

A Weak Christian

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[0 : 00] Psalm 42 and Psalm 43, the psalmist asks himself, why are you so downcast? And that's the title of the sermon series I want to begin today for these afternoon sermons.

Why so downcast? And the inspiration for it comes from a series of sermons preached way back in 1648 in London by a Puritan named William Bridge.

You can actually read a copy of those sermons in the library. It's under the title, Lifting Up for the Downcast. And so that's somewhat of the inspiration.

So what does a person look like when they're downcast? Well, their heads are down, their eyes are down, they can hardly lift their heads up.

What does a person sound like when they're downcast? A sigh. They can hardly get a word out.

[1 : 11] It takes almost all their energy to say anything. What does it feel like on the inside to be downcast? It's complicated.

It can feel like despair. Nothing's going to get better. It can feel like frustration. I've tried and I've tried and still the situation is the same.

It can feel like defeat. Like a whipped puppy. Sadness. Sadness. Loss. There are all kinds of reasons that we become downcast.

It's a room with lots of doors that go into it. But however we got there, and I think we can all be honest and we can all have the self-awareness to say that I know what that's like to be downcast. I've been there. But however we got there, whatever door we took, discouragement is not a good place to be. I'm not going to go into lots of details about why it's not a good place to be, but it's just not a good place to be.

[2 : 24] It's a place of weakness. It can be a place of difficult obedience. It can be a place where Satan has a foothold in our hearts and our lives and he can really pick on us, but it's not a good place to be.

And the good news is, dear Christian, it's not a place that you have to stay. Just because you're in that room or you found yourself there, it doesn't mean you have to stay there. Really, the point of this series is not to say these are all the reasons we get discouraged.

These are all the reasons how we become downcast. The point of this series is to talk about all the reasons we have for encouragement. Because that question in Psalm 42 and 43 that's echoed three times across those two Psalms, that question of why are you so downcast, O my soul, has buried within it the understanding, the realization that while I might have some good reasons for my discouragement, I ultimately have better reasons to be encouraged.

The idea is, yes, you are discouraged, but O my soul, you don't have ultimately good reasons that outweigh the encouragement.

Well, so you might have reasons for discouragement, but you have better reasons for encouragement, reasons to lift up your downcast head, your heart.

[3 : 51] And so that's what I want to do. Lift up your head. Why are you downcast? Put your hope in God, for you will yet praise him. You are going to praise him still, your Savior and your God.

The tricky things about emotions is that they can feel so permanent. They can feel like this is the way it's always going to be. But even in Psalm 42 and 43, he says, you know what, this is not the way it's going to be.

And there's some, there's relief even in knowing that. That yes, this is how I feel at this moment. But David knew, or the sons of Korah knew, excuse me, that ultimately I am going to praise God.

He's going to save me. He's going to rescue me. So is this you, downcast? Well, why are you discouraged? Today I want to talk about just a single case, a single situation.

And it's the single case of a weak Christian. A weak Christian. And what I mean by this is you're not a strong Christian.

[5 : 01] You might say, I see other Christians and they're strong. They're always serving. They're always growing. Me, I can hardly do anything.

Others seem so much better or stronger in their gifts. I have a hard time even knowing what I'm gifted at to begin with. I look at what the stronger are doing and I get discouraged.

I look at what other Christians are like. And it doesn't feel, it doesn't seem like that's me. I feel weak. I feel like a loser.

I feel like I'm not good to anyone or good for anyone. I'm not a teacher. I'm not a preacher. I'm not a deacon. I don't have, I'm not a good encourager. I see other ladies and those ladies are strong, but that's me.

That's not, that's not me. Others go from strength to strength. I feel like I just sit in the same spot. It's hard for me to go forward.

[6 : 03] Others know more. Others do more. But not me. Shouldn't I be discouraged? Shouldn't I be downcast? If anyone should be discouraged, shouldn't I, don't I have that right?

And the answer is, and my answer is, yeah, I see what you're saying. If you're, if this is you, if this is your wavelength, if you are echoing what I'm saying in your heart, I see what you're saying and I'm not belittling any of that at all, those feelings.

It's not ideal. It's not ideal. And I want to say it's right to be, you are right. It's better to be stronger than to be weaker.

It's better to be doing than not doing. It's better to be growing than hardly growing at all. But, sister, brother, you still don't have to be discouraged.

Downcast, hopeless, feeling worthless. And let me tell you why. Let me tell you why. You have lots of good reasons to even be encouraged in your situation.

[7 : 13] And so, let's just begin. And let me tell you one reason you can be encouraged is that even weak things, weak things can be wise things.

Even weak things can be wise unto salvation. Just because you're a weak Christian doesn't mean you're not a Christian. And just because you're not as wise as someone else doesn't mean that you're not wise in the most important ways.

Remember when Timothy was young, he was made wise unto salvation through the scriptures. He was young. He was a child when that was true of him.

And so, just because you're a weak Christian doesn't mean that God hasn't made you wise unto salvation. The weakest Christian in the world is wiser than the strongest unbeliever in the world.

The weakest Christian is smarter in the things of God than the smartest unbeliever. And so, you weak Christian, you're wiser than kings and presidents and college professors and investment bankers and wiser than all of these.

[8 : 19] So, turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 30. Proverbs chapter 30. And look at verse 24. We're going to read verses 24 through 28.

And he's talking about weak things. And yet, he says, you know, even weak things can be wise. Proverbs chapter 30, verse 24.

And we'll read through verse 28. Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise. Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer.

Conies are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags. Locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks.

A lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in king's palaces. So, four weak, yet wise things.

[9 : 26] Ants have little strength. But you know what? Ants know to plan for the future. And we, Christian, you have food stored up for you for the future.

Your best things are stored up in heaven for you. Your best things are still in front of you. Conies, or whatever they are in Hebrew, they're little animals with little power.

But you know what? They know how to hide in a strong fortress. They hide in the crags, in the mountains, in the hills there. So, weak Christian, you have hidden in a mighty fortress.

A mighty fortress is your God, a bulwark never failing. Locusts are weak. You take them one at a time. Anyone can step on a grasshopper. But when you join them all together, they become unstoppable.

And so, weak Christian, you're not all alone. You have joined yourself to a huge group. Angels in heaven.

[10:28] Men on earth. Saints. You're marching with others. You aren't alone. And then there's the lizard. You can catch it with your hand. I don't know.

If you've gone down to Florida, you can see these little lizards everywhere. And little kids can catch them. They're not hard to catch. But what does it say about them?

You still can't keep them out of the king's palace. They found a good place to live. And you can't keep them away. So, weak Christian, a little child might be able to catch you.

Might be able to pick you up and shake you out. But, you know what? You live in the heart of the king. And one day, you're going to live in the palace of the king. Wise. Weak yet wise.

And so, you can lift up your head. Your stocks. Your pantry. Of spiritual blessings is just as full as the strongest Christians.

[11:30] The smallest grace opens the door to the pantry of Jesus Christ. The same pantry as the ones with the greatest faith. The strongest grace.

So, every spiritual blessing in Christ is just as much yours as it is the strongest. And so, you're no less justified than the strongest Christian.

That righteousness that we heard about this morning. That righteousness. That forgiveness. That justification. Is as much yours as it is theirs.

Your sins are no less forgiven. And so, why so downcast? Your sins are forgiven. You have heard those sweetest of words. Your sins are forgiven. Just as much as the strongest Christian.

So, Paul, probably the greatest Christian to ever live, was no more justified, was no more right, was no more forgiven than the weakest Christian.

[12:31] And let me put that in another way. Paul, probably the greatest, strongest Christian of all, was no more justified, no more right, no more forgiven than you.

Than you. The same Spirit lives in you. The same Son died to win you. The same Father loves you. So, the strongest Christian might just enjoy his adoption, what we sang about, what we talked about this morning.

He might enjoy his adoption more than you do. That's a possibility. But he's not more adopted than you are. The strong Christian might do more for their father, in some ways.

But she's no more daughter than you are. And so, what else can we say? Except in the words of Romans 5, by faith we've gained access into this grace in which we now stand.

And you say, but my faith, my faith is so weak. It's so small. And reverently and kindly I say so.

[13:46] The smallest faith. Faith the size of a mustard seed will move mountains. Faith the size of a speck of dust opens the door to all the riches of Jesus Christ.

Our weakness and our frailty never kept us away from Jesus Christ. So, why do we think that our weakness and our frailty will somehow exclude us and push us away from him? The strongest Christian might feel more comfort in Christ than you do.

But they don't have better reasons for their comfort than you do. So, you look under your feet and you're standing on Jesus Christ and you look under the strongest Christian's feet and they're standing on Jesus Christ.

And so, lift up your head. There's more. More to say. God's promises fall thicker on your field than the strongest Christian's.

And what I mean by that is this. There are a lot of promises for the weak. There are not a lot of promises for the strong. Of course, we are all weak.

[14:59] And of course, that's why we all find ourselves gathering around the same promises. Because we all feel this weakness. And so, now you know what I'm saying. You feel weak. There are promises for that.

Promises fall thick on your field. And so, you're weak. You feel dejected. You feel sad. You mourn. You mourn your weakness. Blessed are you who mourn.

For you will be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. You say, I wish I was more righteous.

I wish I was stronger. I wish I didn't have all these undone deeds. And these things I didn't get to. And don't have the energy. I fail so often.

I have this hunger for righteousness. And that's all I have. But this wish. And Jesus says, blessed are you. You will be filled.

[16:01] God takes special notice of the hungry, the thirsty, the sad. And he says, blessed. Or take, excuse me, Isaiah 41.

Isaiah 41. These promises that fall on the field of the weak. Listen to how it describes Israel. Do not be afraid. Oh, worm Jacob.

You're running in the morning. Or you're walking out on the sidewalks in the morning after the rain. And the worms are there. A worm. Can hardly get out of the sidewalk. And you see them all scattered.

Oh, worm Jacob. Oh, little Israel. Oh, Israel. For I myself will help you. And then he says, the poor and the needy search for water. But there is none. But I, the Lord, will answer them.

I will not forsake them. Weak. Little worm. Can't find what he needs. I will not forsake him.

[17:03] Isaiah 42. A bruised reed he will not break. And a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. You say, I'm weak. I'm this bruised reed. I'm not a tree. I'm just a stalk in the swamp there.

And I'm bruised. Jesus says, I will not break you. Where I'm a flame that's just next to nothing. I'm like when you turn on the stove.

And then you turn it all the way down. And I'm like that last little bit that's just hanging on before it falls off. Jesus says, I will not snuff you out. So lift up your head.

Why are you so downcast? The promises of God fall thick on your field. He sees your situation. He calls it to mind. And he promises you.

There's more. You have just as much of Jesus' heart. And just as much of Jesus' help. As the strongest Christian. And what I mean is, Jesus is yours.

[18:02] Just as much as he is the strongest. Let me give you just a couple of illustrations. Matthew chapter 8. A centurion.

So he's a Roman. And he's a Roman soldier. And he has a sick servant. And he comes to Jesus. And he says, Lord, my servant is sick.

And Jesus says, Jesus gets up and he gets ready to go. He says, I'll come. I'll come with you. I'll go and heal him. And now you remember what the centurion said. Oh, you don't need to come.

You don't need to come to my house. Just speak the word. Because I know what it's like. I know what it's like to command. And I say to one soldier to do this. And he does it. So just speak the word.

And Jesus is astonished. He's surprised. Can you imagine that? He's astonished. You can't believe this. Amazed at his faith.

[19:01] I haven't. He says, I haven't found anyone in Israel with such great faith. And the servant was healed from that very hour. Matthew 8. The centurion. Matthew 9.

We have a very similar situation. Except it's different. A synagogue ruler comes to him. He's not a Roman.

He's a Jew. He's not really ignorant of the scriptures. He knows the scriptures. He comes to Jesus. And his daughter is dead.

And so I'm not belittling his faith here. Because his daughter was dead. And he knew to go to Jesus. My daughter is dead. But come and put your hand on her. And she will live. Now Jesus got up.

And went with him. But did you notice? The centurion said. You don't need to come with me. Just say the word. But that ruler.

[19:59] His faith wasn't that strong. But Jesus didn't berate the ruler. And say. You know. Just a few days ago. A centurion. A centurion.

Said. Just speak the word. Where's your faith? He was strong. Yours is weak. No. There's none of that. Jesus goes with him. He goes with him.

Without complaint. He commends the strong. And he goes with the weak. But strong. Weak. They both had Jesus for them. They had just as much of Jesus healing.

Miraculous power for them. Or we can go to Revelation 2 and 3. Now Jesus has all kinds of churches. Remember. That's the passage where he's.

He's writing to the seven churches. And they're all very different. And the first is Ephesus. Ephesus. And in many ways. Ephesus is a strong. Church. They are a mature.

[20:56] Church. They've endured. Hardships. They have not grown. Weary. They're mature. Doctrinally. They're mature. In practice. So that's them.

They've endured. Hardships. And they've not grown. Weary. They're. They're. Strong. But then he talks to Philadelphia. The church in Philadelphia. And they're hardly holding on.

They have little strength. And Jesus says that about them. I know you have little strength. But which one. Which one had Jesus's heart?

Which one did he love? Which one did he care for? Which one did he help? The answer is. Both. Strong.

And the weak. So are you like Ephesus? Mature. Strong. You've seen your share of troubles. And you're still persevering.

[22 : 02] Good. Good. Don't lose your first love. Jesus says I'll come and take away your candlestick. Or maybe your Philadelphia. You're hardly holding on.

Little strength. You know what Jesus said to that church? I'm going to make your enemies know. That I have loved you. They're the church that needed to hear Jesus say.

You know what? I love you. And I'm going to make everyone see that. So. Weak brother. Weak sister.

You have just as much. Of Jesus' heart. As the strongest. And so take heart. Lift up your head. You have reasons to be discouraged.

You have greater reasons to be encouraged. So. As we end. Just want to say one word.

[23 : 04] If you're not a Christian. I want you to see the heart of the Lord. What kind of person is he? What kind of. What's his heart like?

Well this is his heart. He loves the strong. But he loves the weak. He promises to both. He receives both. And so there you are.

His heart runs out to the weak. He's not some harsh demanding Lord. Who loves only the strong. His heart knows the weakness of men. And he loves them.

Because when we were helpless. When we were powerless. When we had nothing. Nothing at all to offer him. Nothing at all we could do. Christ died for us.

That's his heart. His heart came to the powerless. And that's how you'll find him. If you turn to him. That's how you'll find him. If you come to him. And confess.

[24 : 04] And unburden. Your heart. And unburden. Your sin. And unburden. Your self. He says. I am meek. And lowly of heart. And I'll give you rest.

For your soul. He knows how to take the weak. And the tired. And he knows how to give their souls rest. That's what you'll find. If you come to Jesus. The devil will lie.

And say. He's. Exacting. And harsh. And mean. And cruel. Those are the lies of the one who. When he speaks. He lies. Instead. The gospel tells us.

That Jesus receives the weak. And he loves. Them. And he helps them. Well let's pray. Our heavenly father. We thank you for.

The truth of your word. The truth that meets us. In our weakness. We all know what it's like. To be. In over our heads.

[25 : 04] And there are some here. Especially who. Who struggle. And who are discouraged. I pray that you would encourage them. With these truths. That they would find something here.

That would. That they could hold on to. And Lord Jesus. Come. With your word. And be that good shepherd. And feed. And nurse. And care. For your.

Your weakest of sheep. Father. Please teach us all. To have that kind of heart. That would love the weak.

And not despise them. But to have more of our. Savior's heart. And his compassion. About us. As we love one another. I pray this for Jesus' sake.

Amen.