

As long as there is breath in our body and we’re not dead and in the grave, the Bible is clear saying; *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”*, I Corinthians 10:12. This chapter is very descriptive about Christians who have fallen by the wayside by one thing or another. None of us when we start in our Christian walk anticipate getting off the straight and narrow pathway do we. Everything is great; we have purpose, a sense of destiny with a hope for eternity in heaven. But this chapter gives great warnings.

These Delectable Mountains in the story belong to Immanuel – Jesus Christ. They’re like Palace Beautiful – the local church - a gathering place for Christians or sheep as we are called in the Bible. Is your local church a place where you can be refreshed, washed by the Word of God, regularly take communion at the Lord’s Table, and where the Holy Spirit moves freely to fill you to overflowing? Jesus is the good shepherd as it says in John 10:11-12; *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.”* Jesus has also appointed shepherds/pastors over local congregations. Each should reflect the names of these four men;

1. **Knowledge**; having a great understanding of the Word of God – I Timothy 3:2; *“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach.”*
2. **Experience**; not a new convert – I Timothy 3:6; *“not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”*
3. **Watchful**; he guards the sheep – Acts 20:28-30; *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”*
4. **Sincere**; single-minded and pure – I Peter 5:2; *“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.”*

There’s one sentence in the chapter that I don’t want you to overlook. It says; *“For they (the shepherds) understood that few pilgrims who first set out and travel a distance yet show their face at these Mountains”*. Meaning...Christians get off the straight and narrow and don’t make it in their walk, they defect on account of persecutions, the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches! Matthew 7:14; *“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* Matthew 13:21-22; *“yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”*

Christian and Hopeful are shown three locations that they are to avoid;

1. The Hill called Error - even in holy fellowship with believers, men and women can fall shipwrecked by doctrinal error. They fall off the cliff and left as a spectacle for all to see. [II Timothy 3:1-13](#) is very clear about this, and also II Timothy 2:16-18; *“But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.”*; Romans 16:17; *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”*
2. The Mountain called Caution. This is like a horror scene. Why? Because Christian and Hopeful had just escaped from this deathly prison, being taunted to commit suicide by Giant Despair! How horrible to see men whose eyes had been gouged out – unable to see the promises of God – stumbling aimlessly with the dead eventually committing suicide. That could have been them....but...for the grace of God! You see, there is ALWAYS room for repentance. They repented, turned from their sin of getting off the narrow path and got back in right relationship with Jesus and are now looking at what could have been their demise. Matthew 7:13-14; *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are MANY who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* Proverbs

21:16; “A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead.” [I Timothy 6:3-10](#). In an article written by Jennifer LeClaire in Watchman on the Wall, she gives statistics that in 2013, “more than 2 million adult Americans made a suicide plan and about half that many went through with the plan!” You can only imagine how many could have been Christians.

3. The By-way to Hell! Another horrible sight. Four examples are given of men and women who had started out on the straight and narrow pathway who strayed and whose end was eternal torment in hell, [Revelation 20:10-15](#). Like I said at the beginning...take heed lest you fall! The story says; “the Shepherds told them in reply, ‘this is a By-way to Hell where hypocrites are able to enter. That is those like...’”
 - a. Esau – loved material satisfaction, [Genesis 25:27-34](#)
 - b. Judas – betrayed Jesus for money, [Matthew 27:1-5](#)
 - c. Alexander – a blasphemer opposing the Apostle Paul, [II Timothy 4:14-15](#)
 - d. Ananias and Sapphira – lied to the Holy Spirit, showing sacrificial charity and giving but inwardly were liars and thieves, [Acts 5:1-11](#)

The shepherds give Christian and Hopeful an opportunity to get a glimpse of the gates of the Celestial City –from the Hill called Clear, their vision is being directed to where they are going to give them hope. Experiences from the past, the many times of getting off the straight and narrow path, guilt and sin can dim our view of heaven as it did theirs, so much so that they couldn’t even hold the telescope. I Corinthians 13:12 says; “*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*” What has you shaking in your boots that you can hardly see your heavenly destination?

Even after the visual warnings and the glimpse of heaven, Christian and Hopeful are given clear direction to keep them on the straight and narrow path and even more cautions; 1) to avoid the Flatterer and 2) not to sleep on the Enchanted Ground. So even though they’ve come this far, their lives are not over and they need to keep themselves in the grace of God to flee temptations.

If you’re reading this, you’re not dead. So as a Christian, between now and when you do die, a lot of decisions will carve out your life, either good or bad, and if by your choice you make bad decisions because you’re not comfortable on the straight and narrow Christian path you could see yourself as one of these fatalities. The devil could be lying to you saying that this could never happen to you. Don’t think that it can’t happen to you! Are you only living for the here and now? Are you greedy and lusting after money? This doesn’t mean you don’t need money to be able to live, provide for your family, pay your bills, give to the Lord – those are givens. Do you have habits of the flesh that are shutting out the Holy Spirit from filling you? Are you making decisions out of the perfect will of God and being diverted, i.e. marrying the wrong person, working at the wrong job? Are you in such despair that you’re contemplating suicide because your vision of all that Jesus has done for you has been plucked out? Can you look towards heaven and eternity without shaking from your past and what you’ve seen and done? Has the devil lied to you trying to offer an alternative path to heaven, one more comfortable and easy?

When a person is out of the will of God, off the straight and narrow pathway, the devil will pluck out your spiritual vision. Look at Samson, he sinned, was in captivity for years having his eyes burned out and died. King Saul – out of his rebellion against God, he had an evil spirit torment him, he fell on his own sword trying commit suicide and failing to do so, has an ungodly servant strike the final blow! These were men of God! Lastly, look at Lucifer or satan, the devil. He was the highest arc angel in heaven. His beauty was beyond comparison and the musical instruments were built into his body. He was cast out of heaven together with 1/3 of the heavenly beings because of his pride and wanting to be God. If it can happen to them....it can happen to you. That’s why satan doesn’t want you to believe this message. “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*”, I Corinthians 10:12.

“*You are saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*” Ephesians 2:8. Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling as Philippians 2:12 says. While you’re alive and breathing, you can repent of backsliding and being led down countless erroneous paths leading to destruction. Jesus will always forgive you, always. But you must ask for forgiveness, repent and turn from your sin and get back on the straight and narrow path to heaven. Do that right now, don’t wait another moment.