

A Bruised Reed He Will Not Break

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Date: 25 October 2015

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[0:00] On behalf of my wife and I, thank you so much for the warm welcome you've given. Diane texted to someone. I heard her talking into her phone this afternoon, and she used the word! respite, a time of respite down here. And the Lord Jesus said to his disciples, come away with me to a lonely place and rest a while. There's something very calm about northern Indiana to be able to get away from the rat race of West Michigan and rest a while. So thank you for the kind, refreshing fellowship to me and to my wife. Please take your Bibles and turn with me to Isaiah chapter 42.

Isaiah 42. We want to look at the first three verses. This is the word of God to us. We pray that he would speak to us in this. Isaiah 42. Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise his voice nor make his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish. Let's pray together. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word that is God-breathed that can make us equipped for every good work and for training and righteousness. So we do stand like young Samuel and say, speak, O Lord, for your servant sits to listen. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Philip Ryken is the president of Wheaton College. I've come to greatly appreciate Phil Ryken's sermons and writings. I highly esteem him as a man of God. He at Wheaton

College at a convocation chapel, that's the first session together for a new student body coming together in September of 2014. He's got his academic gown on as he's declaring this message. You can even find his message on YouTube that I refer to. He writes this in beginning his introduction. In fact, I manuscripted his introduction because his introduction is going to be my introduction.

Ryken said this to the whole student body in the gymnasium there. It was the spring semester of the academic year, and I was in trouble. He's just referring to a few months earlier. I was in trouble. You see, over the course of long weeks that stretched into months, I fell deeper and deeper into discouragement until eventually I wondered if I even had the will to live. I'm talking about me, not somebody else. I'm talking about just the spring semester of 2014. Most of you don't know anything about this. That's why I've entitled today's message after the African American spiritual, Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen. Some of you know I don't talk much about myself in chapel.

[3:13] I'm here to talk about Jesus, and I'm starting here a series on how Jesus helped men and women in the Bible who were in trouble. You see, I was in trouble last semester. You imagine how the student body has eyes as big as saucers. What was going on with President Ryken? He went on to say this, I was in trouble last semester, but I know you'll be in trouble too. You think of these young freshmen coming there away from home the first time. They're all homesick and emotionally unstable. I know you'll be in trouble too. I suppose some of you are in trouble even right now, even if nobody knows you are in trouble. You're weighed down by some kind of guilt maybe, some kind of shame. Maybe you're grieving about the loss of home or relationship, or even if you're not in trouble now, cheer up because sooner or later you will be in trouble. And it'll help you immensely to know what godly people do when trouble comes.

Ryken went on. Let me share with you my own story. Someone very close to me, someone I love more than life itself, was going through a time of trouble, and those troubles came to her with feelings of such fear and painful sadness that for her life was just not worth living. These were things that I'd never experienced in my own life, so I asked God to lift her burden, and if possible, maybe let me carry some of that burden instead. Lord, I prayed, she's too little. She doesn't understand what's happening to her. Lord, please let me take her pain. You may want to give it to me instead in Jesus' name.

And I wonder about that prayer, Ryken said. All I know is that in the weeks and months to follow, my beloved's burdens were lifted and my joy was changed to sorrow. My beloved's sufferings affected

me very deeply. Her burdens made me anxious about the future. I had overwhelming sadness. Truthfully, many mornings I cried all the way while I was getting ready in clothes for the day. I was struck with broken relationships, multiple attacks on my character, revisiting of painful experiences from the past. I'm not sure it was the best semester for me to go through my 360 degree performance review and get honest feedback about my leadership from faculty, alumni, and students. All of this made me very anxious. There were nights when I didn't sleep well, which is rare for me. Many mornings I was up well before dawn. There were days when it was very hard for me to get up and face the day at all.

I thought I was very good company, and I'm sad about that. My problems were consuming so much emotional energy that it was hard for me to be with people for any more than an hour at a time. I just needed to go and be alone throughout the day. Mrs. Ryken, his wife, said I needed to go to the doctor. They said I needed to go through their checklist for emotional health, and I scored badly, really badly, really badly, and that was very humbling. I began to struggle with whether or not God loved me.

[6:12] Another new experience for me, that was I'd read God's promises, but then doubts and guilts would creep in. I'd read passages like Psalm 86 too, save my soul, Lord, for I am a godly man. Then I'd wonder, really? Do I qualify to be called a godly man with the struggles that I'm going through?

I was in a downward spiral. I said to myself, you know, I understand why people would kill themselves. A few days after that, I started to wonder about how I might end it all if, you know, it wasn't a thought I wanted to have, but Satan was after me. He was tempting me. Things are moving in a bad direction for me, and at that rate, the rate they were going, who knows how long it would be before I was in real danger. Well, those were some of the troubles I've seen. Not all of them, by any means. I guess now I could change the title of my message. Everybody knows the troubles I've seen, but I can tell you that God didn't abandon me, but he rescued me. My loving Lord Jesus brought me safely through. I can't say my troubles are all over. I can't say my feelings of despair will never return, but I know that my Lord will be a very present help in times of trouble. He said, and that's my testimony. So that's my introduction to this sermon. Isaiah 42 and verse 3, a bruised reed. You see, Ryken was a bruised reed at this season. And a dimly burning wick, that's what Ryken was as well, he will not extinguish. I'm going to look at this passage. It's great hope and help for frail saints who sometimes feel like they're too weak to go on. We want to unpack this passage under three main headings, and then the third heading will have three subheadings to it. That's the shape of our sermon tonight. Come on with me to the first main heading. Really, there'll be three main questions, which is, who is this servant who's referred to here? Behold my servant whom I uphold. Second main heading will be, how does this servant act? And then the third main heading will be, for whom does this servant act? So come on with me to the first question. Who is this servant? Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit on him. He'll bring forth justice to the nations. He won't cry out or raise his voice, nor make his voice heard in the street.

A bruised reed he won't break. A dimly burning wick he will not extinguish. Who is this servant that's being spoken about? Well, I think profoundly it's referring to first a nearby failed servant, and then second, a faraway successful servant. Consider the nearby failed servant. 42.1, behold my servant. Who is this referring to here? I believe this is referring to Israel back in the seventh century BC. It's Israel because if you look at 41.8, just the previous chapter, it says, Israel, look there, my servant. Jacob, whom I've chosen, seed of Abraham, my father. You see, this is referring to the fact that the Lord had chosen among all the nations, Israel, the offspring of Abraham, to be his own. My people, they referred to. Genesis 12, the Lord says, I will choose Abraham. I will make you Abraham into a great nation, and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you, the nation of Israel. They were chosen from the slave market of the races, and God said, I'll take that one, Israel, to be my servant.

[10:15] I will uphold Israel. I will strengthen Israel. I will delight in Israel. Israel among all the nations will be the apple of my eye. They'll be my darling, and the Lord treated them like a little darling there in Egypt in the land of Goshen, where they moved from infancy into toddlerhood, and they were actually escorted across the Red Sea to be brought into the promised land of Canaan, and their mission was, look at 42.1b, to bring forth justice to the nations. That's why they were in Canaan, to bring forth justice to the nations. Now, the Hebrew word is mishpat. It doesn't mean

they'll bring punishment to the nations. The word mishpat actually means the idea of they will bring integrity to the nations.

They were to be a community of integrity. That's what mishpat means. They will be humanity as it should be, living righteously and wholly. You see, Israel living in Canaan would be a light like a city on the hill, and all the nations would see the holy, godly, righteous living in Israel, and the nations in the darkness to the ends of the earth would be drawn like houseflies to flame Israel, and they would all come to know the Lord. And the way that they would do it, it says, I will put my spirit upon him, because the spirit would do that work, fueling Israel's holiness. Look, how would they overtake these Gentiles? Not by crushing them with bully tactics, not with military charges against them and battle cries, collapsing Gentile walls, or terrorizing them in the city streets and bringing their prisoners to Israel. No, look, it says in verse 42.2, they will not, my servant Israel won't cry out, they won't raise their voice, won't be heard in the streets, but rather Israel is to woo them at Gentile merchants who come through say, the living God dwells in this nation of integrity. But that nearby servant Israel failed. Did Israel live as a bright light of holiness? No, they kept turning away and loving darkness. Didn't live with justice, justice? Rather, there was hypocrisy in the land. They rebelled against the Lord, and so God, what?

Punished them by exiling them off to Babylon. And that's why chapters 40 through 66 are saying, I'm going to pull you back from punishment and eventually bring you back in the land. But as it says, behold my servant whom I uphold, a bruise really won't break. The ancient nearby servant Israel in the 7th century BC failed. But that was a shadow, that servant of the faraway successful servant, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate servant of God, the son in whom God delights. In fact, Jesus quotes this passage, Isaiah 42.1-3, when he healed the man with the withered hand, and he said, this is me. I am coming to the bruise reed, and I'm not breaking it. I am healing it. I am graciously blowing on the burning wick. See, Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of this passage.

Jesus will accomplish as the second servant what the first servant Israel failed to do, to bring the nations to himself. The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve. Behold my servant. And the father delighted in the Lord Jesus there in the Jordan River when he was baptized. The dove comes over. This is my beloved son in whom I am pleased. He delighted in the son, the Lord Jesus Christ, his darling. And so Jesus was the chosen one, and he preached the kingdom of mishpat, of integrity, the sermon on the mount. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And then he told his disciples that they were to, what, baptize and speak to all the nations, to draw all the nations. Even the islands would be drawn. Even people from like Malta and

Corsica and now the Philippines and the Bahamas, people are coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we see where old covenant Israel failed, the new covenant servant Jesus succeeds as we see that justice and integrity by the new birth and the gospel will draw people from the ends of the earth to come and bow down and worship the Lord. So that is, who is this servant? As it says, behold my servant, whom I uphold. A bruised reed he won't break and a dimly burning wick he won't extinguish. It's talking about Jesus, ultimately. So that's who this servant is. But secondly now, come on, how does this servant act?

[15 : 41] How does this servant act? Well, he won't use harsh and crushing bully tactics, but rather we see he'll be tender and gentle, like a nurse. Those are the tactics he'll use. He'll sensitively and affectionately and softly deal with people. Look, 42.3, a bruised reed he won't break. That's tenderness.

When our boys were little, they would play in the yard and they'd play with Bradley and Christopher across the street and they would play with baseballs. And Harvey Newell, who lived next door, he had a home that was always well manicured and he actually won in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the award of Better Homes and Gardens, the most beautiful yard in town. Well, this is dangerous and boys are playing ball next door. The ball goes into the cattails in Harvey's yard and one of the cattails is broken. Well, Mr. Newell comes out and sees the broken. He looks over at the boys and what does he do? Do you take a machete and cut off? No, no. Harvey would take a popsicle stick and he would splint it and then he would tape it so that that bruised reed would be healed instead of broken off.

You see how tender he was in healing and restoring that bruised reed. Jesus will be tender like this and dealing with us and maybe like a Phil Reichen when you're bruised emotionally and you feel

like you can't even stand. Or it says, look at 42.3, it says, a dimly burning wick he won't extinguish. You know what it's like when you were young. You had a birthday cake, right? And your mom had a wonderful birthday party and there was the cake and you were maybe 13 and you blew out all the candles and your mom, she wants to get on with the party, right? There's the candle, it's a little spark on it. What does your mom do? She's not kind to that candle. She wets her fingertips and she just smothers it right out. Cruel to the dimly burning wick. But no, it says about the Lord, he will not extinguish the dimly burning wick. You see this servant, Jesus, he's not impatient to despising small things. He has compassion, tenderness, even on the faintest of embers. There's no harsh machete. There's no wet fingertips. There's no, you know, the campfire that you see maybe in the autumn there, the wood has been burning and all there are the little embers. And you could take a water, it's getting kind of smoky, right? And you could take a water bucket and just end it all. But instead, you know, you could get in there and blow on those embers. You put a little more wood on there, it becomes a raging fire. That's the way the Lord Jesus deals with us. Though we in our sinful, emotional weakness may be smoky in his holy eyes, doesn't end it all. No, he's, he's breathes on us. In fact, it's not only a matter of tolerating us, it's kind of a litotes, a figure of speech, which is understatement. He doesn't only tolerate it, but he actually nurtures the flame by healthily breathing into us. William Hendrickson says this about Jesus who won't extinguish the burning wick. He won't break the bruised reed. The real significance is he will treat with profound, tender sympathy, with tender concern, whatever is near to exhaustion. Even as Jesus said in Matthew 11, 28, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest. He'll impart strength to the weak. He'll help those pining away. He'll, he'll heal the sick. [19 : 38] And wasn't that the way Jesus came when God was enfleshed and put on sandals and a tunic? How did God come? He came in such a way that he did. There's a man with withered hand. How did Lord Jesus treat it? He blew on that hand and strengthened it. He came to publicans and to sinners, those who were all smoky in the immorality that was coming out of them. And he breathed on them. He calls Levi to be an apostle. He was a tax collector. He calls prostitutes to be his disciples. He also comforts those who mourn because of their sin.

He, he feeds the famished. Five thousand. You see how he strengthens what's weak. He encourages the fainting. Remember Jairus who said, Oh Lord, I know my daughter. They said she's died. I believe, but help my unbelief. Only believe, Jesus said. You see, he's breathing on that little, on that little spark of faith. And we see that even pardons the sins of the paralytic. You see how tenderly and gently Jesus, the servant of God comes and he conquers and he woos. And so, you know what? Nobody should be reluctant to go to him for the healing of their sores. Do you have sores? Do you have lacerations? Do you have hurts? Don't be uneasy about going to him. When I was young, we used to go to a doctor. It was Dr. Bronchner. He was our family doctor. Now, Diane tells me that her family doctor was an ornery critter. And he would, he would grouse about and be irritable. But Dr. Bronchner, our family doctor, he was, he was such a tender doctor. I can remember, you know, I had a sore throat, my glands were really, he cut and put his hand up on my glands and touched me and he talked to me and, you know, my mama sitting there and he's discussing things. I just wanted to jump up on his lap because he was, he was a tender physician. He would give me the remedy that I needed. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ is like. Old Richard Sibbes, he's a

Puritan. He speaks about the bruised reed, the smoking flax. He writes this, Jesus shed tears for those who shed his blood. And now he intercedes in heaven for weak Christians standing between them and God's anger.

He is a physician who is good at healing diseases, especially binding up a broken heart. A bruised reed, he will not break. A burning wick, he will not snuff out. This is Jesus. Who is this servant? Well, it's Jesus. How does this servant act? Gently, tenderly, compassionately with us weak lambs. And the last question then is, for whom does this servant so act? For whom does this servant so act? Okay. A bruised reed he won't break. A dimly burning wick he won't extinguish. He's gentle. He's tender. He's nurturing. I just have three categories of people before we go home for whom this servant so acts. The first category is for newly converted saints. Jesus acts this way. Sib says this, the lion of the tribe of Judah won't show his fierce strength to those who prostrate themselves before him. You think of how Bartimaeus comes before him. Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

[23:29] How does the lion of the tribe of Judah treat this burning flax of smoky sinner bringing unholiness in his eyes? How does he treat him? Makes me think of C.S. Lewis, Chronicles of Narnia, Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Aslan comes to the queen's courtyard, that evil queen who has all these statues, these dead, dead creatures. And Aslan, the lion comes to them. What does he do? Does he bring a sledgehammer to destroy them and shatter them? No, what does he do? You tell me, what does he do? He breathes up and he brings them to life. And that's what the Lord does to hell-deserving sinners who stand before him.

He's the lion of the tribe of Judah. And he, I told you this morning in my testimony, he breathed on me back in 1976. I was dead in transgression and sin. I was, my life was a smoky irritant in the eyes of the holy, holy, holy, holy God. And he came to me and he breathed on me and he gave me life. He is so compassionate. He'll sometimes lay us low in conviction of sin. Remember that book, Born Again, Chuck Colson, many years ago? Colson was the big man on campus in Washington, D.C. He was Nixon's chief of staff. Remember that? And what did God do? God caught him in deceit and threw him into a prison cell. And the weight of his sin was on him. And he was like a, kind of like a Manasseh who had a ring in his nose and he was pulled to a place where he was humbled for his sin. And what does Colson do from his prison cell? He cries out to God to have mercy. What, what does the Lord Jesus, the servant of

God do? Kick him away? No, the Lord Jesus puts a splint on him and, and heals him and restores him and makes him to be a mighty man of God. Sibb says this, the spirit levels all proud high thoughts so we understand what we really are. We love to wander in far countries till God bruises us. Then we begin to think. You think of Luke 15, the prodigal son. Then we begin to think. Then we come to our senses like the prodigal. I realize that the moral fig leaves that we thought could cover us from God's righteousness are totally useless. And our only hope is in Christ. And like the filthy leper, we stand before the Lord Jesus. We bow, we say, please have mercy upon me. We're like the publican who beats our breasts. God, be merciful to me, the sinner. We're like the prodigal who comes sheepishly home and wonders what the father is going to do to us. What is he going to do? Look, we see the father picks up his robes and he bears his legs and he runs to his son. And he doesn't kick him in the teeth. Instead, he hangs on his neck and he weeps on him. They killed the fatted calf for him. You see how he breathes on the smoking flax. He doesn't break the wounded reed. This is the Lord Jesus

Christ. And so for newly converted saints, we see the Lord Jesus is gracious and merciful to us. So if you're a sinner and you feel ashamed of your sin like you're an irritant to God, come to him and he will blow on you and give your life and draw you to himself. He's so tender, this Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. But I'm saying for whom does this servant so act? Well, first for newly converted saints. Secondly, for sin-plagued saints. He acts like this. For sin-plagued saints. Sibb says this, grace in a Christian is not only little, but often it's mingled with corruption. And so a Christian is said to be a smoking flax. Do you ever feel like that? In the presence of the Lord and you are still smoking with a sinful stench about yourself, irritating, choking fumes into the eyes of God whose eyes are too pure to approve of iniquity. And so we find that we're tempted at times to faint because of our sin in view of our Savior. I claim to say that Jesus is my Savior. And then I treat him in such a despicable way. I read through 2 Samuel 11 and 12 and we see David in his sin with Bathsheba. And we see the immorality. And you know, you ever felt like you've sinned against God? And there's a sense of God's wrath on you and a sense of guilt. How did God deal with David? Did God send to David's court Benaiah, who was the hitman of the palace, who executed David? No, he didn't send the palace hitman.

[28:47] He sent the palace prophet. He sent Nathan with a parable. And David was like a smoking flax. He was like a little ember left. And this parable blew on David. And it brought a flame of spirituality.

And David repented. And David was restored. Lord, restore unto me the joy of my salvation. And grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. That's the way that the Lord works with us when we are in our sin. Or Jonah, I just told you, I preached through the book of Jonah.

You know, that Jonah's an obnoxious fellow. And I see myself in the mirror of that passage. The pride and the arrogance of this prophet. How does the Lord deal with Jonah? Yeah, throw him overboard. Make him walk the plank. Drown him.

But then what does the Lord do when he's going down in the water? He sends a big fish to swallow him. And to save him. And to restore him. And the Lord has a plant to tutor him. And a worm to

instruct him.

And then a whisper to mature him. That's the way the Lord deals with us. His obnoxious, like Jonah, people. Because a dimly burning wick, he doesn't snuff out in a bruised reed.

[30:03] He won't break. My wife is a grandma now. We have a two and a half year old grandson.

And there was a time just a few weeks back when Diane was... Richard came in the house and he hadn't eaten much. And he's having this emotional meltdown. Now, I can snuff out the dimly burning wick.

I laugh to myself. Richard, come on, man. Think straight. What's the matter with you? No, no, no, no. Diane. Diane comes to him, not with a sharp rebuke. Richard, softly. He talks to him softly.

Richard, don't cry. Richard, talk to me. Richard, tell me what you want. And Richard reasoned. And he was calmed.

And she gave him a little bit of cheese and a little bit of eggs. And he was back to himself. Kind of like that Snickers bar commercial, right? He's back to himself. This is the way God deals with us.

[31:03] God doesn't crush me when I have a spiritual meltdown. Instead, he nurtures me. When Paul said, oh, when I would do good, there is evil right there with me. So don't do the good that I would do, but the evil I wouldn't do.

That I do. What a wretched man am I. And what does the Lord do? He brings thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There's no condemnation for me that is in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, Peter's triple denial. I mean, Peter bragged about how spiritually immature he was. The others may deny you, but I will not deny you. And then in Caiaphas' courtyard in Luke 22, the third time after he cursed into a little mage.

I tell you, I don't even know him. And he looked across the courtyard. And Jesus' eyes locked with his. And he still was shamed. And he wept bitterly. He didn't dare to show his face until when Jesus had risen.

What was the message that was given in Mark 16 to the women? Go tell his disciples to meet with me up in Galilee. Is that what it says?

[32:09] It says that plus something else. It says go tell his disciples and what? Peter. And Peter. In other words, I know Peter's a dimly burning wick. And when I tell him I said his name, I want him up there.

And then up on the beach after they had breakfast on the shore. What does the Lord Jesus do? He takes a walk on Peter and Peter. Peter, do you love me? How many times does he do this?

Three. Three times. Three denials. He's breathing on Peter. And he restores this dimly burning wick back to being the point man of the kingdom. And the book of Acts shows him to be a mighty man of God.

That's what the Lord. How do I dare? How do you dare stand in front of these people apart from that reviving breath of the Lord Jesus Christ on our ministries?

Sib says this. After conversion, we need bruising that reeds may know themselves to be reeds, not oaks. Even reeds need bruising because of the remainder of pride in our nature.

[33:18] And to let us see that we live by mercy. Such bruising may help weaker Christians not to be discouraged when they see stronger ones shaken and bruised.

I mean, that's why Reichen stood in front of these post-adolescent college students who go through all kinds of emotional difficulties. He says, listen, let me tell you about the comfort with which I have been comforted.

And let me tell you that I myself, no temptation has seized you. You students may even feel suicidal. No temptation has seized you but that which is common to man.

Let me tell you about the grace that I have needed as a dimly burning wick. So we're saying, for whom does this servant so act? Well, he's gentle and breathing for newly converted saints, for sin plague saints.

Now, thirdly and finally, for sorely afflicted saints. For sorely afflicted saints. Now, understand, these aren't airtight categories. I'm not saying that affliction and sins are always unmixed.

[34:28] I think sometimes we are afflicted because of our sins. I think even Reichen was saying that when he quoted Psalm 86.2, Save me, our Lord, for I am a godly man. He says, that can't be my text.

I'm not a godly man. The sense of my sin has struck me. Sometimes, loved ones, we're dizzy with suffering and our faith is wavering because of sin that we're dabbling with.

And sometimes it's the lying whisperings and the temptations of the enemies that are sworing about us. You see, Reichen didn't feel godly. He felt guilty. You know that hymn by Newton which says, I ask the Lord that I might grow.

And what's the upshot? I thought he would give some wonderful wave that would blow me into prosperity. No, I ask the Lord that I might grow. He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart. Sometimes that's the way that we grow. I am not a godly man. I am a wretched man. And D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who preached great things back in the 60s and the 70s, he wrote this in his book, Spiritual Depression.

[35 : 43] I'll ever be grateful to Richard Sibbes, who was balm to my soul at a time when I was overworked and badly overtired and subject in an unusual way to the onslaughts of the devil.

So not just Reichen, but Lloyd-Jones, too, went into depression at times. You see, Satan is a cruel predator. He's a liar.

He's a murderer. He assaults us. But he's noble. He assaults us only when we're our strongest, right? Nah. He's a predator. He brutally assaults us when we're at our weakest.

You know that passage in Genesis 34 where Simeon and Levi, they went after the Shechemites. When? When? When they were circumcised. When they could barely even stand.

Then they attacked. Oh, that's the modus operandi of the devil. When we're down for the count, that's when the lion comes after us. He is cruel.

[36 : 41] We see this in Job. Job had lost his children. He had lost his wealth. He had lost his health. And there were the whispers of the enemy. From Mrs. Job.

Curse God and die. See, suicidal thoughts even coming. Have you ever dealt with suicidal thoughts? Job did.

In Job 3.11, he cursed the day of his birth. Jeremiah 20.14, he too cursed the day of his birth. Moses, Numbers chapter 11. Sometimes leaders can feel like this.

The rabble criticized him. He said, Lord, please just kill me at once, Lord. Elijah, 1 Kings 19. Where is he? When Jezebel. Jezebel is. She keeps hunting him down.

And he is so drained. He's under a broom tree. He said, Lord, this is enough. Take my life. One of my favorite preachers. Jewel Beeky. In one sermon that I heard recently.

[37 : 40] He confessed that he once went through a dark night of the soul. And he found suicidal internal whispers. In his own soul. Even the Lord Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane.

Suffocating sore, dark night of the soul. Psalm writer says in Psalm 13.1. How long, O Lord? How long will you hide your face from me? How long, O Lord, must I have every day sorrow in my heart? Psalm 44. Lord, my soul is sunk down into the dust. My body cleaves to the earth. Psalm 88.18. Darkness is my closest friend.

You ever feel like that? The songwriter did. Reichen did. How can we be helped out? Well, what do we do as pastors, John?

To help people out. Come on, buck up, buck up. No, no. This is Spurgeon. Spurgeon suffered from depression himself. He knew of preachers who just tried to tell their congregation.

[38 : 40] Do not give way to these feelings. Spurgeon says this. If those who blame quite so furiously. Could once know what depression is. They would think it cruel to scatter blame.

Where comfort is needed. There are experiences as of the children of God. Which are full of spiritual darkness. That I am almost persuaded. That those of God's servants. Who have been most highly favored.

Have nevertheless experienced. More times of darkness. Than others. Pray for your pastor. You see, Jesus is our servant nurse.

He isn't harsh with us. When we're down for the count. He's gentle. He's nurturing. He's massaging. He's splinting. He's breathing. He's blowing. See, a bruised reed he won't break.

Dimly burning wick. He will not snuff out. Lord Jesus Christ. Remember those guys on the road to Emmaus? Man, these guys were down for the count spiritually.

[39 : 43] Their feet. Jesus said, the one they thought would be the hope of Israel. He died. He died. And was in a tomb. And these guys were in a daze. What does Lord Jesus do to those two guys who are just dimly burning wicks?

On a Lord's Day night. He merged with them. He talked with them. By the time he was done with them. Didn't their hearts burn within them?

Isn't that kind of like what the Lord Jesus does when we gather together on Lord's Day evenings? And like Charlie said, we open up the word of God. Speak, O Lord. Doesn't sometimes we leave this place with eyes brightened regarding the promises of a raised Savior?

This is what the Lord Jesus does. You know, Phil Riken, just kind of concluding home stretch here. Phil Riken. He divulged to the student body some of the ways that Jesus nursed him during that semester.

And splinted him. And breathed on him. That the ascended Lord Jesus Christ helped him. You know, Philippians 4.19 says, My God will supply all your needs according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

[40:52] Riken tells us how God helped him out of this. Riken didn't say, you know, I went to this counseling session. And in one hour there was this dramatic breakthrough.

And I burst out into joy. And the joy of my salvation was returned. No, no, that's not the way it went. He says, let me give you some things that Jesus did to help me.

And I got six here, quickly. First, he revealed to me that darkness is normal. Normal. It's totally, completely normal. Scripture tells us that darkness is part of the normal Christian life.

You know, some saints, for a season, they're in darkness. And for some, it can be even almost like a lifetime going through darkness. Now, it doesn't mean I'm a bad Christian if I go through darkness.

It doesn't mean God is against me. In fact, it happens to most of God's beloved children. And sometimes even the most useful of God's servants. Riken said, that helped me. The second thing, Jesus prescribed to me a normal lifestyle.

[41:58] How did God deal with Elijah who was suicidal under the broom tree? To Elijah, he gave food and drink and sleep.

And that was a recipe for getting him out of the suicidal spiral. Riken says, I had lost my appetite during my time of darkness in the campus, he said.

But I made sure I ate something healthy every day. I engaged in physical exercises. And he said, I'm so thankful for intramural soccer.

And he pointed to a few guys in the bleachers. I'm so thankful for the Rikenators. Apparently, he played on the soccer team intramural. They called themselves the Rikenators after Phil Riken, the president.

He says, you guys saved my life. He says, it got me off my troubles. Physical exertion brought me emotional exhilaration. I also kept up with my kids' activities.

[42:58] There's recitals. I went there a little. I didn't feel like I wanted to. I wanted to stay home. I wanted to sit in my bedroom. But I went there a little league games. I went to family dinners we had together. There's a bedtime routine. I got adequate sleep.

I'd get up and have early morning walks with my daughter. I'd see God's beauty in the horned owl on campus. And I'd hear the warbling birds. That was just medicine to me. Third thing, he says, Jesus met me in worship.

He said, in church, Jesus would meet me. In college chapel, Jesus would meet me. He said, I didn't always want to go to worship. I never feel like that. I don't want to go. I wanted to stay home.

I don't feel like going. But he says, Jesus was there, he says. Often Christians don't want to go. But that's where Jesus meets with us in the reading of the word, in sermons and singing hymns and songs.

But he said, once I was in college chapel, he says, y'all sang this hymn by Joseph Franck to me. Listen. In thine, and you think of a guy who's down for the count emotionally.

[44:02] Here's how the hymn goes. In thine arms, I arrest me. Foes who would molest me cannot reach me here. Though the earth be shaking, every heart be quaking.

Jesus calms my fear. Lightnings flash and thunders crash. Yet though sin and hell assail me, Jesus will not fail me.

In worship, Jesus would meet him. Words in time of trouble. Beloved, worship is oxygen to the soul. We ought to come where Jesus breathes.

Fourthly, Jesus sent me friends. He said, friends who knew I was in trouble. You know why?

Because I shared with them not everything, but I shared some things to my close friends, parents, and colleagues.

Sometimes we don't want to divulge to our friends that we're in trouble. Sometimes we want to come across like we have it all together. But we need to share our burdens in a principled way, one with another.

[45:08] Reichen said, I don't know how people make it alone. There would be daily nurturing from my wife. My own son, Josh, he said, would send me text on my phone, scripture verses that encourage me.

Ladies from the office would send me cards with verses on them. He says, One time I was at a board business meeting for the college, and the stress was so crushing to me, I just had to get out of that room.

Let me catch a breath. And I went to a dark room, and he says, My friend, John Dennis, who is one of the pastors at College Church, John Dennis called me.

And John says, Dennis, you said there, a crucial time, Hey, Phil, how are you doing? You okay?

And Phil confessed, I just don't know, John, if I can go on. I just feel like I want to just end it all.

And Phil said, Brother, I'm praying for you right now. And Reichen says, You know, there was something about divulging that weakness that seemed to just break the handcuffs of the enemy on me.

[46:10] And for that moment, it brought me liberty, and it brought me freedom. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ sent lifelines to help him in friends, friends, in time of need.

Fifthly, he says, He had friends pray for him. He said, Jesus had friends pray for me. He said, This is so humbling. There was a Thursday morning ladies group. They told me they were praying for me.

My mom and dad prayed for me. His dad is Leland Reichen. You ever hear of Leland Reichen? Who wrote the book, *Worldly Saints*? This old, wise man. Leland, he says, My dad came over, and my dad and my mom, they laid hands on me.

And they prayed for me. And they asked that the Lord would have mercy on me, like Hezekiah laid it all out before the Lord. Lord, come, come to my son. And he says, One time he says, My college roommate from years and years ago, Jimmy Favino.

Oh, Jimmy Favino. He gave you call on the blue and said, Phil, I know you're struggling. Tomorrow, tomorrow I'm praying fast for you, Phil. And Reichen said, That was like honey on a staff to my eyes.

[47:19] Let me just ask you, Anybody who may need you to pray and fast for them tomorrow? With that kind of encouraging breathing on them? He says, He says, The Holy Spirit came and gave me groans unutterable.

Jesus, help me in my prayer life. Sometimes it was just, Help, Jesus, help. The great Phil Reich and the great systematic theologians writes many books. He's reduced to prayers of two words.

Help, Jesus. Help, Jesus. That's like the Spirit of God. Your prayers don't have to be eloquent.

Sincere, he hears. And lastly, lastly, Jesus spoke his word to me.

Jesus spoke his precious scriptures from the Old Testament in my personal readings. He says, My mom would send me scriptures like Psalm 138.7, Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me.

Your right hand will save me. He said, Late at night when I couldn't sleep, my wife Lisa would read Psalms over me till I fell asleep.

[48:28] He said Jesus was blowing on me. He said, Jesus didn't abandon me, but he rescued me. He saved me in trouble. I can't say these feelings of despair will never return, but I do know that Jesus will be a stronghold for me in times of trouble.

That's Rikin's testimony. That has been so encouraging to me. I wish I could say, You know what? I can't relate to what Rikin was talking about, but I can.

I can relate to what Rikin was talking about. And praise God for the servant of the Lord who takes care of his people, and he is like that blowing on the dimly burning wick, and he heals the bruised reeds.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Lord Jesus. We confess that we are so weak, and we are so frail.

Sometimes we wonder if we can keep going, but we thank you that, yea, you'll be with us even to the very end of the age.

[49 : 37] You who began a good work in us will perfect it until the day of the Lord Jesus. So would you come to some heart that is a dimly burning wick.

Maybe nobody even knows about it, Lord. May you breathe on them this Lord's Day evening, and may you cause their hearts to, in an encouraging way, burn within. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.