

Pro Crushed Cans Broken Walls

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[0 : 00] So, I wonder how you're feeling this evening. I wonder how you're feeling. I very, very rarely have visual aids. I thought I'd have visual aids with this sermon. I wonder if that's how you feel.

And if I was going to go for a title, I would call this sermon Wisdom for the Crushed Can and the Broken Wall. You know, the broken wall, we have a crack. There is a crack there, but there is a crack that runs right through it.

So, you have a wall that is no longer reliable. And it is a wall, but it's cracked and it's not reliable. The crushed spirit or the broken wall. Something that we'd like to rely on, like a wall, but it actually gives some false security. The crushed spirit and the broken wall.

And it may not be how you're feeling tonight, but for many, it may well be. Proverbs is a book, isn't it, that is full of stuff about everyday living. So, you find things in Proverbs about boundaries and feels.

You find things about what it's like to be nagged at home. You find things about what it's like to be honest in the workplace. You find things about doing what you say you do. And it's about all sorts of practical things. And much of it happens out there. External things in our lives. I read this week of a man, Lewis Risinghead, who read the book of Proverbs every day for 40 years. He was a businessman.

[1 : 35] And he found that Proverbs informed his business practice. But Proverbs is also interested in what goes on in here. Proverbs is interested in our inner lives.

And it's interested in it because you are so closely related, aren't they? What goes on out there and what goes on in here. In fact, if Proverbs was written today, it would be interesting to see what section of the bookshop it would be in, wouldn't it?

There's lots of psychology, really, in Proverbs. And it's very profound. And it's very helpful indeed. And so, too, I don't want to think about our hearts, as Proverbs calls them.

It doesn't mean the heart that pumps the blood around the body. The heart, in Proverbs, is a picture of the centre of our being. It's where we feel things. Yes, but it's more than that. It's where we take decisions.

It's where we ponder things. It's where we experience that mix of emotions, of intellect and will. It's the centre of our personality. It's who you are. And particularly as we feel things and respond to them in an emotional way.

[2 : 36] And the book of Proverbs speaks about our hearts being terribly, terribly important for our lives. We are not like cyber men, is it? In Doctor Who?

Or who've got no hearts. Or who was it? Was it the tin man? Who had no hearts? It was the tin man in the Wizard of Oz, was it? Who had no heart. We're not like that. We have hearts.

I just want to give you my four points. And before I start, I never normally do that. Where are they? Where are my four points? Here are my four points.

I'm not sure we'll get to them all, but we'll see. So first of all, our hearts are important but vulnerable. They're important but vulnerable. And our hearts need the right words. And our hearts need something to rely on.

And our hearts find transformation in Jesus. The reason I showed you them the four at the start is because point three and four, I'm not sure where they start and where they end. So our hearts are important but vulnerable.

[3 : 34] Our hearts need the right words. Our hearts need something to rely on. And our hearts find something to transform them in the Lord Jesus. So look at chapter 15 and verse 13.

Your heart is very important. Your heart is important in determining what you do and how you cope with. And your heart is vulnerable to being crushed.

Chapter 15 verse 13. A glad heart makes a cheerful face. But by sorrow of heart, the spirit is crushed. So when you're happy inside, for most of us, the vast majority of us, not all of us, it tends to show on the outside.

And especially when you know someone well, isn't it? And so when somebody doesn't look right on a Sunday, when they look sad, what do we say?

What do you say to them afterwards? I hope you say this. I hope you say you're all right. You know someone well, if you could pick up on it, can't you? You don't look quite right. Are you okay? On the other hand, when somebody is obviously very cheerful, their face is cheerful, not because something is right inside.

[4 : 47] And it settles. But on the other hand, when our hearts are not happy, that has a crushing effect on the whole of who we are. That's maybe the meaning of the word spirit in that verse.

The whole of us is crushed. And life is very difficult. How we are on the inside of our hearts also affects our physical health. Chapter 17 verse 22.

A joyful heart is good medicine. But a crushed spirit dries up the bones. So I'm not a doctor, as you know well. But doctors will tell you about the connection between morale and health.

It has an effect. One on the other. So we know, don't we, those of you who have experienced it, it is almost like depression has an effect on physical well-being too.

To use a big word, we are psychosomatic beings. We have an emotional, a heart side to us. And we also have a physical side to us.

[5 : 48] And the two are connected. And so your heart tonight is very important. And then the writer of the Hebrews explores how it's just not so simple as that.

How we are such complicated creatures. So look at chapter 14 and verse 13. Even in laughter, the heart may ache. And the end of joy may be grief.

We're screwed up, aren't we? We are all mixed up. We can be laughing on the outside, but there can be heartache on the inside as well. And we have those experiences, don't we?

Those mixed experiences of emotion. And most of us know that tonight. There's also the experience of being happy about something. And then it ends in grief because something else goes wrong.

There's the experience of being lonely in our feelings. Look at chapter 14 and verse 10. The heart knows its own bitterness. And no stranger shares its joy.

[6 : 53] Now it's not trying to make a categorical statement. That is a general observation of something. What it's saying is that you can get lost in your inner emotions.

And unless you really share it, it may be that other people actually don't understand. And don't sympathise. Each heart knows its own bitterness.

And there is an experience of sadness and bitterness. And it is mine. And it can be really hard, can't it? It can be really hard to communicate that to other people. Even if they're good listeners.

And then there's the experience that the writers of the Proverbs call the crushed spirit. That can of beautiful liquid that is now crushed and empty.

And it's no longer quite fit for purpose. So look at chapter 18 and verse 14. A man's spirit will endure sickness. But a crushed spirit will compare.

[7 : 57] The human body, when it is faced with illness, is actually very resilient, isn't it? And I guess you've known people, as I've known people, who have been remarkably cheerful, and they've been uncomplaining.

And their Christian faith has really strengthened in the midst of hard times of illness. People who've had cancer. And you've seen that their strength, they have blossomed through that.

But as soon as your morale goes, it's very different. As soon as your spirit is crushed in that way, the hope has been sucked out of you.

That becomes very hard to bear. In fact, that is much harder, isn't it, than physical illness.

Somebody's commenting on that verse. If we are short of outward resources, if we are short of outward resources, life is hard.

If we are short of inward resources, it is unsupportable. So where does the crushed spirit come from? And the writer gives us several ideas.

[9 : 05] Look at chapter 14, verse 30 again. A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.

Confirms what we've already thought. That first half of that verse, a tranquil heart gives life to the flesh. If your heart is right, the body will tend to be more relaxed and more at ease. But then look at the second part of this, but envy makes the bones rot.

And the contrast is between a heart of ease and a heart that is full of envy. What is envy? What is envy? Envy is making comparisons with other people and wishing we were them.

And if we can't be them, well, we wish bad things on them. We don't want them to be that either. It is the opposite of a heart of ease. To be envious is to be all disturbed.

It is to be disturbed within. Because we're not what we want to be and other people are not what we want to be. Want them to be either. And that affects us and it makes us as well.

[10 : 10] Sometimes headaches. Sometimes great stress. Sometimes other things.

It affects our whole well-being. And so a crushed spirit can come from bad attitudes we have to other people. Another possibility is, count to 12 in verse 25.

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down. Anxiety weighs down in the heart. This is what our attitude to the future.

The future is uncertain. And we're anxious about it. And we think we can predict it a bit better than others. We think things will keep going a little bit the way that they are. But when we get a little hint that actually the future, will not be like that.

It won't be as we expect it to be. And the things are going to change. And we don't know how that will change. We tend to get a little bit anxious. And so one of the definitions of anxiety, I know there's lots of them out there, is this.

[11 : 19] A problem in handling uncertainty about the future. And what does that do? It weighs us down. What does anxiety do?

It presses us down. It's like a weight. Crushing down on our hearts. And preventing our hearts from being free. And liberated.

And light. And unbuddly. Just what happens. Now are those things anything you can relate to? Of course they are. In general, in the past, maybe even tonight.

Being disturbed by comparisons with other people. Or maybe that sense of uncertainty about the future that weighs you down.

Well let me tell you this. I am no psychologist. As you well know. But the fact that this is in the book of Proverbs.

[12 : 17] And that this is in the Bible. Shows you tonight. God understands. God understands.

And it shows you God understands. And that God cares. Because otherwise he wouldn't have put it in his word. Would he? He understands.

And he cares. Otherwise he wouldn't have put it in his word. Now let me move on to another important aspect. And there's crushed spirits. And how our hearts are.

And the relationship particularly with words. With words. Our hearts are vulnerable. And they're very important. And they need the right words.

If they're not going to be crushed. So look at chapter 12 and verse 25. Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down. But a good word. It makes him glad.

[13 : 15] Isn't that so true? So actually I do struggle with anxiety and worry. And all sorts of silly things. As you do. And then my good friends.

I hide it from you not pretty much. But my good friends. Look at that. Not that you're not my good friends. I love you all. I would want to go on holidays. But a friend sees it.

Somebody knows you. They know the giveaways. And they spot it. And they see it. And they're kind to me.

And they say something kind. And it's as if a weight has been lifted off our shoulders. We know what that's like. And we get all head up. Don't we? And we imagine all sorts of things. Which are very unlikely to happen.

And somebody comes along to you. And says in a very gentle way. I don't think it's going to be as bad as all that. And it usually isn't as bad as all that. And they do it in such a kind way.

[14 : 14] That it's not glim. It's not trite. They're not trying to get it off their back. And it's a real word of kindness. And what happens when a friend does that. Is we feel cheated.

And we feel lifted. A kind word can make all the difference. In contrast. An unhelpful word. In chapter 15 and verse 4.

We've got a bit of both there haven't we? A gentle tongue is a tree of life. But perverseness. In it breaks the spirit.

On the one hand it's the continuing. Of a kind word. Cheering people. And the soothing tongue. Don't you love that description? Verse 15. Chapter 15 verse 4. A gentle tongue.

It's a lovely thought. A gentle tongue is a tree of life. And it gives us something to live again. When somebody is aching.

[15:15] And somebody speaks a gentle word. It's like a tree of life. Well contrast that with the second half of the verse. There's this perverse tone. And that word perverse is to do with being twisted.

Bringing lies. Saying the things which are misleading. Perhaps to do with harshness. And cruelty. Not just in the content of what someone says. But actually in the tone of it.

And it crushes. So children. Your mum and dad. Might have said to you. I hope they haven't said to you. Sticks and stones. May bring your bones.

But leaves will never hurt you. And that isn't true. Is it? That isn't true. It really isn't true. Because words hurt terribly.

Don't they? We know that they do. Words hurt us deeply. And often. It's the tone of words. As much as the content that does it. And we are so very vulnerable.

[16:12] To words coming in. And we need the right words. And Proverbs encourages us. To seek out the right words. That will bring healing. To the crushed spirits.

And bring help to those. Whose hearts are troubled. So that in chapter 15. And verse 30. The light of the eyes. Rejoices the heart. And good news. Refreshes the bones.

Friends. So you know how it is. And it's something you come in sometimes. And you know that they want to say something to you.

And you can tell it from their eyes. Particularly from their eyes. If it's something good. They want to share it. And just seeing that look in their eyes. And what they want to say.

Brings joy into the heart. Somebody's got something good to say to me. And when the content of what they're saying. Is good. Then it's even better. You have this idea.

[17:06] Of good news. Coming into our hearts. And of our hearts being at ease. And that flowing through to the whole of our lives. Including our bodies. Into our bones. Do you see the connection between the heart.

And the bones. Which stands for our bodies. Friendship. And the good news. How much of those with crushed spirits. And vulnerable hearts. Need those good news. Need that good news.

Now where will we find it? Where will we find it? Well some of it is in common relationships. Some of it is in common great things. It's in people being kind.

It's in people being encouraging. How much we need that? The friendship. But I want to tell you. That the greatest good news. Is not just in those friends.

That we value every single one of them. The greatest good news. Comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Lord Jesus. He brings the good news. And it's on a different plane.

[18:04] As much. He brings good news. From a different level. From any other kind. Of encouraging word. He comes from. The father of mercies.

And the God of all compassion. He comes as the son of God. And he says. I understand. He says to you. I sympathise. He says.

I have done everything. To put your life right. And I want to bring you to God. Listen to some lovely words. Which he said. To people who were weary.

Who were tired. And who were crushed. He said this. Matthew 11. 28. 30. He said. Come to me. Come to me. All you who labour. And are heavy laden.

And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me. For I am gentle. And lowly in heart. And you will find rest. For your souls. For my yoke is easy.

[19:00] And my burden. Is light. The bruised reed. He says. I will not break. The flax.

The flax. I will not step out. And it may be. That you are here tonight. And you are feeling like. A crushed coke can. And you can identify. With these problems.

About the crushed spirit. And the troubled heart. And I want to say to you. Again tonight. The Lord Jesus Christ. Understands. And he wants to come for you. With the message. Of good news. About

himself.

And that one day. He will make all things different. Now it may be. That there are some of you tonight. Who quite frankly. Are like the coke can. In that original stick.

It may be like that. And some of you are thinking. It's okay for those who are a bit weak. And those who are a bit flaky. And maybe I know. Some people are going through a hard time. But I'm doing okay.

[19 : 57] This has not much to say to me. I feel okay. And my life is in good shape. My heart is in good shape. And emotionally speaking. I'm on an evil keel. And my morale is good.

I feel alright. And I don't know that this. Is very relevant to me at all. Well I'd like to draw you. And everyone else to this text. Look at chapter 18 verses 10 to 11.

The name of the Lord. Is a strong tower. A righteous man. Runs into it. And is safe. A rich man's wealth.

Is his strong city. And like a high wall. That's impossible to scale. In his imagination. You see. Each of us.

If we are naturally strong people. Or if. I were in a strong phase of life. Or not. And we might think.

[20 : 56] We don't need anything. Anything to rely on. Look at the picture that he gives. He looks at this picture. Doesn't he.

Of a secure tower. Strong tower. And the picture here. Is of a fortified city or town. It's a picture of a town.

With lots of towers. And the towers are tall. And the towers are very strong. And let's say. The towers are built.

In that town. Because the families. Want somewhere safe to live. They want somewhere to run to. And where they can be safe. And these towers are built.

And they live in these towers. And they think. We are secure. We are secure. And something like that. Must have happened. In Old Testament Israel.

[21 : 52] Cities which had towers. Within them. That were safe. For people to go to. And it's that kind of picture. For all of us. All of us. Search for something.

That will make us feel. Safe. Something that will make us. Feel secure. So that when the hard times come. When it turns sour. And difficult. We will have some walls around us.

And the writer. To the Proverbs. Is very well. Aware. That people put their hope. In something like. Money. And so the second half.

Of that verse. Can you see it? A rich man's wealth. Is his strong city. His strong tower. And like a high wall. Is imagination.

They imagine it. A wall. Too high to scale. They want a sense of security. Like everyone else. And they have their money.

[22 : 46] And they think. This will keep me safe. And they think. If I've got enough money. Then I will be safe. If I've secured my future. I'll be alright. It's like having a fortified city. With a very strong wall around it.

Think of the Tower of London. With those different towers. And thinking. When you live in there. And nobody will be able to get it here. I'm alright. Nothing will be able to get past.

What I have set aside. The money will always be there. I'll be able to always. To buy my way out of trouble. So I wonder what your fortified city is.

What are the walls. That you are trusting in. And what do they consist of? What are the things. That make you feel secure?

What is the thing. That gives you meaning. And happiness. That you build your life around. And the point of Proverbs is this.

[23 : 45] That nothing is as strong. As it seems to us. Nothing is as strong. As it seems to us. Because walls can be scaled. And walls can be broken down.

Even more easily than we think. You know the Lord of the Rings isn't it. Those of you who haven't watched it. You should watch it. You remember they read that. In the second one.

Where's Lars and Marius? Where are they? Paying great attention. Right boys. Now you know in that second one. When they're standing on the wall. Isn't there. And there's that keep. And the orcs. You know the orcs. They come on those things. And they come onto the tower. And the school. And the orcs climb. Did you know that? And then there's one orc. Isn't there. That runs with a bomb.

And he runs through. And they try and fire him. And he runs under the wall. Remember that? And he blows the wall up. Because the people in that keep. Didn't they? They thought that they were secure.

[24 : 43] And yet they weren't. And that's the picture. That every single one of us. Boys and girls. Men. When we trust in these towers. In these walls. But they can be scaled.

And walls can be broken down more easily than we think. And in fact. In the long run. Every single wall. That we trust in. To protect us. Has got a crack running right through it. Hence the broken wall. Money. Money can go. Investments can change. Sour. Or you start to realise. That the money that you. Money can't buy you love. And it can't buy you everything you want.

And relationships. Relationships can be a broken wall. Can't they? And it's great to have friends. And family. That we trust in. That we rely on.

To a degree. I think I spoke to it before. Is there. Of people who are single. That think. Actually. All I need. More than anything. Is to be married. And once I'm married. Then I'll be secure.

[25 : 42] And all my problems go. And what happens. On the day you get married. You swap one set of problems. For another. And you have this. Great burden. Of hopes. And dreams. That you place. On someone else.

And you think. That is my security. And they can't bear it. And then you get married. And you think. Well actually. What we need is children. Children make my life secure. And I'll be content. And there they come.

And then you get family. Family life. Secure family life. Family. Family. Family. The children grow up.

Trying to disappoint. Trying to get ill. And we rely. You don't mean. On people too much. For our security. Or our job. Our career. I get to a certain level. And that is where my hopes are.

That is the wall. That I'm building. And there's a crack. Running right through it. What do you do. When someone gets ill. And they can't sustain.

[26 : 41] That level of support. And for some people. Their career is their wall. And their strong tower. But think how precarious that is. Someone told me this week.

And said to me this. Almost nobody. Gets to the top. In their career. Is that right? Almost nobody. Almost nobody. Gets to the top. In their career. If you are a certain person.

That needs to succeed. And needs to be over other people. How can you be sure. That when you get to the run. That is your limit. When you're promoted.

To your level of incompetency. That you're going to be satisfied by that. And if you're not. Well then it won't be any strong tower for you. For some people. It is religion. It is the church.

That is their strong tower. For some people. It is their image. That is their fortified city. The way that they project themselves.

[27 : 41] To other people. That is how they try to make themselves. Feel secure. Social media thrives on them. It is like Facebook and Twitter. It is a big part of people's lives. What is it? And there is good things about Facebook.

Which I never talk about. But let me say this. It is our own mini PR business. As somebody described it. And there are times out there.

There are times. When God takes somebody. Who is trying to shelter. In the security of their image. Or behind someone else. Something else. Or behind someone else. Or in some job.

Or in some relationship. And God allows us. To go through an experience. That shows us a broken wall. Doesn't he? Doesn't he do that? And that behind that broken wall.

Actually there are broken people. And God allows trials. In your life. He does. Trials that make us question.

[28 : 39] Our relationship with him. And we think God is against me. And God is punishing me. And why has God allowed this. To happen to me. And the wall crumbles. And it is good. Because it is never a reliable wall anyway.

And so when trial comes. We thank the Lord. And we say. Heavenly Lord. What are you teaching me here?

Because our hearts need something. That they can truly rely on. And it is not our image. And it is not how we present ourselves. To the world. And it is not our career. And it is not even those.

Who are nearest and dearest to us. And it is not our money. It is not our things. And it is not our ambition. Or anything like that. The only thing that we can rely on. Is. God himself.

Do you see that chapter 18. Verse 10 to 11. The name of the Lord. Is a fortified. And there is a strong tower. And the righteous run. The righteous run into it.

[29 : 41] And are saved. You see. In God. In Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our hearts find something.

They find something. That they can really rely on. And the author speaks. Doesn't he. Verses 10 and 11. Of the name of the Lord. And in the ancient.

Ancient words. The name of the Lord stood for them. The name of the Lord stands for who they were. Who he is. Stands for their power.

Stands for their authority. The name. Represented the person. And what they. Do for you.

So. To quote Lord of the Rings again. Is there. Sauron. One of the agents of Sauron. The baddie. He runs up to these gates. And he says. Open these gates.

[30 : 41] In the name of Mordor. It's the same kind of idea. The king's emissary comes. And he says. I come in the name of king. Dot dot dot. The name represents power.

It is a positive name. It is a superior name. It is a superior power. Isn't it? So that name of the Lord. It represents a power. That belongs to a person. Who can bring you to security.

And safety. And good. That is good news. Isn't it? That is good news. To crushed cans. And to broken walls. To people who are building. Their own walls. And feel like crushed cans. And the Old Testament name of the Lord.

Is Yahweh. Hebrew. But the New Testament name of the Lord. Is Jesus. Lord Jesus Christ. And it is in his name.

And the power that stands behind that. And what he has done. That stands behind. This. That gives us this safe place.

[31 : 44] To run to. And to be safe. How can that be? How can it be? Well because the Lord Jesus. He has come. He has come to this earth. And he has lived a life as a man. And he has died on a cross.

For all our rebellion. Cancelling all our guilt. And our wrongdoing. And he is raised to new life again. And we know that he will return. And that one day. He will bring an end. To this phase of world history.

And he will spring clean. The world. And the universe. And he will rule over a renewed creation. With all those who have run to the tower of safety. And it is open for any of us to do tonight.

So it may be. You've been at Agnesi for years. It may be a newcomer. Maybe that you're a child. Maybe that tonight is something that you need to renew. But the door of the tower is open for you tonight.

And to put it more personally. Not only is the door open. But the Lord Jesus is inviting you. Isn't he? The Lord Jesus is inviting you to trust him. And to be safe. And that doesn't mean.

[32 : 51] That hard things don't come to Christians. People in this room that suffer. Have suffered terribly with anxiety. People who have suffered with unemployment. Suffered with bereavement. Suffered with terrible ill.

And there is illness. And there is uncertainty in life. There's unemployment. There's suffering all kinds of things.

But it does mean this. That none of those things. Will ever be able to separate you. From the love of God. Which is in Christ Jesus. And even if your spirit becomes crushed for a while.

There will be a message. From the Lord Jesus. There will be good news to restore you. And beyond that. An eternity. Without being crushed.

An eternity with healing and health. And so he comes to us tonight. And he says. Demolish the gods that you keep in high places. And entrust your life to God.

[33 : 51] And find meaning and security. And happiness. Well they're not in all those things. They're found in him. Is your spirit crushed? Look away from yourself.

And look into the eyes of Jesus. And finding his faith. Good news and healing. And if your spirit isn't crushed tonight. Because you're pretty sure the walls you've got around you are secure.

You need to come to Jesus tonight. Because one day. In one way or another. Those strong towers will crack. And then.

Your spirit will be crushed. Whether it is in this life. With disappointment. Or in eternity. As you discover that trusting in yourself.

Means internal separation. From God. Come to Jesus. And find your safety. And your healing. Let's pray together.

[35 : 03] Come to me all you who labour. And are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me.

For I am gentle. And lowly in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden is light.

We pray oh Lord. That the good news of Jesus Christ. Will bring joy into our hearts. And health to our bones. And we pray for those. Cursed spirits.

Cursed spirits. That you would lift them up. And we pray for ourselves. That we will not trust in anything. But you. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Amen. Amen.