Chapter Six

Christian Seeks after the Village of Morality

A. The Fearful Threatening of the High Hill.

So Christian departed from his present course so as to head toward Mr. Legality’s house for help. But notice that when he had drawn very close to the Hill, it seemed so high that it appeared to almost hang over him and threaten to crush him. Being paralyzed with fear, he stopped rather than go any further. As a result he did not know what to do. Also his burden now seemed much heavier than when he was formerly in the way.

There also came flashes of fire erupting out of the Hill that made Christian fear that he would be burned. For this reason he was terrified and began to sweat and tremble in his body. Now he was sorry (repented) that he had taken Mr. Worldly-Wiseman’s advice.

How casually Mr. Worldly-Wiseman has spoken of the high hill, as if easily traversed, like many a modern day religious moralist. How naively Christian sets out upon an impossible journey. Ignoring his book, and good pastoral advice, he follows his carnal instinct (Rom. 8:1-5, 12-13).

1. The high hill overwhelms Christian.

The closer he draws near to the hill, the steeper and more threatening become its sides and crags, till they seem almost perpendicular and about to topple upon him. Thus he stops in his tracks, quaking with fear, because of a growing sense of futility. Now he “wetted [knew] not what to do;” dark clouds have suddenly displaced a sunny horizon.

2. The high hill enlarges Christian’s burden.

As he ponders the sheer loftiness of the hill, his burden is felt to be proportionately greater and the way seems only all the more impossible to overcome. So the more a sinner contemplates the righteous demands of the Law, as revealed upon Mt. Sinai, the more evident become his exceeding sinfulness and impotence (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:7-13).

3. The high hill terrifies Christian.

Flashes of fire from the high hill, representative of God’s awesome and perfect holiness manifest on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19: 16-18), cause Christian to be alarmed and near petrified with fear. Now he becomes full of remorse at having heeded Mr. Worldly-Wiseman’s advice. Now he understands the terror of the law.

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1 Ex. 19:16, 18.
4. Application concerning Mt. Sinai.

Mt. Sinai, otherwise the Law revealed to Moses, represents the demands of God’s righteousness that call for total, perfect, and everlasting obedience (Gal. 3:10; 5:3). Any pilgrim who fails to fully measure up to this standard finds that not only are the promises of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman unfulfilled, but also the curses of God take their place (Deut. 27:15-26; Gal. 3:10).

a. The promise of bliss has led to fear.

Mr. Worldly-Wiseman’s promise was empty in that it lacked any dynamic ground of fulfillment. God also promises happiness born of relief from the guilt of sin. Yet, through faith alone, He lifts burdens by means of the dynamic of the gospel (Rom. 8:3-4; Gal. 3:16).

b. The promise of life has led to prospective death.

As Paul reveals, it was not the Law that actually brought death, but rather the real culprit sin, unmasked by the Law (Rom. 7:13). Christian was ill prepared to climb well, and thus was endangered because of the disabling burden on his back. Only late awakening to his own disability delivers him from the brink of disaster.

c. The promise of release has led to greater captivity.

Mt. Sinai, with its threatenings and condemnation, bears children who are slaves (Gal. 3:23; 4:24-25), whereas the true Jerusalem bears children who are free (Gal. 4:26-5:1). Mt. Sinai results in darkness and gloom whereas Mt. Zion produces a better covenant (Heb. 12:18-24).

d. The promise of pardon has led to condemnation.

No wonder that Mr. Worldly-Wiseman scorned Christian’s book since it labelled this false gospel of the high hill as, “the ministry of death . . . the ministry of condemnation,” and commended the true gospel of, “the ministry of the Spirit . . . the ministry of righteousness” (II Cor. 3:7-9).

B. The Stern Exhortation of Evangelist.

When a seeking sinner is lured by the deceptive false gospel of law/works, what is it that draws him back to a true gospel path? It is the faithful gospel minister who both refutes falsehood and proclaims the truth over and over again.
1. Evangelist approaches and enquires about Christian’s predicament.

Yet at that very moment he saw Evangelist coming directly toward him, and this caused him to blush with shame. So Evangelist drew near, while appearing to be most indignant in his mood, for he seemed eager to talk soberly with Christian.

EVA NGELIST: What are you doing here? (At this Christian was at a loss for words. He just stood speechless.) Are you not the same person that I found weeping outside the walls of the City of Destruction?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, my dear sir, I am that man.

EVA NGELIST: Then how is it that you have so quickly turned aside from my direction, for you are now going the wrong way?

CHRISTIAN: Soon after I left the Slough of Despond, I met a very sympathetic gentleman who persuaded me that I could, in the Village just ahead, find a man who was able to relieve me of my burden.

EVA NGELIST: Who was he?

CHRISTIAN: He appeared to be such a gentleman in both his appearance and conversation. Eventually he got me to yield to his advice, and so I came here. But when I drew close to this Hill and discovered how it hangs over the way, I immediately halted lest it should fall on my head.

EVA NGELIST: And what did that gentleman say to you?

CHRISTIAN: Why he asked me where I was going, and so I told him.

EVA NGELIST: And what did he say to you then?

CHRISTIAN: He asked me if I had a family, and I told him. But I also explained that on account of being so heavily burdened down, I did not have as much pleasure in them as was formerly the case.

EVA NGELIST: So what did he then say?

CHRISTIAN: He advised me to be quickly rid of my burden, and at this I explained that I really did want the relief that he recommended. I further told of my traveling toward the Gate ahead for the purpose of receiving direction as to how I might reach the Place of Deliverance. So he said that he would show me a much better and shorter way, being far less troublesome, sir, than that which you counseled me about.

So he pointed me to another gentleman’s house where, he explained, there were men well able to take away burdens such as mine. So I believed him, and departed from the way along this alternative route with the hope that I might soon be eased of my burden. But when I came to this place, and saw things as they really are, I immediately stopped in my tracks out of fear of great danger, as already described. But now I do not know what to do.

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3 I Kgs. 19:9, 13.
“What doest thou here?” is reminiscent of God’s interrogation of Elijah (I Kings 19:9, 13). Though serious and disapproving in his countenance, yet Evangelist is an agent of God’s prevenient mercy.

a. Christian gives his shameful explanation.

At first speechless in his humiliation, and blushing with obvious guilt, Christian then attempts to make some feeble excuses.

(1) Mr. Worldly-Wiseman seemed such a gentleman. His conversation was so convincing. His personal family interest seemed so genuine, so sincere.

(2) Mr. Worldly-Wiseman seemed an expert on the removal of burdens. Further, he recommended a better, shorter, more comfortable way than via the Wicket-gate.

(3) Mr. Worldly-Wiseman yet has proved to be a deceiver. Christian’s present impasse, being self-inflicted, has brought about despair born of foolishly yielding to a delusion.

b. Christian is rebuked for his foolishness.

Notice the balanced manner of this evangelist. He sees the need to upbraid and is not afraid to do so, though his scolding is also tinged with gracious encouragement.

(1) He is exhorted with the Word.

EVANGELIST: Then stand still for a little while, so that I can explain to you the Word of God.\(^5\) (Christian quietly listened and trembled.) Make sure that you do not reject he who speaks to you as was the manner of Israel. For if God’s ancient people did not escape judgment when they refused to heed God’s messenger on Earth, how much more shall we not escape if we turn away from he who speaks from Heaven?\(^6\)

Moreover, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.\(^7\) (Then he made specific application.) You are the man who, in running into such a miserable backslidden condition, have begun to reject the counsel of the most high God and withdraw your feet from walking along the way of peace, even to the point of being in danger of eternal perdition.\(^8\)

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\(^5\) I Sam. 9:27.
\(^6\) Heb. 12:25.
\(^7\) Hab. 2:4; Heb. 10:38.
\(^8\) II Sam. 12:7.
His faithlessness is condemned, and this also entails the neglect of his book that is rejection of “the counsel of the most high” (Heb. 10:38; 12:25).

(2) He is repentant and encouraged.

Then Christian fell down at his feet as if dead, lamentably crying, “Woe is me, for I am undone [ruined].”

At the sight of this Evangelist caught him by the right hand saying, “All manner of sin and blasphemies shall be forgiven men; be not faithless, but believing.”

As a consequence Christian revived a little more and stood up trembling before Evangelist, even as he had first done.

First trembling, then weeping, he confesses his predicament: “Woe is me, for I am undone” (Is. 6:5). Then Evangelist gently revives the sorry pilgrim with the assurance that he will yet be forgiven since he has not sinned against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30). However, faith must revive, and so it commences (John 20:27), for Christian begins to straighten up a little.

(3) Application.

Evangelism is not a one shot effort that gathers in the easy responses by means of an altar call. Rather, Bunyan sees gospel ministry as part of the pastoral role within the confines of a local church. It is persistent proclamation that perseveres in a variety of situations; it shepherds wayward seekers by guiding them to the Good shepherd.

2. Evangelist explains and repudiates Mr. Worldly-Wiseman.

In terms of today’s evangelism, here is uncommon ministry, for it is the exposure of counterfeit evangelism and its fraudulent evangel. It is vitally necessary, explicitly detailed, wholly negative, and thoroughly profitable in terms of protecting Christian from another similar trial.

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9 Isa. 6:5.
Mr. Worldly-Wiseman is true to his name.

Then Evangelist continued to speak, saying, “Give more earnest attention to the things that I shall tell you about. I will now show you who it was that deluded you, and also to whom it was he sent you. The man that met you is none other than Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and how right it is for him to have this name. The reason is partly because he favors only the doctrine of this world, therefore he always attends church in the Town of Morality, and partly because he loves the doctrine of that Town the best, for it saves him from the Cross. So because he is of a carnal nature, therefore he seeks to oppose my ways, even though they are right.”

“It is instructive to contrast the characters of Worldly-Wiseman and Evangelist regarded as advisers. The first is hail-fellow-well-met, slight, and hypothetical; the second dignified and even official, but thorough and imperative. The first has no horizons (the sure sign of a false kind of breadth), and in consequence there is no real clearness of vision in him even for things near; the horizons of the second are Heaven and Hell, which he sees as tremendous ramparts of the Universe, and within the space between, his insight and his outlook are pitilessly clear. The first, with all his show of friendliness, is hard, cold, and untender; his comfort is a mere narcotic, and he lacks the manly virtues of chivalry and a sense of honour. The second is tender and compassionate; his healing is by surgery which wounds in order to cure, and his bearing is that of the soldier of Jesus Christ. Finally, the first is mistaken in his dealing with a burdened man; the second is correct. Both are there to help the man off with his burden, and they have at least this much in common, that neither of them attempts himself to take it off. The difference lies in the fact that the former sends him for relief to certain inconsiderable and helpless persons; the latter passes him over to God and the Christ of God” (Kelman, The Road, Vol. I, pp. 38-39).

(1) He delights after the doctrine of the world.

Originating with the world, he hopes in the world, speaks of the world, gains a hearing from the world, and solicits for the world (I John 4:5). He is the world’s counterpart of Evangelist.

(2) He fellowships at the Church of Morality.

There he sings, prays, and even preaches; he enjoys the company of those who desire to make a good show of the flesh (Gal. 6:12), rather than saved sinners who boast solely in the cross (Gal. 6:14).

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11 I John 4:5.
12 Gal. 6:12.
(3) He proclaims the gospel of human ability.

His gospel of nascent goodness, of realised self-worth and self-esteem, of psychological readjustment openly opposes the narrow literalism of fundamentalism, its detestable doctrine of original sin and total depravity, etc. Rather, he endorses human evolution, religious humanism, rationalism, existentialism, etc.

b. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman is a teacher of three errors.

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<th>“Now there are three things in this man’s counsel that you must utterly detest.”¹³</th>
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<td>1. His ability to lead you out of the way.</td>
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<td>2. His zealous effort to portray the Cross as abhorrent to you.</td>
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<td>3. And his directing of your feet toward that way which leads to the administration of death.”¹⁴</td>
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Here Bunyan includes this exposure of error as part of “doing the work of an evangelist” (II Tim. 4:5).

(1) His doctrine draws men from the way of life.

| “First, you must despise his ability to turn you out of the way; yes, and your own agreement to such a proposal as well: because this is to reject the counsel of God for the sake of the counsel of a Worldly-Wiseman. The Lord says, ‘Strive to enter in at the strait [narrow] gate,’¹⁵ the gate to which I am sending you; ‘for strait is the gate that leads to life, and there are few that find it.’¹⁶ This wicked man has turned you from the Wicket-gate and the way that leads up to it, and almost brought you to destruction. Therefore hate his ability to turn you out of the way, and loathe yourself for listening to him.” |

Therefore “abhor” any inclination to listen to him and “hate” the way he recommends.

(a) He counsels the rejection of the truth of God that leads to life, and acceptance of the wisdom of this world, whereas “the Lord says, Strive to enter in at the strait [Wicket] gate” (Luke 13:24).

(b) He commends the broad, comfortable, popular way that leads to destruction, whereas “the Lord says, . . . strait [narrow] is the gate that leadeth unto life” (Prov. 14:12; Matt. 7:13-14).

¹³ Evangelist reveals the deceit of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. Heb. 2:1.
¹⁴ II Cor. 3:7-11.
¹⁶ Matt. 7:13-14.
(2) His doctrine makes the cross to be offensive.

"Second, you must abhor his zeal in attempting to depict the Cross to you as offensive; for you are to prefer it to the treasures of Egypt; besides, the King of glory has told you that he who will save his life shall lose it; and he who follows Him, but does not hate his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes even his own life as well, cannot be His disciple. Therefore I say, for a man to work hard to persuade you that the King's advice will lead to your death, yet without any support from the truth, is to be detoured from the way that points you to eternal life. So you must completely loathe this doctrine."

Therefore "abhor" any ministry that demeans the pre-eminence of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(a) He devalues the gaining of Christ, and the accompanying suffering for Christ which is worth more that the treasures of Egypt, because he has no hope of heavenly reward (Heb. 11:25-26).

(b) He decries the pilgrim requirement of self-renunciation of all things, including the closest relatives and even one's own very life (Matt. 10:39; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 14:26; John 13:25).

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(3) His doctrine leads to the way of death.

“Third, you must hate his directing of your feet along the way that leads to the ministration of death. And in this respect you must carefully consider the person to whom he sent you, and especially how unable that person is to deliver you from your burden. He to whom you were sent for ease, that is Legality by name, is the son of the Bondwoman who is in bondage along with her children; she represents Mount Sinai as a mystery, which you have feared would fall on your head. Now if she, with her children, are in bondage, then how can you expect to be made free by them? Therefore this Legality is not able to set you free from your burden. No man has ever got rid of his burden by him, no, and is not likely to be so delivered in the future.”

“You cannot be justified by the works of the law; for no man living can be rid of his burden by means of the works of the law. Therefore Mr. Worldly-Wiseman is an alien guide, and Mr. Legality a cheat; as for his son Civility, in spite of his simpering [smiling] manner, he is yet a hypocrite and cannot help you. Believe me, there is no substance in such blustering talk that you have heard from this sottish [works intoxicated] man. His only design has been to deprive you of your salvation by means of turning you from the way along which I sent you.”

That is, he promotes “the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, . . . the ministry of condemnation” (II Cor. 3:7, 9), the ministry of the Law of Moses which magnifies burdens rather than releases them.

(a) He recommends an impotent burden reliever.

Mr. Legality, born of the Bondwoman in the shadow of Mt. Sinai (Gal. 4:21-27), cannot possibly offer liberty (Gal. 2:16), only judgement and slavery.

(b) He is himself an alien evangelist.

As a loud “sottish [drunken] beguiler,” he is in fact an illegitimate evangelist, a revival professional, a religious huckster, a sanctimonious scoundrel.

(c) He recommends a hypocritical burden reliever.

Mr. Civility, an heir and understudy of Mr. Legality, with his artificial smile, forced manners, and religious poses, is nothing but a vacuous charade.

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20 Gal. 4:21-27.
21 II Cor. 11:3.
3. Evangelist calls for heavenly confirmation.

After this Evangelist called aloud to the Heavens for confirmation of what he had said; and immediately there came words and fire out of the Mountain, under which poor Christian stood, that made his hair to stand on end. The words that poured forth were as follows: “As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue to live according to all things that are written in the Book of the Law, that is to obey them.”

Thus the high hill or mountain spews forth consuming holy fire and the words of Galatians 3:10: “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, to perform them.” In other words, God’s inviolate requirement is that His Law be kept totally, perfectly, and everlastingly. Evangelist’s gospel is vindicated, which unlike that of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, delivers from such a curse by means of the greater power of sovereign grace (Rom. 5:17-21).

C. The Penitent Return of Christian to the Way of Life.

In itself, even the most heart’felt contrition cannot deliver Christian from his plight. Rather he must be exposed to good counsel, encouragement, and exhortation. Here is another aspect of faithful evangelistic ministry.

1. Repentant Christian pleads with Evangelist.

Now Christian anticipated nothing but death, and so gave out an agonizing cry, even cursing the occasion when he met Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and called himself a thousand fools for paying attention to his advice. He also felt terribly ashamed to think that this gentleman’s arguments, though originating from the flesh, should prevail with him and be the cause of his abandonment of the right way. So having scolded himself, he again directed himself to Evangelist with great earnestness.

CHRISTIAN: Sir, tell me what you think. Is there any hope for me? May I now return to the right way and then approach the Wicket-gate? Or shall I be abandoned on account of my waywardness, and be sent back to certain shame at the City of Destruction? I am heartily sorry for having listened to this man’s counsel; yet may my sin be forgiven?

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22 Gal. 3:10.

23 Christian enquires if he may yet be happy.
His inward churnings concerning felt shame, self-condemnation, self-depreciation, and loathing for Mr. Worldly-Wiseman find outward expression in loud groanings, cursings, indictments of himself, and timid entreaty for mercy.

a. His repentance is profound.

He is severe with himself, even as was Bunyan in Grace Abounding, confessing with pain his carnality, his thousand-fold foolishness, and his worthiness of death. However, Christian does not totally despair.

b. His pleading is with faint hope.

With a shallow understanding of the sovereignty of grace, and remaining infection from the fumes of Mt. Sinai, Christian believes that the merit of his pilgrimage thus far may not be sufficient to counter the prospect of banishment back to the City of Destruction! Nevertheless, as with his predicament at the Slough of Despond, so here he still desires forward movement rather than regression.

2. Reproachful Evangelist encourages Christian.

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**EVANGELIST:** Your sin is very great since you have in fact committed two evils; you have forsaken the way that is good, and then pursued forbidden paths. Nevertheless, the man at the Gate will welcome you because he offers goodwill to approaching pilgrims. Even so, be careful that you do not turn aside again, for then you may perish altogether when his wrath is kindled but a little.

Then Christian made preparation to return to the right way. After Evangelist had kissed him, encouraged him with a smile, and commended him to God’s keeping, the pilgrim quickly pressed forward; he was now especially careful not to speak to anyone; even if spoken to by a stranger, he would not offer a reply. Now his manner of walking was as if he was stepping on forbidden ground in unsafe territory; he seemed so intent on reaching the right way where he was first beguiled by the counsel of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman.

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Here is yet another aspect of Bunyan’s understanding of pastoral evangelism, namely balanced redirection of an erring pilgrim.

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24 Jer. 2:13.
26 Ps. 2:12.
a. His severity is measured.

Christian has committed two evils (Jer. 2:13), the spurning of the true gospel and the embrace of a false gospel. Therefore, he is warned of perishing on account of divine wrath (Ps. 2:12). Such warnings, as employed by the author of Hebrews (2:1-4; 3:7-19; 6:4-12; 10:26-31; 12:15-17), are yet intended to goad the hesitant pilgrim into pressing forward (Heb. 12:1-28).

b. His tenderness is encouraging.

There is also a word of assurance concerning the welcome of Good-will that awaits enquirers at the Wicket-gate. There is a kiss of reconciliation and a smile of comfort. This evangelist is both manly and compassionate; in wrath he remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2). To the penitent prodigal he makes known the open door of the Father’s house.

c. His pilgrim is sent on the right way.

So, according to Evangelist’s sound redirection, Christian gingerly returns to the narrow way. His mood is now resolute and unwavering for every step is a reminder of his recent foolishness; every stride seems unclean and full of regret, that is until he finds the safety of the King’s Highway. However, this is not the last time that Christian will sadly retrace his steps!