

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

November 5th, 2017 - Christiana's Progress
Stage 4 - Part 4 (pages 45-48)

Prudence has been an focal person in this chapter and it's obvious that she had a love for children as she frequently encouraged the boys to seek her out and ask questions concerning their new faith. In ending this Stage, Matthew who had been sick, has some inquisitive questions which replies are similar to parables. We're only going to highlight one of them today though and it's the following which we'll break down;

*"MATTHEW. "What may one learn by hearing the cock crow?"
PRUDENCE. "Think of Peter's sin, and Peter's repentance."*

We read about this, what we'll call, 'the big boast' from Peter in **Matthew 26:33-35** where it says; "*Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.*"

You can sense Peter's boasting here but it's interesting to note that it says that not only Peter said this, but all the disciples. Peter probably said what he said with the echo's of the other disciples concurring with what he said to Jesus. Peter was the mouthpiece and we seem to always single him out, but Jesus knew that it applied to all of them because it was prophesied in **Matthew 26:56**; "*But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.*"

Jesus could have called each of his disciples by name saying that they would deny him, but he singled out Peter because he made the verbal boast, but not one disciple was left, they all left Jesus.

We continue reading; "*PRUDENCE. The cock's crowing shows also that day is coming on. Let, then, the crowing of the cock put you in mind of that last and terrible day of judgement.*"

Peter and disciples in their boastful pride, fell. **James 5:12** says; "*But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*" Peter and all of the disciples fell into judgment because of their swearing to something they could not stand by.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 talks about temptations that we face also; "*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*"

You may think you're so strong in some areas and boast that you'll never fall, or talk about another believers or church family members saying or thinking you'll never do what they've done. These scriptures encourage us to stay humble so that we don't fall.

Prudence refers to the day of judgement that everyone will face and it says in **2 Corinthians 5:10**; "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*" In death, judgement will occur, Christian and non-Christian alike. Awards will be handed out.

Revelation 20:11-12 talks about the great white throne judgement; "*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And*

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I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." Every person will stand before God and be judged when the books are open.

The script continues on as Christian, her boys and Mercy are about to leave this house of fellowship. It says;
"Then said Joseph to his mother,
JOSEPH. *"It is proper that you do not forget to send to the house of Mr. Interpreter to beg him to grant that Mr. Great-Heart should be sent to us, that he may be our conductor for the rest of the way."*
CHRISTIANA. *"Good boy, I had almost forgotten."*

When was the last time you sincerely asked for an angelic escort? It might be in just going out the door, driving somewhere or going into a new job, career or new school. Wherever you go, you can ask for an angel to accompany you as they work for you and on behalf of you. King David says in **Psalm 91:11-12**; *"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone."*

We read about protection for the Israelites in **Exodus 23:20**; *"Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared."*

Hebrews 1:13-14 talks about the role of angels when it says; *"But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"* As Christians who have inherited salvation, you can ask for ministering angels.

The script continues with the family showing them things that will be profitable to them for their pilgrimage, or their Christian walk. I'll break it down into a few segments with scriptures.

"When the family, where Christiana was, saw that they intended to go forward, they called the whole house together to give thanks to their King for sending them such profitable guests as these. Which done, they said unto Christiana, "And shall we not show you something, as our custom is to do to pilgrims, on which you may meditate when you are on your way?" So they took Christiana, her children, and Mercy, into the closet, and showed them one of the apples that Eve ate, and that she also gave to her husband; and that, for the eating of which, they were both turned out of paradise. They asked her what she thought about it."

1. Whether it was an apple or another fruit, Adam and Eve were strictly told by God not to eat of this tree. They were showing them the power that temptation, that when it comes, can cause you to fall if you don't resist it. **Genesis 3:6** says; *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."*

Then they took her to a place, and showed her Jacob's ladder. (Gen. 28:12) Now, at that time, there were some angels ascending and descending on it. So Christiana looked and looked to see the angels going up: so did the rest of the company. Then they went to another place, to show them something else.

2. I believe this reassures these pilgrims again about the angels that God has commissioned over those that love and serve him. Remember, they've just asked Mr. Interpreter to send Mr. Great-Heart to them to accompany them on their journey. It says in **Genesis 28:12** *"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."*

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"After this, they took them to a place where a golden anchor was hanging. So they bid Christiana to take it down; for said they, "You should have it with you, for it is of absolute necessity that you should, that you may lay hold of it within the veil (Heb. 6:19), and stand steadfast in case you should meet with stormy weather."

3. What is the anchor in your Christian life? It's hope. **Hebrews 6:19** says; *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil."* The veil was torn to the most holy place in the temple when Jesus gave himself as the final sacrifice for us, taking our sins upon himself. In salvation, this is the hope that anchors us.

"Then they took them up the mount where Abraham, our father, offered up Isaac his son, and showed them the altar, the wood, the fire, and the knife, for they remain to be seen to this very day. (Gen. 22:9) When they had seen it, they held up their hands, and blessed themselves, and said, "Oh, what a man, who for love of his Master, and for denial of himself, was Abraham!"

4. **Genesis 22:9** says; *"Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood."* It's said that what Abraham was a type and shadow of what God the father did with Jesus. God was testing Abraham's heart to see if he was truly loyal to him and loved him above the blessing of his son Isaac. He passed the test and a ram was provided for the sacrifice. God however, did allow his only Son, Jesus Christ, to be the final pure and holy sacrifice.

"After they had shown them all these things, Prudence took them into a dining room, where there stood a pair of excellent virginals.(a virginal is a keyboard instrument of the harpsichord family). So she played on them, and turned what she said to them into this excellent song: "Eve's apple we have showed you; Of that be you aware: You have seen Jacob's ladder too, Upon which angels are. An anchor you received have; But let not these suffice, Until with Abram you have gave Your best, a sacrifice."

So what's the summary of these four things that they were shown? They were shown; 1) the fall of mankind, 2) the supernatural angelic provision, 3) hope in their salvation which is their anchor in the storms to come and 4) the life of self denial found in Abrahams willingness to sacrifice the best, his only son.

I think it's very important, above all the supernatural experiences, to evaluate whether or not you truly are giving your best in your service to the Lord. You see, knowing your Christian heritage, experiencing supernatural angelic intervention, and having a hope in salvation is a great inheritance, but without a willingness to give your best to the Lord, it's not much of any value on the Day of Judgement. We read in the following verse the testing of our works when God judges them.

I Corinthians 3:9-15 says; *"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

The script continues with this; *Now, about this time, someone knocked at the door; so the Porter opened, and behold, Mr. Great-Heart was there. But when he had come in, what joy was there! For it came now afresh to their minds, how, but a while ago, he had slain old Grim Bloody-man the giant, and had delivered them from*

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the lions. Then said Mr. Great-Heart to Christiana and to Mercy, "My Lord has sent each of you a bottle of wine, and also some parched corn, together with a couple of pomegranates. He has also sent the boys some figs and raisins to refresh you in your way."

With Great-Heart's arrival, we see again that God provides for his children through angelic ministers. They were given wine, corn, pomegranates, figs and raisins. God's supernatural provision! God's provision for your life could come through an angelic visitation. In **Hebrews 13:2** we read; "*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.*" We've been taught so much to not talk to strangers haven't we. You don't know who they are, what their motive is, and they could be trouble. But we're told here, as a Christian, we're not to walk in fear.

Elijah was fed by an angel and we read about it in **I Kings 19:5-8**; "*Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.*" Elijah received supernatural provision from God by an angel!

The script continues; "*Then said Christiana to the Porter, "Sir, I am much obliged to you for all the kindnesses that you have shown me since I came here; and also that you have been so loving and kind to my children. I don't know how to gratify your kindness; so, please, as a token of my respect to you, accept this small mite."*

Christiana was a widow like the woman we read about in **Luke 21:1-4** where it says; "*And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."* This widow gave her best. Are you giving God your best?

"So she put a gold angel coin in his hand. And he made her a low bow, and said, "Let your garments be always white; and let your head lack no ointment." Ecclesiastes 9:7-8 says; "*Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil.*" It's talking about provision; clothing, food, drink, oil for refreshing.

So just how important is it to give your best to God, something requiring a sacrifice? In **1 Kings 17:8-15** we read about Elijah and a Widow. When you read this, you think it should be the opposite way around in our, wouldn't you. It should be that the prophet should provide for the widow, right. Ultimately the prophet does provide, but it's conditional upon this widow's response to him. It says; "*Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." So she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.'*" So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days."

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This widow gave out of her need, and as a result ended up experiencing God's supernatural provision. Elijah encouraged her to live by faith.

Christiana had every reason in the natural to be on the take instead of the give. A needy widow with 4 children, but from the time they left the city of destruction, having sacrificed her former life for the Christian pilgrimage, has lacked nothing. She's had trials but hasn't lacked anything.

What are you holding on to that you're not willing to sacrifice for the call of God on your life; be it career, money, family, friends etc. You know your Christian heritage, you've experienced angelic intervention, you're hope in your salvation is a strong anchor securely fixed to endure any storm in life, yet if you're not willing to give your best to the Lord when tested just like Abraham, what's it worth on Judgement day, but only wood, hay and stubble burning up in smoke the fire of God.

Let's read it again in **I Corinthians 3:12-15**; *"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

All that you're holding onto in life, whether it's money, material possessions, career, education, a spouse or family member and on and on, God is asking you today to put it on the altar. Not a physical altar of course, but on the altar of your heart. You know what or who it is and Holy Spirit is asking you to give it as a sacrifice today. You may find out that it's a test, like Abraham, and when you're ready to give it up, God will say, stop - I'm testing you. But if it's not a test and it is something God is saying for you to give sacrificially, then do it. If not, just as we read in the scripture above, it will go up in fire and there will be no rewards for it. On judgement day, will what you've built be on gold, silver and precious stones, or will it be built on wood, hay and straw?

It really comes down to what Jesus said, that if you want to follow him, you're to take up your cross, follow him and die to yourself. **Luke 9:23** says in the Amplified Bible; *"And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to follow Me [as My disciple], he must deny himself [set aside selfish interests], and take up his cross daily [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me]."*