

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 42

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 42

Theme: "Salvation of Christ to the World!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 42:6-7 (KJV) "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; **7** To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *and* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

INTRODUCTION

Christianity has often been misunderstood as a western religion. This is far from true. Christianity is the world's only true religion for all others are false. Christ is the only hope to a world in spiritual darkness. The spiritual darkness of the world is one of sin. The sins committed by mankind today have taken on gargantuan proportions that it can only be compared to the days of Noah before the Flood came to destroy the whole world. God's commentary on man's conditions in the time of Noah was that "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every

imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (cf. Genesis 6:5)

The world of sin needs a Saviour. But there is no one who could save mankind for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no not one! God has to intervene and send His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for mankind. Jesus Christ willingly came down onto the earth and did exactly and all that the Heavenly Father commanded Him to do. God accepted all that Christ did on the earth to save mankind by raising Him from the dead on the third day after Christ died.

All sinners need to do is to turn to Jesus Christ and cry to Him to save them from their sins and he will become their personal Lord and Saviour. In Isaiah 42, the LORD who is Christ describes His relationship to the Gentiles. He will reach out to them and save them. The Gentiles will respond positively to Him. It will be a glorious time for the world when many come to believe in Christ.

The Gentiles and the idolatrous Israelites are contrasted here. The first part of this chapter describes the blessed response of the Gentiles to the Christ whereas the second half of this chapter chastises Israel for her idolatry. The ending of this chapter did not auger well for Israel. It ends on a sad note that "yet he laid it not to heart." Despite the chastisement of the LORD, Israel refused to repent and turn from her sins.

OUTLINE

1. God's Servant shall not Fail (vv.1-4);
2. Blind Eyes Opened (vv. 5-9);
3. Singing a New Song (vv. 10-17);
4. The LORD Rebukes Idolaters (vv. 18-25).

COMMENTARY

God's Servant shall not Fail — 42:1-4

Verse 1 – Isaiah 42 begins with a cry to God's servant. Who is the servant of the Most High God here? It has to refer to Jesus Christ because of the next three verses. The context is quite clear that it has to refer to Christ with verses like 3 and 4. Jesus Christ is described as God's servant because he is doing the Heavenly Father's will. God upholds His servant as He does the Heavenly Father's will. The word for "uphold" means "to sustain." The LORD Jesus Christ was sustained by the Father just as the Heavenly Father sustains all believers throughout the ages. That was why Christ prayed constantly for Himself and for His disciples when he was on earth (cf. John 17).

God is delighted with His chosen one i.e. elect. Christ was chosen to be the Messiah or Christ to save the world from their sin. God said that His soul is delighted with His servant. The word for "delight" means "to be well pleased." This same phrase "in whom I am well pleased" was used at Christ's baptism (cf. Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and Christ's

transfiguration (cf. Matthew 17:5). God approves very much the work of Christ on earth when he came to die to save us from our sins. God said that He has put His Spirit upon Christ. This occurred at the time of Christ's baptism when the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and lighting upon Him (cf. Matthew 3:16-17). The servant of God will bring forth judgement to the Gentiles i.e. The Gentiles would also be told that they are sinners like the Israelites and need Christ as their Saviour and Lord too. This was carried out according to the blueprint of the church as recorded in Acts 1:8.

Verse 2 – The nature of Christ's ministry is described here. All the three verbs have negatives, which emphasized strength of prohibition that is similar to the Ten Commandments. Christ will not cry i.e. shriek in the street. He will not lift up i.e. shout out loud in anger or scream loudly to be heard in the street. Christ's ministry is quiet and not showy. His ministry on earth was the opposite of what is mentioned here. His ministry was humble, quiet and meek. There were times he told those whom He healed to keep quiet and not to broadcast it. The ministry of Christ was very subdued and focused. He focused on the immediate 12 disciples. They were the ones who will continue the work of Christ after His death, resurrection and ascension.

Verse 3 – His ministry was so gentle and meek that it was illustrated by "a bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not

quench." A reed is "the cane or calamus which grows up in marshy or wet places." (Albert Barnes, *Swordsearcher* 6.2). It is fragile and very easily broken into pieces. It moves gently and very easily in the gentle breeze when it blows across the Egyptian marshland. When it is bruised it means that it is about to snap into two pieces but the LORD would not break such a frail and fragile reed. The flax is "That wick of a candle (called *flax* metonymically, because it is made of flax) which is almost extinct, and doth only smoke and not flame, he will not utterly quench, but will revive and kindle it again." (Matthew Poole, *Swordsearcher* 6.2). The flax is not burning but smoking which means that it was about to be blown off. The LORD would not allow it to burn out. Both verbs have the same strength of prohibition as the Ten Commandments. He would revive it and bring it back to life.

These two illustrations described perfectly the ministry of Christ when he was on earth. To His disciples who stumbled and fell over and over again, He was most patient and He exercised very long sufferings. His treatment of the apostle Peter was a case in point. Peter denied the LORD three times when He needed him most and yet after His death and resurrection He appeared to Peter before His ascension to restore Peter back to the ministry (cf. John 21). Christ's ministry was gentle but at the same time he never compromised on truth. He shall bring forth judgement unto truth which means that His ministry will be founded upon God's

absolute truth. He did this to both His disciples and His enemies.

To His enemies who needed repentance because of the hardness of their hearts Christ dealt with them patiently. At the tail end of His ministry when He was about to be betrayed and arrested, He became very direct with His enemies and called them hypocrites, vipers including white washed sepulchres. He did this hoping that they would wake up and turn from their sins.

Verse 4 – Again using the negative and two verbs with the same strength of prohibition as the Ten Commandments like in verses 2 and 3, the Bible described Christ's ministry as one that will not be allowed to fail! He shall not be discouraged as well. No matter how much Christ suffered he will not be discouraged. He will minister until He has set i.e. establish judgment in the earth. This will be done in the millennium when Christ will rule on the earth and establish His rule of law throughout the whole earth.

The isles shall wait for His law means that the Gentiles (cf. 41:5) shall wait for the law of Christ to prevail over all the earth i.e. the justice of God to come upon this earth. Was this not the cry of the saints in heaven as revealed in Revelation 6:9-11? These saints died for the testimony of Christ and the Word of God and therefore they cried for God's justice to come onto the earth. There is no true and absolute justice on earth today for the justices are the subjective judgements of man. They change with the times as man changes. Man is changing for the

worse not the better. Therefore their judgments are getting from bad to worse!

Blind Eyes Opened — 42:5-9

The omnipotent God is emphasized at the start of this next section. He is introduced as God the LORD. God emphasizes His power as God Almighty. The LORD emphasizes His covenantal relationship. Then He is addressed here as "he that created the heavens, and stretched them out." God not only created the heavens and bunched them together but He was the One who spread them out far and wide. Man today has yet to fathom the vast expanse of the universe! Here the LORD reveals that He simply spoke it and it was so! He also spread forth i.e. to expand by pounding the earth to what it was before the Fall. Take the surface of the earth and stretch it out and it is likened to a flat sheet! The LORD did them all.

All the things that came out of it as described in Genesis 1 are all brought into existence by God. The LORD was the One who gave life to every living thing on the earth including man. He gave life to the birds, fish and beasts and all creeping things. There is no evolution at all. God made them all. God gave life to all mankind till today. Man lives and breathes today because of the LORD.

Verse 6 – The LORD turns His attention back to Israel. The role of Israel as His visible witness on the earth is highlighted here. The LORD was the One who called Israel. Israel did not exist according to the whims and fancies of man like all the other

nations of the world. Israel was specifically called by the LORD for a divine purpose. He called Israel in righteousness. The LORD is a righteous God. All that He did and will do through Israel is based upon the righteousness of the LORD. He will not do what is wrong and against His own justice. He will send Christ to die on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. This is righteousness. Israel was the nation through whom the Messiah would come. In the mean time before the LORD comes to die for mankind, Israel was the only nation who had been given the truth and to reveal this truth to the rest of the world.

The LORD will not allow Israel to do His will alone. He will hold the hand of Israel as He commanded Israel be His witness. To hold someone's hand means that someone has to be a child. The LORD describes Himself here as a loving Father guiding and protecting His child as He asks His child to do His will on earth. He says that He will keep Israel i.e. protect from harm. Israel will not be destroyed as long as the will of God in Israel remains unfulfilled. Israel was destroyed because of her own sins and has borne a terrible witness for the LORD all these years.

The LORD has entered into a covenant with Israel so that she will be a light to the Gentiles. This was the visible witness of Israel as a nation that she often forgets. As such she bore a bad witness for the LORD for most of her existence in the Promised Land until her destruction. What a tremendous privilege it is to be a living

testimony on earth for the LORD. What a great honour for anyone to be given this blessing that the LORD God almighty, creator of heaven and earth would entrust Israel with the responsibility to show the world who the living and true God really is by the way she conducts herself!

Verse 7 – By the witness of Israel, she was to open blind eyes. She was also to bring the prisoners i.e. the ones who are bound or chained out of their prison i.e. the fastener or things that chain. All those who sit in darkness must be brought out of the prison house i.e. a place that shuts people in. This has to refer to the spiritual realm. The Gentiles were not in any "physical" prison at all. By the living testimony of this spiritual nation, the Gentiles were supposed to see Christ in them. Through this witness they will become believers like Rahab and Ruth!

Israel was never a nation measured by political, economic or military power. Gentile nations that have leaders who bring these things to their own nation are called successful leaders. But Israel was measured by the yardstick of spirituality. There was no other nation that could do what Israel was tasked to do by God. The LORD gave to Israel the Tabernacle and the Temple, the priesthood, the prophets and most important of all the perfect Word of God and the presence of the LORD. Israel was equipped to succeed and be able to overcome all obstacles that stand in her way. But sadly she failed and the world died spiritually because of her failure. The

world remained in spiritual darkness whenever Israel fails.

Verse 8 – The LORD introduced Himself in very clear terms. He said that He is the LORD. This is His name. The name of anyone is extremely important. It describes everything about him. Therefore when the LORD said that His name is the LORD this is very significant. He will not give His glory to another. The glory of the LORD belongs only to God. He will not give or share it with anyone at all. The LORD will not give His praise to any graven image i.e. image made by the hands of man.

The praise of the LORD means that the LORD would encourage and accept the graven image of man. He will reject them for they insult Him. How dare mankind reduce the One living and true God who created the heavens and the earth into an object made by the hands of finite and sinful man! This is ludicrous. But that is what sin can do to us who are made in God's image! Do not regard the worship of idols lightly. God never did and He never will!

Verse 9 – Behold the former things are comes to pass means that all that the LORD had revealed in the past are true such as the creation of the heavens and the earth, global Flood, birth of Israel, etc.! They have all been fulfilled. Now the LORD will reveal new things to Israel which are in the future. Before they spring forth, the LORD will reveal them to Israel. This is a wonderful imagery used by the LORD here. Like flowers blooming in

spring, the prophecies of the LORD will spring forth into reality!

New Prophecies are meant for Israel so that she might live a holy life in light of these future events. They were also to be guardians of these prophecies just as they will be encouraged by them. Prophecies are to be viewed as deeds done by our heavenly Father. He now tells His children what Father would surely do in the future! Children of God must take heart and believe in them and live their present lives in light of these future revelations.

Singing a New Song — 42:10-17

The LORD now calls on all His children to sing a new song and His praise from the ends of the earth as they have been given new prophecies. Everyone is called to praise the LORD and give thanks. All the ones who go down to the sea and all that is therein are to praise the LORD. These do not refer to the fish of the seas but rather the inhabitants in the islands as the next phrase evidenced.

When the LORD reveals the future and that He is control of the future, there is indeed much to praise the LORD for. The knowledge that nothing happens by chance but will inevitably lead to the fulfillment of the LORD's prophecies is most reassuring. No matter how the present might seem out of sorts, there is nothing to fear for the future is already assured. The present events are to be viewed as immediate future events also in God's control or else how could the future be assured if the present is not! Believers truly have much to

praise the LORD for whenever they meditate on the LORD's prophecies.

Verse 11-12 – Let the wilderness and the cities lift up their voices. The world is made of cities and wilderness. When these are called by the LORD to lift up their voices it means the whole earth is called to praise the LORD. The villages that Kedar does inhabit refer to the Arabians who dwelt in the wilderness i.e. uninhabited areas where city life ends. Matthew Poole rightly observes that the people of Kedar were, "the Arabians; which were a heathenish and barbarous people, and well known to the Jews, and are synecdochically put for all nations in the same circumstances."

Let those who lived in the rocks also sing. Let them shout from the top of their voices praising the LORD. The salvation of Christ reaches to the far corners of the earth where believers are found everywhere. They were all called to praise the LORD because of the great work of salvation that the LORD has done in their lives. Let them give glory to the LORD. Let them declare His praise in the islands. What a tremendous picture to encourage God's people at a time when Israel had been decimated and Judah was nearly destroyed and would soon enter into exile in the not too distant future. But the impact of the Christ of Israel would be worldwide. The praise of the LORD would reverberate throughout the earth.

Verse 13 – The LORD will conquer all who stand in His way of truth and righteousness. He shall go

forth as a mighty man indicating that He will walk amongst man and He will do all things upon the earth. He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war. This seems to be a strange thing to say about God. What it means here is that the LORD would stir up i.e. to awaken His jealousy i.e. righteous indignation like a man of war taking revenge upon all those who attacked and persecuted His children as they served Him by doing His holy will to send forth the gospel message.

The LORD shall cry i.e. shout loudly to split the ears. Yea He would even roar i.e. to be clear in tone like a shrill. He shall prevail against i.e. easily overcome His enemies. None of the LORD's enemies is able to stand up against His onslaught. They might appear to have power over God's children on the earth but a time will come when the LORD's enemies will be on the receiving end of the LORD's omnipotent power.

Verse 14 – The LORD had held on to His peace for too long. It is now a time for war where sinners will receive their just reward. He had been still and allowed sinful men to get away with their insults of God and persecuting His children for defending the testimony of Christ. The LORD had refrained Himself from unleashing His wrath upon the earth for the many sins they committed.

Now their sins are full. The time of God's wrath has come. The LORD will cry like a travailing woman. The word for "cry" means "to scream." The intensity of the anger of the LORD is highlighted here by this imagery. The

LORD said that He will now destroy i.e. blow away and devour i.e. inhale eagerly at once. The LORD's vengeance will be swift and certain. There will be no mistakes. Everyone who hindered the work of God would be punished. There is no one who will escape.

This gives great comfort to the godly and obedient Christian who suffered for Christ's sake. They must not take matters into their own hands for vengeance is the LORD's. They will not escape the wrath of God if they do not repent. They must be pitied. They must be prayed for. They must be loved with the love of Christ. They must see Christ in the life of God's children. If they do not repent they will die and end in Hell.

Verse 15-16 – The wrath of the LORD will include the earth that all men depend on for survival. Therefore when the earth is devastated, Man will suffer greatly. He will make waste mountains and hills. Mountains and hills are where water comes from. Once destroyed, drought would set in. He would dry up all their herbs i.e. all that they planted for their food would be destroyed. Famine and drought would cover the face of the earth. The LORD will make the rivers islands which mean that they would be dried up that river beds would appear. The LORD would also dry up the pools. Fresh water would disappear from the face of the earth. Global drought and famine would destroy economies and bring great sorrow and fear to all mankind.

However, to the people of God who lived at that time, the LORD will care for them. The blind will be brought by the LORD to a place that they do not know. He will lead them in paths that they have not known. He will make darkness light before them. Crooked things would be made straight. The LORD will do these things for His own. He will not forsake them even as He destroys and devours the earth! This is definitely a description of salvation. This was the way that the Gentiles do not know. The blind here refers to spiritual blindness rather than physical. The LORD will never destroy the righteous together with the wicked.

Verse 17 – The Gentiles who turn back to the LORD are emphasized here. In other words they would be stopped by the LORD from their idolatry. They shall be greatly ashamed that they had trusted in images. They shall be greatly ashamed that they had said to the molten images, "Ye are our gods." Now that they have known the one living and true God, they realize their errors and wish to become believers.

The LORD Rebukes Idolaters

— 42:16-25

Verse 18 – The LORD called the blind and the deaf to see and to hear respectively. The moment they turn to Christ and accept Him as their Lord and Savior their eyes will be opened and their ears would hear. The truth would sound sweetly to their ears when before they were jarring and repulsive. The Word of God becomes the sweetest sound to them.

Verse 19 – Who are these blind and deaf ones? There are no people on earth that are more blind and more deaf than the Jews. They had been founded by the LORD from day one. They had the presence and guidance of the LORD from the moment they came out of Egypt in the days of Moses. Why could they not see the truth and hear the truth and be a godly witness instead of turning to worship idols? The Gentiles will one day turn in a great and global manner to the LORD whereas the Jews who had the LORD with them for hundreds of years keep running away from the LORD!

They were the messengers that the LORD sent to show to the world who the LORD is. Israel was to do this by the way she lived as a nation. But to no avail, there were more bad years than good years of testimony. Israel was ignorant of her gigantic failures. Instead Israel thought that she was perfect in the sight of the LORD even as she bowed down to idols. When the externals become the measure of spirituality and holiness, the folly of the delusional "perfection and righteousness" abound. They are in deep sin but they strut around like peacocks thinking that they are right with God. When in reality they are bound for Hell like the rest of the world. Israel looked down on Gentiles and despised them for they considered them unclean. They still believed that they are the LORD's servants even though they made molten images and continue to bow to them. These are the blind and deaf ones.

Verse 20 – Israel continues to see i.e. see with their eyes many things but they observe nothing i.e. did not take heed to walk right with God. What is the point of having all the external trappings of purity and holiness when the heart is far from God? Israel did not know the LORD for the LORD surely did not know her.

Their ears were opened but they did not hear at all. Their lives of continual sin and idolatry belie their blindness and deafness. They still call God by His name, the LORD, but that was all they had, for they did not have a spiritual life but one that was full of idolatry. God's name was uttered in front of molten images!

Verse 21 – The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. This means that although Israel deserves to be punished for all her sins, the LORD did not do so. This was not due to Israel's goodness for Israel's behavior and conduct was no better than the Gentiles, in fact, it was worse than the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not have all the blessings and truths that Israel had. Israel remained for all these many years because of the LORD's own righteousness. His plan for the world's salvation must be completed. The prophecies and promises of the LORD must be fulfilled in and through Israel. God will keep His promises and His Holy Word despite Israel's many failures.

He will magnify the law even though Israel did not. He will make it honourable even though Israel brought shame to it most of her life. The LORD will magnify the law by sending Christ

to obey every jot and tittle of the law for sinners' sake. Then there will be a people of God who would obey the law as the law would be written in their hearts. This means that they would be given the righteousness of the law so that they would keep them and observe them as His witnesses. In this way the law would be made honourable through Christ.

Verse 22 – But Israel was, "a people robbed and spoiled; *they are* all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore." Note the similarity between verse 22 and verse 7. The Gentiles would be delivered from sin and spiritual darkness. Israel remains in sin and spiritual darkness. Israel is snared i.e. spread a net in holes. Israel has fallen into many holes. She is in prison houses. They are good for nothing except to be a prey for others. There is none to deliver her. She has become spoils of war to others who have captured her. Worse still Israel did not cry to the LORD for help to restore her!

There is no spiritual darkness darker than one who is deep in it and does not know it!

Verse 23 – A general cry to Israel from the LORD comes next. The LORD appeals to Israel to come back to Him and stop sinning! Who among Israel would give ear and hear? Who will hearken and hear i.e. obey the truths of these prophecies of the LORD! Will Israel stop sinning and return back to the LORD!

The mercy and compassion of the LORD toward Israel is great.

Verse 24 – The LORD wanted Israel to understand that her captivities, deaths and defeats by the enemies were all allowed by Him. The LORD said, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law." Israel's deep state of weakness and defeat was the LORD's doing. It was not the power or might of the enemies that defeated Israel. It was the LORD who defeated Israel. The LORD had no choice but to punish Israel.

Israel had sinned against the LORD not the Gentiles! In fact, Israel tried to make alliances with the Gentile nations. They were Israel's friends and yet they turned around and destroy Israel instead. Israel has sinned against the LORD and the LORD has punished! Israel had not walked in the way of truth and righteousness. Israel had not obeyed the laws of God. For these many years of patient dealings, the LORD said enough was enough. Israel would go into exile! But all is not lost. Israel must return. The reason for these chastisements from the LORD was to bring Israel back to the LORD.

Verse 25 – Therefore the LORD has poured upon Israel the fury of His anger and the strength of His battle against her. Israel can never win against the LORD if the LORD wanted her to lose. Israel must learn fast! The LORD has set Israel on fire. She was destroyed because of sin. But sadly

Israel did not know it i.e. refuse to acknowledge that she had sinned against the LORD.

They were burned to the very depths of their beings and yet they refused to humble themselves by laying the truth of the LORD's doing to their heart. Why would the people of God who sinned remain so stubbornly in sin! What a great tragedy! They had everything to succeed but they failed the LORD miserably. Amen.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 42:1-9

TUESDAY: Isaiah 42:10-25

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 42:1-25

THURSDAY: Isaiah 42:1-25

FRIDAY: Isaiah 42:1-25

Discussion Questions

1. Is discouragement a sin? Do you feel discouraged at times in the ministry such as loved ones' refusal to repent from their sins and turn to Christ? Are discouragements like these sinful? Please explain.

2. How do you feel knowing that the One who called you to be His witness on earth is God Almighty? Does this in anyway impact your life and testimony everywhere? Please elaborate.

3. Is there such a truth as a Christian nation? Is there a Christian nation today? Please explain.

4. Do believers have the glory of God in them? What is the glory of God in your life like? Are people supposed to see the glory of God in your life? Explain.

5. Is it OK to have the image or pictures of Christ in children's Bible or Sunday School material?

6. Do we need to have faith to believe in the past as well as the future? Is there a time in our lives where faith is not needed? Please explain.

7. Do the prophecies of God encourage you at all? How? Please give reasons.

8. Are there people today who are in spiritual darkness but do not know it and still call themselves Christians? They are far from the LORD but still think that they are near to Him? Are you one of them?

9. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
