

The City of Destruction

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

John Bunyan's timeless work *Pilgrim's Progress* powerfully expresses the truth that the present life is a spiritual journey. When Jesus Christ liberates a sinner from the power of sin, He also extends an invitation to a lifetime of discipleship. As we shall see, the path of the Christian life is riddled with many trials, dangers, and obstacles. Yet, the journey to the Celestial City is also laden with displays of God's grace and faithfulness. As we begin our study of Bunyan's masterpiece, Dr. Derek Thomas will direct our attention to the City of Destruction, the starting point for Christian's spiritual journey and ours.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrews 9:27; Psalm 38:4; Acts 16:25-34

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce John Bunyan's classic work *Pilgrim's Progress* and discuss its importance in the lives of generations of Christians.
2. To describe certain events in the early life of John Bunyan that are helpful in understanding this work as his spiritual autobiography.
3. To communicate the burdening nature of sin and the gravity of future judgment.
4. To chronicle the beginning of Christian's spiritual journey, with its ties to Bunyan's experiences and those of believers today.

QUOTATION

*Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement*

Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.

—John Bunyan

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Legacy of *Pilgrim's Progress*

- A. After the Bible, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the most published book in the history of the English language.
 - i. For many generations, it has been read in Christian homes around the world.
 - ii. Many names of characters and locations in *Pilgrim's Progress* have become common phrases in English literature and everyday speech.
- B. *Pilgrim's Progress* contains two parts.
 - i. Part One, based largely on Bunyan's own experiences, relates Christian's journey to the Celestial City.
 - ii. Part Two is the lesser-known story of Christian's wife, Christiana, and their children as they undertake a similar journey.

II. A Man, a Book, and a Burden

- A. *Pilgrim's Progress* begins with a man who is in a state of distress.
 - i. As a resident of the City of Destruction, this man carries a great burden of sin upon his back.
 - ii. While reading from a book, this man was awakened to his state of spiritual peril.
- B. This man's conviction of sin parallels Bunyan's own spiritual awakening.
 - i. John Bunyan came of age during the turbulent period surrounding the English Civil War.
 - ii. As a young man, he was self-absorbed, vulgar, and hostile to God.
 - iii. Through the influence of his wife and others who confronted his sin, Bunyan slowly came to a realization of his need for salvation.

III. Toward the Wicket Gate

- A. Evangelist gave this man direction and encouragement in his state of distress.
 - i. This man, Christian, wanted to escape from judgment but did not know where to go.
 - ii. Evangelist instructed Christian to follow a shining light, which would lead him to a wicket gate.
- B. Christian left his family and home behind, covered his ears, and began running toward the light.
- C. Though he could not yet see the gate itself, he was eager to be freed from his burden and spared from the judgment that would befall the City of Destruction.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has furnished the English language with phrases such as By-Path Meadow, Doubting Castle, and Worldly Wiseman.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. John Bunyan's father was a _____ by trade.
 - a. Farmer
 - b. Preacher
 - c. Soldier
 - d. Tinker
3. Christian became convicted of his sin through _____.
 - a. Reading the Bible
 - b. The evangelistic efforts of his family and friends
 - c. Noticing the burden on his back
 - d. The words that Evangelist spoke to him
4. Though his heart had been hostile to God, John Bunyan experienced a sudden conversion as a young man.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Evangelist instructed Christian to go directly to _____.
 - a. His home
 - b. The foot of the cross
 - c. A wicket gate
 - d. The Celestial City

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you read *Pilgrim's Progress*? If so, what do you recall most vividly about it? If not, what are you most interested in learning from your study of this book?
2. What does it mean to be a pilgrim? Why do you think the metaphor of pilgrimage is a fitting description of the Christian life?
3. What is Christian's situation at the beginning of this story? What needs to change? What is the hope that is extended to Christian and to others in his situation?
4. In this story, does Christian find eternal life immediately or gradually? What truths does this communicate about salvation and the Christian life?