

Chapter Twenty

Evangelist Reappears to Give Timely Warning

A. Evangelist's Encouraging Welcome.

THUS they went on talking about what they had seen along the way, and this discussion made their travel easier, otherwise their journeying would undoubtedly have been tedious, for now they passed through a *Wilderness*.

Now when they had almost passed out of this *Wilderness*, *Faithful* happened to look behind and on doing so he noticed someone coming after them, who he suddenly recognized. "Oh!" said *Faithful* to his brother. "Who is it that approaches us from behind?" Then *Christian* looked and exclaimed, "It is my good friend *Evangelist*." "Yes, and my good friend as well," said *Faithful*, "for it was he who directed me along the way that leads to the *Wicket-gate*." Then did *Evangelist* reach them and offer his greeting.

EVANGELIST: Peace be with you, dearly beloved, and may there be peace upon those who have helped you.

CHRISTIAN: Welcome, welcome, my good *Evangelist*; the sight of your face reminds me of your earlier kindness as well as your untiring labor for my eternal good.

FAITHFUL: And let me add a thousand welcomes. Oh sweet *Evangelist*, how desirable is your fellowship to us who are such needy pilgrims.

This third and last appearance of Evangelist in the narrative thus far,¹ is concerned with nurture for progressing pilgrim converts by their earthly spiritual father (I Thess. 2:11). The advice that is here given only reinforces the earlier suggestion that Bunyan's portrayal of Evangelist is that integral role of "doing the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5) which was commonly understood in his time as but part of the work of a church pastor; he certainly did not have in mind that modern itinerant namesake. Kelman agrees: "This expansion of Evangelism from the call to repentance and the start of pilgrimage, to the larger task of 'cure of souls,' is well worth noting. His work is not merely initiatory, as at the City of Destruction, or negative, as at Mt. Sinai. It is the pastoral and positive work of one who is ever watchful over the souls of his converts."²

¹ Evangelist first appeared at the City of Destruction, and then a second time when Christian found himself overwhelmed by the impenetrable heights of Mt. Sinai.

² John Kelman, *The Road*, I, pp. 199-200.

1. He is met in a wilderness.

The obvious intention here is the conveyance of a certain barrenness and dryness that overtakes the souls of the two pilgrims. Kelman adds that this state was generated by “the mood which his [Bunyan’s] last composed passage had induced. The effect of all this talking was that inevitable sense of dreariness that falls upon the spirit after any excess of speech.”³

2. He invokes the peace of God.

What better antidote could there be for souls parched on account of arid conversation than pastoral counsel that nourishes, satisfies, and challenges? So Evangelist breaks the backward horizon and approaches with particular intent. He calls upon God so that He might bestow peace and unity upon their reacquaintance; he also asks that God would bless their “helpers” (I Chron. 12:18), that is that multitude of providentially supplied guides, messengers, shining ones, shepherds, etc. who direct and preserve true pilgrims along the way (II Cor. 1:24).

3. He is greeted with intense loving regard.

While this temporary companion is also a talker, yet he is known by reputation as one who cares for heart-work, both within himself and others. Hence, in contrast with Talkative, Evangelist is most warmly welcomed (II John 6, 10).

- a. Christian remembers his untiring concern.

This faithful pastor is characterized by selfless concern for the sheep committed to his care. And how readily does one of his lambs acknowledge the preciousness of his unending devotion.

- b. Faithful salutes his present company.

He acknowledges the impoverishment of both Christian and himself, and enthusiastically anticipates substantial pastoral nourishment and cultivation. This lamb desires proper

³ Ibid., p. 198.

B. Evangelist's Assessment of the Pilgrims' Present Progress.

EVANGELIST: How have you managed, my friends, since the time of our last meeting? What have you encountered, and how have you behaved yourselves?

Then *Christian* and *Faithful* told him of all the things that had happened to them along the way, and how they had passed through many difficulties up to this point in their journey.

EVANGELIST: How glad I am, not so much that you met with trials, but rather that you have proved to be victors over them. And for this reason you have been enabled to continue thus far, notwithstanding your many weaknesses.⁴

Again I say just how pleased I am of this matter, and that for my own sake as well as yours. I have sowed, and you have reaped, and the day is coming when both he that sowed and they that reaped shall rejoice together, that is if you hold out [*to the end*]. For in due time you shall reap if you do not faint.⁵ The crown [*of reward*] is before you, and it is an incorruptible one; so run that you may obtain it.⁶ There are some that have set out for this crown, and after they have traveled a great distance, another steps in and takes it from them. Therefore hold fast what you have and do not let any man take away your crown; you are not yet beyond the gunshot of the *Devil*; you have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin. So always let the kingdom be before you, and steadfastly believe concerning the things that are invisible.⁷ Let nothing in this life come between yourself and the world to come.

Above all, pay attention to your own hearts with their indwelling lusts, for they are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Set your face with flint-like resolve since you have all power in *Heaven* and *Earth* on your side.⁸

He makes pastoral enquiry that reflects genuine interest, even though it is not born of breathless curiosity. After all, having come from behind, undoubtedly he has gleaned many reports concerning the trials and experiences of his spiritual children, and especially from the Palace Beautiful. However, he listens with great earnestness while longing to impart necessary counsel.

1. He rejoices in their victories through trials.

They have not merely endured trials, but rather have profited from them and gladly identified with the sufferings of Jesus Christ and the apostles (I Thess. 1:2-3, 6). Furthermore, they have persevered in spite of confessed failings.

⁴ Acts 26:22.

⁵ John 4:36-37; Gal. 6:9.

⁶ I Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:13-14; Rev. 3:11.

⁷ II Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:27; 12:4.

⁸ Isa. 50:7; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 28:18; Luke 9:51.

- a. They have reaped because he has sown.

No doubt Evangelist could also confess that he had reaped because someone else had sown for him (John 4:36). However, both sowers and reapers will one day rejoice when the great ingathering takes place at the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ at his return (Matt. 13:30; 24:3 1).

- b. They must endure to the end and faint not.

Here is the character of those who possess “eternal security,” that is salvation that shall never be revoked. Though subject to weakness and failure, yet they retain an indomitable spirit that never quits, for they are “looking to the reward” (Heb. 11:26; Matt. 10:22; Gal. 6:9).

- c. They have an incorruptible crown set before them.

Here Bunyan draws upon the Apostle Paul's athletic illustration (I Cor. 9:24-27) to justify his pilgrimage illustration of making progress toward the prize of citizenship in the Celestial City. The track contestant runs to win the victor's crown; so the Christian pilgrim runs with perseverance toward the goal of his heavenly inheritance (I Pet. 1:3-4).

- (1) Run so as to obtain.

In *The Heavenly Footman* based upon I Corinthians 9:24, Bunyan describes nine directions for pilgrim running, nine motives for pilgrim running, and makes nine applications concerning pilgrim running.⁹ To run is “to flee for one's life” (Heb. 6:18-20), it is “to press toward the mark” (Phil. 3:14), it is “to continue in the way of life” (Col. 1:23).¹⁰

- (2) Run so as not to be deprived.

Satan would distract your running so that you might be disqualified (I Cor. 9:27; Rev. 3:11).

The devil is nimble, he can run apace, he is light of foot, he hath overtaken many, he hath turned up their heels, and hath given them an everlasting fall. . . . If thou lose, thou lovest all, thou lovest soul, God, Christ, heaven, ease, peace, &c.¹¹

⁹ Bunyan, *Works*, III, pp. 375-394.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 382-383.

2. He warns that they are not yet out of Satan's reach.

Apart from his fortress outside the Wicket-gate, there are other encampments of Satan that must be encountered. Either pilgrim has not yet resisted to the point of shedding his blood as a martyr, although Christian came close when he fought with Apollyon (Heb. 12:4; Js. 4:7).

a. Let the kingdom be always before you.

This vital principle of anticipation is reiterated yet again. The bona fide pilgrim "lives in hope" (Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18) since this present tawdry world cannot compare with "the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18; Matt. 6:33; I or. 15:19).



Evangelist counsels Christian and Faithful

- b. Let the spiritual be esteemed above the material.

Why is this so? Because “the flesh profits nothing; the words that I [the Lord of the land] have spoken to you are spirit and are light” (John 6:63). Moses “left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen” (Heb. 11:27). “The things which are not seen are eternal” (II Cor. 4:18).

- c. Let nothing of this world enter your soul.

It is always corrosive, tending to deface and fragment the imprint of the truth of God that is imbedded there. It is always soiling, tending to multiply impurities and inject unhealthy conflict. It is always weakening, tending to cultivate doubt and give birth to unbelief (Jas. 1:13-15).

- d. Let your hearts flee from fleshly lusts.

The renewed heart must yet wrestle with the mingling influences of carnal suggestion accompanied with excuses, assaults when physically tired, selfish indulgence cloaked in religious platitudes, and subtle devilish proposals (Jer. 17:9). God's way of escape must be discovered and utilised (I Cor. 10:13).

- e. Let your faces be as flint as you press ahead.

The committed pilgrim is to possess both determination and discipline. His unswerving devotion to completion of his course (II Tim. 4:7) is rock-like (Is. 50:7). The trials of the way leave no place for a casual and indifferent attitude (Eph. 5:15-16).

- f. Let all power in heaven and earth be your stay.

The bold procession of pilgrims is grounded upon their assurance that their Lord Jesus Christ is sovereign in the most comprehensive and absolute sense (Matt. 28:18-20). Furthermore, through him “all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God” (I Cor. 3:22-23).

C. Evangelist's Prediction of the Pilgrims' Future Trials.

Then *Christian* thanked him for his exhortation, but added that they would prefer that he speak some more, that is something helpful about the rest of the way ahead. Since they knew that he was a prophet, they were anxious to know about the things that might happen to them, and also how they might resist and overcome them. So *Evangelist* agreed to speak further.

EVANGELIST: My sons, you have heard in the words of the truth of the gospel that you must enter the kingdom of *Heaven* through many tribulations.¹² And again you have heard that imprisonment and afflictions will accompany you.¹³ And therefore you cannot expect that you should travel far on your pilgrimage without encountering them in one way or another. You have already experienced a measure of the truth of this testimony, and more will immediately follow.

For now, as you see, you are almost out of this *Wilderness*, and therefore you will eventually come to a *Town* that will appear directly in front of you. Now in that *Town* you will be severely assaulted by enemies who will make every attempt to kill you. Now you may be sure that one or both of you will seal the testimony which you profess with blood.¹⁴ Nevertheless, be faithful unto death and the *King* will give you a crown of life.¹⁵

Whoever shall die there, although his death will be unnatural and his pain probably great, yet he will have the advantage over his companion; this will be, not only because he will arrive at the *Celestial City* sooner, but also because he will escape the many miseries that the other will meet with in the rest of his journey. But when you have come to this *Town*, and all that I have spoken about has been fulfilled, then remember your friend and quit [*behave*] yourselves as men; and commit the keeping of your souls to your *God*, as unto a faithful *Creator*.¹⁶

This concluding exhortation reveals yet another aspect of Bunyan's understanding of the ministry of an evangelist, and particularly within the fellowship of a local church (Eph. 4:11-12). George Offer comments:

The pilgrims are now about to enter upon a new era - to leave their privacy in the wilderness, and commence a more public scene - perhaps alluding to Bunyan's being publicly set apart to the work of the ministry.¹⁷ It was in the discharge of these public duties that he was visited with such severe persecution. This interview with Evangelist reminds one of the setting apart of Dissenting ministers. . . . Evangelist's address would make a good outline of an ordination

¹² *Acts 14:22.*

¹³ *Acts 20:23.*

¹⁴ *John 21:18-19.*

¹⁵ *Rev. 2:10.*

¹⁶ *I Pet. 4:19.*

¹⁷ Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 266-270, p. 411.

sermon. . . . [It] peculiarly relates to the miseries endured by Nonconformist ministers in the reign of Charles II.”¹⁸

1. The request for profitable prophetic ministry.

Evangelist has already hinted that torrid times are ahead. Others such as Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, Timorous and Mistrust, and the two men with an evil report have plainly described severe future trials along the way. So it is not surprising that the two pilgrims here should be curious when they have at their disposal such a reliable prophet.

2. The revelation of future tribulation in general.

In quoting Acts 14:22, Evangelist identifies ongoing tribulation in the pilgrim's life as part of “the truth of the Gospel.” This is because the true believer appropriates both the sufferings and glory of Christ (Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; I Pet. 4:13). So, “if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him if we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (II Tim. 2:11-12).

a. It is mandatory for pilgrims.

But why is suffering so indispensable? Because the gospel of Jesus Christ, when rightly proclaimed, offends this proud world (I Cor. 1:23). Hence, faithful ambassadors of Christ will, of necessity, suffer for the cause of Christ (John 15:18-20; 17:14).

b. It is ongoing for pilgrims.

Paul declared that, “the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.” The Apostle also seemed to understand this as a description of the manner of living he could expect to the very end of his earthly “course” or appointed ministry (Acts 20:23-24).

3. The revelation of persecution at Vanity Fair.

The pilgrims learn that they will progress from one type of wilderness to another, that is the parched Town of Vanity. It is significant that Bunyan portrays most of his allegorical cities, town, and villages as worldly places. They include Destruction, Carnal-Policy, Morality, Deceit, Fair-speech, Love-gain, Apostasy, and Graceless. The exceptions are Sincere and Good-confidence.

a. It will involve martyrdom for one or both.

Evangelist's prophecy of martyrdom is similar to that of Christ's concerning Peter (John 20:18-1,9). As Peter was nevertheless directed to “follow me,” so the two pilgrims here are to be “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10).

¹⁸ Ibid., III, p. 126.

- (1) The martyr shall receive a crown of life

It will signify that this pilgrim did not consider his life to be of great importance, that is insofar as the completion of the commission of the Lord Jesus is concerned (Acts 20:24). Yet he who loses his life for this cause will find it (Mark 8:35).

- (2) The martyr shall first reach the Celestial City.

He will gain the advantage in being first “with Christ, for that is very much better” (Phil. 1:23). And although his passage will be intense with suffering and short, yet will he avoid many prolonged trials that his partner will endure.

- (3) The remaining one shall encounter more miseries.

His faith shall be sorely tested by unending devilish plots. The flesh shall increasingly decay and cause distress. The world shall continue to rage against God’s elect. The cares of earthly necessities shall distract from heavenly investment.

- b. It will be remembered for profit.

To know history in advance is to know that the affairs of men are sovereignly directed and are not the result of random material activity. To know the Sovereign Director of these same events is to gain great confidence in His overall revelation and projected course of human destiny. So Jesus Christ used prophetic revelation for the purpose of stimulating faith (John 13:19). And so Evangelist encourages Christian and Faithful to reflect upon the events he has described, that is when they happen. And as a result, they are to be manly and renewed in faith (I Cor. 16:13; I Pet. 4:19).



Christian thanks Evangelist for his counsel