

Alas, there is in this whole prayer an attitude of self-righteousness. It assumes that since God is their God He must bless them regardless of what they do. There is no evidence of personal penitence and desire to be cleansed from evil so as to do good and follow God. One feels the utter absence of any such thought as the hymn-writer expressed when he said:

"And from my stricken heart with tears
Two wonders I confess
The wonders of redeeming love
And my own worthlessness."

In this prayer there is no suggestion of the need of a Redeemer to stand between them and God and to take upon Himself the punishment that should be theirs. If these chapters are correctly understood they lead directly into the following passage containing God's answer.

God detests carnality and licentiousness, but He detests spiritual pride still more. It is brought out clearly in the chapters following Isaiah 40 that God did not call Abraham or set Israel apart for Himself merely because they were to be His pets, but because they were to be His servants to accomplish His purposes in the world. If they sincerely try to do His will He will give them every blessing. If, however, they sit back and say, "I am holier than others; I am God's and He must bless me because I am His and because of the goodness that He has shown my ancestors," then His answer will be, "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day" (cf. 65:5). It is reminiscent of the statement in Jeremiah 7:4: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these." What did Jeremiah mean? Surely it was the temple of the Lord. It had been built at His express command. In it He had been worshipped and His sacrifices had been performed. Yet anyone who trusted that God would bless him simply because this was God's temple was trusting in lying words. God blesses those who follow Him, not those who put their hope upon something that their ancestors have done.