

# Praying for Revival in Times of Spiritual Decline (part 1)

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[0:00] Isaiah 63, 7-19. I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us.

Yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me.

And so he became their Savior and all their distress. He too was distressed and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy, he redeemed them.

He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.

Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them through the sea with the shepherd of his flock?

[1:06] Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them to gain for himself everlasting renown?

Who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble. Like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord.

This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name. Look down from heaven and see, from your lofty throne, holy and glorious.

Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. But you are our father, though Abraham does not know us, or Israel acknowledge us.

You, O Lord, are our father. Our redeemer from of old is your name. Why, O Lord, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?

[2:09] Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance. For a little while your people possessed your holy place, but now our enemies have trampled down your sanctuary.

We are yours from of old, but you have not ruled over them. They have not been called by your name. If God should give to the Church of Jesus Christ in America a report card today, what would it say?

A? C minus? F? Where we find ourselves in the study of Isaiah is addressing an Old Testament people of God when they were failing, and the report card coming in was not good at all.

They were far from God. Sin had polluted the land. It had destroyed family, their agriculture, their cities, their government, and God was no longer fighting for Israel.

In fact, he had given them over to their enemies and was going to do so even more and was even fighting against them himself. It was a spiritual low point on the chart of Israel's walk with God.

[3:34] And the history of the Church looks like a performance chart of the stock market over the last 50 years. It's not a steady incline.

It's all over the chart, isn't it? It's with ups and downs, highs and lows. So where is the American Church today in our relationship with God?

At a high point or a low point? What do you think? There are some encouraging exceptions, but in the main, I think we would have to conclude that she is in a period of spiritual decline.

We don't have time to identify the markers, but surely a few is that we have lost much of our Christ-like holiness. in the Church.

We look as the world looks, and there's no more the distinction between the world and the Church. We have light views of sin and of God and ignorance of God's Word.

[4:41] A worldly spirit that does not seek God's kingdom and righteousness first, but is taken up with our own things as priorities over his.

Little power with God in prayer. Few genuine conversions. Little influence in the world. We're really too much like the world to be of any challenge to the world.

Someone described spirituality of American Christianity today as being a mile wide and a half inch deep. superficial, shallow, lacking of the reality of the work of the Spirit.

Perhaps the American church is in the same low condition today as what Isaiah found it in his day. But then it begs the question, how are we doing as a local church?

Are we experiencing the reviving influence of God's Spirit? Are we on a spiritual high point or a spiritual low? What do the markers of spirituality have to say about our church?

[5:49] And then even pressing it further, what about you as an individual in the church? Because we are no better. The church is no better than the individuals that make up the church.

We're no better than the sum of our parts. Where are you right now in your relationship with God? Would you say I'm at a high point or at least the arrow's going up or would you have to confess, no, I feel low.

I feel God is distant. I feel I've drifted from Him. I'm less prayerful than I used to be. I don't witness as much as I used to witness. I care less about my neighbors than I used to.

I'm less consistent in the attendance of the means of grace. I'm not as hungry for the Word as I used to be. I'm not pursuing God's kingdom and righteousness as the priority of every day of my life.

How much of the cross is in my life? I don't mean Christ's cross. I mean my cross on which I die every day. When have I last denied myself to pray, to read the Scriptures, to do good to another, the cross of the Christian.

[7:09] Yes, these markers search us as well. But here's where grace meets us in Isaiah 63. If we find ourselves in a spiritual low place, feeling our need for God's reviving, then our text meets us right where we are because it was given to Israel in a low condition.

And it tells us what we are to do when we feel our hearts cooling and not as hot as they ought to be. It says pray. I wonder if we get that.

God's strategy for a church in spiritual decline is to pray. There's a lot of churches that don't even have prayer meetings anymore. I don't think that we're getting the point.

A church in spiritual decline needs to pray. But even better than telling us to pray, our text shows us how to pray.

For our text today, together with the whole of chapter 64, is one prayer of Isaiah. Isaiah. And he stands as a watchman on the walls of Zion and he gives himself no rest and God no rest.

[8:29] And he pleads for God to come and to revive his people. So may the Lord teach us this morning how to pray for reviving in times of spiritual decline.

We have four petitions to the Lord that run right through this prayer. We'll look at two today and then two next week. I'll give them all four to you this morning. The petitions.

Lord, we remember you. We remember you. Second, we miss you. Third, we want you. Fourth, we need you.

Now this morning, we remember you. Number one. Isaiah's been telling us about the glorious future of God's people.

We just sang about it. Is it not encouraging to sing about the day when Jesus Christ will return and we'll see him face to face? Does that not stir our hearts? Is it not good for our souls?

[9:35] And that's what we find in the end of Isaiah. He's pointing us to our glorious future. And he did that in the first six verses of chapter 63 when he showed us Messiah's final victory over all of his and our enemies.

But now, he turns the focus backwards and he looks at Israel's past. And this is something that's interesting about the Christian.

That a Christian can find encouragement whether he looks at it in the future or whether he looks in the past. kids, do you remember that funny little old man in the fairy tale named Rumpelstiltskin? He had an amazing ability. He could spin gold out of straw. And the Christian is able to spin encouragement either out of the future or the past.

And this morning we begin by remembering the past. Looking backwards. Verse 7 Isaiah's taking us on a look backwards.

[10:48] I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord the deeds for which he's to be praised according to all that the Lord has done for us past tense. Yes, the many good things he has done for the house

of Israel according to his compassions and many kindnesses.

Now the entire history of Old Testament Israel is one long record of God's loving kindness to his people. And Isaiah sets himself to cover that ground.

At least the high points of it. To count their past blessings and to name some of them one by one. And he's recounting them for himself for Israel but he's also recounting them to the Lord as we'll find in verse 14.

So he starts at the beginning of their relationship to God. God chose us. We were nothing. We were sinful. We were idolaters and God came and chose us to be his people.

He entered into a covenant with us in which he said I'll be your God you will be my people. We didn't deserve that. We deserved hell from God forever.

[11:59] That's all we deserve. What grace that he would choose us to be his people and enter into a covenant with us. And so God says in verse 8 surely they are my people.

That's the language of a covenant. My people. Surely they are my people. Sons who will not be false to me. And so he became their savior. And God lived up to what it meant for him to be their father.

father. He saved them. He delivered them from Egypt. Now whether they would live up to what it means to be a son of this God. Well that's another matter.

And when God says surely they are my people's sons who will not be false to me. It's not that God is overestimating them and was later surprised when they ditched him. No.

He's just expressing what God might rightly expect from these who he had chosen by grace and had saved from Egypt.

[13:07] So they were chosen. They were saved. And they had his sympathy. This is another past mercy. 400 years they were afflicted in Egypt.

And yet in all their distress he too was distressed. Isn't that beautiful? Parents because of your love for your children when they go through afflictions you count them as your own don't you?

You feel them as much as if they were your own. Why? Because you love them that much. You identify with them. Their distresses are your distresses and it's the same way with God and his sons.

In all their distress he too was distressed even though many times their distress was brought on by their own sins and departures from God still he was distressed in their distresses.

Child of God you cannot be distressed and he not feel it. So great is his love for you. We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses.

[14:22] no he does sympathize. We have his covenant that made us his people. We have his salvation his sympathy.

Furthermore we have his presence. For the angel of his presence saved them verse 9 says. A reference to the Lord himself. He saved them. He's here called the angel of his presence. He didn't save them from afar but he saved them near.

He was an ever present savior and help to them. Remember how he came and dwelt in the cloud. Wherever they went there he was an ever present help and savior to them.

Then the verse ends in his love and mercy he redeemed them. Yes they had his redemption and it was all because of his love and mercy. His heart was moved with pity for them and so he redeemed them and he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

He redeemed them out of Egypt and he lifted them up and carried them right through the wilderness those 40 years and brought them into the promised land. He carried them like a father in his love and tender mercies for his two year old son might pick him up on a long walk home because he sees he's tired.

[15:43] So the Lord did for his people. Now all these things that God had done for them spell one thing. I love you. They're all expressions of God's love for his people.

Zion. He had set his love on them and all that he did in his actions of saving and destroying their enemies and sympathizing with them and keeping them it was all expressions of his loving kindness toward him.

Now dear Christian your history of God's love to you includes all these same things. He chose you in him before the creation of the world. He chose you to be his people.

In love he predestined you to be his sons. He saved you not just from some captivity in Egypt but from your sins and the hell they would have brought you to.

That salvation salvation. That we need to look back and to remember. We go back to Calvary and we remember there. There we have that expression that demonstration of his love for us you see. [16:54] All that he's done for us in the past is demonstrating this one thing. How kind, how good, how merciful God is to us. Yes he saved us. So we go back and we see this vast history.

You know we have a lot more history to look back on than Isaiah's hearers. We have 2700 more years of God's mercies to his people. And so we look at his incarnation.

We look at his perfect life. We look at his death, his resurrection, his ascension. All for us because he loves us. He daily is with us.

He comes and dwells in us by his spirit. He carries us. Goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. We look back and we see that and we're meant to see God loves us.

Yet, verse 10 says, they saw, had all this rehearsed to them, yet, against the backdrop of all these mercies received, they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.

[17:55] In other words, they didn't remain true as it might be expected of those who had been saved by grace. Instead, they rebelled against the one who had saved them.

They turned their backs on the one who brought them out of Egypt. And so, he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.

Verse 10 finishes. When they rebelled, they treated God as their enemy and so he treated them as his enemy. He turned from them and treated them as his enemy.

And this rebellion of Israel was not just a single incident. It wasn't something that happened once and it was over. It was their whole history. When they finally, after 40 years in the wilderness, come to the promised land, Moses says to them in Deuteronomy 9 and verse 7, remember this, from the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord.

Wow, from the very start, you have been rebellious. And it was the same thing. They'd walk with God a while during the period of the Judges and then they would rebel against him.

[19:08] And that cycle throughout the whole Judges, throughout the whole time of the kings. And at the end of the period of the kings, God says I'm going to wipe out Jerusalem. I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies.

They will be looted and plundered by all their foes because they've done evil in my eyes and provoked me to anger. From the day their forefathers came out the whole checkered history is marked with rebellions, departures from the Lord.

And this is what caused God to turn and fight against them. That's why the northern kingdom had already gone off into captivity to the Assyrians in this southern kingdom to whom Isaiah is writing is soon to go off into Babylon.

God is fighting against his people. earlier when he was fighting for them no one could stand in front of them. Nations greater than them, coalitions of nations, God was fighting for Israel.

But then they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. The people of God cannot afford to grieve the Holy Spirit. Let us learn that the greatest threat to the church is always ourselves.

[20:31] Always ourselves. It's not the enemies outside. God can handle the Assyrians just fine. He can handle the Babylonians, the Philistines, the communists, the radical Muslims, the atheists, the post-modernists, whoever it may be.

But when we grieve the Spirit of God in rebellion against him, we cause him to turn and fight against us undisciplined.

you remember the Moabites that were attacking Israel and they hired a prophet named Balaam to come and curse Israel so that they might win the battle against Israel.

And as hard as Balaam tried to curse them because he wanted the payoff, every time he opened his mouth to curse, a blessing tumbled out of his mouth. And he just said, I can't curse them.

God has blessed them and I can't reverse it. The current of blessing is flowing from God and I can't turn it around into a curse. You see, who are the Moabites? They're nothing as long as God is blessing and fighting for Israel.

[21:43] Nothing can stop them. But then Balaam took a different strategy. He got the Moabite women to tempt and allure the Israelite men into sexual immorality in an orgy to their idols.

And God was furious. And he who once fought for them fought against them. You see, if God before us, it doesn't matter who's against us.

But if God's against us, it doesn't matter who's for us. We cannot afford to have God in discipline fighting against us. And that's precisely what had happened to Israel.

So our greatest need is always to be saved from ourselves lest we grieve the Spirit, lest we rebel against Him and grieve Him away. How much of the church's present impotence and weakness is due to having grieved the Holy Spirit?

He's the Spirit of holiness. There is not one sin mortified apart from the Spirit's influence. If He's grieved away, the battle's over with sin.

[22 : 54] He's the Spirit of truth. And apart from Him teaching us, we will not feast on Christ and the Word of God as we ought. He's the great convictor and converter of sinners, the one who gives new birth.

There will not be conversions without the Holy Spirit. We can't afford to grieve the Spirit. So let's be careful not to grieve Him and if we have to confess and to forsake the idols that drove Him away. Now this was the great challenge to faith in Isaiah's hearers. They were going to find God fighting against them and fighting for the Babylonians and trampling them in battle.

It's indeed bitter to have God fighting against you. But sometimes that's the very discipline that we need in order to wake us up. To begin recalling those better days when God was fighting for us and when His loving tenderness just engulfed us and we sensed His nearness and we saw His power and we saw Him working on our behalf, building His kingdom here on earth and so under the smart of Him fighting against us, we remember those days when He fought for us.

And that's what happens here. Verse 11, then His people, after God was fighting against them, then His people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and His people.

[24 : 27] Remember those days. Oh, how God was fighting for Israel. Remember the ten plagues. Remember the Red Sea. And that's what He's saying. But everything they remembered about His past kindnesses provoked this question in them.

Where is He now? This God who was so near and so great and acting for us and so powerful, where is He? Verse 11, where is He who brought them through the Red Sea with the shepherd of His flock?

Where is He who sent His Holy Spirit among them as in the pillar of cloud? Where is He who sent His glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand to work those glorious plagues and to open the Red Sea?

Where is He who divided the waters before them all to gain for Himself everlasting renown? Where is He who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble like cattle that go down to the plain. They were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. Where is He who took them from bitter slavery in Egypt and brought them into the promised land with all of its blessings where they were able to be as a people at rest like cattle grazing in a fertile valley?

[25 : 44] But here's the question, where is He? Where is He? And we see that all along Isaiah has been rehearsing this before the Lord Himself.

It's where are you? verse 14 ends, this is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name. You see, He's been doing this whole rehearsal, looking back, remembering, yes for Himself, yes for Israel, but He's been doing it before the Lord.

He's saying, Lord, remember all you did for your people, all your power on their behalf, all your compassion in spite of their offensive backslidings and rebellion and all in order to make for yourself a glorious name.

But Lord, that was then, this is now, where are you? Where is your tender mercy now? Where is your power? Where is your zeal? Was it all for nothing?

And then He begins to pray, you see. And here we see the right use of memory in times of spiritual decline. Remember, remember God's past blessings to us and as we do, His absence, the absence of the expressions of love and power with us will stand out in stark contrast.

[27 : 08] This is one of the things that happens when we read of God's past revivals. When we read the book of Acts, when we see God's power upon His church, we come and say, where are you today?

Why is the church so weak today, so unholy today? And we're made to long for God to come and to do in our day what He did in previous days.

That's the way Habakkuk speaks. Lord, I've heard of your fame from the past. I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day. In our time, make them known.

In wrath, remember mercy. There's the prayer for revival. Do these deeds again, Lord. Come again in mercy. Come again in power. Act on behalf of your people.

Once again, it was the same for David in Psalm 44. We have heard with our ears, O God. Our fathers have told us what you did in their days. In days long ago, how you drove out the nations and planted our fathers.

[28:13] You fought for us. But now, Lord, you've rejected and humbled us. You no longer go out with our armies. Awake, O Lord, he says.

Rouse yourself. Rise up and help us. Redeem us because of your unfailing love. So the memory of past mercies and power and tenderness cause us to see God's absence.

And we begin to pray, not just, Lord, we remember you, but we miss you. We realize something's missing. And it's not a new technique to fill the building.

No, we need something far deeper than that. We need you. We're missing you. No. And that becomes the heart out of which this prayer just erupts as Isaiah pours out his heart to the Lord for fresh revival upon a people in decline.

And so he is encouraged to pray. He finds ground to pray in God's character, in God's covenant, and in God's name.

[29:39] And those are the last three points here under we miss you. He starts in verse 15. Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. It's like saying, look, Lord.

Remember how Hezekiah the king did it when he brought the letter, the threatening letter from Sennacherib in before the Lord? And he said, Lord, look, can you read what they're saying about you?

And that's what he's saying here. Lord, look, give your full attention to us. See us here, wandering away in our, or pining away in our sin and our weakness and our enemies triumphing over us. Isaiah believes that if God would just look on their present state, his heart of love and compassion would run out to them and he would show them mercy.

So look down from heaven at our pitiful state, Lord. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us.

[30:42] We miss you, Lord. Where's that zeal you had for your people of old? Where's your might with which you smashed our foes? Where's your tenderness with which you dealt even with your sinning people?

Where's your compassion and pity? We don't see it anymore. Indeed, you're withholding it from us. Notice Isaiah's faith in God's character.

Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. That's important that we see. He doesn't say it's gone. He said they're just being withheld. They're still there in you.

I know that Isaiah is saying. But you're holding them back like a dam holds back pent up waters. So there's God and he's got plenty of tenderness and compassion for his people.

But he says you're holding them back. He knows God's character does not change. Remember, he's just been on this remembering of all God's loving kindness and mercy.

[31:51] And Lord, I know you don't change. So I know that that is still in your nature. You still have this love for your people, Zion. God's character. And Isaiah is confident that God cannot be indifferent to the needs of his own people.

That's the kind of God he is. He delights in the well-being of his servants. No, he's just holding himself back. He's just holding himself back.

Maybe like you, parents, when you would just rather lavish good gifts upon your child, but you know that because of their behavior, that would simply spoil them and you need to discipline and there must be some kind of restraint upon that expression of your love for the time being.

And you love them in a different way, don't you? He's just holding himself back. Is God withholding blessing from us today?

Well, we dare not go on living as if this is okay with us. Well, it's God's sovereign. He blesses one era of his church and other times he doesn't. No, we must take the posture of Isaiah.

[33:05] It's not right, Lord. It's not okay. We miss you. We don't want to go on without you. We want to see your zeal and power, your tenderness and compassion flowing upon us.

Unstop the dam. Stop restraining yourself. Let it flow. Isaiah's faith in God's character. But then we see his faith in God's covenant.

Remember, the covenant establishes the relationship. God's their God. They are his people. God is their father. They are his sons. And he now is pleading the covenant in verse 16.

But you are our father. And tender mercies and compassion are things that fathers show to their sons. So please, you are our father.

Even though we don't look like your people presently, you are our father. Even though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledges. Now these were the patriarchs, the fathers of Israel.

[34:06] The earthly fathers. You remember Abraham, the father of Israel? He's a man who believed God. He feared God. He obeyed God.

But Isaiah is saying, we, the offspring of father Abraham, have drifted so far from you, Lord, that even if Abraham came back and visited us, he would not recognize us to be his offspring.

Where is their trust in God? Where is their fear of God? Where is their obedience to God? These aren't my people. Remember in John 8 when some people tried to claim Abraham was their father and Jesus says, no, you may have the physical descendancy from me, but you are of your father, the devil.

You don't have the marks of your father, Abraham. He loved me. He pleased me. He obeyed me. And so even Abraham would not recognize us.

And if Jacob, who was named Israel, if he came back and we bear his name, the very name of the Israelite, got their name from their father, Jacob, who was called Israel.

[35:17] And if Israel was to come back, he would be too embarrassed to own us as his descendants. We've wondered so far from what we were called to be. I wonder sometimes if the apostle Paul or James or John or Peter came and visited us and lived in our homes with us for a month, would they say, this is strange stuff we're seeing.

They came to church with us. Would they recognize apostolic Christianity that they preached and that they lived as they looked at our churches today and as they worshipped and followed us into our homes and our workplaces and into our schools?

Or would they say, we don't recognize this as the offspring of what we were given from Christ to preach? What would Calvin and Luther and the Puritans and J.C.

Ryle say about American Christianity today? Although the great fathers of the church, the great fathers would have nothing to do with us yet.

Oh, Lord, you are our father. Our redeemer from of old is your name. This doesn't change, Lord. You called us to be your people. We are your people.

[36:36] You are our father. And so he's pleading. His covenant. You've attached your name to us.

Therefore, you're still our father. Now, verse 17 shows us just how far they drifted from God. Why, oh Lord, you make us wonder from your ways and harden our hearts so that we do not revere you. Isaiah is not blaming God for their sins. He's not saying God forced us to sin. Rather, he's saying, no, we quit revering God as a nation. We quit one.

We started wondering from his commands and we hardened our hearts to the point where God in judgment gave us over to our hard hearts. He hardened us like Pharaoh who hardened his heart and wouldn't let Israel go.

So what did God do? God in judgment hardened his heart. He left him to his hard heart. God giving men over to what they have chosen, to what they want so badly.

[37:36] It's his judgment upon them. He leaves them to themselves. So imagine there's a lump of moist clay here and it's very, very pliable and you can shape it into anything you want it to be.

And I plop it down here. And here's the question. What has to be done to harden that clay? The answer is nothing. Just leave it alone.

It has all the hardening properties right within it. Just leave it by itself and it will dry up and grow brittle and hard all by itself. Do you see how dependent we are upon the Lord?

Do you see how badly we need him? If he did not continually work with our hearts, working in graces of his spirit, powerfully, loving us, shaping us, we would grow hard if he just left us to ourselves.

And if we play around with sin and think at any time we can give it up, we may find that God just leaves us in the grip of that sin to teach us a lesson, to show us, no, we dare not play with sin.

[38:51] Our hearts can easily grow hardened under the power of sin. But Isaiah reasons if God has hardened us, if this is his doing, then he can undo it.

And so he prays, return to us. Don't leave us alone. Don't leave us just to get hardened further in our sins and to go on in our own ways. Return, he says.

Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance. You see his use of your, that's covenant language. Return to your servants, to your people, to your sons, your inheritance. For he will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever. For he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. In the furnace God may prove us, thence to bring thee forth more bright, but can never cease to love us.

Thou are precious in his sight. And so Isaiah knows, we're your people, Lord. We need you. So return to us.

[39:51] You must return to us if we're ever to return to you. Christ has been exalted to give repentance to Israel. Psalm 80 verse 14 says, return to us, then we will not turn away from you.

Revive us and we will call on your name. Restore us that we might be saved. And so he's pleading God's covenant. Remember, we are your people.

We are yours. And that's how he ends this passage. We're yours from of old, but you've not ruled over them. These nations that are now, have now trampled us. They have not been called by your name.

And the implication is we have. And here he pleads God's name. God's name. We have been called by the name of God.

And Isaiah knows God's zeal for his own name. The whole of Israel's history, God was saving his people in order to make a name for himself. Verse 12. His whole motivation, his ultimate motivation, I should say, in saving his people is to gain for himself everlasting fame.

[40:59] Verse 14. To make for himself a glorious name. Isaiah knows that. That God has a very zealous, tender heart for his name. Yes, for his people.

Those that he's made his people. But also for his name. And so when God was about to wipe out Israel and start over, this is the way Moses prayed. Why should the Egyptians say it was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, to wipe them off the face of the earth? Is that what the reputation you want? Do you want nations thinking that you hate your people? Well, so what's the lesson for us? Well, we too can pray.

Not only we are your people, Father. Have mercy upon us. Remember all those things you did for us in the past and do them in our day. But. And return to us.

But Lord, remember your name. We bear your name. We're called Christians. Christians. We bear the name of Christ.

[42:02] Christ, we bear your name. Don't let us drag it through the mud. Don't let the church today send a wrong message to the world about our glorious Savior. Come and do something for the sake of your name.

Come and make us more like Jesus Christ. That we might reflect the glory that is his. Do something for the sake of your name. So he pleads.

God's character. I know you haven't changed. You're just withholding it. Open up the floodgates and let your mercy and your love flow to us. Oh, Lord, we are still your people, though we don't even look like it.

You're still our Father. Come and do us good. And Lord, we bear your name. Do something for the sake of your name. So Isaiah's audience is in spiritual nosedive.

And Ray Ortlund says they need renewal. Every generation does. Can't you say amen to that?

[43:04] They needed renewal. Every generation does. Every generation needs to rediscover afresh in its own experience what Christ is worth and what it means to live flat out for him.

And that's why we pray. Lord, look on us. In our weakness. In our sin. In the ways that we've grieved you.

Forgive us. And come and heal us. You see, we're leaky buckets. Constantly needing to be filled with the Spirit. Our love and zeal are weakening and constantly needing to be revived.

We're straying sheep constantly needing to be restored. And we're drifting boats constantly needing to be drawn near to God to have him return to us.

And so may our response to this word this morning, if we see the church of Jesus Christ at a low point, may it be that we have a holy discontent to not be satisfied.

[44:09] Not be satisfied with the status quo, but to become one of those pleaders on the wall with Isaiah. That we'll give ourselves no rest and God no rest. And we'll say, Lord, we remember.



We remember the deeds. The mighty deeds you did of old. We remember your character. We remember your covenant.

We remember your name. And we miss you. So return to us for your name's sake. Let's pray. We thank you, Father, for this word from Isaiah.

We thank you that you do not act as if your people are perfect. You tell it like it is.

You show us your people in all of their weakness and in their worldliness, in their rebellion. And it's upon that backdrop that you display to us the amazing character of you, our God, that have chosen us to be your people, that are so committed to us that you would send your son to die for us and your spirit to live within us.

[ 45 : 22 ] And so we pray for your mercy's sake. Come and heal us. Come and make your church more like Jesus Christ. Make us more obedient to those commandments that our Lord Jesus has given us.

Make us more zealous to see his kingdom come, his will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven. And we pray for the sake of your name that you would make us good representatives before a watching world.

Hear us then. Out of the bowels of your love, out of the depths of your heart, come and revive us again. And bring glory to your name we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our closing hymn is an opportunity to respond to God's word. Do we feel him distant? Do we feel him far off?

Isaiah says our cry should be return, Lord, return. And in this song we pray, draw us nearer, Lord. Draw me nearer, nearer.

[ 46 : 31 ] Dissatisfied with any distance between our souls and the Savior. Let's stand as we sing from the overhead.