

## Pilgrim's Progress (Part 7)

**Quote:** "Of all the Temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God, and the truth of his Gospel, is the worst, and worst to be born."  
— John Bunyan

### ● Recap

- Vanity & it's Fair (Vanity Fair)
  - (ask what this could be compared to in today's Christian walk)
  - what 3 things made Christian & Faithful stand out to the citizens of Vanity?
  - What happened to Faithful?
  - Who is Hopeful?
- Hill of Lucre
- Monument by the Way

### ● The River of God

- Meadow
  - several days & nights
  - ate, rested, slept (this was a safe place to sleep)
- the Way left the River (separate directions)
- the Way became rough
  - they kept wishing for an easier way
  - "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way" (Numbers 21:4)
  - discuss tract – "Cutting Off the Cross" (<http://godsacres.org/tract.CuttingOfftheCross.html>)

### ● By-Path Meadow

- stile leading from the Way to this meadow
  - definition "stile": set of steps for crossing a wall
  - spiritual stiles: temptations to leave the path
    - recognize "stiles" that have proved to be a danger in the past & avoid them at all costs
- By-Path seems to run alongside of the Way
  - just outside of the fence
    - the fence is there for a reason (protection, to keep pilgrims IN the Way)
- Hopeful is unsure, but Christian persuades him
- (1) Vain-Confidence was walking ahead
  - Christian & Hopeful have "vain confidence" in thinking they can choose this path without repercussions
  - Christian & Hopeful call out to ask Vain-Confidence where he is going
  - Vain-Confidence tells them, "The Celestial Gate"
  - they don't know this traveler (unknown & unproven); yet they ask for and are reassured by his advice
- Darkness Falls
  - Christian & Hopeful lose sight of Vain-Confidence
  - Vain-Confidence fell into a deep pit prepared by the owner of these grounds
    - dashed to pieces
    - Christian & Hopeful called out to Vain-Confidence
      - \* heard only groaning
  - Christian & Hopeful realize their error & determine to go back to the Way
    - thunder, rain, and floods prevented their return
      - \* "It is easier going out of the way when we are in, than going in when we are out."

- + Discuss the ease of leaving the Christian walk versus the difficulty of returning
      - so important to stay in the Way, regardless of how easy or alluring By-Path is
    - found shelter & fell asleep
- **Doubting Castle**
  - Giant Despair
    - while walking up & down his fields, finds Christian & Hopeful (trespassers)
    - Christian doesn't try to use his sword on this giant; despair makes him weak<sup>1</sup>
    - imprisoned in Doubting Castle
      - from Wednesday morning until Saturday night (escaped Sunday morning)
      - Christ was taken to the Cross Wednesday morning
      - Christ arose from the grave Sunday morning
        - \* this would've been the time of greatest despair for the disciples
          - + doubts concerning Christ & His message
      - based on Bunyan's own experiences with despair
        - \* "I found it a hard work now to pray to God, because despair was swallowing me up" (*Grace Abounding* by John Bunyan).
  - Diffidence (wife of Giant Despair)
    - (definition "diffidence": mistrust, skeptical)
    - counsels her husband to beat the prisoners unmercifully
      - **Thursday:** prisoners are beat with a cudgel (club) from the crab-tree
        - \* crab-tree cudgel: It was once quite common in England to use a stick of crab-apple wood as a weapon.
          - + The wood is often knotty, and the tree has a thorny bark.
        - \* why did Giant Despair need to cut a new cudgel? Why not use an old one?
          - + club fashioned according to the weaknesses of the prisoner
        - \* beat with despair, such as:
          - + there is no way out of this problem
          - + you are a constant failure (spiritual, academic, socially, etc.)
            - "you can never do anything right"
          - + doubts about whether you are really saved or not
          - + doubts concerning the reality of God
            - "Of all the Temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God, and the truth of his Gospel, is the worst, and worst to be born." (Bunyan)
          - + doubts about whether this is the right Way or not
            - perhaps other religions are just as good
          - + tenderheartedness: always feeling you didn't say or act right
      - **Friday:** prisoners are given the tools for suicide
        - \* knife, halter (rope) & poison
        - \* Despair: "Why should you choose to live, seeing it is attended with so much bitterness?"
        - \* prisoners ask to be set free
          - + Despair fell into one of his fits & left them
            - had fits in sunshiny weather
            - when doubts & despair are brought into the Light, they are powerless

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bunyanministries.org/pp\\_commentary/25\\_com%20christian\\_and\\_hopeful\\_with\\_giant\\_despair.pdf](http://www.bunyanministries.org/pp_commentary/25_com%20christian_and_hopeful_with_giant_despair.pdf)

- John 1:5 – "And the Light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it [put it out or absorbed it]" (The Amplified Bible)
- Light = Christ or the Word
- \* The prisoners discuss how suicide would be easier than "this dungeon"
  - + Hopeful: "the Lord of the country to which we are going hath said, 'Thou shalt do no murder'"
    - forbidden to murder another or even one's own self
  - + Hopeful: "let us be patient and endure for awhile"
    - Christian fellowship is an excellent cure for despair
  - + Bunyan (through Hopeful's character) shows that suicide is wrong; perhaps refuting a work written by John Donne
    - Historical reference: John Donne (clergyman) wrote in defense of suicide, using Biblical examples, "including Jesus, Samson, Saul, and Judas Iscariot."<sup>2</sup>
    - This was published following the author's death (1631)
    - *Pilgrim's Progress* was published in 1678
- **Think on These Things**
  - Hopeful:
    - "Let us consider, the Lord of the country to which we are going"
    - "All the law is not in the hand of Giant Despair"
    - "Others have been taken by him as well as we, and yet have escaped out of his hands"
    - Despair might die or have another fit (with additional Light)<sup>3</sup>
- **Giant Despair Returns**
  - furious the prisoners are still alive
  - prisoners are barely alive
    - no bread (Bread of Life) or water (Holy Spirit)
  - more threatenings
    - Christian "swoons"; is tempted to end it all
    - Hopeful again encourages Christian
      - "Remember" – Apollyon, Valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair
      - "What hardship, terror, and amazement hast thou already gone through"
      - Isaiah 46:9 – "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me"
    - \* draw encouragement from past victories
- **Castle-Yard Full of Bones & Skulls**
  - **Saturday:** Diffidence tells Despair to show them the bones & skulls of other pilgrims who committed suicide
    - Diffidence (mistrust, skepticism) is the driving force behind Despair
      - Despair doesn't act without her prompting
      - Mistrust & skepticism of the Gospel, the Way, the truth is the beginning of despair
  - Despair promises to tear them into pieces in 10 days
    - why the delay?
    - can Despair "kill" the prisoners or only provide the "tools" of suicide?

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<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biathanatos>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bunyanministries.org/pp\\_commentary/25\\_com%20christian\\_and\\_hopeful\\_with\\_giant\\_despair.pdf](http://www.bunyanministries.org/pp_commentary/25_com%20christian_and_hopeful_with_giant_despair.pdf)

- Prisoners beaten & returned to their prison
- **Midnight**
  - Prisoners began to pray
    - Acts 16:25 – "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed"
  - Prayed all night
- **Key of Promise**
  - Christian remembers the key he has "in my bosom"
    - bosom = heart
      - why the heart and not his pocket?
      - Psalm 119:11 – "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
      - Discuss the importance of "hiding" the Word in your heart for future needs
        - \* there are many Scriptures that are hard to understand ("dark sayings"; Psalm 78:2)
        - \* every Scripture has its "mate" (Isaiah 34:6)
          - + store up the Word in your heart; later, when the "mate" is read, understanding will come
  - God's Word is full of promises
    - find one that fits the "lock" of your situation
      - Christian's key unlocked 3 locks in Doubting Castle
        - \* last lock was "damnably hard" (devilishly tight)<sup>4</sup>
    - every child of God has access to exactly the "key" that will deliver him from Doubting Castle
    - Examples of promises:
      - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).
      - "And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs" (Philippians 4:19).
      - "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).
      - "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).
      - (ask for other examples)
- **Deliverance**
  - Sunday morning
    - just as the Resurrection occurred on Sunday morning, dispelling all doubts and despair in Jesus' followers
  - Despair tried to go after them but had another of his fits
  - Back on the King's Highway
    - Went back over the stile
    - Set up a pillar to warn future pilgrims
      - "Over this stile is the way to Doubting Castle, which is kept by Giant Despair, who despiseth the King of the Celestial country, and seeks to destroy his holy pilgrims."
    - Young person, consider yourself warned concerning the stiles (temptations) that lead to By-Path Meadow
- **Pilgrim's Progress – Part 2**
  - Diffidence & Despair are killed & Doubting Castle is torn down by Great Heart, old Honest, and four young men

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.bunyanministries.org/pp\\_commentary/25\\_com%20christian\\_and\\_hopeful\\_with\\_giant\\_despair.pdf](http://www.bunyanministries.org/pp_commentary/25_com%20christian_and_hopeful_with_giant_despair.pdf)