



Pilgrim's Progress

For today's Pilgrim



John Bunyan & Seth Grotzke

Introduction

John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress in 1678. Part, if not all, was written while he was a prisoner in Bedfordshire, England. Bunyan was imprisoned for conducting religious services independent of the Church of England.

This particular retelling was done in order to distribute to those walking the Camino de Santiago and to those who might find the original language to be difficult.

May this retelling of Pilgrim's Progress encourage today's pilgrims in their journey toward the City whose builder and maker is God.¹

¡Buen Camino!

1. Hebrews 11

Chapter One

Destruction

As I was out walking one day, I stopped in a cave along the way and fell asleep. As I slept, I dreamed a dream.



Now I saw in my dream a man. He was wearing nothing but rags, standing and staring at the mountains. He had a book in his hand and a huge weight on his back. I could see him open the book. He read for a time and then closed it. Moments later he opened it again. At times he would weep. At other times he could only tremble. At one point he shouted, "What am I supposed to do?"

He turned and walked to his home. Neither his wife nor his children could understand why he was so distraught. Day after day his situation worsened and the burden on his back grew larger and heavier. It got to such a point that he couldn't continue on. He called to his wife and children and told them, "My dear family, I love you, but I cannot carry this weight any longer. I know that everything we have here in this City will be destroyed. It will all be burnt to nothing. If we do not escape, we will all die. We must flee!"

His wife and children were shocked, not because they believed him, but because they thought he had lost his mind. They helped him into bed and encouraged him to rest. But when he woke up in the morning he was worse! All day long he talked on and on about destruction and escape, warning them to flee. Day after day he continued, but no one listened to him. At times they would plug their ears. Sometimes they merely laughed at him. Eventually his daily life came to a stop. He could do nothing but hide in his room or walk in the fields. His only desire was to clear his mind and pray.

Now, as I watched him walking in the fields, reading from his book, it was clear that his mind was extremely distressed. At one point he blurted out, "What will save me from all of this?" He looked around as though he would run, but he couldn't determine which way to go. And that is when I saw someone approaching him. The man stopped and spoke. "My name is Good News Teller. Explain to me why you are crying."

The man in my dream answered, "This book says that I am a man about to die. And not only that, but I will die and then be judged!"

Then Good News Teller asked, "If that is correct, why are you still in this city?"

"Because I don't know where else to go. Do you know where I can hide?"

With that, Good News Teller pointed to the horizon, "Do you see in the distance that small door in the large wall?"

"No, I don't."

"Then, do you see the bright light?"

"I think I do."

"Well," said Good News Teller, "keep that light in front of you and go straight there. You will eventually see the door, and when you do, knock and you will be told what to do next."

Questions for Destruction

- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt overwhelming guilt? What was it that kept bringing it to your mind?
- What are some common methods people use to lessen their feelings of guilt?
- How would you help a friend deal with their guilt?
- Read Acts 2:14-41. What caused the crowd to ask the question, "What must I do?"

Chapter Two

Stubborn And Bendable

Now I saw in my dream that the man began to run. However he had not made it far before his wife and children, and even some of his neighbors began to chase after him. Two of those who caught up with him were Stubborn and Bendable.

"Christian, you must come back with us!" they called.

"I can't go back with you to the City. It will be destroyed!" he cried. "Come with me and escape!"

"Why would we ever leave our friends and home?" said Stubborn.

"Trust me, where we are going is so much better than what we leave behind. It is all in this book!"

"Nonsense!" said Stubborn. "Forget your book and come back."

"But what if he is right?" asked Bendable. "Maybe he is right. I feel like we should go with him."

"Yes!" said Christian. "Come with me, Bendable, and you will see. It will be even better than I could explain. I know it has to be true. The one who gave the promises guaranteed them by giving up his own life."

"Fair enough. I will go with you," said Bendable. "But how do you know which way to go?"

"A man by the name of 'Good News Teller' directed me to that small door in the distance. Once we arrive there we will be given more directions."

"Well, let's not waste any time then!" said Bendable, and off they walked.

Behind them they heard Stubborn call out from where he remained, "I will not be any part of this foolishness!"

Now I saw in my dream that the two began to talk. "Can you tell me more about where

we are going?" asked Bendable.

"Well, let me read to you some of what I have read," answered Christian. "Where we are going is a forever kingdom where we won't die. There is love, and honor, and completeness, and a life where you are who you were always meant to be."

"Tell me more!"

"Well, it says that the tears of things gone wrong will be wiped away. And then there will be many others there, some like us and some beyond us. If we didn't know better we would be tempted to worship them. Instead we will be accepted as one of them. There will be men and women who have suffered greatly, but have been healed completely. They will be all the more beautiful for the tragedies they endured, because the King himself will turn their scars into gems."

"Just hearing this makes me wish we were already there!" said Bendable. "But how could two people like us ever be part of something so beautiful?"

"That is what is so amazing! According to his own words, the King of that country has promised it is free. You only have to receive it."

"Then why don't we move faster?" pushed Bendable.

"I would, but this weight that I am carrying slows me down," Christian replied.

Now in my dream I saw them disappear into a great swamp, right in the middle of the plain. In the midst of their conversation they had fallen in. The name of this swamp, as would later be seen, was "Discouragement". They flailed around, trying to free themselves of the filth and muck. Christian had the worst of it. For even with all his effort, he sank deeper because of the great weight he carried on his back.

Then Bendable cried out, "Christian! Where are you?"

"I honestly don't know!" yelled Christian.

With that, Bendable became angry. "Is this the beautiful City that you told me about? You said nothing about the mud, the smell, and the damage done to me and my

clothing! I would be better off at home. Good luck to you!"

With that he pulled himself free and returned home. That was the last Christian ever saw of Bendable.

Questions for Stubborn And Bendable

- Have you dealt with people like Stubborn and Bendable? How did they affect the decisions you were trying to make?
- What do you think of Christian's description of his desired destination? Do you think there has ever been a place like that? Do you think there ever will be a place like that?
- When have you found yourself in the Swamp of Discouragement? What words could you use to describe that time of your life?
- Read Psalm 51:1-12. What is going on in the author's life? How might his example help you in your own life?

Chapter Three

Help And Mr. More Rules

Now I saw in my dream that in the midst of Christian's struggling, a voice called out to him, "What are you doing?"

"I was told to come this way by Good News Teller, but I fell in!"

"Then why didn't you look for the steps?"

"Steps? I didn't know there were steps!"

"Right there," the man said while pointing.

Christian looked and thought he saw what the man was pointed at. "I suppose I couldn't see them because I was afraid, and all I could do was thrash around. When my fear is in control I do thoughtless things."

"Well then, give me your hand. My name is Help."

So Christian reached out his hand and Help pulled him up. Once on solid ground, he pointed Christian in the right direction and got him started again.

Now, as Christian was walking by himself a man came across the field to meet him. The gentleman's name was Mr. Popular Opinion. He had heard that Christian had left his town and was in need of assistance.

"Christian! I am glad I have found you. I have a question for you," Mr. Popular Opinion called out. "Don't you think that you will be more comfortable if you get rid of that weight on your back?"

"Of course!" responded Christian. "That is exactly what I am trying to do. But I was told by Good News Teller to walk to the small door and I would be told what to do there."

"Well, that seems nice and all. But perhaps you could ease your burden a little in the meantime. How did you get the weight on your back in the first place?"

"It all started to grow when I began reading this book. It is filled with so many promises and hopes, and exactly what I have always dreamed. But at the same time I began to feel my burden grow."

"Well, I will be glad to help you then," said Mr. Popular Opinion. "I hate to say this but that scoundrel, Good News Teller, has sent you on the worst possible path. I have a better plan for you."

"But how do I know that your path will be better than the one I am on?" asked Christian.

"First, it appears to me by your mud and smell that your path has not been very successful. Second, I am older than you are, and I have been told that your path will include all kinds of suffering. You will face exhaustion, pain, hunger, dangers, battles, wild animals, darkness, and probably death. Who in their right mind would want to suffer all of this?"

"Sir, this weight on my back is much worse than all of those. I will face anything as long as this burden is removed."

"Well, then listen to me. You need to head to that village over there, the one called Good Behavior. There is a gentleman named Mr. More Rules. He has helped many people like you with their heavy weights. He even has a son, Politeness, that can do nearly as good of a job. And once they get rid of your burden, you should look around for a home and move your family there instead of this imaginary City you are searching for."

Christian was not sure what to do with this information, but in the end he determined he should take the advice and head toward the village on the hill.

The distance wasn't far, but as he climbed, he realized the slope got steeper and steeper. Then he noticed the outcroppings of stone above him. Christian feared that he would either fall or have the cliffs come crashing down on his head. And with all of this effort, his weight only grew heavier! What could he do? He was stuck. And he was sorry he ever listened to Mr. Popular Opinion. That is when he saw Good News Teller working his way along the edge toward him. Christian was both thankful to see him,

but also embarrassed.

“What are you doing here?” Good News Teller nearly shouted. “Didn’t I tell you which way to go?”

“Yes sir,” Christian mumbled. “But I met someone after the Swamp of Discouragement and he told me of a different route.”

“And who was this person?”

“His name was Mr. Popular Opinion and he told me I could get rid of my burden at the village up there.”

“Christian, you need to listen to the book that you hold. It says, ‘There is great danger in turning away from the right path. If you do not listen, if you do not follow the path, there will be no hope for your soul.’ You must believe what it says. And right now you have turned away.”

At this Christian fell down. His physical exhaustion of climbing the hill coupled with his internal exhaustion of doubt and fear, nearly pushed him to his end. He lay there sobbing.

After a time Good News Teller reached down and pulled him up. “You must hear what else the book says. ‘There is forgiveness, full and free.’”

These few words felt like a salve to Christian’s soul. Forgiveness was all he could hope for.

Good News Teller continued: “You must be careful of Mr. Popular Opinion. First, he has led you off the path. Second, he has made you forget the one who has given all the promises in this book. Third, he has led you toward your death. This should be enough for you to reject his advice and turn back toward the one you are seeking, and his City.

“You also must know that he was sending you to Mr. More Rules. He and his son, Politeness, carry burdens greater than yours. How could they ever relieve you of your burden when they can’t even get rid of their own?”

Upon hearing this, Christian trembled and feared even more. "Do you think there is any hope for me?"

Good News Teller looked at him and spoke gently. "What you did was wrong, but there is hope. However, if you turn away again you might never find your way back. And even if you could, the gate may be shut to you. Stay on the path."

Christian turned and nearly ran back to the narrow path.

Questions for Help And Mr. More Rules

- When have you seen this sentence be true in your life, "When my fear is in control I do thoughtless things"?
- Describe someone in your life who is to you like Help was to Christian.
- What do you think about Christian's burden? "It all started to grow when I began reading this book. It is filled with so many promises and hopes, and exactly what I have always dreamed. But at the same time I began to feel my burden grow."
- Has anyone like Mr. Popular Opinion tried to help you? Did the person make your situation better or worse?
- What do you think of the saying, "There is forgiveness, full and free"?
- Read Ephesians 2:1-10. How does this differ from Mr. Popular Opinion's advice?

Chapter Four

Kindness And The Door

Now I saw in my dream that eventually Christian reached the small door in the great wall. Above it was a sign which read, "Knock, and it will be opened for you." So Christian knocked many times, calling out, "Can I come in? Please, let me in!"

Finally a man came to the door and asked, "Who are you? Where did you come from? What do you want?"

As quickly as he could, Christian answered all his questions. He was a poor man carrying a great burden. He wanted to go to the beautiful City of which he had read. He was fleeing from the destruction that awaited his former home.

"Please come in then!" invited Kindness.

Just as Christian stepped through the door, Kindness grabbed his arm and pulled him inside.

"What was that for?" asked Christian in surprise.

Kindness slammed the door and leaned against it. Something struck the door and the surrounding gate with great force. "You must not have seen it, but there is a castle across the way from which they shoot arrows at those who are admitted in. They hope to kill all who come to this door before they can enter. But you are safe for now."

Christian breathed a sigh of relief. But before he could thank his rescuer, Kindness asked another question. "Who sent you here?"

"Well, Good News Teller told me to come and knock. He said that once I entered you would tell me what I was to do next."

"I'm glad you listened to him. Now that you are safely here I will help you. But, did you come alone?"

With that, Christian's shoulders sagged. "I wanted my wife and children to come, but they wouldn't. I even tried to convince a couple of my neighbors to join me, Stubborn

and Bendable, but they turned back as well. Bendable did make it as far as the Swamp of Discouragement, but then he could handle no more.”

“What a shame. To have turned back when they had seen the right path, that is sad.”

“To be honest, Bendable and I are very similar. I too turned off the path after Mr. Popular Opinion’s promises.”

Kindness looked thoughtful, “I suppose he wanted you to visit Mr. More Rules. Both of them will cheat you if they get a chance. And you listened to him?”

“Yes, but only until I realized the danger of the mountain and cliffs. That is when Good News Teller caught me and put me on the right path again. I am so thankful to be here.”

“Do not worry. We don’t turn anyone away based on what they have done before coming. Now let me show you the way to go.” With that, Kindness pointed to a narrow path. “Do you see this path? Follow it.”

Christian squinted and then asked, “But won’t I lose my way?”

“Not if you stay on the path which is narrow, but straight. You can always tell the wrong paths because they will look easier and more comfortable. But don’t be fooled. Easy paths don’t lead to where you need to go.”

I saw in my dream that Christian asked many more questions, even requesting help with his great burden. But Kindness could do nothing except assure him. “When you get to the place of rescue, it will fall off by itself. Until that time,” he said, “be content to carry it.”

With that Christian tightened his belt and headed off. He was on his way to a house known as the House of Explanation.

Questions for Kindness And The Door

- Has there been a time in your life when you turned back from the right path? Did you ever have another chance to return to the right path?
- What do you think of Kindness' statement, "We don't turn anyone away based on what they have done before coming." How could that be encouraging to someone? How could it be upsetting to someone?
- Do you agree with Kindness' instruction, "Easy paths don't lead to where you need to go." Why or why not?
- Read Acts 9:1-19. What do you think Ananias was thinking when he went to Saul? Do you think it would have been easy for him to accept the statement, "We don't turn anyone away based on what they have done before coming"?

Chapter Five

The House Of Explanation

Now I saw in my dream that Christian walked until he came to a large house which belonged to a man known as Light Shiner. Christian stood in front of the door and knocked.

"Who is there?" a voice called out.

"My name is Christian. I am a mere pilgrim, but one who comes to learn. I was told by a friend that I should come to this house in order to listen and learn."

With that the porter went off and found the master. Upon being introduced, Christian spoke again. "Sir, I was born in the City of Destruction, but I am now on my way to the City of Peace. The man at the gate, Kindness, told me that if I were to come here you would explain things to me. This, he promised, would help me on my journey."

The owner of the home, Light Shiner, looked at Christian and smiled. "I will do what you ask! Come in. Come in!"

Christian followed the man into the home and down the hallway. They entered a room and Light Shiner pointed to a painting on the wall. It showed a man looking up to heaven with a precious book grasped in his arms. His back was turned to a burning city. "I wanted to show you this first," said Light Shiner, "because this man is your guide. Many others will claim to give you good directions, but this man alone is the one who the King has approved to lead others. Don't be led astray by imposters, for their end is not peace, but death."

Next, Christian was led into a large room. Everything was covered in dust. Light Shiner called for a servant to come and sweep the room. Christian watched as the dust spread around the entire room, choking him and causing his eyes to water. Finally, when Christian could handle no more, Light Shiner called another servant to come and sprinkle water around the room. When she had done that, the sweeping was effective.

"I don't understand. Could you explain it to me?" said Christian.

Light Shiner looked at him and spoke. "This room is like the heart of one who went his

own way. He broke the foundational laws, ones he knew were right. He heaped up guilt and shame like the dust covering this room. But what happens when he tries to clean it himself? He only creates more mess and frustration. What he needs is grace. He needs good news. While he can't fix what he has broken, there is one who can."

The host took Christian to the next room where two little children sat. The older one was named Passion and the younger was named Patience. Passion was restless and discontent whereas Patience sat quietly. As they looked on, Light Shiner whispered to Christian, "Their teacher wants them to wait for their gifts till the first of the year, but Passion cannot wait."

With that, someone entered the room carrying a large bag of treasure. It was all poured out before Passion. He was so excited that he laughed, danced, and mocked Patience who had nothing. But almost as quickly as it had come it was all spent. Once again Passion was reduced to poverty.

Christian looked at Light Shiner and said, "Can you explain to me what happened?"

"Well, these two boys are examples of those you will meet. Passion is just like those who believe everything they need is in this present world, whereas Patience is like those who are willing to wait. For they know that there is more to our existence than what we experience with our senses.

"Passion wants everything right now, right here. He cannot wait. He lives by the phrase, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' even though his soul understands that there is something more than this short life. He fights for all he can get. Then he watches as it all is squandered away."

Christian nodded and spoke, "So then Patience is the wiser because he waits for the best things, and he will have lasting wealth when the other is poor again."

"Yes, and more importantly, he will arrive in the next life."

"So this is meant to teach me not to covet what this life offers, but to wait for the perfect gifts to come?"

"Exactly. All that you see is temporal, like drifting fog or a crashing wave. But there are

things which are eternal. You have to trust that those things will come.”

With that Light Shiner took Christian down the hallway to a fireplace. There knelt a man who was pouring water on the fire to put it out, but the fire kept getting hotter. “How can this be?” asked Christian.

“This fire is that of grace that has begun to burn in the heart of one who believes. But the Liar will work tirelessly in order to put it out.”

“So then why won’t the fire go out?”

With that, Light Shiner took Christian around the wall to the back side of the fireplace. There he pointed to another man pouring oil onto the fire. “The King himself makes sure that the fire which has begun will not be put out. But this is hard to see for the one under constant attack by the Liar.”

Light Shiner led Christian to an overlook of a beautiful palace. Standing on the balconies were people in fine clothing and talking with great joy. “Can I go in?” asked Christian.

“Just watch for a moment,” Light Shiner said as he pointed at a gate.

There stood a large group of men, hesitant but wanting to enter. Finally a tall, strong man stepped forward and called out, “Put my name down. I am willing to go.”

His name was written down and he was given armor. This was necessary, for as Christian looked, there rushed forward a band of warriors to guard the gate. As soon as the armor was on, the man ran at the guards and tried to push through. Voices yelled. Swords clashed. Armor broke. The man both wielded and received many blows, but finally pushed through and entered the palace. All those within cheered.

Christian smiled and said, “I think I know what this means. I am ready to go in!”

“You must wait just a moment. There is more,” said Light Shiner. The two then walked into a dark room. There sat a miserable looking man in an iron cage. His hands were folded, his eyes turned down, and he sighed heavily.

Light Shiner leaned over and whispered, "Go talk to him."

Christian moved closer and asked, "Who are you?"

"I am not who I once was," came the mournful reply.

"Well then, what were you before?"

"I once was a well-known teacher, a leader, a guide to the City of Peace. Or so I thought."

"And now what are you?" asked Christian.

"I am now a man of despair. Locked up. Unable to move. Imprisoned forever."

"But how did this happen?"

The mournful man looked down. "I stopped watching. I stopped guarding my steps. I followed whatever desires I felt within me. I turned against God and his love for me. The Liar caught me and trapped me. Now my heart is hardened and I couldn't go back even if I tried."

As the two moved past the cage, Light Shiner looked at Christian and said, "Take note. Let this man's fate be a caution for you. Now, I have one last thing to show you."

They walked into a room and watched as a man climbed out of bed and tried to prepare for the day, but he was shaking uncontrollably.

"Why are you so scared?" asked Christian.

"I just dreamed that the Day of Judgement had come. There was fire and there were angels. There was thunder and lightning. There was agony and fear. My own conscience was judging me and all my past sins came rushing into my mind. There was nowhere to hide."

Light Shiner looked at Christian and said, "If you keep these things in your heart they will be signs to point the way and thorns in the ditches to keep you on the path. May the Comforter always be with you to guide you and keep you safe until you reach the

City of Peace." And with that Christian was sent on his journey.

Questions for The House Of Explanation

- Share an experience from your life where self-reform worked. Share an experience from your life where self-reform didn't work. What was the difference?
- Do you agree with Light Shiner that grace is needed for true reform?
- When have you been like Passion? When have you been like Patience?
- Do you agree with this statement: "For they know that there is more to our existence than what we experience with our senses"?
- Have you ever passed through times in your life where you felt as though the Liar was trying to extinguish your faith?
- What do you think of the final lesson from Light Shiner? When you think of what happens after you die, what comes to mind? Do you have peace or fear?
- Read Matthew 13. Why do you think Jesus taught in this way? Which parable was the most encouraging? Which one was the most frightening?

Chapter Six

The Cross And Tomb

Now I saw in my dream that Christian continued along the path. It was bordered by an immense wall called Salvation. As soon as Christian realized this and understood where he was, he began to run up the hill. With his great burden on his back he lurched and swayed, but persevered. He ran until he came to a flat place upon which stood a large cross. As he approached that unique landmark he felt his burden loosen and slip off his back. It hit the dirt and began to tumble down the path. It rolled down into a tomb at base of the hill. That was the last anyone ever saw of Christian's burden.

Christian was overjoyed with his newfound freedom. He jumped in the air and spun in circles, enjoying the relief. He then broke into song, "He has given me rest by his sorrow, life by his death!"

When he had tired, he sat down and stared at the cross. He was amazed that something of such horror could give him this freedom. Just thinking of it made him cry. While tears rolled down his face, three Shining Ones appeared. One placed his hand on Christian and said, "Your sins are forgiven." The second took his torn clothing and gave him a beautiful new wardrobe. The third placed a mark on him and handed him a scroll. "Give these credentials to the guards at the Gate of the City of Peace," he said. Then all three were gone.

When Christian finally realized what had happened, he stood up and sang while he walked,

"I made it this far bearing my sin;
But nothing could calm the guilt within
Until it fell off, here in this place.
Why here would bring joy to my face?
Why here my burden fall off my back?
Why here its iron shackles crack?"

This cross! This tomb! Blessed rather be
The King who was put to shame for me!”



And Can It Be

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour’s blood?
Died he for me? who caused his pain!
For me—who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?²

2. Wesley, Charles. And Can It Be, 1738.

Questions for The Cross And Tomb

- In your own words explain what happened in this chapter.
- Why was the cross so horrible and yet so amazing?
- What do you think about Christian's song, "He has given me rest by his sorrow, life by his death." Do you think this is possible? Why or why not?
- Read John 19-20. How does this account of Jesus' death and resurrection affect you? Is it similar or distinct from what Christian felt?

Chapter Seven

Losing His Scroll

Now I saw in my dream that Christian began his journey again, this time relieved of his great burden. While walking he came across three men locked in chains and fast asleep. Their names were Ignorant, Lazy, and Audacity.

Christian rushed over, "Wake up! I can help you with the chains. The enemy may be near!"

Annoyed, they pushed him away. Ignorant said, "I don't see any enemy nearby." Lazy just yawned and rolled over. And Audacity said, "Who are you to try to help me? Go away!"

So Christian left them, saddened for his inability to help those who wanted no help. As he was reflecting on this, he saw two men come tumbling over the wall along the path. One of them was named Pretend and the other Hypocrite. In a moment all three were walking together.

Christian spoke first, "Gentlemen, where did you come from and where are you going?"

"We are from the Land of Pride, and we are headed to the City of Peace!"

Christian looked confused. "But why did you not come through the gate at the beginning of the path? Don't you know that the King has said that those who come over the wall, not through the door, are thieves and robbers?"

"Well, it is much too far for us to go all the way back to the gate. And it is completely normally for those from our hometown to take this same shortcut."

"But," Christian replied, "won't the King count that as trespassing?"

"Do not worry!" assured Pretend and Hypocrite. "This is our culture. We have documentation that this has been the custom for centuries."

"But, will this evidence stand up in a court of law?"

"Calm yourself!" they said. "This has been going on for at least a thousand years. And anyway, what does it matter how we got in? What matters is that we are on the path. We are all equals now."

"I don't think so," said Christian. "I am following the rules of the King. You are doing what you want. You are following the way of the thief even as you try to walk the way to the City of Peace."

"You mind your own business and we will mind ours."

Christian could do no more to try to convince them, but instead pulled the scroll from his pocket to read. What he read was of far more encouragement than the former conversation.

As I watched, all three of them came to the Hill Difficulty. At its base was a spring of water and three paths. One path turned to the right, and was called "Danger." The path which turned to the left was called "Destruction." And the third path went straight up the steep hill.

Christian took a drink from the spring and started up the Hill Difficulty. "Better is a difficult path which leads the right way than an easy path which ends in sorrow," he thought. The other two watched him struggle up the hill, and each took his own path around the hill, but neither were seen again.

Christian's pace slowed to a walk, and then a climb, and finally a crawl as the hill became steeper and steeper. About half way to the top there was a shaded arbor, which the King had ordered to be built there for the pilgrims who would need it. Christian sat down and rested, reading from his scroll and taking a better look at the clothing he had been given at the cross. He began to feel drowsy and soon fell asleep. He lay in that same place until nearly dark. Suddenly he awoke and realized the time he had lost. In his haste he gathered up his things and scrambled to the top of the hill. But in the rush he did not realize that his credentials had slipped from his pocket and slid under a bush.

As he arrived at the top of the hill, two men came running to meet him. One of them was named Weak-Kneed and the other one Skeptical. Christian stopped them and

said, "You are running the wrong way! What is the matter?"

Weak-Kneed answered and told of their journey to the City of Peace. He shared how they had climbed this difficult hill. And then he said, "But this path is nothing but trouble. Every turn brings us more and more danger. We have seen enough! We are going home."

"Exactly!" said Skeptical. "We just saw two lions on the path up ahead. There is no way we will be continuing forward if there are lions!"

"That frightens me," said Christian, "but what am I supposed to do? If I go back to my city, Destructions awaits me. At least going to the City of Peace offers some hope."

Weak-Kneed and Skeptical didn't stay around to hear Christian's considerations. They took off running down the hill. Seeing this, Christian looked in his pocket for his scroll with his credentials to find some encouragement. But instead he found nothing! Where could his scroll have gone? He knew he had it before falling asleep in the arbor. He must have lost it during his nap! With that he fell to his knees, pleading for God to forgive his foolish act. There was nothing left to do but get up and go looking, so off he went.

His heart was a raging sea within him. Would he ever find his credentials? How could he have been so stupid? What would he do if he never found his scroll again?

When at last he saw the arbor where he had slept, all his doubt came rushing to his mind. Why would he have slept during the day when he knew he needed to get to safety? How could he have been so careless with something of such importance? How much time and energy had he lost with this one act? How much further would he be if he weren't backtracking?

When he finally reached the place where he had slept, he fell to the ground and wept. He was physically and emotionally exhausted. He was discouraged. As he slumped on the ground, out of the corner of his eye he saw his scroll with the credentials. He felt immediate joy! This was his assurance and acceptance into his safe haven. He held it close to his heart and thanked God once again.

It seemed like just a moment and he was back up the hill again, but the sinking sun and looming darkness reminded him of his foolish act. And then he remembered the story of the lions from Weak-Kneed and Skeptical. "If those beasts are prowling tonight, they surely will find me!" But even in his fear there was a moment of hope. There before him, breaking through the darkness, was a very large palace, House Beautiful.

Questions For Losing His Scroll

- Have you ever tried to help individuals like Ignorant, Lazy, and Audacity? What happened?
- What do you think about the interaction Christian had with Pretend and Hypocrite? Do you agree that because something is right in their culture, it is right for them?
- “Better is a difficult path which leads the right way than an easy path which ends in sorrow.” When have you given similar advice to someone?
- Are there legitimate times to follow the example of Weak-Kneed and Skeptical? Have you felt that your path is nothing but trouble?
- Share about a time when you had thoughts similar to Christian’s: “How could I have been so careless with something of such importance? How much time and energy did I lose with this one act? How much further would I be if I weren’t backtracking?”
- Read Proverbs 12:15. When have you seen this to be true?

Chapter Eight

House Beautiful

Now I saw in my dream that Christian pushed on in order to find safety. But before long he entered a narrow stretch, and there stood the lions. These must be the very ones Weak-Kneed and Skeptical had seen! Christian considered turning and fleeing, but before he could, a voice came from the porter of the palace. "Trust me! Don't fear the lions. They are chained up. They are only here to test the faith of those who would come. If you stay in the middle of the path, they cannot touch you."

Difficulty is behind. Fear is before,

Though he sees safety, the lions roar;

A pilgrim is never long at rest,

When one fear's gone, another comes to test.

So Christian inched forward, listening to the words of the porter and pushing past the fear in his bones. As soon as he was beyond the reach of the lions he shouted and danced in delight.

"Good sir! May I have a room for tonight in this fine house?" Christian called out in his joy.

The porter answered, "My name is Observant, and this house was built by the King of the City of Peace so that the pilgrims would find relief and security. Are you one of those pilgrims?"

"I am Christian, on my way to that City of Peace. But I once was called Antagonist and lived in the City of Destruction, a place I want nothing to do with now."

"But why are you arriving so late?"

"Because I am a fool. I slept when I should have been walking. In my sleep I lost the scroll that holds my credentials. I didn't realize it until too late. Then I had to return to where I thought I had lost it. That is why I am so late."

"Well," said Observant, "I will call one of the young ladies of the house to see what she believes to be best." He then rang a bell and they both waited. A moment later a serious, but beautiful young woman appeared at the door.

"Discretion, this man is a pilgrim from the City of Destruction. He is on his way to the City of Peace and he requests a night to lodge. What would you like me to do?" asked Observant.

Discretion asked Christian a variety of questions about his comings and goings, the trials, people he had met along the way, and his family. Finally she asked "Good sir, why do you seek lodgings here instead of another place?"

"Well, I can see that this home was built by the King for the relief and safety of pilgrims like me. I want what he has provided."

Discretion was moved by this answer and turned and called out for three of her companions, Wisdom, Reverence, and Tenderness. Each of them spoke with Christian and welcomed him in. "You are welcomed by the King, and by us, his servants." They quickly brought him something to drink and each spoke with him while supper was being prepared.

Reverence spoke first, "Please Christian, tell us why you started on this pilgrimage to begin with."

"It was out of fear," Christian responded. "I had heard of the dreadful fate that awaited me if I were to stay in the City of Destruction."

"But how did you end up on this path?"

"I have no other explanation than it was God's plan. In the moment it seemed like chance, but a man named Good News Teller came to me and saw me in my fear. He pointed me to the small door which I would have never seen. That is how I started on this path.

"Then I met with Light Shiner. He showed me through his home and taught me many things. Some of them were just as concerning as the fate of my former city, and others were of such encouragement.

"But to be honest, the most painful, and the most beautiful sight I saw was later in my journey. I saw a man hanging on a cross. It was a horrific sight. It was made worse because I knew that he was there, not because he deserved it, but because I did. My burden had been growing for some time, but in that place I felt it fall from my back. I experienced true freedom! Shortly after three Shining Ones came and assured me that I was forgiven, accepted, and secure. Oh the relief I felt!"

"Was this everything that you have seen?" asked Reverence.

"No. These were the best, but I also saw Ignorant, Lazy, and Audacity sleeping in the way. I met with Pretend and Hypocrite who came tumbling over the wall. I struggled up the hill and past the lions and now am here. And for that I am so thankful."

"But do you think about your past life at all?"

"I do," said Christian, "but with embarrassment and disgust. I want a better country."

"But do you struggle with some of the same things you dealt with in that city?"

"Yes, of course! But now I struggle. Before they were normal. Now I try to fight against them. But it is hard. I want to do right, but sometimes I do exactly what I would have done had I continued on in that city."

"So what helps you?" Reverence asked.

"Well, I have to remember the cross. I also look upon my new clothes which I was given, and these credentials assure me as well. And then there is the City of Peace..."

"But Christian, tell me again, why do you want to go to the City of Peace?"

"For so many reasons. But my greatest desire is to see the one who died for me on that cross. I want to love him with a heart that is free from sin. They also say that there is no death there. I am ready to be with my King."

Tenderness then spoke up. "Are you married? Do you have a family?"

"Yes. I have a wife and four small children."

“So why didn’t you bring them along?”

Christian began to weep, “I wanted to! I really did. But they were completely against me leaving on this pilgrimage. They wouldn’t listen to my warnings of what would come. Nor did they care about the promises that I read in the book. I tried everything. I prayed and prayed. My wife and children are so important to me, but they would have nothing of it. They could see my fears and sorrows written across my face. I couldn’t hide it. But even that couldn’t move their hearts.”

“What kept them from coming then?”

“My wife was afraid of losing everything she had worked to gain. My children had their youth to blame. They couldn’t see past the present moment. So little by little, I was left to walk this path alone.”

Now in my dream they continued talking until they finally sat down together for supper. And it was quite the feast! At first Christian was surprised at all that was offered. However after a moment’s reflection, it made sense. For if someone was willing to die for his followers, would he also not do everything possible to provide those same pilgrims with what they need?

They talked till late in the night, prayed together, and then rested. The ladies of the house took Christian to an upper room which had a window facing the rising sun. The name of the room was Peace, and there he slept till sunrise. As the sun rose over the hills, his heart was filled with gratitude.

Where am I now? What gifts are these?

That they should be poured on someone like me!

I have nothing to offer, but all I’ve been given

The greatest of these, that I’ve been forgiven.

When everyone had woken up and prepared for the day, they spoke together and counseled Christian to wait to depart until he had seen some of the treasures of House Beautiful. They first took him to the library and showed him books and archives from

history long past. There he read the story of the King, his life, what he had done, and those who he had taken into his service. They pointed out how these humble servants had been a part of something greater, their acts of service and sacrifice used to change the world.

They looked at the stories of how certain enemies of the King had been forgiven and brought into his home. There were prophecies and predictions, warnings and encouragements. All day long they studied, filling Christian with hope and confidence.

The next day they took him to the armory and explained the King's strategy for preparing his people. Christian ran his hands across the hilt of the sword, the shield, helmet, breastplate, and shoes. He was amazed at the sheer size of the armory, with enough armor to equip a massive army.

Alongside the armor, Christian saw weapons from other famous battles. He saw the rod of Moses and Jael's hammer and nail. He studied Gideon's trumpets and lamps, and Shamgar's simple goad. There was a donkey's jaw-bone from a fascinating episode in Samson's life, and a small sling from David. Christian was enthralled with the artifacts that he saw and the stories he heard, but this day finally came to a close as well.

Christian awoke in the morning, ready to continue on, but they had something else to show him which would greatly encourage him. They took him up on the rooftop and directed his gaze to the south. There, in the distance he saw a mountainous country, full of beautiful groves, vineyards, streams, and meadows.

"What is that place?" gasped Christian.

"Those are the Delectable Mountains, part of God's country. He has made this place for those on pilgrimage. And from there you can see the gates of the City of Peace."

"Can I start now? I am ready to enter this beautiful land!"

"First you must return to the armory," they counseled him.

There they supplied him with the armor he would need in his upcoming battles. As soon as he was fully armed they led him to the door and sent him off. As he left he asked the porter, "Have you seen any other pilgrims pass this way?"

“Why yes! A pilgrim named Faithful just passed by.”

“Faithful? Why he was one of my former neighbors! How far ahead is he?”

The porter thought for a moment and replied, “By this time he should be at the bottom of the hill.”

And with that Christian set off, accompanied by Discretion, Wisdom, Reverence, and Tenderness. They spoke together as they descended. When they all reached the base of the hill the ladies gave him provisions for the way and returned to House Beautiful.

Christian was alone once again, yet only for a moment. For as soon as the ladies had left, another joined him in that Valley of Humility. It was no other than the feared enemy of every pilgrim, the Destroyer! What was Christian to do? He could flee, but he had no armor to cover his back. He was left with no choice but to stand and fight.

Questions For House Beautiful

- What words would you use to describe Christian's stay at House Beautiful?
- Why do you think it was important for Christian to keep sharing his story as he met with new people on his pilgrimage?
- Of all the different experiences that Christian had at House Beautiful, which one would you most desire?
- Read Hebrews 11. How does this chapter align with Christian's stay at House Beautiful?

Chapter Nine

The Destroyer

Now I saw in my dream that as Christian stood there, the Destroyer slowly approached. He was a hideous monster. He was covered in scales, had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, his mouth was like a lion, and he was covered in smoke and fire.

"Where are you coming from? And where are you going?" he growled.

"I am coming from the City of Destruction and on my way to the City of Peace," Christian answered, with a wavering voice.

"So you are one of my subjects then, for I am the king of that country! Why are you seeking to escape? I could cut you down right now if I didn't have more work for you."

Christian raised his shield and spoke, "That is true. I was born under your flag, but I serve you no longer. Your work was evil and your payment was death. So when I came of age I moved on."

"If you don't like your wages come back and I will give you more!"

"I will not," Christian stated with more force. "For I have already sworn allegiance to a new king, the King of Peace."

"Do not fear, you would not be the first to turn back from this so called king. Believe me, you are better off with me. And if you come now I will forget your former betrayal."

"My answer is 'No!' I will not. First, my new King will forgive what I did under your service. And second, I like his service infinitely better than your vile work. I am his servant now and will follow him."

The Destroyer sneered, "Be careful. You have no idea what you will meet with on your journey. I would hate to see you end up like so many of the others. It is such a pity to see the waste. Do I need to remind you that you have already failed him once? And you think he will still accept you. Ha!"

"How have I failed him?" asked Christian.

"My, how quickly you forget. Don't you remember the Swamp of Discouragement? Or that embarrassing detour to Mr. Popular Opinion? What about sleeping when you should have been walking and forgetting your little piece of paper? And then there was your fear of the lions. I haven't even mentioned your inward pride or vanity." The Destroyer finished his accusation with a sneer.

Christian looked down and spoke softly. "All of that is true...and there is much more that you left out! But the King whom I serve is full of mercy and ready to forgive me!" Then his voice began to rise. "And besides all of this, in your country I was sick of life itself. I groaned under the weight of your evil. And my King has forgiven me all that I did while there!"

The Destroyer reared up in anger. "I hate this King of yours and all who follow him! I will end you!"

Christian stood tall. "I warn you! I am on my King's highway, not yours. Be careful what you do."

"I will be careful," the Destroyer sneered, "I will be careful to crush both your body and soul." And with that he flung a flaming dart at Christian, embedding it deep in his shield.

Christian drew his sword and held his shield fast while the Destroyer threw more and more darts. Some hit their mark, injuring Christian on his head, hands, and feet. Nevertheless, Christian pushed forward and cut at the monster. Back and forth they fought. The hours dragged by, Christian battling for his life. He was growing weaker with each wound.

And then the Destroyer, seeing his opportunity, rushed in on Christian and forced him to the ground. In the fall, Christian's sword flew from his hand. The Destroyer stepped on his chest, standing there gloating. As Christian struggled, a smile crossed the monster's face. "You are lost forever," he whispered.

But in that moment, Christian's fingers found his sword and he plunged it up into the

Destroyer's belly. "You will not rejoice over me! Even though I fall, I will rise again."

Clutching his belly, the Destroyer reared back and fled. Struggling to his feet, Christian called after him, "The one who has loved us has made us the conquerors!"

With the battle ended, Christian knelt and bowed his head.

"I thank the one who delivered me from this beast.

The Father of lies, the captain of devils,

Sought to kill me, and drink his fill.

But when we fought, it was the Lord

Who moved my hand to lift the sword.

And because he kept me in this war,

I will praise him forevermore."

Finishing his song, Christian cleaned his wounds and refreshed himself with the food given to him by the ladies of House Beautiful. When he had gained his strength, he continued through the Valley of Humility, his sword in hand.

But as he left this place of battle he realized that he was not free from danger. For the next valley he must pass through was called the Valley of the Shadow of Death. There was no way around. And Christian would soon find out that his battle with the Destroyer was not the worst that he would face on his pilgrimage.



A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;
Our shelter He, amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great, And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.



Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth is His name, From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.³

3. Luther, Martin. A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. Translated by Frederic Henry Hedge, 1527.

Questions for The Destroyer

- What tactics did the Destroyer use to strike fear into Christian? Which do you think would scare you most?
- What types of accusations could the Destroyer bring up against you?
- What do you think about Christian's response: "All of that is true...and there is much more that you left out! But the King whom I serve is full of mercy and ready to forgive me!"
- How would you counsel a friend who feels as though they are in a fight with the Destroyer?
- Read Luke 4:1-13. What does Jesus do in order to battle the Destroyer?

Chapter Ten

The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death

Now I saw in my dream that as Christian was about to enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, two men came running toward him.

“Stop! Go back! Go back!” they shouted. “If you value your life, go back!”

Christian stopped abruptly and asked, “Why? What is the matter?”

“What’s the matter? We almost died! We were about to enter this Valley, and had we done so, we would never have made it back to you. The valley is dark as coal, and filled with every type of horrible beast. There are goblins, satyrs, and dragons. There are devils, tempters, and witches. And the sound of the place is like that of a prison in hell, with the banging and clanging of shackles. It is horrific!”

Christian stood for a while, considering their words. “I believe you. I do. But I have to go forward. My City lies on the other side and my path leads me through this valley.”

“That is fine with us! You are responsible for your own death. Just keep your sword ready!” one of the men shouted over his shoulder as the two began to run again.

Christian slowly advanced. On his right there was a deep ditch where others had stumbled into and never returned. On his left there was a reeking swamp with no discernible bottom or place to stand. And the path that he walked was so narrow that he had a difficult time not falling into one or the other. Each step was dangerous.

In order to find comfort and strength in the darkness, Christian softly sang a hymn.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,

Pilgrim through this barren land;

I am weak, but thou art mighty;

Hold me with thy powerful hand:

Bread of heaven,

Feed me till I want no more.⁴

As Christian worked his way through this valley he came to a great cavern. Flames and smoke belched forth with sparks and shrieks. It was the very mouth of hell. His sword would do no good here, so he cried out to God, "O Lord, rescue my soul!"

The noises amplified. The smoke and flames intensified. Beasts, both real and imagined, rushed past him. Fears welled up inside. His mind echoed with the question, "Will I be lost, body and soul?"

Christian would have turned back, but he thought he may be more than half way through. If he were, going back would only multiply his miseries. Each step he took he was assaulted by the enemy. His only recourse was to whisper, "I will walk in the strength of my God..."

But even his own voice was a confusion to Christian. At times voices spoke so close and in such a way that Christian thought they were his own thoughts. The lies and insults concerning his King were so near to him that he believed they had originated in his own heart. This only magnified his doubt.

In the midst of this torture, Christian heard another voice crying out above the horrors, "Even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will not fear the evil, because you are with me!"

This greatly encouraged Christian, not only because those words calmed his heart, but also because it meant someone else was nearby. He would be strengthened if there were a fellow pilgrim.

Even as morning dawned, Christian had not caught up to the voice he had heard. But in the middle of his progress, he turned back and saw what he had passed through. He had no desire to return, only to appreciate his deliverance. And looking back over the chasms and fire, the demons and beasts, he had not realized their full dreadfulness until now.

4. Williams, William. *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*, 1745.

But turning back again to the path he realized, that if it were possible, the next portion was even worse. For every step of the way was covered with traps and snares, nets, pits, deep holes, and all manner of danger. If he had attempted to pass this in the night, even with a thousand lives, he would not have escaped. But now in the daylight there was hope. And by this light he passed unhurt.

At the end of the valley Christian passed great piles of bones and ashes. Many of those who had made it this far had still fallen, for there lurked two giants. One's name was Pope, and the other Pagan. Between them they caught whoever they could. Though once mighty, at this moment neither were well, and could only sneer and curse Christian as he passed. Instead of returning their curses, Christian sang out,

Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.



When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of deaths, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee.⁵

5. Ibid.

Leaving this all behind, Christian began to climb out of the valley. There in front of him, hiking up the hill, was another pilgrim. Christian called out to him in his joy, "Wait for me! I will walk with you!"

But the pilgrim didn't even turn or slow. Instead he shouted back, "I will not stop! I am running for my life!"

So Christian pushed himself and ran up the hill, so quickly that he raced past the other pilgrim. A feeling of pride washed over him. But Christian's pride was quickly lost when he stumbled and fell.

Questions for The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death

- Why do you think the original author included episodes where individuals came running toward Christian to stop him? Have you had something similar in your life?
- At what times have you felt that going back might only multiply your miseries?
- Why do you think the enemy voices which Christian heard were so dangerous?
- What do you think is the significance of the two giants at the end of the valley?
- What periods of your life have felt similar to the Valley of the Shadow of Death?
- Read Psalm 23. What is the most meaningful part of this psalm at this period of your life?

Chapter Eleven

Christian and Faithful

Now I saw in my dream that Christian lay on the ground. As Faithful approached he stooped and helped him to his feet. "My good friend!" he said, "I had hoped to catch you before this, since you left our town earlier than I!"

"Once I had heard you were on the path, I had hoped that as well! But how long after I left did you start on your pilgrimage?" Christian replied.

"I left soon after, afraid of the destruction which could fall at any time. I wish others had come as well. We were all talking about you after you had fled. But it appears that for everyone else it was merely talk. There was no real concern, except mine."

"And what about Bendable? What happened to him?"

"We heard nothing from him. The rumor was that he had fallen in the Swamp of Discouragement, but he would never admit to it. He had enough mocking to deal with once everyone saw him leave and then return again. It would have been better for him to never have started. He is now known as 'The Deserter'."

"Well," replied Christian, "when we first started out I had hoped that he would find freedom, but apparently not. And what of you? I would like to hear about your adventures on the path!"

"There is much to say! I evaded the Swamp which you had fallen into, but soon I was confronted by the woman known as Cruel."

"Oh no! Even Joseph, imprisoned in Egypt, nearly fell to her. What did she do to you?"

"You can't even imagine. Her flattery, promises, and seductions were so convincing. I don't even know if I fully escaped."

"What do you mean?" Christian asked. "You are here now."

"I didn't follow her, but I can still hear her voice. I know her steps would lead me to death, but even though I shut my eyes to her beauty, my imagination sometimes pulls

at me.”

“I can believe that.”

The two walked in silence for a time before Christian spoke again. “And did you come across anyone else?”

“When I came to the base of Hill Difficulty I met a very old man. He said his name was The First Adam. He promised that if I moved to his town, Deception, I could work for him and his children: Sensuality, Covetousness, and Pride. If I worked hard, he would provide me with a wife and family and all I could ever want.

“It was tempting. But I remembered that I have a new life, and the old one needs to die. And then I realized he probably would sell me as a slave as soon as I got to his home. So I rejected his offer and kept walking. This caused him to fight and curse me, and he nearly hauled me back with him. Finally I pushed him off and went up the hill, which he had no desire to climb.

“But as I had made it about half-way up the hill, someone came running up to me. How he could run up that hill, I have no idea. But when he reached me he knocked me down. He punched me and kicked me, all because I had told The First Adam ‘no’. And he probably would have killed me if the other would not have stopped him!”

“And who was that?” Christian asked in surprise.

“I didn’t know at first, but as he left I could see that he had scars in his hands and in his side. So I knew it was our King.”

“Ahh,” sighed Christian. “That one who ran up the hill must have been The Law Giver. He shows no mercy.”

“That’s right. And it wasn’t the first time I had met him either. Back in our City he had stopped by my home and threatened to burn it down on top of me if I stayed there.”

“And what about House Beautiful that was just beyond the hill. Did you see it?”

“I did see it, but after I had passed the sleeping lions, I still had much daylight so I

pushed forward.”

“Oh, I wish you could have stopped. There were so many valuable things to see and learn. You would have remembered your visit till your dying day. And it would have helped in the Valley of Humility. Did you see anyone there?”

“Yes, one called Dissatisfaction came up to me and said that it wasn’t worth walking that way. He told me if I kept going that all the popular people, such as Pride, Arrogance, Ego, and Fame, would think I was a fool.”

“So what did you tell him?”

“Well, I told him that they were close relations, but in my old life. Ever since I left on this pilgrimage they had all disowned me. So I now disown them. And then I told him that it is well known that before honor ever appears, humility must be found. So I was content to walk through this brief embarrassment in order to find true glory. But after a while I met with Shame, and he was the worst of them all!”

“And why is that?”

“The others would eventually give up, but this Shame wouldn’t stop. He told me how embarrassing it is that I should look to religion. He told me of how all those who are important and powerful in this world had left it long behind. He told me how exchanging liberty for service is a fool’s choice. He pointed out how rough the pilgrims had it, and how they did not have the degrees or pedigrees that were so important. He mocked my desire to listen to others explain the Great Book. And then he tried to convince me that it was a demonstration of weakness to seek forgiveness and resolution in my relationships. In short, he told me I was an embarrassment.”

“So what did you say?”

“I had little to say! The truth be told, I believed him for a while. But then I began to think, Shame is correct about how humanity really is, but he has no idea about who God is, or his Word. And then, in the final judgment, it won’t be mankind who pronounces the verdict, but God himself. So that settles the questions of who I should care about!

“If God cares about true religion, repentance, love, and mercy, then I should as well. And with that in mind I told him to leave. Not that he did, but from then on I could recognize him for who he truly is. It also helped to sing out loud to drown out his accusations.

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know
It is well, it is well, with my soul.



Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.



My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!⁶

“From that point on my journey has been lonely. I was able to walk in sunshine through the rest of the valley, and even through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, of which I am extremely thankful.”

“What a gift!” spoke Christian. “My path was much different, for once I entered the Valley I came face to face with the Destroyer himself. I nearly died by his hand, but God heard my prayer and rescued me. And then I passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.” At this Christian shuddered. “I thought I would die there as well, but the sun broke through and I finally made it to you.”

6. Spafford, Horatio. *It Is Well with My Soul*, 1873.

Questions for Christian and Faithful

- How do people normally view those who start something but don't follow through? When has that been you? What were your reasons for stopping?
- Do you think the following statement is always true? "And then I told him that it is well known that before honor ever appears, humility must be found."
- Faithful had two encounters with The Law Giver. How would you interpret them?
- Would you agree with Faithful and his description of Shame? Have you ever felt something similar?
- Read Proverbs 7. How does Solomon describe the woman called Cruel? How would the current culture modify this description? What are your opinions about her?

Chapter Twelve

Only Talk

Now I saw in my dream that in their walking they soon came up to one named Only Talk. He appeared tall and handsome, but that impression changed the closer one stood to him.

"Friend, where are you headed?" asked Faithful.

"I am on my way to the City of Peace."

"We as well! It will be good to walk with another pilgrim. Tell us of what you know!"

"I love a good conversation! I am one of the few who enjoys speaking of the deep topics of life, and meaning, and truth. You won't find many who appreciate it more than I do!"

Faithful was pleased to hear this. "It is true! There are so few who care to speak openly about the King and his country!"

"I completely agree with you," replied Only Talk. "There are so many benefits that come from talking through these topics. It is amazing the knowledge and wisdom that comes from understanding the new life, our inability to produce it, our King's forgiveness, and many others. We learn how we ought to pray, and talk, and suffer. And above all, the promises we are given are so comforting!"

"You are so right!" Faithful replied enthusiastically.

Only Talk continued on. "It is no wonder why so few realize their need of faith, grace, and true life. Others just don't understand it!"

"But to be fair, individuals can't understand them just by talking about them. They need a work in their hearts. Only God can do that," Faithful corrected.

"Yes. Yes. Yes. Obviously that is the case. And if you asked, I could easily give you a hundred examples of what you are saying."

"Well," Faithful replied, "what should we talk about first?"

"That is up to you, my friend! I can speak about anything under the sun. You just start the conversation."

Upon hearing this Faithful began to wonder. He stepped closer to Christian and said, "What do you think of our fellow pilgrim here? He sure has potential!"

Christian smiled slightly and shook his head, "He is a talker, all right. He can mesmerize a crowd...as long as they don't recognize him."

"So you know him?"

"Of course!" replied Christian. "Probably better than he knows himself. His name is Only Talk, and he is from our old city. I figured you had known him. But I suppose it was a big city. His father is Sweet Talker and they lived down on Rambling Row."

"Oh. Well, he seems put together."

Christian shook his head again. "Sure, when you first meet him. He is an angel when out and about, but at home he is a devil. I suppose it is because his mouth is full of beautiful words but his heart is another matter."

"If this is true I have been the fool!"

"Just remember what the King said, 'They say one thing and do another.' You can tell who they really are if you look at their life. For Only Talk, I have seen enough of him to know that his words tell different stories than his actions. There is no sign of repentance or proof of real love for the King. If you doubt me, just ask his family and coworkers. They see him at home when the mask is off."

"I can't believe I was fooled by him!"

"Don't worry Faithful. I was too, for a time. But eventually you see the differences between one's words and their actions and you aren't fooled any longer. "

"So then, what do we do to get rid of him?"

"It is actually fairly simple. Just start him talking on true religion, and then ask him if that is how he is living. Then see what he does."

With that Faithful sped up and began conversing with Only Talk once again. "How are you feeling? Are you doing ok?"

"Oh, I am just fine. But I had hoped we would have talked much more by now."

"Well, let's start! Tell me how someone goes about realizing if they are truly following the King or not."

"What a great question! Well, first the individual sees their sin in a new light and then..."

"Hold on! Don't rush past the first. I think you mean to say 'That the individual begins to hate their sin'."

"I don't know that there is much difference between seeing their sin and hating their sin," Only Talk protested.

"But there is! Anyone can see their sin, but only certain ones can hate it. We can see it and still treat it kindly. Only one who hates it will put it to death. Now tell me, what were you going to say next?"

"Well, before you interrupted me I was demonstrating that the person sees their sin and then understands great mysteries about grace."

"Oh, but don't you mean to say 'submits himself to the good news of grace'?"

Frustrated again, Only Talk nearly shouted, "No! I mean 'understands'. That is why I said it!"

"But the King himself told us that we are blessed if we obey what he says, not merely acknowledging it."

"Then have it your way. Why don't you answer the question since I see that my answers don't meet your approval."

"Well," said Faithful, "one can tell if they are truly following the King if they are convicted and crushed by their sin. In seeing and feeling this danger they turn to the King himself who promises to save all those who ask. And to the extent that they are

trusting their King's promise and pardon, so is the extent of their peace and joy, their love for what is good, and their desire to know and serve their King.

"Then this internal reality will be clearly seen by those around them. They will hear of their allegiance to their King from their own mouth. Their life will be characterized by turning from their sin and turning to their King. They will seek to do good, not harm, to others.

"So what do you say, Only Talk? Does this sound like you?"

"Well, now...really..." bumbled Only Talk, "you have put me in a difficult place. I don't really think...I really ought not to say...well, now...I say, why do you ask?"

"Only because your reputation precedes you. I hear your words, but others speak of your actions. Which should I believe?"

"If that is what you think, I can see that it will be of no good to talk any further!" With that Only Talk distanced himself and took another path as soon as he had the opportunity.

"That is no surprise!" said Christian. "I was confident he would respond like that. It is clear that a person is no true follower of the King when they would rather cover over their life with beautiful words than change their actions. It is best to let him go his own way."

Faithful stared off after him. "I guess it was good that we had this conversation. Maybe he will think about it as he walks."

"I hope that is the case, my friend. There is nothing else we can do than speak the truth. How someone accepts it is not in our hands."



When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.



Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.⁷

7. Watts, Isaac. *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, 1707.

Questions for Only Talk

- Have you met someone like Only Talk? Why do people like him appear good from a distance, but not nearly so good when you get closer?
- Do you agree that a person should be judged on their actions and not merely their words? What are some other ways we judge people?
- Do you see a difference between seeing sin and hating sin? Why do you believe that?
- What do you think of Faithful's statement: "And to the extent that they are trusting their King's promise and pardon, so is the extent of their peace and joy, their love for what is good, and their desire to know and serve their King"? Is this something you have seen in your own life?
- Read Matthew 23. How did Jesus view those who said one thing and did another?

Chapter Thirteen

Good News Teller

Now I saw in my dream, as the two were walking and conversing, Faithful looked back and happened to see someone approaching. "Oh! It is Good News Teller!" he exclaimed.

Soon Good News Teller had caught up with them. He smiled at them and blessed them. "Peace to each of you, my brothers; and peace to those who help you!"

"Good News Teller! It is so good to see you. The memories of your kindness and help flood my mind," Christian replied.

"Yes, as Christian said!" Faithful added. "You have brightened our day in ways you could never imagine."

"Well, friends, tell me how you are doing? Tell me of your pilgrimage since we last met. What has passed since then?"

The flood gates opened in Christian and Faithful. They shared the battles they had faced. They talked of their fears and despair in the midst of their danger. They spoke of the blessings they had found along the way. They had many stories to tell.

"I am encouraged," said Good News Teller, "not because you have had so many trials and conflicts, but because you have come out as conquerors. And even though you have found yourself to be weak in many ways, you are still continuing on!"

"It truly gives me such joy. I have planted and you have harvested, and now we can rejoice together since none of us has quit.

"There is a great reward ahead of you, so don't give up. Keep going. Even if it costs you your life, don't turn back. This world will make you doubt, but its promises aren't true. Continue on no matter what happens, for you have been given all the necessary strength and authority in both heaven and earth."

"Thank you, Good News Teller! Your words are good and necessary," replied Christian. "Can you tell us more? You know some of what we will face. Can you give us counsel

so we can be prepared?"

"Of course! You both have heard, and also have seen, that this pilgrimage is not easy nor safe. You must fight many enemies and pass through many dangers in order to arrive at the City of Peace. Each town along the way has chains to restrain you and hardships to trip you up. You will never go far without feeling their presence. You have already seen this in your pilgrimage to this point. Be prepared for more.

"Soon you will leave this region and come to a town that will not be kind or gracious to you. The truth is that they will be your outright enemies. They will want to destroy you by any means possible.

"I promise you, either of you, or both of you, will be pushed to the edge. Stay faithful no matter what. Follow the King and you will receive your reward.

"And if one of you lose your life there, to their hands, it might be even better for you. For you will arrive at the City of Peace first, and also escape the struggles still yet to come on this pilgrimage.

"So be prepared. You will see this soon enough. Be strong. Be courageous. Don't be afraid or depressed. Your King is with you!"

And with those words Good News Teller departed.

Questions for Good News Teller

- Good News Teller was thankful that Christian and Faithful had found themselves to be weak in many ways but were still continuing on. Do you think it is a strength to see your own weakness? How does this align with, or disagree with, the current culture?
- What do you think Good News Teller was trying to communicate when he said, "This world will make you doubt, but its promises aren't true"?
- If you had a choice, would you want to know, or remain ignorant, about the upcoming battles you will face? Why?
- Read 2 Timothy 3. What was Paul's purpose in warning Timothy? Do his warnings remain applicable today?

Chapter Fourteen

The Town of Empty Promises

Now I saw in my dream that they approached a town. It hosted a market year round by the name of Empty Promises, and therefore the town was known as the Town of Empty Promises.

This market was nothing new. Rather, it was an ancient event. Its beginnings were covered in shadow, but what was clearly known was that it had begun thousands of years before when three travelers decided to set up a market where they could sell their goods. They desired to sell homes, property, honor, titles, and countries. Along with their products, they would provide any type of pleasure desired. There would be crass comedians, tricksters, sneaking magicians, sexual favors, and slavery. There would be jewelry and treasures, modern fashion and relics. At any time of day or night, one could be entertained with fights and dances, intoxicants and stimulants, flashing lights and dark shadows. While the underbelly of crime, extortion, and murder would be known, it would be hidden and hushed, so as not to affect business.

Those three founders of the market were none other than the Prince of Lies, the Destroyer, and the Commander of Demons.

This market was so large it had row upon row of venders. And within its large area there were designated areas of pleasure for each culture. No matter the origin of the pilgrim there was always something to their taste.

The problem was that the path of Christian and Faithful led straight through this town. It was impossible for them, or any pilgrim, to go another way. Even the King himself had to walk through the Town of Empty Promises. And while he navigated the streets he had at his side the very Prince of Lies to offer him all the world's promises. Even with such a salesman, the King still had no desire to buy what could be sold.

Now as these pilgrims entered the town, they immediately caused an uproar. In every direction the inhabitants were talking about them. The two could hear the comments whispered as they walked.

"Look at their strange clothing!"

"They must be trouble makers."

"I think they are merely fools."

What most upset the town was the disregard the pilgrims showed for the goods being sold. "They don't even look at them!" exclaimed one vender.

"Or even attempt to bargain," said another. "They just keep walking and don't even take a second look."

"Tell us what you want to buy!" came the mocking cry of one of the venders.

Christian and Faithful stopped and answered. "We buy the truth."

That one statement sent the crowd into an uproar. Some mocked. Others yelled. Many called for the authorities. It was not long before the two pilgrims were arrested and questioned.

"Where are you coming from?"

"Where are you going?"

"Why are you dressed that way?"

"We are pilgrims on our way to the City of Peace. We have done nothing wrong, nor harmed anyone. We simply have no need of what this market offers. We are looking for truth."

That was enough for the police, and they were dragged away and beaten. They were humiliated and smeared with mud. Then they were placed into a cage in the middle of the market for all to laugh at.

There they sat for a long time. They were the mockery of the town. Men, women, and children took their turns staring, laughing, and mocking them. But the two men were patient. They tried to speak good to those who cursed them but this only resulted in more insults and threats.

There were some who watched from the outside of the mob. They saw the peace and

kindness in Christian and Faithful. They wondered at how they could be full of hope and joy. Most of these observers did not dare say anything because of the crowd, but a few did. And those who did were turned on and attacked for merely stating the obvious.

Some time later the two pilgrims were dragged before the authorities. They were interrogated again. Then beaten. Then displayed in an attempt to deter others who thought about following their example.

This treatment, however, did not affect how the pilgrims reacted. They responded with more gentleness and peace. This in itself caused some of the observers to join their side, causing the townspeople to yell even louder. For in addition to their words, according to the venders, these pilgrims were spreading false information and misleading their countrymen!

While Christian and Faithful sat and listened to the accusations and lies, they remembered their friend, Good News Teller. He had warned them and prepared them for this. This comforted them for, in spite of this suffering, they knew that they were on the right path. This made them wonder in their hearts which of them might give up their life here.

After some time they were brought before the judge of the town, Sir Hate-Good. The accusations were read for the court. "These men have disturbed the peace and endangered our town. They have caused an insurrection and have spread false information. They, and their ideas, are a danger to society!"

Upon hearing these accusations, Faithful stood up and answered. "I have only refused what is refused by my King. I am contrary to only what is contrary to him. In regards to the insurrection, I am a man of peace and have no desire for riots or mobs. Rather than being forced to believe, those who have defended us have done so because they saw our desire for truth. And in reference to your king, the Prince of Lies, you are correct. I refuse to obey him."

Hearing Faithful's answer, the judge called for witnesses. Three entered the courtroom: Envy, Superstition, and Groveler. All three acknowledged the judge and then glared at the pilgrims.

Envy was the first to present his testimony. "Your Honor, I have known this Faithful for a long time, and he is one of the worst. He has no regard for our Prince of Lies, our customs, or our people. All he speaks about is faith and holiness. His religion is completely opposite of our own. And when he speaks against our beliefs, his hate speech harms us. Your Honor, I could say much more, but I need not take more of your time. There is plenty to condemn him."

Then Superstition stood up and addressed the court. "Your Honor, I do not know this man very well at all. But I do know this, that when I spoke with him the other day, I heard him say that our religion was incapable of doing us any good. In his words then, what we are doing is pointless and impotent. We will be condemned."

Finally, Groveler stood up and gave his statement. "I, along with Envy, have known this character for a long time. I can attest to his hateful words toward our Prince of Lies, as well as to other important rulers in our land such as Lord Old Life, Lord Pleasure, Lord Luxury, Lord Desire of Attention, Lord Debauchery, and all the other nobility of our lands. He claimed that if we were wise we would allow none of these respected officials to live in our town. And above this, he has not even spared you, Your Honor, in his hostile words!"

Sir Hate-Good, nearly boiling in anger after hearing this last statement, stood up and yelled at Faithful. "You traitor! You denier! You heretic! Do you hear these accusations?"

"May I make my defense?" Faithful asked.

"A defense! You don't deserve to live a second longer! However, since I am kind and compassionate, I will allow you to make a final statement, you miserable worm."

Faithful stood and addressed the crowd. "As to the testimony of Envy, all that I said was that those laws or customs which are against the Word of the King, are opposite of truth. If I said more than this, I will acknowledge it and correct it.

"As far as Superstition, I merely told him that whatever is done in the name of God, but not based in the Book of the King, is worthless and won't lead to the City of Peace.

“And finally, in regards to the accusations of Groveler, I stated that the Prince of Lies, and all others like him, find their true home in hell, not here. God have mercy on me.”

With that the judge stood and asked the jury, “Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard these words. You have seen the uproar. You have listened to the testimony of these upstanding citizens of our town.

“And now, let me remind you of our laws. Since the time of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, our laws have stated that those who do not submit themselves to the truths we have decided on must be cast to the beasts and fire. Now, determine your verdict.”

The jury stood and went out. They were only gone for a few moments before they all returned and gave their unanimous decision that Faithful was guilty of all charges. They each stood and gave their own statement:

Mr. Blind-man: “I can clearly see that he is a heretic.”

Mr. No-good: “He deserves to die!”

Mr. Hatred: “Exactly! I hate him.”

Mr. Appetite: “I can’t stand to be near him.”

Mr. Free-Living: “Nor I. I couldn’t handle his pious attitude.”

Mr. Thinker: “Hang him. That is all.”

Mr. Self-Centered: “He is pathetic.”

Mr. Conflict: “I am burning with anger just by looking at him!”

Mr. Liar: “He is good for nothing.”

Mr. Cruelty: “Don’t hang him. That is too good for his kind! Torture him!”

Mr. Hate-light: “End his life.”

Mr. Unforgiving: “Even if you were to give me the whole world, I still could never

handle seeing him. He needs to die.”

With these words still ringing in the air, Faithful was dragged from the assembly, beaten, and killed. And as I watched, I saw a chariot and horses waiting in the winds. For as soon as Faithful had given up his life, they rushed in and carried him into the clouds. Trumpets sounded and he was carried to the City of Peace.

Christian remained in prison for some time. However, one night he was able to escape. He rejoiced in his freedom as he fled the city, but he also ached in the absence of his friend. Two had entered. One left alone. Yet even in his loneliness, he sang:

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me.



Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,

But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings,

Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea—

Come, Friend of sinners, and thus bide with me.



Thou on my head in early youth didst smile;

And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,

Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee,

On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.



I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.



I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.



Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.⁸

8. Lyte, Henry Francis. *Abide With Me*, 1847.

Questions for The Town of Empty Promises

- If you were to locate this Town of Empty Promises in your current culture, where would it be? How would you go about describing it?
- How did the townspeople react to Christian and Faithful's desire for truth? What is the most commonly accepted idea of truth in your culture?
- When Christian and Faithful respond with patience and kindness to the mob, it caused some to join their side and others to react with multiplied hate. Why do you think that happened?
- How would you describe the court process in this town? Have you ever seen something that seemed similar?
- Read Psalm 7. What did David, the author, do when he was falsely accused? What process did he follow? What can we learn from him about our own times of being accused?

Chapter Fifteen

By-Any-Means

Now I saw in my dream that Christian was not alone for long. For soon, a young man came running out to him.

"May I join you in your pilgrimage?" he asked.

"That depends. Are you a follower of the King?" Christian asked.

"I believe so. I watched your friend and listened to his words. I was convicted by what he said and convinced by how he lived. I want to journey to the City of Peace also."

Christian looked at the young man and smiled. "One dies so another might live. From the ashes arises new life. That is truly the work of the King! What is your name?"

"I am called Hopeful."

"Then let us walk together Hopeful!"

The two continued on and soon met up with another. "Where are you from, sir?" asked Christian.

"I am from the town of Flowery Words and am on my way to the City of Peace."

"Flowery Words? Is there anything good in the town?"

"I think so!"

"Well then, what is your name?" asked Christian.

"We are strangers. If you are going this way, I will accompany you, but if not, I am content to walk by myself," was the only answer.

Christian paused for a moment. He had to think before he continued on. "I have heard of your town before. They say it is a wealthy town."

"That it is! I have many rich family members there."

"Oh! And what are their names?"

"Well, I'm related to nearly the whole town. There is Lord Change, Lord Busy, Lord Flowery Speech (whose grandparents founded the town), and also Mr. Convincing, Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Whatever-you-want, and the pastor, Mr. Two-tongues. I am related to them all. In fact, my grandfather was a boatman on the sea, looking one way and rowing the other. That is how I made my living as well."

"And are you married?" Christian asked.

"Why yes, I am. My wife is a very good woman from the family name of Fake. She definitely knows how to carry herself in the best of society. And while it is true that we are different from others, we have much in common. Really, the only difference you might find is in two small areas. First, we never fight against the wind or tide. Second, we are very religious when it is in our best interest."

Upon hearing this, Christian whispered to Hopeful, "I now know who this is. This man is By-Any-Means, and he is known to be a cheat."

"You should ask him then. He shouldn't be ashamed of his own name!" replied Hopeful.

Christian spoke up, "I think I know you. Isn't your name By-Any-Means?"

"No, no, no. That is not my real name, but a nickname given to me by others who don't like me. I can't change what others call me, so I won't fight it."

"How did you get such a nickname then?"

"I didn't do anything to deserve it except to be able to get on the right side of history. Whenever I sensed the opinion changing, I was first to get on the right side!"

"That makes sense," Christian replied. "And if this is the case, I don't think we will be good companions for you, for this pilgrimage is all about going against the wind and tide, being mocked for following our King, and ignoring applause."

"Well, you don't worry about me and I won't worry about you."

With that Christian and Hopeful moved ahead. Farther down the path Hopeful looked back and saw three other pilgrims join with By-Any-Means. They appeared to be old acquaintances and Christian knew them as Mr. Hold-the-World, Mr. Love-Money, and Mr. Guard-Everything. They had all attended school together with By-All-Means and had been taught by Sir Complaining in the school of Desire. There they were taught how to get whatever they needed through fighting, flattery, lying, and pretending. They had learned so well they could become teachers in their own school!

The two pilgrims overheard their conversation as they spoke loudly to one another.

"Well, hello there! Who is walking up ahead?" shouted Mr. Love-Money.

"Oh, those are just a couple pilgrims on their journey. Not the best companions if I do say so myself. They are too rigid and fail to adapt their faith to the times," replied By-Any-Means.

"Good observations! Bigots like them think they are the only right ones. But what was their argument with you?"

"Oh, their pride pushed them to ignore the weather and times, and march on. While I, on the other hand, make sure to wait for sunnier weather and better company. They will give up anything for their King, while I am making sure to not put all my eggs in one basket, if you know what I mean. I know the best time to switch course or jump ship. Not they!"

At this, Mr. Hold-the-World spoke up. "Very true! Only a fool would give up what he has earned for something he has yet to see. There is a proper time for every endeavor, and only a fool would walk when rain threatens. And for my own part, I prefer to believe that God's favor is best measured by his gifts to us. If we have plenty of possessions, he is plenty pleased with us!"

Mr. Guard-Everything nodded his head in agreement. "Very true!"

"Now instead of dwelling on these fools, let me ask you all a question," spoke By-All-Means. "Let's assume that someone, a minister, or business man, has the opportunity to make a good life for himself. But to do so he has to dedicate himself, at least

externally, to something that he really doesn't believe in. Can he do this and still be considered an honest man?"

Mr. Love-Money smiled and answered. "I see where you are headed. Let's say that this minister sees he could speak out against something, or for something, with more energy (obviously depending on his audience), and thereby gain a broader following. Even if he has to modify his faith, I think it is not only acceptable, but necessary. Perhaps God has placed him in this position for such a time as this, and he could use this new popularity for some great purpose!

"And if the person is a business man, it only makes sense. If he can broaden his base by marrying well, getting a good reputation, joining the right groups, and by adding his voice to the crowd, then he should. When religion helps him, use it! There is no law against any of those."

Everyone applauded after Mr. Love-Money finished. However Christian and Hopeful bristled and slowed their pace. Once the others had caught up, they all began to talk. Soon By-Any-Means asked Christian the same question.

Christian thought and then answered. "This isn't a difficult question to answer, because we have the King's own word. When others followed him just to eat the bread he gave, he moved on. They were not true followers who were only in it for their gain. He called them hypocrites, pharisees, snakes. Judas Iscariot was their representative.

"If someone will believe in order to get money, for money he will leave the faith. What convinces you can dissuade you."

This answer did not receive an applause. Rather, all walked in silence for a time, the small company putting space between themselves and the two pilgrims.

After a time Christian looked back, and seeing the distance said to Hopeful, "If this is how they act when a mere man speaks, how will they react when God himself judges them?"

As the two walked they soon crossed over a narrow stretch of land called Ease. It was a beautiful little area, but hardly had they entered before they were leaving again. On

the far end there was a hill with a silver mine in it. In front of the entrance a man named Demas called to the pilgrims, "Come on in and make a little money for your travels!"

"What could possibly get us off our path to the City of Peace?" asked Christian.

"This silver mine is rich and deep. What you mine, you keep. This is a great way to store up some money for your journey that the King has called you to make!"

Hopeful looked at Christian and said, "What a great opportunity!"

"Not for me!" Christian replied. "I have heard of this place. The mine is dangerous. And if you survive the work, the treasure is cursed. We wouldn't be the first pilgrims to lose our way, or our lives, from this detour."

"Well now," said Demas, "it isn't that dangerous!" But both pilgrims could see the lie in his eyes.

"Let's keep going," whispered Christian.

"I agree. But I bet anything that By-All-Means will stop."

As they walked on, Demas called out, "Won't you even take a moment to look inside?"

"Demas, don't try to stop us!" Christian yelled over his shoulder. "You are an enemy and condemned by our King already. Don't encourage us to follow your example."

Just moments later, Hopeful was proved right. By-All-Means and his company veered from the path and stopped to see the mine and make some money. None of them were ever seen again.

Then Christian sang a hymn along the way.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?



In every condition, in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.



Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.



When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.



When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.



Even down to old age all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.



The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.⁹

9. Keene, R. *How Firm a Foundation*, 1787.

Questions for By-Any-Means

- What impression do you get of By-Any-Means as he is explaining his hometown and family?
- What motivated Christian to go against the wind and tide, suffer through being mocked, and ignoring applause? What motives you to do this?
- What do you think of the phrase, "God's favor is best measured by his gifts to us"? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- What are some ways you have seen others sacrifice their beliefs for a broader platform? Why is it such a temptation?
- How does Demas' mine further explain the story earlier in the chapter?
- Read 2 Kings 5. How does this episode in Israel's history compare with this chapter and current examples of greed?

Chapter Sixteen

Still Waters

Now I saw in my dream that as the pilgrims had left this plain, they saw an old monument beside the road. Its shape was strange and alarming, almost like a person who had been transformed. Neither knew what it could be until Hopeful saw an inscription at the very top. It said, "Remember Lot's Wife." At this Christian understood and explained it to Hopeful.

"It is from a story right out of the book of Genesis. This woman looked back at her former city while it was being destroyed for its evil. This was the result. We are fortunate considering how close we were to doing just the same back there. It is a good thing we did not give in to Demas' offer, or this could have been us."

"Thank you, Christian. If you wouldn't have said something, I would have followed his guidance. I wanted to go see the mine and work a little. But if this woman only looked back, nothing more, how much worse would my end have been. I was so close to this fate!"

"I suppose it is a good lesson for us. She escaped one judgement and fell into another. That could be us at any moment."

"But how could Demas and the others be so confident in their search and not be like this woman here? She just turned back. They are camped out there!" Hopeful replied.

"I don't understand either. How can some commit crimes in front of a judge and still seem to get away? I don't know. But that isn't for us to determine. God judges, not us."

Hopeful thought for a time and replied. "You are right. It isn't up to us. I am just thankful that we are not in either of those positions now."

I saw then that they arrived at a calm river, full of life-giving water. They enjoyed walking along the shaded path and drinking from the clear, refreshing water. Everything about the place encouraged them. Along the path there were fruit trees and medicinal plants. They rested in the green meadow. They were safe.

For several days they enjoyed this, basking in this gift of God.

Finally, when they were ready to continue on, they ate and drank once more, and moved on.

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear.



It makes the wounded spirit whole,

And calms the troubled breast;

'Tis manna to the hungry soul,

And to the weary, rest.



Dear Name, the Rock on which I build,

My Shield and Hiding Place,

My never failing treasury, filled

With boundless stores of grace!



By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,

Although with sin defiled;

Satan accuses me in vain,

And I am owned a child.



Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,

O Prophet, Priest and King,

My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,

Accept the praise I bring.



Weak is the effort of my heart,

And cold my warmest thought;

But when I see Thee as Thou art,

I'll praise Thee as I ought.



Till then I would Thy love proclaim

With every fleeting breath,

And may the music of Thy Name

Refresh my soul in death!¹⁰

10. Newton, John. *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds*, 1779.

Questions for Still Waters

- Are there other individuals or stories that have been used to warn you from making bad decisions? How have they helped you?
- When have you had the same thought as Hopeful, "How come some get away with evil and others do not?" What would you say to someone who asked you that question?
- Under what circumstances would you want to remember the counsel of Christian, "But that isn't for us to determine. God judges, not us"?
- Read Genesis 19. What surprises you? What questions are you left with? What does this teach us about God and man?

Chapter Seventeen

The Castle of Doubt

Now I saw in my dream that it didn't take them long to leave the comforts of the stream behind. The path became more difficult and their feet began to ache. In their discomfort, Christian looked up and saw that over the low stone wall there was a meadow with an easier path running through it. That place was called By-path Meadow.

"Why don't we just follow that path, Hopeful, for as long as it borders our own?" Christian asked.

"But won't that lead us in the wrong direction?"

"I wouldn't worry about it. It looks like it runs right beside our path."

So Hopeful and Christian crossed over and found that it was much easier to follow. They also were pleased to be joined by another traveler named Self Deceived.

"Where are you headed?" Christian asked.

"I am on my way to the City of Peace!"

Christian turned to Hopeful and said, "See, I told you we would be fine!"

They continued on together until it began to grow dark and they lost Self Deceived to the shadows. After the darkness had overtaken them they heard him cry out in the night. He had fallen into a deep pit right beside the path.

The two called and called, but there was no answer. This caused Hopeful to begin to doubt their decision again. "I don't think we are on the right path. It is dark and the rain is coming. How I wish we would have stayed on the path!"

"But who would have known that the path would lead us here. We couldn't have guessed," Christian replied.

"I did, but I only mentioned my doubt. I should have spoken my thoughts more clearly."

"It is my fault," Christian confessed. "I shouldn't have led us this way. I didn't want this to happen. Please forgive me for what I did."

"Of course I forgive you. We will find our way again."

So the two turned to go back, but realized that they would have to return across the stream. But by this time it had risen considerably and they would risk drowning. There was no way they could return in the dark and still survive. So they decided to wait out the night in a little shelter they found along the path.

Not far from where they sat stood a great fortress called The Castle of Doubt. The lord of that place was a giant named Giant Despair. The two pilgrims had the misfortune to be sleeping on his land.

Early the next morning, before Christian and Hopeful had awoken, Giant Despair found them. He woke them up and demanded to know where they were going and what they were doing. They explained that they were pilgrims and had gotten lost.

"You have trespassed on my property and for that you will be punished." He dragged them back to his castle and placed them in his dark dungeon. Its smell made them sick, and the dampness seeped into their bones. That is where they lay from Wednesday until Saturday night. They had no food, no water, and no light. They were all alone. Christian felt twice as bad because it was his fault that they had ended up here.

Now Giant Despair was married, and his wife's name was Distrust. When Giant Despair asked what she thought about the pilgrims, she told him, "Beat them without mercy."

So that is what Giant Despair did. He grabbed a club and descended to the dungeon. There he beat them until they could do nothing but lay on the floor and moan. There they lay the rest of that day.

The following evening Distrust told her husband what to do next. So Giant Despair, on his wife's orders, descended into the dungeon and explained to the pilgrims, "Neither of you will ever live to see light again. You will never be freed. It would be better if you took your own lives. You can choose a knife, a rope, or poison. But there is no point in living if this will be your life."

The two pilgrims begged for their lives, but this only caused the giant to rage even more. He would have beaten them to death had he not lost the strength in his arms. This would sometimes happen, mostly on sunny days. The effect was so dramatic that in a moment the giant would lose all his strength. When his disability struck, all he could do was stumble from the dungeon.

As soon as he had left, the two pilgrims began to talk. "What should we do?" asked Christian. "This life is miserable. Wouldn't the grave be easier?"

"You are right," Hopeful replied, "this is miserable. But we can't forget what our King told us, 'Don't murder.' And wouldn't we be murdering ourselves? If we were to kill ourselves, wouldn't we demonstrate that we were no more than murderers ourselves, and go to where murderers go?"

"And we must remember that Giant Despair isn't in complete control. Others have been caught by him and escaped. Maybe we will have the same opportunity! Or maybe he will leave the dungeon unlocked, or have one of his fits. If that happens, I am going to do my best to escape."

"So let's be patient and wait for an escape. And for sure, we must not kill ourselves."

That evening Giant Despair came down and found them alive. He was furious. "You should have taken my advice!" he yelled. "You will wish you had never been born!"

At this Christian trembled and fainted. He had eaten nothing for days and his body had been beaten. When he came to, he did all he could to convince Hopeful that they should follow the giant's advice and kill themselves.

"Christian! Remember how courageous you were with the Destroyer, or in the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Remember the fear that you felt but were not controlled by it? And then remember how you acted in the Town of Empty Promises? You don't need to bow before this giant. We are together. Let us see how we are rescued!"

That night, upon hearing of the prisoners, Distrust told her husband what to do. "Tomorrow, take them to the pile of bones. Show those pilgrims all that is left of those like them who were caught on this property. That will finish them."

That is exactly what the giant did the next morning. "Here is what awaits you!" he said with a laugh. "No one else has survived. And in less than ten days, I will add your bones to this pile." And with that he forced them back to the dungeon.

There they lay all Saturday. About midnight they began to pray, and they continued until it was almost dawn. It was at this dark hour when Christian exclaimed, "I am such a fool! Here we are in this stinking dungeon when we could be free! I have the Key of Promise right here around my neck. This key is able to unlock many doors!"

"Let's try it!" Hopeful cried out.

When Christian placed the key in the lock they were amazed. The door swung open with ease! They passed through it quietly and tried it on the door opening to the yard. It worked perfectly. Finally they tried it on the great iron gate of the fortress, and with some pushing, it opened that last door as well. However, all the creaking of the rusted gate woke the giant. When he saw his prisoners escaping he rushed after them. As though it were planned, the sun rose over the horizon and put him into one of his fits. With the giant hardly able to move, the two pilgrims made it back to the King's Highway.

"What should we do so that others don't make the same mistake?" they wondered. They finally decided upon putting up a sign that read, "Beyond this point lives the Giant Despair who keeps the Castle of Doubt and hates the King of the City of Peace. He will attempt to kill all who trespass here!"

When they finished with their sign, they sang the following song:

Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,

till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last.



Other refuge have I none,
hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah! leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenseless head
with the shadow of thy wing.



Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
more than all in thee I find;
raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
false and full of sin I am;
thou art full of truth and grace.



Plenteous grace with thee is found,
 grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound,
make and keep me pure within.

Thou of life the fountain art,
 freely let me take of thee;
spring thou up within my heart;
 rise to all eternity.¹¹

11. Wesley, Charles. *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*, c. 1740.

Questions for The Castle of Doubt

- When have you tried an easier path and found that it led you into more trouble?
- What do you think of the author's description of Giant Despair and the Castle of Doubt? How would you go about describing your own times of discouragement?
- How would you help a friend who was struggling with their own battle against Giant Despair and his wife, Distrust? What hope would you give them? What practical advice is found in this chapter?
- What do you think is the basis for Christian's Key of Promise? When has something similar come to your rescue?
- Read Psalm 88. How does this psalm help us in our own time spent in the Castle of Doubt?

Chapter Eighteen

Delightful Mountains

Now I saw in my dream that they continued on, nearly running to get that dreadful place behind them. They soon came to the Delightful Mountains. As they journeyed through them, they came across gardens and orchards, vineyards and streams of water. They ate whenever they felt hungry and drank from the clear streams. Their trials of the past faded in their memory.

Now in these mountains were Shepherds who kept large flocks. The pilgrims approached them and spoke with them. "Whose Delightful Mountains are these? And whose sheep are these?" they asked.

"These mountains belong to the King of Peace and you can see them from his City. We are the keepers of his sheep. He would give up his life for them."

"Then this is the way to the City of Peace?" Christian asked.

"That is correct."

"How far do we have yet to go then?" Christian replied.

"It is too far to go for anyone who will not make it all the way there," answered one of the shepherds.

"Well, is the rest of the journey safe or dangerous?"

"It is safe for those for whom it will be safe. However, those who don't belong will find it extremely dangerous."

"Will there be any place of refuge and refreshment for pilgrims who are tired and hungry along the way?" Christian asked.

"The King has instructed us to host strangers, and care for those who need it. So you are free to enjoy all that is offered here."

Once Christian had finished with his questions the Shepherds asked their own. They had many, for very few pilgrims made it this far on the path.

They asked questions such as: "Where did you come from?" "Why did you start your pilgrimage?" "What has helped you to keep going through the difficulties?"

When Christian and Hopeful shared their answers the Shepherds were very pleased. They were encouraged to hear of the perseverance of these pilgrims and how the King had brought them through each struggle.

"Welcome to the Delightful Mountains!" they told the pilgrims.

The Shepherds' names were Knowledge, Experience, Observant, and Genuine. They took the pilgrims by the hand and led them to a place of rest. There they had them sit and eat food that they prepared. "We would be honored to have you rest here for a while and gain strength for the journey ahead."

The night was quickly approaching and so the pilgrims gladly accepted. They slept soundly now that their stomachs were full.

In the morning when they awoke, the Shepherds invited Christian and Hopeful to walk with them in the mountains. On every side the Shepherds showed them beautiful views.

"Should we caution these pilgrims before they depart?" they asked among themselves. When they decided to do so, they led the two to the top of the hill called Fallacy. It was steep on either side.

"Look down at the bottom and tell us what you see."

Christian and Hopeful looked down. "It looks like some have fallen from here and did not survive."

"That is correct. Those pilgrims stepped off the trail and followed their own ideas, not the King's. They are a reminder to all others on this path."

They then showed them to the top of another mountain called Caution. "Look off in the distance and tell us what you see."

Christian and Hopeful squinted, attempting to see. After a long time one of them said,

"It looks to me like there are men wandering among tombs. They stumble along as though they cannot see."

"You have seen correctly. That meadow is connected to a path which leads right to the Castle of Doubt where a giant named Despair lives. Those that you see staggering around the tombs are pilgrims whom he has caught and gouged out their eyes. He lets them wander around, knowing they can never escape."

Upon hear this Christian and Hopeful looked at each other. They were both crying.

The Shepherds led them further and showed them a cave at the base of a mountain. "Look inside here," they said.

The pilgrims peered inside the dark and smoky cave. There was the sound of a great fire and screams from somewhere deep inside.

"What is this place?" whispered Christian.

"This is the back door to hell. This entrance is mostly used by hypocrites. Men such as Esau or Judas have passed through here."

Hopeful looked back, "They were once pilgrims like us, weren't they?"

"That is correct," the Shepherds replied.

"Then how long can a false pilgrim go before he is shown to be fake?"

"Some make it further and some don't make it quite this far."

Christian and Hopeful looked at each other and said, "We need the King's help if we are to succeed."

"Yes, you do. And he will give it," came the Shepherds' reply.

By this time both the pilgrims were ready to continue, and the Shepherds encouraged them to do so. They led them toward the end of the mountains and showed them one last thing. They took them to the top of a final mountain, the one called Clear, and handed them a golden instrument. "Look through this toward the horizon. There you

will see the gates of the City of Peace.”

After the warnings they had just seen, the pilgrims had difficulty keeping their hands from shaking. This made it very difficult to see anything. However, they thought they saw something that looked like a gate. Whatever they saw, it was clear that there was something beautiful there.

As they were leaving, one of the Shepherds gave them advice about the path. Another one warned them about someone called the Flatterer. The third advised them not to sleep on the Enchanted Ground. The fourth gave them a blessing, “God be with you.”

And off they walked singing.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
save from wrath and make me pure.



Not the labors of my hands
can fulfill thy law's commands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.



Nothing in my hand I bring,
simply to the cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress;
helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly;
wash me, Savior, or I die.



While I draw this fleeting breath,
when mine eyes shall close in death,
when I soar to worlds unknown,
see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee.¹²

12. Toplady, Augustus. *Rock of Ages*, 1775.

Questions for Delightful Mountains

- What aspect of the Delightful Mountains interests you the most?
- What would you say are the principle dangers of which the Shepherds warned?
- What aspect of the Christian life does this chapter best describe?
- Read John 10:1-21. How does this passage relate to what you have read about the Delightful Mountains?

Chapter Nineteen

Ignorance

Now I saw in my dream that the two pilgrims continued walking toward the City. On one side of the path was a land called Arrogance with a crooked path winding through it. As they passed by they met up with a young man who was in a hurry.

"What is your name and where are you going?" asked Christian.

"My name is Ignorance. I was born very near to here. However, even though I was born in this place, the very best of places in fact, I am heading to the City of Peace!"

"But will the guards let you in? Won't you have problems?" asked Christian.

"I don't think so. I assume I will walk through the same gates as any other person."

"But do you have any credentials, proof that they should open the gate for you?"

"Oh, of course," Ignorance replied. "I know many of the teachings of the King. I am a good person. I treat everyone well. Periodically I give money to help others. That should be sufficient."

Christian looked concerned. "But you didn't come through the narrow gate which is the entrance to this whole journey. You can't just make up your own rules."

"Gentlemen, you are strangers. I would suggest that you follow your religion, and allow me to follow mine. Your gate is too far for me. And not only that, it is unnecessary since this path leads right beside yours."

Hopeful leaned over to Christian and whispered, "I don't think it is worth our time to speak with a fool. Maybe if we keep walking, his heart will be softened and we can help him understand. But talking to him now only hardens him more."

So the two continued on together with Ignorance trailing behind. As they were walking through a very dark section of the forest they came across one man being led by another. He was being taken back to the cave the Shepherds had shown them, the gate to hell. The man was bound and walked with his head bowed. Both Christian and

Hopeful trembled.

"I know this man," Christian whispered. "He is Mr. Turn-Back from the town of Betrayal."

They watched as he was led past them. Then Christian whispered again, "I think something similar happened awhile back. I remember a story of a man called Small-Faith. He was a good man and lived in the town of Sincere. Well, when he started on his pilgrimage he was met by three villains: Fearful, Suspicion, and Guilt. In an alleyway the three attacked Small-Faith. Fearful stepped forward and ordered, 'Give me your money.' Small-Faith refused, so Suspicion lunged forward and grabbed what he could from his pockets. Small-Faith called out, 'Thieves! Help! Help!' And in all of this, Guilt, afraid of being caught, took a club and hit him on the head. Small-Faith lay on the ground surrounded by his own blood, and the thieves would have taken everything except they heard someone coming."

"Then what happened?" asked Hopeful.

"Well, they had stolen his money, but he had some jewels on him that they had missed, as well as his credentials for the City of Peace. He didn't want to sell either of those, so he was forced to go hungry most of the way to the City."

"But why didn't he just sell the jewels if he was so hungry?"

"I guess because he couldn't bear to think about losing those as well. Often we forget what we really have when our mind is stuck on what we have lost."

"It sounds to me like those men were cowards. Why didn't Small-Faith fight back?" Hopeful asked.

"You are right! They were cowards. But Small-Faith didn't have any more courage than they did. And I doubt whether we would have any more if we were in the same position as he was."

"But they ran away when they thought someone was coming. Who would they have been afraid of?"

"The King's champion, Great-Grace. There is no one like him. And we can't expect that Small-Faith would have the same courage as the King's champion. And even with that title, he is still scarred and bruised in each attack. These villains do not fight fair. And when they sense that they will lose, they call directly to their master.

"And we need to be careful, lest we think we are so much better than anyone else. We can imagine ourselves to be brave or strong, but we would fall just the same. I think I may be more like Peter the Apostle than I would like to imagine. Even a small girl caused him to lie and run."

Hopeful looked concerned. "If it is really that dangerous, how are the two of us supposed to continue on?"

"I think we keep doing what we are doing right now. First, we go prepared, expecting that we will face these types of dangers. A danger expected is only half as dangerous.

"The second thing we do is move forward together. With two we are safer, and a third is even better. We can trust that the King is close."

The two walked in silence for a time until they came to a place where another path merged into their path, and nearly followed the same route. It was confusing as to which to follow, so the two sat and considered it. While they were studying their options, a man in a white robe, but shadowed hood, came and spoke to them.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"We are going to the City of Peace," they answered together.

"Excellent! You have chosen wisely. You are two of the only ones who could withstand such dangers. Follow me and I will lead you for I am headed there as well."

So the two stood and followed him. They walked together for hours, listening to his kind words, but not noticing that by small degrees the path turned away from the true path. Eventually they were walking in the opposite direction of the City. And then, when they were beyond help, the man threw a net over the two men and trapped them.

In the chaos that followed the hood fell off the man and Christian explained, "I should have known! The Shepherds warned us of the Flatterer. He would lead us into a trap."

The two laid in the net for some time, calling for help and weeping over their foolishness. Finally one of the Shining Ones came and freed them. He heard their whole story and then led them back to the path again.

"You tell me that you spent yesterday with the Shepherds. Did they not warn you about this man who would deceive you?"

"Yes, they did."

"And when you were wondering which path to follow, did you not look at the note you carry for guidance?"

"No. We had forgotten to do that. The Flatterer was so convincing that we didn't think it was necessary."

Upon that the Shining One took a stick from the tree and told the men to stand before him. "This will hurt, but I hope it will teach. A little pain now can save your very souls later." With that he struck the two men on their backs, raising welts.

Once done, he sent the two men on their way again. This time the two pilgrims walked in the right way. Even though they were sore and stiff, they were thankful that they had met someone who cared enough about them to correct them, rather than let them wander in their own way. This brought a song to their hearts.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto Me and rest;

Lay down, thou weary one, lay down Thy head upon My breast."

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad;

I found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad.



I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give

The living water; thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live.”

I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him.



I heard the voice of Jesus say, “I am this dark world’s Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright.”

I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I’ll walk, till traveling days are done.¹³

13. Bonar, Horatius. I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say, c. 1860.

Questions for Ignorance

- What is it like to meet with someone like Ignorance? How do you normally treat individuals like him?
- What do you think about Ignorance's statement, "I would suggest that you follow your religion, and allow me to follow mine"? When is that a good idea and when is it a bad idea?
- When has Christian's statement been true in your life? "Often we forget what we really have when our mind is stuck on what we have lost."
- How would you counsel someone who you see being led away by a Flatterer? What are some clues that they are leading someone down the wrong path?
- Read Genesis 2. How does the interaction between Adam, Eve, and the serpent mirror this chapter and our own lives?

Chapter Twenty

Atheist

Now I saw in my dream that the two continued on their journey. Soon they spotted someone coming toward them, all alone.

"Look!" Christian pointed, "Here comes someone, but he is walking in the wrong direction, away from the City."

"Let us be careful this time. Perhaps he is the same Flatterer we met earlier," Hopeful whispered.

"Good afternoon!" the man shouted as he drew close. "My name is Atheist. Where are you headed?"

"We are on our way to the City of Peace."

Atheist laughed out loud, holding his side. "Really!"

"Yes. I don't see why that is so funny," Christian replied.

"You would have to be fairly ignorant to walk this far without any reason. I am sorry to tell you that you will not have much to show for your effort but sore feet."

"Why is that? Do you think we won't be allowed in?"

"Allowed in! No, my good man, but there is no such place as the 'City of Peace'. It is only in your imagination."

"But there is something after this life. There are realities that we are not able to see in this moment," Christian replied.

"Listen. When I was younger, I used to hear the same things you now speak. And I believed them. I really did. And I went looking. But for years I looked and looked and never found any evidence. It is just wishful thinking."

"But we have heard from others, and reliable sources, that there is such a place."

“Oh, I am sure you have. We all want to believe in something. But I tell you, there is no proof. Trust me. I have searched. And I guarantee that I have searched for much longer than you have, but now I have given up. I am returning home and hope to get back some of what I gave up to leave on this fool’s errand.

“Do you think this is true?” Christian asked Hopeful.

“Why should we believe him? I have no reason to trust his word over any of the others who have told us about the City of Peace. And did we not see the gate of the City from the Delightful Mountains? We have more proof for the City of Peace than we have to follow his guidance. Let’s keep going.”

“I agree with you. The truth is that I was hoping to hear that from your mouth. I didn’t trust him from the beginning, but hearing your answer gives me even more courage.”

With that the two of them continued on, leaving the man scoffing at their backs. They, however, went on their way singing.

Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore!¹⁴

14. Prudentius, Aurelius. Of the Father’s Heart Begotten. Translated by J. M. Neale, c. 400.

Questions for Atheist

- What are some words to describe how Atheist treats the beliefs of Christian and Hopeful? Why is it unhelpful to treat the beliefs of others in such a way?
- What are the principle reasons why Atheist didn't believe in the City of Peace? What are some other reasons your culture might give for not believing in the eternal?
- What are Christian and Hopeful's reasons for believing in the City? What are some other reasons you can think of?
- When is it the most difficult for you to hold to your beliefs? How do you deal with those times in your life?
- Read John 20. How did Jesus treat those who doubted? How could this help us in our own times of doubt?

Chapter Twenty-One

Hopeful's Past

Now I saw in my dream that their path led them through a quiet land. The trees, the shadows, the very air itself made one's eyelids heavy with sleep. Hopeful began to slow his pace and yawn frequently. At one point he sat down and said, "Christian, I need a short rest. I can hardly keep my eyes open. Let's stop and take a short nap."

"We will not!" Christian exclaimed, his reaction startling Hopeful in the middle of his yawn. "If we do, we might never get up!"

"What are you talking about, Christian? We will be refreshed after a nap and can continue much faster if we are well rested."

"Don't you remember what the Shepherds told us? They warned us about this Enchanted Ground. They didn't want us to fall asleep here. We must be on our guard."

"That's right! I had forgotten that. All I could think about was how sleepy I felt. I am so thankful that there are two of us instead of me alone."

"Here is what we will do, Hopeful. Let's talk about something to keep our minds off of our exhaustion."

"Excellent idea. You give us a topic to discuss," Hopeful said, holding back a yawn.

"Ok. Let me to teach you this song:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see.



'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed.



Through many dangers, toils and snares

I have already come;

'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far

And grace will lead me home.



The Lord has promised good to me

His word my hope secures;

He will my shield and portion be,

As long as life endures.



Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,

and mortal life shall cease,

I shall possess within the veil,

A life of joy and peace.



When we've been there ten thousand years

Bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise

Than when we've first begun.¹⁵



After they had sung awhile, Christian began again. "Now Hopeful, I would like to hear how you started off on this pilgrimage? What motivated you to do so?"

"That is a good question. It all started back in the Town of Empty Promises. I enjoyed living there and regularly participated in all that the town offered. But had I continued, it would have taken my life."

"What do you mean?" Christian asked.

"I was caught up in gathering money and enjoyment. Partying, binging, carousing, whatever I could do I would do with all of my energy. The more I searched for enjoyment in those entertainments, the less I found. They ate away at my soul. And in all of that, I knew there had to be something more. That is when I heard about your friend Faithful. I watched him on trial. I heard him speak. I decided that was what I want to be like. I wanted what he had."

"So is that when you recognized your sin?"

"No. I didn't want to think of it that way. I just wanted to think of this being a better way of life, and I could fix some of my problems. When I heard the King's words concerning my sin, I wanted to plug my ears.

"I couldn't see God's Spirit working in me. I still loved doing some of those things I was involved in. It was just that afterwards I felt worse and worse. And I didn't want to break any of my old friendships. But when my eyes would open to who I truly was, I was more miserable than you could ever imagine."

"So what would you do when you started to feel that guilt?"

"Oh, I would try to bury it with more of the same. But then eventually it would

15. Newton, John. *Amazing Grace*, 1779.

resurface. It would come from anywhere. I would meet with someone on the street and would recognize that they had something I didn't. At times I would remember one of the teachings of the King. When my headaches went away and I could think clearly, I would regret what I had done. Or even when I heard of someone else dying, or even imagined myself dying, I would begin to think of my life choices and what would come afterwards."

"So then what would you do?"

"I tried to fix my life. I changed habits. I would quit doing certain things. I tried to start new habits. I would give money to some cause. I tried meditating. I tried praying. I tried studying different religions. I looked for anything to give me peace."

"And did that help?"

"At times. But then eventually I would feel the guilt come tumbling over me again, crushing my best efforts at change. I would read the teachings of the King and be troubled again. I would read that all my good deeds and right actions were like filthy rags. Or, I could only be made right by faith, not by strength or rules. Then I would think, 'If this is true, what hope have I?' Because if someone spends much of their life purchasing things on credit, but then one day changes their ways and begins to pay for each thing with money they actually have, that is good. But if that person never goes back and pays their original debt, it doesn't disappear. It is still there against them. And one day they will have to pay it, or go to jail."

"So what does that mean for you?"

"Well, I have sin that is clearly in my past. All my self-reform won't change that. It may make my life better now, but I can't go back and undo what I did. How could I ever pay for what I could never erase? And what would the judge say at the end of my life?"

"And then on top of that, even in my new life I see other sins mixed in with my good intentions. I see pride. I see envy. I see anger. I see the good mixed with bad. Even the best that I do is still polluted. So the judgement would eventually come even if I continued on my self-help journey."

"So what could you do?" Christian asked.

"Do! I couldn't do anything. I finally went to Faithful and he told me that unless I could grab onto the goodness of a perfect man who had never sinned I was lost. None of my own goodness would count for anything."

"And what did you think of that?"

"Well, had he told me when I was pleased with myself and my new habits, I would have laughed at him. But since he told me when I was so discouraged and full of guilt, I had to agree."

"But what did you think when he told you about someone taking your place?"

"It sounded ridiculous to me, but the more I talked with him about it, the more I understood that it was my only hope.

"And then when he kept pointing me to the King of the City of Peace, the one who is fully God and fully man, I knew it had to be true. Faithful told me about how the King had lived on this earth, those he had healed, fed, and loved. He told me about the King's horrible death, but his forgiveness of those who killed him. Faithful told me of the King's resurrection from the dead and all the proofs of how we can know that it is true. And then he told me of how the King's goodness and rightness were offered to me to cover all my sins."

"So what did you do then?"

"Obviously I couldn't follow him."

"What! Why not?"

"I had all sorts of objections. He wouldn't want me. I needed to clean myself up first. His offer was for others with more faith, not me. I had all sorts of reasons to not go to him."

"So what did Faithful say to you then?"

"He told me to go and listen to the King. But I told Faithful that the King wouldn't want

me. And then Faithful told me that I was invited. He told me that the King wanted me to come, and he wanted everyone else like me, who was weary and burdened, to come to him.

"So I asked him how I should go about going to the King. He told me to pray and ask God that my eyes would be opened. Then I should read his words. And when I began to see him more and more, to keep praying, keep pleading, with whatever words I could find.

"Faithful even gave me words of others for when my own words didn't come. 'God be merciful to me a sinner, the worst sinner I know. Open my eyes and my heart to see your Son. I believe that Jesus is King and believe in my heart that you raised him from the dead. I want the salvation he offered to be mine. You have so loved this world, that you gave your one and only Son. And you have said that if I believe in him I will not die, but have eternal life. For you sent your Son into this world, not to condemn this world, but that we might be saved through him. May I be found in your Son. I believe, help my unbelief."

"And did you do that?"

"Yes! Over and over again."

"And what happened?"

"Nothing at first. But I kept reading and I kept praying. Over and over again I went to his words and kept talking to him, in the only way I knew how. And there were many times that I would toss the book down and move on, but I just couldn't leave it. I had to keep going back again. It had to be true. And if it wasn't, what hope was left to me?"

"And did it ever change?"

"Slowly. Slowly I started to see our King, not with my eyes, obviously. But it was as though a fog inside of me lifted and I could finally see him. And the more clearly I saw him, the more clearly I saw myself. I saw all my sin in the light of day. It was horrible. And the more I felt the weight of my sin, the more I turned to our King.

“So I cried out, ‘Lord, I am a horrible sinner. Save me!’ And he said to me, ‘I have more than enough grace for you.’ But all my fears fought that thought, so I cried out, ‘But how do I believe?’ And then he answered, ‘Believing is coming to me. Believing is resting in me. Believing is trusting that I am all you need.’ ‘But are you sure? You know what I have done. You know what I would do if I had the chance. You know the very depth of my heart.’ And with that he looked at me and said, ‘I know. And with all I know, I will never throw you out. You were once my enemy, but I welcome you as my brother.’”

Christian thought on Hopeful’s words for quite some time. Finally he said, “And then what happened?”

“In that moment I saw all that was in me, and in this world, for what it was. I had been against God himself. But he in his mercy could make me right with him through his Son Jesus. And with that I felt waves of guilt and waves of peace. Guilt because I had been an enemy. Peace because the King had welcomed me.

“And that peace made me want to follow our King in everything. I wanted to be completely new and live with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And that is how I ended up running after you on the path.”

Questions for Hopeful's Past

- How does Hopeful's past mirror yours? How does it differ from yours?
- What are some ways your culture teaches you to deal with your guilt?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the self-help way of life?
- What are your thoughts on Hopeful's conversion? Have you experienced something similar?
- Read Acts 26. What aspects of Paul's conversion are unique? Which are common?

Chapter Twenty-Two

Ignorance II

Now I saw in my dream that Hopeful looked back and saw Ignorance following them.

"Look how far back he is! It would be better if he caught up and walked with us."

"I agree with you, but I do not think he would agree with you," Christian replied.

"Either way, let's let him catch up."

So the two of them waited while Ignorance slowly walked toward them.

"Join us!" Christian called out to him. "Why are you walking so far behind?"

"I prefer to walk alone unless I really like the companions," Ignorance mumbled.

"See what I mean?" Christian whispered to Hopeful. "Tell us, Ignorance, have you thought any more about what we said when we first met?"

"You mean, about my walking my own path? Well, I am convinced that I am doing my best. And the more I think of all I have done, I don't know that anyone has tried harder than I."

"Tell us about what you have done," Christian encouraged.

"I think about God and heaven all the time."

"That is good, but so do demons and those under judgement," Christian responded.

"Right, but I think about them and really want them. I have left all in order to find them!"

"That is a hard thing to do. Are you sure you have left everything?" asked Christian.

"My heart tells me that I have."

"But how can you trust your heart? Hasn't it ever led you down the wrong path?"

"No, my heart is good. I can trust it."

"But how do you know you can trust your heart?" Christian asked.

"That is simple. I measure my heart by how I measure everything else, my heart."

"I think you are going to have troubles Ignorance. You can't measure your heart by your heart. You have to evaluate it by something complete, without error, unchanging. That is why we have the Book of the King. We use it to measure our heart, our thoughts, our desires, our emotions. Our heart changes. His words don't change."

"So how am I supposed to measure my heart by the Book of the King?" Ignorance asked.

"Voice your thoughts, emotions, and desires and then ask, 'Does this line up with the King's words? Am I agreeing with what it says is good or bad, beautiful or ugly?' When you do that you will see that your heart often lies to you and will lead you down the wrong paths."

"Not in my case. My heart is much too good to do that!"

"Then you are gullible. You will keep being tricked. The Book of the King says our hearts are twisted and dishonest. We need a new heart."

"And how do I get that?"

"God gives new hearts to those who trust in the King. Those who recognize their sin, turn from it, and cling to him for their right standing before God. And that heart is sensitive to what God has said. If you don't have confidence that you are in desperate need of the King, then you won't have confidence in his promise of salvation."

Ignorance walked on for a while without speaking. After some time he said, "I think it would be best if you two continued on. You are walking too fast for me."

Then the two sang,

O splendor of God's glory bright,

O thou that bringest light from light;

O Light of light, light's living spring,

O day, all days illumining.¹⁶

Some time later Christian turned to Hopeful and said, "It looks like it is just the two of us again."

"It is too bad that he won't see himself for who he is. There are so many like him back in the City of Destruction."

"That is what the Word says, 'There are many who are blind.' But what keeps them there is another matter."

Hopeful thought about this and then said, "If they are blind, why do you think individuals like Ignorant start on pilgrimage?"

"I think that one main reason is fear. And it is a good reason, if it is a correct fear."

"What do you mean 'a correct fear'?"

"A correct fear, or true fear, is one that comes about because the person is convicted of their sin. It then moves the person to cling to the King. And then it has a great respect for the words of the King which tell us of each of those."

"So if fear is a good motivator, why don't people continue on?"

Christian thought for a moment and responded, "Because that fear is pushed to the side. They start to tell themselves that the fear is coming from the Enemy and they can ignore it. Or they think that the fear is actually ruining their faith, when they don't have any yet! Others they convince themselves that it is wrong to fear and try to forget it. Or perhaps they see their fear as undermining their self-confidence, and so they tell themselves good things about themselves."

"That sounds like some of the tricks I tried when I first began to see my own sin,"

16. Ambrose of Milan. O Splendor of God's Glory Bright. Translated by Robert Bridge, c. 348.

Hopeful replied.

"And not only you! It has happened to all of us at some time or another. Remember Temporary? He lived in a town called Without-Grace right next door to Mr. Turn-Back. He once told me he was going on pilgrimage. He had seen the sin inside of him and desperately wanted to change."

"Yes," said Hopeful, "I remember him now."

"Well, he was always talking about going on pilgrimage, until he met Mr. Save-Yourself. Then his desire completely disappeared."

"So what happens to someone like Temporary?" Hopeful asked. "How can he go from convinced to skeptical?"

"Hold on! I answered the last question, Hopeful. It is your turn now," Christian said.

"You are right. I will do my best. I think there are a number of reasons. First, I think his conscience is woken up, so he feels guilt. But then he doesn't change his thinking about his sin. He just explains away his guilt.

"Another reason is he has other fears. He fears the fire of judgement, but when that lessens in his mind, other fears return. He fears not having enough, losing his reputation, being seen as a fake, or missing out in life.

"For some, shame is stronger than fear. It is embarrassing to turn to religion. So his fear of judgment is less than his fear of what others think.

"And maybe another reason is that everyone likes the sensational. We want to be surprised or frightened. But instead of having that distress move us to the safety of the King, it wears off and our hearts are hardened further."

Christian looked at Hopeful, "Better than I could have done. Good answers!"

"So, what are the steps then? What does it look like when someone starts on the path and then eventually forgets it all?" Hopeful asked.

"Well, as you said, they push the fear out for some reason or another. Then they start

to ignore the reading of Book of the King, prayer, and fighting against their sins. Then they push away from the friendship of other Christians. Then they stop participating in the gatherings of the followers of the King. Then they start to cut down other pilgrims behind their backs. Then they spend more and more time with those who are opposed to the King and his Word, loving more of what they love. Soon they start doing those same things openly. And by this time they are nearly gone. Only the direct work of God can bring them back.”

Questions for Ignorance II

- How is Ignorance's view of himself different from Hopeful's view of himself in the last chapter?
- Why are we prone to follow our hearts like Ignorance does? When has your heart led you to do the right thing? When has it led you astray?
- What do you think about Christian's statement, "If you don't have confidence that you are in desperate need of the King, then you won't have confidence in his promise of salvation"? Is this true? Why or why not?
- What are some ways that you have seen fear working positively and negatively in your own life?
- Read Acts 5. How do you see fear working both positively and negatively in this chapter?

Chapter Twenty-Three

The River

Now I saw in my dream that the two left the Enchanted Ground and entered into a refreshing and peaceful place. Instead of feeling sleepy and exhausted they felt energy and hope filling them up. They were nearing the City of Peace. Birds were singing, flowers were growing, trees were blossoming. This place was a refuge after the dark lands of the Shadow of Death, the Castle of Doubt, and the Enchanted Ground. They also saw many of the Shining Ones walking through this land. The City of Peace was so close that they could see its effects everywhere they looked.

This place was so beautiful that both Christian and Hopeful struggled with homesickness. They had an overwhelming desire, not for their old home, but their new home where they had not yet been. For a time, both were caught by such a longing for peace, safety, and wholeness, that they could not continue on. Their souls ached for the City of Peace.

After a time they encouraged each other, and began to turn their longing into footsteps. They walked together through this calm place full of orchards, vineyards, gardens, and cottages. At one such home Christian stopped and asked a gardener, "Whose gardens are these?"

"These belong to the King! He planted them here for himself and any pilgrim who needs food and rest."

So the two pilgrims rested there and slept the night. A strange thing happened as they passed the night, they talked more in their sleep in this place than they had in any other. When they woke the next morning, each sharing how the other had awoken them in the night, they decided to ask the gardener.

"Why do you think this is?" Christian asked.

"It happens to all who pass here. The fruit, the water, and even the air of this place is so sweet that it enables the weary to find words they have never known."

They quickly gathered their things and began to walk. It was difficult at first because

the City, with all its gold and silver, reflected the light with such intensity that they could hardly look at it. They squinted their eyes the best they could and moved toward the shining City. As they walked, two men came near, both wearing clothing nearly as bright as the City itself.

"Where are you coming from, and how has your pilgrimage been?" they asked the two pilgrims.

Christian and Hopeful recounted portions of their story, including both their joys and sorrows. Upon hearing all of this, the two Shining Ones said, "You have only two more difficulties to meet with before you enter the City."

"Would you go with us then, to help us through the last of these?" Christian asked.

"We will walk with you, but you must enter with your own faith, not the faith of anyone else. Be of good courage!"

So Christian and Hopeful continued to walk toward the City, coming so close as to see the gates. But as they passed over the final ridge they saw that between them and the City was a great river. They looked both upstream and downstream, but there was no bridge over which to cross. The pilgrims were stunned. "How are we supposed to pass?" they asked.

The two Shining Ones looked at them and said, "You must go through it. Otherwise you cannot enter the City."

"Is there no other way?" Hopeful asked.

"There is, but only two have ever been able to take that path, Enoch and Elijah. All the rest until the last trumpet will walk this same path as you two."

Upon hearing this, Christian began to despair. He looked one way and then another. "There must be another way!" he thought. But try as he might, he could find nothing.

"Is it very deep?" Christian asked the others.

"That depends on each person, because the waters that you pass through are related

to your own life. You will find the river deeper or shallower depending on your faith in the King of the City.”

There was nothing left to do but try. So Christian and Hopeful slowly stepped into the flowing water. Immediately Christian began to sink and be carried by the current. “Hopeful! I’m sinking! Help! The water is pulling me under!”

Hopeful called back to him, “Be strong Christian! I can feel the bottom and it is good. Keep going!”

Christian could only cry out, “Oh, Hopeful. I am so close, but I will die in this place. I have seen the City but will never enter!”

Darkness and horror came over Christian and he lost nearly all his senses. He couldn’t remember the blessings he had received. He couldn’t recall the victories he had experienced all along the way. All that came from his heart and mouth were the darkest of fears. His mind raced to his past sins, both before and after he had left the City of Destruction. He thought of his failures along the way and his pride. In the visions that passed through his mind, he felt as though he were walking the Valley of the Shadow of Death once again. It was all Hopeful could do to keep his friend’s head above the water. At times he would sink, and at others rise again, half dead.

“Brother, I can see the Gate! Be strong. We will make it if we have faith!” And then at another time, “Christian, I can see those at the gate ready to lead us in. Be courageous!”

“They are there for you, Hopeful. They are waiting for you. You have always had hope.”

“And you as well. Keep going!”

“I cannot. My sins have caught ahold of me and won’t let go.”

“No, Christian. Don’t you remember? Death has lost its sting! This water is not a sign that God has abandoned you. This river is here to test you to see if you will trust in his mercy and grace. If you can find life in Him, you will find life after this trial.”

Christian was lost in his own thoughts for a time, struggling against the current. Hopeful called out again, "Be encouraged! The King is making you whole!"

When he heard that, Christian shouted, "I see him again! I can hear him speak again! He is telling me 'When you walk through the deep waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the river, it will not sweep you away'."

They both were encouraged, and once again Christian found his footing on the bottom of the river. Slowly they moved forward and the river grew shallower as they approached the far bank. When they were about to step out, two Shining Ones took their hands. "We are here to help you! Come with us."

As Christian and Hopeful stepped out, they couldn't help but sing,

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Amen.¹⁷

17. Ken, Thomas. *The Doxology*, 1709.

Questions for The River

- Have you ever experienced a homesickness for a place you have never been? What words would you use to describe what you were longing for and what you felt?
- What questions or concerns come to mind when you read of this final river crossing?
- As you read of the two distinct experiences of Christian and Hopeful as they crossed the river, which one do you think might be more like your own?
- Read Jonah 2. How can Jonah's prayer while in the belly of fish prepare us for our own future crossing?

Chapter Twenty-Four

The City Of Peace

Now I saw in my dream that the City was on a high hill, but Christian and Hopeful found it easy to walk. With the two Shining Ones to help them, they ascended quickly. They also felt more free than ever before, because even though they entered the river with their worn robes and provisions, they came out of the water without them. As they were led up the hill, the river carried all of their former burdens downstream.

As they walked they realized that the City was higher even than the clouds. But as they ascended the air grew sweeter, not thinner. They could not help but sing as they walked in this beautiful place. "Who wouldn't give up all for a home such as this!"

As they walked, they spoke with the Shining Ones. "Here is Mount Zion, Heavenly Jerusalem, God's own garden. The tree that brings life is planted here. You will receive your white robes. You will walk with your King. There is no end to life here!

"Those things which were always in your thoughts in your former life: sadness, sickness, trials, and death, those are all made right. They won't crowd your thoughts here. Instead, you will walk with the great saints. You will hear their stories of God's grace and goodness."

Then Christian and Hopeful asked, "What do we have to do to enter this holy place?"

"Do? You only need to receive the comfort, accept the joy, harvest what was planted, and enjoy the fruit of all that has grown out of the soil of your struggles. The King has welcomed you!

"In this place you will wear the crown he gives. You will see him and you will walk with him. You will be able to speak the words of your heart directly to his face. All the good that you wished you could do and say while you were struggling in the past life, you will be able to do without battle here.

"Friendships will be restored. Joy will be in the very air you breathe. Glory and majesty will wrap around you like a cloak. When the King goes to make all things right, you will ride with him. When he brings his perfect justice, you will sit with him. When his

judgement falls on all his enemies, you will be there. And when he returns as the champion, you will enter his city with him. All will be made right again!”

Now as they were approaching the gate, a crowd came out to meet them. The two Shining Ones shouted for all to hear, “Here are the two pilgrims who have loved our King and left all to come to him. He sent us to bring them to this City so they might find their true home. We have brought them here so they can see their Redeemer’s face!”

The whole crowd cheered and cried out, “How blessed are those who come to feast with the Lamb of God!” And with the crowd came out a whole assembly of musicians. The trumpets sounded, music rang in the air, singing was everywhere. The entire place nearly shook with happiness and victory.

The two pilgrims were surrounded on all sides, as though they were being guarded by this joyful mob. There was no doubt in the minds of the pilgrims if they were welcome or not. The whole city appeared to be waiting for them. And then the bells began to ring. The sound, had it not been so sweet, would have overpowered them. They were expected and welcome. They were coming home!

As they came to the gate they looked up and read, “How blessed are those who obey the commands of the King. They are invited to eat from the tree that brings life. They are welcomed into the gates of this City!”

They knocked at the great door and the Shining Ones called out to the guards, “These pilgrims come from the City of Destruction. They left all to follow our King.”

Christian and Hopeful handed over the credentials they had received at the beginning of their pilgrimage. They were examined and then the voice of the King echoed through the air, “Open the door! Those who love the truth are welcome here!”

Now I saw in my dream that the two pilgrims, as they stepped into the city, were transformed. They too shone like gold. They were given a gown and a harp. They were given new clothing of pure white. A shout went up, “Enter into the joy that your King gives!”

And then Christian and Hopeful sang out, "Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be to you who sit on the throne, O Lamb of God, forever and ever!"

The whole city, in all its glory, invited them in. All the light and beauty danced to the song of the King. Men and angels cried out,

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!



Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert and art and evermore shalt be.



Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.



Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth, and sky and sea.

Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!¹⁸

And then I saw the gates close behind them, and I wished with my whole heart I could be with them. But then I saw in my dream that there was one more. Ignorance was coming up from the river, which he crossed much easier than the other two did. For there was one who had a small boat on the bank. The owner was named Mistaken-Hope and he ferried Ignorance across the river.

Ignorance climbed the hill alone. No one came to meet him or encourage him. When he finally made it to the gate, he saw what was written above and then began to knock. He assumed he would be allowed in immediately. He was mistaken.

"Who are you? Where did you come from? What do you want?" a voice called over the wall.

"I have eaten with the King and he taught in the streets of our town," Ignorance shouted back.

"Where are your credentials?" the voice answered.

Ignorance searched around in his pockets, but found nothing.

"Don't you have any?" the voice spoke again, but Ignorance had nothing to answer.

All of this was told to the King. He sent down the two Shining Ones who had led Christian and Hopeful into the city. "Tie him up and take him away," he commanded.

So they tied him up and carried him to the side of the hill, for there, even from the gates of the City of Peace, was a doorway to hell.

And then I awoke from my dream.

18. Heber, Reginald. Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!, 1826.

Questions for The City Of Peace

- As you read of the Shining Ones' description of the City of Peace, what most interested you?
- What do you think about this phrase, "enjoy the fruit of all that has grown out of the soil of your struggles"?
- What emotions did you experience while reading this chapter?
- Is this how you expected the book to end? Why do you think John Bunyan chose to end his book in this way?
- Read Revelation 21-22. What words would you use to describe what you read in these two chapters?

Conclusion

Dear Pilgrim,

If you, like Christian, are following the King, be encouraged! Soon you will see him, and you will be like him, for you will see him as he is.¹⁹

But if in these pages you found yourself in opposition to him, be warned! He deserves and demands your worship. Humble yourself, give him your fears, and see how much he cares for you.²⁰

19. 1 John 3:1-10

20. 1 Peter 5:6-11