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The Palace Beautiful

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Amidst the challenges and difficulties of the Christian journey, it is important to remember that we are not solitary travelers. After Christian experienced setbacks on the hill Difficulty, his road led him to a place where he found rest, refreshment, and the encouragement of spiritual community. In this message, Dr. Thomas will explain what this segment of Christian's journey can teach us about the church of Jesus Christ and its importance in the lives of God's people.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:11-22

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the corporate dimension of the Christian life.
2. To discuss the nature and outcome of the church's spiritual warfare.
3. To express the significance of God-centered fellowship and conversation.
4. To encourage Christians to invest in meaningful relationships with other Christians and to cultivate a greater love for Christ's church.

QUOTATION

Why, there I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things that to this day are in me an annoyance to me: there they say there is no death; and there I shall dwell with such company as I like best. For, to tell you the truth, I love Him because I was by Him eased of my burden; and I am weary of my inward sickness. I would fain be where I shall die no more, and with the company that shall continually cry, 'Holy, holy, holy.'

–Christian

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. A Place of Beauty
   A. When Christian returned to the top of the hill after finding his lost scroll, he spied a stately palace in the distance and sought shelter there during the night.
   B. In this section, John Bunyan describes the spiritual riches of the church.
      i. John Calvin is known for proclaiming that a person cannot have God for his father who does not have the church as his mother, a teaching that was articulated by Cyprian in the third century.
      ii. John Bunyan shared a deep love for the church, and he uses this portion of the story to impart to his readers a deeper understanding of the church.

II. Satanic Resistance
   A. Throughout history, the church has been engaged in spiritual warfare.
      i. On his way to the palace, Christian had to pass by two lions, which had already frightened away the pilgrims Timorous and Mistrust.
      ii. By referring to two lions, Bunyan was perhaps describing the opposition he had experienced both from the state and from the Church of England.
   B. Though Satan's power opposes Christ's disciples, He cannot prevail over them.
      i. At the palace door, the porter informed Christian that these lions, though fierce, were chained and could not harm him.
      ii. Though the devil may roar and threaten, his power and access are limited.

III. The Gift of Overseers
   A. As the overseer of the palace, the porter represents the elders and ministers through whom Christ governs His church.
   B. When the porter asks Christian about himself, Christian tells the porter of his descent from the line of Japheth.
      i. Bunyan alludes to Noah's pronouncement in Genesis 9:27.
      ii. Bunyan also draws attention to the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, a work accomplished through the work of pastors, missionaries, and evangelists (Romans 10:14-15).
   C. As Christian discovered, the church is also a place where believers can share their stories with one another, praising God for His work in their lives.

IV. Spiritual Refreshment
   A. The people of the house enjoyed rich spiritual conversation, which directed Christian's thoughts and feelings toward the king that he was on his way to meet.
   B. Christian also received bodily nourishment, dining upon delicious and rare foods.
   C. In the morning, the people of the house showed Christian a variety of treasures and relics, reminders of the deeds of God's people and of God's faithfulness throughout the ages.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In this part of the story, Bunyan uses the imagery of a _____ to describe the church of Jesus Christ.
   a. Flock
   b. Bride
   c. Body
   d. Palace

2. According to Augustine, no one can have God as a father who does not have the church as a mother.
   a. True
   b. False

3. What was unique about the lions at the top of the hill?
   a. They were known for devouring pilgrims
   b. They were restrained by chains
   c. They defended pilgrims from wild beasts
   d. They spoke insults and accusations in human voices

4. What did Christian need to do before he gained entrance to the house?
   a. Share the story of his pilgrimage
   b. Show his scroll as proof that he was a pilgrim
   c. Prove his courage by defeating the lions outside
   d. Nothing; he was granted immediate admittance

5. *Within the house, Christian received both physical and spiritual nourishment.*
   a. True
   b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some examples of the satanic opposition that the church faces today? How can Bunyan's example of the lions outside the palace encourage us amidst such opposition?

2. Why is it important for believers to share their stories with one another? Think of a person whose story of faith you have found particularly encouraging; how did God reveal Himself in that person's life?

3. Christian was asked to answer many questions about his journey. After learning about Christian's failures and shortcomings, how did the people of the house treat him? What can we learn from this, and how can we apply it to our own churches?

4. When Christian was asked why he wanted to go to Mount Zion, what did he say? *How can this hope impact our day-to-day lives?*