

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

February 18th, 2018 - Christiana's Progress Stage 7 - Part 2 (pages 79-82)

In this chapter, we see plainly how four Shepherd's (Pastors) whose names are Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere, are used in a great way to teach them about the importance of;

- a) living in innocence in the midst of prejudice and ill-will;
- b) being charitable at all times with the understanding that your needs will always be taken care of,
- c) how to walk out the difficult times in life by faith in the Bible,
- d) that the feeble in mind or body are treated equal to those that are healthy, and
- e) the reality of eternal torments of those in hell.

It's very important as a Christian to walk in innocence, to always be charitable, walk by faith using God's word found in the Bible. To not be a respecter of persons, always keeping in mind that those who have rejected Jesus and chose not to live the life of a Christian are in eternal torment in hell.

a) Let's look at the definition of innocence. The King James Version Dictionary Definition means innocency, innocent".

1. Properly, not noxious; not producing injury; free from qualities that can injure; harmless; innoxious; as an innocent medicine or remedy.
2. Free from guilt; not having done wrong or violated any law; not tainted with sin; pure; upright. In this general sense, no human being that is a moral agent, can be innocent. It is followed by of.
3. Free from the guilt of a particular crime or evil action; as, a man is innocent of the crime charged in the indictment."

So when prejudice and ill will are done to you who are walking an innocent life, do you respond like the world would in self defense, or do you simply allow your innocence to prove you not guilty?

Let's look at Jesus who is referred to as the innocent lamb that was slain.

We read about it in **Isaiah 53:1-9**; "*Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; he was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.*"

Jesus was perfect and innocent in everything. This message today can be really directed at those who pastor churches, but as a Christian, pastor or not, this is applicable to you. Are you charitable at all times, or do you tend take care of your needs first and then if there's something left over give that to the poor?

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b)Let's look at the meaning of **Charity**. Again, the King James Version Dictionary Definition is; "1. *In a general sense, love, benevolence, good will; that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good. In a theological sense, it includes supreme love to God, and universal good will to men.*"

Philippians 2:3-4 says; "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*"

Proverbs 21:13; "*Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.*" It doesn't matter who you are in the body of Christ, this applies to us all.

In **Luke 6:38** Jesus says this; "*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*"

Proverbs 19:17 says; "*He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.*" This is powerful...the word is lend to the Lord, not give, and HE WILL repay you in one way or another!

We read in the script today the following; "*Then they took them to some new places. The first was Mount Marvel, where they looked and saw a man at a distance that filled the hills about with words. Then they asked the shepherds what that meant. So they told them, that that man was the son of one Mr. Great-grace, of whom you read in the first part of the records of the Pilgrim's Progress; and he is set there to teach pilgrims how to believe down, or to tumble out of, their ways, and what difficulties they would meet with, by faith.*"

A good question then for pastors or those in your congregation; are you like the son of Mr. Great-Grace speaking the Bible verses out, applying specific biblical scriptures that would strengthen your faith and that of others while facing difficult situations in life? Or do you tend to seek out and apply secular worldly solutions first and if that doesn't work then lastly resorting to God's word, (while clinging independently to that secular saying, "God helps those who helps themselves"), when in reality it is quite the opposite expectation that God requires of us?

c)What does **faith** mean? It means strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof. Jesus says this power statement which so many Christians can't seem to wrap their head around in **Mark 11:23-24** ; "*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*"

The writer of Hebrews also said this in **Hebrews 11:1-3**; "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*"

I'd encourage you to read the whole chapter, because those referenced in it didn't even receive what they were believing for. How much greater should our faith be because Jesus has now come! Faith is how we live our Christian walk, it's what motivates us to read the Bible every day, to witness to unbelievers, to get us on our

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knees to pray, to get us to church and so much more! It's by faith that you talk about Jesus living inside of you through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul says in **2 Corinthians 4:17-18**; "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

Paul also says in **Romans 10:14-17**; "*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"

All the more reason to read and study the Bible on a daily basis. To be straight up with you, it's very hypocritical to call yourself a Christian and yet not believe God's word (the Bible). You can't cherry pick as a Christian, you're to believe, receive and walk by faith in all that it says in the Bible literally.

d)The script continues to say; "*SHEPHERDS. "Come in, Mr. Feeble-Mind; come in Mr. Ready-to-halt; come in, Mr. Despondency, and Mrs. Much-afraid his daughter. These, Mr. Great-Heart we call by name, for they are most subject to draw back; but as for you, and the rest that are strong, we leave you to your desired liberty."*

You see a beautiful delineation of these Pastors specifically calling by name the weak and wanting to give special care to them. These are ones who have a tendency to draw back from going to church, probably because of a sense of unworthiness, hence much more attention is to be given them.

Are you treating the poor as you would the rich, are you treating the mentally or physically infirmed as you would the healthy, do you go out of your way to help those that would naturally draw back from Christian fellowship because of their handicap, be it mentally, physically or materially poor? Or are you more inclined to give preference to associate with Christians that are physically, mentally whole and materially prosperous? Many believe in churches today that if a person is poor, sick, mentally handicap that they're not prosperous. That's an ungodly mindset. God the Father and Jesus always talked about his love for the poor, mentally and physically handicapped. They're the ones who are struggling like we've read in our characters mentioned above.

Jesus said in **Luke 14:12-14**; "*Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

Proverbs 19:4 says; "*Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend.*" How many can identify with this?

James 2:1-5 talks about beware of personal favoritism. It says; "*My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You*

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stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”

Is the poor or disenfranchised persons faith any different that of a healthy wealthy person? Absolutely not. They may just have a little harder time getting into fellowship due to distractions or maybe they're a little dysfunctional. They might not be able to comprehend what's being preached and they may not even be able to read. But Jesus acknowledges them for being rich in faith because they've had to learn to trust him.

e) The script continues to read; *"MERCY: “Mother, I would, if it might be, see the hole in the hill that is commonly called the By-way to hell.” So her mother opened her mind to the shepherds. Then they went to the door; it was on the side of a hill, and they opened it, and bid Mercy listen a while. So she listened, and heard one saying, “Cursed be my father for holding my feet back from the way of peace and life.” Another said, “Oh that I had been torn in pieces before I had, to save my life, lost my soul!” And another said, “If I were to live again, how would I deny myself, rather than come to this place!” Then it was as if the very earth groaned and quaked under the feet of this young woman for fear; so she went white, and came trembling away, saying, “Blessed is he and she that is delivered from this place!”*

That is quite visual! It would shake anyone to the core and maybe we ought to be shaken to the core like this as it would help us evangelize more every day, right.

Let's look at the definition of **eternity**. It is infinite or unending time, a state to which time has no application; timelessness. Synonyms applied to it are the afterlife, everlasting life, life after death, the hereafter, the afterworld and the next world. You're going to live for eternity either in heaven or in hell. It doesn't stop when your heart stops nor at the grave.

Let's read what Jesus says in [Matthew 25:31-46](#) where it talks about him judging the nations at the end of time. It's a sobering word. *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

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Jesus was talking to Christians. He says he's going to separate those who did what we've been talking about today and those who didn't. Separating the sheep from the goats. These Shepherds named Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere are a perfect type and shadow of what pastors are to be to those in their church. Unlike those spoken about in **Jeremiah 23:1-6** where it says; *“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord. “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord. “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord our Righteousness.”*

This is in reference to the Old Testament leaders or spiritual shepherds, but it's pointing towards Jesus who would come and be the Great Shepherd.

Let's read what Matthew Henry's Commentary says about this scripture, referencing the shepherds, not the congregation;

I. Here is a word of terror to the negligent shepherds. The day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them: Woe be to the pastors (to the rulers, both in church and state) who should be to those they are set over as pastors to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep. God here calls them the sheep of my pasture, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for. Woe be to those therefore who are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to do it, but who, instead of that, scatter the flock, and drive them away by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good. In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect scatter them and drive them away. The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, who should have kept them together. Woe be to them when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings and deal with them as they deserve. They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

II. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up. Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private secular interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty.”

God has not given up when the hireling gives up and runs off and has neglected the sheep. God's arm is not short that he can't reach back into the sheeps lives and hearts to bring them to another church where there is a pastor or pastors who will have mercy, love and acceptance for them. So when the Shepherds (pastors) are failing to do their job, you can truly rely on Jesus the Good Shepherd!

Let's read in **John 10:7-15** where Jesus declares that he is the Good Shepherd; *“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. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd*

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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. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

In closing today, it doesn't matter how many pastors, preachers, missionaries and others in ministry who have had a hireling mentality, Jesus is the Great Shepherd. He will gather into his fold those who the hireling has overlooked and been unfaithful to. Jesus has not forsaken the weak, ill, disenfranchised, poor, weak willed, simple, etc. It is very comforting to know that he will take care of you and will also judge the hirelings for what they've done. If you have hardened your heart and are not going to church because of shepherds who have not been mindful of your needs, forgive them first and then ask the Good Shepherd - Jesus - to redeem what has been robbed and lead you to a new place of fellowship to be healed and restored.