

## **A DREAMER AND HIS WONDERFUL DREAM**

The Story of John Bunyan and The Pilgrim's Progress

by

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### **Chapter 18**

#### **THE PILGRIM'S COME HOME: The Last Chapter**

#### **THE COUNTRY CALLED BEULAH LAND**

Soon the Enchanted Ground came to an end and the pilgrims entered into another country called Beulah Land, the air of which was sweet and pleasant and filled with the fragrance of beautiful flowers that grew in great abundance. Birds of gorgeous plumage filled the air with their melody. Here the sun shone day and night, and they were far removed from the noise of Vanity Fair, from the terrors of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and from the fearful threats of Giant Despair and his castle. They could see from this land the beautiful Celestial City in the distance, and the Shining ones that had appeared to them at the cross walked continually in these parts. The contract between the bride and the bridegroom was renewed so that the Bridegroom rejoiced over the Bride, as also did GOD rejoice over them.

In this beautiful region there was no lack of food, but an abundance of all that the pilgrims could desire. Here also they met many other pilgrims who were nearing the end of their journey. As they walked in the lovely gardens and partook of the luscious fruit, Christian exclaimed, "If you see my Beloved, tell him I am sick with desire to see His glory." They also heard voices coming from the Celestial City saying, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold thy salvation cometh! Behold his reward is with him!'" Here they slept and awakened and feasted to their heart's content; but all the while looked with longing eyes on the city of gold that was founded upon pearls. They anticipated with great delight that time when they should enter into that glorious place and see the KING in all His beauty.

In this land of Beulah, Bunyan has given us a beautiful illustration of that period in the Christian's life when his journey is almost at an end. Here the pilgrim seems to enter the borderland of eternity. The things of time and sense lose their value entirely. The noise and bustle of this work-a-day world never penetrates into the quiet and hallowed seclusion of the blessed spot. The Lord is the ever present COMPANION of the Christian and Heaven seems to be just over the way. Its glories are so real, and its splendors so attractive, that the pilgrim longs for that sweet home with his blessed Lord and Saviour. Sweet foretastes of this glory are continually given to him, and he can almost hear the song of the redeemed in Heaven that he is soon to swell. He sees and hears things that none who stand around the dying bed can hear or see. The world with all its anxieties, fears and sorrows is lost

sight of in the light of the City of GOD. This is Beulah Land - the borderland of the believer's eternal rest.

## THE RIVER OF DEATH

One day as they walked through the gardens they were met by two men whose faces shone as light and whose raiment gleamed like gold. Those two angels asked Christian and Hopeful who they were and whence they came. When the pilgrim's gladly responded, these angelic messengers asked them of their journey, what dangers and difficulties they had encountered, and what persons they had met with on the way, so the pilgrims told them all.

This pleased the angels much and they, in turn told them that there was yet another difficulty before them ere they could enter the Celestial City. The angels then conducted them to the side of a river called the River of Death. The sight of this river stunned Christian and Hopeful, so that they asked their guides, "Is there no other way to get to the gate, except through this river?" To which the angels replied, "Yes, but there hath not any, save two, namely Enoch and Elijah; been permitted to tread that path since the foundation of the world; nor shall there be, until the last trumpet shall sound."

The pilgrims next asked how deep the river was, and they were told, "You shall find it deeper or shallower, as you believe in the king of the place." With these words the angels left them.

We need not pause long here, for the truth is self evident. Every reader of these pages will be in eternity within one hundred years. Death comes to all men everywhere, irrespective of age, intellect, riches, religion and nationality. "**It is appointed unto men once to die,**" is the solemn dictum of Holy Scripture, and the universal confession of humanity is, "We must all needs die." The cold icy grip of Death will one day be laid upon each person, unless the Lord JESUS comes within the lifetime of the Christian, and each must cross the chill river of Death himself. Is the reader ready for this experience? If GOD were to say to you, as He did to one of old, "**This night is thy soul required of thee,**" would you be ready for the journey from time to eternity? Could you look up into the face of GOD and say, "By thy saving grace, and trusting only in the merits of my Saviour's finished work, and resting my all upon Him, I am ready to go any time;" or would the summons find you unprepared to meet GOD? The message of the Bible is, "**Prepare to meet thy GOD!**" Death will come swift and sure, perhaps at the most unexpected time, and your soul will then be ushered into an eternity of bliss or of woe. Which is it to be with you? Make certain of eternal blessing by being saved. Just where you are, and as you are, accept GOD's Son as your own Saviour, for He has tasted death for every man!

## THE EXPERIENCE OF CROSSING THE RIVER

They now entered the stream of death, and Christian immediately began to sink and cried to Hopeful, "**I sink in deep waters. The billows go over my head! All His waves go over me!**"

Hopeful replied, "Be of good cheer, brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good!"

Poor Christian, however, began to be tormented with doubts and cried, "Oh, my friend, the sorrows of death have compassed me about. I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey!" With this, a great horror of darkness came over his soul. The Devil, seeing the physical weakness of Christian, began to suggest doubts to him, and brought to his mind the many sins he had committed before he became a pilgrim, and the many he had committed since he went on the journey.

Hopeful did his best to keep Christian's head above water, and for his encouragement said, "I can see the other side, and there are angels waiting to receive us!"

But Christian cried despairingly, "It is for you they wait. You have been hopeful ever since I knew you."

Then said Hopeful, "My brother, you have forgotten the Scripture that says, 'The wicked have no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued as other men.' These troubles are no sign that GOD has forsaken you; but are sent to try you, to see if you will call to mind the goodness of GOD in the past to comfort you now in the present." With such words Hopeful reassured Christian, and he was silent for a while thinking. Then said Hopeful once more, "**Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.**"

At this Christian looked up and shouted, "Oh I see Him again, and He tells me, '**When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee!**'" With this they both took courage, and the waters became comparatively shallow, and soon they reached the other side.

Bunyan has given us here a graphic illustration of that solemn time which comes in the life of the believer, when the spirit is about to leave the tenement of clay it has occupied since birth. Death is still an enemy to the Christian, and is the last enemy that shall be destroyed at the coming of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. All Christians do not have the same experience in the hour of death. To some, dying is an easy thing with no doubts to mar the way; but to others, with bodies racked with pain, and minds beclouded by fear and doubt, death is a dreadful thing. But whether the passage of the river is easy or difficult, the result is the same to the Christian; for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which is "very far better." A death bed scene is no criterion of what comes afterwards. Many a hardened CHRIST rejecter, deluded by Satan's wiles, has had a peaceful death; but what a fearful awakening shall be his on the other side! The Christian, subjected to the very end by the attacks of Satan, may find the river deep and the crossing difficult; but what a glorious awakening shall be his as he enters into the presence of His Lord and Saviour!

### **THEY STEP ON SHORE**

As they stepped on the shore they were met by two angels who said, "**We are ministering spirits, sent to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation.**" Now the Celestial City was built upon an exceedingly high hill that reached above the clouds, but the pilgrims mounted the hill with ease, for the garments of their mortality had been left in the river. Accompanied by the angels, sweetly conversing as they did so, the pilgrims ascended higher and higher. Their conversation was about the glory of the Celestial City, and their hearts were ravished as the angels sought to describe its magnificence. They said, "You are going now to the paradise of GOD, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruit thereof. When you come there you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the KING, even all the days of eternity." They also told the pilgrims, that they should there see the KING in His beauty, that they should see Him as He is, crowned with glory and honour; no longer the object of the hatred of men, but the center of universal homage and praise.

As they drew near to the gate, a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them. Then said the two angels who were escorting Christian and Hopeful, "These are the men that have loved our Lord when they were in the world. They have left all for His holy name: and He hath sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey, that they may go in and look their REDEEMER in the face with joy." Then the heavenly

host gave a shout and sang, "**Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!**" Then a company of trumpeters came out and filled the air with wondrous melody and heavenly cadence; and compassing them on every side, escorted them upward with shouts of welcome and songs of joy.

Then came to view the glorious city that no tongue can properly describe or its glories unfold. Their thoughts, however, were more occupied with the Person that lived in that city than the beauties of the city itself. Presently they came to the gate over which was written in letters of gold, "**Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they might have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.**"

### **THROUGH THE GATE AND INTO THE CELESTIAL CITY**

Then the pilgrims gave in their credentials at the gate, and as the gate was opened, the glory from within transfigured the garments of the pilgrims so that they shone like gold. They were given crowns to wear and harps with which to praise the Lord. Then all the bells rang again with joy, and it was said unto them, "**Enter ye into the joy of your Lord!**"

Then sang Christian and Hopeful, "**Blessing, honor, joy and power be to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever!**"

Thus, with everlasting joy over all, the pilgrims were now safe home with CHRIST forever. All earth's sorrows were forever past. Its pains, disappointments and partings shall never be experienced again. Death, darkness and despair have been eternally annulled, and glory, everlasting glory, is now their eternal portion.

As John Bunyan thus introduces his pilgrims in this blessed place of eternal bliss, he wistfully adds, "Which, when I had seen, I wished myself amongst them."

Do you, my reader, reecho these sentiments? Do you ardently desire to be amongst that blessed company who are eternally happy in the presence of the Lord JESUS CHRIST? You can make absolutely certain of this if you will do as Christian and Hopeful did.

- Take your place as a guilty, lost sinner.
- Believe the good news of the Gospel, that CHRIST died for your sins.
- Accept Him unreservedly as your own personal Saviour,
- and confess Him as your Lord.

The Word of GOD will then assure you that you are eternally saved, and will be kept by the power of GOD, until the day when you shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

### **THE HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF**

The story is not over however, for some time later Ignorance came to the side of the river. Being afraid to cross alone, he perceived a ferry boat owned by a man, named Vain Hope who offered to give him a comfortable journey across the stream.

Being easily persuaded, Ignorance stepped into his boat and lulled into a sense of false security, was rowed across the river with comparative ease. There was no one to meet him at the other side, so he began to ascend

the hill alone until he came to the gate of the Celestial City. Here he knocked and asked admission. When he was asked who he was and whence he came and what he wanted, he replied, "I have eaten and drunk in the presence of the King, and He has taught in our streets." He was then asked for his certificate which would give him the right to enter the city. Alas, he had none, for he had rejected the gift of GOD which was eternal life through JESUS CHRIST the Lord, and had thought that his morality, good works and religious profession was quite good enough.

Then the KING commanded the two angels who had escorted Christian and Hopeful to take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and carry him away into outer darkness where these should be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Accordingly, poor Ignorance, with all his fancied goodness, self-righteousness, pride and rejection of GOD's way of salvation, was taken by the angels, and carried over hill and vale until the side door to hell was reached. Into this fearful place he was thrust, there to bemoan his wretchedness, folly and the awful sin of rejection of GOD's Son for all eternity. Bunyan adds these solemn and searching words at the end of Part I of his book, "Then I saw that there was a way to hell even from the gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction."

Is the fate of Ignorance to be yours, my unsaved reader? Rest assured, GOD does not desire it to be so. We are assured that **"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16).

The Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD, does not desire you to be thus eternally lost, for He died on Calvary's Cross under the awful load of the sin of the world. He endured the outpoured wrath of GOD against sin, so that every sinner who believes on Him should be delivered from the penalty of sin which is eternal death. The HOLY Spirit of GOD does not desire you to end in this awful fashion, for even now, He is seeking by His strivings with you to produce conviction of sin and thus arouse you to a sense of your need of CHRIST, and to lead you, through the message of the Gospel, to put your trust in the Saviour's finished work of reconciliation. The writer of these pages, together with a great company of others do not want you to go out into eternity unprepared as did Ignorance.

Thereby by the love of GOD, Who gave His Son; by the love of the Son of GOD, Who gave Himself a RANSOM for all; by the love of the HOLY SPIRIT Who takes of the things of CHRIST and makes them real; wake up to a sense of your need, and flee for refuge to those arms stretched wide to receive you, and delaying no longer, say from your heart, "As a guilty, lost sinner, but believing that the Lord JESUS CHRIST bore my sins, took my place, and died for me, I now definitely receive Him to be my own personal Saviour for time and all eternity."

May the GOD of all grace, Who enabled John Bunyan, that immortal dreamer, to pen this masterpiece of spiritual biography, grant that each unsaved one who reads these pages, may come to know, love, trust and serve the blessed Lord JESUS CHRIST, Whose death, resurrection and ceaseless ministry at the right hand of the majesty on high, make possible the pilgrim's progress from this world to that which is to come! Amen.

~THE END OF A DELIGHTFULLY GOOD BOOK ~

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