**Bruise Reeds and Weak Wicks by Tim Laitinen**

Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen, in whom My soul delights: I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up His voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick He will not quench; He will faithfully bring forth justice.  - Isaiah 41:1-3 ESV
As God speaks through His prophet, Isaiah, regarding the promise and purposes of Christ, it's easier to focus on the grander things, and overlook the smaller.

At least, it's easier for me to focus on Christ's grand purposes, like bringing justice to the nations.  Pretty impressive, huh?  Meanwhile, I overlook the fact that God pointedly assures me that His holy Son will not run roughshod over the weak as He accomplishes his momentous, eternal objectives on Earth.

Of course, God's justice is broad and deep.  It is the perfect accomplishment of His plans and designs for each one of us, where we live, and when we live.  It's as perfect and strategic for you - no matter the country in which you're accessing this article on the Internet - as it was for the Jews in Isaiah's day.

When we mortal humans accomplish big things, unfortunately, we usually tend to inflict a considerable amount of collateral damage along the way.  China, for example, has obliterated so many densely-populated neighborhoods in its desire to build some of the world's most ostentatious buildings, social scientists worry that indigenous cultural features from China's ancient traditions may be vanishing within a single generation.

As the pastor at my church who preached from this text above pointed out in his sermon yesterday, we Americans were pushed into World War Two's Pacific Theater with the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor.  Yet our valiant fight for freedom was quietly compromised as over 100,000 Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps during the war.  Quite the irony, wouldn't you say?

God, however, will accomplish His epic, universal, and even intimate purposes without destroying His people.  How could he act otherwise?  Pure, complete justice such as the sort God represents doesn't inflict collateral damage of any sort amongst those who serve Him.  This means that in terms of our deficiencies or problems, He will not discard disciples who have suffered injury, nor will he snuff out weak-spirited followers.

Isn't His an amazing depiction of sovereign care and grace in the midst of Isaiah 42's sweeping pronouncements about all Christ will accomplish?  Even in the midst of such utterly profound feats as creating us, giving sight to the blind, freeing captives, and defending His glorious honor, God will preserve the lowly, and the damaged, and the weak.

God watches over bruised reeds and weak wicks.

Regular readers of my blog know those things that weaken me, and that have bruised me emotionally and mentally.  And even spiritually.  For years, I've felt like a faintly-burning wick, barely able to cast a glow, let alone a shadow.  My spirituality has been beset by doubts and fears, and it's easier for me to feel sorry for myself than be confident in my future.

Indeed, I tend to see myself more as a wick than a reed.  How about you?  A bruised reed sounds as though it's describing an otherwise innocent person who has been injured by somebody or something else.  A faintly-burning wick seems to more aptly describe somebody who simply feels as though their very being has been compromised by some debilitating deficit within themselves.

I don't blame anybody else for my depression, or for anything else that has affected me negatively.  Not that I'm a model of forgiveness, or champion of letting bygones be bygones.  I simply haven't been victimized any more than anybody else.

What I do believe, however, is that my chronic clinical depression has drained so much emotional, physical, and spiritual energy from me, that if I were to demonstrate the amount of fuel within my soul, and a wick were inserted to try and generate some sort of light or warmth from that fuel, the flame would be faint at best.

Yet Christ didn't come to punish me for having a faintly-burning wick.  He didn't come to snuff me out!  Amen?  He knows my weaknesses, and He's come to save me from them.  Not penalize me!

Of course, in order to benefit from this reality, I need to believe that Jesus - even the baby much of the world celebrates in some fashion at this time of the year - is indeed the Christ, the holy Son of the living God.  I need to let Him be the Lord of my life.  I need to allow His Holy Spirit to produce within me the Fruit of Godliness, which includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.  And I need to rest in His promises of deliverance - deliverance in His time and through His ways.  Not my timeframe, and my expectations.

In our popular parlance, the word "break" has become commonly used in conjunction with ending something, like breaking one's self of a bad habit, or breaking-in a new employee with an employer's preferred best-standards.  In the context of these verses, however, Isaiah is talking about "break" as in destroy, as if to regard the destruction of a ubiquitous reed with a weak spot in it as irrelevant.

And how many of us bother with a weak flame?  When you're lighting candles, or when candles have reached the bottom of the wax, and one of the flames is weak, what else do you do but snuff out the flame?  What good is a weak flame to us if we want to use it for light, heat, or even ambiance?

Providentially, God's value metrics are different from ours, aren't they?  And for that, shouldn't we be profoundly grateful?

Maybe you don't see yourself as a bruised reed, or a faintly-burning wick, and you're enthusiastic about celebrating all that our Christmas season has to offer.  You're full of vim and vigor, and really can't relate to what I'm writing about.  If this describes you, then be thankful for your lot in life, and invite the Lord to glorify Himself through the ways you celebrate His birth.

Nevertheless, meanwhile, if the Lord allows any of us to metaphorically encounter a bruised reed, let's be careful not to break it.  And if we encounter a faintly-burning wick during this candle-burning season, why not resist the urge to snuff it out?

When we're seeking to honor Christ, being mindful of others is simply following the pattern Isaiah told us He'd model.

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