

“The Pilgrims Progress”
What Fellowship Is For
(1 Thessalonians 4:9)

Introduction:

1. Have You Gone Through Any Valleys In Your Life:
 - This Week?
 - Like The Valley Of Humiliation:
 - Where - In The Pilgrim’s Progress:
 - Christian Faced The Onslaught Of:
 - Spiritual Battle? Or:
 - Like The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - Where Christian Faced:
 - A Spiritual Depression:
 - That God Used To Both Try And Refine His Faith?
2. Perhaps, Like Christian:
 - One Valley Even Seemed To Lead To:
 - Another Valley:
 - And You Felt Like You’d Never Again:
 - See The Light Of Day!
 - Well - In The Midst Of Those Valleys:
 - Whatever They May Be Or Have Been For You:
 - God Often Brings Others:
 - To Help You:
 - Along Your Difficult Path!
3. And This Is What We Find Next:
 - In Our Story - Which:
 - We Got A Hint Of Already!
 - When - As Christian Was Still Under The Cloud Of Great Darkness:
 - In The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death:
 - He Heard A Voice Up Ahead!
 - A Voice Of Another Christian On The Same Path & In The Same Valley!
 - As We Read Last Week:
 - *“When Christian Had Travelled In This Disconsolate Condition Some Considerable Time, He Thought He Heard The Voice Of A Man, As Going Before Him, Saying, ‘Though I Walk Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death, I Will Fear No Evil; For Thou Art With Me!’”* (Psalm 23:4)
 - And Those Words - And:
 - The Prospect Of Companionship:
 - Along His Pilgrim Pathway:
 - Was A Balm To His Weary Soul!
 - And That Is Why - We Were Also Told:
 - *“He Hoped, Could He Overtake Them, To Have Company By And By!”*
4. Well - Christian Finally Came To The End:
 - Of Those Difficult Valleys!
 - And - On Page 39, Paragraph 3:
 - We Find Him Getting A Little Rest & Relief:
 - Along With A Chance For His Hope Of Company:
 - To Be Fulfilled!
 - *“Now, As Christian Went On His Way, He Came To A Little Ascent, Which Was Cast Up On Purpose, That Pilgrims Might See Before Them!”*
 - Read Through Page 41, Paragraph 7:
 - *“Then She Railed On Me, And I Went My Way!”*
5. So Far - For Most Of His Journey:
 - Christian Had Traveled:
 - On His Own!
 - And - Through This:
 - I Think John Bunyan Is Showing:
 - The Personal & Individual Dimension:

- Of The Christian Faith!

- This Is Also Clear:

- From The Brief Introduction We Were Already Given:

- To Faithful!

- Because - When Christian Was Leaving The Palace Beautiful:

- Which Represents The Church:

- He Asked The Porter, Or Pastor, If Any Other Pilgrims Had Passed By!

- And The Only One The Porter He Mentions:

- Is Faithful - But Faithful:

- Did Not Stay Or Even Stop:

- To Refresh Himself:

- At The Door Of That Friendly Palace!

6. Perhaps Bunyan Was Sensitive:

- To The Roman Catholic Doctrine:

- Which Says That:

- "Outside The Church There Is No Salvation!"

- And - The Church You Need To Belong To:

- Is The Official, Visible Church:

- Whether Of Rome Or England Or:

- Any Other Place!

- Well - One Of The Great Reformation Truths:

- Stressed That Salvation Is:

- In And Through Christ Alone!

- Because Jesus Himself:

- Is The Door - John 10:9 - "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture!"

7. So - Even Though:

- Belonging To The Visible Church:

- Is *Not* A Necessary Condition:

- For *Salvation* - On The Other Hand:

- Through Christian's Encounter With Faithful - We See That:

- It *Is* An Important Condition:

- For *Fellowship* And *Growth!*

- It Was Even:

- An Inner Longing:

- Of Christian's:

- For Spiritual Fellowship:

- Along The Way!

- Because - When God Placed That:

- "Little Ascent" Or Hill:

- Just Outside Of The Valley:

- He Saw Faithful Up Ahead:

- And Couldn't Wait To Catch Up!

8. Christian Longed For Christian Fellowship!

- And This Really Should Be:

- Our Desire & Longing As Well:

- Because Of What:

- That Kind Of Fellowship & Companionship:

- Can Be!

- In 1 Thessalonians 4:9:

- The Apostle Paul Wrote To The Thessalonian Church:

- "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another!"

- The Essence Of Christian Fellowship & Companionship:

- Is Love!

- And That Mutual Love:

- Is To Be Manifested:

- In Different Ways!
 - Several Of Which:
 - Can Be Seen In The Interaction Between Christian & Faithful!
- In Fact - In This Verse:
 - We Are Introduced To A Very Common Phrase:
 - That The Bible Uses:
 - To Describe Our Love & Fellowship!
 - “One Another!”

9. So - This Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!
 - First - It Is:

1. *For Mutual Challenge!*

- This Is What Happened:
 - When Christian First Saw Faithful:
 - Up Ahead On The Road!
 - But - After He Called Out To Him:
 - “Stay, Stay, Till I Come Up To You!”
 - How Did Faithful Respond?
 - Faithful Refused To Stop Or Turn Aside:
 - From The Path He Was On - And:
 - The Progress He Made!
 - He Said - “No, I Am Upon My Life, And The Avenger Of Blood Is Behind Me!”
 - Well - The Firm Resolution:
 - Of Faithful:
 - Moved & Stirred Up Christian:
 - To “Gird Up” His Loins:
 - And Catch Up To Faithful!
 - Which Was Probably Not The Easiest Thing To Do:
 - Since He Was Still Covered:
 - From Head To Toe:
 - With The Armor He Had Been Given:
 - At The Palace!
 - So - As Bunyan Tells Us:
 - “Christian Was Somewhat Moved, And Putting To All His Strength, He Quickly Got Up With Faithful!”
 - And This Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!
 - According To Hebrews 10:24-25:
 - We Are To:
 - “Consider One Another To Provoke Unto Love And To Good Works!”
 - And We Are To Do This By - “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching!”
 - Like Christian:
 - All Of Us Should Long For This Kind Of Fellowship:
 - So That We Can Challenge Each Other:
 - And Stir Each Other Up:
 - Go Grow More & More In The Lord!
 - Christian Fellowship Is Also:

2. *For Mutual Compassion!*

- This Is What Happened:
 - When Christian Outran Faithful:
 - And - In Pride:
 - Compared Himself With Faithful:
 - And Gave A Devious Smile:
 - “Because He Had Gotten The Start Of His Brother!”
 - In Other Words:

- When Christian:
 - Caught Up With Faithful:
 - It Was Pride:
 - That Caught Up With Christian!
- There Is Always This Danger:
 - In Any Society Or Group:
 - Even - Sadly - In The Church!
 - And So - He Forgot The Antidote:
 - For His Spiritual Pride:
 - The Gospel!
 - And So - What Happened Next:
 - Was Inevitable!
 - “He Suddenly Stumbled And Fell!”
 - Proverbs 16:18 - “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall!”
- But - How Did Faithful Respond?
 - With Much Grace And Compassion!
 - All That Bunyan Tells Us Is That:
 - Christian “Could Not Rise Again, Until Faithful Came Up To Help Him!”
 - We’re Not Told:
 - If Christian Confessed To Faithful - Or:
 - If Faithful Confronted Christian!
 - It Seems Like Neither Was Necessary:
 - Because They Both Understood That What Happened To The One Could Easily Happen To The Other!
 - Instead - I Suspect:
 - 1 Peter 4:8 Was At Work In This New-Found Christian Friendship:
 - “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins!”
- And This Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!
 - According To 1 Peter 3:8-10:
 - We Are To Told:
 - “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: / Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing!”
- Like Christian:
 - All Of Us Should Long For This Kind Of Fellowship:
 - So That We Can Have Compassion Toward Each Other:
 - And Look For Ways & Opportunities:
 - Not To Be Offended - But:
 - To Extend Love And Grace!
 - Christian Fellowship Is Also:

3. ***For Mutual Communication!***

- This Is What Happened:
 - When Christian & Faithful:
 - Finally Walked On The Same Pilgrim Pathway:
 - Together!
 - They Talked And Edified Each Other:
 - With Their Words!
 - As Bunyan Wrote:
 - “Then I Saw In My Dream, They Went Very Lovingly Together, And Had Sweet Discourse Of All Things That Had Happened To Them In Their Pilgrimage!”
 - And That “Sweet Discourse” Began:
 - The Conversation Between:
 - Christian & Faithful:
 - That Will Last For Quite Some Time!
- And - What Did They Share With Each Other?

- They Shared:
 - Their Personal Testimonies!
 - And How Both They Got:
 - From The City Of Destruction:
 - To The Place They Are Now!
- They Shared:
 - Their Personal Trials!
 - And How Some Of Those Trials:
 - Were Different From Each Other!
 - Christian:
 - Had A Very Difficult Time:
 - In The Slough Of Despond:
 - But Faithful Did Not!
 - Each Christian Story:
 - Is Unique And Special:
 - Because Each Christian:
 - Is Truly A Trophy Of God's Grace!
- They Shared:
 - Their Personal Temptations!
 - And - Even The Temptations Christian & Faithful Faced:
 - Were Different!
 - The Temptations Christian Faced:
 - Were Sinful Suggestions:
 - In His Mind!
 - Even Temptations:
 - To Doubt & Blaspheme:
 - The Lord! But:
 - The Temptations Faithful Faced:
 - Were Sinful Suggestions:
 - To His Flesh!
 - Even Temptations:
 - To Give In To His Carnal Lusts Through Immorality & Sensuality!
 - But - They Did Not Share Their Struggles:
 - To Be Sensational - Or:
 - To Gossip About! No!
 - It Was So That They Could:
 - "Bear One Another's Burdens, And So Fulfill The Law Of Christ!" (Galatians 6:2)
 - But - Most Importantly:
- They Shared:
 - The Truth!
 - As They Shared With Each Other:
 - Their Struggles With Temptation:
 - They Helped Each Other:
 - Through Relevant Verses From The Word Of God!
- And This Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!
 - According To Romans 14:19:
 - We Are Told:
 - "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another!"
 - And In Ephesians 4:29:
 - Paul Reminds Us Of The Kind Of Communication:
 - There Is To Be Between Christians!
 - "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers!"
- Like Christian:
 - All Of Us Should Long For This Kind Of Fellowship:
 - And - Offer This Kind Of Fellowship:
 - So That We Can Grow:

- Together!
- Christian Fellowship Is Also:

4. For Mutual Care!

- After The Prideful Mishap:
 - Between Christian & Faithful:
 - Christian Responded To Faithful's Care For Him:
 - With Even More Care & Consideration!
- I Like How Christian:
 - Addresses Faithful:
 - When They Begin To Talk!
 - He Calls Him:
 - "My Honored And Well-Beloved Brother!"
 - Wow! After All - They Had Just Met!
 - But - This Is The Kind Of Regard & Care:
 - All Christians Ought To Have Toward Each Other!
- A Care Based On:
 - Esteem For Each Other!
 - As Paul Tells Us:
 - In Philippians 2:3 - "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves!"
 - Obviously Faithful:
 - Had Forgiven Christian:
 - Of His Proud Smile - And It Seems:
 - Christian Had Learned His Lesson!
 - And For The Rest Of Their Journey Together:
 - They Esteemed Each Other:
 - Very Highly In The Lord!
 - But They Also Had:
- A Care Based On:
 - Affection For Each Other!
 - True, Christ-Like Love & Affection:
 - Like Jesus Himself Said:
 - In John 13:34 - "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another!"
- And These Feelings:
 - Of Love & Respect & Care:
 - Were Mutual!
 - Because Faithful Then Calls Christian:
 - "Dear Friend!"
- And This Too Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!
 - In 1 Corinthians 12:25:
 - Paul Reminds Us That:
 - "The members - Of The Body Of Christ - should have the same care one for another!"
- And So - Again - Like Christian:
 - All Of Us Should Long For This Kind Of Fellowship:
 - And - Be True Friends:
 - To One Another! Because:
 - Proverbs 17:17 - "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity!"
 - We Need Each Other!
 - And That Is Because - Also:
 - Christian Fellowship Is:

5. For Mutual Companionship!

- The Biggest Boost:
 - That Both Christian & Faithful Received:
 - Through Their New Christian Friendship:

- Is That Now They Knew:
 - They Were Not Alone!
- Of Course:
 - They Knew **God** Was With Them!
 - After All - They Had Psalm 23:4:
 - Burned Into Their Hearts:
 - As They Walked Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death!
 - “Thou Art With Me!”
 - They Would Repeat Over & Over Again!
- But Once Again:
 - God “Knoweth Our Frame!”
 - And - He Knows How To Encourage Us:
 - At Just The Right Time - And:
 - In Just The Right Way!
 - Remember When:
 - The Prophet Elijah:
 - Was On The Run For His Life:
 - From The Wicked King Ahab & His Wife Jezebel?
 - Elijah Knew God Was With Him!
 - After All - God Not Only Fed Him:
 - God Even Talked With Him:
 - When He Was Hiding In The Wilderness!
 - But - To Encourage Elijah Even More:
 - God Told Him That:
 - 1 Kings 19:18 - “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him!”
 - And That Knowledge:
 - Was A Balm To Elijah’s Weary Soul!
 - So It Was For Christian & Faithful:
 - On That Narrow Road:
 - That Seemed So Lonely At Times!
 - But Now - God Had Brought Two Men Together:
 - From The Same Country!
 - Who Spoke The Same Language!
 - Who Had Gone Through Some Similar Experiences!
 - But - Most Importantly:
 - They Had The Same Christ!
 - And This Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!
 - This Is Why - In 1 Corinthians 11:33:
 - When The Church Gathers For The Lord’s Supper:
 - We Are Told To:
 - “Tarry For One Another!”
 - This Means We Are:
 - To Wait **For** Each Other:
 - To Wait **On** Each Other - And:
 - At Times - To Even Wait **With** Each Other: Because - We Are Companions & Members:
 - “One Of Another!”

Conclusion:

1. And - All Of Us Should Long For:
 - This Kind Of Fellowship & Companionship:
 - Because - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10:
 - “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. / For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up!”
2. But - For Christian Fellowship:
 - To Be All That It Is Meant To Be:
 - We Need To Pursue After It:

- In The Way Of Christ!
 - Our Challenge To Each Other:
 - Is To Reflect:
 - The Challenge Of Christ:
 - For His People:
 - To “Be Ye Holy, For I Am Holy!” (1 Peter 1:16)
 - Our Compassion For Each Other:
 - Is To Reflect:
 - The Compassion Of Christ:
 - For His People!
 - Our Communication To Each Other:
 - Is To Reflect:
 - The Communication Of Christ:
 - To His People:
 - Which Is Always “Faithful And True!”
 - Our Care For Each Other:
 - Is To Reflect:
 - The Care & Love Of Christ:
 - For His People!
 - Ephesians 4:32 - “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you!”
 - And - Our Companionship With Each Other:
 - Is To Reflect:
 - The Companionship Of Christ:
 - With His People!
 - Who Will “Never Leave Thee, Nor Forsake Thee!” (Hebrews 13:5)
3. Because - This Is What Christian Fellowship Is For!

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