

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

August 20th, 2017 - Christiana's Progress
Stage 1 - pages 14-19

A great example of mercy is found in **Matthew 9:9-12** talking about Matthew the tax collector; "*As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."*

Christiana is as much a sinner as this tax collector, who now the Lord is having mercy on. Out of all her friends and neighbors only one followed her on this pilgrimage. That friend being Mercy. It's a type and shadow where the Bible says in **Psalm 23:6** "...let mercy follow you all the days of your life."

Jesus says in the sermon on the mount in **Matthew 5:7**; "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*" This lady Mercy, is very merciful and inquisitive to the pilgrimage that Christiana is setting out on. Christiana is like an evangelist, sharing the good news of King Jesus with her, showing her the way to salvation. This scripture is very applicable to this neighbor who follows Christiana on this pilgrimage, and should be a constant reminder to us to be merciful at all times and not be as the scribes and Pharisees shown in **Matthew 23:23**; "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*"

Christiana is an evangelist right from the start, not only with her children but with her neighbor Mercy, whom she convinces to pursue this pilgrimage with her to the Wicket Gate. She's stirring up faith with Mercy to join her. It would be like you saying to a friend that you're going to a crusade or an evangelistic meeting and at the altar you will have the opportunity to receive Jesus into your heart, would you like to go with me to this altar to obtain eternal life? The gatekeeper in the story is a type and shadow of Jesus, and there at the gate or altar, salvation will be given.

The story says; *Christiana "Well, Mercy, cast in your lot with me, for I well know what will be the end of our pilgrimage: my husband is where he would be, despite all the gold in Spanish mines. Nor will you be rejected, though you come only at my invitation. The King, who has sent for me and my children, is one that delights in mercy. Besides, if you will, I will hire you, and you shall go along with me as my servant. Yet we will have all things in common between you and me: only, go along with me."*

MERCY. "Then will I go there, and will take whatever follows; and the Lord grant that my lot may fall there, even as the King of heaven shall set his heart upon me!"

Christiana, then, was glad at heart, not only that she had a companion, but also that she had prevailed with this poor maid to fall in love with her own salvation. So they went on together, and Mercy began to weep."

There has to be a confession of sin for salvation and this happens when you come to Jesus - the Gatekeeper. There is no other way for you to be born again but by confessing your sins to Jesus as **Romans 3:23** says; "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Upon understanding the true love that she will receive in becoming a follower of Jesus, Mercy's heart breaks at the thought of her family and friends who have not yet heard of so great a salvation. When you are burdened and pray for the unsaved, the Lord hears and will bring people into their lives to help bring them to the altar also.

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In their journey now to the Wicket Gate where they'll meet the Gatekeeper - Jesus, they come to the Slough of Despond, where Mr. Sagacity says; "*CHRISTIANA. "For this is the place where my dear husband was likely to have been smothered with mud." She saw, also, that despite the command of the King to make this place good for pilgrims, yet it was rather worse than formerly. So she asked if that was true.*

Mr. Sagacity, the old gentleman, spoke as follows,

SAGACITY, "Yes too true; for there are many that pretend to be the King's labourers, and say they are mending the King's highways, but they bring dirt and dung instead of stones, and so mar instead of mend."

Here he is talking about destructive doctrines that have come in, which the Apostle Peter says in both **2 Peter 2:1**; "*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*" and **2 Peter 2:17-19** "*These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*"

It's clear that these false labourers - teachers - speak empty, misleading, erroneous and deceptive words about the highway that leads to Jesus, and instead teach filth by luring the flesh into an easy wide slippery path that leads to destruction...and hence fall into the slough, quicksand and quagmire to kill you before you even get to the altar of salvation. This slough that traps you is the false teaching that you'll get stuck in that seems so alluring and easy on the flesh which requires no repentance of sins and hence, no salvation. It's what we've often heard the term as 'greasy grace'.

Jesus warned his disciples in **Matthew 24:3-14** about the final days that we are living in when he says; "*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."*

What stands out in this verse is where it says that many false prophets will deceive so that people can't even get to Jesus, the Gate-Keeper! How evil are the devils tactics to mislead so many.

As Christiana and Mercy arrive at the gate, Christiana has to knock on the door. Jesus says in **Matthew 7:8** "*For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened.*" The Gate-Keeper wants to know that you're serious and just standing around, hoping that you'll notice him. Your action to become a Christian is deliberate.

The story goes on to say the following.

"GATE-KEEPER. "Where have you come from? And what do you want?"

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CHRISTIANA. "We have come from where Christian came from, and upon the same errand; that is, to be, if it shall please you, graciously admitted by this gate to the way that leads to the Celestial City. And I answer, 'My Lord, in the next place, I am Christiana, once the wife of Christian, that has now gone above.'"

At that, the keeper of the gate marveled, saying,

GATE-KEEPER. "What, has she now become a pilgrim that, a little while ago, she abhorred that life?"

Then she bowed her head, and said,

CHRISTIANA. "Yes; and so are these my sweet babes also."

Then he took her by the hand, and brought her in, and said also,

GATE-KEEPER. "Suffer little children to come unto me."

And with that, he shut the gate. This done, he called to a trumpeter up above, over the gate, to entertain

Christiana with shouting, and the sound of trumpet for joy. So, he obeyed, and sounded, and filled the air with his melodious notes."

It's pretty obvious that the Gatekeeper here is Jesus. **Matthew 19:14** says; But Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* Upon your salvation, Jesus said that the angels in heaven would rejoice over your repentance. **Luke 15:10** says; *"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

"Now, all the while, poor Mercy was standing outside, trembling and crying, for fear that she would be rejected. But when Christiana had gained admittance for herself and her boys, she began to make intercession for Mercy."

It's interesting that this is a type and shadow of Christians being born again, then proceeding to make intercession to Jesus on behalf of Mercy who is outside the gate. We see ultimately see Mercy knocking on the Gate herself and being born again also. It's very important to make intercession to Jesus for those who you are evangelizing, but ultimately it is they who have to make a decision to pursue Jesus themselves, and receive his forgiveness of sins on their own.

Revelation 3:20-21 says; *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*

If you haven't knocked at the door and met the gatekeeper, you're not a Christian. Jesus himself says that in **John 10:1-9**; *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."* Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."*

Now look at another deterrent to keep you from knocking at the gate to meet Jesus. It's referred to here as the dog, which is the type and shadow of the devil. The Gate-keeper (Jesus) says; *"That dog has another owner. He is also chained up in another man's ground. Only my pilgrims hear his barking; he belongs to the castle which you can see there at a distance, which comes up to the walls of this place. Indeed, he has frightened many an honest pilgrim from worse to better by the great voice of his roaring. Indeed, his owner does not keep him out of*

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any good-will to me or mine, but with the intention of keeping the pilgrims from coming to me, making them too afraid to come and knock at this gate for entrance.

This is an interesting part of the story. The Gate-Keeper (Jesus) says that he says *'he has frightened many an honest pilgrim from worse to better'*. How is that possible? We think of Joseph in the Old Testament when he met up again with his brothers who had sold him into slavery and he says that what they meant for evil, God used for good, Genesis 50:20. Also, the Apostle Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 2:18 that the devil obstructed or hindered him but he ultimately went where the Holy Spirit directed him to.

At times, what the adversary means for evil to terrorize and scare you away like this loud barking dog, even before you get to the gate to be born again, God will turn it around for good and use it to drive you to salvation and where you need to be.

1 Peter 5:8-11 says; *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

No matter what's going on around you prior to salvation, no matter how evil it feels or dark it gets, many a time it's the roaring or barking of the adversary that pushes you towards Jesus because you know you need it and you're on your knees praying for help. If the scare tactics are driving you to your knees to pray and be saved, then let the roars continue. God will allow whatever it takes, to get you to come to him - even barking dogs or roaring lions. For the most part, peoples testimonies will verify that they came to Christ because their life was falling apart, whether it was their health, or money problems, or loss of job or family and marriage problems - but God had allowed it and used it for good to get them to run to Him, not away. Rarely do people come to Christ when they're life is going great.

If it's driving you away from the Lord, that's not good. But that is your decision is driving you away in fear. Let's be clear though, the devil is not roaring and barking out of good will to get you to run to the gate, as it says in the story. He wants to fill you with fear, doubt, unbelief to hopefully conquer you before you confess your sins and get saved. He absolutely does not want you to be born again and is not intentionally driving you to the altar. His sole purpose is to drive you away from salvation.

If you are a Christian, remember that the devil will not stop roaring. The scripture we just read in I Peter 5 is speaking to Christians and the devil will not give up at any time in your life and even on your death bed, to keep roaring and spewing out lies to you. But you're to resist him firm in your faith! Submit to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you according to James 4:7. For the most part, when you're a Christian the roaring gets louder because the devil doesn't want you to complete your pilgrimage.

So how do you stand strong now as a Christian, by putting on the full armour of God according to Ephesians 6: 10-17. Use the word of God in the midst of the devils roars and barks and say, like Jesus did when the devil tempted him, 'it is written', and quote Bible verses. There is no truth in the devil when he roars and barks - no truth whatsoever. He will never stop as that's who he is but you have authority over him in Jesus' name. Like a bark-collar on a dog that shocks it when it barks, use the Word of God on the devil when he barks at you...he'll shut up pretty quick!

Please, don't let anything or anyone deter you from becoming a Christian. If the Slough of Despond is trying to drag you in by its smooth talking fleshly antics like it did Christiana, flee from it. If you're at the wicket gate

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and the dog is barking, run to the gate and knock and cry out to the Gate-Keeper, Jesus Christ, and he will open the door to you. Amen.