

Journey to the Celestial City

A Study of Pilgrim's Progress

To the Palace Beautiful

Simple, Slothful and Presumption Asleep

Having experienced the joy of salvation at Jesus Christ, Christian is disturbed to see three men sleeping with chains on their feet: Simple, Slothful and Presumption. They represent the indifferent who sit under the preaching of the gospel but are unmoved. Christian tries to awaken them to and warn them against their danger of spiritual ruin.

Simple is spiritually dull and ignorant and prefers a simplistic approach to the Christian life, believing that God is love and forgives and that everything will be fine in the end.

Sloth knows his need to repent and believe, but not yet. He prefers to wait, enjoy the pleasures of this life a little longer. One day when it is too late, he will awake to the reality of eternal poverty and misery of soul (Prov. 29:1).

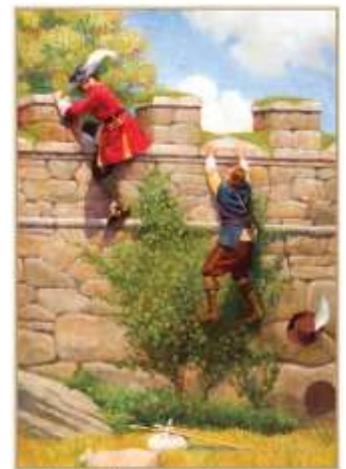
Presumption responds by saying that he can take care of himself and does not need the advice or help from anyone else. He is proud and arrogant. He intends to get to heaven, but he will do it his own way.

Jonathan Edwards: "Every man flatters himself, thinking that he shall escape hell, by what he has done, or is doing, or one day intends to do."

Formality & Hypocrisy climb over the wall

These two men come from the land of Vainglory (meaning that they boast in things which will not profit them in the end, like _____, _____). But they are unburdened, having the form of godliness, but not the power of it.

- ❖ The religion of Formalist is habitual but lifeless. What he hears and reads does not touch his heart. He "is a man that hath lost all but the shell of religion... but it leaves him in his sins."
- ❖ Mr. Hypocrisy pictures those who present themselves as Christians, but his heart has never been changed. Samuel Rutherford: "a man's heart may deceive his heart, and he may persuade himself before he was converted."



Christian is learning to not quickly accept the profession of those whom he encounters.



At Hill Difficulty

The narrow path leads strait up Hill Difficulty. Will we go on the narrow way even if it is the most difficult way? Many prefer the broad way, the easy way, the road of least resistance, that leads to destruction. Formalist and Hypocrisy take bypaths. Notice that there is a refreshing spring at the foot of Hill Difficulty. But the climb is not easy.

He finds a place of rest, an harbour of ease. He pulled out his scroll and began to read in it for comfort. But this place is not to stop being sober, watching and praying. Christian falls into a deep long sleep. How slothful a Christian can become at times. When he is awakened, he immediately gets up and speeds up the hill to the top. In such hurried and unguarded times, the believer tends to be neglectful and Christian leaves his roll behind.

Timorous and Mistrust

These two men are running back, scared, intending not to go on anymore. There are fair-weather pilgrims. They want to go to the Celestial City, but not if they encounter hardships (2 Tim. 1:14, Matt. 13:20-21). There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is death (Prov. 14:12).

Christian realizes he has lost his roll. The believer can have times of doubts and fears, times of depression and a troubled conscience. What should he do? Take up the words of Job 29:2-3: "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness." We need to trace out why we are in this condition, especially if we have not been diligent, but slothful and seek God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Lions

After retrieving his scroll, he presses on in darkness. Before him, along side the narrow way, lies the stately palace called Beautiful. But there are lions in the way. The porter of the palace, saw his fears, and asked: "Is thy strength so small? Fear not the lions, for they are chained and are placed there for the trial of faith where it is, and for the discovery of those that have none. Keep in the midst of the path, and no hurt shall come to thee." Many things can keep people from the place of Christian fellowship and the church. Lions like _____, _____, _____.

At the Palace Beautiful

A searching investigation takes place here. They are also going to partake of a supper together, but prior to that there is more conversation as they listen to Christian tell his experiences thus far. He tells of his conviction of imminent judgment, the grace of God, the means of Evangelist, the deliverance from the burden by the blood of Jesus, etc. He is asked about his on-going struggle with sin. Bunyan believed in the reality of the on-going



struggle with remaining sin. What helps to vanquish enemies of the soul? Meditation on the cross, the robe of righteousness, the prospect of the Celestial City. These conversations are meant to show careful preparation and examination prior to celebrating the Lord's Supper. Sweet communion was tasted, and he received rest in a room called Peace.

In the morning he is given a guided tour of the palace. Before he leaves, he is fitted with the armour of faith, and accompanied into the valley of humiliation.

Questions for discussion

1. Which of pride, sloth, presumption is in the worst place? Why?
2. Regarding Mr. Hypocrite, someone once said that "the perfect hypocrite is the man who has the truth of God in his mind, but is without the love of God in his heart" (A. Whyte). Read 2 Tim. 3:5. What did he mean by this? How can we avoid falling into this trap ourselves?
3. Christian met Timorous and Mistrust and became afraid. Where did he look for comfort? What does that teach us?
4. The conversations with Prudence, Piety, Discretion, Charity was searching, but sweet. How can we seek to engage each other better on spiritual things?