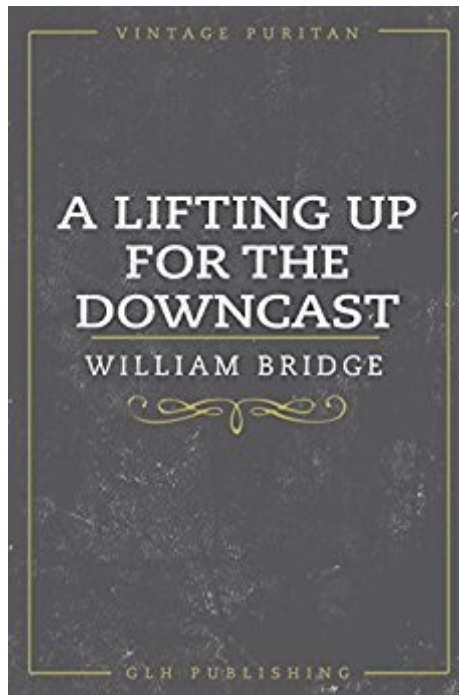




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A Lifting Up For The Downcast (Vintage Puritan)



Synopsis

This work from William Bridge is a reflection on Psalm 42:11. He writes how even through discouragements because any circumstance (sin, temptation, etc.) the Christian should not be downcast in thinking that Christ has let them go. Includes a linked Table Of Contents, NCX navigation, and Hebrew and Greek words used in original text.

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Customer Reviews

Great work to have by your side when going through hard times. Well all need encouragement and comfort. The Puritans are the ones who can teach us 'so called' modern day saints how to get through the mire and muck of our modern age.

If you're a pastor and have not read this book - shame on you! If you're one of us "downcast" get it - read it - mark it up and give it to your pastor. Though the writing style can be tricky to get used to - slugging your way through this book is well worth it. As a Biblical Counselor I find myself going back

to it again and again. A real challenge and inspiration.

difficult read

Excellent book

This book is a thorough evaluation of those various circumstances that all in the Christian life experience at some point. In the midst of those discouragements it can be easy to forget the truths of God's Word. Bridge's book systematically reminds the believer of the hope that is theirs in Christ.

I sent this book as a gift to a friend in a foreign country. It arrived very quickly (about 3 weeks) and in good shape. They were happy - I'm happy! Good job, well done !

Thirteen sermons on one verse might seem like a lot of close exposition. Trust me, though, the severely downcast need that much. *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?”* A spiritual doctor is needed for a soul in this condition. William Bridge brings a bag full of God’s remedies to answer this question from Psalm 42.11. There are so many excellent lines of thought that I could trace in order to show what Bridge does and how he does it. The best I can do, because my notes are so extensive and diverse, is to choose three lines of content, then remark on both the tone and the style, and then conclude. The thesis is that God’s people have *no* Scripture reason to be discouraged, no matter what (p. 67.) How does he bring us to agree with this disagreeable verdict? (1) His reasoning is irrefutable. Example: the downcast soul might complain that because of all that happened, he now lacks the heart and will to do any service. But, *“He that complains of his own unserviceableness is not unwilling to serve the Lord.”* (p. 225.) Sometimes the complaint itself argues against the thing complained of. There is no cause to be cast down for some imaginary reason. (2) He focuses much on the effect for which the affliction is appointed. One of the greatest effects (a virtue that few obtain and many desire) is a settled judgment. How does this happen through unsettling tribulation? *“Certissimum est, quod certum est post incertitudinem* (that is most certain that is certain after uncertainty)*”* (p. 131.) (3) He treats the worst cases, thereby comforting not only these, but the lesser cases as well. By the terrible revelations of those who are more downcast, those who are less downcast are compelled to bear their lighter burdens. If Satan is at

you, then consider, *“He that is not troubled sometimes by Satan is possessed by him [under his dominion]”* (p. 142.) That is a lifting up. But the absolute worst case, or the worst facet of the worst case is worse than the presence of Satan himself involves the absence of God, which is called *“desertion.”* He does not mean that God actually deserts the Christian. He is talking about feelings, not an actuality. Desertion is when a Christian does, as it were, combat with God himself (p. 174.) He tells of a religious woman who feels so deserted by God that she would rather endure her nine travails at once than feel such loss (p. 175.) Then, drawing from Scripture events, Bridge comforts cases like these by proving *“that it is Christ’s usual manner to personate an enemy when He intends the most friendship, to seem a stranger when He intends the most communion.”* (p. 179.) Don’t get the idea from this that Bridge is teaching that Jesus pretends to be what he is not; pretence might be some kind of deception. (See Acts 24.28 for the sake of interest.) He means that the Lord simply withdraws, and permits the feelings that such withdrawal occasions. When deserted, it will be as if God is now the enemy. Job’s case is the classic case. The quintessential case is Jesus on the cross. The book’s tone is like pastoral interrogation. William Bridge has the rare gift of being able to woo with authority the soul that is at the point of refusing to be comforted. Almost nobody can do this. Probably only a minister can do it well, and only that minister who can be ranked among the best of the best. Bridge is a model pastor. This tone is likely impossible to show in a line or two, for it is more in the spirit of the book than in the letter of it. But here goes: *“Do not say thus, I shall never be helped; I shall never be better; Beloved, this you cannot say, for who knows what God will do? His ways are in the deep, and His foot-steps are not known.”* (p. 149.) He has this way of tenderly grilling the downcast into an acceptance of what he says. A low, melancholy spirit, so long as he is a humbled man, will listen to psychiatry like this. The truth is, though, even the best of comforters with the best of reasoning cannot heal the dark night of the soul. Understanding only goes so far toward lifting the veil. Even the presence of an angel may do little or nothing. Mary Magdalene continued to weep after the angel came to her at Jesus’ tomb (p. 175.) What to do, then? Try to stand on the fact that *“though for the present He hides his face from me, yet I shall see His face again.”* (p. 191.) It may be that this will happen only at the edge of death, or on the other side of it. In the meantime, *“hoping, trusting, waiting on God”* means appointed against all discouragements (p. 262.) The

style, in its own way, is second to none. Anecdotes, and Latin phrases (all subsequently translated) come in at regular intervals for the sake of maintaining interest. No story is longwinded; every one is impressive of whatever matter is at hand. Illustrations are homely and biblically awakening in that peculiar Puritan way. There is even a parable that he invents at one point (p. 159.) To give some sense of what he is capable of stylistically, see how he reminds those who are weak in grace, of the wisdom they already have. The godly possess "the wisdom of the conies [badgers], to build in the rock of Christ; the wisdom of the locusts, to join with others; and the wisdom of the spider, to take hold on those beams of the promises, which are in the chamber of Christ our King" (p. 89.) Now that is not beauty for the sake of acting smart. That is encouraging. It is encouraging because it is true. He is never far from what the Bible affirms. Of course, besides all of this he teaches about false peace and common grace to warn the vexed person to not be satisfied with anything else but the special favor of God and the true saving peace that is wrought by faith in Jesus. Evangelical ability is to know how to fold this in with pastoral work without confusion, and thus without being guilty of sending the wrong message to either sinner or saint, reprobate or elect. And there are many things in here that wonderfully surprised me.

I am sure that anyone who reads this will experience the same. How does *A Lifting up for the Downcast* measure up beside so many other efforts that have been put forward to treat the horrid disease of spiritual depression? *Bridge's* remedy book is at least as interesting, and noticeably more biblical, than *Where is God when it Hurts?* and *Disappointment with God* by Philip Yancey. In one of those books, Yancey seems happy over the fact that a depressed person threw all of his Christian books in the garbage can. He seems to revel in the fact that someone is angry with God. What kind of sympathy is that? Who does that help? Maybe Yancey is the spiritually depressed one. Bridge, because of his superior grace and his experience with God, never glories over the shame of a sufferer. Put Yancey's books in the garbage can. Then you'll feel better. Again, *A Lifting up for the Downcast* is just as warm, and more extensive and profound, than *A Book of Comfort for those in Sickness* by P. B. Power. It is just as challenging, and even more helpful, than *Horatius Bonar's When God's Children Suffer*. It is just as diagnostic and psychological, and more practical, than *Spiritual Depression* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. William Bridge eclipses all the authors that I have read on this grim theme that, for some people, is a bitter reality for a long time. He has more spirit, more authority, more pastoral ability, just more overall wherewithal than all the rest. He digs deepest into the words of God to find "comfort in the absence of comfort" (p. 233.) This *Lifting up* is for all of Christ's little sufferers.

It will especially bless those who crave to receive a good education while they are being cared for. I can't see how this book could not be the last one of this nature that a downcast heart would need. A Lifting up for the Downcast was immediately preparatory to my deepest experience with God. Lloyd Jones's Joy Unspeakable was a more distant foundation to the experience. Ralph Venning's Learning in Christ's School helped me to put that experience in perspective. Those are books that God has put his stamp of approval on.

This book is quite thorough and biblical in its various diagnosis and remedies for spiritual depression and discouragement. Lack of assurance of salvation, the lack of God's presence in life, sickness, neglect of various christian duties and work, persecution, besetting and persistent sins, excessive temptations; nearly all aspects of life that would cause a christian to despair are covered within this book. Though the english in this book can be a bit outdated (the author was a 17th century English Puritan) those who manage to patiently work their way through this book will be rewarded with a wealth of theological knowledge that is rarely obtainable even in today's most bible-based christian books. Well worth the effort to read through it multiple times.

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