Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Terrifying End of Turn-away

A. The Captive Man in the Dark Lane.

So the two pilgrims went on while Ignorance followed after them. Now when they had put some distance ahead of him, they entered into a very dark lane where they met a man who seven devils had bound with seven strong cords; they were carrying him back to the door that they had earlier seen in the side of the Hill, when being escorted by the Shepherds.

This dark passageway speaks of limitation of perception and the consequent need of caution on the part of pilgrims. It is in just such a place as this that questionable characters lurk, with their faces almost hidden, to deceive unwary travellers (Eph. 4:14). In fact, an apostate does lie ahead of them.

1. He is captive to seven devils.

However, providence has delivered the two pilgrims from a confrontation of a dangerous nature. Seven devils (Matt. 12:45) have discovered in the lane a citizen who qualifies for their infernal realm and commenced to carry him away, bound by the cords of his own qualifying sin and guilt (Prov. 5:22).

2. He is being taken away to the By-way to Hell.

These emissaries of hell are readily recognized by Christian; he recalls being confronted by them in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and together with Hopeful in a valley between the Delectable Mountains. Obviously they are reapers for that region and have recently made a catch.

3. He is thought to be Turn-away from Apostasy.

Probably, on account of earlier instruction (I John 2:18-19), Christian thinks that he can identify this captive as Turn-away from Apostasy, and his judgement turns out to be correct. In Part Two, Great-heart tells us much more about this charlatan. "He would harken to no Counsel. . . . When he came to the place where the Cross and the Sepulchre were, he did meet with one that did bid him took there, but he gnashed with his teeth, and stamped, and said, he was resolved to go back to his own town. Before he came to the gate, he met with Evangelist, who offered to lay hands on him, to turn him into the way again. But this Turn-away resisted him, and having done much despite unto him, he got away over the wall, and so escaped his hand (Heb. 10:26-29)"

1 Prov. 5:22; Matt. 12:45; Eph. 4:17-18.
2 Jude 4, 13.
However, now being caught he hangs down his head in shame in view of his great foolishness.

4. He is identified as Wanton Professor.

In other words, he is a loose, trifling, and nominal believer who proves to be a reprobate and thus a consignee for hell. However, such identification is only possible from a rearward perspective. So Kelman comments: “In his heart he was a traitor to the laws of pilgrimage. The Cross of Christ [as described in Part Two above], here as elsewhere, tears off the mask, and shows the real hatred to religion underneath the pretence of loyalty. This is the crucial point with Bunyan. His Christian many a time may wander, but never once does he turn back on his old religious experiences” (The Road, Vol. 11, p. 84).

B. The Pilgrim’s in the Dark Lane.

Now good Christian began to tremble and so did his companion Hopeful. Yet as the devils led the man away, Christian looked to see if he could identify him, and he thought it might be a certain Turn-away who resided in the Town of Apostasy [Departure from the Faith]. But he was not able to clearly see his face because he hung his head down like a thief who has been discovered. However, after he had passed by, Hopeful watched as he was taken away and noticed on his back a label with the inscription, “Wanton [licentious] professor [believer], and damnable [Hell consigned] apostate.”

Now they soberly ponder this frightful scene. Now the darkness takes on a different perspective for it not only presents danger to pilgrims, but it also describes the condition of the apostate himself.

1. They tremble at the captive’s prospects.

He has been abandoned to a state that is without remedy; he is stripped of any outward pious display so that only his naked ungodliness is evident. Thus the pilgrims seriously consider their own condition (II Cor. 13:5).

a. The dark lane has described Turn-away’s mind.

It has never been illuminated through the Holy Spirit to the glorious truth of the gospel (II Cor. 11:13-15; Eph. 4: 17-18).

\[3\] I John 2:18-19.
b. The dark lane has described Turn-away's destiny.

Having crept into the pilgrim way unnoticed, yet he as those "who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ." Thus for him, "the black darkness has been reserved forever" (Jude 4, 13).

2. They tremble at the timely warning.

The identity of authentic pilgrims is not always an easy matter. From a frontal perspective, Turn-away's appearance was undoubtedly convincing. How shocking then it is to discover that a "solid Christian" is in fact an unbelieving scoundrel who never at any time knew of the saving grace of God (Matt. 7:22-23). However, the tremulous condition here is not to be despised for it is far more likely to signify the response of genuine believers. Apostates tend to cover their tracks with a false confidence; to display fear would not be thought of as very convincing.

3. Application.

apostates are very discreet, subtle, and secretive, who creep into Christian fellowship "sideways" (Jude 4). With counterfeit doctrine they disarm, with counterfeit abilities they take control, with counterfeit charm they beguile multitudes, with counterfeit morals they seduce, and with plastic words they deceive (II Pet. 2:1-3). Further, Ignorance is just behind. So what might be his response to this grave incident?

Turn-away is taken to the By-way to Hell