

December 6th, 2015 - Pilgrim's Progress

Chapters 9, 10 & 11 Review

Salvation! The song Amazing Grace by John Newton comes to mind when we see Christian running up the hill to the Cross! The first stanza in the song says;

“Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.”

It is by grace Christian is saved not by the law or works as we've read in previous chapters. The book of Isaiah says in 26:1; *“In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: ‘We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks.’* Do you know what's it like to be saved from calamity, disaster or difficult situations? There is no greater joy on earth than having the burden of sin and separation from God fall off your back to be remembered no more – to be forgiven – to be saved from spiritual death! Psalm 103:12 says; *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* Our sins have fallen into the depths of the sea as it says in Micah 7:19, to be remembered no more. The decision for salvation can only be made as long as you're alive. It's not a decision to be made in the afterlife nor are you able to come back to earth for another 'kick at the can' so to speak. The burden and weights will fall off; the empty spot in your heart will be filled with the love of Jesus Christ. I John 1:9 says; *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Christian's joy is uncontainable! He's crying, weeping and jumping for joy! Jesus says in John 4:14; *“but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”* When you come to the cross of salvation, three things transpire; 1) you're forgiven, 2) you're clothed with a robe of righteousness and 3) you're sealed with an invisible seal on your forehead, as referenced in Revelations 22:4. You've been made in right standing or made righteous in God as II Corinthians 5:21 says; *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* Ephesians 1:13 says; *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation ; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”*

In chapter 10, three characters are introduced that unfortunately mirror all too often those who've become born again. Christian is seeing them as a warning. He now has new purpose and meaning in life. At times, newly born again people can be naive in their new life and zeal for God. These following three can often represent a lifestyle that new believers fall into. Let's look at them and what their names mean as they're in shackles and laying asleep beside the way.

SIMPLE: means easily understood or easily done; presenting no difficulty. Jesus warns his disciples in Matthew 10:16; *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves”*. Simple represents someone who is spiritually dull and ignorant. They trust in their own understanding, they're easily swayed by others, they're still living only for their sensual pleasure. Jesus says in Matthew 15:14; *“Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”*

SLOTH: means reluctance to work or make an effort; laziness. Other synonyms are sluggishness; apathy and lethargic. Sloth represents a spiritually lethargic person. He is someone who doesn't want to study the Word of God; he is not working out his salvation by actively pursuing right fellowship and laying aside the seductions of the world. He wants to be spoon fed and does not want to press into all that God has in store for him. Proverbs 15:19 says; *“The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns,”*; 18:9 says, *“One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.”*; and 19:24 says, *“A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!”*.

PRESUMPTUOUS: means of a person or their behavior – failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate. Synonyms also are – brazen, arrogant, audacious, impertinent, insolent, and cocky; this is what a presumptuous person is. They've presumed the grace of Jesus Christ in their salvation but still desire to keep on sinning. Like Hebrews 6:4-6 says; *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”* They exemplify someone full of pride and self-sufficiency. Proverbs 16:18 says; *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

All these three have willingly chosen their exhausted captivity and shackles. They've fallen into religion and conformity and are not even aware that the devil, like a roaring lion is prowling around to devour them as it says in I Peter 5:8. What a lesson for new Christians. Beware of falling by the wayside with heart issues like these. As Christian does, keep your eyes on Jesus and the narrow path.

We now come to two characters in Chapter 11, **FORMALIST and HYPOCRISY** who all too much represent all those wanting to avoid the cross of Jesus. They represent those who do not want to enter by the straight and narrow pathway nor by the gate which Christian entered by. Jesus admonishing the religious leaders of the days says in John 10:1; *“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.”* These two have gotten over the wall illegally, like squatters. They're there, but are not legal citizens or owners of the property, they're a thief and a robber! They come from the city (belief system) of Vainglory! Vainglory means inordinate pride in oneself or one's achievements; excessive vanity! They're seeking the praise of man and in their journey and want praise when they arrive at the celestial city instead of giving praise to the God of heaven and earth. Let's look at them closely.

FORMALIST: formalism is the practice or the doctrine of strict adherence to prescribed or external forms, the strict observance of forms or customs. They're a religious performer; everything is external, pomp, ritual, vestments, pageantry, set prayers, and symbolism. They're what Jesus in Luke 20:46-47 describes; *“Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”* They are not born again because they have not come through the cross of Jesus Christ. They're glorified religious actors. We can probably think of numerous religions that fit this type of person.

HYPOCRISY: means the practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one's own behaviour does not conform; pretense. False virtue, posturing, empty talk, insincerity, falseness, deceit and dishonesty. They are someone who will masquerade as a Christian but whose lifestyle is contrary to that of one. They're a pretender and very irreligious.

These two are perfect representations of the belief system that says, 'all ways point to heaven'. They say that *‘they prefer to take a short cut and climb over the Wall,’* (they don't want to go through the cross) and that *‘their manner of entry has become a long established custom; in fact many witnesses would testify that it has been accepted as an established route for over a thousand years.’* Again, how many world religions have been saying this for thousands of years - that all roads/ways/beliefs lead to heaven? They're referred to as illegitimate pilgrims and false cheats! They say they follow the law, but Galatians 2:16 says; *“know that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”* World religions who implement and look like the law; act good, do good, think good...are not justified and will not reach heaven. The most malicious act with this belief system is that they laugh and mock the robes of righteousness that Christians have been covered with and they mock the Cross.

Beware of those who look and act like Christians but have not come through the gate of Jesus Christ and have not gone to the cross of Calvary to have their sins washed away.