

October 20, 2019

The Progress of an Experimental Christian

Psalm 119:105-112

A Pilgrim's Progress¹

The most remembered work that the Puritan John Bunyan wrote was *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory of a Christian's spiritual journey through life. Bunyan understood that all humanity was set on pilgrimage —with a beginning, a middle, and an end. In his introduction, we read this:

“every individual of our race is upon pilgrimage, from the cradle to the grave. It is the progress of the soul through time to enter upon a boundless eternity; beset on all sides, at every avenue, and at every moment, with spiritual foes of the deepest subtlety, journeying from the commencement to the close of the course through an enemy's country, uncertain of the term of existence, certain only that it must terminate and usher us into an eternal state, either of exquisite happiness, or awful misery.”²

¹ In 1660, Justice Wingate signed the arrest warrant for one uneducated preacher named John Bunyan. The monarchy had recently changed in England ending the religious toleration that had been afforded to Protestant preachers. Uniformity was now to be compulsory. All preachers were required to be ordained through the Anglican church, and Parliament became the sword of enforcement. John Bunyan knew they were coming for him. His friends begged him not to preach that morning, but Bunyan not be moved. He simply said “Come, be of good cheer, let us not be daunted; our cause is good, we need not be ashamed of it.” His text that morning was from John 9:35 entitled “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” He intended to show that absolute need of a saving faith in Jesus Christ—that this the highest concern for all mankind. But he only got his opening prayer out uninterrupted before the constable came into their meeting place and arrested him. His crime? He refused to stop preaching. For the next 12+ years, he sat in the Bedford Jail. Who could have conceived, but the wisdom of God, what happened next? Instead of silencing Bunyan, Parliament gave him a megaphone. As his biographer said, the jail became “his study...and the means of his preaching to millions of his fellow sinners, in all ages and languages.” [John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan Vol. 3*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 5]

² *ibid*, pg. 1

Every man's life is a pilgrimage. All of humanity is making *progress* towards this conclusion that will seal their fate for eternity.

The progress of an experimental Christian

In our passage this morning, we see the Psalmist speaking about the progress of an experimental Christian. Experimental simply means “known by trial.” It is interchangeable with *experiential*. An experimental Christian is simply a Biblical Christian—one who doesn't *merely* have notions of the gospel in his head, but in his heart and in his hands. If you have been truly born again, your Christianity *just is* experimental. Meaning, God is testing and trying and refining your faith. **1 Peter 1:6-7** “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that *the tested genuineness of your faith*—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The only Christians that are not being tested like this are false Christians. Experimental Christians are those who are being changed, and transformed from one degree of glory to another. **2 Cor. 3:18** says “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

The biography of a Christian

This morning the Psalmist is going to show us what this looks like. He's going to show us the *progress* of an experimental Christian. In these 8 verses, what we see, is really, the biography of every Christian—from start to finish. If you are a Christian, this is what your life looks like. This is your pilgrimage. This is your progress.

☆The Beginning of the Christian Life (v.105-106)

☆The Middle of the Christian Life (v.107-110)

☆The End of the Christian Life (v.111-112)

The Big Idea...

The Christian life begins by *the Word of God*, is sustained by *the Word of God*, and ends with the everlasting enjoyment of *the Word of God*

I. The Beginning of the Christian Life

In the beginning there was darkness

Please look with me at v.105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The Christian life *begins* with light. The imagery here is easy to understand. A man is in the darkness. He can’t find his way. But then a light appears. This light shows him the way, it shows him where to put his feet. What this verse is claiming is that the Word of God is alone this light, *and* that before anyone is ever made a Christian, they are living in complete darkness. And this is perhaps the greatest stumbling block that all humanity must face: if you are not a Christian, all of your ideas about this life are simply wrong. The unbelieving world is wrong about everything. That’s what it means to be in the darkness. I don’t mean that they can’t understand things like $2 + 2$. I don’t mean that they haven’t made advances in medicine and science and technology and transportation. Of course they have. Nor am I saying that non-Christians are less intelligent than Christians. There are many brilliant non-Christians, *and* there are many Christians who are very simply minded. What I mean by saying that *the unbelieving world is wrong about everything*, is that they are wrong about the most fundamental questions that any person could ever ask:

Why am I here? Why is there evil in the world? What is to be done about it? Let’s take those one at a time.

The first most fundamental question: “Why am I here? “

What is the meaning of life? The non-Christian lives as if the meaning of his life is to please himself. He is entirely self-controlled. His mind is set on the flesh, meaning, he is *controlled* by his own ideas.³ That’s what it looks like to live in darkness.

But when a Christian is made, he can see clearly for the first time why He exists: he exists to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The Scripture gives him light: **1 Cor. 10:31** “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Christian realizes that his life is to be a “God-centered, God-controlled life.”⁴ There is no greater discovery that anyone could ever make.

The second most fundamental question: “Why is there evil in the world?”

The non-Christian recognizes that there is evil in the world. Just read your newsfeed—the world is *constantly* claiming that “this is wrong” or “that is evil.” But the natural man refuses to come to the light and accept the inevitable truth: ‘I am what is wrong with the world.’

You see when a man is born again, he understands this most devastating reality: Sin is what is wrong with the world, and I am a sinner.’ And the world is full of sinners. There are no exceptions. **Romans 3:9-10** “For we have already charged, that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one;’” The only way to become a Christian is to realize this about yourself—that you are utterly helpless and hopeless to save yourself, that you are rotten to the very core of your being.

The third most fundamental question: “What is to be done about this?”

The non-Christian knows in his heart of hearts that he is a sinner. So he attempts to make up for his sin. Either through self-reformation, or through his

³ **Romans 8:7** says “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Acts Chapters 1-8*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2000-2007), 409

own form of penance. But this is impossible. It is not as if a sinner could just make some adjustments to his thinking and ideas and behavior, then he could be made right. No. The message of the Bible is this: you have offended a holy God, and satisfaction must be made. A punishment must be meted out. But here's the crisis: this punishment is eternal. To sin against an infinite God requires an infinite punishment. But who can endure this?⁵

The Word alone gives us the light of Christ⁶

This is *why* the Word is a light *because* it tells us *Who* satisfied the wrath of God for sinners: the God-man Jesus Christ. **1 John 4:10** "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." But that's not all. **Romans 4:24-25** says that God "raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." That is the light that the Word gives! The most thrilling news every heard by mortal ears.

A Christian is separated from the world by faith

So then what does a Christian do with these facts about Jesus? He believes them. That's what makes Him a Christian. A Christian believes the message of Jesus Christ slain for sinners, and he passes from death to life. And then the Christian follows Jesus Christ. That's what the Psalmist is getting at in **v.106**. "I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules." Coming to Jesus Christ by faith is giving yourself entirely over to Him. The Christian is a person who, in essence, has sworn an oath to be separated from the world. I don't mean that he takes himself out of the world like a monk or something. I mean he separates from the world's rebellion against God.

⁵ The world has no answer. That is why the world hates to think and talk about death. They shudder at the very idea of what lies beyond the grave so they invent countless ways to distract themselves. But how utterly foolish it is to ignore this! There has been countless examples since the beginning of the world to warn all people. Suddenly at a moment when it was least expected—a car wreck, a terrorist attack, a violent illness, some sort of fatal catastrophe—and then one is plunged into a death that can never be reversed. What will a person do with their sin then? It is too late.

⁶ This Word is Christ! (John 1:1-2) This Light is Christ! (John 8:12)

Remember, this is what the Jews did when at Pentecost. After they were cut to the heart over their sin, they asked Peter "...what shall we do?" (**Acts 2:37**). How did Peter respond? "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For *the promise* is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." Peter is speaking in covenantal language: "Christ promises this to you..." What was required of them? They had to give themselves over to the Lord Jesus. Dear congregation, that's what conversion is. It is separating from the world forever, and joining the Lord Jesus Christ *by faith* in His name. Believing in the Lord Jesus is the most important oath you can ever take. Charles Spurgeon says it like this:

"Yes the [oath]⁷ of the Lord is upon us, especially those who have professed discipleship, have been baptized into the holy name of the Trinity, have eaten of the Lord's Supper, and have spoken in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are enlisted and sworn in and bound to be loyal soldiers all through the war."⁸

⁷ original—vows

⁸ Charles Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet: An Exposition of Psalm 119*, (Abbotsford, WI.; Aneko Press, 2018), pg. 180

The undivided Christian life

This is where we must be very clear about *how* the Christian life begins. What did Jesus accomplish on the cross? Two things. Paul says in **Titus 2:14** that Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness (that's the first thing) *and* to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works (that the second thing)." You see those two things must not be divided. But the order matters. We do not start off the Christian life by skipping over the forgiveness of sins. You cannot bypass the cross and *just follow* Jesus. Your sins must be forgiven first. How are you forgiven? Only by trusting in Christ alone. **Acts 13:39** "...by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law..." But it doesn't stop there. Please look again at **v.106** "I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, *to keep your righteous rules.*" True faith *desires* to keep God's Word. That's why Jesus said "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (**John 14:15**). Jesus is not talking about about never sinning (**1 John 1:8**). He's talking about a brand new disposition for obedience that wasn't there before. Once you loved the darkness and obeyed it, but now you love Christ and obey Him.

Pilgrim's beginning

Let's illustrate these first two verses of the Christian life by remembering how Pilgrim's Progress began. How did Christian first discover that he lived in the city of Destruction? How did he first discover that he was under the condemnation of God? Through his precious book. It was this book that became the lamp to his feet and the light to his path. It led him to eternal life. He told his companion Pliable "If you believe not me, read here in this book...behold, all is confirmed by the blood of Him that made it."⁹ What then did Christian do? He fled the city. What other choice was there? He already gave himself to the Author of the book—so he was compelled to follow what the Author had written. That's the truth of v.106.

Experimental progress

Dear congregation, that is what it means to be saved. Just as Christian was led by the light of the Word to trust in Christ, so he was led by the light of the Word to follow Christ. "The Lord Jesus Christ did not stop at saying, 'Come unto me.'¹⁰ He went on and said, 'Follow me.'¹¹"¹² That's the beginning of the Christian life. A Christian is one believes in Jesus, and then follows Him. Does that describe you? That's our **first point**.

II. The Middle of the Christian Life

So then what does this journey of the Christian life look like? The Psalmist tells us to expect three things in our progress to eternity. We can expect **1) pain; 2) praise; and 3) persecution.**

⁹ John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan Vol. 3*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 5

¹⁰ Matthew 11:28

¹¹ Matthew 16:24

¹² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Acts Chapters 1-8*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2000-2007), 408

1. The pain of the Christian's life

First on this journey, the Christian should expect pain. Please look with me at v.107 “I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word!” Now why is the Psalmist returning to this theme of affliction *again*? He already dealt with it in detail in v.65-72. Why is he bringing it up again? Because affliction is not just for *one part* of our lives. Paul said “that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). So many Christians are caught off guard in their lives when they are afflicted in some severe way. Those of you who have experienced this know what I’m saying. Severe affliction can make you feel like God is no longer with you, that He has become your enemy. And then you start to question everything! “Am I even a Christian? Is God real? Is all of this just a fantasy in my mind?” That’s what the Psalmist is saying. He’s so downcast, that he feels as though he is dead: “*Give me life, O Lord...*”

The Psalmist is repeating this because you must know that more affliction is coming dear congregation. The particular affliction is unspecified by the Psalmist because there are many afflictions you will face: utter loss of health; death of loved ones; financial hardship; betrayal; the affliction of your own sin; of doubt, of suffocating anxiety, of depression, of loneliness, of abandonment, and finally of death itself. Affliction is not a matter of “if” but “when.” 1 Peter 4:12 says “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” When Christian set out on his journey in Pilgrim’s Progress, he was immediately met with trouble and affliction. In fact, from the time he left the city of Destruction until he reached the Celestial City, he only had brief moments of peace and rest.

Why is this helpful to know? Because the Psalmist here is telling us how to deal with it specifically. He doesn’t pray for escape or relief. Why? Not because it’s wrong to pray for those things. But there are simply some afflictions that you will not escape from or be relieved of. So then how do we pray in our afflictions? The Psalmist says “give me life, O Lord, *according to your*

word!" Dear congregation, it is the Word of God that can give you live in the worst of your afflictions. That is the only remedy.

What do you need to hear sickness has overcome you and you wish for death? **2 Corinthians 4:16-17** "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. "

What do you need to hear when you feel abandoned and all alone in the world? "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me...I go and prepare a place for you, I will come and again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (**John 14:1-3**).

God has a promise for every affliction that you face *in His Word*.

2. The praise of the Christian's life

Secondly, on this journey, the Christian can expect praise. Please look at **v.108** "Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your rules." How fascinating that praise and pain are put side by side? Why is the Christian's life filled with praise if it is filled with so much pain? Because no amount of pain, no predicament we find ourselves in, no danger, no death will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:39**).

And this is something that so radically separates the Christian from the non-Christian. The non-Christian will suffer just as much pain as the Christian in this life. But the non-Christian can never praise. The non-Christian lives a praise-less life. What hope does he have? What can he boast in? What does he think will secure him when death finally knocks on his door? He could gain the whole world and yet still lose his soul. And all of the goods that he has stored up will pass on to some else.¹³ And when he dies, his name will be forgotten. This is

¹³ But none of the Christian's labor is ever in vain—1 Cor. 15:58

why Ecclesiastes paints the godless man as a man of utter vanity and meaninglessness. The godless man is a praise-less man.

But the Christian can rejoice even in his afflictions. Why? Because "...we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (**Romans 8:28**). God will turn our worst things into treasures, either in this world or in the world to come. That's why the Christian's life is the most thrilling life. No matter what we face in this life, *all is turned to praise*. "For all things are yours, whether...the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (**1 Cor. 21-23**).

3. The persecution of a Christian's life.

Thirdly, on this journey, the Christian can expect persecution. Please look with me at v.109-110 "I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts." The reason why persecution is different from the affliction we saw in v.107 is because the Christian is persecuted specifically *because* he is a Christian. Why did Cain kill his brother? **1 John 3:12** says "And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous." The Christian is a reminder to the unbeliever that they are unrighteous and that judgment is coming. But I fear that we have an over-simplified view of persecution as if it is limited to what we see in China or Somalia. There are more snares that the wicked lay for the Christian than *merely* imprisonment or death. Remember the point of persecution is to separate you from your faith in Jesus Christ. In Pilgrim's progress, Christian faced such traps at every turn.¹⁴ He faced the character Obstinate who ridiculed him by calling him a 'brain sick fellow.' The early disciples faced this in Acts 2, when they were accused of being filled with new wine (**Acts 2:13**). He faced Worldly Wiseman who urged him to give up his religious foolishness and live a contented secular life. We know that Demas gave into this temptation and deserted Paul because he was in love with this

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pilgrims/characters/> Accessed October 19, 2019

present world (**2 Tim. 4:10**). He faced Formalist and Hypocrisy who tempted him to ignore the Book and to rely on his own works and customs. This was the temptation of the Judaizers in the book of Galatians who tempted the church to rely on Jesus + the works of the law.

All of these are serious traps that the wicked sets for the Christian. How do we respond to them? Because to give into any of them is to shipwreck our faith (**1 Tim. 1:19**). How does the Psalmist respond? He says at the end of **v. 109** and **v.110** “I do not forget your law...I do not stray from your commandments.” The Psalmist is teaching us again and again that the word is sufficient for everything that we face. Our constant mantra should be: What does the Scripture say? What does the Scripture say? If you are facing some sort of attack from man or from devil, simply ask this: what does the Scripture say?¹⁵ That’s how the Lord Jesus answered the Devil. At every point of attack, He responded “It is written...it is written...it is written...” Dear congregation, we are armed with the most fearsome weapon in the world¹⁶—the Word of God.

Summary

So those are the three main things that a Christian can expect during the middle of his journey. You can expect great pain, you can expect inexpressible praise, and you can expect persecution at every turn. But through it all it is the Word that is sustaining us, satisfying us and securing us. That’s our **second point**.

¹⁵ Isaiah 8:20 To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

¹⁶ Gene Cunningham, *Psalm 119: The Diary of a Captive*, (USA.,: Basic Training Bible Ministries, 2009), pg. 91

III. The End of the Christian Life

The timing of the Word

So then, how does this Christian life end? Please look with me at v. 111-112 “Your testimonies are my heritage *forever*, for they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes *forever*, to the end.” Notice what’s in view here: eternity.

The testament of the Word

But notice what the Psalmist says he gains in eternity: “Your testimonies are my *heritage* forever.” A heritage is an inheritance. It is the passing on of property, titles, and rights to one’s descendants when they die. An inheritance especially in the ancient world was what secured the livelihood of one’s children. Their very lives depended on it. But an inheritance is not something you can gain by merit or by money. It only comes when someone dies.¹⁷ Dear congregation, we inherit all these promises *only* because Jesus Christ died for us. All the promises of God are yes and Amen only for those who are *in Him*. The Word of God does not belong to the world. It belongs only to those who have been redeemed His blood, buried with Him in death, and raised with Him in His glorious resurrection.

The treasure of the Word

Oh dear church just consider the great and precious promises that have been afforded to you.

¹⁷ Hebrews 9:15-17 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

You shall inherit everlasting life and live in an endless kingdom. **Isaiah 55:17** “But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.”

You will be given a crown of righteousness. **2 Timothy 4:8** “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

You will shine like the sun. **Matthew 13:43** “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

You will never weep again for the Owner of that place will wipe away all tears from your eyes¹⁸ and death shall be no more, nor pain, for the former things have passed away (**Rev. 21:4**).

Are those things not the true joy of your heart? The world is as dust on the scales compared to the treasures that have been promised to you.

The transformation from the Word

But look lastly how this progress finally ends. **v.112** “I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.” In the celestial city, you will never sin against your Savior again. There will never be anyone who will ever sin against you again. In that place, no one will be hateful or hurtful. All will have their hearts tuned to the glorious harmony of God’s Word. And your destiny will finally be complete. You will finally be conformed to the image of the Son of God Himself. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” (**Romans 8:29**). Oh dear saint not only will

¹⁸ John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan Vol. 3*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 91

you be conformed to Christ, but you will come into the full enjoyment of Christ. That is the heaven of heavens. The end of this life is the beginning of glory.

Application

1. What kind of a world do we live in?

Two things are clear from this passage. First the world that we live in is a world of darkness. Any reasonable person can see that something is desperately wrong with us. And yet no one: not the politician, not the movie star, not the rich, not the scientist, not the star athlete, no one, no one can help you out of this darkness. They cannot even help themselves. Secondly, we see that this world is merely a pilgrimage. Everyone can see that this life must soon end, and we will be ushered into our eternal state. Every day in this world is one day closer to Heaven or to Hell. That is the world we live in.

2. What kind of a Word has God given us?

God had given us a Word that alone has light. If you are here this morning and *this Word* means nothing to you, that means you are still in the darkness and you are not a Christian. And if you will not turn to Jesus Christ and trust Him alone, you will very soon sink down to the depths of eternal darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And then it will be too late. I imagine the objections of your heart dear unbeliever.¹⁹

Perhaps you think: “But if I trust in Jesus, then I will lose my friends, because none of them believe in this stuff.” I would answer, “What better friend could you have than Jesus Christ who will pardon your sins and welcome you into the Kingdom of God?”

¹⁹ These are adapted from John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan Vol. 3*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 90, fn. 5

Or perhaps you would say: “But if I trust in Jesus, then I must quit my sinful life.” I would answer, “That’s true, but if you don’t quit your sinful life and trust Christ you will go to hell.”

Or perhaps you would say: “I’ll become a Christian later in life, perhaps in a year or two.” I would answer: “Do you have any control over when you will die? Has God told you that you will live another year longer? Why would you wager your everlasting soul on something so uncertain on whether you will be alive a year from now.” The Scripture says “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

Perhaps you might say: “I am too wicked for Jesus to save me, so there is no hope for me.”²⁰ I would answer that Jesus only came to save wicked people. Before Paul became a Christian, he killed Christians, which led him to write: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Timothy 1:15). No dear unbeliever, you have no excuse left. Trust Christ. He will deliver you from the wrath to come if you hope in Him.

3. What kind of a church should we want?

We should want a church that knows how to strengthen weary pilgrims. Partway into his journey, Christian faced the Hill of Difficulty. Everyone traveling to the Celestial City must climb it. The other two paths that lead around the mountain lead to death. At first he was running, then walking, then he was crawling on his hands and knees. He didn’t make it to the top until night. There he found the lodge called Beautiful. It was the church. It couldn’t be at a better part of their journey than there. Christian was desperate. There he found three precious companions: Piety, Prudence and Charity. Each of them refreshed him differently: Piety rehearsed the gospel with him; Prudence helped

²⁰ The gospel says that no one is so righteous that they could be accepted because of their righteousness, AND that no one is so wicked that they would be rejected because of their wickedness.

examined his ways and motives. Charity spurring him on to a more fervent love towards his neighbor. Christian was so encouraged and comforted. He would have stayed, were it not for the fact that he had not reached the Celestial City.

Dear congregation, this is the kind of church we should want. The church is not a place where we simply come and hear someone preach. That is to fundamentally misunderstand what the church is. Yes that is what the Church must do. But we are members one of another. We have a common interest in each other's final destiny. Christian's three friends perfectly exemplify how we should encourage each other.

Are you encouraging fellow church members to piety (holy zeal)? How do you do that? By simply talking about what Christ accomplished, what He is accomplishing and what He will accomplish. The more you talk with others about Jesus, the stronger in zeal they become.

Are you encouraging fellow church members to be prudent (wise)? How do you do that? By simply asking each other: "Hey brother, how your fight against sin?" And then tell them about your fight. Counsel with one another.

Are you encouraging fellow church members to charity (love)? Charity did this with Christian by asking him how he was sharing the gospel with his family and friends. So ask each other: "who have you shared the gospel with lately? Tell me about it." If you haven't shared the gospel in a long time, then confess that to each other and ask for prayer for more love to your neighbor. Sharing the gospel of Jesus with others is the most loving thing we can do in this dark world.

That's the type of church we should want, one that seeks to stir up one another to love and good works...encouraging one another all the more as you see the Day drawing near (**Heb. 10:24-25**).

4. What kind of Savior do we need?²¹

We need a Savior who is with us every step in our progress towards Heaven. That's exactly what Jesus promised. "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (**Hebrews 13:5**). So then how do we experience this? Because I think that for some of us—we can know *in our heads* that Jesus is always with us, but we fail to experience it *in our hearts*. So how in our progress towards Heaven do we experience the constant presence of Christ? Well consider **v.105** one more time: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Now ask yourself: Who does the NT say is the Word? Jesus *Himself*. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (**John 1:1, 14**). Who does the NT say is the Light? Jesus *Himself*. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (**John 8:12**).

Dear congregation, that is how you experience the constant presence of Jesus—by going to Him directly *in His Word*.

²¹ With the exception of the question on the Word, the other three are from Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, Preaching the Word Series*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2014), pg. 17-23