

Is This Preventing a Downpour of God's Spirit in Your Life?

"Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might shake at Your presence" (Isa. 64:1).

How can you carry this burden in the spirit of Isaiah's passion? Ask God to rent the heavens in your life. God does the opening—you prepare the soil. Here's how...

1. Acknowledge that God is your only hope: "Oh, that You would open heaven." We quote, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," but very few actually know what it means. It means, "Blessed are the beggars." It all begins here: We have to be desperate for more of God. Which leads to the second point.

2. Desperation fuels desire: Rather than being paralyzed by fear, cry out, "God, help me," use the desperation to propel you closer to God. There is truth in the song, "God blessed the broken road that led me straight to You."

Ask Him to come down like rain on barren soil; like a mighty river in a parched land: "Oh, that You would rend the heavens." A downpour nourishes, restores, replenishes and revives; it makes alive. You may feel dead and dry, but don't give up. "God, come down" must be the desperate cry of your heart.

Don't be too proud to cry out to God, or you'll never experience a downpour. Do you see the irony, or better yet, the ignorance in this? We'll cry out to entertainment, alcohol and lust to nourish our parched soul, but not to the God who created and sustains us.

You may be "a good Christian" —you may even "know your Bible," but have you truly experienced a mighty downpour? Pride avoids answering this question, and arrogance blinds us. Desperation

makes us feel vulnerable and weak. In opposition, our pride prevents us from seeking more of God. We are like farmers casting down a few seeds rather than planting a bumper crop. "Oh, that You would rend the heavens" must be our cry—our nation, families and churches need a massive downpour.

Be aware: Bitterness, negativity and a critical heart prevent downpours of God's favor. In the same way that sin in the nation of Israel blocked the blessings of God, wrong attitudes can prevent a downpour. Instead of open heavens, the heavens are slammed shut.

3. A downpour has a cost: "He acts for the one who waits for Him." A downpour often cannot be rushed. Leonard Ravenhill once said, "There is no such thing as a painless Pentecost." The disciples waited days in an upper room before they received a downpour. Jesus fasted 40 days and began His ministry in "the power of the Spirit." Those who wait on God will renew their strength; the rain begins to form and the downpour is inevitable. Cost is determined by value. "Life-giving preaching costs the preacher much—death to self, crucifixion to the world and the travail of his own soul. Crucified preaching only can give life. Crucified preaching can come only from a crucified man" (E.M. Bounds).

Like a farmer, we must prepare the soil while we wait for rain. 1) Break up the fallow ground. Examine your heart and motives. Is the downpour about God's glory, or are you striving for popularity, position and power. 2) Remove excuses such as, "I don't need that ... I don't want to get carried away. I'm not emotional. That's not who I am." This is pride. Remove it before it removes you from receiving a downpour. 3) Pull out the root of bitterness: "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15). So many believers know the Bible, but they lack the fertile soil of love and compassion. If you're not loving, gentle and compassionate, you didn't receive a downpour, or your heart has grown hard and dull. Repent today and prepare

the soil of your heart for a mighty downpour.

These may not be easy words to hear, but in the same way, farmers don't gently work the soil. They use 10-ton equipment to rip and tear it, and our hearts must be softened as well. We need to hear hard things from time to time. Cozy sermons void of heat will not melt our pride, and feel-good messages void of repentance will not change anyone.

Before receiving a downpour, Oswald Chambers stated, "God used me during those I had no conscious communion with Him. The Bible was the dulllest, most uninteresting book in existence..."

Later, he wrote, "If the four previous years had been hell on earth, these five years have truly been heaven on earth. Glory be to God, the last aching abyss of the human heart is filled to overflowing with the love of God." Heaven was rent; the downpour came to his parched heart. Now it's your turn.

NOTE: A pastor's job is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be. The feedback has been overwhelming—this sermon will help in so many ways: