

Christiana's Progress - Part 2 of the Book "Pilgrim's Progress"

March 18th, 2018 - Christiana's Progress
Stage 8 - Part 3 (pages 91-96) The End

Today is the beautiful conclusion of this allegory written by John Bunyan in the 1600's. Christiana and some fellow pilgrims have come to the end of their earthly journey, ready to cross the river of death into the Celestial City.

Let's start by reading what the Author says; *"After this, I looked until they came into the land of Beulah, where the sun shines night and day. Here, because they were weary, they took time to rest. And because this country was common for pilgrims, and because the orchards and vineyards that were here belonged to the King of the Celestial country, therefore, they were licensed to make bold with any of his things."*

This is the heart of God for his children; He gives them everything of his to enjoy. Just like your own children or you with your parents, have privileges that no one else has. Many of you may have heard this famous hymn called Beulah Land and I'd like to quote the chorus on it; *"O Beulah land, sweet Beulah land! As on thy highest mount I stand, I look away across the sea. Where mansions are prepared for me and view the shining glory shore my heaven, my home forever more."*

What God has prepared for you with mansions of glory as a born again Christian, cannot compare to the most luxurious early mansion this world could afford to offer. They would look like matchboxes in comparison to these mansions in heaven, it's out of this world glorious!

The hymn derives from the King James Version of **Isaiah 62:4**; *"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah and thy land Beulah; for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."*

As Christians, we are referred to in the Bible as the bride of Christ. We have an appointment one day with the groom, who is Jesus, when he calls us home to be with him.

The idea the hymn presents that Heaven can be seen from Beulah land comes from John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress in which he states *"Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted ground is placed so nigh to the land Beulah and so near the end of their race [i.e. Heaven]."*

Last week we read about the Enchanted ground which was full of witchcraft, sorcery and everything evil to cause pilgrims (Christians) to hinder their walk while approaching the end of their earthly race. As you're coming to the end of your race in life approaching Beulah land, you enter into a place of peace, comfort, sweet Christian fellowship and all the previous trials and troubles are behind you. Now, you see heaven before.

Isaiah 62:1-5 says; *"For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."*

This is the promise for you as the bride of Christ. Matthew Henry's Commentary says this about this scripture; *"The Son of God here assures his church of his unfailling love, and his pleading for her under all trails and*

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difficulties. She shall be called by a new name, a pleasant name, such as she was never called by before. The state of true religion in the world, before the preaching of the gospel, no man seemed to have any real concern for. God, by his grace, has wrought that in his church, which makes her his delight. Let us thence learn motives to holiness. If the Lord rejoices over us, we should rejoice in his service."

Whatever that service is in your life, every time you make a decision to serve Jesus, including regularly going to church on Sunday no matter what the godless system says or how much family tries to influence your righteous decisions, God promises to bless it.

Philippians 3:20-21 says; "*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*"

What a wonderful promise we have that we will receive a new body in heaven, as we leave our temporary residence on earth to our eternal residence in heaven. All the aches, pains, diseases etc., of this earthly body will be no more!

We now have a series of summons by God to individual pilgrims. Remembering now that this is an allegory, **God summons Christiana** in the form of a personal letter. This type of letter from God could come to us through a doctor, a dream, an angel, or the Lord himself telling you that you'll be dying soon and that he's coming to take you home. It's a good and positive subject, not negative if you're a Christian.

The script says; "*Now, while they lay here, and waited for the good hour, there was news in the town that the post had come from the Celestial City, with a matter of great importance to one Christiana, the wife of Christian the pilgrim. ... Now the day drew on when Christiana must be gone. ...The last words she was heard to say were, 'I come, Lord, to be with you, and bless you!'*" There was no fear, she knew she would be with Jesus and see not only Christian her husband but friends and family who had gone on before her. It was a promotion.

Paul the Apostle says this in **1 Timothy 6:18-19**; "*Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*" He also says in **Romans 8:38-39**; "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

What a promise! NOTHING can separate you from the love of Christ Jesus except one thing, you. You are the only one to make that personal decision as to whether or not you're going to serve him and make him Lord and Saviour of your life. **II Peter 3:9** says clearly that he is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. You're the only one that can keep yourself out of heaven, absolutely nothing else.

So after Christiana dies, a number of fellow pilgrims also get summoned with letters saying that they too will be dying shortly. We read about **Ready-to-halt** who was a cripple and handicap and in the natural physical way, had a difficult time serving Jesus. The script says; "*In the process of time, there came a post to the town again, and his business was with Mr. Ready-to-halt. So he inquired after him, and said, 'I have come from Him whom you have loved and followed, though upon crutches; and my message is to tell you that He expects you at his table, to sup with him in his kingdom, the next day after Easter...When he came to the brink of the river, he said, 'Now I shall have no more need of these crutches, since yonder are chariots and horses for me to ride on.' The last words he was heard to say were, 'Welcome life!' So he went his way. "*

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Ready-to-halt's sufferings had been numerous and as his name shows, many a time he could have thrown in the towel, but he pressed on and the Lord says that he wanted to celebrate and eat with him in heaven. Don't give up saint...no matter what has happened in your life, whether physically or emotionally. Run the race with perseverance and like this pilgrim, you too will receive a new and perfect heavenly body.

John 10:27-29 is where Jesus says; *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."* Again, no one can snatch you from God's hand...only yourself by refusing to follow him.

God summons Mr. Feeble-mind who we read about in Chapter 6 where Giant Slay-good had caught him, was rifling through his pockets, wanting to devour him, but Mr. Great-Heart slew him and set Feeble-mind free. His summons is as follows; *"After this, Mr. Feeble-mind had news brought him that the post was sounding his horn at his chamber door. Then he came in, and told him, saying, 'I have come to tell you that your Master has need of you, and that, in a very little time, you must see his face in brightness. ...His last words were, 'Hold out, faith and patience!' So he went over to the other side."* He was a changed person, a healed in his mind and fully complete.

Revelation 21:3-4 says this; *"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

God summons Mr. Despondency who was rescued from Doubting Castle where he and his daughter Much-Afraid were held captive by Giant Despair. His summons reads as follows; *"When many days had passed, Mr. Despondency was sent for; for a post had come, and brought this message to him: 'Trembling man! These are to summon you to be ready for the King by the next Lord's Day, to shout for joy for your deliverance from all your doubts...."*

All of their Christian journey, Despondency and Much-afraid were enslaved to despair, fear, doubt and unbelief. They acknowledged that it had been a demonic spirit that had entertained them and they received when they first became Christians knowing too, that even after they had died, that spirit would continue to seek to cause havoc in other Christians lives.

It continues; *"Now, Mr. Despondency's daughter, whose name was Much-afraid, said, when she heard what was done, that she would go with her father... The last words of Mr. Despondency were, 'Farewell, night; welcome, day!'" His daughter went through the river singing, but none could understand what she said. "* They shed their doubt, unbelief, and fear and now have peace and joy for eternity.

Jesus says in **John 14:1-3**; *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* This is our inheritance in Christ!

Another summons happens now and it's **God summoning Mr. Honest**. The script says; *"Then it came to pass a while later, there was a post in the town that inquired for Mr. Honest. So he came to the house where he was, and delivered in to his hand these lines: 'You are commanded to be ready this day next week to present yourself before your Lord at his Father's house.' ...The last words of Mr. Honest were, 'Grace reigns!' So he left the*

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world." What a beautiful way to end your life. He knew it was only by God's grace that he was able to live as an honest man.

Jesus again says in **John 17:3-4**; "*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*" This ought to be our heart also towards our heavenly Father.

2 Timothy 1:8-12 is a powerful scripture by the Apostle Paul; "*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*"

God summons Mr. Valiant-for-truth. This pilgrim and saint knew how to use the Bible as a sword didn't he. Like him, I'm sure many of us carry scars from battles that we've fought when we've had to speak the word of God over our life and stand firm in the midst of spiritual battles. His summons reads as follows; "*My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder.*'... *When the day that he must go over arrived, many accompanied him to the riverside, into which, as he went, he said, 'O death, where is thy sting?'*"

He knew that God would reward him for his valiant spirit, and although his body had suffered many a sting in his lifetime, now in the face of death, he again uses the word of God saying that there was no sting in death! The devil couldn't touch him now.

1 Timothy 6:12 says; "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*" **Philippians 3:9-11** also says; "*and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*"

God summons Mr. Standfast. It read like this; "*And the post brought it to him open in his hands: the contents of which were, that he must prepare for a change of life, for his Master was not willing that he should be so far from him any longer.*" Such a display of God's love for his child that he just didn't want to be away from him any longer. Eternal life is a promotion. There's nothing to be fearful about even though the devil would lie to you about it. But like Standfast, stand using the Bible saying, 'it is written'. Your adversary will flee.

The script continues saying; "*Now, while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed; his strong man bowed under him: and after he said, 'Take me, for I come to you', he ceased to be seen by them.*"

In **1 Corinthians 15:53-55**, the Apostle Paul says; "*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* Everything in our body is corruptible but there in heaven we put on incorruption!

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Romans 8:37-39 also says; *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

So long as you're walking upright with God, making decisions to lay down your life for him, no weapon formed against you will prosper because Jesus already conquered it all.

Jesus says in **John 5:24**; *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*

John 8:51 is powerful when Jesus says; *"Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."*

1 John 5:10-12 says; *"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."*

John 14:2-4 is one of the scriptures that is the most comforting when a person is confronting death. Jesus is waiting in heaven for you having prepared your mansion for you. It says; *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

In **Revelation 22:1-5**, the Apostle John says this about eternity, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."*

2 Corinthians 5:1-8 talks about the assurance of the resurrection; *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."*

Let's read some testimonies of Christians who have gone on before us and read what they've said on their deathbed.

"Dwight L Moody awoke from sleep shortly before he died and said; "Earth recedes. Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go." And Moody's son said,

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"No, no, Father. You're dreaming." And Moody replied, "I am not dreaming. I have been within the gates. This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! It is glorious!"

John Bunyan said; *"Weep not for me, but for yourselves. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, through the mediation of His blessed Son, receives me, though a sinner. We shall meet to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy."*

Catherine Booth of Salvation Army said, *"The waters are rising, but so am I. I am not going under, but over. Do not be concerned about dying; go on living well, the dying will be right."*

Martin Luther said; *"Our God is the God from whom cometh salvation. God is the Lord by whom we escape death! Into Thy hands I commit my spirit; God of truth, Thou hast redeemed me!"*

The Apostle Paul said in **2 Timothy 4:7-8**; *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."*

Jesus, when he died on the cross said this in **John 19:30**; *"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."*

Romans 6:8-10 is our hope when we die; *"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."*

This is the confidence that we have as Christians. As we die to the world, the flesh and the devil, we are raised new creatures in Christ Jesus. Our prayer today should be; how can I serve you today Jesus? How can I share the gospel of salvation and be the evangelist with someone else to see them become a Christian? How can I see someone come out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light? In this, when we get to heaven, family, friends, co-workers will come to us and thank us for introducing them to Jesus. What greater reward will you have in heaven than seeing someone that you introduced to Jesus, there with you.