

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Silver Mine at the Hill Lucre

A. The Plain Ease gives Respite to Christian and Hopeful.

THEN *Christian* and *Hopeful* moved ahead of *By-ends* and his friends once again. So they traveled until they came to a delicate [subtle] plain called *Ease*, across which they journeyed with much satisfaction; though this plain was also narrow so that they quickly passed through it.¹

While a brief period of rest here is legitimate and welcome, perhaps being reflective of Nonconformist Sunday fellowship and worship, usually it both follows after and precedes worldly trials.

1. Here is solitude and contentment away from the enemy.

The first disciples profited much from such relatively brief and uninterrupted times of fellowship with Christ their Master (Mark 6:31).

2. Here is a narrow passage all too quickly traversed.

This is especially true for those pilgrims who eagerly press forward rather than dawdle. Those who delay turn rest into debilitating sloth.

B. The Hill Lucre Holds an Attractive yet Dangerous Silver Mine.

Now at the other side of this plain was a small hill² called *Lucre* [*Greedy Profit*],³ and within it a silver mine; and because of the rarity of this place, some pilgrims having gone this way had turned aside to investigate it. However, drawing too near to the edge of the shaft, and because of the treacherous nature of the ground which broke under their feet, they were destroyed.⁴ Other pilgrims were known to have been maimed there, and for the rest of their lives were never free from the mine's wounding influence.

This tourist attraction and subsidiary enterprise of Vanity has a Latin name that describes raw wealth and pecuniary profit. The biblical usage of this term in the KJV always has in

¹ Pilgrims have very little ease in this life.

² *Gen. 19:20.*

³ *I Sam. 8:3; I Tim. 3:3, 8; 6:10; Tit. 1:11; I Pet. 5:2.*

⁴ *Matt. 13:22.*

mind “filthy lucre” (I Sam. 8:3; 1 Tim. 3: 3, 8; Tit. 1:7, 11; I Pet. 5:2), that is sordid and covetous gain.

1. Some pilgrims venturing too close are killed or severely maimed.

The allurements to some pilgrims being strong to possess the wealth of earth as well as heaven, many have been snared by the temptation and rarity of easy money. Some bona fide pilgrims have been so disabled at this point that their usefulness has been irremediably hampered.

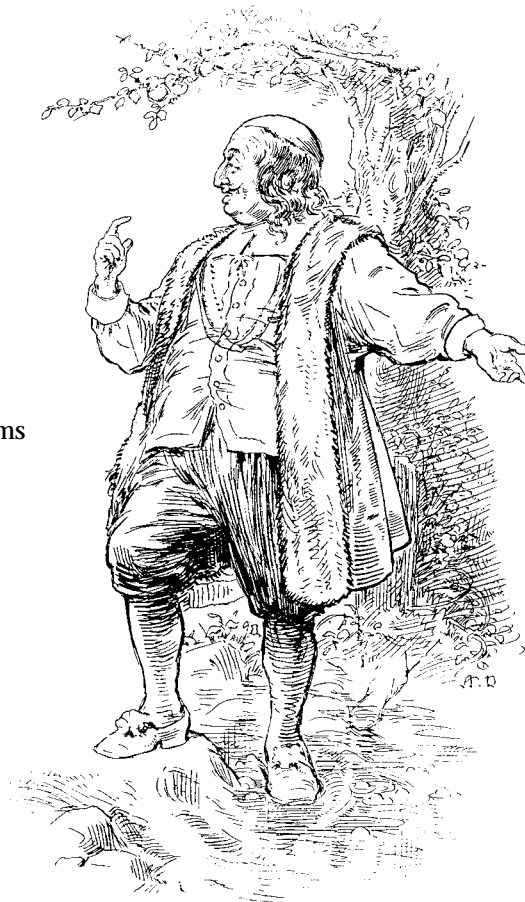
2. All pilgrims are tested when they have been briefly at ease.

Perhaps the philosophy of By-ends retains some lingering appeal. Here is the place to find out. The Hill appears to be “little” (Gen. 19:20) and seemingly harmless as a challenge. Yet the wayside ground is deceptively unstable and prone to collapse, causing many who peer at the edge to suddenly tumble into the mine’s abyss.

C. The Mine-keeper Demas Attempts to Allure Christian and Hopeful.

Christian has recently warned concerning religious mercenaries who will just as readily discard their religion for worldly profit. So he and Hopeful now encounter just such a person. Demas has formerly been on pilgrimage (Col. 4:14; Phil. 24), but now has quit his journey on account of his greater love for “this present world” (II Tim. 4:10).

Demas beckons pilgrims



Then I saw in my dream that a little off the side of the road, and right next to the silver mine, stood *Demas*. Standing like a gentleman, he would invite passing pilgrims to step aside and investigate the sight; so he hailed *Christian* and his companion. "Hello their friends; come over here and I will show you something quite remarkable."⁵

CHRISTIAN: What could be so deserving of our attention as to draw us out of the way?

DEMAS: Here is a silver mine, and right now some are digging in it for treasure. If you also would come here, with only a little effort you will be able to richly enhance yourselves.⁶

HOPEFUL: If this be true, then let us go and investigate.

CHRISTIAN: Not I! I have previously heard of the reputation of this place and how many have been destroyed here; and besides this, the treasure being promoted is in fact a snare for those who seek it because it hinders them in their pilgrimage.⁷

Then Christian called to *Demas* asking, "Is this not a dangerous place? And has it not hindered many others in their pilgrimage?"⁸

DEMAS: It is not very dangerous, except to those who are careless: (Nevertheless he blushed as he spoke this way.)

CHRISTIAN: (Addressing Hopeful) Let us not wander aside even one step, but instead keep on our way.

HOPEFUL: I give you my word as certain, that when *By-ends* arrives at this place and receives the same invitation as we have, he will definitely turn aside to explore the site.

CHRISTIAN: Undoubtedly he will, for his principles lead in that direction; and I wager a hundred to one that he will perish there.

DEMAS: (Persistently) But will you not come over and look?

1. With gentlemanly stance he invites investigation.

After the manner of Philistine guile (I Sam. 14:12), Christian and Hopeful are invited to turn aside from the straight way. Demas' sales patter is well rehearsed, full of charm, and purposely intriguing.

a. Demas offers great wealth for little effort.

He especially looks for pilgrims who have "an evil eye" (Prov. 28:20, 22). In commenting on Genesis 3:7, Bunyan declares:

And thus, even to this very day, doth the devil delude the world: His temptations are gilded with some sweet and fine pretences; either they shall be wiser, richer, more in favor, live merrier, fare better, or something; and that they shall see it, if they will

⁵ Col. 4:14; Philem. 24; II Tim. 4:10.

⁶ Prov. 28:20, 22.

⁷ Hos. 4:16-19; 14:8; I Tim. 6:9-10.

⁸ Col. 3:5.

but obey the devil: Which the fools easily are, by these and such like things, allured to do.⁹

b. Hopeful desires to examine the offer.

Since all pilgrims have their moment of weakness, there is security and guidance for those who travel in fellowship rather than alone. Otherwise, at this stage Hopeful may well have suffered permanent loss.

c. Christian refuses to turn from the way.

Why is this so? Not simply because of the dangers inherent in such a place, but rather because of his greater regard for the wealth that God provides (Phil. 3:8). Bunyan writes:

I tell thee, friend, there are some promises that the Lord hath helped me to lay hold of Jesus Christ through and by, that I would not have out of the Bible for as much gold and silver as can lie between York and London piled up to the stars.¹⁰

(1) The mine has slain many pilgrims.

To those nominal pilgrims who pass by, the marketing of material prosperity in a religious dress has irresistible appeal. They are enabled to covet with respectability while patronizing Christianity for stimulus value (Ezek. 33:30-32). Then they “pierce themselves with many a pang” (I Tim. 6:10).

(2) The mine is a snare to pilgrims.

To those true pilgrims who pass by, the siren-like appeals of Demas are so seductive. The flesh cries out for comfort and pampering, and the Silver-Mine offers satisfaction in full measure, yet not to the total exclusion of religion (Gal. 5:17).

2. With blushing misrepresentations he seeks to deceive.

Christian's direct question about the accident mortality rate at the mine brings forth body language of confession and words of denial. In attempting to deny the real danger of such a place, yet Demas' flushed appearance betrays both his guilt and love for such a shameful enterprise (Hos. 4:18).

a. Christian remains resolute in following the way.

He will not allow his companion or himself to be distracted in the slightest. The warning signals of a snare have been quickly identified.

⁹ Bunyan, *Works*, II, p. 431.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III, p. 271.

- b. Hopeful gains insight as he ponders By-ends.

Probably overhearing the trifling banter of the carnal coterie not far behind, he ponders their likely response to Demas' overtures. Christian wagers that By-ends is certain to perish because his worldly affections have been made abundantly clear.

3. With repeated pleading he asks for reconsideration.

This pressing huckster is not so easily discouraged. Leech-like he sniffs the mild interest of one pilgrim; he solicits for a mere glimpse of his side-show.

D. The Beckoning of Demas is Firmly Rejected.

CHRISTIAN: (Speaking bluntly) *Demas*, you are an enemy of those who pursue the right paths of the *Lord* of this way. I know that you yourself have been rebuked because of your own turning aside here, and that by one of *His Majesties'* judges;¹¹ so why do you seek to bring us into the same condemnation? Besides, if we were to turn aside here, our *Lord* the *King* would certainly hear about this and reveal our shame, whereas our desire is to stand before him with boldness.

In reply, *Demas* only pleaded further; he professed to be one of their kinsmen, and proposed that if they would only wait a short while, he would then join them on pilgrimage.

CHRISTIAN: What is your name? Is it not the same as I have already called you?

DEMÁS: Yes, my name is *Demas*; I am the son of *Abraham*.¹²

CHRISTIAN: I know you; *Gehazi* was your great-grand-father, and *Judas* was your father, and you have continued to walk in their ways.¹³ What you are now suggesting is simply one of your commonly used devilish tricks. Your father was hanged as a traitor, and you also deserve no better reward. Do be assured that when we have audience with the *King*, we will tell him of your treacherous behavior.

Christian remains the stronger pilgrim at this point, though a little way ahead he will prove to be much reduced in wisdom.

1. Demas declares he is a true pilgrim.

His testimony is part of his sales pitch. It is carefully crafted in the biblical vernacular. He is a "born again, washed in the blood, water baptized, Spirit filled, saved and sanctified, materially blessed," child of God.

¹¹ *Acts 13:10*; II Tim. 4:10.

¹² *John 8:33, 37-40*.

¹³ II Kings 5:20; Mt. 26:14-15; 27:1-6.

- a. He will soon continue on pilgrimage.

His current investments necessitate temporary delay. They are well worthy of inspection. A short tour of the mine will pay rich dividends. He pleads for delay so that he might continue in that style of fellowship to which he is accustomed!

- b. He is a lineal son of Abraham.

His family relations were all good pilgrims who regularly attended the same church, at a most historic location, as full communicant members in an illustrious tradition (John 8:33, 37-40).

2. Christian roundly denounces the fraudulent Demas.

Here is no silent accommodation of a weak pilgrim, no justification on account of the pressure of the times, no broadminded acceptance of a different lifestyle.

- a. He is an enemy of the way of the Lord.

For all his pretense, his beguiling invitation, yet he remains an agent of Lord Beelzebub who “makes crooked the straight ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10).

- (1) An enemy already condemned.

The presiding judge was the Apostle Paul who, in the closing period of his life, was grieved at the defection of Demas for some business venture in Vanity (II Tim. 4:10).

- (2) An enemy who leads to shame.

He purposely refrains from advising about the true Lord of the land and especially His displeasure at pilgrims who are distracted by mining and incur great shame.

- b. He is the great-grandson of Gehazi.

This covetous servant of Elisha plotted to obtain the generous present which Naaman the Syrian offered to the prophet as a token of his gratitude for his healing. However, Gehazils greed was unmasked, and as a result he was judged with leprosy (II Kings 5:20-27).

- c. He is a son of Judas.

His love for money was such that he betrayed his faultless Master, with devilish intent, for “thirty pieces of silver” (Matt. 26:14-15; 27:1-6). Likewise, Demas was prepared to make merchandise of “the blood of the covenant” and “insult the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29).

- d. He will be judged for his treachery.

A report of his deceit will be given to the true King at the end of the journey. Then will follow an investigation that will eventually cause the whole mining industry to be evaluated as of no worth whatsoever, and worse, even damning to the soul (Prov. 11:28). So Christian and Hopeful continue to press forward.



Hopeful and Christian refuse Demas

E. THE ARRIVAL OF BY-ENDS AND COMPANY AT THEIR TRUE HAVEN.

So *Christian* and *Hopeful* continued on their way, though they remained in sight of *By-ends* and his friends; and it was noticed when the trailing party arrived at the silver mine, they immediately left the way in response to the invitation of *Demas*. Now whether they fell down the mine shaft by looking over the edge, or whether they went down to dig, or whether they were smothered at the bottom by the damps [*poisonous fumes of discouragement*] that often arise in those depths, I am not certain. But this I did observe that they were never seen again in the way.

Then *Christian* sang:

By-ends, and *Silver-Demas*, both agree;
One calls, the other runs, that he may be
A sharer in his lucre; so these two
Take up in this world, and no further go.

This return in thought to the band of four pilgrims trailing behind is more than a reflection of Bunyan's literary ability to weave intrigue into his plot. Rather it declares the inevitable consequences that result from a particular world-view. Those who "sow to the flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8).

1. Demas' invitation is enthusiastically accepted.

The mere inference that wealth may be nearby is enough to snare *By-ends* and his friends. This news quickens their pace much more than the prospect of entering the Celestial City. As goats, they stampede to the slaughter.

2. Demas' guests are never seen again.

Their disappearance in the bowels of the Silver-Mine is tragic and final, though specifics are lacking. Either they fell at the brink, committed themselves to endless digging, or were incapacitated by "the damps" (discouragements) that commonly overwhelm miners.

3. Christian's song is of travelers' woe.

He bewails the foolishness of many pilgrims who are so easily lead astray by mammon intoxication. Cheever quotes Samuel Coleridge in this regard as follows:

Often as the motley reflexes of my experience move in long processions of manifold groups before me, the distinguished and world-honored company of Christian Mammonists appear to the eye of my imagination as a drove of camels heavily laden, yet all at full speed, and each in the confident expectation of passing through the eye of the needle, without stop or halt, both beasts and baggage.¹⁴

¹⁴ George B. Cheever, *Lectures on Bunyan*, p. 249.