

**Revelation 8: 3-6; "The Censer filled with Fire", Sermon # 66 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness",  
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 29th, 2007,  
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

There is an old hymn which we sing which is called Immanuel's land which I like the words of very much. But the words of one verse are left out of the Trinity hymnal. They never should have been left out. I believe they apply very much to the verses which I have just read to you from Revelation 8. They go like this. "With mercy and with judgment, my web of time He wove." "And aye the dews of sorrow were lusted with his love." "I'll bless the hand that guided, I'll bless the hand that planned, when throned where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land." I am quite sure that we will bless the hand that guided us when we come to our journey's end. But do we see that the Lord's judgments are in all the earth now? And do we bless Him for His judgments as well as His mercies? There was a Scripture song that we used to sing at Community Christian Fellowship years ago which was taken from Psalm 36: 5 and 6. It says, "Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens." "Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies." "Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; Thy judgments are like a great deep." "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast." How wonderfully true these words are. "It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you," says the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1: 6 and 7, "and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is what will happen when Christ comes the second time. But His judgments are in all the earth on a lesser scale, even now. Do you believe this? This is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Take for example Isaiah 26: 10 and 11. "Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." "Lord when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see." "But they will see and be ashamed for their envy of people; yes the fire of Your enemies shall devour them." But in verse 9, in speaking of God's dear people it says this. "With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. "The inhabitants of the world" are not the wicked who are specifically mentioned afterwards. Rather they are the righteous; those who are the "meek" who will inherit the earth.

They are those who desire God in the night and by their spirits, "they will seek Him early."

Last week we studied the intercession of Christ. We saw that His intercession on behalf of His people consists of taking the merits of His righteous life and His sacrificial death, and as our High Priest bringing them before God. He is our High Priest whose merits continually are making up for what we lack in righteousness. His sacrifice at the cross is continually making payment for our sins. This He faithfully administers to each and every one of His people. "If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who could stand?" "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." He is our Advocate when we have fallen into sin, and when Satan is standing there to accuse us. He comes before God and he attempts to say to God that we are hypocrites and unworthy of the grace that He has shown to us. He questions whether the complete and perfect salvation that God intends to bring to us, should be applied to such a sinner as we are. Christ's blood and His righteousness plead for us. His prayers of intercession prevail. And we have also seen that it is Christ's intercession that keeps our faith from failing and the truth from completely falling to the ground in any generation. A verse which well applies to this would be Hebrews 4: 14 and 15, which I began to open up to you this past Sunday. "Seeing then that 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 cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." So the truth we want to examine this afternoon is this. When we are facing the oppositions of men who are attempting to twist the truth or oppose the truth we must remember that Jesus Christ is filling the censer with fire from the altar, that He might defend us and that He might further and advance His own kingdom on the earth. So with the remainder of my time, I want to show you first of all, the importance of our prayers in relation to the advance of Christ's kingdom. And then 2ndly Christ's defense of His kingdom and cause.

**1st of all- The Importance of our Prayers in the advance of Christ's kingdom.**(Verses 3 and 4)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His High Priestly ministry, offers up to God in His intercessory ministry, His own merits mixed with the prayers of all the saints. "He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." This is a very interesting and intriguing thought. The prayers of God's people in every generation are listened to by God and they are answered, not only in our own

generation and lifetime, but also they continue to be answered even after we have gone on to heaven. They are on a slow burn upon God's altar in the heavenly places because of Christ. The way that we pray and the things that we pray for, are all remembered by God and stored up by God, and they show Him, at any time, how much in tune with His purposes we really are. God's purposes and plans have been fixed from before the foundation of the world, but yet He is great enough in His wisdom and power that "none of us can ask too much" of Him. Jesus Christ mediates our prayers. He not only makes us acceptable in God's sight when we pray; but He really takes our prayers into His own Holy Mind and mediates them to God; all of our hopes, our desires, and our fears in such a way that they are taken in and incorporated into the great and mighty purposes of God. When our prayers ascend to God they ascend as a fragrant incense in the nostrils of God. Our prayers are every day being offered through our Lord Jesus upon the golden altar of God. Our prayers about many different subjects. We may be praying about our own sanctification. We may be praying against the advances of wicked men who speak and work against the truth. We may be praying for our own defense and for God's defending His Church against the in-roads of false doctrine and our compromising our holiness, or the truth. We may be praying for boldness in our witness. All of these things we should be praying for.

Let me give you an example. Turn with me to Psalm 141. It is a psalm of David. He says, "Lord, I cry out to You." Make haste to me!" "Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You." "Let my prayer be set before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." And what does David pray for specifically? In verses 3 to 5 he prays about himself. You know, it is often a good place to start; to start with ourselves. When we are dealing with ourselves, when we want God to do things to help us; we should first pray for His grace to help us to do what is right. David begins with his own words and speech, and continues with his works and his ability to receive reproof. "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips." "Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies." "Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness." "And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it." This is how Christ's kingdom advances. "The kingdom of God is within you." And it must advance within you first, before it can advance to others around you. You cannot give anything to anyone else that you have not first learned yourself.

First, David had prayed for himself; and then he prays against the wicked. Verse 5b says, "For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked." "Their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff, and they hear my words, for

they are sweet." "Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave, as when one plows and breaks up the earth." You see, he lays before God all of his greatest concerns about what wicked people have done, not only to himself, but also to others of God's people. He is a lover of the brethren and would take the whole cause of Christ and His people before the throne. We will see how this kind of prayer is acted upon by Christ in just a moment. Having cast these cares upon the Lord, he ends his prayer in faith; adding 3 further requests. He says, "But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord; in You I take refuge; do not leave my soul destitute." Ah, this is his greatest concern and request. "Do not leave my soul destitute. If God is with him, if God is for him, if God will help him; he can endure all that God is leading him into and through, on his way to heaven. "Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, and from the traps of the workers of iniquity, let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape safely." These are the kind of prayers that Christ takes in from his people, and He couples them with His own merits and prayers for them, and He brings them before the Father. They are prayers which are inward looking first and outward looking second. They focus on the kingdom of God within us; and then the advance of the kingdom of God outside of ourselves. Christ puts these prayers in His golden censer and lays them upon the altar to burn before God. It is because of Christ they are considered. It is because of Christ that they are remembered. Isaiah 62: 6 and 7 say, "I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day and night." "You who make mention of the Lord, (that is of the advance of His kingdom and His glory) "do not keep silent and give Him no rest till he establishes and till He makes Jerusalem (that is Christ's Church) a praise in all the earth."

**2ndly- Christ's defense of His own Kingdom and Cause; His intercession in this regard.** (Verse 5)

The kingdom of Christ advances by prayer for boldness in preaching the gospel and the word of God, and it advances by the destruction of what is false in doctrine. His people pray for His kingdom to come, and Christ's prayers and His righteous judgments will prevail to give grace to His people to stand in the evil day. He has and He will bring a firestorm of judgment against those individuals and nations who attempt to undermine and oppose the advance of His truth. I think of the words of the battle hymn of the Republic. They well represent what these verses are speaking of. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." "He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword." "His truth is marching on." In these prayers of Christ and His saints there is also prayer being offered for the defense and

preservation of God's people in the midst of the difficulties that they find themselves in, for Christ's sake. This is the picture of verse 5. "Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth." "And there were noises, thundering, lightnings, and an earthquake." Here is the picture of a firestorm that is brought upon the earth by Christ Himself. The Lord Jesus is taking his censer, "filling it with fire from the altar, and throwing to the earth." We have seen that the earth under the seals of Revelation 6 meant the Pagan Roman Empire. Now here, as we begin the time period of the trumpets which relate to the Christian Roman Empire, the earth has relation both to the Roman state as well as to the visible Church of Jesus Christ, because there has been a uniting of Church and State under Constantine and the Emperors that followed him. Therefore the judgments of Christ which come under this section of Church History pertain to both. "Fire from the altar" refers to Christ's holy and righteous indignation and His intention to judge whatever is false and unholy in regard to His own Church; to preserve her from the incursions of false doctrine, and also the edicts of the state which might conflict with His Word of Truth coming to His precious Bride. This time period of Christian Rome is the time when the foundations for Antichristian Rome were laid. It was the time when Satan laid the foundations for his corruption of the visible Church's doctrine and discipline. Verse 5 of our text shows us that even though Satan had asked permission to "sift the Church like wheat", that Christ was praying for his true Church that her faith would not fail. And this verse shows us that Christ was going to throw down, in His indignation and wrath, great and powerful judgments against all that opposed His true kingdom, which would bring down whatever was false in either Church or state. He would deal decisively with false doctrine. And He would deal decisively with the political oppressions that flowed from those who held to this false doctrine. His defense of His true Church in this way is a part of His intercession. That is why the same censer is used for throwing the fire of judgment as was used in the receiving of prayers, mixing them with His intercession and offering it upon the altar. They are 2 aspects of what His intercession consists of. He intercedes for His people. He intercedes for them against their enemies.

Christ's casting of fire to the earth from the altar is a picture of His concern for the way that God is worshipped. The altar is the place where worship and sacrifices were offered in the Old Testament. How God was seen, how He was to be worshipped, how the Church was to be governed, truths related to the Church's obedience to Christ; these things were being corrupted in this second period of Church History. Christ would judge those who thus corrupted His Church. The judgments would affect both Church

and State. In Luke 11: 49 Jesus says, "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" "Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth?" "I tell you, not at all, but rather division." These divisions are divisions that came into families, over whether Christ was to be followed according to His Word. They have happened in all generations and will until the end of the world. The fire which Christ casts upon the earth, which is talked about in our text relates to divisions and differences within the Church over doctrine, discipline, and practice, which will continue as long as the Antichristian powers shall last. In coming sermons we will hope to discover and disclose what the sounding of these trumpets means; what these great judgments of Christ consisted of. We will hear the noises (voices), see the thunderings, lightnings, and feel the earthquake that resulted from them. We will see how important it is to have right views of the Word of God.