It is not that God is no longer residing in the heart. It is the fact that the believer does not listen to God and lean upon God. God is nothing more than one of many aspects of life to be considered not a priority of life to heed. Even the strongest of believers can have moments when the fire burns low and spiritual health is in great need of being reenergized. After the great episode of calling fire down from heaven, Elijah fled to a cave at the threat of Jezebel toward his life. He desired to die. God came in the still small voice and reinvigorated his faith and ministry. Jeremiah wanted to quit preaching but could not because of the fire within. “If I say, ‘I will not mention Him, or speak any more in His name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.” (Jeremiah 20:9) How many Christians have a fire for God within that has to come out? How many Christians have no fire at all that consumes them to be stirred for God?
On the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit empowered the church and the disciples spoke the Gospel in the languages of many attending, having never spoken those languages before, the noise of the event caused a great stir among the people. “And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?’” (Acts 2:6-8) Paul wrote to Timothy, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (2 Timothy 1:6, 7) The majority of Christians will never be in full-time service for the Lord as pastors, ministers, missionaries, etc., but they still have been given a ministry of testimony as the light of the world. That ministry will only shine effectively if the fire is burning brightly. Then the noise of the Lord will be heard.

COMPASSIONATE SPIRITS

Isaiah questioned God if His compassion for His people still was true since His people had stubbornly refused to repent and walk in the truth. Isaiah was wondering if God’s desire and interaction for His people had changed. It had not. His compassion for His own was “new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:23) To live with unconfessed sin is to miss out on enjoying the abundant and merciful compassion of God. When one refuses to acknowledge one’s sin and experience God’s overflowing compassion and forgiveness one will developed a hardened conscience and spirit becoming more insensitive to God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. It will seem as if the believer is fenced off from God’s compassion thus the believer also cannot extend compassion to others.

Christians are to be vessels “useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:21) Christians are to extend compassion and love to others but they cannot if they themselves are not daily experiencing God’s compassion and love. If Christians are involved in sin which goes on and on without ever repenting and asking God for forgiveness, they will not be able to give out because they have not first received. One cannot pour out from the heart when the heart is empty. It is imperative that believers confess their sins daily so as to receive God’s forgiveness daily, not allowing sin to destroy any fruit that is attempting to be produced, choke out any life before it has an opportunity to blossom fully.

Some will say their sin hurts no one but themselves. Everything a person does affects someone else. People can deny all they wish that they have any accountability toward others. As has been said, “No man is an island.” One can try their hardest to avoid people and live the life of a hermit when it comes to relationships. God made man to be relational. It is the created nature of man. Every person has an impact of some type or element upon every other person one meets. Christians cannot have an effectual impact if they are not being daily impacted by God which includes confessing sin and being forgiven and cleansed by God.

SUMMARY

The Apostle Paul wrote, “The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things
are excellent and profitable for people.” (Titus 3:8) Every Christian needs to take an internal look and see if there is still a passion, a burning fire for the things of the Lord. There needs to be a survey by the Christian to see what God is doing within the life or if what God desires has been pushed aside. The Christian should be making the right noises, not being a “noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” (1 Corinthians 13:1) Each Christian should be a vessel where compassion is regularly flowing from the heart to others.

To ensure the Christian sees things with the right focus, the Christian must yield to God for Him to look from His “holy and beautiful habitation.” (Isaiah 63:15) A statement that produces both a reverent fear and a faithful trust is found in Hebrews. “And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13) God sees all things. That thought should produce a healthy reverence of God and fearful accountability to God. God sees all things. That thought should also produce a strong faith that God knows everything about my life and He provides His loving grace and mercy which follows the challenge of Hebrews 4:13. “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Christians need to regularly repeat the words of David. “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Psalm 139:23, 24)

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)
LORD COME DOWN

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)

IDENTITY CRISIS

“For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. Your holy people held possession for a little while; our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary. We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name.” (Isaiah 63:16-19)

What is an identity crisis? An identity crisis is when one goes through an intensive self analysis and explores different ways in which to see one’s self. When first coined, the term mainly referred to the period of adolescence. The term has been used universally to describe anyone on the search of their personal identity.

For Christians an identity crisis is basically living for self or living for the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.” (Romans 7:25) To be called a Christian one should identify with the Christian talk and walk, with the person and the truth of Christ. “For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” (Acts 11:26) A Christian’s identity is based upon the redemption by Christ, living a life of reverence to the Lord, being faithful to the God given responsibilities according to God’s Word, and reflecting glory to God and God alone.

IDENTITY WITH OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

“For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.” (Isaiah 63:16)

The people of Israel recognized God as Father even though it had been many years since God first called Abraham and established His covenant with him, subsequently reiterating it with Isaac and Jacob. The centuries between Abraham, Jacob and Isaiah’s day denied the feasibility of a personal knowledge of each other. That did not prevent the people of Israel from having a personal relationship with God as their Father. The spiritual connection with God for the people of Israel was brought about through their spiritual heritage. Christians should be so thankful for their spiritual heritage. “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” (2 Timothy 1:5)
A spiritual heritage is wonderful to have but it is not a prerequisite to having a spiritual connection or relationship with God. In fact, some people come to the Lord having no spiritual heritage at all in their ancestry. Once they have come to Christ, they should strive to develop a spiritual heritage for those who follow. A spiritual heritage also does not guarantee a spiritual relationship with God. A spiritual relationship with God requires a personal faith. The Jews of Jesus’ day exalted the fact they were descendants of Abraham. In John 8, Christ carries on a dialogue with the Jews. They confidently spoke of their relationship with God because Abraham was their father according to the genealogy of the people. Christ told them if they were truly descendants of Abraham in their hearts they would believe the message of Christ and receive Him. At the end of the dialogue, the Jews maintained their connection to God was based on Abraham and sought to stone Christ. “So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” (John 8:59) The path to a spiritual connection to God can be enhanced by having a spiritual heritage but a spiritual connection with God requires a personal faith. One does not have a spiritual connection with God just because mom and dad know Jesus. Being raised in a Christian home, always going to church does not qualify with God. One must be born again, having a personal experience with God. “But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12, 13) One’s eternal destiny is based on one’s personal faith in God, not the faith of one’s ancestors.

Isaiah wrote of the spiritual connection and the spiritual heritage. He also wrote of the spiritual hope. “You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.” (Isaiah 63:16) There is only one redeemer. He who redeemed the patriarchs, who redeemed the prophets, who redeemed the disciples, who redeemed one’s ancestors, is the same redeemer today. Israel’s hope was not in Abraham but rather in the redeemer.

IDENTITY WITH OUR REVERENCE TO GOD

“O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage.” (Isaiah 63:17)

Having established the truth of a relationship with God and identifying with the Redeemer, Isaiah questioned why there was a distance between God and His people. Isaiah was asking the Lord why He allowed His people to stray, and then hardened their hearts so that they no longer reverenced Him. He pled for the return of a spiritual life among God’s people in which they would be recognized as the true people of God.

The people of Israel had a spiritual wandering, walking astray of the will of God. As a result of this wandering from the paths of God, Israel experienced a spiritual hardening, becoming insensitive to the leadership of God. They had a spiritual dullness, no longer seeing God in the light of His nature. Isaiah prayed that the spiritual heritage would be rekindled as to passion, works, noise and compassion.

One could identify some New Testament passages to relate to Israel’s status with God at this time.
• Spiritual shipwreck: “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” (1 Timothy 1:18-20)

• Spiritual dullness: “About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their power of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:11-14)

• Spiritual barrenness: “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” (2 Peter 1:8, 9)

Isaiah’s request is for the Father to accept the prodigal back home. (Luke 15:11-32)

IDENTITY WITH OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

“Your holy people held possession for a little while; our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary.” (Isaiah 63:18)

Many years after Abraham but before the days of Isaiah, the people of Israel attempted to conquer the land of Canaan. Some of the areas were conquered and certain tribes of Israel ruled over them. Other areas were not conquered and certain tribes of Israel co-inhabited the land with the Canaanites. The tribe of Dan did not conquer their territory, rather fleeing the Amorites who dwelt in their portion of the promise land. The tribe of Dan would seek another area eventually given over to idolatry. “The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain....In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the people of Dan was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in, for until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them.” ( Judges 1:34, 18:1)

The enemies changed from time to time, but Israel never really held power over the land given to them. Eventually the Babylonians would take Judah into captivity and destroyed the temple. The holy people of God no longer had possession of the land God had given. Instead of enjoying the land which flowed with milk and honey, they were subject unto others.

Christians have a wonderful life given by God for them to enjoy. It is called abundant, victorious, fruitful, and eternal. Along with this life is the responsibility to live according to the expectations of God. Christians possess a life filled with endless possibilities of learning, loving and living the truth that is found in Christ. Along with possession of the abundant life is the responsibility to live according to all which God decrees of His children in order to enjoy the fullest of the life given in Christ. There will be conflicts, enemies that try to detour, detain and destroy the Christian walk. The devil is a thief who
seeks to steal the blessings which flow from God to His children. Too many Christians have lost possession of the land and the enemy is living in their midst corrupting their lifestyle. Christians are called overcomers. Sadly, too many Christians have been overcome because of their failure to live responsible Christian lives. Defeat has become their motto instead of victory.

One could say today, “Lord, your holy people were in charge of society for a while but now the enemy steps all over those things considered holy.”

IDENTITY WITH OUR REFLECTION OF GOD

“We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name.” (Isaiah 63:19)

Israel was living like those who had never known God. The danger of not ridding the land of the Canaanites had come to fruition. When Christians allow the enemy to stay alive, the enemy will eventually deteriorate the Christian’s faith enough to rule over them instead of being ruled by them. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian becomes blurred so that no distinction can be seen.

The Apostle Paul admonished, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” (Ephesians 4:17-19) He also wrote, “Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as Children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” (Ephesians 5:7-11)

Christians are people who have been called by the name of the Lord. They should live in such a way that His name is always glorified and honor.

DO I HAVE A SPIRITUAL IDENTITY CRISIS?

- Am I assured in my relationship with the Lord?
- Am I living in respect to the reverence and holiness of God?
- Am I fully enjoying all the victorious life by faithfully fulfilling my God given responsibilities?
- Am I reflecting well upon the name of the Lord?

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)
LORD COME DOWN

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)

INVIGORATING PRESENCE

“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!” (Isaiah 64:1, 2)

In continuing this prayer for God to revive His people, Isaiah requested the Lord’s presence. It has been said of certain people when they enter a room it changes the environment of the room. Isaiah’s thought is for the Lord to come into the presence of His people and change the environment. The backdrop of his thought would be when God gave Moses the law upon Mt. Sinai. Mt. Sinai trembled and the people were warned to not touch or come near the mountain while Moses was with God. There was a spirit of awe and fear. There was no doubt as to the presence of God. All of man’s pride was vanquished. The total focus was on God and not the people.

How much this is needed today. Every day Christians should plead to the Lord for him to make His presence known, to make a difference in their life for that day and while making a difference in their live, He is also making a difference in the lives of others. Let the mountains of life shake at God’s presence. What man cannot move, may God move. What seems difficult to climb, may it be brought low. May hardened hearts shake at God’s presence. May the invigorating presence of God make a difference today. May God’s presence light a fire which consumes all that is sinful and empowers all that is right.

MAY YOUR PRESENCE BURN WITHIN THE HEART

The use of fire in Isaiah’s request signifies that Isaiah was asking God to come consume the trash and fuel the pot. The tool which God uses to consume the trash and fuel the pot is His Word.

- “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:9-11)
- “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” (Psalm 19:7-11)
...that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:26, 27)

After His resurrection, Christ walked with two believers. Unknown to them, He explained every Old Testament passage that related to Him. After dining with them, He opened their eyes and they knew He was the resurrected Christ. After He vanished from their sight, they discussed among themselves how their hearts were on fire as Christ taught them His word. “They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?’” (Luke 24:32)

**MAY YOUR PRESENCE CONSUME THE WEEDS**

Isaiah requested God to come down, making His presence known in such a way as a fire that burns and consumes. The fire was to burn away the brushwood, the small branches and shrubs. The fire was to clear the path of weeds and obstacles for more effective growth in the mature trees and bushes. It was to create a cleaner look, a well kept garden.

Weeds always seem to grow. It does not take much effort to grow a landscape of weeds. Keeping weeds from taking over a garden is difficult work. You cannot attack the surface to expect eradication. One must attack the root. In the Christian life, one does not have to work to grow weeds in life but it does take tremendous effort to keep the weeds out. It takes a fire from God that consumes weeds. This principle is seen in various terms: removing the leaven, removing the dross, purifying life, purging. Each of these ideas has one main focus, to be a more effective vessel for the Lord to use.

- “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- “Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel.” (Proverbs 25:4)
- “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Psalm 51:7)
- “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:6, 7)
- “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:21)

**MAY YOUR PRESENCE CAUSE SPIRITS TO BOIL**

The same fire which consumes the brushwood is also meant to cause water to boil. It is not enough to clean out the garden, the path of service. It is also necessary to have a swelling growth for things of God. Many Christians focus on cleaning up their act but never fill their life with the things of God. Christ shared this illustration. “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through...
waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.” (Luke 11:24-26) Effective Christian living empties self and allows God to fill that life swelling over with His purpose.

The Day of Pentecost in which the church was empowered for ministry by the Holy Spirit is to be evident in the daily ministry of the church. A movement of God that is undeniably only of God should be desired by the body of Christ and only by that movement can effective ministry be performed. “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4) The ministry of tongues, the ability to speak unlearned known languages, was unique to the early church. It was a means of getting the Gospel to various people groups quickly. Once the Word of God was completed the gift of tongues was no longer necessary. Though the gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues is no longer a ministry of the church the same power exists today and it is that power which must swell and boil in the church for an effective ministry.

People are fearful of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, not willing to allow Him to have His perfect way in their lives. Many feel if the Holy Spirit is allowed to swell or boil in their life, then they will have no control and their lives will be much different. That is precisely what God desires. He wants control of the lives of His children and when God is in control lives are tremendously different. The church today needs what the church of Acts experienced. “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31)

MAY YOUR PRESENCE MAKE AN UNDENIABLE STATEMENT

When the fire of God is allowed to burn away the weeds and cause the soul to swell and boil for the Lord, then His name will be magnified. Christians are to be so passionate to make His name known and thus causing a disturbance in the world. There needs to be some showdowns among the people proving the God above is the only true God. Fire needs to come down from heaven and amaze the people.

“And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.’ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, ‘The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.’ And Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of
them escape.’ And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.” (I Kings 18:36-40)

Notice four things which need to be regular occurrences in the life of a Christian.

- Manifestation of the Lord
- Consumption of the sacrifice
- Acknowledgement of the Lord
- Destruction of the wicked

MAY YOUR PRESENCE CAUSE HEARTS TO TREMBLE

One day while keeping the flock, Moses saw a sight he had never seen before, a bush was on fire but it was not being consumed. “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ And He said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God is Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” (Exodus 3:3-6) God’s presence in the bush was unique. God’s presence in the bush and His words from the bush caused Moses to be in fear. It was not a fear of punishment but rather a fear of reverence. God was directly calling to Moses to use him for His specific purpose. Along with the call would come an awesome responsibility. When challenged to go for the Lord, Moses questioned the authenticity and the authority. God’s response was, “I will be with you.” (Exodus 3:12) To be called by God is to be directed by God. To be directed by God is to be accountable to God. To be accountable to God causes one to tremble before God.

What burns in the heart of the Christian creating a passion for God, consuming the chaff, weeds, and dross of life, and swelling into a fruitful effective ministry can only be by the fire of the Lord. There are other fires but they can only destroy and never swell to effective ministry. God had specific directions for fire that was to be used on the altar of incense. Aaron’s sons approached the altar with foreign fire and subsequently lost their lives. “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” (Leviticus 10:1, 2)

To illustrate how one can have the wrong fire burning, Paul’s words to the single will be used. “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” (1 Corinthians 7:8, 9) The fire that burns within the question should only be of the Lord. Every other fire will destroy all in its path. Only the fire of the Lord, His presence, can fuel an effective ministry for the Lord.

Is there a fire burning? Is it the fire of the Lord or a fire of the flesh which burns only to destroy? The true fire of God will not allow one to quit. Jeremiah attempted to quit on the Lord but he had a fire
from God burning within. “If I say, ‘I will not mention Him, or speak any more in His name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.” (Jeremiah 20:9)

Thoughts to ponder:

Does God’s presence burn within the heart?

Does God’s presence continuously burn away the chaff, weeds and dross of life?

Does God’s presence boil over causing a swelling of fruitful ministry?

Does God’s presence have full reign in life so as to make His name known?

Does God’s presence cause a healthy heart submissive and in reverence to the Lord?

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)
LORD COME DOWN

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)

NO ONE DOES IT LIKE GOD

“Nobody does it like Sara Lee.” That slogan and its catchy jingle are memorable. “A date which will live in infamy.” The words of President Roosevelt are as memorable as the events of the attack on Pearl Harbor. “This is one small step for a man, one giant step for mankind.” The words of Neil Armstrong remind people of a huge achievement for man, landing on the moon. Each of these quotes has become familiar refrains to products or special events. Whether a jingle to sell a product or a quote to commemorate an event, a uniqueness or specialty is being noted.

While there are many events in the history of man that are memorable and many jingles that are catchy, none of the events or jingles can compare to the workings of God. Borrowing a phrase from the song “Days of Elijah”, “there’s no God like Jehovah.” God has proven Himself time and time again to astound man. It is a fact. God has done awesome things. It is a fact. God is doing awesome things. It is a fact. God will continue to do awesome things. God is the God of awesome. Isaiah’s thought is for God to do awesome again.

LORD DO IT AGAIN

“When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:3)

Awesome acts are things done that cause man to tremble with reverence and awe. The acts in Egypt and the wilderness may be in Isaiah’s thought when this passage was written. “He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.” (Deuteronomy 10:21, 22) God took seventy people who were predominantly shepherds, placed them in a land for provision, allowed them to become slaves to a heathen king, allowed them to be in bondage for over 400 years, and by His miraculous ways brought them out of bondage as a people probably exceeding 2,000,000 in number. God took an insignificant people and made them into a nation. God hardened a heathen king’s heart that refused to allow God’s people to experience freedom yet those people were made free by awesome acts of God which could not be stopped. He parted waters, made provision of food, water and clothing and redeemed a nation from the clutches of bondage. The insignificant was made significant to God.

Awesome acts are things done with the least possible means of ability or hope. There was no hope for the people of Israel in themselves. They could not overcome the Egyptian armies or rule. Upon being released and subsequently that release being revoked and their lives in danger, the people of Israel faced a formidable obstacle, the Red Sea. God intervened when there was no hope. With the
waters of the Red Sea parted, an entire nation walked across on dry ground. When the armies of Egypt pursued, Israel was concerned, but those same waters which were parted to provide access to freedom were gathered back again to permanently destroy an enemy. Being freed from bondage there was no going back. With the same premise, man is in bondage with no hope for freedom. Man has no merit, no ability, no purchasing power, and no prestige that can achieve redemption. “For consider your calling brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31) The redemption of man is an awesome act of God and God alone in which without God there is no hope for redemption.

Awesome acts are things done that exceed the comprehension of man. Think the loftiest thoughts and God is beyond. Search the deepest truths and God is beyond. Imagine the most grandiose dreams and God is beyond. God’s ways and thoughts are much greater than man’s so as there is no way to compare them. Isaiah wrote, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways.” (Isaiah 55:8, 9) A passage from the New Testament that carries a simila line of thought was given by Paul. “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20, 21)

Awesome acts are things done where the glory can only be given to God. If man can be praised for the action, then the action was not of God thus it is not an awesome act. Awesome acts are those things when looked upon that no reasonable evidence can be found to give credit to man. There is no way a thing could have been accomplished except by God. The act deifies logic, understanding, and even the ingenuity of man. There is only one who can be given the glory and that is the Lord. “Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and know me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight,’ declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:23, 24)

LORD AMAZE ME

“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.” (Isaiah 64:4)

Isaiah is saying, “There is no God at all except for the God.” That ends all conversation. There is no other god in which to compare the God. Ideas can be considered by men to create a god but those ideas can never produce a true god. Man can even consider himself to be a god as Bible characters such as Nebuchadnezzar and Herod proposed. But man in his greatest greatness can never achieve the status
of a god. Man has never heard of a god except for the God. Man has never perceived a god aside from the God. Man has never seen a god but for the true God revealed in Christ. “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known.” (John 1:18) In the most plain and simple truth, there is no God but the God. Others can claim to be a god, people can ascribe the title of god to an entity or being but it is impossible for there to be any other god but the God.

This God of whom Isaiah wrote is the One who acts on behalf of those who trust in Him. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5, 6) God is the God of great acts which He performs because He is love for those who call Him Lord based upon a heart that has truly been reborn by His grace.

When the Christian has done all one can do to find the solution to a problem, to find a cure for a disease, to find the relief for suffering, to find the ease for a burden, to find the answer to the question, there is still hope. God, who should be sought in the forefront of an issue not at the end when there is nowhere else to turn can and will act on behalf of those who wait on him. His actions may very well be such as what defies man’s thinking. The cry should be, “Lord amaze me.” God can do marvelous things. God desires to do marvelous things for His children. God can put the Christian in awe of Him. That should be the desire of each Christian.

When Christ healed the paralytic, the crowd was amazed. “And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, ‘We have seen extraordinary things today.’” (Luke 5:26) When Christ calmed the storms the disciples were amazed. “And the men marveled, saying, ‘What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?’” (Matthew 8:27) Even in His death Christ amazed others. “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (Matthew 27:54) In the ministry of the early church, “And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.” (Acts 2:43)

“By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; the one who by His strength established the mountains, being girded with might; who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.” (Psalm 65:5-8)

The apostle Paul used this text in his letter to the church at Corinth. “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him’...” (1 Corinthians 2:9) Too often people use this verse in reference to heaven. It is true that God is preparing the eternal abode of His church but that is not all that God is preparing. God has a wonderful life for His children while they are on earth. He desires to amaze them while they live among men in this world. The expectation of what God will do should always encourage the Christian. God has the wow factor. Lord, there is no God like you. “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)
LORD COME DOWN

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)

EXPOSE THE TRUTH

The belief system of a person is revealed by the actions of an individual. Many will take a survey and check the point of being a Christian without any life proof to substantiate their claim. Christ said, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.” (Matthew 12:33) There are many people who believe God is real and believe they are connected to God but who have no born again relationship and thus no lifestyle to prove their connection to God. It is more than believing that God is real. “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!” (James 2:19) Some people will die misleading their own souls.

Some people will die and truly have a relationship with Christ but having very little to show or give the Lord in the judgment. These are people who believe but do not practice the Word of God. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Of if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.” (James 1:22-24)

Sin is a daily problem for the believer. The battle against sin and temptation will not end until death. Any Christian who believes sin is not a problem is lying to self and lying about God. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10)

This section of Scripture is a request by Isaiah to God for God to reveal to His people their sin problem and what it has caused in their lives. This is a plea for God to pull away the shades and make His children fully aware of their present standing. It is exposing the truth of their lifestyle and how the current lifestyle compares to the desire of God.

SIN WILL BREAK FELLOWSHIP

“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?” (Isaiah 64:5)

The word “meet” has the idea of striking a covenant with someone to be in league together. Isaiah is stating the fact that God had made a covenant with Israel to be in league together with them. God was fulfilling His part of the covenant expecting His people to remain faithful to Him, joyfully doing acts of righteousness. “Joyfully” is to be glad, literally leap, in doing righteous acts. God is pleased to bless His children who are eagerly excited to live righteous lives.
Isaiah goes a step further in describing those leaping to live righteously by recognizing them with the trait of remembering the ways of God. This is to live with God always in mind. God was considered before every action or decision. God is pleased to bless those who walk joyfully in righteous ways ever mindful of what pleases God.

Sin destroys the blessings, not the covenant. God’s covenant with His people is secure in the character of God. His blessings are removed or ignored when sin becomes the dominant aspect of life. Sin does not break the covenant of God. It breaks fellowship with God and thus His pleasure is not experienced. The word “sinned” is to miss the mark. An illustration of missing the mark is found in Scripture. “And the men of Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered 400,000 men who drew the sword; all these were men of war.” (Judges 20:17) God is not pleased with sin and He will withhold His blessings though always without question stay faithful to His covenant. The question is whether persistent disobedience can be overcome. Isaiah asked, “In our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?” (Isaiah 64:5)

SIN WILL SOIL THE TESTIMONY

“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.” (Isaiah 64:6)

Sin has an effect upon one’s daily relationship with God. It will hinder fellowship. Sin also has an effect on one’s outward witness of the Lord, what the world sees in the Christian’s life about God. Sin makes one’s life unclean, absent of the appearance of righteousness though the heart has the righteousness of God within. Everything the flesh does when it is of the flesh only, not directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is as a polluted garment. The polluted garment is as the menstrual rags used by the women in Isaiah’s day. There is nothing clean about them. Everyone recognizes the unsanitary conditions that are present. A Christian life that is persistently living in sin is an unsanitary life, reeking from uncleanness, having a stench. “Dead flies make the perfumer’s ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.” (Ecclesiastes 10:1) It takes just one mistake to ruin a lifetime of good testimony.

Sin will cause the testimony to fade as a leaf withers. It is still a leaf but it has lost the life. The idea of fade is to act foolishly. When sin continues the perversities of sin will carry one away further than one might even think one might go.

Sin will cause one’s works for the Lord to be in vain. All efforts will be futile. It is as the movie title, “Gone with the Wind.”

SIN WILL DAMAGE THE FOUNDATION

“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.” (Isaiah 64:7)

To call upon the name of the Lord is to recognize the dependency upon the Lord, the accountability to the Lord, and the worship due the Lord. Sin ignores all of these. Isaiah is writing that
the people of God are asleep as far as God is concerned and none of them are waking up to take hold of the Lord. “Take hold” is to be watchful, strengthening, holding fast. It is to live with expectancy from God and to God. It is to live faithfully, thus ever strengthening one’s walk with the Lord. It is to hold fast or securely the very principles of righteous living. Righteous living is the foundation of a house built for God. Without it, the foundation begins to deteriorate. Christians are to be alert to the manner of life God desires for them. “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now then when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13:11, 12) Christians are to ever be more alert the closer the coming of the Lord.

God’s face of blessing is withheld because of sin. Sin has caused God to give His people over to judgment to be delivered into its hand. To “melt” is to give over. Paul wrote, “When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 5:4, 5) This passage does not teach one can lose one’s salvation. It is teaching that God will allow the devil to have his way with God’s children when sin is repeated in the hope that God’s children are awaken to their error and repent, coming back to the faithful way of life expected by God. Isaiah is literally saying that God would give His children over to the hand or power of perversion. It would be hoped that the child of God would become so miserable in sin to return to the Lord. As the prodigal came to the end of self and found misery, he sought to return home even as a servant, so God allows sin to run its course in His children to the point of making them miserable in hope of their return. David wrote, “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah.” (Psalm 32:3, 4)

May the prayer be for God to truly expose His children to the reality of their sin, making their lives miserable until they come to the point of confession and subsequently righteous living. It is not enough to be forgiven. His children must also commit to righteous living.

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)
LORD COME DOWN

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)

REMAKE THIS POT OF CLAY

“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.” (Isaiah 64:8)

“But now”, is a phrase which ties the previous to the current. Isaiah has praised God as being singular and unique. There is only one God and nothing can compare to Him. Isaiah has denoted the sinfulness and unworthiness of man. Now with those thoughts as backdrop, the only God and a sinful man, Isaiah concludes the need for man to yield to the potter. Israel would not have been formed as a nation without God. Israel would have no purpose without God. Israel would have ceased to exist as a nation very soon after its founding if not for the Lord. He is the Father of the Jewish people, the potter who has formed them into a nation loved by God, dependent upon God, and expected to serve God, while frequently praising God. Israel as the clay is nothing within itself and is dependent upon God as the potter for its continuation and purpose.

This same truth is in existence for the Christian. There is no born again without the Lord. There is no purpose without the Lord. Christians are dependent upon God for salvation in its beginning, middle and end. Every day Christians need to be humble and yield to the potter. Every day Christians need to rejoice that they are under the watchful care of a potter who can take the broken pieces and remake a vessel fit for the service of the Lord. May Christians readily ask the Lord, “Potter please remake us, fashion and form us according to your will.”

The illustration used frequently in God’s Word of the potter and the clay has some tremendous pictures that are good examples of the relationship God has and desires to have with His children. Potter is the word form or fashion, used of God in the creation of the world and man. “…then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed.” (Genesis 2:7, 8) What lessons can be learned from the potter and his forming or fashioning of the clay?

The potter makes the clay whatever He desires.

“You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’.” (Isaiah 29:16)

“Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles?’” (Isaiah 45:9)
In both passages, Isaiah is criticizing the people of Israel for basically rejecting God as their maker and the purpose He had for His people. The idiocy of a pot of clay being able to tell its maker, the potter, you made an error in making me is portrayed by Isaiah. God began Israel when He called Abraham, making a covenant with Abraham to establish him as the father of many nations, particularly the nation of Israel. Abraham did not choose God. The nation of Israel did not choose to become God’s people. Their connection to God is totally based upon His sovereignty.

The same is true of the Christian. One does not become a Christian based upon one’s choosing. God first chooses the sinner, draws him unto the Lord and provides the very gifts of repentance and faith. As the potter, God molds and shapes His pot of clay, the Christian, into the design and purpose He chooses. God has a general purpose for every child of God. “For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.” (Romans 8:29) God molds His pots of clay to be like His Son. Just as one can look at paintings or other art pieces and identify the artist because of various similarities between art pieces, so people should look at the various pots of clay God has designed and see a similarity because they are made by the one and the same artist, God.

In specific terms, God as potter chooses various unique purposes for each vessel of clay. These vessels are to be fully used in the manner God has chosen. “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:20, 21) God may make one a pot for the mission field, or a pot for the pulpit, or a pot for the nursery wing at church, or a pot as an educator or a pot for the choir. God does not make mistakes. If He decides a specific purpose for the pot, that will be the best use for that pot. Christians are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

The formed clay glorifies the potter.

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Some pots may seem to carry great value. They shine. They are colorful. They look pretty sitting on a shelf. What good is it for a pot to look nice but have no useful value? Paul wrote that Christians are jars of clay, pots. They may look shiny or colorful. They may make a nice table piece. An empty pot is a vessel for dust collection. A filled pot serves a better purpose. The more valuable the contents of the pot, the more value the pot itself. As jars of clay, Christians portray some sight value, living God obeying and God fearing lives. The great value to the world is not the good life which the Christian may live but the gospel which produces the good life in the Christian. The Christian is not the treasure. It is the Gospel which is the treasure. The role of the Christian is to fulfill the use of which God has decreed for that particular pot. The reflection should be of the potter’s skill, creative ability and artistic quality. Often in stores one will see a display. The display is not for sale but only to create an
appetite for the product. Christians are the display God uses to create an appetite for His gift of salvation. This is one of the reasons Paul wrote, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” (Ephesians 4:1)

The people of Israel were clay pots formed by the Lord. “But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made....the people whom I formed myself that they might declare my praise.” (Isaiah 43:1, 7, 21) As His clay pots which He formed, the people of Israel were created and redeemed for the glory of God to be vessels declaring the praise of the potter. Christians are individuals who have been bought by the Lord, whom He has redeemed for His glory, whom He has redeemed with a purpose, whom He has redeemed that they might return praise to the Lord. Paul wrote that Christians are people who have been adopted by the Lord “according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace....so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory...who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:5, 6, 12, 14)

It is not only the pot serving the purpose for which it was designed by the potter. It is also the pot being the personal design of the potter thus a connection is formed by the potter to the pot. “But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen...I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me...your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb.” (Isaiah 44:1, 21, 24) God made, formed, chose Israel as His own to be His servant. He promised Israel they would not be forgotten by Him. God does not forget His children.

The clay cannot change itself or give itself purpose.

The clay pot could not place itself upon the potter’s wheel and reform itself. Each pot made by the potter is its own unique design. There will be similarities between pots. The process for the potter was not a continuous stamping out of countless pots by various types of machinery. Each pot was handcrafted in its own time. The texture may be different. The size or colorization may be different. The intended purpose may be different. Christians are not stamped out carbon copies of each other. They are called and redeemed by the same Lord. They have similarities because they are made by the same Lord but they also have variety in their purpose and functioning in ministry. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6) Each of the apostles had been called by God. Each of them had unique personalities and backgrounds. The Lord used the uniqueness of their nature and nurture in the work of His kingdom. There are four Gospel writers, not that there are four Gospels, but four different perspectives that together reveal the complexity of the person, nature and work of Christ. Christians will strive to imitate other Christians in their right behavior which is biblical. Discipleship is mentoring and modeling for others how to walk the Christian walk. Yet individuality is not removed. God uses people in their God created unique design to show all facets of His glory and honor.
A broken pot can be remade by the potter.

“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. ‘Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.’” (Jeremiah 18:4-6)

Israel as God’s created and designed pot had become broken. She was of no use to the Lord in her current state. Her life was not hopeless. God as the potter would put her back on His potter’s wheel and remake her again. She would be remade by the potter’s design for the potter’s prescribed purpose and to the potter’s glory. Paul wrote, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:36) The beautiful love story of Hosea and Gomer is a picture of God remaking His love, the people of Israel. Israel had forsaken the Lord, turned her back on serving Him. She would be taken into captivity and abused. The Lord would redeem her from the slave market of sin and restore her to her place, recipients of His grace and mercy, enjoying His unconditional love.

One day Peter did the unthinkable. He denied Christ three times. As the third moment of denial occurred, the eyes of the Lord looked upon Peter. Peter was shattered. Three days later Peter would be forgiven, restored, and established into an awesome empowerment to lead the fledgling church into monstrous growth. Should Christians make every effort to avoid sin? Will Christians succumb to temptation and fall? Can God and will God forgive His own and the gross misconduct? Can God restore fallen Christians to useful purposes? Can fallen, then forgiven Christians live productive lives for the Lord? The answer to all of the above is an eternal, heaven shouting, soul stirring, heart pumping, life cleansing YES!

The old song by Ruby Kitchen and Jane Martin says, “Pick up the broken pieces and bring them to the Lord. Pick up the broken pieces and trust His holy Word. He will put them back together and make your life complete. Just place the broken pieces at the Savior’s feet.”

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)
LORD COME DOWN

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)

“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, has 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?” (Isaiah 64:9-12)

The more awareness and greater respect for God’s holiness, the more awareness and greater understanding of man’s sin will be experienced by God’s people. The Apostle Paul went through a transition of his view toward sin. Paul considered himself to be the “least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle…” (1 Corinthians 15:9) Toward the end of his ministry, Paul saw himself as the worse of all sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) When God’s presence is fully expressed and acknowledged in a child of God’s heart, sin will be more evident in that person’s life. Light truly reveals darkness. God’s holiness reveals man’s sin. So Isaiah wrote for God to not be angry but be compassionate toward His own. He asked God to remember the people belong to Him. A healthy perspective of God’s holiness leads to a healthy humility of the saint’s heart.

Sin made God’s children as a wilderness, an uninhabited plain country with sandy sterile soil. The place of worship was no longer in use. Things that were once sweet had become places of desolations. Isaiah asked whether the Lord would hold back His blessings because of the sins of His people. He wondered if God would hold His peace and stay inactive, afflicting His children beyond measure.

The plea for the Lord to come down was a plea for God’s presence to be fully experienced and whatever that would cause to happen was greatly needed and desired. May God’s children still cry out for the Lord to come down and make His presence known.

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” (Isaiah 64:1)