

SWEET COMFORT FOR FEEBLE SAINTS

NO. 6

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 4, 1855,
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 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“A bruised reed shall He not break and smoking flax shall
 He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.”
 Matthew 12:20.*

BABBLING fame always loves to talk of one man or another. Some there are whose glory it trumpets forth and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites and their names are carved on marble—heard in every land and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge—she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts, and almost deifies—others, whose virtues are far greater and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron, and cast in a rough mold. Fame caresses Caesar because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome, and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox, for he was stern and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow creatures fearless of them—men who were made of courage—who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness, and never knew what timidity might be!

But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous and equally to be esteemed—perhaps even more so—whom fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon—she says but little of him—yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation as even the mighty Luther! You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford, and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips, or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm cloud—she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveler rests. She wants something bold and prominent—something that courts popularity—something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in the shade. Therefore, it is, my brethren, that the blessed Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except His followers; we do not find His name written among the great and mighty men, though in truth He is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, purest, and best of men that ever lived. But because He was, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” and was emphatically the man whose Kingdom is not of this world—because He had nothing of the rough about Him, but was all love—because His words were softer than butter, His utterances more gentle in their flow than oil—because never man spoke so gently as this man—therefore He is neglected and forgotten.

He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence, but He came to speak with a “still small voice,” that melts the rocky heart, that binds up the broken in spirit; a voice that continually says, “Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden.” “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Jesus Christ was all gentleness, and this is why He has not been extolled among men as otherwise He would have been. Beloved, our text is full of gentleness; it seems to have been steeped in love, and I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy, and the mighty tenderness of Jesus as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed!—First, *mortal frailty*; secondly, *divine compassion*; and thirdly, *certain triumph*—“till He send forth judgment unto victory.”

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILITY—bruised reed and smoking flax—two very suggestive metaphors, and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful—and if it is, I know you will excuse me—I should say that the *bruised reed* is an emblem of a sinner in the first stage of his con-

viction. The work of God's Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be plowed up—the hard heart must be broken—the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to heaven without passing hard by the gates of hell—without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it then that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences His operation upon the soul. He is a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed—there is but little strength in him! The smoking flax I conceive to be a *backsliding Christian*—one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of Grace, the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out—not quite—it never can go out, for Christ says, “I will not quench it”; but it becomes like a lamp when ill-supplied with oil—almost useless. It is not quite extinguished—it smokes. It was a useful lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed, and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together, and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak* ones. What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax? A reed that grows in the bog or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps. Let but the foot of man brush against it, and it is bruised and broken. Every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro, and well near tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances than a bruised reed! Then look at smoking flax—what is it? It has a spark within it, that is true, but it is almost smothered—an infant's breath might blow it out, or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment! Nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things*, you see are here described. Well, Christ says of them, “The smoking flax I will not quench. The bruised reed I will not break.” Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah, I shall not have to go far. There are many in this house of prayer this morning who are, indeed, weak. But some of God's children, blessed be His name, are made strong to do mighty works for Him!

God has His Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill. He has here and there His mighty Gideons who can go to the camp of the Midianites, and overthrow their hosts. He has His mighty men who can go into the pit in winter and slay the lions—but the majority of His people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passerby, a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it; if trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it—their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave, and when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea bird on the crest of the billows. *Weak things*, without strength, without force, without might, without power! Ah, dear friends, I know I have got hold of some of your hands now, and your hearts too, for you are saying, “Weak? Ah, that I am! Full often I am compelled to say I would, but cannot sing; I would but cannot pray; I would, but cannot believe.” You are saying that you cannot do anything! Your best resolves are weak and vain, and when you cry, “My strength renew,” you feel weaker than before! You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for *you* then! I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that He will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up.

I know there are some very strong people here—I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, “Do you think that we go into sin, sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing; we are good, pure, and upright; we have strength and might.” To you I am not preaching this morning; to you I am saying nothing. But take heed—your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie—for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away! When you come to the real contest with death, you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it; when one of these days of strong temptation shall come, it will take hold of you moral man, and down you will go! And the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained that though you wash your hands in snow water, and make yourselves ever so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you! I

think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing; the Holy Spirit has made him such. Can you say, "I have no strength?" Then this text is for you!

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy, but I never yet heard of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having! Who would care to have a bruised reed—a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax! What is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing, and the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or the smoking flax. Well, then, beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here who if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary, and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing—worthless, useless! There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world—when if anyone had said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it, and said, "I believe I am as good as other people." You thought yourselves something wonderful—extremely worthy of God's love and regard, but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature—so worthless—not worth His consideration. You can understand how He can look upon a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening, but you can hardly tell how He can think of *you*, you appear so worthless—a dead blank in the world, a useless thing! You say, "What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the Gospel, he is of some service; as for a deacon of the church he is of some use. As for a Sunday school teacher, he is doing some good—but of what service am I?"

And you might ask the same question here—what is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself with it? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan, and make music come from a bruised reed? Ah, no, it is of no service! And of what use is smoking flax? The midnight traveler cannot be lighted by it; the student cannot read by the flame of it; it is of no use—men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah, that is how you talk of yourselves; you are good for nothing! So are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of what use you may be, and after all you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps; she says, "Well, I do not often go out—I keep house with my children, and seem to be doing no good." Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one. In training up children for the Lord, you are doing as much for His name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the Word! And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night, and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day; you have nothing to give away, and when you go to the Sunday school, you can just read, you cannot teach much. Well, but unto him to whom little is given, of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, as long as God ordered them. So God, in His providence has called you to work hard for your daily bread. Do it to His Glory! "Whatever you do; whether you eat or drink, do all to His honor."

But, ah, I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the church. You do all you can, but when you have done it, it is nothing. You can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time, and therefore you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah, beloved, talk not so! Jesus Christ says He will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed! He has something for the useless and for the worthless ones, but mark you, I do not say this to excuse *laziness*—to excuse those that *can* do, but do *not*—that is a very different thing! There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men, and they must sometimes have it. I am speaking now of those who *cannot* do it. Not of Issachar, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens, and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard who will not plow by reason of the cold; but of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service—who cannot do more—to such the words of the text are applicable!

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an illusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented, and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes; one unsound tube would so let the air out as to produce a discordant sound—or no sound at all—so that one’s impulse would be to take the pipe out, and put in a fresh one. And as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive. To me no odor in the entire world is as abominably offensive as smoking flax. But some say, “How can you speak in so low a style?” I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me, for I am sure you are, if God the Holy Spirit has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own souls, and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose! I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake, or anything rather than a *man*, for he felt he was so offensive. Oh, I can conceive a nest of vipers, and I think that they are obnoxious; I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the *human heart!* God spares from all eyes but His own that awful sight—the human heart! And could you and I but once see our heart, we would be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight! Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God’s sight—that you have so rebelled against Him, so turned away from His commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to Him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning that has departed from the paths of virtue, and while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts and stand among God’s people. She thinks that God might almost make the chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner! Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax; though you are the scorn of man, and loathsome to yourself, yet Jesus says to you, “Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.” There is some man here who has something in his heart that I know not of—who may have committed secret crimes that we will not mention in public. His sins stick like a leech to him, and rob him of all comfort! Here you are young man, shaking and trembling lest your crime should be divulged before high Heaven. You are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah, I have a word for you, too. Comfort! Comfort! Comfort! Despair not, for Jesus says He will not quench the smoking flax; He will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point—both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service*. When God puts His hand to a man, if he were worthless and useless before, He can make him very valuable; you know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material as upon workmanship put upon it. Here is very bad raw material to begin with—bruised reeds and smoking flax; but by divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value! You tell me the bruised reed is good for nothing. I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up, and fit it in the pipes of Heaven! Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, “What was that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?” And someone shall say, “It was a bruised reed!” Ah, Mary Magdalene’s voice in heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other! And the voice of that poor thief, who said “Lord, remember me,” if it is a deep bass voice, is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other—because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use!

Do not say you are good for nothing. You shall sing up in Heaven yet! Do not say you are worthless—at last you shall stand before the throne among the blood-washed company, and shall sing God’s praise! Yes, and the smoking flax—what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere; it is nearly out, but still a spark remains. Behold the prairie on fire! Do you see the flames come rolling on? Do you see stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched—till heaven is reddened with the flame? Old night’s black face is scarred

with the burning, and the stars appear frightened at the conflagration; how was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveler! It was fanned by the soft wind till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man—one ignorant man, one weak man—even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation! Who knows but that you who are nothing now, may be of more use than those of us who appear to stand better before God because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire—He can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul! You may be useful yet—therefore be of good cheer! Moss grows upon gravestones; the ivy clings to the moldering pile; the mistletoe grows on the dead branch, and even so shall Grace, piety, virtue, holiness, and goodness come from smoking flax, and bruised reeds by God's Grace!

II. Thus, my dear Friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant, and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty. Now I mount a step higher—to DIVINE COMPASSION. “The bruised reed He will not break; the smoking flax He will not quench.”

Notice what is first of all stated, and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ means a great deal more than He says. First of all, what does He say? He says plainly enough that He will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me—a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the law would never stop. It keeps on—lash, lash, lash! And though you say, “Lord stop it, and give me a little respite,” still comes down the cruel thong—lash, lash, lash! You feel your sins. Ah, I know what you are saying this morning—“If God continues this a little longer, my heart will break—I shall perish in despair, I am almost distracted by my sin. If I lie down at night I cannot sleep; it appears as if ghosts were in the room—ghosts of my sins, and when I awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me, and saying, “You are my prey, I shall have you.” All the while hell behind seems to burn; ah, poor bruised reed, He will not break you—conviction shall not be too strong—it shall be great enough to melt you, and to make you go to Jesus' feet; but, by His Grace it shall not be strong enough to break your heart altogether, so that you die. You shall never be driven to despair, but you shall be delivered! You shall come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shall not be broken!

So there is a backslider here this morning. He is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord, and such delight in His service, that you said, “There I would forever stay—

*‘What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.’*”

You are smoking and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I would tell you that He would—but being a believer in the Bible and nothing else—I tell you that He will not quench you! Though you are smoking, but you shall not die! Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says, “Return, you backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon you.” He will not cast you away, poor Ephraim! Only come back to Him—He will not despise you, though you have plunged yourself in the mire and dirt; though you are covered from head to foot with filthiness! Come back, poor prodigal, come back, come back! Your Father calls you; listen poor Backslider! Come at once to Him whose arms are ready to receive you. He says He will not quench—He will not break, but there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says He will not break, He means more than that; He means, “I will take that poor bruised reed, and I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither! I will water it every moment; I will watch it; there shall be heavenly fruits upon it. I will keep the birds of prey from it, but the birds of heaven, the sweet songsters of paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches.”

When He says that He will not break the bruised reed, He means more; He means that He will nourish it, that He will help and strengthen, and support and glorify—that He will execute His commission on it, and make it glorious forever. And when He says to the backslider that He will not quench him, He means more than that—He means that He will fan him up to a flame! Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from chapel, and found that your fire had gone nearly out. I know how you deal with it; you

blow gently at the single spark, if there is one—and least you should blow too hard, you hold your fingers before it, and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder—how gently would you blow it! So, Backslider, Jesus Christ deals with you—He does not put you out—He blows gently. He says, “I will not quench you.” He means, “I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful.” He will put on dry material, so that by-and-by a little spark shall come to a flame and blaze up towards Heaven, and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a moment to expand this thought, and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master, and great in strength for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much God’s elect as the great saint*. When God chose His people, He chose them all at once and altogether, and He elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but one is as much chosen as the other, and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest! Again—*the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* The feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones; the tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less of Jesus’ precious blood, and the greatest child of God did not cost Him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin—I am sure he did not—for I read in the Bible that “*there is no difference.*” Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel—the poor shall bring no less, and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other!

Now, then, little child of God, take that thought to your soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ’s cause—and it is very good that they should be—but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did! He paid the same price for you that He paid for them. Recollect again *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint*. Some of you have five or six children; there is one child of yours perhaps, who is very tall and handsome, and has moreover, gifts of mind. And you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding; but which is the more your child? “The more?” you say. “Both alike are my children, certainly one as much as the other.” And so, dear friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about divine things, you may but “see men as trees walking,” but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried saint, *that you are just as much justified as any other child of God*. I know that I am completely justified—

***“His blood and righteousness
My beauty are; my glorious dress.”***

I need no other garments except Jesus’ doings and His imputed righteousness! The boldest child of God needs no more, and I, who am “less than the least of all saints,” can be content with no less, and I shall have no less! O Ready-to-Halt, you are as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, or the loftiest saint in Heaven; there is no difference in that matter. Oh, take courage and rejoice!

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God’s honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost*. A strange thing I once read in an old book about God’s children and people being a part of Christ, and in union with Him. The writer says—“A father sits in his room, and there comes in a stranger; the stranger takes up a child on his knee, and the child has a sore finger, so he says, ‘My child, you have a sore finger.’” “Yes,” the child says. “Well, let me take it off and give you a golden one!” The child looks at him and says, “I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger. I love my finger, and I will not have a golden one instead of it.” So the saint says, “I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger, and He will take me off and put a golden one on.” “No,” says Christ, “No, no—I cannot have any of My members taken away! If the finger is a sore one, I will bind it up; I will strengthen it.” Christ cannot allow a word about cutting His members off! If Christ loses one of His people, He would not be a whole Christ any longer! If the meanest of His children could be cast away, Christ would lack a part of His fullness—yes, Christ would be incomplete without His Church! If

one of His children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one than a little one; if a little one were lost, Satan would say, “Ah, You save the great ones because they have strength and could help themselves, but the little one that has no strength, You could not save him.” You know what Satan would say, but God would shut Satan’s mouth by proclaiming, “They are all here, Satan—in spite of your malice, they are all here; everyone is safe! Now lie down in your den forever, and be bound eternally in chains and smoke and fire!” So shall he suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall!

One thought more, and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of someone else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion; you would speaking after the manner of men, say that your conversion depended upon hers—for her being converted made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be the means of your calling. Then your conversion in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens that the salvation of God’s mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother—no one ever knows anything about her—she goes to the house of God; her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else. She teaches her child, and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary—a William Knibb—a Moffat—a Williams, but you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah, but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones, and may you rejoice that He will nourish and cherish you though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax!

III. Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY. “Till He send forth judgment unto victory.”

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular War, was very touching. He fell in the arms of triumph, and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eyes were lit up with luster by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, “I die happy,” having just before heard the shout, “They run, they run!” I know victory, even in that bad sense—for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value, but oh, how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write “*Vici*” on my shield. I shall be “more than conqueror through Him that loved me.” Each feeble saint shall win the day—each man upon his crutches—each lame one—each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness, and weakness shall gain the victory! “They shall come with singing unto Zion, as well the blind, lame, and the woman with child, together.” So says the Scripture. Not one shall be left out. But He shall “send forth judgment unto victory.” Victory! Victory! Victory! This is the lot of each Christian! He shall triumph through his dear Redeemer’s name!

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women. Dear brethren, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them, and death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden; you feel full of weakness and decay; your frame can hardly hold together. Ah, you have here a special promise. “The bruised reed I will not break.” “I will strengthen you.” “When your heart and your flesh fails, I will be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever”—

***“Even down to old age, all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love!
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.”***

Tottering on your staff, leaning, feeble, weak, and wan—fear not the last hour, for that last hour shall be your best! Your last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished for! Weak as you are, God will temper the trial to your weakness; He will make your pain less if your strength is less, and you shall sing in Heaven, “Victory! Victory! Victory!” There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near Heaven—to be so near Home. With all your infirmities, your gray hairs are a crown of glory to you, for you are near the end, as well as in the way of righteousness. A word to you middle-

aged men, battling in this life's rough storm. You are often bruised reeds. Your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax. It is as much as you can do to serve your God, and you cannot say that you are "fervent in spirit" as well as "diligent in business."

Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, He will not quench you when you are like smoking flax! He will not break you when you are like the bruised reed, but will deliver you from your troubles! You shall swim across the sea of life, and shall stand on the happy shore of Heaven. And you shall sing, "Victory," through Him that loved you. You youths and maidens! I speak to you, and have a right to do so. You and I oftentimes know what the bruised reed is when the hand of God blights our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness—it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us—for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths, and dangerous ways are the ways of the young. But God will not break or destroy us! Men by their over caution bid us never tread a step lest we fall. But God bids us go, and makes our feet like hind's feet, that we may tread upon high places. Serve God in your early days! Give your hearts to Him, and then He will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you!

Let me not finish without saving a word to little children. You who have heard of Jesus, He says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Savior. I never despise infantile piety; I love it; I have heard little children talk of mysteries that gray-headed men knew not! Ah, little children who have been brought up in Sunday schools, and love the Savior's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still—

*Gentle Jesus, meek and mild
Still will look upon a child!
Pity your simplicity—
And allow you to come to Him.*

He will not cast you away, for smoking flax He will not quench, and the bruised reed He will not break!

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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