Chapter One

Christian Flees from the City of Destruction

A. Introduction.

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I came upon a certain place where there was a den; and I lay down in that place to sleep; and as I slept I dreamed a dream.

To the realist concerning this decadent modern age, the opening words are both arresting and intriguing. Having read the whole of the first paragraph, one is immediately made aware of the fact that this allegory is seriously and vitally concerned with the plight and destiny of mankind in its common predicament, not mere moralistic platitudes. The esteemed historian G. M. Trevelyan, declared in 1928:

Of all the works of high imagination which have enthralled mankind, none opens with a passage that more instantly places the reader in the heart of all the action that is to follow; not Homer’s, not Milton’s, invocation of the Muse; not one of Dante’s three great openings; not the murmured challenge of the sentinels on the midnight platform at Elsinor - not one of these better performs the author’s initial task. The attention is at once captured, the imagination aroused. In these first sentences, by the magic of words, we are transported into a world of spiritual values, and impressed at the very outset with the sense of great issues at stake - nothing less than the fate of a man’s soul.

1. A wilderness world.

The commencing scene is that of the world fittingly described as a moral “wilderness,” or desolate planet, the allusion being to the wilderness wanderings of Israel in the Sinai Peninsula (Neh. 9:19, 21; Ps. 78:40, 52). Man’s present abode is not perceived even as a moderate paradise, but rather as an arid region where souls shrivel under the heat of sin’s glare and lack of the life of God, and the flesh burns with consuming desires. It is a place void of the true praise of God such as is continual in heaven; only predatory human beasts roam about, seeking to competitively devour each other so as to individually establish their exclusive, autonomous, ungodly reign. It is a place where Christians must necessarily pass through as ambassadors in enemy territory (II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 5:15-16), and are regarded as the scum and dregs of society (I Cor. 4:13).

2. A dismal den.

Even more foreboding is the cell which is obviously representative of Bedford county jail where Bunyan was contained for twelve years. Such confinement is typical of how the world treats choice saints, namely as animals only fit for caging (II Cor. 11:23-27; Bedford jail.

Heb. 11:32-38). Nevertheless, since God can cause the wrath of man to praise Him (Ps. 76:10), and even the desert to blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1-2), therefore out of that “den” there came forth a book that shall influence generations throughout the world for the cause of God’s gospel (Rom. 1:1).

3. A doctrinal dream.

Hence, Bunyan commences to portray the essential truth of Scripture in the form of an allegorical dream. Here then, as stoutly defended in the opening poetic apology, the doctrine of God is packaged with holy guile, both respectfully and appealingly, for the purpose of baiting an indifferent world. Especially note that while contemporary man conjures up countless fanciful and illusory means by which he might escape reality, yet on the other hand Bunyan employs picturesque language for the purpose of pressing home the truth about biblical reality.


I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed in rags standing in a certain place, with his face [turned away] from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden on his back. I looked and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able to contain himself any longer, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, “What shall I do?”

At its roots, biblical Christianity is individualistic in terms of a man or woman being right with God (Job 4:17). Yet the resultant effect is corporate fellowship with those who have likewise been reconciled to God (Acts 2:42). To begin with Bunyan focuses on that singular and personal aspect, which must be understood as being even separate from close relatives, even one’s wife and children. However, the importance of spiritual gregarious concerns will have strong subsequent emphasis.

1. His name.

Bunyan introduces the main character simply as “a man,” though we are later told, when he is investigated by the Porter at the Palace Beautiful, that his proper name as an unbeliever was “Graceless.” In a short while he will be renamed “Christian,” though this is some time before his conversion at the Wicket-gate, and we might well ponder the author’s intention here? Could Bunyan be drawing upon his own experience?

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3 Isa. 64:6; Ps. 38:4; Hab. 2:2; Luke 14:33.
2. His attire.

The whole stance and dress of this man is perceived in a manner that is contrary to that of the world. Here is the biblical perspective concerning an unregenerate man to whom, blind though he be, the particular grace of God reaches out.

  a. This man’s clothing of rags is his righteousnesses, his most esteemed motives and works, viewed from God’s perspective (Isa. 64:6). No doubt the citizens of the City of Destruction regarded this fellow-countryman as being respectably dressed.

  b. This man’s posture is uncommon in its direction, that is looking away from his community, for so serious is he about a personal predicament that he appears to be prepared to seek for advice that is not in agreement with that of his family, neighbors, and city officials (Luke 14:33; 18:29-30). Of course the reason is that this man’s most intimate friends do not understand his inner turmoil.

  c. This man’s book is the Bible, which has begun to challenge and disturb him, and it will remain his primary guide in the days ahead. This Word of God will be both convicting law concerning unrighteousness and saving gospel concerning righteousness (Hab. 2:2; Rom. 3:9-26; II Tim. 3:15; Heb. 4:12). No doubt the citizens of the City of Destruction have derided this book for being passe, irrelevant, narrow, etc. Bunyan describes this early part of his spiritual pilgrimage as follows: “I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation; still crying out to God, that I might know the truth, the way to heaven and glory.”

  d. This man’s burden is a growing consciousness of personal sin and guilt which, he later confesses to Mr. Worldly-Wiseman; it is stimulated by the reading of his holy book (Matt. 11:28; Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:7-13; II Cor. 5:1-4). Therefore, it is not surprising that Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, according to his gospel, strenuously assails Christian’s Bible. As Bunyan writes in Saved By Grace, “this revelation [of God] of the emptiness of his [the sinner’s] own righteousness, brings also with it a further discovery of the naughtiness of his heart, in its hypocrisy, pride, unbelief, hardness of heart, deadness, and backwardness to all gospel and new-covenant obedience, which sight of himself lies like millstones upon his shoulders, and sinks him yet further into doubts and fears of damnation.” Bent over rather than being upright (Ps. 38:4), yet doubtless the citizens of the City of Destruction esteemed him as a fine upstanding fellow. Possibly Bunyan’s portable anvil weighing sixty pounds, carried on his shoulder, engraved J. BVNYAN, aroused his thought here.

3. His attitude.

  a. With weeping and trembling, he conveys a desperate concern for his plight. Perhaps earlier he had been more indifferent to the truth, even as was Bunyan when first attending the local Elstow Anglican church. So in Grace Abounding he recalls: “[W]herefore I went up and down bemoaning my sad condition, counting myself far worse than a thousand fools, for standing off thus long, and spending so

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7 Ibid., pp. 351-52.
many years in sin as I had done.” However, the point here is that only a serious quest for relief brings revelation of the true remedy for man’s predicament (Ps. 119:2, 10).

b. But what specific parts of Christian’s book does he find so disturbing? They are those portions which declare God’s mandatory holiness and righteousness, such as the Decalogue in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:1-17) and the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament (Matt. 5-7); though these same essential demands are comprehensively revealed in Scripture overall (cf. Rom. 3:20 where “law” in context refers to the whole of the Old Testament).

c. Application. When a man genuinely enquires about biblical Christianity, he does not come as it were with a modest headache or faint temperature, but rather with a sense of a deep-seated, mortal condition in his soul. Only then is he prompted to cry out, as with Christian, “What shall I do?” (Acts 2:37; 16:30-31). In *The Strait Gate* Bunyan explains: “He therefore, and he only, knows what saved means, that knows what hell and death, and damnation means. ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ is the language of the trembling sinner. ‘Lord save me,’ is the language of the sinking sinner.” True evangelism always first declares the condemnation of God’s righteousness before it then proclaims the saving grace of God’s righteousness. (Rom. 3:9-26).

C. The Earnest Concern of Christian for his Family.

While the prelude to conversion is individualistic, yet it does not preclude heartfelt involvement with others, especially close relatives. As Andrew sought to interest his brother Peter in Jesus as the Christ (John 1:40-41), so Christian is deeply concerned for the deliverance and destiny of his wife and children.

1. His tender regard.

   Therefore in this plight he went home, and strained himself as long as he could, so that his wife and children would not notice his distress. But he could not be silent long for the reason that his trouble increased. Therefore at length he broke his mind to his wife and children; and thus he began to talk to them. “Oh my dear wife,” he said, “and you the children of my bowels [deepest affections], I your dear friend am myself undone [crushed], by reason of a burden that weighs heavily upon me: moreover, I am certainly informed that this our city will be burned with fire from Heaven, in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with you my wife and sweet babes, shall come to a miserable ruin, except (which alternative is not apparent) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered.”

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9 Ibid., p. 364; cf. p. 543.
To begin with he conceals his strained feelings, but as the load of guilt and his knowledge of coming judgment increase, they must inevitably be unburdened to those closest to him.

a. He is aware of impending destruction.

With the most tender and unaggressive concern, he warns his wife and four children, Matthew, Samuel, Joseph and James,\(^{10}\) of imminent, consuming fire from heaven (II Pet. 3:7, 10).

b. He is unaware of a way of escape.

While being frantic due to conviction of coming judgment, his concern is multiplied in being ignorant of a way of escape, in spite of the directions being clearly revealed in his book. Thus Christian solicits his family’s help in finding a way of salvation whereas he needs the guidance of a pastor/evangelist.

2. Their contemptuous opposition.

At this these close relatives of his were greatly amazed. It was not that they believed to be true what he said to them, but rather because they thought that some frenzy distemper \(\text{[disorientating disease]}\) had got into his head. Consequently, with the night approaching, and with the hope that sleep might settle his brains, they got him to bed with all haste. However instead of sleeping, he spent that evening in sighs and tears.

So when the morning was come, they enquired as to how he was feeling, and he told them, “Worse and worse.” He also intended to talk to them again, but they began to firmly resist him. They also contrived to drive away his demented frame of mind by means of surly carriages toward him \(\text{[responding with contemptuous and irritating behavior]}\). Sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and at other times they would quite neglect him.\(^{11}\)

Therefore he began to retire to his bedroom to pray for and pity them, and also condole \(\text{[lament]}\) over his misery. He would also walk alone in the nearby fields, sometimes reading and sometimes praying; and so for some days he spent his time in this manner.

Now I noticed on a particular occasion, when he was walking in the fields, that he was (according to his habit) reading in his book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, “What shall I do to be saved?”\(^{12}\)

As is so often the case, and due to no fault of Christian, his wife and family respond not merely with indifference, but outright antagonism. “Dad has got religion!”

\(^{10}\) Ibid., III, pp. 199-200.

\(^{11}\) Carnal medication for a sick soul.

a. He is constrained to seek God with tears.

Believing that Christian’s brains are unsettled, the family quickly bundle him off to bed, pitying his eccentric condition. But for the “patient,” this was a night for wrestling in his soul and crying out to God with tears for himself and his loved ones. In desperation, his plea to God is like that of Peter: “Save us, Lord; we are perishing” (Matt. 8:25).

b. He is thought to be crazy.

How shocked Christian is to discover that his close relatives in the flesh are yet enemies in the Spirit (Ps. 41:9; 55:12-21). His loved ones believe that their husband/father has “some frenzy distemper,” that is a fever that produces a delirium. He has “caught” a religious infection, having become contaminated through the Bible, and needs careful rehabilitation. His new attitudes are intolerable!

c. He is treated with derision and contempt.

The next morning his “loved ones,” being disappointed that the illness has not departed, aggressively oppose him with “surly carriages [contemptuous, peevish behavior],” by means of successive periods of abuse, silence, and disdain. For all this, yet Christian’s distress persists with increasing aggravation.

d. He is constrained to pray.

This prayer for a wife and children, although offered by an unconverted husband and father, is eventually answered when, “though they all played the fool at the first, and would by no means be persuaded by either the tears or entreaties of Christian, yet second thoughts have wrought wonderfully with them; so they have packed up and are also gone after him.”

e. He is a learning seeker.

Thus Christian withdraws to his bedroom and the open fields so as to “condole [lament]” over his misery. Now he learns how true seekers after salvation and righteousness must suffer ostracism from even the circle of their own blood relatives (Matt. 10:21-22). However, he persists in calling out, “What shall I do to be saved?” (Acts 2:37; 16:30).

f. Application.

Christian here perfectly portrays the true seeking penitent (II Cor. 7:9-11). This man does not merely patronize the Bible; rather, forsaking all, he makes the remedy for his condition his primary quest.

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13 Ibid., p. 172.
(1) He has a deep sense of his imminent danger.

(2) He is burdened and bowed down on account of his sin and guilt.

(3) He is consequently concerned for his blind loved ones.

(4) He seeks an alien righteousness in God’s Word.

(5) He is not dissuaded by the opposition of even his own family.

(6) He earnestly seeks the face of God in solitude.

(7) He is desirous of receiving guidance.
D. The Compassionate Concern of Evangelist for Christian.

I also saw that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go. I then looked and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him who asked, “For what reason are you crying?” He answered, “Sir, I understand by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment; and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second.”

Then said Evangelist, “Why are you not willing to die since this life is accompanied with so many evils?” The man answered, “Because I fear that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave; and I shall fall into Tophet [a place of burning]. And sir, if I am not fit to go to prison, I am quite sure I am not fit to go to judgment, and as a consequence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.”

Then said Evangelist, “If this is your condition, then why are you standing still?” He answered, “Because I do not know which way to go.” Then Evangelist gave him a parchment scroll on which was written within, “Fly from the wrath to come.”

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.”

Modern use of this title “Evangelist” may lead us to misunderstand Bunyan’s intention here. He does not have in mind a specialist, itinerant preacher who, with the allurement of popular entertainment and a light-hearted style, calls for “decisions for Christ” that are signified by “walking forward” or “raising a hand” or “signing a card.” Rather he portrays a faithful man of God, an earnest pastor who fulfills his calling as a gospel minister (II Tim. 4:4), and who is epitomized in the first scene at the house of Interpreter, as with Great-heart

14 Representing Pastor John Gifford, who greatly helped Bunyan at his time of conversion.
15 Heb. 9:27.
16 Job 16:21-22.
18 Is. 30:33.
19 Conviction of the necessity of flying.
20 Matt. 3:7.
21 Matt. 7:13-14. It was usually beside or in a larger gate.
22 Ps. 119:105; II Pet. 1:19.
23 Christ and the way to him cannot be found without the Word.
in Part Two, but more particularly in Pastor John Gifford of Bedford who so well instructed Bunyan in the saving truth of God.  

1. The conviction of Christian.

The load of Christian’s burden continues to increase as he reads God’s diagnosis of his condition. He is now staggering under his weight of sin and guilt (Rom. 7:9).

a. He fears death (Job 16:21-22; Ezek. 22:14) and judgment (Heb. 9:27) as God’s scalpel, magnifying glass, and x-ray investigation probes deeper and deeper. He groans and agonizes and squirms at the new-found pain of his mortal spiritual cancer, so that he continues to cry out, “What shall I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30), with the implication that he needs someone to provide relief.

b. Illustration. In an early work of Bunyan’s entitled The Doctrine Of The Law And Grace Unfolded, he writes: “The Lord finding of me in this [earlier, degenerate, unconverted] condition, did open the glass of his law upon me, wherein he showed me so clearly my sins, both the greatness of them, and also how abominable they were in his sight, that I thought the very clouds were charged with the wrath of God, and ready to let fall the very fire of his jealousy upon me; . . . some times I have been so loaden with my sins, that I could not tell where to rest, nor what to do; yea, at such times I thought it would have taken away my senses.”

2. The condition of Christian.

His state becomes one of despairing lostness (Isa. 6:5), for he is ignorant of any way of escape and impotent insofar as finding one.

a. Christian is drowning in an ocean that is fed from the bitter and polluted spring of his own heart. He cannot see any hope of liberation on the horizon; all seems hopeless with only dark prospects (Ps. 143:3-4), that is with regard to any saving attempt on his part.

b. Illustration. What is more pitiful than a lost blind man, whose groping in the dark finds no hand of help or well defined pathway (Isa. 59:9-10)? What of a deaf man who, also knowing that he is lost, yet despairs of hearing of a way of deliverance?

3. The coming of Evangelist.

This timely compassionate messenger providentially reaches out to minister to Christian. When a man truly grieves over his pervasive corruption, God sovereignly sends an agent, whether personal as with a diligent pastor or impersonal as with a piece of literature, to declare where mercy may be found, that is in the gospel (Acts 8:26-35). His appearing here is the first of three in Part One of The Pilgrim’s Progress, and it is

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24 Ibid., §§ 77, 117, pp. 15, 20; also John Brown, John Bunyan, pp. 77-90.
25 Ibid., p. 549.
26 Ibid., III, pp. 94, 125.
this ongoing interest in struggling pilgrims, even following their conversion, that marks him out as a man of pastoral concern.

a. He is a self-effacing messenger, not a showman.

This humble ambassador clearly contrasts with the flamboyant and mercenary hucksters that abound today and often harvest crops of tares. This faithful herald values his heavenly commission more than the advice and strategy of this present world. He is a man sensitive to the plight of groaning unbelievers before the needs of his pocket and a notable reputation.

b. He speaks to Christian about his stricken condition.

In this particular case he perceives strong conviction of sin evidenced by a heavy burden, but yet seeks a clear confession. In another case, he could have seen the need to proclaim the righteous demands of God so that a sense of guilt might result. So Christian unburdens his terror at the thought of death and his unfitness to stand before God’s judgment throne (Heb. 9:27). He thus fears falling beyond death and the grave into “Tophet” or “a place of burning” (Isa. 30:33), where wicked souls are punished, of which his book speaks (Matt. 25:46). But evangelist rebukes Christian for cleaving to this life, even in fear, for it is so full of evil and godlessness. Thus he stimulates a further craving for a way of escape.

c. He exhorts Christian to flee from destruction.

In response to Christian’s confession of his lostness, Evangelist directs him away from the City of Destruction by means of a parchment scroll, a simile for the Bible, on which is written, “Fly from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7). Evangelist evidently has a touch of John the Baptist about him! This specific instruction helps Christian who remains so ignorant of the book in his hand. Note how this pastor/evangelist has a sobriety and earnestness about his task that is a result of his assessment of the dire predicament that confronts this wicked world. As already indicated, his demeanor is more that of sober John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2) rather than the fashionable modern day entertainers who, with their breezy, mood-setting music, star-studded testimonies, and snappy stories, seek to cajole their listeners into making a “decision for Christ.”

d. He directs Christian toward the Wicket-gate.

For Bunyan, this is the entrance to the narrow way that leads to eternal life (Ps. 119:105; Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24). It was commonly a small gate beside or in a larger gate. It is portrayed in Grace Abounding as, “a narrow gap, like a little door-way,” being “Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father.” It is likewise described in The Strait Gate, based upon Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24, as follows: “This door is Jesus Christ, as also himself doth testify, saying, ‘I am the door,’ &c. (John 10:9; Acts 14:27). By this door men enter into God’s favor and mercy, and find forgiveness through faith in his blood, and live in hope of eternal

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life.” It is here that Christian will meet a “grave person” or keeper of the gate named Good-will who grants entrance. In Part Two this person is also identified as Jesus Christ. Should Evangelist have portrayed Jesus Christ more directly and clearly at this point? No, not if a degree of allegorical intrigue is appreciated. Bunyan probably felt that his portrayal of Christ at this point was, biblically speaking, sufficiently clear, that is representative of the limited perception of many a seeking sinner.

e. He directs Christian toward a shining light.

Knowing that Bunyan has II Peter 1:19 in mind here, then this shining light is another simile for the illuminating truth of Christian’s book (Ps. 119:105), and not the inner personal light of Quakerism. This is confirmed by Bunyan’s marginal comment at this point: “Christ and the way cannot be found without the Word.” Further, in Instruction for the Ignorant is the catechetical instruction: “Q. But what must one that knoweth not God do, to get the knowledge of God?—A. Let him apply his heart unto the Scriptures (Prov. 22:17; 23:12), ‘As unto a light that shineth in a dark place,’ even this world, ‘until the day dawn, and the day star arise in his heart’ (II Pet. 1:19-20).” If this pilgrim will but persevere in the Word of God, limited though his present knowledge may be, he will come to a time when, “the day dawns and the morning star arise in . . . [his] heart.” Christian only just perceives the light ahead, but he is assured that if he pursues this true light in his book (John 1:9; 8:12; 12:46), then the Wicket-gate will eventually be sighted with greater clarity, and in particular Jesus Christ’s beckoning will be clearly seen. This representation here of Christian’s spiritual myopia regarding gospel truth is a distinctive reflection of Bunyan’s dimness of sight prior to conversion in spite of the assistance of pastor John Gifford.

(1) Application. We may meet people who indicate a serious yet short-sighted and elementary interest in the Word of God and Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we must not cast them aside even if their understanding is ever so feeble (Isa. 42:3). Rather we must lead them on from truth to truth; for if they can perceive some truth, then this may lead them onward to the Truth (John 14:6) in all of his saving fullness.

(2) Application. Notice that Evangelist does not invite Christian to attempt to take his burden from off his back, that is repent in the sense of quitting doing this or that. His call is not for reformation of habits so that one might become presentable before Christ, but for the burdened to seek refuge in Christ who alone is able to lift the burden away (Matt. 11:28-30).

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28 Ibid., p. 365.
29 Ibid., III, p. 190.
30 Ibid., p. 90.
31 Ibid., II, p. 681.
E. The Urgent Concern of Christian for Eternal Life.

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.

It is one thing to contemplate a major journey, and quite another to actually venture out. Many investigate and plan and discuss concerning a voyage, but there is something quite decisive and final about the moment of departure. So it is with Christian at this point. Yet how more significant are these first running paces when we consider their meaning. Here is a man prepared to sprint, as best as his burden will allow, against the tide of this world, and even his wife and children in particular. There is no ambivalence here, only a singleness of mind that will not be distracted. And so it ought to be for any who would seek the kingdom of God and His Son Jesus Christ. There is to be no double-mindedness or halting gait (Matt. 6:33; Luke 9:61-62; Phil. 3:13-14).

1. He runs with resolve.

His commencing to run is indicative of desperation and firm resolve within his weary soul. He does not amble along, but flees as directed. He will not be distracted in his flight, or look back (Gen. 19:17, cf. v. 26).

2. He is sought by his relatives.

As is common, his family rallies together to dissuade him from his religious fad which now appears to be set in concrete. But it is to no avail, for with a growing grasp of the truth, Christian rightly values the pursuit of the kingdom of God above the idolizing of his family (Luke 14:26).

3. He gives priority to eternal life.

It will be seen on numerous occasions in this journey that in spite of various trials and tribulations, yet it is the prospect of eternal life, both at the Wicket-gate and consummately at the Celestial City, or a saving knowledge of the Son of God (John 3:16, 36; I John 5:20), that makes the endurance of suffering and deprivation more than worthwhile (Phil. 3:9-12; II Tim. 4:18). Thus Christian’s pilgrimage has truly begun.

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33 John 3:16, 36.
4. Application.

It should not be thought that Bunyan is advocating that a seeking father can justifiably abandon his wife and children so as to pursue, with reduced hindrance, personal salvation according to the Bible. His devotion to his own family is beyond question, though for the sake of conscience he felt constrained to subject his own flesh and blood to deprivation on account of a higher priority represented by imprisonment for twelve years. It would seem that his second wife was in full agreement with this determined stand. Hence, in allegorical terms, Bunyan is teaching that nothing, not even one's closest relatives, should take precedence over an individual’s quest for peace with God and citizenship in His kingdom (Matt. 6:33).