

Hazards, Hypocrites & A Hill

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 December 2020

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

- [0 : 00] Well if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling. I want us to read before we think about pilgrims' progress. I just want us to read a couple of verses that we read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.
- I want us to read 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and read again in verse 4. Where Paul writes, But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.
- For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of the darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.
- For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.
- Now as you know, we're continuing our study of the pilgrim's progress. And as we've walked with Bunyan's pilgrim, we've witnessed a transformation in his life.
- [1 : 06] A transformation from being a graceless sinner, standing in the city of destruction with a book in his hand, and a burden on his back, and he was clothed in rags, and he was crying, What must I do to be saved?
- And now we've reached the point where Christian is a committed Christian. He was standing at the cross, and he was clothed in righteousness. And he was singing in many ways.
- He was singing like the hymn writer. You know, a lot has changed in Christian's experience because he has now become a new creation.
- The old has passed away, and all has become new. And as we've walked with Christian in the pilgrim's progress, in these first few chapters, we've fled from the city of destruction.
- We've been delivered from the slough of despond. We've passed through the wicked gate. We've had a tour of the interpreter's house. And we've also stood at the cross.
- [2 : 17] And last week, as we saw, we stood at the cross looking and weeping with Christian. And as we were there, we saw that three shining ones came to Christian and welcomed him with words of peace.
- And these three shining ones, they each had a promise for Christian at the cross. The first one, from the first shining one, Christian received atonement.
- When he said to Christian, your sins are forgiven. From the second one, Christian received a new attire. He was stripped of his rags of righteousness and then clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness.
- And then from the third shining one, Christian received assurance. The shining one set a mark upon Christian's forehead and gave Christian a sealed scroll.
- And the last we saw of Christian last Lord's Day, the last thing we saw of him was that he was leaping for joy. And he was singing, blessed cross, blessed sepulchre, blessed rather be the man that was put to shame for me.

[3 : 29] But you know, one of our elders, she often reminds me that the first step after being saved is being kept. The first step after being saved is being kept.

And that's certainly true, that after you have come to the cross like Christian did, you're given the promise and the assurance that the Lord will keep you to the end.

As it says in Psalm 121, the Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even forevermore. The Lord will keep you to the end.

You know, that's what Paul reminded the Philippians. He said to them, he who began a good work in you will bring it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

But Paul also explained to the Philippians that as Christians, they will be kept until the end, but they must also keep persevering to the end.

[4 : 27] As Christians, they will be kept to the end, but they must also keep persevering to the end. And that's why Paul made on to say, press on towards the mark of the high call of God in Christ Jesus.

And that's what we see in this section. Because in this section that we're looking at this evening, Bunyan issues to us a call to perseverance. Because as Christian moves forward from the cross, as he moves along the king's highway towards the crown and the celestial city, he has the promise that he will be kept.

But he must also keep persevering to the end. And as we'll see, Christian encounters seven characters. He encounters seven characters, all of whom at one point were heading towards the celestial city.

But for one reason or another, they took a wrong turn. And they didn't keep persevering. And what Bunyan wants to remind us with these seven characters after the cross, is that the pilgrim's progress is all about persevering to the end.

The pilgrim's progress is all about persevering to the end. Because when we move forward from the cross, you know, my friend, we're not to hit cruise control.

[5 : 51] No, we're to stay alert. We're to stay attentive. And we're to stay awake. Therefore, in order to persevere to the end, after the cross, we're told that there will be dangers, and there will be distractions, and there will be difficulties.

But in order to persevere to the end, we need to know what these dangers, distractions, and difficulties are. And that's what Bunyan sets before us in this section. He reminds us that after the cross, there will be hazards, hypocrites, and a hill.

After the cross, there will be hazards, hypocrites, and a hill. And there are our headings this evening. Hazards, hypocrites, and a hill.

So first of all, hazards. So as Christian moves forward from the cross, he finds three hazards. And we're told that they were fast asleep, and they were fastened with fetters.

And these hazards, they went by the names of simple sloth and presumption. Simple sloth and presumption. But what's alarming is that Christian finds them asleep.

[7 : 03] He finds them asleep at the foot of the cross. Of all the places to find them asleep, they were asleep at the foot of the cross. They had given up their perseverance immediately after the cross.

Of course, we're told that Christian, he tried to rouse these men. He tried to wake them from their sleep and their slumber. And he tried to make them see the possible danger that they were in.

And we're told that Christian, he goes over to simple sloth and presumption. And he shakes them, and he speaks loudly to them. And he quotes to them this wise proverb from Proverbs 23.

You are like them that sleep on the top of a mast. For the deep sea is under you, a gulf that hath no bottom. Christian says that these men are like watchmen in the watchtower of a ship that's at sea.

And he says that they're meant to be looking out for land or rocks that could make shipwreck of the ship. But he says you're sound asleep. And Christian says awake, come with me, and I will help you with your fetters.

[8 : 14] There's this urgency with Christian because he knew that when a sinner finds salvation at the cross, the devil is never far away. And there's this urgency because Christian says if he that goes about like a roaring lion comes by, you will certainly become prey to his teeth.

But you know, it's the response of simple sloth and presumption. It's the response that shows us how much danger they were really in. And how much of a hazard they were to Christian's perseverance.

Because simple responded by saying, I see no danger. I see no danger. You know, my friends, simple was naive.

He was naive to the difficulties, distractions and dangers of the Christian life. In fact, simple was so naive that when Christian spoke his wise proverb to him from the book of Proverbs, he didn't understand what it meant.

And because he didn't understand what it meant, he thought that it was irrelevant to him. You know, my friends, simple was the kind of person who claims to be a Christian, but doesn't have a teachable spirit.

[9 : 29] Yes, they've come to the cross, but they're not striving for the crown at the celestial city. Simple had come to Jesus as saviour, but he didn't come to Jesus as Lord.

Jesus wasn't Lord over his life because he didn't want to learn from Jesus or look to Jesus or live for Jesus. Simple didn't want to be disciplined about the difficulties and the distractions and the dangers of the Christian life.

Because all he could say was, I see no danger. I see no danger. My friend, simple was the kind of person who comes to the cross, but doesn't ever grow in grace.

And he doesn't grow in grace because he doesn't have a teachable spirit. And he fails to keep persevering to the end. And so when Christian points out the danger that they were in, simple naively says, I see no danger.

But sloth mumbles, a little more sleep. That's what he mumbled, a little more sleep. And that's because sloth is the kind of person who comes to the cross, but doesn't like commitment.

[10 : 44] Yes, he wants to be a Christian by his confession, but not by his commitment. He wants to be seen and known by his outward profession, but his practice is non-existent.

Because, you know, sloth, he's the kind of person who doesn't read his Bible. He's the kind of person who rarely prays. He only attends the morning service and he's never at the prayer meeting.

Sloth, he even seeks to be in a position of status, but has no interest in service. Sloth is someone who holds office in the church, but looks more like an ornament on a shelf.

Sloth. My friends, sloth might have made a confession of the Saviour, but commitment to the Saviour wasn't part of his vocabulary. Because he doesn't want to get involved in the church.

He doesn't want to get his hands dirty. Needless to say, sloth is slothful and sluggish and lazy and lethargic when it comes to the cause of Christ and the gospel.

[11 : 42] Sloth is the kind of person who just says, someone else will do it. Someone else will get involved. I need more sleep.

And like simple, sloth is completely oblivious to the difficulties, distractions and dangers of the Christian life. But then there's presumption.

Presumption, he proudly stated in response to Christian's illustration of a sleeping watchman in the watchtower of a ship. He said, every tub must stand upon his own bottom.

In other words, presumption said, it's not my problem. And it has nothing to do with me. And you know, he said that because that presumption is the kind of person who comes to the cross and is proud of their salvation.

Where presumption, he thinks to himself, I'm saved because I'm in the elect. And because I'm in the elect, I don't need to do anything. Because God will do it for me.

[12 : 47] And the result is that presumption, he presumes that he will make it to the celestial city one way or another without the need to keep. And for that reason, presumption, he becomes proud of his salvation.

My friend, presumption is the kind of person, he's the kind of person who has this superiority, this self-importance and self-righteousness about him because of his salvation.

But you know, there's nothing more contradictory to the cross than a proud Christian. There's nothing more contradictory to the cross than a proud Christian.

Because the cross, my friend, it's the greatest act of love and humiliation ever seen in the history of this world. Where the Son of God humbled himself.

He humiliated himself. All the way from the crown of glory to the cradle in Bethlehem. All the way down, down, down to the cross of Calvary. And he did it all out of love.

[13 : 53] Out of love for lost, hell-deserving sinners like you and me. But presumption, he lived in contradiction to the cross. Because presumption was a proud Christian.

Presumption was a proud Christian. But then we're told that despite Christian pointing out all these difficulties and distractions and dangers in the Christian life, simple sloth and presumption, we're told, they laid down to sleep.

Again. Do you know in his book, Practical Religion, my good friend, J.C. Ryle, he has this chapter called Self-Inquiry.

And it's a brilliant book. I'd encourage you to read Practical Religion. But in the chapter Self-Inquiry, J.C. Ryle says that Christians need to undergo self-inquiry.

They need to undergo self-examination. And Ryle, he writes, he says, Paul often revisited the churches to see how they were getting on.

[14 : 58] And he asks all these questions. Were they continuing steadfast in the faith? Were they growing in grace? Were they going forward or standing still? Were they prospering or falling away?

And, you know, in the same way, my friend, we need to be examining ourselves daily. We need to ensure that we keep persevering to the end. Because, you know, there are many who come to the cross but don't continue to the crown at the celestial city.

And they go by the name of simple sloth and presumption. In fact, when we come to book two of the pilgrim's progress, with Christiana and her children making the same journey, they also encounter simple sloth and presumption.

But this time they're not sleeping. They're dead. Simple sloth and presumption are dead.

My friend, after the cross, the road to the celestial city is filled with dangers, distractions and difficulties for the Christian life. After the cross, there will be hazards and there will be hypocrites.

[16 : 12] Which is what we see secondly. Hypocrites. Hypocrites. You know, Christian, he was troubled by the hazards of simple sloth and presumption.

He was troubled that they could be so careless when it came to the dangers and distractions and difficulties of the Christian life. But we're told that as Christian was troubled, he saw two men tumbling over the wall onto the narrow way.

And they hurried to catch up with him. The name of one was Formalist. The name of the other was Hypocrisy. And Christian asked them, Where have you come from?

And where are you going? And they responded by saying, We were born in the land of vainglory. And we're going to Mount Zion to receive praise. But having witnessed Formalist and Hypocrisy, having witnessed that they crawled and clambered over the wall onto the king's highway, Christian asks them, Why didn't you enter at the wicked gate?

Do you not know that it's written? It's written in John chapter 10. He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

[17 : 27] But Formalist and Hypocrisy, they just excuse themselves by claiming that the wicked gate, well, it's too far away. And that they'd prefer to take a shortcut and just climb over the wall.

But, asks Christian, Will it not be counted as a trespass against the Lord of the celestial city, to which we are going? And will that not be a violation of his revealed will?

But Formalist and Hypocrisy, they just play down the seriousness and the severity of their actions. And they say to Christian, Don't you worry about that. Where we come from, this form of entry into the celestial city has been a long established custom and an accepted route for over a thousand years.

And of course, what Bunyan is reminding us is that in order to keep persevering to the end, we must beware of Formalism and Hypocrisy.

In order to keep persevering to the end, we must beware of Formalism and Hypocrisy. Because the thing is, Formalist and Hypocrisy were just like the Pharisees.

[18 : 39] And it was Jesus who said of the Pharisees, You honour me with your lips, but your heart is far from me. You honour me with your lips, but your heart is far from me.

And you know, Formalist and Hypocrisy, they were actually the complete opposite to Simple Sloth and Presumption. Because Simple Sloth and Presumption, they were careless when it came to the dangers and distractions and difficulties of the Christian life.

But Formalist and Hypocrisy, you could say that they were very careful when it came to the dangers, distractions and difficulties of the Christian life. In fact, they were so careful that they were convinced that their carefulness would grant them access into the Celestial City.

So let's consider these hypocrites in turn. First of all, Formalist. As Paul describes in his second letter to Timothy, he says, Formalist had a form of godliness, but denied its power.

Formalist had a form of godliness, but denied its power. Formalist thought that if I live like a Christian, and if I look like a Christian, and if I use the language of a Christian, then God will love me as a Christian.

[19 : 59] Formalist thought that he would reach the Celestial City and gain entrance into the King's Palace by what he had done, not by what Jesus had done for him.

Formalist thought that if he did the right things, and said the right things, and attended the right meetings, and looked the part, that God would somehow accept him.

Formalist thought that if he read his Bible, and prayed his prayers, and performed his practices, and tithed his income, and followed all the rules, and regulations, and rituals of his religion, that he would be safe at last.

And you know, it was actually during the 19th century, while he was ministered in St George's Free Church in Edinburgh, that Alexander White, he gave a series of lectures on the characters in the Pilgrim's Progress.

And the lectures of Alexander White, they've been published in a series of volumes called Bunyan's Character. They're called Bunyan's Characters. And I'd encourage you to read them, if you can, because Alexander White, he describes Bunyan's characters so vividly.

[21 : 08] It's brilliant to read. When it comes to Formalist, Alexander White, he says something quite striking. He describes what Formalist is like.

He says, Look at the religious formalist at family worship, with his household gathered round him, all in his own image. He would not on any account let his family break up any night without the habitual duty.

He has a severe method in his religious duties that nothing is ever allowed to disarrange or in any way interfere with it. As the hour strikes, the big Bible is brought out.

He opens where he left off last night. He reads the regulation chapter. He leads the singing in the regulation psalm. And then, as from a book, he repeats his regulation prayer.

But he never says a word to show that he either sees or feels what he reads and his household break up without an idea in their heads or an affection in their heart.

[22 : 13] Formalist, he says, then comes to church and he goes through public worship in the same wooden way and he sits at the Lord's table in the same formal and ceremonious manner.

He has eyes of glass and hands of wood and a heart without either blood or motion in it. All his religion, he says, is a religion of rites and ceremonies without any sense or substance.

My friend, Formalist, had a form of godliness but denied its power. And Alexander White, he then says, a formalist is not yet a hypocrite, although he is well on the way to becoming a hypocrite.

Because when it came to hypocrisy, his companion, he was only out to disguise his identity and to deceive other people. Because that's what a hypocrite does.

In fact, that's what the word hypocrite means. It comes from the ancient Greek, meaning an actor, where the actor would put a mask over his face in order to disguise his true identity.

[23 : 23] And by disguising his identity, the actor could assume a different character, a different conduct, and even a different conversation. He could disguise himself in such a way so as to deceive others.

And that's the kind of Persian hypocrisy was. He was a hypocrite. He disguised his true identity and he deceived others by his Christian character, conduct, and conversation.

You know, in his pictures from Pilgrim's Progress, Spurgeon writes, he says, hypocrisy was the bigger rogue of the two, for he had not yet any belief in the matter at all.

Formalist had perhaps some measure of faith of a certain sort. He thought there might be something in forms and ceremonies. But hypocrisy said in his heart, ah, it is all a pretty story, but then it is a very respectable story.

And if I pretend to believe it, people will think the better of me for it. But you know, what revealed his hypocrisy was when Christian questioned him.

[24 : 36] Because like every hypocrite, he ignored the log in his own eye and highlighted and indicated the speck in Christian's eye. Because when Christian asked about the way hypocrisy had entered the king's highway, he arrogantly responded by saying, he said, what does it matter how we got in?

If we're in, we're in. You came by the wicked gate, we came over the wall, but now we're in the same position, so what does it matter? How is your condition better than ours?

And you know, that's always the attitude of a hypocrite. Do you think you're better than me? Do you think you're more godly than me? Do you think you're more holy than me?

Do you think you're more righteous than me? Do you think you're more important than me? Because you know, my friend, the heart of a hypocrite is that no one can do better than me. That's how a hypocrite thinks.

No one can do better than me. Because it's all about the outward appearance. It's all about the disguise of their Christian character, conduct, and conversation. It's all about deceiving other people.

[25 : 45] hill. But as we see with these men, it all comes to an abrupt end at the foot of a hill. That's what we see lastly.

A hill. As we said, after the cross, the road to the celestial city is filled with dangers, distractions, and difficulties. After the cross, there will be hazards, hypocrites, and a hill.

And that's what we're seeing lastly. A hill. Because we read that Christian formalist and hypocrisy, they went on until they came to the foot of a hill where there were three paths.

The middle path went straight uphill, and it was called difficulty. Then the path to the left was called danger, and the path to the right was called destruction.

And as Christian formalist and hypocrisy, as they stood at the crossroads, they decided to part company and go their separate ways. And so Christian, he goes forward, he goes up the hill, he goes along the path called difficulty.

[26 : 55] Then we're not really told which way formalist and hypocrisy went, but I would guess that formalist turned left, and he went on to the path towards danger, which led into a deep, dark forest.

While hypocrisy, he turned right onto the path towards destruction, which led, as we're told, into a field full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell and rose no more.

And you know, whether they turned to danger or destruction, what Jesus said about hypocrites is true. they received their reward.

Danger and destruction. They received their reward. But as Christian moved forward up this hill called difficulty, Bunyan gives us one of his little poems.

He says, the hill though high I covet to ascend. The difficulty will not me offend, for I perceive the way to life lies here. Come pluck up heart, it's neither faint nor fear.

[28 : 05] Better though difficult, the right way to go, than wrong though easy, where the end is woe. We're then told that about halfway up the hill, Christian comes to a place that is pleasant.

It's an arbor. It's a place of refuge and it's a place that the Lord of the hill had made for the refreshment of weary travellers. And we're told that it was there that Christian he sat down to rest and he pulls the scroll of assurance out of his pocket and he begins to read it.

And we're also told that he sits and he looks at his cloak of righteousness that he was given at the cross. But then after a little while we're told that Christian fell asleep and while he slept that scroll of assurance that was in his hand it fell out and he lost it.

Of course there's nothing wrong with Christian taking rest that's why the arbor was there but it seems that for a moment Christian eased off in his perseverance and the result was that Christian became comfortable and complacent and when Christian became comfortable and complacent he lost his assurance and it's then that he actually meets the last two characters these characters that are reminders to us that after the cross the road to the celestial city is filled with dangerous distractions and difficulties because we're told that when Christian woke up from his sleep he just hurried straight to the top of the hill until he met two men Timorous and Mistrust and they were running in the opposite direction and as you'd expect Christian he asks them well what's wrong why are you running the wrong way to which Timorous replied the further we go the more danger we meet with therefore we're going back the further we go the more danger we meet with therefore we're going back and you know it was on hearing the testimonies of Timorous and Mistrust that Christian began to question he began to question his own safety and his own security he began to ease off his perseverance and lose sight of his assurance and you know my friend when we're tempted to turn back like Timorous and Mistrust were you know we need to realise that the dangers and the difficulties and distractions that we're going to meet with we need to look at them the way

Christian looked at them we need to be like Christian and think about what it actually means to go back because we read that Christian responded to Timorous and Mistrust by saying if I go back to my own country that is prepared for fire and brimstone I shall certainly perish there if I can get to the celestial city I am sure to be in safety there I must venture forward he says because to go back is nothing but death to go forward is the fear of death and life everlasting beyond it and so Christian comes to the conclusion I will yet go forward I will yet go forward and you know it was having concluded that it was better for him to persevere and to go forward despite all these dangers and distractions and difficulties in the Christian life it was then that Christian realised that he had lost that scroll of assurance my friend it was when

[31 : 55] Christian encountered these hazards and hypocrites and a hill that he eased off his perseverance and for a moment he lost sight of his assurance but we're told that Christian he went back to the armour he went back to find his assurance he went back to the place where he had lost sight of his assurance and you know my friend that's what we need to do if we lose sight of our assurance we need to first of all remind ourselves that it's better to go forward and to persevere despite all these dangers and difficulties and distractions of the Christian life it's better to go forward than to give up and go back and you know my friend if we do lose sight of our assurance we must go back to where we found it because we might have lost sight of we might lose sight of our assurance due to sin or sickness or suffering or sorrow but in order to to persevere to order to move forward like Christian we must go back to where we lost sight of our assurance we must think about what it was that caused us to lose sight of our assurance to lose sight of all these covenant promises that are given to us in God's word and of course sometimes to go back in our mind to these things can be painful as it was for Christian because we're told that thus Christian went back till he came again to the arbor and there he sat and slept bewailing his his sinful sleep saying oh wretched man that I am that I should sleep in the daytime that I should sleep in the midst of difficulty that I should so indulge myself as to use that rest for ease to my flesh which the Lord of the hill hath builded only for the relief of the spirits of pilgrims how many steps have I taken in vain and yet despite his mistake and his mistrust

Christian was taught he was taught that after the cross the road to the celestial city is filled with dangers distractions and difficulties for the Christian life after he was taught that after the cross there will be hazards and hypocrites and a hill but he was also taught you must keep persevering to the end you must keep persevering to the end you must as Paul encouraged the Thessalonians that we read earlier on we must not sleep as others do but let us keep awake and be sober for those who sleep sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night but since we belong to the day let us be sober having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation we must keep persevering to the end you know the well known words of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones which he used to often say to everyone he met he would say to them keep on keeping on keep on keeping on my friend we must keep persevering to the end because that's what

Christian did this section concludes with the words thus Christian went on his way but while he was bewailing his unhappy mistake he lifted up his eyes and behold there was a very stately palace before him and the name of which was beautiful and it stood just by the highway side and God willing next Lord's Day will walk with Christian as he enters the palace called beautiful and may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray our heavenly father we give thanks to thee that that are the one who promises to keep us and we know that we cannot keep ourselves but Lord help us day by day to look away from self and to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus and to run this race with patience looking to Jesus as the author and the finisher of our faith help us Lord to keep pressing on towards the prize of the high call of God in Christ Jesus help us to keep pushing and striving to keep looking and listening to keep loving Jesus and living for Jesus knowing that he is the one who promises to keep our going out and our coming in from this time forth and even forevermore

Lord keep us even in the week that lies ahead that whatever is before us whatever providence or whatever experience is in our cup whether it is sin, sickness suffering or sorrow that thou Lord wouldst be gracious to us that we would be assured that the word one who is with us on the way and the one who promises never to leave us and never to forsake us go before us then we pray take away our iniquity and receive us graciously for Jesus sake Amen we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 36 Psalm 36 in the Scottish Psalter and we're going to sing from the verse marked 5 down to the verse marked 11 Psalm 36 in the Scottish Psalter from verse 5 a psalm that reminds us that the Lord is the one who keeps us he preserves us according to his grace and mercy thy mercy Lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice is like mountains great thy judgments deep as floods

Lord thou preservest man and beast how precious is thy grace therefore in shadow of thy wings men's sons their trust shall place and we'll sing on down to the verse marked 11 to God's praise thy mercy Lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach thy clouds thy justice is like mountains thy coexistence seize upon thyME Lord truth Lord thy love■■■ we start us upon our me our precious gifts thy grace therefore in

[39 : 20] The shadow of thy wings, then sons their trots shall blaze.

May with the kindness of thy heart shall be well satisfied.

From where I saw thy pleasures I will take to them provide.

Because all life hath blinded pure, remains the Lord with me.

Under the purest light of thine, we clearly life shall see.

[40 : 42] Thy loving kindness unto them, continue that we know.

And still on the end of right in heart, thy righteousness bestow.

Let not the fields of cruel pride come out against me stand.

And let me not remove the deep, nor find a wicked time.

Let not the fields of cruel pride come out against me stand. Let not the fields of cruel pride come out against me stand.