Intro:

Today I want to begin our long anticipated study of Pilgrim’s Progress. Our lesson today is introductory in nature.

I. Why Study Pilgrim’s Progress

A. Next to Bible, best-selling Christian book of all time

B. Bunyan’s allegory turns Christian doctrine into adventure

“A person who thoroughly understands The Pilgrim’s Progress is an accomplished theologian.”

C. Men of God since Bunyan’s time have made the book an object of study:

   1. Charles Spurgeon read it at least 100 times

   2. Spurgeon: “Prick John Bunyan and he will bleed Bible.” (Pictures from Pilgrim’s Progress, p. 6)

D. The story of The Pilgrim’s Progress is the story of the Christian life.

II. Biographical and Historical Notes

A. Background of Protestant reformation

   1. John Wycliffe: translated Bible into English from Latin, preached salvation by grace alone and absolute authority of Scriptures (d. 1384)

   2. Hus: disciple of Wycliffe, pre-reformer in Prague, burned to death (d. 1415)

   3. Luther led Protestant Reformation beginning in 1517

   4. William Tyndale: translated NT into English from Greek, much of OT, martyred by Henry VIII 1536, prayed “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”

   5. Elizabeth I: Act of Uniformity

      a. Every man must accept Book of Common Prayer

      b. Every man must attend church once a week (or be fined)

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2 Quoted in Bradley, p. 1.
c. Puritans objected:
   1) Some stayed in agitating for reform, known as Presbyterians (some of these formed Massachusetts Bay colony as Non-separating Congregationalists)
   2) Some went out and were known as Separatists (later some of these came to Plymouth, MA on the Mayflower)

B. The Stuarts and the Commonwealth
   1. James I authorized King James Version as a means of exerting his power over church
   2. Charles I with Archbishop Laud attempted to enforce Elizabeth’s Act of Uniformity
      a. John Bunyan born three years into Charles’ reign
      b. Parliament struggled with king over his authoritarianism and the religious turmoil, finally erupted in Civil War
      c. John Bunyan served in Cromwell’s parliamentary army 1644-1647
      d. Charles executed by parliament 1649
   3. Cromwell, Commonwealth, Lord Protector 1649-1658
      a. Great political and religious freedom for Puritans
      b. Time of Bunyan’s spiritual awakening

C. John Bunyan
   1. Born in Elstow, England, 1628
      a. Father a ‘tinker’ – a man who made and repaired pots and pans
      b. John had little opportunity for education
      c. Lived a life of wickedness until his awakening
   2. Bunyan married and began a period of spiritual struggle during Cromwell’s rule
      a. Encountered Martin Luther’s commentary on Galatians
      b. Thought it could have been ‘written out of my heart’ (identified with Luther’s spiritual struggle)
      c. After struggling with concern about his soul, he finally came to assurance of salvation
3. Initial Christian experience
   a. Joined the church of John Gifford (the model for ‘Evangelist’ in his book), an independent church pastor (not C of E) by believer’s baptism (1653)
   b. Began serving as a lay preacher at various independent gatherings around the countryside

4. Cromwell dies, Charles II comes to throne, resumes Act of Uniformity
   a. Nonconformists refuse *Book of Common Prayer* and refuse to attend C of E services
   b. Bunyan arrested November 1660 for failure to conform to king’s edicts
   c. Spends next 12 years in prison
      1) Possessed two books while in prison (Bible and Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*)
      2) Supported himself and family in prison by making shoelaces
      3) Also wrote several books as a means to support his family
         a) *Profitable Meditations*
         b) *Christian Behaviour*
         c) *The Holy City*
         d) *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*

5. Bunyan released from prison May 1672
   a. Became pastor of Baptist church in Bedford
   b. Jailed again in 1677 for preaching without a license (6 months)
   c. Completed *The Pilgrim’s Progress* during this imprisonment
   d. Upon his release, continued writing and preaching
   e. Died Sept 3, 1688 from a cold caught while traveling on horseback trying to reconcile a father and son (drenched in a downpour)
   f. Buried in Bunhill Fields, a Non-conformist cemetery in London

“John Bunyan died in 1688 at the age of sixty, having been one of those violent men who take the kingdom by force (Mt 11.12).”

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3 Bradley, p. 4.