

June 16, 2019

# What is an Experimental Christian?

Intro to Psalm 119

## Introduction

This morning we are beginning a new expositional series on Psalm 119. The theme that we will be exploring in Psalm 119 is what the Reformers and the Puritans called *experimental christianity*. We will unpack that phrase as we proceed. But for now, first things first. Why are we starting a series on Psalm 119?

## The greatest need of the hour

It is my conviction that what our age needs *most* at this present hour is to know what a Christian *is*. It's not just that the world needs to know what a Christian *is*, that is a given, but the church needs to see what a Christian is. How would you answer that question? What is a Christian? Often times our problem is that we are always reducing, always shrinking, always giving a very small answer. "Well a Christian," we say, "is a person who has been born again by the sovereign and free grace of God. A Christian is one whose sins have been washed away, one who has Christ's righteousness imputed to Him." All those things are true. But if that is all we say a Christian *is*, we have fallen grossly short of how the Bible defines a Christian. Or worse we can fall into the error of defining a Christian *merely* by what a person believes: "...a Christian is one who believes *everything* the Bible says." Christianity cannot be reduced to mere doctrinal knowledge or the affirmation that certain propositions found in the Bible are true. If that were the case, Satan would be a Christian. Satan is more of a Calvinist than anyone in this room. Of course it's true that we must believe certain propositional statements in order to be a Christian. But a Christian cannot be reduced to that.

## What is a Christian?

No, a Christian is that most blessed soul that has come into a vital union with the Living God. Chosen by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, sealed by God the Spirit in order that we might live now and for all eternity in the very presence of God. That's what was lost in the fall. Through Adam we lost our communion and fellowship with the Lord of glory. But through Christ, that is what has been restored. "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (**John 17:3**). That is a Christian. One who been brought into an intimacy, and a personal communion with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

## Surrendering to far less

But we forget that don't we? Christians all too often settle for far less. Some of you have taken these truths found in Scripture and have treated them as *mere* propositions, doing your best to live by them, even praying for God to help you. But this is an entirely inadequate position. That's not the essence of Christianity. The essence of Christianity is "a life that is lived with Him, in the consciousness of His presence."<sup>1</sup>

Others of you have completely surrendered to the mundane. Life is busy. Bills must be paid. Endless routine has taken over and now you've "come into a state in which you expect nothing to happen."<sup>2</sup> Lloyd-Jones once said "Possibly one of the most devastating things that can happen to us as Christians is that we cease to expect anything to happen."<sup>3</sup> This is what Satan labors for in your life. If he can't stop you from being a Christian, he will whisper to you that this is all there is. This is as good as it gets.

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<sup>1</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Living Water: Studies in John 4*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2009), pg. 589

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, pg. 13

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

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 "Our danger was to be so afraid of wrong experiences or to be so absorbed in our own routine and activities that we look for nothing beyond the ordinary." Iain Murray, *D.M. Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 475-476

### More to be tasted, more to be seen

But that is a lie. Don't you know dear believer that there is more. I don't care how long you have been a Christian, or how many failures you have had since becoming a Christian, there is more. There is more of Christ to be tasted and seen. Not merely in propositional truth, put in personal presence. There is a subjective element to Christianity. Not subjective in the sense of "something may be true to you but not to me" but subjective in the *experiential* sense. You can still have fresh meetings with the Living Spirit of God. In fact, the best meetings are still before you, not behind. You still have great surprises that await you. That's what Paul's great hope was: "that I may know him...not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (**Philippians 3:10, 12**). Paul anticipated more of the presence of God in his life. Are you open to that possibility in your own life?

### The experimental Christian of Psalm 119

So then what does this have to do with Psalm 119? Everything. Psalm 119 is *the* portrait of our whole Christian experience. One divine said that Psalm 119 is "the ordinary and serious breathing of my soul."<sup>4</sup> Or as another has said "Every line in Psalm 119 is an expression of the desire that God has placed in every human heart—the desire to know and be known by the Lord of the universe."<sup>5</sup>

As we read Psalm 119 here in a moment, this is what I would ask you focus on. Consider that Psalm 119 shows you the *real you* in all your spots and stains, and the *ideal you* one who is walking in the full confidence of a redeemed life. Psalm 119 is not a *prescription* of how you get right with God, it is a *picture* of those who have been made right with God. Each section represents a different theme or season of the Christian life. Sometimes the Psalmist reaches the very

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<sup>4</sup> Halyburton quoted in Charles Bridges', *Psalm 119: An Exposition*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2002), pg. x

<sup>5</sup> Gene Cunningham, *Psalm 119: The Diary of a Captive*, (USA.,: Basic Training Bible Ministries, 2009), pg. 7

heights of the mountains, soaring in spiritual ecstasy. Other times the Psalmist is digging the hole of his own grave in utter despair. But regardless of which season we find the Psalmist in, throughout all of it, we find him living in the presence of God. Psalm 119 is the diary of an experimental Christian.

## ● Read Psalm 119

### Prayer

“Lord please bless Your Word to our hearing. We ask that you would create faith in our hearts now, for ‘...faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.’<sup>6</sup> As the Psalmist sought to live in before your face, so we Lord desire your presence to be with us now. Show us Lord what it means to draw nearer to you, in whatever season we are in. Free our minds with the lie that there is no greater experience of You to be had. Convict us of truth that Jesus came to give us life and to give it abundantly.<sup>7</sup> Show us how this Psalm is a portrait of that type of life no matter what season we are in. May it be the new song of our souls for the rest of our lives. Amen.”

### *The Big Idea...*

An experimental Christian, whether he be in great despair or glorious delight, desires to live in the presence of God

☆ What is an Experimental Christian?

☆ The Experimental Christian of Psalm 119

☆ The Experimental Christ of Psalm 119

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>7</sup> John 10:10

## I. What is an Experimental Christian?

### Defining our terms

This is a term that the Reformers and the Puritans used quite frequently. Experimental simply means “to try, prove, or test.”<sup>8</sup> An experimental Christian is one who has their thoughts and affections and choices tested or proved against Scripture. If it helps, know that *experimental* is interchangeable with the word *experiential*. As one author has said “Experimental Christianity values genuine spiritual experience...in the act of preaching [the] goal is not just to pass out information or knowledge but that to desire to experience and *feel* the truth... Yes, we champion sound doctrine...but true Experimental Christianity cultivates a burning zeal for the honor of Christ and the fame of his name...This desire is at the heart of Experimental Christianity.”<sup>9</sup>

### Experimental husbands

Maybe I can get at this definition with a couple examples. What would an experimental *husband* look like? He would be a husband who doesn't *merely* possess the notions of marriage in his head, but they are expressed in his heart and in his hands. Although imperfectly, he puts to practice by experience his wedding vows. He seeks to comfort his wife, to honor her, to love her in sickness and health, forsaking all others, keeping himself only for her as long as he lives. A nominal husband on the other hand is completely passive towards his wife. The ring is on his finger, but it doesn't mean much at all, other than a legal contract has been made. The marriage vows are not experienced in the heart. He doesn't allow his vows to test or inform his affections and behaviors. He's nominal. This is what the Lord accused His people of in **Isaiah 29:13** “... this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me...”

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<sup>8</sup> Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2018), pg. 24

<sup>9</sup> Source: [http://www.reformationtheology.com/2009/06/explaining\\_experiential\\_chris.php](http://www.reformationtheology.com/2009/06/explaining_experiential_chris.php)  
Accessed June 16, 2019

## The kingdom of God *is*

But there are other ways we can fail to be experimental Christians. We can be entirely intellectual or doctrinal, and reduce our Christianity into mere *words*. But Christianity is more than mere *words*. **1 Corinthians 4:20** says “For the kingdom of God does not consist in *words* but in power.” On the other hand, we can reduce our Christianity to moralism where we are only concerned with external behavior. But Christianity is more than mere *conduct*. **Romans 14:17** says “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>10</sup>

## David Brainerd

David Brainerd the missionary to the Indians in the 18th century was an experimental Christian. This is what he wrote in one of the last entries in his diary: “This day I saw clearly that I should never be happy, yea, that God Himself could not make me happy, unless I could be in a capacity to “please and glorify Him forever.” Take away this and admit me into all the fine havens that can be conceived of by men or angels, and I should still be miserable forever... Oh, to love and praise God more, to please Him forever! This my soul panted

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<sup>10</sup> “Real religion is more than notions in the mind or actions in the body. Intellectualism makes Christianity into mere words or ideas. Moralism would make religion into a matter of good conduct. If we reduce Christianity to ideas and behavior, we cut the heart out of the faith. Christianity is more than words... “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1 Cor. 4:19-20). It’s more than external behavior... “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). The kingdom consists of the righteousness of Christ and the powerful work of the Spirit producing effects within our souls.” Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2018), pg. 55

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 “...unless our religion is experiential, we will perish, not because experience itself saves, but because the Christ who saves sinners must be *experienced personally* as the foundation upon which our eternal hope is built.” Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, (Webster, NY,: Evangelical Press USA, 2006), pg.426

after and even now pants for while I write. Oh, that God would be glorified in the whole earth.”<sup>11</sup>

That’s our **first point**. An experimental Christian, as Henry Scougal said, is the life of God in the soul of man. An experimental Christians brings the Word of God to bear on all the faculties of his soul. He is the experiment in which the Word of God tests him, tries him, proves him.

## II. The Experimental Christian of Psalm 119

### The attributes of Psalm 119

So what are the features of Psalm 119 that make it the ideal place to turn to for experimental Christianity? **First**, we see the unique form that it takes. There are twenty-two sections in Psalm 119, one section for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The 8 verses in each section begin with that corresponding letter. It’s an alphabetic acrostic. Which is why the church has always called this Psalm the A - Z of the Christian life.<sup>12</sup>

**Secondly**, this Psalm is ideal for promoting experimental Christianity because each section is thematic. It covers all the seasons, all the circumstances of the Christian life. Do you want to understand why you feel so out of place in this world? Turn to v.17-24. Do you need words for your sorrow? Turn to v. 81-88. Do you want to see how your faith affects the rest of the church? Turn to v.73-80. Psalm 119 tells you who you are, and what you will face in this life. It tells you things about yourself that you don’t even know yet.

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<sup>11</sup> Ian Hamilton, *What is Experiential Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), pg. 7

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 “The Holy Scriptures do everywhere place religion very much in the affections; such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion and zeal.” Jonathan Edwards, quoted in Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2018), pg. 55

<sup>12</sup> Charles Spurgeon calls Psalm 119 “The Golden Alphabet”

**Thirdly**, this Psalm is ideal for promoting experimental Christianity because it's supreme focus is on the Word of God. Out of the 176 verses, only four verses don't mention the Word of God.<sup>13</sup> The Psalmist describes the Word under different terms like law or testimony or precept, or statute or rules, or judgments (et. al.) but all these terms are essentially synonymous. The point is that Psalm 119 is teaching us that "the only thing that can sustain any nation (or church, or family) or individual is the Word of God."<sup>14</sup> It *alone* is your only light when you pass through the valley of the shadow of death. **v.114** "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." And the Word *alone* is what will keep you bringing all glory to God, when you are made to lie down in green pastures and led besides still waters. **v.164** "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules."

**Fourthly**, this Psalm is ideal for promoting experimental Christianity because it is essentially one long prayer. Why does prayer decline in the life of a Christian? Why does prayer decline in your life? Prayer declines when you stop believing that you can truly know and enjoy God.<sup>15</sup> Prayer declines when you stop believing that you can enter into *His* presence. The psalmist teaches us not only that we can still experience God's presence, but that communion with Him in prayer is more valuable than our sleep. **v.62** "At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules."

### **The three elements of war**

Joel Beeke compares experimental Christianity to fighting in a war. We must remember three things if we are to fight in a war: "...**first**, how the battle ought to go *ideally* with the tactics you have been taught; **second**, how the battle *really* is going (which is often quite different from the ideal, as wars are bloody

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<sup>13</sup> J. Stephen Yuille, *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 3

<sup>14</sup> Gene Cunningham, *Psalm 119: The Diary of a Captive*, (USA.,: Basic Training Bible Ministries, 2009), pg. 6

<sup>15</sup> Iain Murray, *D.M. Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 700

and seldom go the way that is expected); and **third**, the ultimate goal [which is victory].”<sup>16</sup> So three crucial elements: 1) How things *ought* to go. 2) How things *do* go. 3) How things will *ultimately* go. This is exactly what we see in Psalm 119.

### **Psalm 119: How things *ought* to go**

First we see how things *ought* to go in the Christian life.

The experimental Christian counts God as his all-surpassing treasure, v. 57 “The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words.”

His passion is to build up the church of God v.79 “Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies.”

He constantly feeds of of the Word of God v.97 “Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.”

He mourns that God’s glory is so ignored in the world. v.136 “My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.”

Psalm 119 is going to give us a picture again and again of how things *ought* to go in the Christian life.<sup>17</sup>

### **Psalm 119: How things *do* go**

But secondly, Psalm 119 is also concerned with showing us how things *do* go in the Christian life.

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<sup>16</sup> Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2018), pg. 55

<sup>17</sup> This is how the NT speaks to us as well. **Romans 8:5** “...those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit.”

The experimental Christian faces severe affliction in this life. v.143  
 “Trouble and anguish have found me out...”

He will battle continual conflict with indwelling sin v.176 “I have gone  
 astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant.”

He mourns over what He sees v.28 “My soul melts away for sorrow...”

He realizes he has no strength *in himself* to perform any of God’s law. v.  
 25 “My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!”

Psalm 119 is going to show us how things do *go*. It will show you the trials and  
 tribulations of this life, and all the spots and stains of your sin.<sup>18</sup>

### **Psalm 119: How things will *ultimately* go**

But thirdly, Psalm 119 shows us how things will *ultimately* go in the  
 Christian life.

The experimental Christian trusts that God will finally transform him. v.  
 33 “Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to  
 the end.”

He knows that this present darkness will not last forever. v.50 “This is  
 my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.”<sup>19</sup>

Psalm 119 is going to show us how things will *ultimately* go. It is like finding the  
 personal correspondence of a great general. Sure, we see his defeats, we see his

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<sup>18</sup> This is how the NT speaks to us as well. **Romans 7:19** “For I do not do the good that I want,  
 but the evil I do not what is what I keep on doing.”

<sup>19</sup> cf. v.116

blunders, we see his failures. But we have the greater record of history. We see that his plan, his struggle was ultimately victorious.

That's our **second point**. Psalm 119 is *the* portrait of our whole Christian experience. Psalm 119 is a picture of your own heart dear Christian.

### III. The Experimental Christ of Psalm 119

#### Learning your abc's

Imagine growing up as Hebrew child before the coming of Christ. Every night at dinner, your parents taught you to memorize Psalm 119 alongside of the alphabet. As you learned each letter, you were given 8 corresponding verses. 8 "a" verses, 8 "b" verses, 8 "c" verses if you will. With each verse, the importance of the Word of God was drilled into your heart 176 times. Each verse lifting up the Word, praising the Word, commending the Word, celebrating the Word. Uncompromisingly your parents taught you that the most important thing in life is the Word of God. It was pressed upon your heart that no matter what horrible circumstances find your self in, run to the Word, rest in the Word, trust in the Word.

#### The Living Word

And then you start hearing reports of this Man who claims to be *the Word itself*. In fact, He claims to be *the Living Word*. "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (**John 1:1-2, 14**).

And then it hits you, Psalm 119 with all it's talk about the Word, was really preparing you to meet *the Word*, Jesus *Himself*. Psalm 119 is the A to Z of the Christian life, and that is what Jesus said about Himself "I am the Alpha

and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (**Revelation 22:13**). “Psalm 119 is a handbook on what he meant when He said that; everything the Word of God *is* Jesus Christ is. Everything the Word of God promises is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.”<sup>20</sup>

When Psalm **119:105** tells us “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a *light* to my path” it is directing us to *light incarnate*. Jesus said “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**).

When Psalm **119:160** says “The sum of your word is *truth*,” it is directing our hearts to Him who said “I am the way, and *the truth*, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

In the very last verse of Psalm 119, the Psalmist cries out: “I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek your servant.” It is Jesus who answers that cry. “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost<sup>21</sup>...I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (**John 10:11**). Oh what poetic beauty. Psalm 119 at every turn points us to Christ.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gene Cunningham, *Psalm 119: The Diary of a Captive*, (USA.: Basic Training Bible Ministries, 2009), pg. 8

<sup>21</sup> Luke 19:10

<sup>22</sup> John Frame rightly argues that THE SPEECH OF GOD HAS DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. “These include righteousness (Ps. 119:7), faithfulness (119:86), wonderfulness (119:129), uprightness (119:137), purity (119:40), truth (119:142; John 17:17), eternity (Ps. 119:89, 160), omnipotence (Gen. 18:14; Isa. 55:11; Luke 1:37) perfection (Ps. 19:7ff). These attributes are not merely attributes of something in creation, such as human faithfulness, righteousness, or truth. Clearly, in context these passages are saying that the words of God are different from merely human words because they embody the unique qualities of God’s own nature.” John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2010), pg. 66-67 (Also see how Frame argues that THE WORD OF GOD IS AN OBJECT OF WORSHIP on pg.67-68)

Hand in hand we shall take,  
 And joy and bliss shall we make;  
 For the devil of hell doth man forsake,  
 And God's own Son is made our mate.

A child is born in the midst of man,  
 And in that child there was no sin;  
 That child is God, that child is man,  
 And in that Child our life began.

...

Sinful man, be blithe and bold,  
 For heaven is both bought and sold—  
 Every last foot.  
 Come to Christ; your peace is told;  
 For you he gave a hundredfold,  
 His life for your salvation.

Hand in hand then let us take,  
 As joy and bliss we make;  
 For the devil of hell doth man forsake,  
 And God's own Son is made our mate.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Hand in Hand We Shall Take" in Leland Ryken's *The Soul in Paraphrase*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2018), pg. 36

That's our **third point**. It's not *merely* the Word that we find in Psalm 119. There's no such thing as *merely* Word. When we encounter the Word of God in Psalm 119, we encounter Christ *the Word* Himself.<sup>24</sup>

## Application

I'm hoping to ask 4 questions with each of these messages during this series.

- 1) What kind of a Word has God given us?
- 2) What kind of a world do we live in?
- 3) What kind of a church should we want?
- 4) What kind of Savior do we need?<sup>25</sup>

### 1. What kind of a Word has God given us?

Why is the great theme of Psalm 119 the Word of God? Because it is through God's Word we come into His very presence.<sup>26</sup> And this is the truth we must recover in our day. As one author has said that "we are like people who have been left a great fortune in a will, but we don't seem to realize it. It seems so good to be true. We've been so accustomed to poverty and...to struggling to make end's meet, that though we have been told we've been left a fortune, we go

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<sup>24</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2010), pg. 68

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Don't mishear me. I'm not saying that Jesus replaces the Word. I'm saying Jesus is the Word. He is the promise hidden in Psalm 119. He is everything that you need in this life. That's why Psalm 119 is so vital to study, and meditate and memorize. Because in it, we discover the Christ who will walk with us in all our affliction, all our sorrow, et. al.

<sup>25</sup> With the exception of the first question, the last three are from Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, Preaching the Word Series*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2014), pg. 17-23

<sup>26</sup> God doesn't reveal *mere* information in His Word, He reveals Himself. John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2010), pg. 41. I think the way I worded this avoids the error that Frame alludes to.

on living as though nothing has happened at all.”<sup>27</sup> Or to use a different analogy, it’s like you’ve been given the musical genius of Beethoven but you never sit down at the piano. Or you have discovered the cure to cancer, but you use your notes to start a fire. That’s the kind of Word that God has given us. It is a vast fortune. It is pure genius. It is the cure to all your sicknesses. Are you tapping into it? Or are you acting as though it is nothing special at all. Oh dear saint, press into the Word of God. Start a new chapter in your life. As we go through Psalm 119, pursue the Word as the Psalmist shows you.

## 2. What kind of a world do we live in?

In 1993, Spin magazine interviewed Eddie Vedder in the early days of Pearl Jam. He was upset because prior to his fame, he and the rest of the band played in very small venues, and that is what he preferred. And now that they were making it big, they started playing before 10’s of thousands of people. He told the interviewer right before one of these big show with his brow furrowed. “...I may be shy about some things, but not when it comes to the music...how can you have a *religious experience* watching a band in a place this size?”<sup>28</sup> How fascinating. A atheist looking for a religious experience. The truth is, that is what every human being longs for. That is what we were made for. A supernatural experience. An experience in which our souls come into personal contact with the Living God. That brings us to our third question.

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<sup>27</sup> “We seem to be like people who have received an invitation to attend a great banquet. But there we are standing out in the street, in the cold and in the rain. Looking occasionally through the window at the bright lights within and all the wonderful things that have been prepared and yet remaining on the street saying “isn’t it wonderful, mustn’t it be wonderful to be in there and enjoying all of that and we’ve nothing to do but walk in through the door. But we remain outside in a kind of unbelief.” Source <https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons-online/ephesians-3-18-19/experimental-christianity/> Accessed June 14, 2019

<sup>28</sup> Source: <https://www.spin.com/featured/pearl-jam-1993-eddie-vedder-interview-cover-story/> Accessed June 16, 2019

### 3. What kind of a church should we want?

We should want a church that has the “religious experiences” found in Psalm 119. Lloyd-Jones said the same thing in his day. “What the church needs to do most of all is “to begin herself to live the Christian life. If she did that, men and women would be crowding into our buildings. They would say, ‘What is the secret of this?’”<sup>29</sup> What is the secret of this? It is experimental Christianity. Dear believer, isn’t that what you long for? Do you know how much you could change the culture of the church if you started consistently living like the Psalmist did? Empowered by the Word of God. Enflamed by the Spirit of God. Engulfed in the love of God. Experimental Christians change the world. And this miracle can happen to you whether you are healthy or sick, whether you are young or old. Profound experiences of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not reserved for certain special people.<sup>30</sup> Just look in your Bibles, God always picks ordinary nobodies. He chose a nobody teenager named Mary; He chose the unnamed Samaritan adulterous woman at the well; He chose Gideon who was from the smallest family in the smallest tribe; most of Jesus’s own disciples were blue collar ignorant fisherman. Yet what do all these ordinary nobodies have in common? They all had profound experiences with the Living God.

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<sup>29</sup> quoted in Ryan McGraw’s *Is the Trinity Practical*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016)

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 “Why are the masses of the people outside the church? I do not hesitate to say that the reason is that they fail to see anything that attracts them, anything that creates within them a desire to receive what we have...” Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Living Water: Studies in John 4*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2009), pg. 8; also see Iain Murray, *D.M. Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 473

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 Lloyd-Jones would say in another place that the danger in the church today is that “deadness [is] more common than excitement.” Iain Murray, *D.M. Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 486

<sup>30</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Living Water: Studies in John 4*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2009), pg. 11

#### 4. What kind of Savior do we need?

First and foremost we need a Savior who will give us the profound experience of forgiveness of sins. If you are here this morning and have not experienced forgiveness by Christ, you have no greater need. “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.”<sup>31</sup> That is why Jesus came. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.”<sup>32</sup> Do you want this forgiveness? Do you want to be clean? Do you want to be free from guilt and condemnation? Then trust Jesus Christ. “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>33</sup>

As believers, we need a Savior who does more than forgive our sins. We need a Savior who personally and profoundly enters into all the experiences of our lives. And that is the kind of Savior that we have. That’s what Psalm 119 is going to teach us. The first idea you must rid yourself of is the idea is that all you have right now of Jesus is all you’ll get in this life. That’s worldly thinking. There’s no arrival point in the Christian life, where you level out, and you enter into some sort of maintenance mode. “That is religion—it is not Christianity.”<sup>34</sup> Psalm 119, and the entire Bible always holds out the prospect of meeting Christ in some new and dynamic way. Jesus said “I came that they may have life and have it *abundantly*” (**John 10:10**). Does that describe your life? If not my friends, then know that there is so much more. Don’t reduce the gospel. The life of a Christian is not *mere* forgiveness of sins. It is opening the door to the Savior and having him come in and sup with you. The greatest pleasures are not physical pleasures, they are spiritual pleasures. The pleasure of being in His presence. That’s what experimental Christianity is. Christianity is only complete if you enjoy Him—Christ Himself.

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<sup>31</sup> Psalm 32:1-2a

<sup>32</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15

<sup>33</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>34</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Living Water: Studies in John 4*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2009), pg. 11