

## **Is. 66:1-2 (LD 45, Q117) “Praying with Humility”**

**For the Children:** Imagine that every day you forgot to bring a pen to school. Every day, you asked the teacher if you could borrow a pen. At first, you made many apologies for forgetting to bring your own pen; you were really polite and humble in asking for help; and very thankful. But after a while, you didn't think much about it. You just asked for the pen and expected it would be given to you. We face that danger when praying to the Lord: we become so used to asking for things, that we forget who He is; we forget how sinful and undeserving we are. We forget to be humble as well as thankful. Questions: What problems did many in Israel have with their view of God? What was wrong with their view of themselves? What does it mean to pray with humility?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: An Unacceptable Attitude in Prayer**

- 1) **A False Sense of Security:** One of the problems in Israel was a false sense of security – based on the mistaken notion that God was pleased with the mere performing of ceremonies. This is the problem of “externalism.” Then it did not matter what was in their hearts and how they acted the rest of the time. This involved much hypocrisy. See the rest of ch. 66.
- 2) **Confined to Barracks:** Another problem that comes from this is that God is regarded as being essentially confined to His House – and that only on certain days of worship - unable to see what goes on elsewhere. This is to reduce God to a finite being, like a creature. It is the opposite of humility. God is said to “dwell in His House,” but that does not mean only there; besides, it is figurative language – a token of His Presence with His people at all times, in Christ. To point out the error of many in Israel, the Lord proclaims Himself as King over heaven and earth. He doesn't need a House to live in. He is the Creator of all things. It is idolatry to try to pull Him down to a finite, creaturely size.
- 3) **A Wrong View of Man:** Sinful man tends to think that he can do God a favour – by building Him a house, by believing in Him, worshiping Him, proclaiming His Name, by giving to His church and kingdom, and doing good deeds according to His Law. But we are neither good enough nor big enough to give Him what He deserves. Our works are only acceptable by grace.
- 4) **Application to Prayer:** Is.66:1-2 is about worship in general. Prayer, as an aspect of worship, goes wrong if we do not join the “how” of it to the “who” – with a right view of the One to whom we pray, the Sovereign and gracious God; and a right view of the one praying – recognizing that we do not deserve to have the Lord listen to us or answer favorably; nor do we do Him a favour by praying.

#### **Second Point: A Humble Attitude in Prayer**

- 1) **The One to Whom the Lord Looks:** The Lord “looks” i.e., He accepts the worship of the person who approaches Him in a certain manner – not because we earn that right, but because a right attitude reflects the fact that we come in Christ's Name.
- 2) **Humble Prayers:** The Lord looks to “him who is humble.” The word suggests someone who cries out to the Lord for help in affliction, knowing that only the Lord can help. This attitude requires a right view of God as Sovereign and gracious – able and willing to help; and a right view of self, as a finite sinner unable to help himself and completely undeserving.
- 3) **Contrite Prayers:** The word “contrite” also implies humility in affliction, but places more emphasis on godly sorrow over one's sin. It was often Israel's sin that led to affliction! The word means beaten in spirit. We need to pray with our own sin and misery in mind; to remember that it is only because of Christ that we can pray and have God “look” to us.
- 4) **Trembling at God's Word:** Fear of the Lord – awe and reverence of Him – leads to reverence for His Word and fear the judgments that fall on those who are outside of Christ. This also requires humility – to see our need of God's Word and Spirit to enable us to know and believe in the Lord Jesus. We must be careful that we do not focus so much on what we are praying, that we forget the One to whom we are praying, our own sinful nature, or our need of the Lord Jesus, His Word and Spirit.

### **Conclusion:**