Chapter Fifteen

Christian Resides at the Palace Beautiful

A. Christian’s Careful Investigation to Qualify for Entrance.

A careful distinction is made here between Bunyan’s belief in a separated church gathered out of sinful society and the comprehensive Church of England establishment that was wedded to the monarchical State. In other words, local church membership in a Nonconformist fellowship required a testimony to regeneration and personal salvation, in contrast with mere nominal association with the Church of England by the populace in general through the formal administration of baptism. Hence, Christian, poised outside the Palace Beautiful, portrays the new convert about to be investigated before such membership in a separated church is granted. Notwithstanding this precautionary investigation, he perceives this edifice to be highly attractive, that is a desirable spiritual oasis in the midst of this wilderness world.¹

1. By the porter, Watchful.

He is the first of five individuals who question Christian concerning his beliefs and experience.

¹ Richard Greaves, John Bunyan, pp. 123-151.
a. Watchful describes the purpose of the Palace.

Then Christian spoke to the porter, :Sir, what is the purpose of this house? And may I reside here for the night?: The porter answered, :This house was built by the Lord of the Hill, and he built it for the relief and security of pilgrims.: The porter also asked from where he had come and where he was going.

It is for the relief, security, and refreshment of bona fide pilgrims. Hence, it is not a haven for a mixed multitude (I Pet. 2:5) as can be expected in the world (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

b. Watchful desires a testimony from Christian.

Christian: I have come from the City of Destruction and am going to Mount Zion; but because the sun has now set, I would like to stay here for the night, if you are willing.

Porter: What is your name?

Christian: My name is now Christian, though it was Graceless to begin with. I was born of the race of Japheth who God will persuade to dwell in the tents of Shem.

Porter: But how has it happened that you have arrived so late since the sun has already set? Christian: I ought to have been here sooner, but oh wretched man that I am! I overslept at the Shady Resting-place that is located on the side of the Hill Difficulty. Yet in spite of that I would have been here much sooner, except that as I slept I lost my scroll of certification and reached the top of the Hill without it. Then searching for it, I was dismayed to find it had gone; so I was forced, with heaviness of heart, to return to the place where I overslept; then on recovering it, I pressed forward once again and thus have come this far.

Although he has observed Christian’s persevering faith in contrast with that of Timorous and Mistrust, yet he still requires a personal confession regarding direction, character, and progress.

1. His route and destination.

He is on a journey from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion, from death to life (John 5:24), and thus seeks temporary accommodation.

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2 The Palace Beautiful represents a faithful nonconformist church.
3 Gen. 9:27; Rom. 11:11-32.
4 Rom. 7:24.
(2) His name and racial origin.

His name as an unbeliever was Graceless, but now is Christian. Only following conversion is he able to designate his true name when unconverted. He is a Japhethite or Gentile, who God will allow to dwell in the tents of the Shemites (Semites or Hebrew/Jewish race) through the engrafting work of Messiah (Gen. 9:27; Rom. 11:11-32).

(3) His reason for delay.

By inference, Christian was expected earlier. Perhaps the thought is that genuine pilgrims only progress in the light (Is. 2:5; 1 John 2:5). His frank confession reveals genuine sorrow concerning this temporary backsliding.

c. Watchful decides upon a second opinion.

PORTER: Well, I will call out for one of the virgins who live here; if your conversation is to her liking, she will invite you to join the rest of the family, that is in accordance with the rules of the house.5

In local church life he accepts the principle of government by an “abundance of counselors” (Prov. 11:14). His cautious nature also considers the welfare of fellow residents (Rev. 3:2).

2. By the grave and beautiful damsel, Discretion.

So the porter Watchful rang a bell, at the sound of which a dignified and beautiful lady named Discretion came to the door of the house and asked why she had been called.6 The porter answered, :This man is on a journey from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion; but being weary and seeing the sun has now set, he asked me if he might stay the night here. So I told him I would call you, and that after some discussion with him, you would decide what seemed best according to the rules of the house.: Then she asked him from where he had come and where he was going; so he told her. She also asked him how he had entered into the way, and he told her. Then she asked him what he had seen and encountered along the way, and he told her. Finally, she asked his name, and to this he replied, :it is Christian, and I now have an even greater desire to reside here tonight because, according to what I now understand, this place was built by the Lord of the Hill for the relief of pilgrims.:7 So she smiled, though tears welled up in her eyes.

5 Christian is to be considered for church membership.
6 Prov. 2:11.
7 Christian has a healthy desire for church fellowship.
While Bunyan regarded women with the highest esteem, yet the significant roles here of Discretion, and subsequently those of Prudence, Piety, and Charity, do not justify the conclusion that female pastoral leadership in a nonconformist church was endorsed. Other writings make this abundantly clear. What is intended, it seems, is the portrayal of the Palace Beautiful, and therefore a biblical local church, as a fellowship of holy and pure faith that is illustrated by means of virginal purity and undefiled feminine virtue (11 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27; Col. 3:12).

a. She investigates with greater detail.

Watchful suggests she will be guided by house rules, that is biblical conditions for membership. Discretion then probes seeking further particulars concerning Christian’s experiences en route. He becomes all the more desirous of lodging at this “house of the Lord.”

b. She empathizes with a tender heart.

Although seeming to identify with Christian’s sincere desires, even with tears of understanding, yet, most likely on account of past experiences with beguiling apostates, she continues to exercise caution. Hence, Discretion seeks further confirmation from three associates.

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9 Ibid., II, pp. 438, 658-674.
3. By the virtuous ladies, Prudence, Piety, and Charity.

Then after a little hesitation she said, :I will call here two or three more of the family.: So she ran to an inner door and called out to Prudence [wisdom], Piety [spiritual devotion], and Charity [love] who, after a little more conversation with him, invited Christian inside to meet the rest of the family. As a result, many of the residents met him in the lobby and warmly beckoned, :Come in, you who are blessed of the Lord; this house was built by the Lord of the Hill for the express purpose of entertaining pilgrims such as yourself.: Then Christian bowed his head in acknowledgment and followed them into the main part of the house.

Here, a biblical local church is portrayed as an earthy spiritual residence distinguished by the graces of wisdom (Col. 1:9), devotion (I Tim. 5:4), and love (I Pet. 1:22).

a. He is further investigated and approved.

No doubt Christian is also judged in terms of his desire for company with such virtuous ladies. A person with unholy interests at heart is likely to balk at such an environment. However, this pilgrim is unanimously confirmed for entry.

b. He is invited inside and welcomed.

Tentatively waiting at the threshold of the house, Christian is at last invited to enter with an accompanying congregational chorus of welcome. For Bunyan, local church membership was a serious matter that must be based upon regeneration, not mere creedal affirmation.

4. Application.

Here we have a reflection of Bunyan’s experience and expectations concerning what is required for church membership. While perfection is by no means required of the new convert, yet the enquiry appears to be more searching when compared with today’s superficial investigations. He also comments that, “it is no new thing, if you find in God’s church barren fig-trees, fruitless professors.” Nevertheless, when discovered, discipline is required, “by the church’s due execution of the laws and censures which Christ for that purpose hath left with his church. This is the meaning of that in Matthew 18, I Corinthians 5, and that in I Timothy 1:20.”

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11 I Cor. 3:9-17; I Tim. 3:15; I Pet. 2:5-10.
13 Ibid., p. 573.
a. Membership and the independent Bedford church.

Gordon Campbell comments:

An examination of The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting shows that Bunyan drew the house rules of the Palace Beautiful from his own church, for it appears that those who desired to join the Bedford church had to wait outside till they were called in. The congregation decided

that such persons as desire to joyne in fellowship, if upon the conference of our friends with them . . . our saide friends be satisfied of the truth of the worke of grace in their heartes . . . they shall desire them to come to the next church-meeting, and to waite neare the place assigned for the meeting, that they may be called in. (folio 17)

Bunyan himself was admitted to Gifford’s church by such a process.14

b. Membership and independent Baptist churches.

George Offor comments:

The mode of admitting members into the church, among the Baptists, appears to have been the same in Bunyan’s days as it is now practised. It is, first to be introduced to the minister [Watchful?], who endeavours to ascertain whether there is an earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come, sincere repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If so, he mentions it to the church; and visitors are appointed [the damsels?], to encourage the young convert, and to scrutinize into moral character. If they are satisfied, he is invited to attend a private church meeting; and if the members have a good hope that he is a decided believer in Jesus, they receive him into their fellowship; and if he requests it, he is publicly baptized in water, and communicates with the church at the Lord’s table.15

B. Christian’s Edifying Fellowship with Prudence, Piety, and Charity.

Here commences a most beautiful literary vignette describing the internal ministry of a faithful local church. Less well known, though equally attractive in its ability to convey the biblical doctrine of the church, is Bunyan’s poem of 1,310 lines entitled A Discourse of the Building, Nature, Excellency, and Government of the House of God. The following extracts well illustrate its insightful teaching.

Alas! here’s children, here are great with young;  
Here are the sick and weak, as well as strong.  
Here are the cedar, shrub, and bruised reed;  
Yea, here are such who wounded are and bleed.  
As here are some who in their grammar be,  
So here are others in their A, B, C.  
Some apt to teach, and others hard to learn;  
Some see far off, others can scarce discern.

Although this house thus honorable is,
Yet 'tis not sinless, many things amiss
Do happen here, wherefore them to redress,
We must keep to our rules of righteousness;
Nor must we think it strange, if sin shall be
Where virtue is; don't all men plainly see
That in the holy temple there was dust,
That to our very gold, there cleaveth rust?
This is the house of God, his dwelling place,
'Tis here that we behold his lovely face;
But if it should polluted be with sin,
And so abide, he quickly will begin
To leave it desolate, and then woe to it,
Sin and his absence quickly will undo it.  

1. He is nourished in preparation for supper.

So when he had come inside and sat down, they gave him something to drink; then they all agreed that until supper was ready, it would be a profitable use of their time if one or two of them should have conversation with Christian about some specific matters. So Piety, Prudence, and Charity were appointed to have discussion with him; and so they began.

This is merely a spiritual appetizer that precedes the main banquet. However such heavenly hors-d’oeuvres do stimulate Christian’s appetite and give evidence of ready hospitality amongst the brethren (Rom. 12:9-12; 1 Pet. 4:9).

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Prudence  
Piety  
Charity

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16 Ibid., II, pp. 577-590.
2. He is questioned concerning his eventful pilgrimage by Piety.

This review of Christian’s experiences, though but one of many in his pilgrimage, yet is designed to provide mutual edification and in particular the strengthening of his confidence in his progress thus far (Rom. 13:11). To begin with, the emphasis is upon Christian’s devotion, consecration, and evident spirituality in the midst of various trials. Only those additional details and embellishments, that have not been revealed to this point, are included at this stage.

a. His conviction of imminent judgment was disturbing.

CHRISTIAN: I was driven out of my native country by a dreadful sound that was in my ears, that is the persistent conviction that unavoidable destruction would consume me, that is if I continued to live in the City of Destruction.

The allusion here is to the portrayal by Eliphaz of man’s filthiness in the sight of God. “The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears” (Job 15:20-21). Thus Christian is oppressed with, and yet desires relief from, the relentless inner turmoil which is the fruit of his godless lifestyle.

b. His departure through God’s sovereignty was compelling.

PIETY: But how did it happen that you came out of your country in this direction?

CHRISTIAN: It was as God would have it, for when I was fearful of destruction hovering over me, I did not know which way to go; but by chance there came a man, even to me as I was trembling and weeping, whose name was Evangelist.

When almost beside himself with fear concerning imminent judgment and worry with regard to the right way of escape he should take, it was, according to one level of Christian’s perception, “by chance,” as the original reads, that Evangelist appeared. Nevertheless according to a higher level of determination it was of particular, sovereign grace, “as God Would have it,” that this messenger of good news came to him.

c. His direction by Evangelist was instrumental.

And he directed me toward the Wicket-gate otherwise I would not have found it. And so at the same time he pointed out the way that has led me directly to this Palace.
The Palace Beautiful and Evangelist work in tandem so that Piety would be all too familiar with the fruit of this faithful gospel minister. His referrals, as opposed to those of false messengers, would be proven by their testimony, as here.

d. His instruction by Interpreter was memorable.

PIETY: But did you not come by way of the house of the Interpreter?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, and the things that I saw there were truly memorable; they will stay with me as long as I live, and especially three scenes. They were, how Christ, in opposition to Satan, maintains his work of grace in the heart; how the man in the iron cage had sinned himself quite out of the hope of God's mercy; and also the dream of the man who thought in his sleep that the day of judgment had come.

PIETY: Why, did you hear this man tell about his dream?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, and I thought it was such a dreadful revelation. It made my heart ache as he was telling about it. Even so, I am glad that I heard it.

PIETY: Was that all that you saw at the house of the Interpreter?

CHRISTIAN: No, for he took me to where I saw a stately Palace, and how people dressed in gold were in it; and how a courageous man strode forth and cut his way through the armed men that stood in the doorway to keep him out; and how he was commanded to come inside and win eternal glory. My mind and heart were totally ravished [enthralled] at the sight of these things. I could have stayed at that good man's house for a year, except that I knew that I still had a distance to go.

The indelible effects that were stamped upon his heart, involving both dreadful fear and the hope of eternal glory, resulted in the frequent recollection of much essential doctrine, and a craving for more!

(1) The remembrance of significant scenes.

The ministry of a faithful local church is to include the reinforcement, through stimulated recall, of basic Bible truth.

(a) The grace of Christ conquers the assailed heart.

(b) The despairing reprobate in the iron cage.

(c) The warning of the final day of judgment.

(d) The persevering, valiant pilgrim.
(2) The desire for additional truth.

His insatiable hunger for more instruction related to making progress in pilgrimage, like the voracious appetite of a healthy baby (I Pet. 2:2-3), was so intense that he desired to remain under this tutelage for a whole year!

e. His deliverance from his burden was astonishing.

PIETY: And what else did you see along the way?
CHRISTIAN: See! Why I had only gone a short distance ahead when I saw, as it were in my mind, a man hang bleeding on a tree; and the very sight of him made my burden fall from off my back, which load had caused me to groan so much; yes, it did actually drop from off my back! It was so astonishing for me because I had never seen such a thing before. Yes, and while I was looking up at that tree, for I could not stop looking, three Shining Ones came to me: one of them declared that my sins had been forgiven: another stripped me of my rags and gave me this embroidered coat,¹⁷ as you can see; and the third set a visible mark upon my forehead, and gave me this sealed scroll which I keep in my chest pocket.
PIETY: But you saw even more than this, did you not?

This, of course, is a reflection of Bunyan’s regard for the abiding significance of the atonement in the sanctification of the believer (Gal. 2:20). He regarded the doctrine of Christ’s substitutionary righteousness as the very heart of the gospel. Refer to Part Two where Great-heart gives Christiana substantial instruction concerning this truth.¹⁸

(1) The bleeding man.

Whereas the original account of Christian’s experience at the Place of Deliverance did not mention a man on the cross, now he mystically recalls: “I saw, as it were in my mind, a man hang bleeding on a tree.” Probably this was Bunyan’s way of avoiding a direct reference to a crucifix scenario. Of course, Christian is also happily growing in his understanding of the doctrine of the atonement (Gal. 6:14).

(2) The embroidered coat.

Whereas the original account of Christian’s experience at the Place of Deliverance described him as being clothed with a change of Raiment; now this new clothing is described as an “embroidered coat” (Ezek. 16:10) that is better appreciated as being highly attractive, desirable, and even royal (Phil. 3:8-9).

¹⁷ Exod. 28:4; Ezek. 16:10.
f. His loss of his roll was unmentionable.

CHRISTIAN: The things that I have told you about were the best; yet I saw some other interesting matters, namely three men lying asleep beside the way with shackles upon their heels; their names were Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, and it was near impossible to awaken them. I also met with Formalist and Hypocrisy who came tumbling over the wall to go, as they pretended, to Mount Zion. But they were soon lost, even as I warned them that they would be; they simply would not believe. However, it was most difficult of all getting up this Hill, and equally as distressing in passing by the mouths of those lions. Truly, if it had not been for that good man, your porter Watchful who stands at the gate, it is probable that I would have eventually turned around and fled down the Hill. But now I do thank God that I am here, and I thank you for welcoming me.

Although he eagerly displays his treasured roll, yet there is no mention of his negligence through indulgent sleep. Yet notice how eagerly he recalls the slumber of Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, and his attempt to awaken them!

3. He is questioned concerning personal cases of conscience by Prudence.

Then Prudence thought of asking Christian a few questions; so she asked him to answer.

The Puritans, as typified by Bunyan, gave great emphasis to the confession of Paul that: I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men: (Acts 24:16). Hence, the representative non-conformist pastor was frequently addressing cases of conscience that needed to be confronted and resolved, such as with Bunyan concerning women praying in a church service.\(^9\) Note also in Part Two that it is Mr. Honest who is assisted across the overflowing river of death by Mr. Good-conscience.\(^10\) Refer also to J. I. Packer’s fine study of this neglected emphasis.\(^21\)

a. The questions of Prudence as preparation for supper.

Concerning proper participation in the Lord’s Supper, Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers: But let a man examine himself: (I Cor. 11:28). So Christian undergoes similar investigation before commencing supper at the Palace Beautiful. Undoubtedly Bunyan would intend that such investigation be personal; the dialogue style here is not intended to justify some inquisitorial method.

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\(^9\) Ibid., II, pp. 658-674.
\(^10\) Ibid., III, pp. 242-243.
\(^21\) J. I. Packer, A Quest for Godliness, pp. 107-122.
b. The questions of Prudence concerning heart experience.

Notice that all of these questions relate to an inward attitude of the soul, and especially the mind (Rom. 12:1-2), rather than outward activities. The end in view is always holiness of life (I Pet. 1:13-16) and a welcome arrival at the Celestial City (Acts 14:22).

(1) Do you sometimes remember your former country?

PRUDENCE: Do you sometimes think of the country from which you originally came?
CHRISTIAN: Yes, but with much shame and loathing. Truly, if I had a deep yearning for that country, then I might well have taken the opportunity to return. But now my heart desires a better country, that is a heavenly realm. Therefore I prefer to press on.

Yes, but with shame and detestation rather than wistful longing. The reason is that there is a far better heavenly city ahead (Heb. 11:15-16).

(2) Are you still plagued with remnants of your former life?

PRUDENCE: Do you not still carry with you in your mind some recollection of the things that you were formerly involved with?
CHRISTIAN: Yes, but greatly against my will, and especially those inward and carnal reasonings which all of my countrymen, as well as myself, were delighted to revel in. But now all those things only grieve me; and should I be able to choose only what I think, I would choose never to think of those carnal things anymore. But when I would be doing that which is best, still that which is worse remains with me.

Yes, though they seem associated with my flesh and conflict with my spiritual nature (Gal. 5:17). My former countrymen revel in these things even as I once did, but now they are detestable to me. This battle, which did not formerly exist, is now present with me (Rom. 7:18-23). Eventually, full deliverance will certainly come (Rom. 7:24-25).

(3) Do you sometimes experience victory over carnal conflict?

PRUDENCE: Do you not sometimes find that personal carnality is vanquished when at other times it was of great trouble to you?
CHRISTIAN: Yes, but those times of conquest over carnality are infrequent, though when they do occur such hours are truly golden.
Yes, though infrequently. However, these triumphs are golden hours when compared with the depressing dross of failure. What refreshing honesty we have here in this reflection from Bunyan’s soul that is so akin to Paul (II Cor. 5:2, 4; I Tim. 1:15).

(4) What are the means by which such victories are obtained?

**PRUDENCE:** When you experience these precious times in which carnal annoyances are vanquished, can you remember by what means these triumphs were obtained?

**CHRISTIAN:** Yes, when I meditate upon what I saw at the Cross, that will do it; and when I look at my embroidered coat, that will do it; also when I look inside the scroll that I carry in my chest pocket, that will do it; and when my thoughts are warmly stimulated about where I am going, that will do it.

(a) Meditation upon the cross (Col. 1:20).

(b) Meditation upon my embroidered coat (I Cor. 1:30-31).

(c) Meditation upon my sealed roll (Eph. 4:30).

(d) Meditation upon my final destination (I Pet. 1:3-4).

(5) What is it that makes the Celestial City so desirable?

**PRUDENCE:** And what is it that makes you so desirous of going to Mount Zion?

**CHRISTIAN:** Why there I hope to see living he who hung dead on the Cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things within me that remain a constant annoyance. At the Celestial City they say there is no death,24 and there I shall dwell with the type of companions that I like best.

For to tell you the truth, I love my Lord because he released me of my burden, and I am weary of my inward sickness. In view of these circumstances, I would much prefer to be where I shall die no more and my companions shall continually cry, :Holy, Holy, Holy.:25

(a) Being face to face with him who, for the loving cause of my relief, was dead upon the cross and now is alive (I John 3:2-3).

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24 Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4.
25 Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8.
(b) Being eased of every vestige of my wearisome burden and the carnal conflict which it presents (I Cor. 15:50-53).

(c) Being rid of the scourge of death (Is. 25:8), and the possessor of eternal life (Rev. 21:1-6; 22:1-5, 17).

(d) Being with the company of the redeemed (Is. 62:10-12; Luke 13:28-29) while continually worshipping the thrice holy God of Israel (Rev. 4:8-11).

4. He is questioned concerning personal family relationships by Charity.

Having four children by his first wife, blind Mary, Elizabeth, John, and Thomas, as well as two children by his second wife, Sarah and Joseph, Bunyan was not only well experienced in family matters, but also pastorally concerned with godly relationships in the home, even when unbelieving members were involved. His treatise Christian Behaviour, mainly focuses upon family life that is pleasing to God.\(^{26}\)

a. The questions of Charity as preparation for supper.

Again, proper participation in the Lord’s supper requires that we first be in harmony with friends and relatives insofar as is humanly possible (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18). Hence, Christian is expected to have reflected loving concern for his unbelieving wife Christiana, and four sons, Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James. Later in Part Two evidence will be given as to the fruitfulness of his witness.\(^{27}\) Bunyan writes:

The believer is the alone man, by whom God sheweth to the world the power of his grace, the operation of his people’s faith, &c. . . . To this, I say, are Christians called; herein is God glorified; hereby are sinners convinced; and by this is the world condemned (I Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1; Heb. 11:7).\(^{28}\)

b. The questions of Charity concerning a faithful testimony.

This fellowship is concerned, not only with its members’ graces being manifest in the church, but also in the world (Matt. 5:16).

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\(^{26}\) Bunyan, Works, II, pp. 548-574.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., III, pp. 196-200.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., II, p. 552.
(1) Why did you not bring your wife and children with you?

Then said Charity to Christian, Do you have a family? Are you a married man?

CHRISTIAN: I have a wife and four small children.\textsuperscript{29}

CHARITY: And why did you not bring them along with you?

CHRISTIAN: (Then weeping) Oh how willingly I would have done so, but all of them were utterly opposed to my going on pilgrimage.

CHARITY: But you should have talked to them, and attempted to show them the danger of remaining behind.

CHRISTIAN: And this I did, and explained what God had revealed to me concerning the destruction of our City. But I seemed to them as one that told a joke, and as a consequence they did not believe.\textsuperscript{30}

Because they were utterly averse to going on a pilgrimage. In spite of tearfully pleading with them, yet they mocked the warning of imminent destruction (Gen. 19:14).

(2) Did you pray to God that your family might repent?

CHARITY: And did you pray to God that he would give them understanding of your warning?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, and that with considerable warmth of affection, for you must understand that my wife and poor children were very precious to me.

Yes, and with loving intensity since they were very precious to me. Often I would pray at night or when walking alone, yet they were unmoved while clinging to city friends and fancies.

(3) Did you convey your own sorrowful concern for their safety?

CHARITY: But did you tell them of your own sorrow and fear of destruction? For I expect that the prospect of destruction was very evident to you.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, over and over and over again. Most likely they could recognize the fear portrayed in my face, and particularly in my tears and trembling, on account of my alarm at the reality of impending judgment. Yet all of this was not sufficient to persuade them to come with me.

\textsuperscript{29} This was true of Bunyan as he wrote The Pilgrim's Progress.

\textsuperscript{30} Gen. 19:14.
Yes, repeatedly so, and with fear and trembling. Yet they were not convinced of their danger due to impending judgment. Rather, they regarded me as a crank and a fanatic.

(4) What reasons did your family give for not journeying with you?

CHARITY: But what reasons did they offer? Why would they not come with you?

CHRISTIAN: For one thing, my wife was afraid of losing this world; furthermore my children were absorbed with the foolish delights of youth. So because of these and many other distractions, they left me to wander alone in this distressed frame of mind.

My wife was afraid of losing the comforts and attractions of this world, while my children were giddy with the amusements of youth. Because of these, they were blind to their danger.

(5) Did a poor Christian example dampen your testimony?

CHARITY: But for all of your talk and persuasive efforts to have your loved ones depart with you, did your empty manner of life nevertheless dissuade them from acting upon your advice?

CHRISTIAN: To be sure, I cannot commend my life, for I am only too well aware of my countless failings: in this regard I also know that a man, by means of his manner of life, may soon negate whatever arguments or good reasons he may strenuously present to others for their good. Even so, I can honestly confess how very careful I was to avoid giving them any reason, that is with regard to disgraceful behavior on my part, for not going on pilgrimage. In fact, for this cautious attitude they would criticize me and tell me I was too precise [puritanical] in denying myself things, for their sakes, in which they saw no wrong. And I think I can rightly say that if there was anything that really did hinder them, it was my own great tenderness in being careful not to sin against God, or do any wrong to my neighbor.

CHRISTIAN: Even as you say, Cain hated his brother because his own works were evil and those of his brother were righteous. And if your wife and children were offended at you for this reason, then they show themselves to be unyielding toward that which is good; and so you have delivered your soul from accountability for their blood.

Not in the main, even though my failings were many. Nevertheless, I was careful to avoid giving offence. Yet they were chiefly offended at my particular concern for: precise: personal righteousness. Thus did Charity identify them with Cain (I John 3:12) since they were troubled at the

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32 Ezek. 3:19.
sensitivity of another to sin. Hence, Christian was absolved of their blood (Ezek. 3:19). Note that Puritans such as Bunyan were often labeled as "precisions" because of the exactness of their holy life-style.

5. He is invited to join his friends in a rich fellowship supper.

Surely this section is a precious jewel in Bunyan’s allegorical casket. He comments:

It is the ordinance of God, that Christians should be often asserting the things of God each to others; and that by their so doing they should edify one another (Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Thess. 5:11). The doctrine of the gospel is like the dew and the small rain that distilleth upon the tender grass, wherewith it doth flourish, and is kept green (Deut. 32:2). Christians are like the several flowers in a garden, that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which being shaken with the wind, they let fall their dew at each other’s roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of one another. For Christians to commune savorly of God’s matters one with another, it is as if they opened to each other's nostrils boxes of perfume.\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\)Bunyan, Works, II, p. 570.
a. The nourishing emblems of fellowship.

Then I [Bunyan] saw in my dream that they all sat talking together until supper was ready. So when the meal was prepared, they sat down to eat. Now the table was set with fat [good, substantial] things, and with wine that was well refined; and all of their conversation at the table was about the Lord of the Hill.

While the Lord of the Hill’s lavish provision of :fat things: (Is. 25:6) speaks here of enriching fellowship in general, yet the wine and ensuing conversation more specifically portray the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:14-20; I Cor. 11:23-29).

1. The abundance reminded them of the Lord of the Hill.

His merciful burden bearing, free and rich garment, mark of ownership, and roll of comfort, as well as the glories yet to come, were overwhelming (Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 2:9; I Tim. 6:17).

2. The pure wine reminded them of the Lord of the Hill.

It was well refined and the very best (John 2:10). By means of this wine their host had accomplished great things, even the building of the Palace Beautiful (Eph. 2:19-22).

b. The edifying discussion at fellowship.

The Puritans, such as Bunyan, utterly rejected any suggestion that the Lord’s Supper was specially sacramental, that is a means of obtaining grace through the ingestion of the material emblems, as was the case with Roman Catholicism. Rather, it was simply a memorial meal where frequent and graphic reminder of the atonement of Jesus Christ resulted in the spiritual stability and growth of the participant (Col. 2:7; Jude 20).

1. The Lord as a great warrior.

For instance, they talked about what he had done and the purpose of it, and why he had built that House: and from what they said I understood that he had been a great warrior, and that he had fought with and slain he who had the power of death, though not without great danger to himself. And for this reason I was led to love him only all the more. For as they said, and as I believe (said Christian), he did it with the loss of much blood.

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34 A representation of the Lord’s Supper or Communion. I Cor. 11:23-29.
As a recent recruit with limited battle experience, Christian was encouraged to learn that the Lord of the Hill was a valiant warrior who had vanquished the dominion of Apollyon (Eph. 4:7-10; Heb. 2:14-15).

(a) He triumphed over the prince of death.

This involved an encounter with death so terrible that he suffered unto death (Rom. 6:10).

(b) He shed much blood in combat.

This he did willingly, and not as a result of circumstances outside of his control (John 10:17-18).

(c) He selflessly displayed glorious grace.

This was for the sake of his kingdom and its establishment (Col. 1:13-14; 2:13-15).

(2) The Lord as a great savior.

But that which put the glory of grace into all which he did was the fact that he did it out of pure love for his country. And besides this, there were some of the household that said they had seen and spoken with him following his death on the Cross; and they further testified, having received it from his own lips, that he was such a lover of pilgrims that his likeness was not to be found from the east to the west. Moreover, they gave an instance of what they had just declared, and it was that he had stripped himself of his glory so that he might do this for the poor;37 and that they had heard him affirm that he would not dwell in Mount Zion alone. Furthermore, they said that he had made many pilgrims into princes, even though they were born beggars and their nature originated from the dunghill.38

His particular interest was the plight of poor pilgrims who he endeavored to seek, save, and exalt (Luke 19:10; I John 3:1), in such a way as the world had never before heard about.

(a) He died and arose for poor pilgrims.

His yielding to death was not in vain since the grave could not hold him (Acts 2:23-24; I Pet. 3:18).

37 II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-11.
38 I Sam. 2:8; Ps. 113:7.
(b) He was humiliated for poor pilgrims.

His heavenly glory was laid aside so that he might identify with sinful man (Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 4:15).

(c) He determined to exalt poor pilgrims.

His dwelling in Mount Zion was not to be alone, so he made rich princes out of poor beggars (I Sam. 2:8; Ps. 113:5-9; II Cor. 8:9).

(3) The Lord as a great protector.

So they discoursed together until late at night; and after they had committed themselves in prayer to their Lord for protection, they each went to bed.

He is the sovereign guardian of this Palace against the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18), and thus the ultimate guarantor of rest for retiring pilgrims (Matt. 11:28-30; Eph. 5:23).

c. The resultant rest of fellowship.

For the pilgrim they provided a large upstairs chamber [bedroom] with windows that opened toward the rising of the sun. The name of the room was Peace, and there he slept until the next day dawned. Then on arising that morning, he joyfully sang,

Where am I now? Is this the love and care
Of Jesus, for the men that pilgrims are?
Thus to provide! That I should be forgiven!
And dwell already the next door to Heaven.

While uncommon amongst evangelical churches today, here Christian finds peaceful rest in both his own heart and in the midst of corporate fellowship. The source of this peace is the focusing of pilgrims’ vision upon the gospel mercies of Jesus Christ. Here is the dynamic which causes all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander . . . with all malice: to be done away with in local church life (Eph. 4:30-5:2).

(1) Christian sleeps in peace.

Having been encouraged by those in charge of his care (I Thess. 5:12-13), in his bedroom named Peace, Christian is further strengthened (Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 3:15).

39 Mark 14:15.
40 II Cor. 13:11.
(2) Christian awakes with rejoicing.

A new day dawns with Christian's refreshed perspective set toward the rising sun. Doubtless he commences with the reading of his book (II Pet. 1:19). Thus his renewed spirit breaks out into song acknowledging this local church to be a foretaste of heaven. Now he is eager to press forward.

C. Christian's Guided Tour of the Palace Beautiful

While Christian is presently unaware of his impending contest with Apollyon, yet his Palace guides seem to appreciate his need of every available means of grace. Thus he is equipped with personal information, fortification, and vision. These are abiding priorities for local church ministry.

1. The Palace Study, with its ancient records.

The second day concentrates upon the teaching of the Word of God for the edification of Christian (I Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:11-13, 29).

a. The pedigree of the Lord of the Hill.

Now in the morning they all got up, and after some further discourse, they told Christian that he should not depart until they had showed him the rarities [distinctive features] of that place. And first they took him into the study where they pointed out records of the greatest antiquity; in these, as I recall in my dream, they first explained the pedigree of the Lord of the Hill, that he was the son of the Ancient of Days and came [was begotten] by an eternal generation. Also, here was more fully recorded the acts [deeds] that he had accomplished, and the names of many hundreds that he had recruited into his service; and how he had placed them in habitations [mansions, residences] that would never pass away, whether by means of earthly decay or the passing of time.

The doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ is of primary importance to the pilgrim who has this Lord of the Hill: as the object of his faith, as is the case in the Gospel of John (John 1:1-18)

(1) He is the Son of the Ancient of Days: or God (Dan. 7:9-10, 13-14), by means of eternal generation (John 1:1-3, 14, 18).

(2) He is the Son of God to hundreds of brethren who have been adopted into his service (Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:5).

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41 Dan. 7:9, 13, 22.
42 Ps. 2:7.
43 Ps. 21:3-4; John 14:2-3.
(3) He is the Son of a kingdom that shall never be dissolved (Ps. 145:13; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14).

b. The valiant acts of the servants of the Lord.

They evidenced great military prowess when encountering the enemy by means of the fight of faith (Heb. 11:1-2, 32-34). Certainly this characteristic was exemplified in the life of Bunyan. Hence, there is great encouragement to be found in Christian biography (Heb. 13:7).

c. The mercies of the Lord toward great sinners.

The grace of God became more astonishing to Christian when he learned of the grossly wicked lives of men who so fiercely opposed the Lord of the Hill, and yet later found mercy and forgiveness. Such were Manasseh (II Chron. 33:1-13) and Paul (Acts 9:1-18; 1 Tim. 1:13).

d. The Histories of the Palace of the Lord.

No doubt Christian learned of periods of decline and revival, of the infiltration of false pilgrims, of times of internal bickering, of assaults made against the Palace walls, of reports from allied palaces, etc.

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44 Heb. 11:33-34.
e. The Prophecies of the Lord and his servants.

There were also things ancient and modern to be seen, along with prophecies and predictions concerning matters that are certain to be fulfilled, both to the dread and amazement of enemies as well as the comfort and relief of pilgrims.

These predictions of future events were both minutely and certainly fulfilled, much to the confounding of the enemy and the comfort of pilgrims. They included prophecies concerning the Lord of the Hill (Luke 24:27), Israel (Is. 62), the nations (Is. 13-24), and the climax of the ages (Zech. 14).

2. The Palace Armory, with its display of weaponry.

The third day focuses upon the resources available for the fortification of the believer according to Paul’s classification in Ephesians 6:10-18. The pilgrim is not, as a result of his salvation (initial justification), fully equipped for warfare. Rather, he must put on the full armor of God: (Eph. 6:11) through the agency of the local church. Furthermore, undergirding this training period in military skills must be a growing awareness of the spiritual nature of the battle (II Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:12).

a. The available weapons suitable for warfare.

The next day they led him into the Armory where they showed him a great variety of military weapons which their Lord had specially provided for pilgrims. There was the Sword, Shield, Helmet, Breastplate, All-Prayer, and Shoes that would never wear out.\[45\]

The supply is inexhaustible, but pilgrims are responsible for being well clad. By implication, the enemy is fierce and very strong.

(1) The sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17b).

(2) The shield of faith (Eph. 6:16).

(3) The helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17a).

(4) The breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14).

(5) The support of all prayer (Eph. 6:18).

(6) The gospel shoes of peace (Eph. 6:15).

\[45\] Deut. 29:5; Eph. 6:14-18.
b. The displayed memorabilia worthy of admiration.

Moreover, there was enough of this equipment in store to outfit as many men for the service of their Lord as there are multitudes of stars in the heavens. They also showed him some of the military equipment with which many of his servants had done wonderful things. Here was Moses’ rod,\(^{46}\) the hammer and nail with which Jael slew Sisera,\(^{47}\) the pitchers, trumpets, and lamps as well, with which Gideon put to flight the armies of Midian.\(^{48}\) Then they showed him the oxgoad used by Shamgar to slay six hundred men.\(^{49}\) They also showed him the jawbone with which Samson did such mighty feats;\(^{50}\) moreover they showed him the sling and stone with which David slew Goliath of Gath.\(^{51}\) There was also on display the sword with which their Lord would eventually use to kill the Man of Sin, on that day of final victory over this predator.\(^{52}\) Besides these they showed Christian many excellent things that so delighted him. So this day being concluded, they all went to bed once again.

In a later writing entitled The House of the Forest of Lebanon, Bunyan comments:

The church also in ‘the wilderness, even in her porch or first entrance into it, is full of pillars, apostles, prophets, and martyrs of Jesus. There also hang up the shields that the old warriors have used, and are plastered upon the walls the brave achievements they have done. There are also such encouragements there for those that stand, that one would think none that came thither with pretence to serve there would, for very shame, attempt to go back again.\(^{53}\)

1. Moses’ rod (Ex. 4:1-5, 17, 20; 7:8-12).
2. Jael’s hammer and nail (Judg. 4:17-22).
3. Gideon’s pitchers, trumpets, and lamps (Judg. 7:16-23).
4. Shamgar’s oxgoad (Judg. 3:31).
5. Samson’s jawbone of an ass (Judg. 15:14-17).

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\(^{46}\) Ex. 4:1-5, 17, 20; 7:8-12.
\(^{47}\) Judg. 4:17-22.
\(^{48}\) Judg. 7:16-23.
\(^{49}\) Judg. 3:31.
\(^{50}\) Judg. 15:14-17.
\(^{51}\) 1 Sam. 17:38-51.
\(^{52}\) II Thess. 2:3-8; Rev. 13:1-10.
\(^{53}\) Bunyan, Works, III, p. 535.
(6) David's sling and stone (I Sam. 17:38-51).

(7) The sword of the Lord (11 Thess. 2:3-8).

3. The Palace Roof-top, with its encouraging vistas.

The fourth day dawns with Christian eager to press forward, though still insufficiently prepared. He still needs many things including greater vision and increased incentive. So his guides suggest a Roof-top perspective of the glorious countryside of the Lord that is yet ahead.

a. The climate for clear vistas.

Then I saw in my dream that on the next day the pilgrim arose expecting to press forward on his journey. But the Palace company invited him to stay with them yet one more day. They added, :We will, if the day is clear, show you the Delectable Mountains. These will further add to your comfort because they are much nearer to the Celestial City than your present location.: So Christian agreed to stay.

Vision from the roof of the Palace Beautiful is periodically clear, but sometimes it is restricted by smog and mist. When clear, the pilgrim can see some of the glory ahead that is close to his :desired haven: (Ps. 107:30), yet at other times his sight will be dim and hazy due to the pollution of sin (Lam. 5:16-17). However, on this occasion the closeness of genuine fellowship has ensured that the way ahead may be viewed with breathtaking clarity.

b. The vista of the Delectable Mountains.

When the next morning had come, they took Christian to the top of the Palace and directed him to look south; in doing this he beheld, a great distance away, a very pleasant section of mountainous country. There he saw beautiful woods, vine-yards, fruit trees of all sorts; there were also flowers, as well as springs and fountains; in all it was very appealing to look upon.

In looking south, as did Abraham toward the land of promise (Gen. 12:4-9), he sees attractive mountainous country, :beautified with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts; flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold: (Is. 33:16-17). As Christian was able to describe to Pliable from his book some of the glory to come (pp. 38-39), so here he is himself encouraged with further comforts and privileges that shall be his when he draws closer to the Celestial City (Rom. 13:11).

\[\text{Isa. 8:8; 33:16-17.}\]
c. The vista of Immanuel’s Land.

So he asked the name of this country and they said it was Immanuel’s Land; they further explained that for true pilgrims, it was of the same character as the Hill on which their Palace was located. Then they announced, :When you arrive at that place, there resident shepherds will direct your eyes toward the near sight of the very gate of the Celestial City.:

The country in which the Delectable Mountains are located is identified as Immanuel’s Land (Is. 8:8). From this region, when directed by the resident shepherds, the gate of the Celestial City is visible. This land is part of the Lord of the Hill’s commonwealth, just as is the Palace Beautiful. In other words, Immanuel’s Land is another type of local church haven toward which Christian is to strive to enter and receive pastoral care.

D. Christian’s Preparation for His Departure.

Now he decided to prepare himself for moving ahead once again. :But first,: said his companions, :let us return to the Armory.: So they did this, and when Christian entered the room, he was equipped from head to foot with fully tested weapons lest he should encounter assaults along the way. Thus having been well accoutered [outfitted], he was escorted by his friends to the Palace gate where he asked the porter if he had seen any other pilgrims pass by. To this the porter answered, :Yes.:

CHRISTIAN: Do tell me if you know him by name?
PORTER: I did ask his name and he told me it was Faithful.
CHRISTIAN: Oh, I know him; he was a fellow-countryman and a near neighbor. He comes from the City of Destruction where I was born. How far ahead do you think he may have gone?
PORTER: By this time he has probably passed beyond the bottom of the Hill.
CHRISTIAN: Well, my good porter, may the Lord be with you and increase his blessings on you because of the kindness you have shown to me.

His heightened eagerness to set forth is yet further restrained. Mature and sage leaders in a local church see the need for both defensive and offensive preparation of saints before they are full commissioned as ambassadors of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16; 6:10-18). Insensitive leadership allows the immature pilgrim to impetuously rush, unprepared and vulnerable, into the fray.

1. He is well equipped at the Palace Armory.

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55 Eph. 6:11-17.
Since Bunyan himself had been a soldier in Cromwell’s army, he well understood the need of good weaponry in battle, and no doubt had been suitably equipped for warfare. So he portrays Christian as being fully “accoutred [clad]” before his conflict with Apollyon. This pilgrim’s array of implements was both complete and proven.

2. He is desirous of companionship along the way.

Residency at the Palace Beautiful has given Christian a taste for genuine fellowship which he desires to maintain as he travels. It is not spiritually healthy for a pilgrim to travel solo through the wilderness of this world (Heb. 10:25).

a. Watchful advises of Faithful passing by.

A problem arises here as to why this pilgrim, who proves to be a genuine believer, should yet pass by and neglect to benefit from several day’s refreshment at the Palace Beautiful? This matter will be considered when Christian and Faithful eventually meet.
b. Christian advises of knowing Faithful.

Faithful was once a near neighbor living in the City of Destruction. But his change of direction in becoming a pilgrim seems to stimulate Christian's curiosity and hope of fellowship. It will also require that he advance more rapidly to overtake his friend.

E. Christian’s accompanied descent into the Valley of Humiliation.

Then the pilgrim began to move forward. But Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence all agreed that they would accompany him down to the bottom of the Hill. So they went on together while reviewing their former discussions, that is until they came to the foot of the Hill. Then said Christian on his way down, :I can now appreciate that while it was difficult coming up this Hill, so far as I can see it is even more dangerous going down.: To this Prudence responded, :Yes, you are right; for it is a hard matter for a man to go down into the Valley of Humiliation as you are now doing, and not slip in any way. Hence it is for this reason that we decided to escort you this far,: So they continued to go down, though very warily; yet in spite of this Christian did slip once or twice. 

Then I saw in my dream that when the pilgrim had reached the bottom of the Hill, his good companions gave him a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine, and a cluster of raisins; then they bid him farewell. So he went on his way.

In this present life, heights of Christian experience are not maintained amongst the best of saints for the reason that God derives great benefit for us from the depths as well. Such is the Christian’s human condition as he treads between earth and heaven that it is necessary for him to know the Valley of Humiliation from personal experience. In Richard Sibbes' classic tract “The Bruised Reed and Smoking flax,” he comments that,

after conversion we need bruising, that reeds may know themselves to be reeds, and not oaks; even reeds need bruising by reason of the remainder of pride in our nature, and to let us see that we live by mercy. And [we need bruising] that weaker Christians may not be too much discouraged when they see stronger shaken and bruised. Thus Peter was bruised when he wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75). This reed, till he met with his bruise, had more wind in him than pith... Thus Hezekiah complains that God had ‘broken his bones’ as a lion (Is. 38:13). Thus the chosen vessel St Paul needed the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be lifted up above measure (II Cor. 12:7).

1. It is an encouraging descent with friends.

Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence, all accompany Christian as he warily enters the Valley. They continue to remind him of their former teaching and its application to

56 Ps. 94:18.
57 I Sam. 30:11-12.
58 Bunyan, Works, I, p. 44.
his approaching trial, though without making any direct reference to the foul fiend who inhabits these lower regions.

2. It is a slippery descent to humiliation.

Christian now realises that while ascending may have been difficult, descending is positively dangerous. Prudence especially, with them all, guides his steps, yet even with great care Christian still cannot avoid slipping. For this reason he is more prone to enemy attacks. In Part Two, Great-heart explains: “For they that get slips there [entering the Valley], must look for combats here [in the Valley].”

3. It is a sad descent to a benevolent parting.

At the bottom of the Valley, Christian is farewelled and given parting tokens of bread, wine, and raisins, for future refreshment (I Sam. 30:11-12) and remembrance (I Cor. 11:23-29). John Monsell’s hymn explains exactly what circumstances will call for this nourishment.

I hunger and I thirst;
   Jesus, my manna be;
Ye living waters, burst
   Out of the rock for me.
Thou bruised and broken Bread,
   My life-long wants supply;
As living souls are fed,
   O feed me, or I die.
Thou true life-giving Vine,
   Let me Thy sweetness prove;
Renew my life with Thine,
   Refresh my soul with love.
Rough paths my feet have trod,
   Since first their course began;
Feed me, Thou Bread of God;
   Help me, Thou Son of man.
For still the desert lies
   My fainting soul before;
O living waters, rise
   Within me evermore.

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Ibid., III, p. 206.