

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 42:1-17

Topic

You are compared to a bruised reed that God's Servant came to heal

Title

"Bruise Control"

Does the name Todd Bentley ring a bell?

It would if you had ever been to one of his revival meetings. Had you gone forward he would have **rang your bell!**

Listen to 'burly' Todd Bentley describe a typical night of ministry:

I said "God, I prayed for like 100 crippled people. Not one?" He said "That's because I want you to grab that lady's crippled legs and bang them up and down on the platform like a baseball bat." I walked up and I grabbed her legs and I started going BAM. I started banging them up and down on the platform. **She got healed.** And another time I'm thinking "God, Why isn't the power of God moving?" He said "Because you haven't kicked that woman in the face." And there was this older lady worshipping right in front of the platform. And the Holy Spirit spoke to me. The gift of faith came on me. He said "Kick her in the face - *with your biker boot!*" I inched closer and I went like this. BAM. And just as my boot made contact with her nose she fell under the power of God.

Bentley was a key figure of the so-called Lakeland Revival in 2008. The meetings attracted up to 10,000 attendees nightly, 400,000 total in-person. Another 1.2 million watched via the Internet.

(Bentley has since been disgraced by scandal).

I have one word: Christlike.

Christians ought to be Christlike in all we do, especially ministry. Nothing about those meetings was remotely Christlike.

What was Christ like?

One of the most well-known descriptions is in our text. Jesus “will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench” (42:2-3). We wouldn’t be wrong to use the word *gentle* to describe Jesus.

Let’s discover together how much we ‘like’ Christlikeness. I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 God The Father Gives You A Profile Of Church Age Christlikeness**, and **#2 God The Father Gives You A Profile Of Kingdom Age Christlikeness**.

#1 - God The Father Gives You A Profile Of Church Age Christlikeness (v1-12)

Todd Bentley is a worst case scenario. The typical revival service features much tamer but no less ostentatious antics. You can expect folks to be slain in the Spirit, lots of sweating and screaming and shouting. **Not Christlike.**

Conservative believers, often cessationists when it comes to gifts of the Holy Spirit, can fall short of Christlikeness. They give God accolades, but they let you know that it is their time in the Word, their prayer life, their giving - in others words, their self effort - that unlocks the power of God. They are the ones whom A.W. Tozer would describe as not being able to recognize if the Holy Spirit withdrew from their gatherings. **Not Christlike.**

Isa 42:1 “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

This is the first of four of what scholars call Isaiah's Servant Songs (49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13 - 53:12).

If you were asked to sum-up Jesus' earthly ministry in one word, "servant" would more than suffice. His entire mission is encapsulated in Philippians 2:7&8, where we read He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a **bondservant**, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross."

Always and forever fully God, Jesus added humanity to His deity via the virgin birth. He said of His being in the world, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45).

We like to make two-column lists; Pros & Cons, for example. Make one with the titles, *I Came to Be Served & I Came to Serve*. Record your actions and attitudes in an average day. At home: Did I serve my wife the way Jesus serves me? Etc., etc.

The Father "uphold[s]" His Servant. The word means *to strengthen, to sustain*. Fully God and fully man, Jesus set aside the independent use of His deity and was strengthened and sustained by His Father. How much more can we trust the Father to sustain us, who are weak and prone to wander? In fact, we need preferential treatment.

God the Holy "Spirit" came upon Jesus when He was water baptized by His cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus applied these verses to Himself when He taught in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. There can be no doubt that the Servant being described by Isaiah is Jesus Christ.

"He will bring out justice to the Gentiles." Israel may be the apple of God's eye, but the salvation of Gentiles was always part of the plan.

Isaiah first mentioned "justice" in chapter one, "Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow" (v17). Justice is righteousness in action, and it is the responsibility of nations to uphold it.

These are things we yearn for, are they not? We are heartbroken as we see greater and greater lawlessness, lawmakers passing evil legislation, people calling good evil and evil good. There will be real justice when the Just One rules.

I skipped over "My Elect One." The Doctrine of Election gets our blood boiling towards one another. The Calvinists & the Arminians are the theological version of the Hatfield's & the McCoy's.

Ask yourself this: Did Jesus need to be saved? *Of course not!* What does it mean, then, that He was God's Elect One? He was elect to His service, not for salvation. I would submit there are other election passages from which we argue about salvation when the context is service.

The Father was delighted with Jesus. He was His Servant, chosen for His very particular service, depending wholly upon the Father to sustain Him.

God delights in you and each of us has a particular path of serving God that He wants to reveal to us.

We are not delightful. But if we are in Christ, He will complete the work He has begun in us. He will present us blameless, unblemished to His Father. Even now, in our present state, God sees us finished and perfect. Michelangelo is quoted, "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it. I [see] the angel in the marble and [carve] until I set him free."

Isa 42:2 He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

Jesus is not intimidating. He is not manipulating. He is not controlling. He is not abusive.

Isa 42:3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.

We have reeds growing out of our urban pond. Once one is bent, there's no restoring it to its original condition. May as well break it off.

Jesus sees us as bruised reeds. Albert Barnes writes, "He will not make those already broken down with a sense of sin and with calamity, more wretched. He will not deepen their afflictions, or augment their trials, or multiply their sorrows. The sense is, that He will have an affectionate regard for the broken hearted, the humble, the penitent, and the afflicted."

The "smoking flax" is the almost-spent wick of a lamp. He will not extinguish or quench it. He will supply it with the oil of grace to see it rekindled.

"He will bring forth justice for truth" can be interpreted as "He will make sure that justice is done." When the Lord rules, politics will have no place in determining justice. No grey areas will interfere with what is right.

Isa 42:4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law."

Why does it take time for justice to spread to the "coastlands?" The Kingdom of God on earth that follows the Great Tribulation is initially populated by mortal survivors of those awful seven years. They will repopulate the earth. They and their offspring will be sinners needing salvation. There will be futile resistance to the rule of Jesus.

Isa 42:5 Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it:

God points us to special creation a lot in order to underscore His greatness and glory. Notice, too, the order of these statements. God created Heaven & earth so He could create mankind. You truly are His master work.

Isa 42:6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles,

These verses are applied to Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (12:18-21). Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out, *"The Servant was not merely to make a covenant. He was to be both the maker and the essence of the covenant itself."*

Isa 42:7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

There are a few notorious prisons: Lurigoncho, Shawshank, Rura Penthe. Without Jesus, you are like a blind man sitting in the dark in a locked cell deep inside a prison.

Jesus is the light Who sets *spiritual* captives free.

The Father said He would “hold [Jesus’] hand.” If we are to be like Jesus, we must allow Jesus to hold our hand. It suggests intimacy, but also direction & protection. Compare a parent holding a toddler’s hand.

Isa 42:8 I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

There are a multitude of lower-case ‘g’ gods. Whether idols, images, or ideas, God alone is Almighty God.

Isa 42:9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the God of prophecy. He alone can and does predict the future with 100% accuracy.

Isa 42:10 Sing to the LORD a new song, *And* His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, You coastlands and you inhabitants of them!

The words, “new song,” appear often in the Bible. It certainly has application to keeping our worship fresh by literally singing new songs. But here its deeper meaning is that we should walk in such a manner that we have new experiences of the grace, mercy, and love of God that are song-worthy.

Write a song!

Isa 42:11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voice*, The villages *that* Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains.

Isa 42:12 Let them give glory to the LORD, And declare His praise in the coastlands.

This is a lyrical way of saying that the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

You might be thinking, “Wait a minute, Gene. The Lord is not always gentle. He’s coming back to rule with a rod of iron, to judge the wicked and cast them alive into the Lake of Fire.”

You are correct, and we are going to see that in the next few verses.

But that's in the future, *after* the church, is resurrected & raptured. It isn't now; it is *after* now, *after* the Church Age. In the present we are to be like the Lord in His first coming. "Make me a servant..."

#2 - God The Father Gives You A Profile Of Kingdom Age Christlikeness (v13-17)

The descriptions of Jesus in the next verses are "Mighty man," "man of war," "lay waste the mountains and hills, dry up all their vegetation... make the rivers coastlands... dry up the pools."

This is an abrupt change. It describes a future dispensation.

Isa 42:13 The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.

I can't read this without thinking about Jesus in His return to earth as King of kings in Revelation 19. He joins the Battle of Armageddon and easily dispatches His enemies by the sharp sword coming from His mouth.

Isa 42:14 "I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself. Now I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once.

The Lord doesn't lose His temper and go off on unbelievers. He is longsuffering, not willing that any of Adam's descendants perish.

Isa 42:15 I will lay waste the mountains and hills, And dry up all their vegetation; I will make the rivers coastlands, And I will dry up the pools.

The Kingdom of God on earth will be glorious. Streams will suddenly break out in the desert.

It won't be entirely blissful, however. As we said, folks born in the Millennium will be sinners in need of salvation. Ezekiel's vision shows the priests making sin offerings during that time (40-46), and Zechariah prophesies that some nations will sin by choosing not to attend the Feast of Tabernacles (14:18-19).

The physical changes the Lord makes in verse fifteen might be judgments upon disobedient nations in the thousand year Kingdom of God.

Isa 42:16 I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them.

Isa 42:17 They shall be turned back, They shall be greatly ashamed, Who trust in carved images, Who say to the molded images, 'You *are* our gods.'

When "darkness [is made] light" the blind see. The folks in verse sixteen are converted and will be guided into the Lord's truth in the future kingdom.

Idolaters, not so fast. "Turned back," they will be "ashamed."

We are reminded of the judgment that Jesus conducts at His return. He will separate the survivors of the Tribulation into national groups of believers and unbelievers. He calls the believers "sheep." The unbelievers are "goats."

The believing survivors enter in to the Kingdom as its first inhabitants. The unbelieving survivors are incarcerated, awaiting their eternal judgment.

In verse two we were told Jesus would not "raise His voice nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." In verses thirteen and fourteen we read, "He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies... *Now* I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once."

Your cat has over 100 vocalizations. The Lord has a limitless range of vocalizations. If you think this is an odd topic, remember that the apostle Paul said God the Holy Spirit "Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

Isaiah says some of what comes out of Jesus' mouth will be crying out and shouting out.

If you've had any experience with martial arts you learn to *kiai*, or *kyup*. It's the shout you make while fighting. It has value in causing you to exhale & inhale at the proper time. But mostly it is for intimidation.

I'll say this - If you can "cry like a woman in labor" *you've got an advantage in a fight.*

Jesus is "the lion of Judah." An adult male lion's roar can be heard up to 5 miles away. It's so loud that a single roar can reach up to 114 decibels - that's estimated to be 25x

louder than a gasoline-powered lawnmower. It's not just the volume. The experience of hearing a lion roar is terrifying.

I cannot begin to imagine an unconverted sinner seeing the Lord as a "mighty man of war," crying out and shouting aloud.

Can you "pant and gasp at once?" Jesus can and it will stun those who witness it.

There are many legendary battle cries:

- The "rebel yell" was the notorious battle cry of Confederate forces during the Civil War. A Union officer described the banshee yell, "It was the ugliest sound that any mortal ever heard - even a mortal exhausted and unnerved by two days of hard fighting, without sleep, without rest, without food and without hope."
- The ancient Roman legions usually marched in silence to maintain order in their ranks, but once they encountered the enemy, their lines would erupt with intimidating war cries that some described as resembling the sound of a stampeding elephant.
- "Bonsai" & "Geronimo" & "Huzzah" are famous one-word battle cries. Go to any Revolutionary War reenactment and you'll hear "Huzzah."
- On the seventh day of the march around Jericho, "the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him" (6:4-5).
- Gideon instructed his reduced special force, "When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*' "

We have a battle cry: "Ready or not, _____."

The Church Age ends with a "shout" and a trumpet blast when Jesus returns to resurrect & rapture the church.

Until He does, *stay on mission*. Go and preach the Gospel... Be 'first-coming' Christlike about it.