

“The Pilgrims Progress”
The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death
(Psalm 23)

Introduction:

1. Tonight - In Our Journey:
 - Through The Pilgrim’s Progress:
 - We Will Find Christian:
 - At The End:
 - Of One Valley:
 - But At The Entrance To:
 - Another!
2. If You Remember:
 - From The Last Time We Were Together:
 - Christian Made It Through:
 - The Valley Of Humiliation!
 - But - He Did Not Do So:
 - Unscathed!
 - Although He Was Given:
 - “Some Of The Leaves Of The Tree Of Life” To:
 - Apply To His Wounds:
 - I’m Sure There Were Still Scars:
 - From Those Wounds:
 - That He Suffered:
 - At The Hands Of Apollyon!
 - And The Same Is True:
 - For All Christians On This Journey!
 - We Will Often Bear The Scars:
 - Of The Testings & Trials & Temptations:
 - Brought About By The Spiritual Conflict:
 - In Which We Are Now Engaged!
 - Doesn’t Jesus Himself:
 - Still Bear The Scars Of His Suffering & Sacrifice:
 - For Our Sins?
 - The “Five Bleeding Wounds He Bears” - In His Head, His Hands, And His Feet! (Charles Wesley)
3. But - The Dangers:
 - That Christian Faced In The Valley:
 - Were Not Yet Over!
 - Because - As He Came Out Of That Valley:
 - There Was Another - And:
 - A Deeper, More Imposing Valley:
 - Which We Will Read About Tonight!
4. “The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death!”
 - So - Starting On Page 35, At The Last Paragraph - We Read:
 - “*Not, At The End Of This Valley, Was Another, Called The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death . . .*”
 - Read Through Page 39, Paragraph 2:
 - Christian’s Poem - “*But Since I Live, Let Jesus Wear The Crown!*”
5. As We Just Read:
 - This Was Another Dark Period Of Time:
 - In The Spiritual Journey:
 - Of This Christian - That Reflects:
 - The Experience - Not Only Of The Author Of This Tale:
 - But Of So Many Christians Even Today!
 - The Puritans - Of Which John Bunyan Was One:
 - Used To Describe This Experience As:
 - The “Dark Night Of The Soul!”
 - It Was A Time Of:

- Spiritual Depression:
- That Was Both Severe And Solitary!

6. In His Autobiography:
 - Titled - "Grace Abounding To The Chief Of Sinners":
 - Bunyan Writes About His Own:
 - "Dark Night Of The Soul" In This Way:
 - *"At Another Time, Though Just Before I Was Pretty Well And Savory In My Spirit, Yet Suddenly There Fell Upon Me A Great Cloud Of Darkness, Which Did So Hide From Me The Things Of God And Christ, That I Was As If I Had Never Seen Or Known Them In My Life; I Was Also So Overrun In My Soul, With A Senseless, Heartless Frame Of Spirit That I Could Not Feel My Soul To Move Or Stir After Grace And Life By Christ; I Was As If My Loins Were Broken, Or As If My Hands And Feet Had Been Tied Or Bound With Chains. At This Time Also I Felt Some Weakness To Seize Upon My Outward Man, Which Made Still The Other Affliction The More Heavy And Uncomfortable To Me!"*
 - With These Words:
 - And In His Story:
 - Bunyan Attempts To Describe:
 - The Undescribable!
 - Because:
 - Spiritual Depression:
 - Can Only Be Understood When It Is Personally Encountered:
 - In Your Own Heart And Life!
 - In The Second Part Of The Pilgrim's Progress:
 - Which Records The Pilgrimage Of:
 - Christian's Wife & Children:
 - His Wife, Christiana, Says This About This Valley:
 - *"Many Have Spoken Of It, But None Can Tell What The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death Should Mean Until They Come In Themselves!"*
7. So - What Bunyan Attempts To Describe With His Words:
 - The Lord Already Had In His Word!
 - Through The Imagery Contained In The Name Of That Valley:
 - "The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death" - Which:
 - Of Course - Comes To Us In:
 - That Psalm Of Psalms:
 - Psalm 23!
 - So - Let's Open Our Bibles There Together:
 - And Read Through That Psalm:
 - Which We Also Just Sang!
 - Psalm 23 - *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. / 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. / 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. / 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. / 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. / 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever!"*
8. There's Something We Need To Remember:
 - About This New Valley Christian Enters!
 - It Is **Not** The Valley Of **Death!**
 - It Is The Valley Of The **Shadow** Of Death!
 - You See - Even Though Death:
 - Is Still An Enemy - To Us As Christians:
 - Death Is Well-Defined!
 - And That Is Why - When A Christian Approaches Death:
 - There Can Be Confidence That:
 - "To Be Absent From The Body" Is "To Be Present With The Lord!"
(2 Corinthians 5:8)
9. But - The "Shadow Of Death" Is **In-Definite!**
 - That Is - It May *Feel* Like Death:
 - Even Though You Are Very Much Alive:
 - Both Physically & Spiritually!

- And What Is Death:
 - At Its Very Core?
 - Separation - Not From Your Body, But From God!
- George Cheever Describes This Valley In This Way:
 - “When God Departs, Or When The Soul Loses Sight Of Him, Then Begins The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death!”
 - In Other Words - This Valley Represents:
 - The Sense & Feeling That:
 - God’s Presence:
 - Is Missing In Your Life!
- Now - There Are Different Kinds & Sources:
 - Of Depression Out There In This Fallen World:
 - Which Are Often As Unique As:
 - The Individuals Who Experience It!
 - And Christians Are Not Immune:
 - To Them Either!
- But The Depression:
 - Bunyan Deals With Is:
 - ***Spiritual*** Depression, When It Feels Like:
 - God Has Abandoned You:
 - For One Reason Or Another!

* And So - The First Think We Can Learn From Bunyan’s Story Is:

1. *There Are Great Problems In This Valley!*

- Now - The Sense Of God’s Withdrawal:
 - From Your Life As A Christian:
 - Can Take Place For A Couple Of Reasons!
- The First Reason:
 - Is The Reason Of Personal Departure:
 - From The Lord:
 - Through Sin!
 - You Can Enter The “Valley Of The Shadow Of Death”:
 - Through Your Own Doing!
 - And - Perhaps - This Is The Primary Reason:
 - For The Spiritual Depression Of Many Christians Today!
 - King David Addresses This:
 - In Psalm 107:10-15 - When He Wrote “Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron;” – Why?
 - 11 - “Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: 12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help!”
 - But Is There Hope?
 - 13 - “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”
 - The First Thing You Need To Do:
 - When It Feels Like “Night” In Your Soul:
 - Is To Pray & Plea To The Lord:
 - As David Did In Psalm 139:23-24 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: / And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”
 - So - The First Reason You May Enter The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - Is Personal Departure From The Lord! But:
- The Second Reason:
 - Is The Reason Of Personal Discipline:
 - From The Lord!
 - Not Discipline As Punishment - But:

- Discipline As Training!
- So - You Can Also Enter The “Valley Of The Shadow Of Death” Through:
 - The Hidden, But Ongoing Work:
 - Of God In Your Life!
- This Is The Kind Of Valley:
 - Job Went Through!
 - Not One Of His Own Making:
 - But Of The Lord’s!
- In Job 10:20-22 - Job Describes How He Felt - When The Lord’s Hidden Hand Of Discipline Was Upon Him:
 - “Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, / Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; / A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness!”
- Job Experienced This Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - But - No Sin Of His:
 - Was The Direct Cause!
 - Instead - God Was Actively, Though Secretly, Trying His Faith!
 - And - In Our Story Tonight:
 - **This** Was The Reason:
 - For Christian’s Journey:
 - Through This Valley!
- Have You Ever Gone Through:
 - One Of These “Dark Nights” In Your Own Soul?
 - Have You Ever Felt The Trial & The Terror Of:
 - The “Shadow Of Death?”
 - If You Haven’t - You Likely Will Someday!
 - Maybe Not To The Same Extent As Job Or David Or Bunyan!
 - But - As Bunyan Pointed Out In Our Reading:
 - “Christian Must Needs Go Through It, Because The Way To The Celestial City Lay Through The Midst Of It!”
- But - What Is This Valley Like?
 - On Page 36 - The Description Given By:
 - Those Two Men:
 - Is “Almost A Description Of Hell!” (George Cheever)
 - And - For A Christian:
 - When You Feel Like God Has Separated Himself & His Blessing & His Enlightenment From You:
 - It Is Indeed:
 - A “Hell On Earth!”
 - Again - As George Cheever Insightfully Says:
 - “It Is Death In Life, And Life In Death, For The Soul To Be Without God!”
 - This Is True Because Spiritual Depression Is:
 - A Place Of Great Darkness!
 - A Darkness - “As Dark As Pitch!”
 - It’s A Place Of Great Danger!
 - Filled With All Kinds Of Nefarious Creatures:
 - Like “Hobgoblins, Satyrs, And Dragons!”
 - It’s A Place Of Great Distress!
 - Where Your Sprit Senses:
 - “A Continual Howling And Yelling, As Of A People Under Unutterable Misery!”
 - It’s A Place Of Great Discouragement!
 - Because Of All The “Discouraging Clouds Of Confusion!”
 - It’s A Place Of Great Dread!
 - Like The Old Testament Wilderness:
 - Which - According To Jeremiah 2:6 - Was “A Land Of Deserts And Of Pits, Through A Land Of Drought, And Of the Shadow Of Death, Through A Land That No Man Passed Through, And Where No Man Dwelt!”

- It's A Place Of All These Things Because:
 - It's Primarily A Place Of Death!
 - "Death Also Doth Always Spread His Wings Over It!"
- And This Was Just The Description Of The Valley:
 - By Two Men Who Never Even Went Through The Valley!
 - We Read More Of Its Problems:
 - As Christian Slowly Made His Way Through It:
 - Though - "Ofttimes, When He Lift Up His Foot To Set Forward, He Knew Not Where, Or Upon What He Should Set It Next!"
- But - Even Though:
 - This Is How Christian Felt:
 - About The Presence Of God:
 - What Was The Truth?
 - What Were The Facts?
 - Psalm 23:4 - "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!"
 - There May Be Times Yet To Come:
 - In Your Own Life:
 - When A Spiritual Gloom & Depression Will Set In:
 - Like A Morning Mist & Fog Rising Off The Fields Around Us!
 - And - You May Even Experience:
 - Like Christian Did:
 - Blasphemous Thoughts Of Unbelief:
 - Suggested To Your Mind!
 - But Know This:
 - As Charles Spurgeon Once Said - "No Sin Is Necessarily Associated With Sorrow Of Heart!"
 - And Even When Sinful Thoughts Or Blasphemies Are Suggested To Your Mind:
 - As John Kelman Once Wrote - "Sinful Things, Disowned And Repudiated, May Seem To Haunt A Man, But Until He Chooses Them For His Own, They Are No Sin Of His!"

* So - Even Though The Problems In The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death Are Great:

2. *There Is A Great Path Through This Valley!*

- Part Of The Danger Of The Valley:
 - Is The Two Sides Of The Path!
 - The "Deep Ditch" On The Right Hand:
 - Which Represents:
 - Error In Principle - That Is:
 - Error In Truth! And:
 - The "Dangerous Quag" On The Left Hand:
 - Which Represents:
 - Error In Practice!
- How Can Anyone Hope To Make It Through:
 - This Kind Of Valley?
 - I Like What Ken Puls Writes About This:
 - "The Only Safe Path Through This Dark Valley Is Christ! He Is The Way And The Truth And The Life! He Keeps Us From Falling To The Right Or Left! In Him We Find Forgiveness; The Law No More Condemns Us! And In Him We Find Strength To Walk In Newness Of Life; The Law Is Our Delight!"
- The Pathway Through:
 - The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - Will Lead You To A Person!
 - The Lord Jesus Christ!
 - Who Is Your Shepherd!
 - Not Only Does He:
 - Make You To "Lie Down In Green Pastures!"
 - Not Only Will He:
 - Lead You "Beside The Still Waters!"

- He Also Remains With You & Me:
 - “Though I Walk Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death!”
 - Cling To Him In Those Times!
 - Remember That “The Eternal God Is Thy Refuge, And Underneath Are The Everlasting Arms!” (Deuteronomy 33:27)
- But Also:
- The Pathway Through:
 - The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - Will Lead You To Prayer!
 - There May Be Times:
 - When The Sword You Have Been Given:
 - Seems Ineffective:
 - Against Your Enemies Or Even Your Own Self!
 - It’s Not - But May Still Feel That Way!
 - But You Still Have:
 - Like Christian - The Weapon Of:
 - “All-Prayer” At Your Disposal!
 - Perhaps God Has Led You Into This Valley:
 - To Cause You To Become More Dependent On Him & His Strength:
 - Than Your Own!
 - But Then Also:
 - The Pathway Through:
 - The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - Will Lead You To Praise!
 - The Loneliness:
 - Of Christian’s Spiritual Depression:
 - Was Relieved:
 - When He Heard The Voice:
 - Of Another Christian:
 - In The Distance!
 - And What Was He Saying?
 - Psalm 23:4 - “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me!” - And Then:
 - The Darkness:
 - Of Christian’s Spiritual Depression:
 - Was Lifted!
 - Even As Job Described In Job 12:22 - “He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death!”
 - Christian Came Out Of This Valley:
 - With More Insight And Wisdom:
 - Than He Had:
 - Going Into It!
 - Because The Lord Was Teaching Him:
 - More About Trust!

Conclusion:

1. And This Narrow Pathway:
 - Led Him To Sing His Song Of Praise - On Page 39:
 - “O Blessed Be That Hand That From It Hath Delivered Me!”
2. When You Experience:
 - Your Own “Dark Night Of The Soul” - Remember:
 - Psalm 23:4 - “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!”
 - Remember That:
 - The Fact Of God’s Presence:
 - Is Greater Than:
 - Your Feelings About God’s Presence!
3. And He Will See You Through!

- Ken Puls:

- "We Don't Have To Be Alert And Aware For God To Be At Work! Even When We Are Confounded And Dismayed, He Is Still Sovereign And In Control! Even When We Are Downcast And Uncertain, He Remains Strong And Faithful!"

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