

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – The Celestial Railroad  
Part 1

The Celestial Railroad is a spin-off from John Bunyan's book, "Pilgrim's Progress", which we have already done an extensive review of and can be read on our website. Please click on this link to read along from this booklet, "[The Celestial Railroad](#)". We start off today by reviewing the Introduction, The City of Destruction and The Slough of Despond.

In **Matthew 7:13-14** Jesus says the following; *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* Isn't it amazing that Jesus says 'few who find it'? Are you part of the few?

In the story of Pilgrim's Progress, we read that Christian flees from the City of Destruction under conviction of sin, and receives direction from Evangelist to enter thru the Wicket-Gate. It was a clear command. Let's read what it says; *"Therefore the man read the scroll, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, "Which way must I go to escape?" Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger beyond a very large field, "Do you see a Wicket-gate [small gate] over there?" The man replied, "No." Then he was asked, "Do you see a shining light not quite so far away?" He said, "I think I do." Then said Evangelist, "Keep that light before your eye, and go directly toward it, and then you shall see the gate, at which, when you knock, you will be told what you are to do." So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door when his wife and children, perceiving his departure, began to cry out to him so that he might return. But the man put his fingers in his ears and ran on crying, "Life, life, eternal life." So he did not look behind him, but rather fled toward the middle of the plain."*

The word of the Lord was given to Christian, the Pilgrim, in this scroll. It was clear direction for life as to what he was to do. It was simple, not complicated at all. The conviction was so strong on him, that to block out all the calls to come back into a lifestyle of sin, he put his fingers in his ears and ran, fleeing from sin and destruction. Christian left his family of non-believers, who thought he had lost his mind while under conviction of sin and his need of a Saviour, and to relieve him of the burden on his back. Keep in mind, that Christian is not a Christian yet, he's not born-again. He is a person under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, living in the City of Destruction.

(Just as a reminder, Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory as we know physically, he still lived with his wife and children in this whole spiritual journey to the Celestial City. In his heart and spirit, he left the sin of destruction to pursue life in Christ Jesus, but his wife and children did not spiritually follow his quest.)

Jesus says in **Luke 14:26**; *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."* Jesus made it very clear, that there will come a time in your life as a Christian that will be costly. It may include denying what you've set up your life to be, or what's been sets up for you to be your life, and may even involve denying your immediate family of unbelievers who think you've lost your mind.

When you step out under the conviction of the Holy Spirit not knowing where you're going, and the only instruction you've received is to enter through the narrow gate, you're walking by faith. It's the Holy Spirit who brings conviction to non-Christians that they are sinners and need to be born again. This is what was happening with Christian, the Pilgrim.

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

This is quite a stark contrast to the passengers, who we'll read more about, on the train in The Celestial Railroad, in that the conviction of sin and need for repentance is not even mentioned, but rather a comfortable, once saved always saved, ride to the Celestial City of Heaven. When you compare the two; Christian is fleeing from the City of Destruction and the other ones who will be boarding the train, are comfortably living in the City of Destruction, waiting for one day to take the ride or pilgrimage to heaven, and that not on foot nor with the burden of sin on their back, but on a comfy, cozy train ride. We will see that there is no conviction of sin for those on the train. No conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. Smooth-it-away had all the knowledge of The Celestial city, and sounds like an individual that would smooth away conviction of sin and replace it with a belief system that requires no ongoing repentance. How many once true Christians have been smoothed over with this belief system and no longer believe what it says in **Luke 13:23-25**; *“Then one said to Him, ‘Lord, are there few who are saved?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from.’”*

You've heard that saying, “they're so narrow minded”. Smooth talkers will have you questioning what God said like the devil did with Eve. We read about it in **Genesis 3:1-7**, *“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” 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 the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”*

The smooth-talking serpent got them to disobey God, and they were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Satan twisted the truth and lied to Eve. Just as today he sneer's at what Jesus says, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*? He mocks and derides it with every moment of every day!

It appears that the Christians who are going to be boarding this celestial train to heaven, making the ultimate and final pilgrimage, are quite content to live out their days in sin in the City of Destruction with no need of repentance and/or ongoing repentance and have been smoothed talked into a belief system that builds a religion to accommodate sin rather than repent of sin.

The Apostle Paul says this in **Romans 6:22-23**; *“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

In looking at the life of Christian again, who ran from the City of Destruction under such conviction of sin with a burden on his back that he could barely carry, leaving everything else behind, we read again; *“So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door when his wife and children, perceiving his departure, began to cry out to him so that he might return. But the man put his fingers in his ears*

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

and ran on crying, “Life, life, eternal life.” So he did not look behind him, but rather fled toward the middle of the plain.”

Before getting to the Wicket-Gate, or the narrow gate as Jesus calls it, pilgrims are faced with the Slough of Despond. The definition of **despondency** is; a state of low spirits caused by loss of hope or courage. Synonyms are hopelessness, despair, discouragement, low spirits, wretchedness; melancholy, gloom, misery, desolation, disappointment, disheartenment, dejection, sadness, unhappiness; informal blues, and heartache.

In Pilgrim’s Progress, Christian falls in this Slough of Despond, heavy burdens on his back and all. His friend Pliable fled, leaving him alone. We read this; “*Therefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone. But he still endeavored to struggle to that side of the Slough that was further from his own house and closer to the Wicket-gate. And this he did, yet he was unable to get out because of the burden that was upon his back. However, I [Bunyan] saw in my dream that a man came to him named Help, and he asked Christian, “What are you doing here?”*

*CHRISTIAN: Sir, I was advised to go this way by a man named Evangelist, and he directed me toward the Wicket-gate ahead so that I might escape from the wrath to come. But as I was pressing forward, I fell in here.*

*HELP: But why did you not look for the steps across the mire?*

*CHRISTIAN: I was so fearful in my escape that I missed the safe way across the mire and fell in.*

*HELP: Then give me your hand. So Christian stretched out his hand, and Help lifted him out of the mire and set him on solid ground; then the pilgrim was exhorted to be on his way toward the Wicket-gate ahead.”*

Christian allowed fear to cause him to not pay attention to where he was to walk, which was on the steps following the straight and narrow path. He panicked and fell. Again, keep in mind that Christian is not born again yet, he is a man under conviction of sin who is in need of a Saviour.

We continue to read what Help says: “*This miry Slough is peculiar in that it cannot be mended. Being low-lying it attracts a continuous stream of scum and filth that is associated with conviction of sin; for this reason it is called the Slough of Despond. As the traveling sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there arise in his soul many fears, doubts, and discouraging perceptions concerning himself; then all of these accumulate and pile up in this place. And so this is the reason for the badness of this ground.*”

Now, even as a born-again Christian, this despondency will try to pull you off the narrow way in your walk with Christ. But now you’re equipped with the full armour of God and the name of Jesus to resist it.

Upon the writing of Pilgrim’s Progress, the pathway on the Slough that enabled a person to cross over, was made of wholesome Biblical instruction over a period of 1600 years, dating from the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection, until the book’s writing. Today, it would be over 2000 years of this type of instruction. Together with the early disciples and apostles, countless hundreds of preachers paved this pathway across this Slough so that through the soundness of Biblical doctrine and the wholesome word of God, pilgrims and those searching for the Celestial City and eternal life would be able to walk firmly through despondency. When they’re minds are being bombarded with fear, doubt and unbelief, full of despondency as they’re under the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, they have a firm footing of truth to walk on as they travel closer to salvation.

The only solution to overcome this Slough of Despond is to come out of fear and into faith in Jesus and his word that says in **Matthew 7:13-14**; “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*”

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

In *The Celestial Railroad* we read, "This," remarked Mr. Smooth-it-away, "is the famous Slough of Despond – a disgrace to all the neighborhood; and the greater that it might so easily be converted into firm ground." "I have understood," said I, "that efforts have been made for that purpose from time immemorial." "Very probable – and what effect could be anticipated from such unsubstantial stuff?" cried Mr. Smooth-it-away. "You observe this convenient bridge. We obtained a sufficient foundation for it by throwing into the Slough some editions of books of morality, volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism, tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen, extracts from Plato, Confucius, and various Hindoo sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries upon texts of Scripture; all of which, by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. The whole bog might be filled up with a similar matter." It really seemed to me, however, that the bridge vibrated and heaved up and down in a very formidable manner; and in spite of Mr. Smooth-it-away's testimony to the solidity of its foundation, I should be reluctant to cross it in a crowded omnibus, especially if each passenger were encumbered with as heavy luggage as that gentleman and myself."

No matter what you're using to band-aid your despondency while under the conviction of sin, will not work, and will always feel unstable until you become born again. Conviction of sin is good! That's the reason why Mr. Smooth-it-away said; "This," remarked Mr. Smooth-it-away, "is the famous Slough of Despond – a disgrace to all the neighborhood; and the greater that it might so easily be converted into firm ground."

What made this Slough of Despond such a disgrace to Mr. Smooth-it-away, is that all those who are to board his train after crossing the Slough of Despond, are confronted with the reality that no matter how stable it appears, it can't be trusted. The devil goes to every length to smooth away the conviction of the Holy Spirit and any despondency you're going through, coming up from within the unregenerate soul as Mr. Help just pointed out.

The only way that a person can overcome times of despondency while under conviction of sin, is to walk by faith and not by sight. There is no other way to cross over this despondency, except by faith. If you walk by your feelings and the despondency that is coming up as a result of not staying on the straight and narrow, it can overtake you, like it did Christian, and that's why he fell. It can't be smoothed away with anything else except word of God which clearly states in **John 3:3**; "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Jesus also says in **Matthew 11:28-29**; "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." This is what Christian did after he was helped out of the Slough. He shook off the despondency that he had succumbed to and continued to press towards salvation, so that he could find rest for his soul.

Why have all of the aforementioned doctrines, philosophies and spiritual teachings been thrown into the path of the straight, firm and wholesome foundation of Biblical doctrine crossing over the Slough of Despond? Because the doctrine of the straight, narrow and difficult road to salvation, has now been diluted, weakened and reduced by the devil, to get you to believe that these teachings are firm and will get you through your despondency, smoothing away your conviction of sin. But the passenger on his way to board the Celestial Railroad saw that it was not as stable nor was it as firm as Mr. Smooth-it-away said it was.

There are **a lot of voices** out there trying to get you off the straight and narrow path. Mr. Smooth-it-away wants you to board his train to supposedly go to heaven, the Celestial City. The Celestial Railroad appears to be a fast-track to heaven, that requires no ongoing repentance of sin, and all believers will go to Heaven when they reach their destination, the Celestial City.

## THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

**1 John 3:8-9** says; *“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”*

What the Apostle John is saying here is that there is no longer a continual lifestyle of sin. If you are truly born again, you will not WANT to continue to sin, but live a lifestyle of holiness, purity and sanctification. But will you stumble at times and sin? Yes, you will. But then, again, you confess your sin that you’ve fallen into, repent, and move forward in your Christian walk.

The Apostle Peter says this about false teachers in **2 Peter 2:18-19**; *“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.”*

The author of Hebrews says this in **Hebrews 10:26-29**; *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”*

The Celestial Railroad can be compared to that of a seeker friendly church, that teaches the doctrine of eternal security, to make the sinner feel comfortable on his pilgrimage to heaven. This is the day and age that we are in right now. Seeker friendly churches are built by going out into the community to find out how the sinner thinks the church should be built to accommodate them. That accommodation sounds like all the beliefs that were thrown into the Slough of Despond to ‘give the appearance’ that it was firm, but was far from it.

This is a sobering word. You’re required by Jesus to walk the straight and narrow as a Christian and to even give your life up for Him if asked. As the introduction of this book says; *“It is an allegory depicting the radical distinction between "the broadness of contemporary Christianity", and "the narrowness of Biblical Christianity". The vast majority of Christian professors have abandoned the Bible's demanding lifestyle of the narrow way, which alone leads to eternal life. A socially fashionable brand of 'easy religion' now masquerades as biblical Christianity.”*

The word contemporary does not refer to the using of technology or modern worship and such. It’s referring to the broadness or wideness and inclusivity of many thoughts that will take you to heaven, free from conviction of sin and living a repentant lifestyle. Christianity is not comfy and cozy but one of denying yourself, taking up your cross and following only Jesus Christ. Your true joy and peace as a Christian are only found in obedience to what Jesus himself delineates in the scriptures, and that is to stay on the straight and narrow path.