

*"The Theological Themes  
of  
John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress"*

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Ever since the publication of *Pilgrim's Progress*, the minds & hearts of Christians around the world have been captivated by the Tinker of Bedford's portrayal of the Christian life from this world to the next. There can be no question that the work of John Bunyan has achieved a fame far beyond the expectations of Bunyan himself, yet earnestly desired by him. It is true or it ought to be true to say that every Christian (& many non-Christians) who read & have read *Pilgrim's Progress* are simply staggered at the sheer accuracy and penetrating light that Bunyan reveals concerning the human heart and condition before God.

I realize that many of you have read *Pilgrim's Progress* and I know that some of you are currently reading it in light of this lecture, and I feel hopeful that some, who have never read it, may begin to desire to do so tonight. I am also aware that many dismiss *Pilgrim's Progress* as a children's story and at very best a story for young people. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are others who study or read *Pilgrim's Progress* as a piece of English literature to be dissected and probed. Worst of all, would be those who read *Pilgrim's Progress* and reject or neglect what Bunyan says, because what he says is nothing more and nothing less than solid biblical food for the human soul.

Mr. Spurgeon said that, "next to the Bible, the book that I value most is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*...it is a book of which I never seem to tire, but then the secret of that is, that John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's*

Progress is the Bible in another shape. It is the same heavenly water taken out of the same well as the Gospel."

Mr. Spurgeon's son, Thomas, stated that his father had read *Pilgrim's Progress* more than 100 times. Samuel Taylor Coleridge said, "this wonderful work is one of the few books which may be read over repeatedly at different times, and each time with a new and a different perspective." Gresham Machen wrote that, "the tenderest and most theological of books, the *Pilgrim's Progress* of John Bunyan is pulsating with life in every word."<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon said that Bunyan was "a living Bible." "Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his soul is full of the Word of God."<sup>2</sup>

As we consider our subject, the theological themes of *Pilgrim's Progress*, it will be necessary to provide, first of all, a picture of John Bunyan. Who was he and where did he come from? Secondly, I would like to outline the *Pilgrim's Progress* for you. Thirdly, I want to consider some of the themes that run through the book, and finally, I want to examine the importance, value, legacy and ongoing necessity to read *Pilgrim's Progress*.

So let us begin with our subject, John Bunyan. He was born in 1628 and he died in 1688 at the age of 60. He was born at Elstow, which was located one mile from the village of Bedford. His father, Thomas Bunyan (Bonnion) was a poor tinker, and his mother, Margaret Bentley (his

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<sup>1</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1923) p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: The Full Harvest* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1973, reprinted 1976), vol. 2, p. 159.

father's second wife), who herself came from a well-respected family. All that is known of John Bunyan's birth is the simple birth register record in Elstow, along with 18 other infants, which records: "John, the sonne of Thomas Bonnion Junr baptized the 30<sup>th</sup> of Novemb."<sup>3</sup> Bunyan had limited formal education and he does not say much about what education he had. He does record that he was grateful to his parents because, "it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me into school to learn both to read and to write."<sup>4</sup> Charles Doe, who was the combmaker in the area relates that John Bunyan was a "very great profane sinner and an illiterate man"<sup>5</sup>, and Bunyan himself comments that he soon lost "the bit I learnt...long before the Lord did His gracious work of conversion upon my soul."<sup>6</sup> From what ever schooling Bunyan had, he very quickly entered the forge of his father to learn the trade of tinker. We ought not to consider the trades of long ago as we do today. Today a profitable living and individuals of education enter the trades. Not so in Bunyan's time. To be a tinker meant you literally earned your bread. When he was scarcely 16, his mother died. He says, "God's finger touched her and she slept."<sup>7</sup> Within a month, his sister, Margaret also died and was buried next to her mother in the Elstow graveyard. And within a month, his father took his third wife.

John Bunyan testified in his autobiography, "*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*," that he fell into wild and willful ways, and became the ringleader of all the youth: a ringleader in all manner of vice and

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Mott Harrison, *John Bunyan* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1964, reprinted 1989), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

ungodliness.<sup>8</sup> Bunyan affirms that the influence of his mother remained with him for a time, but eventually he shook these off - "his pleasures did quickly cut off the remembrance of them"<sup>9</sup>

In the year 1644, new recruits were required for the army, and so at the age of 16, John Bunyan went off to war. It was the English Civil War. It is believed that Bunyan was at the siege of Leicester in 1645 because Thomas Carlyle wrote in his "Cromwell's Life & Letters (Letter XIII of Cromwell) that, "John Bunyan, I believe is this night in Leicester... with a brown matchlock on his shoulder"<sup>10</sup> Bunyan wrote in his "*The Holy War*,"

*"I saw the Prince's armed men come down  
By troops, by thousands, to besiege the town;  
Yea, how they set themselves in battle-'ray,  
I shall remember to my dying day."*

This so-called evidence of Bunyan at Leicester has been questioned by Sir. Charles Firth (Regius Professor of History at Oxford) who argues that Bunyan was elsewhere, namely, at Newport on May 27, 1645, and also because the king (Charles I) only became involved at Leicester on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Be this as it may, Bunyan served as a soldier during the English Civil War. Bunyan would undoubtedly have been exposed to Puritan preaching, and probably received the "the Soldier's Pocket Bible" (issued in 1643).

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<sup>8</sup> A Treasury of Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981, from the 1871 edition published by Bradley & Company) p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Harrison, *John Bunyan*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Bunyan, at age 19, eventually was freed from military service having served his time, and he lost no time at all in returning to Elstow where he settled down to life as a tinker. At the same time he set about the business of finding a wife, which soon resulted in his marriage. He says in *Grace Abounding*, "Presently, I changed my condition into a married state."<sup>11</sup> Bunyan acknowledges their absolute poverty having "neither spoon nor dish" between the two of them.<sup>12</sup> It is not certain as to his wife's name, but many assume it to be Mary. Mary, it would appear was a believer. At this stage of his life, John Bunyan is without God. He has led a dissolute life; famous for his swearing and wickedness (refer to *Grace Abounding* for details). Mary Bunyan's approach to witnessing to her husband was to tell him about the life of her father, who was a godly man.

John Bunyan in his tender years had a very sensitive conscience, which as he grew older became hardened and insensitive to the things of God. We know that he would go to church, and then as soon as the service was over, would return to playing sports, and wickedness. This he did into his marriage. He would listen to Puritan preacher Christopher Hall's sermon, go home feeling the pangs of conscience, sit down to some food, and then he says, having eaten, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and to my old custom of sports and gaming I returned. On one such occasion, as he was playing his games, a voice as it were, he says, came from heaven into my soul, which said, "will you leave your sins and go to heaven, or will you have your sins and go to hell." Bunyan left the game. This was but the start of God's dealing with Bunyan. Bunyan reflected at this time, that it would be miserable to sin, and yet miserable to not sin.

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<sup>11</sup> *Grace Abounding*, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

He was simply entering what he would later call the Valley of Humiliation. Here he would meet the Christian's deadliest foe, Apollyon (the devil himself). Bunyan says that, "he found within a great desire to take my fill of sin...that I might taste the sweetness of it."<sup>13</sup> He desired what he calls the delicacies of sin. Bunyan confesses that he went "on in sin with great greediness of mind."<sup>14</sup> He was even rebuked by an immoral woman because of his swearing.

Bunyan would seek to improve himself through legalistic ways and attempt to improve his morality. Later these experiences would reveal themselves in the character, Mr. Legality and the Town of Morality. God was dealing with Bunyan and it was not a pleasant experience. In many ways, it was similar to Martin Luther's, and it is no wonder that Bunyan treasured Luther's commentary on Galatians. As we know, all attempts at self-reformation are destined to fail.

By now John Bunyan had a daughter and she was blind. It was exceedingly difficult to provide a living in Elstow, so Bunyan would trudge the mile to Bedford. Bunyan says that in the Providence of God, one day, I came to Bedford to work on my calling, and in the streets of that town, I came to where there were three or four poor women sitting at the door in the sun, and talking about the things of God.

Bunyan says that he drew near to hear them. His first reason for doing so was because he considered himself to have made significant progress as a Christian and was able to talk about such things. But he says that soon his head drooped and his heart fell as he listened to them.

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<sup>13</sup> Harrison, *John Bunyan*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

I heard, Bunyan says, but I did not understand, and with a humility that had never been his before said, "they were far above, out of my reach."

Bunyan realized that he knew virtually nothing of Christ. These women were talking about the new birth. They talked about the work of God in their souls. They spoke of their miserable state by nature. They spoke of God visiting their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus. They spoke of the promises of God that helped them face their temptations. Bunyan confesses that "his own heart began to shake."<sup>15</sup> He now mistrusted his vain self-confidence. He knew now that if ever he were to know God he must be born again. Bunyan wrote later that, "I cannot express with what longings and breakings in my soul I cried to Christ to call me."<sup>16</sup> He was jealous of the animals because they did not have souls to give account of to God. Bunyan had simply discovered that he was a religious hypocrite. When John Bunyan records the experience of Christiana in Part 2 of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, confessing her troubles to Greatheart and Mr. Honest, in comparison to those of Mr. Fearing, whose troubles he acknowledged, she says that she kept hers within. Such was John Bunyan - pensive, seeking, in spiritual pain, bearing the worst burden in the world. He became increasingly self-condemnatory and gave himself to ruthless self-examination which led him into the terrible Slough of Despond. And so it was that Bunyan began to spend time with these poor women.

In 1651, these women introduced John Bunyan to John Gifford, their pastor in Bedford of their little church known as St. Johns Church.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), p. 103.

Gifford, himself had had a similar experience to the one Bunyan was having, so he was well equipped to handle the 25 year old tinker. From their first meeting, Bunyan was inseparable from Gifford. He would listen to his preaching. He would listen to him counsel others. It was during this time that Bunyan grasped the eternal truth that only Jesus' blood can remove a person's guilt of sin that was so terrible and real to him. What he needs is the righteousness of Christ.

While walking through a field one day, the righteousness of Christ came home to him in fresh power - it was an unforgettable experience. He says, "this sentence fell upon my soul: Your righteousness is in heaven, and I thought to myself that I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there as my righteousness, so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, he needs my righteousness, because it was right before him. It was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame of heart that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, today and forever. Now did my chains fall off. I was loosed from my afflictions, my temptations fled away...there was nothing but Christ before my eyes."<sup>17</sup>

Bunyan had a number of experiences like this - he came to love Christ - Christ became everything to John Bunyan. In the year 1654, Bunyan with his wife and their four children moved to Bedford. He became a member of Gifford's church and soon became a deacon. His testimony became the talk of the town. By the close of 1654, John Gifford had died. In 1655, Bunyan with great trembling began to preach

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<sup>17</sup> *Grace Abounding*, p. 59.

in Bedford. Hundreds came to hear him. Within 4 years, he had written a number of books as a good Puritan only could. His wife passed away during this time. By 1659, his book, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace* established him as a thorough going Calvinist. At this time, Bunyan remarried. His wife was a godly young woman by the name of Elizabeth.

In 1660, Bunyan was arrested for preaching in a farmhouse at Lower Samsell without permission from the king (Charles II). He was told that he would be freed so long as he did not preach. He said, "if I am freed today, I will preach tomorrow."<sup>18</sup>

For the next 12 years (1660 - 1672) Bunyan was in prison. His wife continually pleaded for his release, but he remained in prison with no formal charge against him. On some occasions during 1668 - 1672, some of his jailors allowed him to go and preach, and it has been said that many Baptist congregations owe their existence to his midnight preaching. Bunyan felt deeply the separation from his wife and especially his blind girl which he described as a "pulling of the flesh from my bones."

The 1660's were very productive years for Bunyan. He wrote extensively having at his side the Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Bunyan was officially appointed pastor in Bedford and with his release in May 1672 returned to take up that work. His freedom lasted a few years and he was again placed in the town jail. It was during this imprisonment that he wrote the first part of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The great Puritan, John Owen used his influence to secure Bunyan's release from prison in 1677.

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<sup>18</sup> *Meet the Puritans*, p. 105.

John Owen also recommended his own printer, Nathaniel Ponder to be Bunyan's printer. It was John Owen, who when asked by the king, as to why he went to listen to John Bunyan preach, answered in reply, "if it please your majesty, I would happily exchange all my learning for the ability to preach Christ as the Tinker from Bedford." In 1678 *Pilgrim's Progress* was released. It was a runaway best seller. Nathaniel Ponder complained about pirate copies so desperate were people to read the Tinker's work. By the time of Bunyan's death in 1688, over 100,000 copies had been printed and since that time, through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Pilgrim's Progress* has enjoyed remarkable success, far more that John Bunyan could ever have imagined.

In 1688, Bunyan caught a fever from a storm while travelling back to London from preaching. The following day, he rose to preach though he was ill. He could say at this time that, "in times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God."<sup>19</sup> For the next 10 days, Bunyan is desperately ill. Many visit him and listen to him as he speaks from his bed.

As death approached he could say, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves. I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, no doubt through the mediation of his blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner; where I hope we ere long shall meet, to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy, world without end."<sup>20</sup> Bunyan raises his hands and says, "take me, for I come to Thee," and thus the great Puritan Baptist is dead. John Bunyan was buried in Bunhill Fields, close to John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, those two other magisterial Puritans. It is a fitting

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<sup>19</sup> Harrison, *John Bunyan*, p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> *Meet the Puritans*, p. 108.

resting place for this giant of the faith whose legacy jumps out of the pages and remains with us as we read the Pilgrim's Progress.

I have not said all that there is to say, about John Bunyan's conversion - which is detailed - I recommend that you read it in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Neither have I given a detailed account of the Tinker's life - there are many books available on his life. Let me point you in the direction of some works. There are the 3 volume works, edited by George Offor, and published by the Banner of Truth Trust. Oxford University Press under the editorship of Roger Sharrock have published a 13 volume set, the Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan. Regarding Pilgrim's Progress there are many editions available. I have read a number of editions ranging from the Old English version to modern editions. The volume produced by Banner of Truth is an excellent work. It displays some pictures of scenes, which are well worth looking at. I am fortunate to possess an old copy dated 1890 which predates the original version that Banner of Truth used for their printed copy. Suffice it to say that the writings of John Bunyan are many and all of them are excellent.

Now, having come to this point, it is necessary to outline the Pilgrim's Progress. Some of you are reading this for the very first time. Others have read it, and still others have read it a number of times. If you have not read it, then may this lecture impress upon you the immense spiritual benefit to be gained by reading the Tinker's great work. I have picked up Pilgrim's Progress many times, and read just a few pages. I have always found it to be shockingly & refreshingly powerful to the soul.

The Pilgrim's Progress is simply an account of the Christian's progress from this world to the next. This is what Bunyan tells us on his title page. It is a journey from the City of Destruction (this world) to the Celestial City (which is not of this world). There can be no question that what Bunyan describes in Pilgrim's Progress is that which he himself experienced. This is the life of a pilgrim which is how the Bible describes Christians (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11).

The Pilgrim's Progress is described as being a dream that the author had. It is written in the similitude of a dream. It is an allegory, but it is not as you would find in the writings of C.S Lewis or Tolkien. It is far more real and penetratingly close to home. It consists of 2 parts. The first, describes the life of a man called Christian, and Part 2 describes the life of his wife, Christiana and her children. We will only be able to consider Part 1 in this lecture.

Part 1, then, tells us of Christian who leaves his home, his wife & children in the City of Destruction, because he bears a burden on his back, which is his sin. He desires to be free of the burden. How does he know that he has this burden? He has a book open in his hand - this is the Bible. Bunyan says that in his dream, "I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his house, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back."<sup>21</sup> Within moments, this man breaks into a cry, "what shall I do?"

He goes home to his wife & children and explains his problem to them. He tells them that their City of Destruction (this world) will be

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<sup>21</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977, reprinted in 2005 from the original printing of 1895, published by John C Ninmo Ltd), p. 1.

burned with fire (like Sodom and Gomorrah as it were). They ought to flee lest they all come to ruin. His family think that he has lost his mind. A good night's sleep will cure him. But the night is troublesome to Christian. As soon as he is awake he begins to speak again of his condition and theirs. They will not hear it. He goes to his room to pray - he goes out into the fields to pray. He continues reading and praying. On one such occasion, he is greatly distressed and asks the age-old crucial question, "what must I do to be saved?" Bunyan says, that he looked this way and that, when presently a man named Evangelist came up to Christian and asked him why he was crying.

Christian replies that he perceives that in the Book which he is reading he was condemned to die, and afterwards go to Judgment. He says, I find that I am not willing to do the first (be saved), nor am I able to do the second (face the Judgment). We are told that Evangelist gives Christian a parchment on which the words are written, "flee from the wrath to come." Christian asks, "where shall I flee to?" Then Evangelist lifts up his finger and points over a very wide field, "do you see yonder Wicket Gate?" Christian says, No! "Do you see yonder Shining Light?" "I think I do.

"Keep that light in your eye and go directly there, when you get to the gate - knock"

Since he was not far from his home, he began to run such that his wife & children see him running, and cry after him to return. But he puts his fingers in his ears and runs on crying all the while, "Life! Life! Eternal Life!"

Others from the city come to see - they mock him as he runs. Two individuals from the City decide to go after Christian to fetch him back. These two characters are Obstinate and Pliable. When they catch up to Christian, they begin to question him as to his behavior. When Christian defends his actions referring to the Book that he had with him, Obstinate attacks him for his foolishness. Pliable is not so aggressive and desires to hear what Christian has to say. Both of them hope to persuade Christian to return with them. Christian tells them that he has been directed by a man named Evangelist to go the Wicket Gate in order to receive further instructions. Obstinate refuses to go and leaves Christian and Pliable. Christian begins to discuss what he has been reading in more detail with Pliable who seems excited to continue with Christian to this new City and Country.

Very soon, they come to the Slough of Despond, a miry bog, and since they were not paying attention, they both fell into it. Here they wallowed for a time in the bog. Because Christian has this burden on his back, he struggles and begins to sink. Pliable begins to scoff at Christian - "where are you now, neighbor Christian?" Pliable is offended and angry and after a desperate struggle he gets out of the Bog and leaves Christian to perish. Christian continues to struggle when a man by the name of Help comes by and asks him why he is in the Slough. Christian explains what Evangelist told him, but he fell into the Slough. Help asks why he did not look for the steps. Christian says he was fearful and heedless. Well, Help gives him his hand and helps him out and sets him on solid ground. The Slough of Despond represents conviction of sin. Like Bunyan himself, Christian has many fears, many doubts, & many spiritual struggles with his sin. Pliable of course, has returned to the City of

Destruction where he is mocked for going with that fool Christian and for being such a coward. For a few days, he sits humbled among his friends, but soon his self-confidence returns, and he begins to mock Christian.

As Christian continues to the Wicket Gate, he meets a man, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman who lives in the town Carnal Policy, a very great town. After hearing Christian's story, Mr. Worldly Wiseman counsels Christian to get rid of his burden as soon as he can. Christian explains that Evangelist told him what to do in order to get rid of his burden. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman condemns the counsel of Evangelist in strong and harsh terms. He tells Christian that if he continues to follow Evangelist's advice he will likely experience hunger, pain, weariness, nakedness, lions, dragons, darkness and even death itself. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman explains that Christian can get rid of his burden in a much easier & simpler way by going to the village called Morality and there meeting with Mr. Legality. He is pointed in the direction of Mr. Legality's house, which is the first house at the top of a very steep hill.

As Christian climbs the hill to Mr. Legality's house, he feels the burden on his back. He also notices that flashes of fire come from the hill every now and then. The Hill is representative of Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Law. He begins to be very afraid. Just at this moment, he sees Evangelist coming to meet him, and he is deeply ashamed to be seen by him. Evangelist asks him in severe and strong tones, as to why he was on the Hill. Christian explains all that has happened to him - the Slough of Despond, meeting Mr. Worldly-Wiseman and listening to his advice of an easier way to get rid of his burden. Evangelist gives him a very severe

warning to pay attention to God's Word, otherwise he will rush headlong into Perdition and perish. This alarms Christian. Evangelist explains the tactics of Mr. Legality and his legalism. It will turn Christian from of the true way - it will make the Cross seem odious and it set your feet on the Way to Destruction. Evangelist sets Christian on the right way, and so with haste, Christian makes it to the Wicket Gate. Over the Gate, the words are written, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Christian actually knocks a few times. The Gate is opened by Goodwill and Christian describes himself as a poor burdened sinner. As he opens the gate, Goodwill yanks Christian in with sudden force which surprises Christian. When he asks why he pulled him in like that, Goodwill explains that nearby is the Castle of Beelzebub who shoots arrows at those who knock at the Gate, so that they may die before they can get in at the Gate. This is a picture of Satan envious of those who seek Christ. Goodwill encourages Christian to continue his seeking journey until the Place of Deliverance. The way will not be easy, he is told.

Not too far from the Gate, Christian arrives at the House of Interpreter. Interpreter shows Christian many things concerning the Lord. Interpreter shows him a parlor filled with dust. A man begins to sweep which causes the dust to fly all over the place nearly choking Christian. A girl comes with some water, and she sprinkles this on the dust so that the room could be swept. Interpreter says that the parlor is the heart of man not sanctified by the grace of the Gospel. The dust is original sin and all the inward corruptions of the human heart. The man who swept the floor was the Law, and the girl who sprinkled the water was the Gospel. The Law provokes the dust (sin in the heart). The more you sweep, the more dust there is. It can choke a person to death as it were. But when the

Gospel comes (the water sprinkled) then sin is vanquished and subdued and thus the room (the soul of man) is made clean.

Christian is introduced to two children, Patience and Passion. Patience is content, Passion is not. Passion receives a treasure and mocks Patience, but soon the treasure is gone, and Passion is left clothed only in rags. Passion represents those of the world and Patience those of the world that is to come. Passion will have all that the world can offer now, but Patience is content to wait for the promises to come that will never wear out like the clothes of Passion. We can have the temporal things now or the eternal things later.

Interpreter shows Christian many other Gospel pictures like this: there is the Fire burning against the Wall which Satan attempts to put out with water, but Christ adds his Oil of Grace causing the fire to burn continually. This is simply an indication of the preservation of the saints of God. Interpreter shows Christian the great Palace where the valiant man attacks the enemy blocking the entrance to get in. Interpreter shows Christian the man of Despair in an Iron Cage - the man who would not pay attention to his heart, but cherished his sins and so provoked God and refused to repent, and thus there is no hope now for him.

Interpreter sends Christian on his way with words of encouragement, "the Comforter always be with you, good Christian, to guide you in the Way that leads to the City." As Christian goes on his way, he finds his road fenced with a wall on either side. The wall is called Salvation. As he runs, he feels the burden on his back. He runs until he comes to a place where a Cross is standing, and at the bottom of the

garden a Sepulcher or grave. Just as he runs to the Cross the burden loosens on his back, falls off and rolls down the way to the Sepulcher into which it disappears never to be seen again.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, Bunyan says, and had a merry heart, "he hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death." The Cross causes him to weep and be filled with gratitude. He is given by three Shining Ones standing there, new clothing, his sins are declared to be forgiven, and he receives a mark on his forehead and a parchment Roll with a Seal on it to hand in at the Celestial City. He gives three leaps for joy and is off on his way.<sup>22</sup>

Now up to this point, Bunyan has described the difficulties of becoming a Christian. As we know, Jesus said that, "the way is narrow and hard and few there be who are actually on that road." (Matt.7:14). Now begins for Christian the Christian life with all of its struggles until he arrives at the Celestial City.

Christian attempts to help (or witness to) three men sleeping with fetters binding them. These individuals are Simple, Sloth and Presumption. They are the sins that entangle individuals on the Way. He meets with two men called Formalist and Hypocrisy who tell him they were born in the City of Vain-Glory, but they are headed for Mt. Zion. Christian perceives that they have not gone through the Wicket Gate and therefore they have missed the Cross. They however, are confident of themselves. This is a graphic picture of how men and women think of themselves and their works. Christian explains that he lives by the rules

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-37.

of the Master, and that they will find themselves without mercy at the end. They have no Roll & no new clothes. They laugh at Christian, but he reads his Roll and is refreshed by it.

Christian arrives at the Hill Difficulty. He notices that there are ways to the left and right around the hill (one is called Danger and the other is Destruction), but the narrow way is over the Hill. He refreshes himself at the spring at the foot of the Hill. There are ways to the City of Destruction, but there is only one narrow way to the Celestial City of God. Formalist and Hypocrisy take those roads, and are seen no more, but Christian goes up the Hill Difficulty. He has to clamber on his knees. Halfway up the Hill, he comes to the Arbor made by the Lord of the Hill for the refreshment of weary travelers. There he rests, reading his Roll. Eventually he falls into a slumber and his Roll falls from his hand. Suddenly he is awakened by someone who says, "go to the ant you sluggard, consider her ways and be wise (Prov. 6:6). He gets up with a fright and sets off up the Hill. As he is going up, two men come running down the Hill towards him. The one is Timorous and the other is Mistrust. When he asks them why they are going the wrong way, they tell him that the further up the Hill they went, the more danger they encountered. There were lions in the way. Christian is distressed at this news but reminds himself of the Celestial City that awaits him, and so he continues.

He feels in his clothing for his Roll but discovers that it is missing. This causes him great distress, and he does not know what to do. He asks God for forgiveness for his foolishness in sleeping at the Arbor, and goes back to seek his Roll. He sighs and berates himself for his folly. He speaks

against his yielding to the flesh in the midst of difficulty. At last he comes to the Arbor, and there he finds his Roll. His Roll is the Assurance of Life and his Acceptance into the desired haven - Celestial City of God. He thanks God for helping him find his Roll. Soon the night comes, and he is afraid of the lions, when suddenly he finds a Palace called Beautiful before him. In order to get to the Palace he must go through a narrow way to the Porter's Lodge. He sees two lions and remembers Timorous and Mistrust. He halts. The porter who sees him, whose name is Watchful calls out to him that he should not be afraid, because the lions are chained. He should be strong in faith. All he has to do is keep to the middle of the path and he will make it. So Christian continues trembling in fear because the lions are roaring, but they do him no harm. The porter tells him that the house was built by the Lord of the Hill for the security and relief of the pilgrims.

Christian introduces himself to the Porter. I came from the City of Destruction and I am going to Mt. Zion. My name used to be Graceless, but now it is Christian. He is invited to stay and have conversation with the Virgins of the place. These are Discretion, Prudence, Piety and Charity. These represent good Christian friends in the Church. One of the great sections describing the conversation between Christian and these ladies is where he is asked how he gets relief from his temptations at times. He says, "when I think of what I saw at the Cross, that takes care of my problems." They also ask him why he is so desirous of getting to Mt. Zion. He says, "I hope to see Him alive who was dead on the Cross, and there I hope to be rid of all these annoyances of mine." After these conversations are ended, Christian goes to sleep.

The following day, he is shown the Delectable Mountains in the distance, which is a source of great comfort to him. He catches sight of Emmanuel's land. Emmanuel's land is as common to all pilgrims as the Hill Difficulty, he is told. When you get to the Mountains, you will be able to see the Celestial City. Christian asks the Porter if anyone else has recently traveled the Hill, and is told that a person by the name of Faithful is ahead of him. Christian says that he knows him because they lived near each other, and so he says goodbye to the Porter. The four ladies go with him to the bottom of the Hill. He finds out that going down is just as dangerous as coming up the Hill was. Prudence tells him about the Valley of Humiliation awaiting him at the bottom of the Hill. After receiving some food and saying goodbye to the ladies, he finds himself alone, but before long he sets his eyes upon a foul looking fiend approaching him. It is Apollyon - it is the devil himself.

Apollyon is monstrous and hideous to behold. He has scales like a fish, wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, out of his belly smoke and fire pour forth, and his mouth is like that of a lion. The Valley of Humiliation is the place where the Christian is attacked. It is a painful experience. For John Bunyan - these were the years of his imprisonment.

Apollyon confronts Christian as one of his subjects from his kingdom. Who does Christian think he is to just leave the service of the god of this world? Christian replies, "I was born in your dominions, but your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on for they are death." Apollyon roars that he will not so easily lose one of his subjects. Their conversation is long and instructive. Apollyon reminds Christian of his weaknesses - remember the Slough of Despond,

remember all your vain attempts to get rid of your burden, remember your sleep in the Arbor, remember your fear of the lions. Christian responds that all these accusations are true, but the Prince of the City to which he was going is merciful and ready to forgive, and I have received pardon for all my faults. At this, Apollyon broke into a violent rage saying that he was enemy to Christian's Prince; I hate His Person, His Laws and His People. Christian states that Apollyon should beware and take heed to himself, because Christian was in the King's Highway, the Way of Holiness.

Apollyon straddles the way and says I have no fear of you - you shall go no further. It is now that Bunyan describes the fierce battle between Christian and the devil. Apollyon hurls a flaming dart at Christian, but he possesses a shield and deflects it. The darts are coming thick and fast - even though Christian has drawn his sword, he is wounded in his hand, his head and his foot. This fierce combat rages for half a day. Christian grows weaker and weaker because of his wounds. Apollyon approaches and they begin to wrestle. Christian's sword falls to the ground. Just when it appears as if Apollyon will make one last strike, Christian is able to lay his hand upon his sword and give a deadly thrust, saying, "rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! When I fall I shall arise... I am more than a conqueror through Him who loved me."

Bunyan states that throughout this entire conflict, Apollyon is roaring and yelling - he spoke like a Dragon. Christian also sees that it was a double-edged sword that struck Apollyon. Bunyan says, "it was the dreadfulest fight that ever I saw."

With his sword in his hand, Christian advances on his way, having conquered Apollyon. He comes to another valley - it is the Valley of the Shadow of Death. This valley is a wilderness place, a solitary place, a land of drought. Every pilgrim must needs go through this valley. As he approaches the Valley, he is met by two men who are described as the children of the spies who brought a bad report to Joshua. They tell him that the Valley is full of evil - it is darkness itself. There is howling and misery in the Valley, they say. Christian advances into the Valley. Bunyan's description is graphic and superb.

It is during this journey that Christian overtakes Faithful and they continue together in sweet spiritual conversation. They discuss their spiritual experiences. Just as Christian met many temptations in various forms, so too Faithful describes his. Christian and Faithful meet the man Talkative, (whom if you must know, talks too much). Talkative is also from the City of Destruction. Christian knows him, but Faithful does not. He is described as the son of Say-Well. He lived in Prating-Row. Christian goes on to prove to Faithful that Talkative is empty of true faith and does not know the way of grace. Faithful also perceives the vanity of Talkative's faith and asks him some penetrating questions about the way of grace. They soon part company for each other.

Christian and Faithful see Evangelist coming from behind them and so they meet up together with each other. They tell Evangelist of all their experiences. Evangelist tells them that soon they will come to the town of Vanity and there they will discover Vanity Fair. They will find all kind of merchandise, all kinds of pleasures, and all kinds of evils. Vanity Fair never closes down - it is open all year long. Bunyan says that even

the Prince of princes had to go through Vanity Fair, on his way to His own City and Country. They will meet Lord Beelzebub, who is in charge of the Fair. Beelzebub showed the Prince of princes all the kingdoms of his world, which is a reference to Christ's Temptation by Satan.

As Christian and Faithful enter Vanity Fair, they are different from all the others. Their clothing is different, their speech is different, and when they were offered anything from the Fair, they would put their fingers in their ears and turn their faces away. This is the way of Christians in the world. They are asked what they will buy. They reply that they will buy the Truth. This leads to mocking and jeering. Since an uproar is being made in Vanity Fair, they are taken to be examined. They are questioned as to who they are, where are they from. Christian and Faithful reply that they are strangers and pilgrims in the world, and on their way to their own country - the Heavenly Jerusalem. They are attacked and beaten and placed in a Cage, and made the object of all mockery. They do not retaliate. They are also marched up and down the town in chains, but in all this they behave with Christian charity. They are placed in their Cage until their Trial should take place.

The Judge of their trial is Lord Hate-Good - they are indicted as enemies and disturbers of the peace. Faithful begins his defense. False witnesses are brought in - these are Envy, Superstition and PickThank. Faithful is accused of speaking falsely against Lord Beelzebub's friends, Lord Old Man, Lord Carnal Delight, Lord Luxurious, Lord Desire of Vain-Glory, the very old Lord Lechery, and Sir Having Greedy. One of the modern objections to the ongoing value of Pilgrim's Progress concerns the identity of such individuals. We are assured in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that we

are not like these descriptions, yet let me ask you - if you have ever known a Lord Lechery or Lord Luxurious. The answer is obvious, for even we ourselves maybe these very kinds of people. Faithful answers all accusations. The Judge turns to the jury of the trial. The jury members are Mr. Blind-Man, Mr. No-Good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-Mind, and Mr. Enmity. Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-Light and Mr. Implacable. How can you win with such a jury?

The verdict of death is delivered against Faithful. He is scourged and beaten. His flesh is pricked with knives. He is stoned with stones, and then he is tied to the stake and burnt. The suddenness of Faithful's martyrdom will catch the reader by surprise.

Christian who remains in custody is somehow able to escape. This escape Bunyan attributes to the Providence of God, which over-rules all things. As he goes on his way, Christian meets Hopeful, who has become Hopeful because of what he witnessed in Vanity Fair. Christian loses one companion, but gains another. They will meet others on the road who are not pilgrims but think they are. Mr. By-Ends, Mr. Hold-the-World, Mr. Money-Love, and Mr. Save-All. Various conversations follow among them all. Christian and Hopeful have conversation with Demas who loved this present world. Hopeful is nearly drawn away by Demas to the supposed treasure of Silver-Mine in the Hill Filthy Lucre, but Christian prevents him. Christian accuses Demas of having Gehazi as is great grandfather and Judas as his father. Eventually they come to a pleasant River - the Trees are good for medicine, the fields are filled with lilies. They are able to rest awhile. They keep to the Way and soon are troubled by By-Path Meadow which represents all kinds of temptations. They meet with

a man called Vain- Confession, but he falls into a Pit in the night, and the Pilgrims are uncertain as to what to do. They retreat only to be faced with a Flood. Eventually they are able to sleep. When they awake they find themselves near a castle called Doubting Castle whose owner is known as Giant Despair. They are imprisoned by Giant Despair for trespassing on his property. The prison is designed to wear down Christian and Hopeful so that they begin to despair. They are abused & beaten. Giant Despair soon counsels them that he will kill them. Christian begins to despair of life itself. Hopeful encourages him to hang in there. Giant Despair expects them to die because of their wounds and lack of food, and becomes enraged to find them alive. Hopeful reminds Christian of his great battle with Apollyon. Hopeful counsels patience & commitment to persevere. Towards the end of nearly a week of imprisonment, Christian suddenly recalls that he has the Key called Promise which he believes will unlock any door in Doubting Castle. Well, sure enough all the doors open easily to the Key Promise, and soon they are free and on their way again.

Eventually they arrive at the Delectable Mountains which belong to the Lord. They are able to refresh themselves and meet with the Shepherds who feed the sheep who belong to the Lord. The Shepherds' names are Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere. They are shown the Mountain of Error where Hymeneus and Philetus lay dashed to pieces (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). They are shown Caution Mountain which was near Doubting Castle. The Shepherds explain that many have perished at the hands of Giant Despair. This causes Christian and Hopeful to gush with tears as they remembered their weakness in sleeping in his grounds and being captured by the Giant. They are shown the by-way to Hell where

Esau and Judas and others have gone. They go to the top of Mt. Clear and with a telescope are able to gaze at the Lord's country. They think that they can see a gate and Glory seems to surround it, but their hands are shaking too much since they realize how providential it was that they escaped the Giant. The Shepherds warn them to beware of the Flatterer and watch out for the Enchanted Ground as they leave.

They come to the country called Conceit and meet a man called Ignorance. Ignorance is going to the Celestial City. He claims that he has been a good man who has paid his tithes. Christian explains that this will not gain him entrance to the City. Ignorance has not come through the Wicket Gate nor has he been to the Cross.

Leaving Ignorance, they enter a dark pathway and meet a man with seven devils on his back. This man was known as Turn-Away. This leads Christian to remember the story about another man called Little-Faith who used to live in the town of Sincere. He was a man who had great difficulties in his life. Christian then expounds about Esau and his sins and this leads to an explanation of the hardships that come to the Christian that can only be overcome by faith.

So dangerous is the way, that Christian and Hopeful are deluded by the Flatterer who leads them in a direction away from the Celestial City. It was fortunate that the Shepherds had given them a Note of Directions to help them find their way back. Along the way, they meet Athiest who mocks their faith. It is at this time that Hopeful reminds Christian of their former struggles, of their chastisements, of their facing temptations, of their faith. Soon they enter the Enchanted Ground and

because the air is so different they begin to be drowsy. Christian realizes their danger, and so to avoid sleeping they begin to talk about spiritual things. They speak of conversion and their own experience of it. They speak of their sins and guilt. They speak of the works of the Law and their attempts at self-reformation. They speak of Christ and His beauty. There is much theological discourse in these sections.

Soon the air becomes sweet and pleasant. They have entered Beulah land. Here the sun shines night and day. They are able to see the Celestial City - its glory staggers Christian so much that he becomes sick. Hopeful also suffers in the same way. They come to refreshing gardens and vineyards tended by the Gardener.

Soon they have sight of the Gate but there is a River between them. There is no way around the River. To get to the gate at the Celestial City, one must go through the River. They desire some other way to cross, but cannot. This means that death is not natural to us and we do not welcome it but seek to avoid it. Some men are nearby whom they ask concerning the depth of the water. Their answer is “you shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the Place.”

As they enter the water, Christian begins to sink crying out to Hopeful that he is sinking in Deep waters with the billows going over his head and the waves over him. This is Christian’s experience with death. Hopeful encourages him by saying, “be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom.” Christian’s hour of death is hard. The sorrows of death have him fast - great darkness descends upon him. All of his sins come back to trouble him. Hopeful seeks to help him but has a hard time trying to

keep Christian's head above the waters. Soon Hopeful says, "I see the Gate, and men standing to receive us." Christian is soon relieved of his fears, "Oh, I see him again." Isaiah 43:2 comes to his mind, "when you pass through the waters I shall be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you."

With that, they have crossed over the River to be met by two shining men who go with them up to the Gate. They find that their old clothes (mortality) are gone. The two shining men speak of all the beauties of God's City. As they get near the Gate, a heavenly host come to meet them, and they are welcomed. At the Gate, they hand in their Certificates or Roll and are welcomed into the City by the King himself. As they enter the City, Bunyan says, they were transfigured and clothed with glorious raiment. The City rings with joy.

Meanwhile, Ignorance has managed to find a ferryman at a place called Vain Hope on the River and he too has crossed over, but with no difficulty at all. At the Gate, he knocks expecting to be given entrance, but he is asked, "Where have you come from?" They ask him for his Roll or Certificate that they might show to the King, but he has none. They tell the King, but he refuses to come down to see him, but rather commands the two shining men to bind Ignorance hand and foot and take him away, and Bunyan says, then I saw in my dream that even at the Gates of Heaven, there is a way to Hell itself, even as there is from the City of Destruction.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 38 - 189.

This ends Part 1 of Pilgrim's Progress. Part 2 has to do with the journey of Christiana, the wife of Christian and his children as they make their way to the Celestial City. There are many great theological discourses in Part 2, and there we meet the wonderful Mr. Great-Heart and Mr. Valiant- For-Truth.

In our sensory image driven culture we are overloaded with the need to see things rather than read or hear those things. But I want to attest to the power of the written word in Pilgrim's Progress. This is what Mr. Spurgeon felt as he read John Bunyan. I confess that I have felt it too, & I know others have felt the same. There is power, almost, indescribable power in the words of Bunyan, for the simple reason that they describe the Christian experience. John Bunyan was able to express the life of the Christian with vivid imagination simply because it was his own experience & because Scripture confirmed it. He can make you weep and laugh and sing. It is the reality of the experience, which we know to be true of ourselves that we feel confirmed to us with convicting power by the Holy Scriptures. This is what I love about Pilgrim's Progress. Pick any passage you want - you will feel its power.

In view of this, we can unhesitatingly affirm then, that this book is necessary and valid for today. The last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have seen a decline in interest in Pilgrim's Progress. In order to pique interest, I gather that various films have been made of Pilgrim's Progress. I remain firmly convinced, however, that the book format best conveys John Bunyan's desire & design - the progress of the saint from this world to the next. The Pilgrim's Progress is not written primarily for children, as many think, though it ought to be read by every child or have it read to

them. The Pilgrim's Progress is a thorough evangelical & biblical theology, the understanding of which is so necessary today. The Pilgrim's Progress is not just for academic study. You can criticize Bunyan all you want to - his style, his words, etc, but you cannot avoid the power of his work.

John Bunyan loved the souls of men. He wanted to see them come under conviction and approach the Wicket Gate, and he wanted to encourage Christians to continue on in their journey towards heaven. Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress because the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was loved by him. He loved Christ for saving him - and he regarded himself as the chief of sinners. He loved the atonement of Christ, and he viewed the righteousness of Jesus as the only ground for justification and sanctification. He saw the believer as a person who was growing in grace because of a transforming conversion. He saw the importance of church life under wise godly leadership as a sure place to protect the saints of God and provide them with refuge and support. He saw the anticipation of final deliverance and glory as important to the believer's present life.

The Pilgrim's Progress remains the most popular book next to the Bible, and has the widest circulation apart from the Bible of any other book ever. In over 300 years of existence it continues to speak to all cultures, all races, and all people. The life of man is a pilgrimage, either to heaven or hell. Bunyan offers hope and challenge to all.

John Bunyan, of course, was overwhelmingly a Calvinist and he was overwhelmingly a Puritan. He was a Puritan because he loved the Glory of God. He was a Puritan because he loved the Lord Jesus Christ. He was

a Puritan because he loved the substitutionary vicarious atonement of Christ. He was a Puritan because he lived and loved the righteousness of Christ. When you read his work entitled *Reprobation Asserted* (a word we never hear anymore), you see a Puritan Calvinist in love with sinners. He urges all men to come to Christ. He begs them, he petitions them, he commands them, he woos them, and he entreats them, for all who genuinely come will genuinely be received by the Lord.

*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is Bunyan's autobiography. It is a detailed account of his conversion experience. His book *The Holy War* (1682) is a magnificent work about Prince Emmanuel vs. Diabolus in the conquest for the City called ManSoul.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is about adult life problems. Faithful is propositioned by a seductress. Christian considers suicide. Hopeful inclines to money. Bunyan's answer is always the same - it is the Gospel of Christ that saves and keeps a person ultimately.

The major theme in *Pilgrims' Progress* is the theme of progression. Moving from this world to the next is serious lifetime stuff. It is from the ugliness of this world to the holy beauty of the next. It is to move from the secular to the sacred.<sup>24</sup> This is how Bunyan begins his story, "as I walked through the wilderness of this world."<sup>25</sup>

John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* can be said to be second only to the Bible. Shakespeare, before Bunyan in time, and John Milton, a

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<sup>24</sup> Barry E. Horner, *Pilgrim's Progress: Themes and Issues* (Auburn: Evangelical Press and Vestavia Hills: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2003), p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 1.

contemporary of Bunyan, have written profound and enduring works, yet not one of their works, either combined or individually, ranks with *Pilgrim's Progress* in terms of enduring popularity. It does not matter whether you see Bunyan's work as allegory or literature or anything else for that matter - it is so profound, so as to be so simple.

Since Bunyan was a Puritan and a Baptist one at that, we must not ignore his churchmanship. He was unhesitatingly Baptist, and unhesitatingly Reformed in his theology. We would associate Bunyan today with the Historical Baptists and the Reformed Baptists, but not with the General Baptists. He had a dislike of Arminianism & a suspicious distrust of the Established Church, and part of his aim in *Pilgrim's Progress* is to assure the Christian that evangelical life & doctrine in a church is a sure help on the way to heaven.

Bunyan packages truth in simple yet attractive ways. He stimulates desire, he provokes anticipation, he moves the mind & the heart, he prompts us for a reaction, & he is always biblically arresting & effectively doctrinal.

Have you ever encountered a hypocritical person such as Talkative? Of course, you have. Have you come across a Mr. Save-self? Of course, you have. Pick any character of Bunyan's & you will know them. You might even find yourself to be one of them. This is what secures for John Bunyan enduring legacy.

Bunyan addresses the themes that are so desperately missing in today's Church. For instance, we need clear Gospel preaching - not

emotional relational appeals to come to an undefined Christ. We need again the banishment of free will & the self- sufficiency of Man. We need subjection to God's Sovereignty in free grace & we need preaching that calls upon all men & women to repent & come to Christ. We need a restoration of the true worship of God where the effects of being in the presence of God cause us to hesitate about doing other things on the Lord's Day. This was Bunyan in life & in Pilgrim's Progress. The Church today needs a restoration of biblical justification and biblical sanctification. This is what John Bunyan provides us.

Bunyan wants us to know that all are pressing through this world, but not all are pressing in the same direction. The doctrines of heaven & hell are set before us in Pilgrim's Progress. The person who rejects God, who does not care about God or his own soul, the person who ignores God and substitutes another god for the true God, or the person who is the atheist, who is ignorantly, unwittingly & unknowingly the greatest testimony to the existence of God, to them all, Bunyan addresses himself with the desire for them to have their eyes opened by God.

Bunyan held the Bible to be relevant propositional truth and not subjective truth. For instance, in his account of his imprisonment, before the Clerk of the Peace of Bedford, Paul Cobb, Bunyan confesses his view of the Bible & why he preached it.

Cobb:           How shall we know that you have the gift of preaching?

Bunyan:       Let any man hear & search and prove the doctrine of the Bible.

Cobb: but will you be willing, Bunyan, that two indifferent persons shall determine your case, & that you will stand by their judgment?

Bunyan: are they infallible?

Cobb: No!

Bunyan: It is possible then that my judgment may be as good as theirs. But I will pass by them and myself and in this matter be judged by Scripture. I am sure that is infallible and therefore cannot err.

This view of the Bible is what the Book meant to Christian. Christian reads concerning his damnation & is concerned about it. He is convicted by what he reads. He recognizes his guilt and that he must come to judgment. It is Evangelist, who points him in the direction of conviction under the Holy Spirit. Today we bypass this crucial work of the Spirit and tell people to simply accept Jesus into their hearts. Bunyan knew that there had to be profound conviction of sin before one would look for a Savior. In other, words, a sinner must know that he is truly a sinner before he or she will seek Christ Jesus the Savior. Salvation is not about fixing our relational problems - it is not about fixing our emotional troubles. Bunyan would tell you that this road can be long and very painful. Luther would tell you the same.

Before Christian comes to the Cross, he must go through the Wicket Gate. At the Wicket Gate, he must knock to be admitted. Christ

is the Door. To enter, Christian must come to Christ. Mr. Spurgeon understood the difficulty people have in coming to the Wicket Gate. Every person has different problems as they confront the horror of their sins, and we all have different responses to that horror. This is why Bunyan, and then Mr. Spurgeon, two centuries later, spoke so effectively to others - they knew their own hearts.

Christian must have Interpreter, who is the Holy Spirit show him that he is convicted by the Law which he has broken, which the more you attempt to obey it the more it is stirred up like dust. Bunyan's book is mocked by Obstinate, dallied with by Pliable, and repudiated by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. May that not be the case with us, is what Bunyan would urge upon us.

The Beautiful Palace that Christian comes to speaks of the local church where the Word of God is preached, and the Lord's Table is celebrated. Godly leadership is seen in the counsel of Prudence, Piety & Charity. The great banquet is the Lord's Supper where they reminisce about the pilgrim's Lord. The records in the Study, are accounts of the saving work of God's warrior Son. The key to Doubting Castle are all the promises of God in the Bible. Giant Despair is representative of distress, despondency and even despair at the hardship of the journey of the Christian. The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains represent godly counsel by those who are sincere and watching out for the souls of others in their care. The Garden in Beulah Land provides nourishment, which are the sweet directives of the Bible.

Pilgrim's Progress is saturated with the Bible. It is dominated by the Bible. Bunyan was saturated with Scripture. It had absolute dominance over him, as God's certain, final and inerrant Word. Bunyan would tell you that he honors the godly and learned Christians, but he prefers the Bible before them all, and he could say, "having only the Bible, I count myself far better furnished than if I had al the libraries of the two universities, Oxford and Cambridge."<sup>26</sup>

"Pray and read the Word of God, Bunyan says, and read and pray; for a little from God is better than a great deal from men. Also what is from man is uncertain, and is often lost and tumbled over by men, but what is from God is fixed as a nail in a sure place."<sup>27</sup>

So, John Bunyan let the Bible have complete ascendancy over him. This is why there is so much profusion of the Biblical text throughout Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan, of course, wrote Pilgrim's Progress with his Bible in his hand and his experiences in his heart.

The theme of sanctification is very significant in Pilgrim's Progress. For instance, the first 10% of the story is concerned with Christian getting to the Wicket Gate & the Place of Deliverance - the Cross, and the remaining 90% is concerned with Christian, now as a Christian traveling through this world to the next. It is about his sanctification. There are setbacks and hardships - Christian falls asleep in the Arbor of the Lord when he should have been spiritually vigilant. This proves that when we are enjoying the fellowship, and benefits of Christ, that danger

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<sup>26</sup> Horner, *Themes and Issues*, p. 75.

<sup>27</sup> *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, 3 vols: quoted from *Christ a Complete Savior*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991; first published 1854) vol. 1, p. 238.

is closer than we think. The two lions bring us fear. There are many of these kinds of situations in *Pilgrim's Progress*, which are reflective of our sanctification. Bishop J C Ryle, says of this life, in relation to what Bunyan wrote in *Pilgrim's Progress*, that the "true Christian's life is holy violence, a conflict, a holy war, a fight, a soldier's life, a wrestling."<sup>28</sup> Having the full armor of God in Ephesians 6 at our disposal is no guarantee that we know how to use it or that we do use it, implying that there are struggles, some victorious and others defeats. It took Christian awhile to draw his sword, and eventually strike the final blow to drive away Apollyon.

Church fellowship is an important part of sanctification. Evangelist offers his counsel about the charlatan Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. It was Help who helped Christian at the Slough of Despond which is probably reminiscent of Bunyan receiving help from John Gifford, his pastor in Bedford. Christian and Hopeful are delivered from Doubting Castle on Sunday morning, the day of resurrection and church life, the day when we feast on the promises of God, the day when the glorious light of the Gospel dispels and drives away our fears and darkness from the previous week. The Beautiful Palace and the Delectable Mountains all offer the reader glimpses into John Bunyan's church life, and how much he treasured and valued it.

You would be staggered at how much singing takes place in *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the Wicket Gate, Christian gave three leaps of joy and went on his way, singing,

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<sup>28</sup> J C Ryle, *Holiness*, (Hertfordshire: Evangelical Press, 1984, first printed 1879) p. xxvi.

*"Blest Cross! Blest Sepulcher! Blest rather be,  
The man that there was put to shame for me."*

When Faithful is martyred, Christian exclaims,

*"Sing, Faithful, sing and let thy name survive,  
For, though they'd killed Thee, thou art yet alive."*

There are at least 12 major places where Christian and Hopeful sing together. In Part 2, there is greater emphasis on singing. We have Mercy's hymn, the Shepherd Boy's hymn and Mr. Valiant-for-Truth's hymn as examples. John Bunyan said in his book *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized* that, "to sing to God is the highest worship we are capable of performing in heaven, and it is much if sinners on earth, without grace, should be capable of performing it according to God's institution. I pray God it be done by all those who get into church nowadays in spirit and with understanding."<sup>29</sup>

Now in conclusion, what shall we say to all of these things as they pertain to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? I have seen Vanity Fair and I have lived in Vanity Fair. I once lived myself in the City of Destruction, but now I have a Roll with entrance to the Celestial City of God. I have felt the pull of the Slough of Despond. I have experienced the Wicket Gate and I have been to the Cross. I have met Mr. Worldly-Wiseman and I have entered the town of Carnal-Policy. I have visited the village of Morality and I have met Mr. Legality. I have been and I have come across Formalist and Hypocrisy. I have climbed and I continue to climb Hill Difficulty with its

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<sup>29</sup> *Works*, vol. 3, p. 496.

narrow path. I have seen and been on the broad ways of Danger & Destruction, that would avoid Hill Difficulty. I have relished the advice of Prudence, Piety and Charity. I have been in the Valley of Humiliation and I have met the dreadful Apollyon. I have fought with him and I confess I have lost battles and I have won some. I have used my sword and my shield and I have not. I have thought on a few occasions that I have come near that Valley of the Shadow of Death, but it lies before me yet. I have confronted Pagan and Pope. I have met and I currently have Hopeful and Faithful as my friends. I have met Lord Beelzebub with his hoard of old men I have met Lord Hate-Good's jury. I have wandered into Doubting Castle and have been held captive by Giant Despair. I have been to the Delectable Mountains and with the telescope of faith I have gazed at the City of gold. I long for that City more than anything, and I long for my Master of the Mansion across in Beulah Land. I have rested in the Arbor of the Lord and refreshed myself in the garden of the Lord. I know the river lies before me, but I have my roll by way of the Cross, and the King shall welcome me when I cross over, and I shall find that my clothes shall be like His, and then forever and forever I shall be with the One who loved me and died for me. This is the Progress of the Pilgrim.

There is power in words is there not? We have had Film and Photography since 1841 and Digital Cameras since the 1990's. We have had telegraphy with Morse Code, (in 1845) to Telephones from Wire to Cellular (1878 - 2009). We have heard the Phonograph from 1877 and we have seen the Silent Movie from 1903 to sound in 1927. We have heard the Radio from 1920 and still it blares on. We have watched the Television from Black & White through Cable through Color through High-Definition. We feel the power of the Satellite to the Personal Computer

with Internet, Email, Floppy Discs to CD-Roms and DVD's & Videos, and I contend that none of them can compare to these simple stirring words from John Bunyan.

Yes, other mediums can make us laugh and cry, but they last for a moment and we move onto the next crazy thing in life. But wherever you go and wherever you are, whoever you are and whatever you do, you are either a Pilgrim or not. You are either going to the City of God or the City of Destruction. There is no other option.

John Bunyan points us to Christ as the Keeper of life - from this world to the next. The only thing that remains to ask ourselves is this - Is Prince Emmanuel our King? If he is, then you must pass as a Pilgrim with John Bunyan through this world, which is not your home to that which is beyond the River, but you shall go with the Promises of God.