

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Pilgrim’s Progress  
Chapters 12, 13 & 14 Review

What’s keeping you from church? We’ll see age old tactics that the devil still uses on believers today to keep them away from fellowship, the body of Christ and from hearing the Word of God.

As we’ve read in these chapters, the ascendance of the Hill called Difficulty by Christian poised great effort, only to be greeted by Timorous and Mistrust trembling for the fear of the lions they saw in the pathway before Palace Beautiful, ultimately backsliding from God and going back to their former life. On top of it, Christian runs into Formalist and Hypocrisy again; Formalist being the religious performer and Hypocrisy being someone who masquerades as a Christian but lives a double standard, neither one wanting to climb the narrow path up the hill, but go an easier route which lead to their demise.

I’d like though to focus this week primarily on the Palace Beautiful – that being the local church and the two lions outside that will do anything possible to keep you away from it.

**TIMOROUS**: means showing or suffering from nervousness, fear or a lack of confidence, to be skeptical and be wary of.  
**MISTRUST**: means to be suspicious of; have no confidence in, lack of trust: suspicion, doubt and wariness.

These two were also on their way to the Celestial City, but they turned around, fleeing – paralyzed by fear of two lions. **FEAR**: means an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat. I John 4:18 says; “*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*” How many Christians are paralyzed by fear and instead of taking authority over it, flee and even backslide? **I Peter 5:8-9**; “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith...*”. **II Timothy 1:7**; “*For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power and love and of a sound mind.*”. **James 4:7**; “*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*” Daniel 6:22; “*My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight...*” **Colossians 2:15**; “*When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*” Jesus conquered fear and the devil. The lion is toothless; he was disarmed and stripped of his powers. He can only growl and roar and on top of it, he’s chained, he’s got limitations. Jesus has given the believer or Christian authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the powers of the devil, **Luke 10:19!**

These lions represent the ungodly people in the world that don’t reverence God. They have an anti-Christ spirit; they’re being influenced by the adversary the devil himself. Of course we don’t fight people – it’s a spiritual battle. Ephesians 6:12 says; “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*” They could be categorized as ideological oppressors or bullies. They can represent themselves in various belief systems such as; sects, cults, one carrying religious paraphernalia, theological liberalism, philosophy, rationalism, social activism, philanthropy, evolution, materialism and the list can go on. These are the voices that roar and growl like lions at believers to keep them away from the church body of believers and from staying on the straight and narrow pathway to heaven. If you study each of these, they do not point you to Christ Jesus but away from Him.

Our own sin though, is the most **ferocious** of lions. What can that sin look like? Pride, self-sufficiency, carnality, guilt, worldliness, counting the cost, selfish ambition, mistaken priorities of family, vocation and recreation and more. Of these all, we need to repent and turn from them.

In closing, remember that John Bunyan himself was in prison as a result of facing these same lions and preaching as a nonconformist of the religious system of the day. He refused to be bullied or tyrannized.

So as I asked at the beginning, who’s keeping you from church? Which voices are you listening to in following the straight and narrow path? What lion is roaring and snarling at you that would even want you to turn from Jesus Christ? Is

it one of these ideologies or sins? Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit who gently leads you into all truth and don't shrink back in the face of adversity.

