

What Good Am I?

Ponder: Am I of any value in God's service?

Scripture: "A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoking flax He will not quench" (Matthew 12:20, NKJV).

Do you ever feel like you're of little or no value in God's service – a liability rather than an asset? If you do, welcome to the club! Awareness of our shortcomings should motivate us to improve; but let us also rejoice that our Savior understands our weaknesses and loves us anyway.

Isaiah prophesied that when the Christ (Messiah) came, He would not break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax (42:3, quoted in Matthew 12:20 and applied to Jesus). How do these two figures of speech help us?

Reeds are inherently weak and usually of little use. A bruised reed would be even less useful than a regular one. Scripture refers to Egypt as a broken reed (2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 36:6). God's people, Israel, foolishly turned to Egypt for help against other enemies. They ought to have relied on the Lord, and they learned the hard way that trusting in Egypt was like leaning on a broken reed. Egypt was weak and unreliable.

Sometimes we are weak and unreliable – bruised reeds. You might think Jesus would just break us in two and toss us aside. But He doesn't! Instead, He sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15), giving us time and opportunity to grow and mature. We should do the same for others whom we might see as bruised reeds.

A smoking flax refers to a lamp wick that is about to go out. It certainly isn't giving much light, and the smoke irritates your nose and makes your eyes sting (a flickering candle wick does the same thing). Instinctively, we want to wet our thumb and forefinger and give that smoking wick a pinch, ending the stream of foul-smelling smoke!

You and I are sometimes like smoking wicks. We're not giving much light for God; in fact, we do things that are offensive, even obnoxious! Why doesn't He just reach down and pinch us out? Praise the Lord for His patience and longsuffering! And let us be slow to write off other people whose behavior may irritate us. Jesus cut you some slack; do the same for them.