

## Isaiah 63:1-6 (NKJV)

**1 Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This *One who is* glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?-- "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."**

**2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?**

**3 "I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one *was* with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.**

**4 For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.**

**5 I looked, but *there was* no one to help, And I wondered That *there was* no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me.**

**6 I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."**

Last week we spoke about the danger of our wrong assumptions leading to bad conclusions. We may have ideas about what **good** is and what **God** is and those **assumptions** lead us to believe that this God described in the Old Testament is not good. And that would be a very wrong conclusion. And it is again, based on seemers that are broken. Humility admits that, standing before God we know **nothing** and He knows **all**. He has created our existence and He has every right to **evaluate it** and **demand from us** as He sees fit. That is where we must start from our passage this morning.

Now, to begin, let's look at an extreme. Let's start with a man like Hitler. He led an organization to exterminate millions of people, like animals. And most of them died slow agonizing deaths in disgrace and humiliation. What we read in the history books was cruelty for the sake of cruelty. It was sheer evil unleashed on a race of people. Now what is the just treatment for a man that is so evil and has caused such pain on fellow humans?

There are countless people like this in the annals of human history. We may not know any personally because our environment may not allow this kind of hateful treatment of humans, but if the environment allowed it, it would spring out of people, just like it did of so many of the German soldiers who carried out the acts of cruelty.

Now what should God do about people like this?

There is a part of us that gushes out- God should make Hitler suffer for all the people he made suffer.

Now, imagine taking a son of yours, and if you have a son it might be easier to imagine. And sending that son to save a people with a deadly disease. And he carried the cure to them. And instead of receiving the cure and being thankful, they hatefully killed your son. And those who played no part in the killing still enthusiastically agreed with it. What do those people deserve?

Or even imagine creating a humanity and providing them with all the resources to live. And instead of loving and respecting the Creator and dealing with the creation as He instructed, they choose to do exactly whatever they feel like doing. And they show disdain toward even **the idea** of a Creator. What do those people deserve?

We need to enter our passage with that kind of understanding. We need to see it from God's perspective, to the degree that we are able to.

**<sup>1</sup> Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?-- "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."**

To understand our passage we must understand what Edom and Bozrah are and what they represent, to understand what image they would **conjure** in the hearers of Isaiah's words.

Edom was a nation south of Israel and Bozrah was its capital city. Do you remember the story of Jacob and Esau?

**Genesis 27:41 (NKJV)**

**<sup>41</sup> So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."**

Now there was a little reprieve when Jacob met his brother later on in Genesis. Esau did not kill him. But the stage was set for what was to follow. Esau was the founder of Edom. And the rivalry between **he who had God's blessing** and **he who did not** was passed on and it escalated.

Edom hated Israel so much that over time Edom became known and understood as a country that held **absolute malice** toward Jacob. When used in prophecy Edom is **humanity at its worst**. It hates God and the choices God makes. It finds its satisfaction in the here and now. It hates those who **live by faith in God** and **depend upon God** for His blessing and guidance.

Our brother Ortlund says this:

Augustine saw the human race divided into **the city of God** and the **city of man**. The city of God is everyone who **loves God**, even to the extent of **contempt toward self**. The city of man is everyone who **loves self**, even to the extent of **contempt toward God**. Each one of us lives in one city or the

other. And our true loyalty stands out in the way we treat God's people. Bob Dylan sang about this:

Go ahead and talk about him because he makes you doubt,  
Because he has denied himself the things you can't live without.  
Laugh at him behind his back just like the others do,  
Remind him of what he used to be, when he comes walkin' through.  
Stop your conversation when he passes on the street,  
Hope he falls upon himself, oh, won't that be sweet  
Because he can't be exploited by superstition anymore  
Because he can't be bribed or bought by the things that you adore.  
When the whip that's keeping you in line doesn't make him jump,  
Say he's hard-of-hearin', say that he's a chump,  
Say he's out of step with reality as you try to test his nerve  
Because he doesn't pay tribute to the king that you serve.  
He's the property of Jesus  
Resent him to the bone  
You got something better,  
You've got a heart of stone

*Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word - Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.*

End quote

So Edom is all those who are not the people of God. They may appear to be nice people. In fact, in our environment we are surrounded by people who will not bow their knee to God but do very kind gestures toward their fellow human beings. And it can be confusing to us. We might believe like the girl in Elton John's Tiny Dancer when faced with people handing out gospel tracts that "the boulevard is not that bad." But we don't see the boulevard with all restraints removed. We don't see what these nice citizens would do if they were free to do anything. But God does. And God knows.

Now, when we understand what Edom is, this next text becomes even more frightful.

Now who is approaching the walls of Jerusalem?

**This *One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?*-- "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."**

Here comes a mighty one who is decked out in glorious clothing. He is the hero of heroes. He will make any science fiction scenario look mild. He is **power personified**. He is traveling in power, a force that cannot be stopped by anyone with any thing.

The wording in Hebrew conveys someone who is completely victorious in battle.

Then see what He says.

**"I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."**

This is not saying that this victor speaks righteous things. He is saying that He speaks in **the realm** of righteousness. In essence He is saying that what **He says is what He does**.

Those who are closest to us know our inconsistencies. We like to think that **what we say is what we do**, but our spouses or friends can often dispel that myth. We do not always speak in righteousness. We often speak with good intentions but we often fail to deliver on them.

That is not like Christ. Christ is always right in **what He says** and in **what He does** and they are **the same**. In fact with Christ sometimes speaking the word and doing the act are the same thing. He spoke worlds into existence. In our text in Isaiah He is portraying Himself to the watchman on the wall, the one pestering God for the salvation of His people, as **one mighty to save**.

Now think about this. If you were the watchman on the wall, and you saw this obvious mighty warrior, this undefeatable enemy coming up the road, what is the first thing you would want to know?

Are you **for me** or **against me**?

Well the mighty warrior clarifies this right off the bat. He says that He is **mighty to save**.

Now wait. To save? What we are about to see is a blood bath, massive destruction. How can this have anything to do with **salvation**?

As we said earlier, there are only two sides in the world of men. There are those who are aligned with the Kingdom of God and there are the enemies of it. Salvation will never be complete as long as the enemies exist. The gates of the city cannot be left open if there are enemies about. To complete salvation, all the enemies must be removed. So, as much as we rejoice that Christ shed His own blood for our salvation, we must learn to be glad that the blood of His enemies will finish that salvation for us. The **power** of sin has been removed by Christ's blood. Part of the process of removing the **presence** of sin will require the blood of Christ's enemies. But notice the emphasis. It is not on **destruction** but **salvation**. He is mighty **to save**. That is what He is using His might for.

Now the watchman asks a question.

**<sup>2</sup> Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?**

The watchman notices that these regal clothes are stained. They look almost

like He has gone out in these dress clothes and trampled on grapes. The clothing is totally stained, but it is clear enough to see that the whole garment is not the same color.

**<sup>3</sup> "I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one *was* with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.**

**<sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.**

**<sup>5</sup> I looked, but *there was* no one to help, And I wondered That *there was* no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me.**

**<sup>6</sup> I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."**

Here is our loving Savior. Here is the one who trades us **our ashes** for **His beauty**. Here is the one who calls us by the pet name- **My delight is in her**. This is He who has been so **patient** and **kind** and **loving** to us. We might be shocked to see this vivid picture of our Savior looking **so much different** than He looks to us. We see the **tender Father**. Christ's enemies experience **His fierce wrath**. And there is nothing inconsistent.

We have got to get into our heads what a big deal sin is. Until we do, we cannot understand the actions of our Savior. Sin costs the life of everyone who commits it. It has with it a death sentence that it richly deserves. For believers, Christ's death sufficed so that we did not have to face the eternal death sentence. For non believers, they have chosen to pay it themselves. And that will be awful.

In case we think that Isaiah's vision might be an exaggeration-

**Revelation 19:11-16 (NKJV)**

**<sup>11</sup> Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.**

**<sup>12</sup> His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.**

**<sup>13</sup> He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

**<sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.**

**<sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike**

**the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

**<sup>16</sup> And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

### **Revelation 6:15-17 (NKJV)**

**<sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,**

**<sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"**

**<sup>17</sup> For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

Like CS Lewis wrote in his children's stories, Our God is not safe. He is good. But we are foolish to think that he is not also very very dangerous. Those who mock God have no idea what they are doing. The only thing that keeps them from trembling in their dress shoes is that they are **ignorant** of who God is. On the day they discover what they have done, they will experience fear and terror that no Hollywood movie can capture. And there is no escape. At all. Anywhere.

And notice in the wording In Rev 6:16. **The wrath of the Lamb.** People do not usually choose a frightening **lamb** as a beast to fear. While Christ may be our Lamb of God, the sacrifice for our sin, He is not limited to extending only Grace. He is also righteous. And this Lamb, while He is **amazingly kind** to His friends, is also **terrifying** to His enemies.

So our picture in our text is of a warrior who, single handedly slaughters all of His enemies, and ultimately all of the enemies of His dear ones. It is a blood bath. And the imagery here, again, is more graphic than the translators wanted to emphasize.

And in this blood bath, Christ emphasizes that He had no human help. Nor did He need any. There is no uncertainty about who wins a battle of good and evil. In fact, it is not as much a battle as it is a testing ground. When Christ wants evil to end, it ends. When He wants suffering to end, it ends. When He wants sin to end, it ends. And He needs no human help. The credit is His and His alone.

Christ paid to redeem us **all alone**. Christ will destroy His enemies **all alone**.

**<sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.**

The day of vengeance and the year of My redeemed are two heads of the same coin. It is the day of **salvation** to one and the day of **damnation** to the other. Even the destruction is paving a way for salvation. That is what God is like. That should drive us to consider what Isaiah said to us earlier.

### **Isaiah 8:11-15 (NKJV)**

**11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:**

**12 "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.**

**13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; *Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.***

**14 He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

**15 And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken."**

Isaiah has walked us through the reasoning of whom we should fear. He warned us of this other side of God. **Hallow** the Lord. **Fear** the Lord. **Dread** the Lord. If you want to reckon with the greatest enemy a person could have, do business with God. He is greater than any enemy who could ever come against you.

Your eternal destiny rests on what you do with Jesus Christ. He can be **your sanctuary**. Or He can be that thing that **dooms you**. But He can be nothing in between.

We know that the Old Testament is not the only place where we receive warnings of the danger of treating God flippantly.

### **Romans 11:22-23 (NKJV)**

**22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.**

**23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.**

We need to understand that good theology doesn't save anyone. There is no one who is saved by having good theology. We are saved by having faith in Christ.

### **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)**

**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,**

**9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

**10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

You see **we have faith, believing good theology**, but the theology without faith will never save us. The demons have some good theology.

But if we have faith, faith results in action. It results in works. It results in obedience. Not perfect obedience. Not perfect works. But it is observable. The resurrection power of Christ produces change in the person that Christ has changed.

So we need to grapple with the true Person of God. We cannot allow our theology to distract us from the reality of **who God is** and the reality of **doing business with Him**. We can trick ourselves into coming up with a theology that allows us to live in sin and feel that we are protected by the promises of God when we do it. But we are mistaken when we attempt that. And we are severely warned about this.

**Hebrews 10:29-31 (NKJV)**

**29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?**

**30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."**

**31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

When a person plays games with God, it is the person who loses. God never loses. Are you trying to maintain sin **under the cover of grace**? Choosing to sin so that grace will abound? You will lose that game. God is scary. God is very very scary. And sin is counter to God. It is against God. And that is what makes sin so very very dangerous. That is why it is worth doing battle against it with everything we have. And that is why we should be on guard against it with all the brothers and sisters we love.

We should never take this **bloodbath warrior** lightly. We should not regard His **kindness** towards us as any kind of **weakness** in Him. Our God is a righteous God.

And on the other hand, and we will close with this, we can take His promises to the bank as we live by faith. As we move into I John in a few weeks we will see that if **we believe what Christ says and obey what He commands and love those brothers and sisters around us**, if we have that evidence in our lives, we can have confidence that God has created new life in us. And as such we are the inheritors of all the wonderful things that God has in mind for His children.



And there is one more thing to mention here.

Have you ever wanted to take vengeance upon someone? Has anyone ever done something **to you** or **someone you love** that you just wanted to destroy that person, or that you just continually live in seething hatred for that person. Well both Hebrews and Romans tell us what to do about this.

**Romans 12:17-21 (NKJV)**

**17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

**18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

**19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord.**

**20 Therefore "*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*"**

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

We saw something today that we may not have learned in Sunday School. We have seen that God is very very skilled in Vengeance. We might paraphrase this to say, "**do not avenge yourselves. Leave it to the expert.**"

I think that a lot of what is described as forgiveness by the modern church should really be defined as **trusting God for handling injustices for us**. If we are to forgive as God forgives we know at least two things about how God forgives. First, our forgiveness will have an eternal effect and second, it will only be granted to those who ask for it. This idea that we are to forgive everyone who has ever done us harm isn't stated in scripture. But when we are done wrong, we are not to fret about it. We are not to seethe in hatred that controls us. We are not to plan a way to get even. We are to **trust God to handle it** and then to go on with what He commands us to do.

Then we are to do the completely unexpected because we are free to do it. If someone who is not a believer is treating us as an enemy, we respond by doing good to them. And we can do this because we can trust that if there is any vengeance called for, God will dish it out in a much more **thorough** way than we ever could. We need to trust that job to the expert.

So we have seen today that is very very bad to have God as an enemy. We cannot afford to live in that state. If you have never, by faith, received what Christ did for you on the cross as your salvation and surrendered your life to His Lordship- do it today. There is nothing to stop you and you have every reason to do so. If you are **not in Christ**, your sin is making you an enemy of God and it will cost you dearly.

If you **are in Christ**, bask in the fact that God will settle the score for those who have harmed you. You can trust Him to do so. And you do not need to allow those people to have any control over decisions you make now. You are free to do good, even to those who have done you harm.