

July 7th, 2019

# The Exile of an Experimental Christian

Psalm 119:17-24

## What is experimental christianity?

The great theme that we have been examining in Psalm 119 is what the Reformers called experimental Christianity. In my lifetime, never has Christianity been more muddled than what it is today. The notion of what a Christian *is*, not only suffers the greatest assault from Satan, but suffers under a cloud of confusion so that both the world and the church at large are unsure what it means anymore.<sup>1</sup>

Enter experimental Christianity. Experimental Christianity is nothing less than Biblical Christianity. It is experimental, in that, the Christian is to be tested or proven or tried against what the Scripture says. Scientist run experiments in order to test their theories or to discover some unknown law. The Scripture is meant to experiment on us. Especially here in Psalm 119, it shows us what a true Christian looks like. And so we are meant to ask as we go through this

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<sup>1</sup> Three quick examples of what I mean.

First, I was in a coffee shop last year, when this Australian woman came over to my table because she saw that I was reading Augustine's Confessions. She asked me what religion I belonged to, to which I identified as an evangelical Christian. She responded 'so you voted for Donald Trump.' That was first connection in her mind. To be an evangelical, to be a Christian, *means* that you voted for Donald Trump.

Secondly, the London newspaper *The Guardian* recently did a piece on Lady Gaga. She identifies both as a Christian and as a bi-sexual who champions the gay rights movement. In her mind that is *not* a contradiction. The contradiction for her was anyone who would call them self a Christian and not fully support the LGBT revolution. [Source: <https://albertmohler.com/2019/01/23/briefing-1-23-19> Accessed July 5, 2019]

Thirdly, the Presbyterian Church of America (that's the conservative branch) recently met for their annual General Assembly. 40% of those present voted *against* affirming the Nashville Statement as a faithful Biblical summary of human sexuality. One of the things the Nashville Statement said is that to identify as a homosexual or transgender person is not consistent with God's revealed will in Scripture. 40% of those present could not affirm that. 40% contended that it is possible to be a transgender or gay Christian. Source: <https://www.aomin.org/aoblog/category/the-dividing-line/> Accessed July 5, 2019

chapter: “Is this true of me? Am I experiencing this?” Now why is this so vital to answer? Joel Beeke explains

“...unless our [Christianity] is experiential [or experimental], 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.”<sup>2</sup>

### What is Christianity?

Christianity is not a philosophy. It’s not a political party. It’s not even a set of moral rules that you live by. Christianity is this: the Lamb of God slain for sinners. “It is the good news that ‘God has visited and redeemed his people’ and that He has done so by sending His only begotten Son into the world to live, and die, and rise again.”<sup>3</sup> And when this Christ visits you in the new birth, you are never the same again. Your mind blind was once blinded by the god of this world, but now you see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> You were once dead in trespasses and sins, but now you like Lazarus have been raised to life and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.<sup>5</sup> You were once under the wrath and condemnation of a holy God, but now nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>6</sup> Becoming a Christian is a more spectacular and awesome thing than original creation itself. Transforming a god-hating, slave of Satan who says in his heart “there is no God” *into* a Christ-loving, servant of God who says in his heart “Thy will be done” is infinitely more miraculous than saying “let there be light!”

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<sup>2</sup> Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, (Webster, NY.: Evangelical Press USA, 2006), pg. 426

<sup>3</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, (Chicago, IL.,: Inter-Varsity Press, Reprint 1960), pg. 29

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 4:4-6

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:1; John 11; Colossians 3:4

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:39

And this experience of being born from above changes you from the inside out. The gospel is the power of God. Paul said “For the word of the cross is follow to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). It is impossible for a Christian to remain unchanged *because* he has the power of God residing in him.

Psalm 119 is the diary of a Christian who has the power of God residing in him. If you are a Christian, this is your life. This is the chronicle of your victories, your struggles, your heart longings, your sin, your righteousness, your Savior.

### **The exile of a Christian**

This morning, the Psalmist gives us another picture of what an experimental Christian is. The experimental Christian is an exile. v.19 is our key verse this morning: “I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!” The Christian is a sojourner, a pilgrim, a stranger on the earth. If you can see that, you will understand something very important about yourself and your relationship to Christ. Brothers and sisters, don’t you often experience that sense that you are out of place? I *don’t* just mean when you find yourself among a group of unbelievers who don’t love Jesus, I mean even in your own home, even among your own family, even when you are all by yourself. Don’t you feel from time to time uneasy, unsettled? Don’t you sometimes feel a sort of homesickness even at home? It is because you are an exile. William Cowper the great hymn writer and poet had long seasons of madness, even having to spend time in a mental institution because he felt this homesickness so acutely. He wrote this in a poem called “The Waiting Soul.”

Help me to reach the distant goal;  
 Confirm my feeble knee;  
 Pity the sickness of a soul  
 That faints for love of Thee!

[...]

I seem forsaken and alone,  
 I hear the lion roar;  
 And every door is shut but one,  
 And that is Mercy's door.

There, till the dear Deliverer come,  
 I'll wait with humble prayer;  
 And when He calls His exile home,  
 The Lord shall find him there.<sup>7</sup>

That is what the Psalmist is pressing on us today. We are exiles. But we have not been left alone.

### *The Big Idea...*

The Christian is an exile in this world, and their only map home is the Word of God

- ☆ The Law of the Exile
- ☆ The Longing of An Exile
- ☆ The Life of An Exile

## I. The Law of the Exile

### **The Christian is an exile**

Please look with me at **v.19**. This is the key verse of this section. The Psalmist says “I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!” A sojourner is a temporary resident. He is a traveler. But the Psalmist

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<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-waiting-soul/> Accessed July 6, 2019

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 Also see “The Narrow Way” Source: <https://kalliope.org/en/text/cowper2002030262> Accessed July 6, 2019

means more than just that a Christian is a traveler. Notice he says “I am a sojourner *on the earth*.” Meaning, there is no where on the earth, where the Christian can say “*This* is my home.” The Christian is an exile. He is separated from his true country. Please turn with me to 1 Peter to see how the NT further develops this idea. Peter opens up his letter in **1 Peter 1:1** by saying “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are *elect exiles* of the Dispersion...” Now this phraseology “elect exiles” was typically used of the Jewish people who were scattered away from their home in Jerusalem. “But Peter uses it to describe the status of the Christian church.”<sup>8</sup> We know he’s applying it to the church. Look at **v.17** “And if you call on him as Father [that’s all Christians] who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear [that is, the fear of God] throughout the time of your *exile*.” And then again in **2:11**, Peter brings the two words—sojourners and exiles together: “Beloved, I urge you as *sojourners and exiles* to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”

### **Three implications of being an exile**

Paul Wolfe helpfully points to three implications of being an exile on the earth. 1) This world is not our home; 2) Heaven is our home; 3) While we remain here, we are making our way there.<sup>9</sup>

#### **1st implication of being an exile: this world is not our home**

That’s what the Psalmist says in v.19 of Psalm 119 “I am a sojourner on the earth.” Now we affirm the original goodness of planet earth. God said it was good in Genesis 1. The Psalmist isn’t denying that that planet earth will be our ultimate home. In fact, the great hope in Revelation 21 is when John sees “a new heaven and a new earth...coming down out of heaven from God” (**Revelation 21:1-2**). No the Psalmist means that this present evil age

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<sup>8</sup> Paul D. Wolfe, *Setting Our Sights On Heaven*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), pg. 182-183

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, pg. 182

(Gal. 1:4) is not our home. When the Scripture talks about the “world” negatively, it is describing “man’s thinking apart from God.”<sup>10</sup> To be worldly means to “[think] of yourself and your life in this world...without God.”<sup>11</sup> Republicans can be just as worldly as democrats. Conservatives can be just as worldly as liberals. To be of the world means that no matter what lifestyle you are living whether you are a prostitute or a philosopher, a drunkard or a doctor for cancer patients, you are living in rebellion to Christ and His kingdom. Any lifestyle—moral or immoral—that doesn’t have Jesus Christ at the center of it, is the Biblical definition of *worldly*. That’s why Lloyd-Jones could say: “the most ethical man in the world is in the same position before God as the drunkard or wife-beater.”<sup>12</sup> That’s why the Christian cannot claim this present world as our home. It breaks the Christian’s heart to see Christ so ignored in this world. We are “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”<sup>13</sup> when all death will die, when all rebellion will be routed, and when all hearts will gladly proclaim “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”<sup>14</sup>

## 2nd implication of being an exile: Heaven is our home

Why do Christians consider heaven our home? Five reasons.<sup>15</sup> **First** because that is where we were born. 1 **John 5:1** “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ *has been born of God*...” Christians have been born from above.

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<sup>10</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Experiencing the New Birth: Studies in John 3*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2015), pg. 92

<sup>11</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Experiencing the New Birth: Studies in John 3*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2015), pg. 92

<sup>12</sup> Iain Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 243

<sup>13</sup> Titus 2:13

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 16:2

<sup>15</sup> Much help here from Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton Vol. 6*, Nabu Public Domain Reprints, pg. 175ff

“Heaven is our native country,”<sup>16</sup> and our heart’s desire is that we would return to that world from whence we came.

The **second** reason Christians consider heaven their home is because that is where our inheritance is. **1 Peter 1:3-4** “...he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to an inheritance* that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, *kept in heaven for you.*” Though the Christian can find many things to be thankful to God for in this world, this is not where our final inheritance is.

The **third** reason Christians consider heaven their home is because that is where our true family is. Jesus said in **Matthew 8:11** “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” It is only when we arrive on those golden shores, at our Father’s house where all the family of God will finally be united as one.

The **fourth** reason Christians consider heaven their home is because that is where we will live the longest. Children, how long do you think eternity is? Our family was walking on the green belt the other day, and the path was rocky. I said to Josiah: ‘look at those rocks son. Imagine if a bird were to come and pick up one of those rocks and flew to a distant land far away. Imagine that the trip took 100 years round trip, so that every 100 years one rock was removed from the path. How long would it take for that bird to remove all the rocks on the path? What if the bird was to remove all the grains of sand from all the earth, each grain taking 100 years, how long would that take? Ages and ages. And yet, that wouldn’t even take away any time from eternity. Dear saints, heaven is where you will live the longest. This age is not even a blink of an eye compared to it. God says to the redeemed in **Isaiah 60:15** “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age.”

The **fifth** reason Christians consider heaven their home is because that is where we will experience the perfect enjoyment of God. “Now we see in a

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton Vol. 6*, Nabu Public Domain Reprints, pg. 175

mirror dimly, but then face to face.”<sup>17</sup> To be in the very presence of God where no sin can hinder our enjoyment of Him, where we never grow tired of praising and adoring Him *in Heaven itself*. There we shall ever be with the Lord.<sup>18</sup> There we shall be ushered into His presence where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures at His right hand forevermore.<sup>19</sup> There we shall say as the Psalmist did “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.” (Psalm 17:15).

### **3rd implication of being an exile: While we remain here, we are making our way there.**

A *sojourner* is a traveler. That’s what the Psalmist is claiming in v.19. What do you do when you travel? Three things. **First** you need to *pack*. When you go on a trip you don’t pack things that you can’t take with you. You don’t bring your refrigerator or your dining room set. No you pack only those things you can take. Ask yourself, what can you take with you to Heaven? Only invisible things. Only your good works. You are traveling to a world where only your love for God and your neighbor will count. That’s why Paul said “...do good... be rich in good works...be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for [yourselves] as a good foundation for the future, so that [you] make take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Tim. 6:18-19).

The **second** thing you need as a traveler is a *plan*. Meaning you must always hold it in your mind where you are going. Jonathan Edwards says “When a man is on a journey, all the steps he takes are subordinated to the aim of getting to his journey’s end.”<sup>20</sup> If you are going to go camping, you don’t stop at the gas station and pop your tent out and start grilling the hamburgers. No your destination determines your decisions. Beloved, is that how you live your

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor. 13:12

<sup>18</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:17

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 16:11

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 244

life? Or are you living as if this world is your final home? Consider making this your daily prayer: “Lord how can I advance towards Heaven today?”

The **third** thing a traveler does is he makes *progress*. If a traveler packs and has a plan, but never makes progress, it does him no good. The Christian life is described in terms of walking (**Romans 6:4**) as running (**Galatians 5:7**), as pressing on toward the goal (**Phil. 3:14**). We are not *merely* to pass the time on this journey, we are to run the race set before us (**Hebrews 12:1**). Perhaps some of you feel impoverished in your journey because you are just waiting around. Spiritual stagnation is a real thing. You can be busy doing all sorts of things but not making progress towards Heaven. How do you make progress towards Heaven? By practicing Heaven now. Edwards put it like this in his famous resolutions. “*Resolved*, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God, and my own good...*Resolved*, so to do, whatever I think to be my duty, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.”<sup>21</sup> Now did Edwards pull that off perfectly? No. But that was where he resolved to make progress. Dear saint, are you resolved to make progress? That’s what travelers must do.<sup>22</sup>

That’s our **first point**. A Christian is not at home in this world because they have been reconciled to God through Christ; secondly a Christian considers their true home Heaven because that is where all their inheritance is, and thirdly a Christian’s life is therefore a journey towards heaven.<sup>23</sup> Or as the Psalmist says it in **v.19** “I am a sojourner on the earth.”

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<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. xx

<sup>22</sup> “It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.” C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (New York, NY.,: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), pg. 75

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 243

## II. The Longing of An Exile

### The Word connects the Christian to his true home

Now let's turn our focus to the second part of v.19. The Psalmist says "I am a sojourner on the earth; *hide not your commandments from me!*" Now how does this second part *follow* from the first? "I am a sojourner, an exile on the earth *therefore* do not hide your commandments from me." How do those go together? Simply this: the Word of God is what *connects* the Christian to Heaven. Just as a marriage connects a man to his wife, so the Word of God is what connects the Christian exile to his true home. And so the Psalmist prays that God strengthen that connection. In fact, we see this three more times.

v.17 Deal bountifully with your servant, *that* I may live *and* keep your word.

v.18 Open my eyes, *that* I may behold *wondrous things* out of your law.

v.20 My soul is consumed with *longing* for your *rules* at all times.

### What you cannot have in this world

The Christian exile *longs* for God's Word, because that is the only place where He gets glimpses of His true home. C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity* talks about that longing that resides in all of us. He says this:

"Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The *longings* which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are *longings* which no marriage, no travel, no learning can really satisfy..."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (New York, NY.: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), pg. 75

How insightful! Lewis understands the human psyche doesn't he? There are things that all of us desire that we know deep down cannot be had in this world. He continues:

“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”<sup>25</sup>

Don't you see? That is why the Psalmist says in **v.20** “My soul is consumed with *longing* for your *rules* at all times.” The Word of God is the *only thing* that can *begin* to satisfy that desire for another world. There's nothing else!

### **How the Word of God fulfills our other-worldly longings**

But why? What is it about the Word of God that fulfills our other worldly longings? Three ways the Word of God fulfills our other-worldly longings.

#### **1. The Word of God fulfills our longings because it has God's attributes.<sup>26</sup>**

God's Word has Divine attributes. There's no where in Scripture that makes this clearer than Psalm 119.

The Word like God Himself is *righteous*. **v.7** “I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your *righteous* rules.”

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<sup>25</sup> Source: <https://cslewisquotes.tumblr.com/post/10244640725/creatures-are-not-born-with-desires-unless> Accessed July 4, 2019

<sup>26</sup> “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)...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

The Word like God Himself is *faithful*. v.86 “All Your commandments are *faithful*...”<sup>27</sup>

The Word like God Himself is *wonderful*. v.129 “Your testimonies are *wonderful*...”

The Word like God Himself is *eternal*. v.89 “Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

The Word like God Himself is *good*. v.39 “Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are *good*.”

That’s the first way the Word fulfills our other worldly longings. Because in the Word, we taste and see the very attributes of God Himself.

## **2. The Word of God fulfills our longings because it is an object of worship<sup>28</sup>**

What we see in Psalm 119 is surprising because the Psalmist praises and worships God’s Word.

He *stands in awe* of God’s Word. v.161 “Princes persecute me without cause, but *my heart stands in awe* of your words.”

He *rejoices* at God’s Word. v.162 “I *rejoice at your word* like one who finds great spoil.”

He *lifts up his hands* towards God’s Word. v.48 “I will *lift up my hands* towards your commandments, which I love...”

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<sup>27</sup> NASB

<sup>28</sup> So much help from John Frame on all three of these points. cf. John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2010), pg. 66-68

The Psalmist is not worshipping the ink and the paper. The ink and the paper is just the created medium. “But through the created medium, we receive the authentic word of God, and that word should be treasured as if God were speaking it with own lips.”<sup>29</sup> That’s the second way the Word fulfills our other worldly longings. Because in it we are brought to worship.

### **3. The Word of God fulfills our longings because it does things only God can do.**

In **Hebrews 4:12-13**, the Apostle is going to begin talking about the Word, but then he seamlessly transitions to God Himself with no indication that He is changing the subjection. Listen carefully.

“For *the word of God* is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from *his sight*, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Two things. First, what the Word does in **v.12**, God is doing in **v.13**. Secondly, as John Frame says “...there is no distinction between one and the other. What the word does, God does, and vice versa.”<sup>30</sup> Why is this important? Because when you come to the Word, you are coming to God. God is living and active. So is His Word. God can discern your inner most thoughts. So can His Word. Oh how precious this is! When we commune with the Word, we are communing with God Himself. That’s the third way the Word fulfills our other worldly longings. Because in it we are brought to God Himself.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, pg. 67-68

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, pg. 67

## Experimental theology

Dear saint, do you see how vital it is for Christian exiles to be in the Word of God? Do you pray like the Psalmist here? ‘Lord, open my eyes, that I may behold all the wondrous things out of your law...hide not your commandments from me...for I am consumed with longing for your Word...’ If your desire for God’s Word is not where it ought to be, then pray like the man who said to Jesus “I believe; help my unbelief!”<sup>31</sup> ‘Lord I desire, help my lack of desire!’

That’s our **second point**. The Christian exile *longs* for God’s Word, because that is the only place where He gets glimpses of His true home.

## III. The Life of An Exile

### The danger of ridicule and contempt

What kind of life should you expect being an exile in this world? Please look with me at **v.22** “Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies.” It’s not just that the Christian is away from His true home, he has to suffer scorn and contempt from the world while He is here. Jesus promised us in **John 15:19** “...because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Boys and girls, one of the great temptations in your life will be when you have to stand up for righteousness. About 20 years ago was at a wrestling tournament. One of my old high school wrestling coaches was going through an extreme trial, and I told him that I would pray for him. He said thank you. But then just a few minutes later he was talking to another coach right in front of me. He didn’t know I was behind him. He started ridiculing me and mocking my offer to pray for him. The other man laughed and joined in. Now I loved these men. Their words cut deep. What is the temptation when things like this happen? To not saying anything next time. That’s the problem. If you let the

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<sup>31</sup> Mark 9:24

fear of what other people will say about you control whether you speak up for Christ, then you will never open your mouth. King Saul in the OT was so worried what the people thought about him that he disobeyed God. He tried to please men instead of pleasing God, and as a result he lost the kingship.<sup>32</sup> So this is a very serious temptation.

So then what should we do when we face scorn and contempt from the world? **First**, do what the Psalmist does. He prays! ‘Lord please remove this from me. Help me not to take it to heart.’ **Second**, consider that no matter what other people say about you, they are always speaking better of you than you deserve. If they knew what God knew about you, they would speak much worse. But if Christ has accepted you and loves you in spite of your great sin, then worry not at all what other’s think. **Thirdly**, consider that when people ridicule you, it is not you they are ultimately speaking against. It’s Christ. This is what God told the prophet Samuel when the people were rejecting him. **1 Samuel 8:7** “...they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me.” This should move you to pity. In a very little while, these people who malign you will face the judge of the universe with nothing but their sin. And the Scripture says “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”<sup>33</sup>

### **The danger of losing your life**

But it’s not just harsh words that the Christian exile faces. Look at **v.23** “Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.” I think this verse will have much more meaning for the church in the West in the future when real persecution breaks out.<sup>34</sup> It certainly has meaning

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Samuel 15:24 Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.” It seemed that Paul was accused of this by the Judaizers. He said in Galatians 1:10 “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

<sup>33</sup> Hebrews 10:31

<sup>34</sup> “Much of the visible church...seems to think Christians are supposed to be at play rather than at war.” J. Stephen Yuille, *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 37

for the church in Muslim dominated countries and in China. There are literally princes, government officials with a vast amount of resources at their disposal who are trying to destroy Christians globally today. There can be no doubt then unless America sees a revival that this will happen here. History always repeats itself. But what's amazing about this verse is how the Psalmist responds to this. His first response is not to run and hide. His first response is not to move out of the country. His first response is not to buy guns and bullets. It's simply this: to *meditate* on God's Word. "Even though princes sit plotting against me, *your servant will meditate on your statutes.*"<sup>35</sup>

Now let's ask ourselves, why does the Christian exile respond in this way? Two reasons. First because the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** says "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds."

### **Christ the ultimate exile**

But the second reason is far more profound. Beloved, this passage is not primarily about the Christian exile, but about the Christ who became an exile for you and me.

It is Christ who was the true sojourner on the earth. **Psalm 69:8** "I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons."

It is Christ who bore all the scorn and contempt of men. **Isaiah 53:3** He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..."<sup>36</sup>

It is Christ who was plotted against by the princes of this world. **Acts 4:27** "... for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant

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<sup>35</sup> One of my modern day heroes in explicating this verse is Randy Alcorn. Source: <https://www.epm.org/blog/2019/Jul/1/8-million-judgment-royalties> Accessed July 6, 2019

<sup>36</sup> also cf. Romans 15:3 "For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."

Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel...”

Jesus Christ was the exile of all exiles.

But why? Because no matter how much reproach you suffer in this world, no matter how much alienation you face, no matter what violence comes against you, it will never be enough to reconcile you to the Father. Your suffering in this present age cannot buy your way into Heaven. But there is One who suffered for you. He bore the wrath of God that was against you for your sin. Jesus not only suffered alienation from this world, but He suffered alienation from God Himself. He cried out on the cross “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46**) Dear saint, Jesus became the loneliest man in the universe when He paid for Your sin. And He did it all because He loved you. That’s how you can survive when princes sit plotting against you. Since Christ died for you, who can possibly condemn you? “Who shall bring any care against God’s elect? It is God who justifies...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...No in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”<sup>37</sup>

### **“Let Worldly Minds The World Pursue” by John Newton**

John Newton the slave-owner turned pastor wrote this beautiful hymn called “Let Worldly Minds The World Pursue.”

Let worldly minds the world pursue  
 It has no charms for me  
 Once I admired it's trifles, too  
 But grace has set me free

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<sup>37</sup> Romans 8:33, 35, 37

It's pleasure now no longer please  
 No more content afford  
 Far from my heart be the joys like these  
 Now I have seen the Lord

As by the light of opening day  
 The stars are all concealed  
 So earthly pleasures fade away  
 When Jesus is revealed

Now Lord I will be Thine alone  
 And wholly live to Thee  
 But I may hope that Your will own  
 A worthless soul like me

Yes tho of sinners I am the worst  
 I cannot doubt thy will  
 For if Thou had not loved me first  
 I had refused thee still<sup>38</sup>

Dear saints, that is the gospel. Christ became an exile so you could become sons and daughters of God. Now He calls us to be an exile in this world, so that we will inherit the next.

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<sup>38</sup> Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aczqNBILDL4> Accessed July 6, 2019

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 “If He smiles on us, it is enough, though the whole world should be against us.” Thomas Manton quoted in J. Stephen Yuille’s *The Path of Life: Blessedness in Seasons of Lament*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. xvii

# Application

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

In the last verse of this section, the Psalmist says “Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.” That is the kind of Word God has given us. A word that counsels us through our exile. As the Puritan Thomas Manton said “A Christian [can] enter heaven while he is here in this world. In the word preached, heaven is brought down to us...And by reading it we do as it were converse with the saints departed...Meditation [upon it] brings us into the company of God; it puts our head above the clouds, in the midst of the blessed spirits there.”<sup>39</sup> We have been given a Word that connects us to our native country.

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

We live in a world where all men try to pursue their deepest longings in the wrong way. When C.S. Lewis talked about those longings that we all feel for another world, he mentions two wrong ways to try to fulfill those longings. The first way he calls ‘the fools way.’ He says that the fool “puts the blame on things themselves. He goes all his life thinking that if he only tried another woman, or went for another expensive holiday, or whatever it is, then, this time, he really would catch the mysterious something we are all after.”<sup>40</sup> The second way he calls ‘the way of the disillusioned sensible man’. This man “soon decides that the whole thing was moonshine. ‘Of course,’ he says, ‘one feels like that when one’s young. But the time you get to my age you’ve given up chasing the rainbow’s end.’ And so he settles down and learns not to expect too much and represses the part of himself which used, as he would say, ‘to cry for the moon.’”<sup>41</sup> If you are here this morning, and you have not trusted Christ, you are either still playing

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton Vol. 6*, Nabu Public Domain Reprints, pg. 181

<sup>40</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (New York, NY.: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), pg. 75-76

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, pg.76

the fool or you are the cynic. The truth is that you are an exile whether you know it or not. The Psalmist says in v.21 “You [God] rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments.” You are accursed. You are cut off from God. If you continue to pursue that longing apart from you will be cut off for all eternity in condemnation. The Scripture says that God “...has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”<sup>42</sup> You can avoid that judgment. Call upon the Lord today. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (**Romans 10:13**).

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

We should want the kind of church that seeks after those fellow travelers who have gotten lost on their journey. I know of several people in this body who started to go astray from the path, and other fellow exiles went after them in love. And what happened? They are now pursuing Christ stronger and more violently than before. **Galatians 6:1** says “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.” We are carpooling together towards the celestial city. Please don’t let the spirit of this age, the spirit of individualism, blind you straying members of this church. Pursue them with phone calls. Pursue them with times at the coffee shop. Pursue them by inviting them to your house, or calling them on the phone, or texting them and telling them you are praying for them. We are our brother’s keeper. We must make it the main aim of our lives to press on to that other country and help others do the same.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Acts 17:31

<sup>43</sup> “I must make it the main object of my life to press on to that other country and to help others do the same.” C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (New York, NY.,: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), pg. 76

#### 4. What kind of Savior do we need?<sup>44</sup>

We need a Savior who knows what it's like to be an exile. That's the kind of Savior we have. **Hebrews 13:11-13** says "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." Dear saints, we have been given the highest privilege to bear the reproach that Jesus endured. Don't despise it. Embrace it. Wear it as a badge. For very soon you will be brought to Him where you will never be an exile again. You will be brought to that "... city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (**Hebrews 11:10**).

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<sup>44</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