

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Colorless Testimony of Little-faith

A. The Assault of Little-faith.

THEN *Christian* said to his companion, “Now it comes to my mind what was told to me about something that happened to a good man in this region. The name of this man was *Little-faith*, as I said a good man, and he live in the *Town of Sincere*.¹ What happened to him was this; there is an entrance to the straight way here that comes down from *Broad-way-gate*² by means of a lane called *Dead-man’s Lane*; this lane is so-called because of the murders that are frequently committed there.”

“And so this *Little-faith*, while going on pilgrimage just as we are, happened to sit down for a while and then fell asleep. It also happened at that time that three sturdy rogues came down the lane from *Broad-way-gate*; and their names were *Faint-heart*, *Mistrust*, and *Guilt* (three brothers), and when they saw where *Little-faith* was snoozing beside the way, they immediately made a quick approach toward him. Now the good man was just awakening from his slumber and preparing to continue on his journey. So they all approached him with threatening language and ordered him to stand still. At this *Little-faith* turned as white as a sheet since he had neither the strength to fight nor to flee. Then *Faint-heart* said, ‘Hand over your purse.’”

“But when *Little-faith* hesitated to comply, for he was very reluctant to lose his money, *Mistrust* came close to him and, thrusting his hand into one of his pockets, pulled out of there a bag of silver. Then he [*Little Faith*] cried out, ‘Thieves! Thieves!’ At this *Guilt* struck *Little-faith* on his head with a large club in his hand, so that the blow felled him flat on the ground; and there he lay, bleeding profusely in danger of dying.”

“During this assault, the thieves simply stood by. But eventually they heard the sound of another coming along the way, and fearing that it could be *Great-grace* who lives in the city of *Good-confidence*, they quickly departed and left the poor victim to fend for himself. Now after a while, *Little-faith* began to revive; so he scrambled to his feet and staggered along as best he could. This was the story.”

By now we have seen that a number of lanes attach themselves to the narrow way, though in every instance they represent either a false gospel or a pathway to destruction. Consider the paths to the Village of Morality, Doubting Castle, Conceit Country, and those named

¹ *Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 1:10.*

² *Mat. 7:13.*

Danger and Destruction at the foot of the Hill Difficulty, and now another called Dead-man's Lane. This road to heaven increasingly becomes crowded with a mixed multitude.

1. Introduction.

Here, as with the approaching discourse on the Enchanted Ground, we find more detailed and doctrinal matter is incorporated into the latter part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This may well reflect the more mature capacity of the advancing pilgrims.

a. Little-faith's condition contrasted with Turn-away.

Having just witnessed the seven devils dragging Wanton Professor or Damnable Apostate back to the By-way to Hell, Christian is immediately reminded of another pilgrim named Little-faith who presents a significant comparison.

(1) His character.

A detailed analysis follows, undoubtedly drawn from Bunyan's pastoral observation, of this pilgrim's nature, testimony, trials, and evident weakness. He is distinguishable from Turn-away.

(2) His legitimacy.

Having originated from the Town of Sincere and passed through the Wicket-gate, unlike Turn-away, he proves to be a genuine pilgrim when closely analyzed.

b. The weak believer contrasted with the apostate.

There is a fundamental difference between the true backslider and the counterfeit Christian, between the legitimate though feeble child of God and the illegitimate child of God, between the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30).

(1) The weak believer is essentially different.

His origin by birth is different (I John 3:7-10) so that any backsliding presupposes some frontsliding. On the other hand, the apostate has never backslidden; he has always been a child of the devil.

(2) The apostate is externally similar.

He becomes a member of a local church and disguises himself as a servant of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:14-15). He is by "smooth and flattering speech [able to] deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting" (Rom. 16:17-18).

2. He sleeps at Dead-man's Lane.

The geography is important here. Little-faith has travelled from the Town of Sincere to the Wicket-gate, and passing through, onward along the narrow way. Feeling tired, he

happens to sleep at an unauthorized resting place; it is in fact at the junction of a small side road named Dead-man's Lane.

- a. This lane originates at Broad-way-gate.

The purpose of this gate is that it allows worldly thugs to travel to the junction of the narrow way so as to assault pilgrims there and rob them of their spiritual treasure. These assailants are particularly successful when they encounter drowsy pilgrims. Little-faith is just such a case, for in failing to "be of a sober spirit, [to] be on the alert" (I Pet. 5:8), he falls prey to a severe assault of the devil in the form of the allurements of the broad way, that mediate weakness of faith, unbelief, and guilt.

- b. This lane is renowned for its murders.

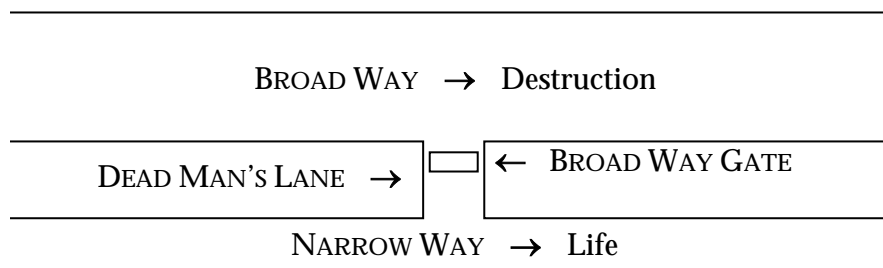
In other words, sometimes these thugs from Broad-way-gate are so successful that they accomplish mortal spiritual casualties and strew these carcasses along Dead-man's Lane. In this case, Little-faith is delivered from such a fate when his attackers are frightened away by a warrior they fear. Otherwise, he too would have become another complete casualty. Even so, Little-faith finds himself seriously crippled.

3. He is attacked by three sturdy rogues.

These highway robbers took for easy prey and, espying the awakening pilgrim, quickly hurl abuse at his pilgrim status and threaten to prove his impotence. They are intent on claiming the scalps of particular travellers they so intensely despise. Their mission is to conquer for the cause of the "broad way."

- a. They come from Broad-way-gate.

The "broad way" is never far removed from the "narrow way" (Matt. 7:13-14), at least during this present earthly sojourn, and its vast citizenry constantly feels it necessary, perhaps through the intimidation of guilt, to press its claims by means of force rather than the persuasion of truth.



b. They are three threatening brothers.

Through the intimidation of militant skepticism and coercion to commit immorality, they are intent on depriving Little-faith of his valuable Christian graces, even though they are not as plentiful as some other pilgrims possess. This evil triad is made up of agents of Apollyon who have persisted with these assaults that are launched from their master's territory.

(1) Faint-heart.

He takes away courage and strength for the truth and replaces them with timidity and hesitancy.

(2) Mistrust.

He takes away confidence and assurance of the truth and replaces them with doubt and suspicion. This character had earlier fled down the Hill Difficulty with Timorous.

(3) Guilt.

He takes away peace and rest in the truth and replaces them with fear and agitation.

c. They demand Little-faith's purse.

This request does not imply that these robbers actually valued what was contained in Little-faith's purse. Rather, their's was a mission of deprivation and disablement. These valuables were of considerable assistance in giving mobility to pilgrims and, for this reason, Little-faith was most reluctant to comply.



Faint-heart, Mistrust and Guilt

- (1) He turns as white as a cloud.

Looking so pale gave indication to the attackers of weakness and fear rather than a flush of anger and aggression.

- (2) He is robbed of his money.

Sensing an easy opportunity, Mistrust snatches away Little-faith's purse of silver and finds little serious opposition.

4. He feebly resists with plaintive cries.

It becomes increasingly obvious that Little-faith has a basic lack of power that restricts his ability to offer strong resistance against devilish opposition. Why was he so weary at this point of the journey? Why is there no offensive reaction? Why is his spiritual nutrition so low? Why is there no thought to use given spiritual weapons of warfare?

- a. The foes beat him down to death.

They intend to destroy and not merely wound. Guilt is particularly effective in felling Little-faith after Faint-heart and Mistrust have weakened him. So they sadistically wait for their victim's demise.

- b. The foes retreat out of fear for Great-grace.

Thus, as God would have it, other pilgrims are heard to be progressing along the narrow way. In particular, the assailants fear lest the valiant Great-grace is found to be approaching from the city of Good-confidence. As a result they hastily retreat back to Broad-way-gate, a place that Great-grace is not likely to approach.



The assailants fear
Great-grace is coming

5. He slowly revives and stumbles on downcast.

Little-faith regains consciousness and still presses forward. This is indicative of his set of heart, however enfeebled he has become. So he continues “to scabble on his way,” that is haltingly stagger and scramble onward.³

B. The Poverty of Little-faith.

To begin with, Little-faith had a weakness which led to his downfall, and it may well be that which Alexander Whyte perceptively points out. He first mentions that this citizen of the Town of Sincere is, on five occasions, described as a “good man.” This he suggests was even evident in his youth. However,

if Little-faith had had more and earlier discoveries made to him of the innate evil of his own heart, even if it had been by that innate evil bursting out of his heart and laying waste his good life, he would either have been driven out of his little faith altogether or driven into a far deeper faith. . . . Little-faith, in short, was such a good man, and had always been such a good man, and had led such an easy life in consequence, that his life had not been much exercised, and therefore had not grown, as it must have been exercised and must have grown, had he not been such a good man. In short, and to put it bluntly, had Little-faith been a worse sinner, he would have been a better saint.⁴

Now we see weakness added to weakness.

1. He lost his spending money.

HOPEFUL: But did the robbers take from him everything that he had?

CHRISTIAN: No, they never ransacked his chest pocket where his jewels were; he was able to keep these.⁵ But I was told that this good man was sorely troubled over what he lost. For the thieves took most of his spending money. As I have already mentioned, they did not get his jewels; other than these he was left with a small amount of money, but hardly enough to support him through to his journey’s end.⁶ Sad to say, if I have not been misinformed, he was forced to beg along the way in order to have enough to stay alive, for he was not able to sell his jewels. So he continued to beg and scrape around; yes, he went forward, but often with an empty stomach for most of the remaining journey.

In other words, he lost much of that for which he was responsible for using and developing, namely growing faith, spiritual gifts and graces. As a consequence he became reduced in faith, reduced in usefulness in ministry, and reduced in the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit.

³ Bunyan, *Works*, I, § 334, p. 49.

⁴ Alexander Whyte, *Bunyan Characters*, II, pp. 12-13.

⁵ Little-faith did not lose his best things.

⁶ I Pet. 4:18.

- a. His loss inflicted the characteristics of his robbers.

Paradoxical as it may sound, Little-faith evidenced the characteristics of his attackers to some degree, yet he had none of their essential character. Not for a moment did he attempt to exit along Dead-man's Lane, yet he continued to evidence some faintheartedness, mistrust, and guilt.

- b. His loss inflicted symptoms of spiritual ill-health.

As a result of the loss of much blood on account of being brutally beaten, and a neglect of nourishment for recovery, Little-faith struggles forward becoming reliant upon the good graces of other more sturdy pilgrims. His beggarly attitude seems to blind him to the riches of grace that are available through various appointed means (Eph. 3:14-19), and should be sought (II Pet. 1:5-11).



Little-faith bemoans his loss

- c. His loss was not total or mortal.

Rather it was partial and crippling without being essentially destructive. Little-faith now ranks among the weak who depend upon the support of the strong (Rom. 15:1; I Thess. 5:14).

- (1) He retained his cache of jewels.

But what is the distinction here between Little-faith's spending money and his jewels? Hopeful is certainly not clear at this point, though Christian seems to understand perfectly.

- (2) He retained a small amount of change.

In other words, Little-faith was not totally bereft of evident faith, and spiritual gifts and graces. But his poverty at this point did very much restrict his walk and witness as a pilgrim. One wonders whether he did reside for long at the Palace Beautiful (I Pet. 4:18).

- (3) He retained his certificate of admittance.

Hopeful seems uncertain at this point as to why this was so. Hence he seeks for counsel from the more doctrinally mature Christian.

2. He retains his roll.

HOPEFUL: But is it not remarkable that they did not rob him of his certificate, that which he must have to gain entrance into the *Celestial City*?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, it is a wonder; but they did not get it. Though they did not miss it on account of the cunning of *Little-faith*, for since he was so dismayed by their onslaught, he had neither the strength nor the skill to hide anything. So it was more a question of good providence rather than his ingenuity that caused them to miss such a vital item.⁷

Here is certain proof that Little-faith is an authentic pilgrim, and yet it was not impossible for this item, also a token of assurance,⁸ to be temporarily lost, as was the experience of Christian. If the roll had been taken by the robbers, the allegory would have had to somehow enable Little-faith to recover it. Perhaps Great-grace could have accomplished such a restorative work.

⁷ II Tim. 1:14; II Pet. 2:9.

⁸ Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 106.

- a. It was on account of sovereign grace.

Little-faith's responsibility was to "guard through the Holy Spirit the treasure which had been entrusted to him" (II Tim. 1:14). Yet he neglected this duty and made himself vulnerable to wayside assaults. His retention then of his roll was due to no effort on his part. Had it not been for the assailants' fear of Great-grace, they may well have taken his certificate as well. But then the sovereign providence of God was hovering over all of this affair. It alone accounts for Little-faith's deliverance, and he ought to have been more ready to confess this.

- b. It was neglected against advice.

When Christian received his roll at the Place of Deliverance, he was also instructed to "look on [it] as he ran."⁹ Then at the Palace Beautiful, Prudence asks him "by what means you find your annoyances at times, as if they were vanquished?" To this Christian answers, among other things: "When I look into the roll that I carry in my bosom, that will do."¹⁰ So we assume that Little-faith received similar advice, yet he neglected to heed it. His only very occasional references to his roll were overwhelmed by a morbid preoccupation with his monetary loss.

3. He retains his jewels.

HOPEFUL: Nevertheless, it must have been a comfort to him that they did not take away his jewels.

CHRISTIAN: It could have been a great comfort to him if he had rightly appreciated this fact.¹¹ But they that related this story to me explained that he made little reference to this matter for the rest of his journey, the reason being his dismay that they had taken his money away. Yes, he forgot about his jewels for a great part of the remainder of his journey; and besides, when at times his mind was comforted with the contemplation of his jewels, yet thoughts about his monetary loss would rise up again and overwhelm his previous comfort.

Hopeful still has not yet grasped the distinctive nature of this treasure. He erroneously believes it can be plundered as was the spending money. However, even Little-faith may not have believed this. Yet he does seem to consider the safekeeping of this treasure as of little account.

- a. Little-faith's objective treasure is neglected.

To Christian, as he will soon explain, the possibility of the robbery of this rich depository is quite unthinkable, even as would be the stealing of a man's soul. What also astonishes him is Little-faith's reputed neglect of the inherent comfort that contemplation of this cache brings (II Pet. 1:19).

⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 108.

¹¹ II Pet. 1:19.

- b. Little-faith's monetary loss is bereaved.

He seems to have developed a fixation regarding the fearful attack he suffered with resultant suffering and loss. Hence, whenever he infrequently considers his jewels and gains comfort, the thoughts of his loss flood into his soul and overwhelm him. He seems to lack certain stabilizing elements which other pilgrims make regular use of.

4. He remains spiritually dismal.

It is surprising in what follows to find both Hopeful and Christian expressing their sympathy for Little-faith as they discuss his outpourings of melancholy. As the forlorn pilgrim struggles forward, and repeatedly shares his sad testimony, he appears to receive the same reaction from other pilgrims who are ready to listen. So he becomes an object of pity, though this response may not have helped to improve his condition. Christian makes no mention of any positive attempts to direct Little-faith's attention in an external and encouraging direction.

- a. Christian explains his ongoing plight.

HOPEFUL: How sad for this man! Such a situation must have been the cause of great grief to him.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, he was deeply distressed, and would we not have been like him if we had similarly been robbed and wounded in a strange place such as he was? It is surprising that he did not die with grief, poor soul! I was told that, for the remainder of his journey, he chiefly spread abroad melancholy and bitter complaints concerning his misfortune. He would also explain in detail to other pilgrims encountered in the way where and how he was robbed, who they were who assaulted him, what he lost, the severity of his wounds, and the closeness of his brush with death.¹²

In attempting to empathize with Little-faith, he almost succeeds in excusing him. Had either he or Hopeful been similarly assaulted at such a "strange place," he suggests, they would have similarly complained. But only a careless pilgrim would think of resting at such a dangerous place.

- (1) Little-faith pondered his calamity more than his privileges.

He travels ever closer to the glorious Celestial City, he is preserved by grace in trouble for which he is to blame, he has the fellowship of other pilgrims, he has the presence of the Holy Spirit, he has the knowledge that he is secure through the sovereignty of his Lord, yet he pushes this aside and concentrates upon his temporary setback!

¹² *Rom. 15:1; I Thess. 5:14.*

- (2) Little-faith complained bitterly of his wounds and loss.

He rehearsed his tragic experience over and over again, almost boasting of his calamity for the purpose of feeding on the “oohs” and “ahs” and “gasps” of his audience. But when all was said and done, the center of attention in this whole fiasco was Little-faith, and not his Lord. His life had become a curiosity rather than a testimony!



Miserable Little-faith

b. Hopeful offers a provocative suggestion.

HOPEFUL: But what a wonder it is that the demands of traveling did not compel him to sell or pawn some of his jewels so that pressures along the way might be relieved.

Without thinking too much, and with the result that his ignorance clearly shows, Hopeful proposes a naive solution to Little-faith's needy condition. Little does he realize that should his idea be feasible, then Little-faith's pilgrimage would be nullified rather than enhanced in quality.

(1) Little-faith ought to have sold some of his jewels.

But to suggest that a child of God should trade away some of the riches of God's grace that have been deposited to his account is to offer a monstrous remedy. How could that even remotely restore a sense of blessedness and maturity? It is rather a foolish thought that betrays Hopeful's shallow understanding of gospel truth. To the contrary, Little-faith needs to take a refresher course concerning his jewels rather than attempt to barter them away for a mess of pottage.

(2) Little-faith ought to have pawned some of his jewels.

But what pawn dealer should he deal with? To approach God would be to insult his holiness and grace. Only Satan would negotiate such a deal and then renege on the terms of redemption. To entertain this proposition Little-faith may as well head straight up Dead-man's Lane, pass through Broadway gate, and at the same time ask for a pass-out ticket! Again, Hopeful has proposed a ridiculous solution which in fact presents an impossible situation.

c. Christian corrects his fellow pilgrim.

CHRISTIAN: You talk with about as much wisdom as that of a newborn chicken with some shell still stuck on its head!¹³ Why would he ever want to pawn his jewels? And to whom would he sell them? In that region where he was robbed his jewels were not even considered valuable, nor did he desire the sort of relief that the citizens there might offer. Besides, had his jewels been discovered as missing at the gate of the *Celestial City*, he well knew that he would certainly be excluded from receiving an inheritance there; and for him, such a consequence would have been regarded as worse than meeting with the belligerence of ten thousand thieves.

¹³ Christian snibbeth [*rebukes*] his companion for his thoughtless comment.

In *Grace Abounding To The Chief Of Sinners* Bunyan clearly distinguishes his meaning with regard to Little-faith's "spending money" in contrast with his "jewels." Once again the allegory is but a reflection of the author's own experience, and especially that time when following his conversion and several years of spiritual ambivalence, the truth of Christ's imputed and substitutionary righteousness brought joyous stability to his life. Of this time, equivalent to Christian at the Place of Deliverance, he writes:

It was glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of all his benefits, and that because of this: now I could look from myself to him [as Little-faith ought to do], and should reckon that all those graces of God that now were green in me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies [petty cash] that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home! Oh, I saw my gold was in my trunk at home! In Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all; all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification, and all my redemption [I Cor. 1:30-31].¹⁴

Thus Little-faith's "spending money" equals "all those graces of God that now were green in me," while his "jewels" were "my gold . . . in my trunk at home," namely Christ's perfect and intercessory righteousness in heaven (cf. Rom. 11:33; Eph. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27; 2:2). Thus Little-faith's jewels were in fact non-negotiable treasure; their absence would have disqualified him as a pilgrim. Consequently, while he lost much of his petty cash, or faith and spiritual gifts and graces, yet he retained all of his rich inheritance in Christ.

- (1) Hopeful is an immature babe.

He is worse than a newborn chicken; in this instance the shell still covers the head, so that he is doubly stupid and blind. This sharp retort reflects Christian's exasperation at such a foolish suggestion.

- (2) Little-faith could not possibly trade this way.

What currency would he agree to accept? Who would offer to trade with him? Why would anyone living near Broad-way gate want to do business with him? And in any case, why would Little-faith want to trade his jewels to begin with?

- (3) Little-faith knew his jewels secured his inheritance.

His heart was still set heavenward, and for this reason he would never jeopardize his hope of receiving that which had been laid up in heaven for him. He well knew that his jewels, in full complement, would be inspected at the gate of the Celestial City. Thus for him to trade away his treasure was unthinkable.

¹⁴ Bunyan, *Works*, I, § 232, p. 36.

- (4) Little-faith valued his jewels above countless assaults.

His complaining notwithstanding, he would endure innumerable attacks for the sake of eventual arrival at the Celestial City. No matter how grievous his wounds, and how often the repeated pilfering of his spending money might be, yet, jealously guarding all of his jewels, he would relentlessly press forward.

5. Application.

The distinction between Little-faith and Turn-away has now become more clear, at least from a doctrinal perspective, though pastorally a difficulty of outward identification remains. Of course the problem is that Little-faith has problems, and these greatly spoil his Christian distinctiveness. However, to identify these difficulties is also to reveal the appropriate remedies.

- a. Little-faith is a believer who neglects means of grace.

Alexander Whyte perfectly describes his condition as follows:

Now, the whole pity with Little-faith was, that though he was not a bad man, yet he never, even at his best days, had much of those things that make a good and well-furnished pilgrim; and what little he had he had now clean lost. He had never been much a reader of his Bible, he had never sat over it as other men sat over their newsletters and their romances. He had never had much taste or talent for spiritual books of any kind. -He was a good sort of man, but he was not exactly the manner of man on whose broken heart the Holy Ghost sets the broad seal of heaven. . . . He had no practice in importunate prayer. He had never prayed a whole night in his life. He had never needed to do so. . . . And a more helpless pilgrim than Little-faith was all the rest of the way you never saw. He was forced to beg as he went.¹⁵

- b. Little-faith is a modestly equipped and careless soldier.

The weapons of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12-18) have been made readily available, but he has neglected to gain skill in their use. They are slackerly attached to his body rather than tautly at the ready. His shield is usually laid to one side, while his sword, with which he is unfamiliar, is most often sheathed. As a consequence, he has suffered many a wounding and defeat; his enemies mock rather than fear him because they frequently gain the victory.

- c. Little-faith is a spiritual hypochondriac.

He wallows in self-interest and especially with regard to symptoms of his suffering. His introspective, subjective, and existential preoccupation produces a morbid mind-set. His conversation solicits sympathy for his meticulously described ailments. But the recommendation of suitable remedies is met with quick dismissal. True, he rightly confesses that heaven is his goal, yet for the present his great interest is personal earthly woe.

C. The Contrast Between Little-faith and Esau.

Yet again Bunyan draws upon that initial period of spiritual turbulence in his early Christian life when he wrestled with a personal problem for at least two years. In *Grace Abounding* he tells how, having been tempted and continually pressed to “sell (or abandon) Christ,” he eventually yielded to such a thought. That is, he (Bunyan) would “let him [Christ] go if he [Christ] would let him [Bunyan] go.” As a consequence, he felt that he had sinned after the manner of Esau, “who sold his own birthright for a single meal” (Heb. 12:16-17), and therefore was beyond the obtaining of repentance. This thought haunts Bunyan for some time, though eventually he confesses that “the sufficiency of grace prevailed, with peace and joy.”¹⁶

1. Hopeful argues for Little-faith selling his jewels.

HOPEFUL: My brother, why are you so sharp with me? *Esau* sold his birthright for a mere mess of pottage; and surely that birthright was his most precious jewel.¹⁷ So if he sold such a treasure, then why could not *Little-faith* do the same?

However, he does not appear to have thought through his reasoning very carefully, otherwise he would have first pondered the consequences of Esau's hasty action and its application to Little-faith. Clearly Hopeful continues to indicate his doctrinal inadequacy.

a. He is stung by Christian's sharp rebuke.

His companion's cutting response has found its mark so that Hopeful winces and defensively counters with a biblical argument. Certainly Christian could have made his point without being so testy; it was just that he found it difficult to suffer a fool gladly.

b. He proposes that Esau sold his birthright or prize jewel.

His assumption is that Esau (Gen. 25:30-34) and Little-faith are parallel pilgrims, that is identical as children of God. But as Christian immediately senses, there are many dissimilarities here.

2. Christian distinguishes between Little-faith and Esau.

Without further censure, Christian explains the impossibility of the parallel which Little-faith has suggested. The gulf between these two characters is as great as that which separates heaven and earth. For Bunyan's resolution of his problem with Esau, as a young man, refer to *Grace Abounding*.¹⁸

¹⁵ Whyte, *Bunyan Characters*, II, p. 20.

¹⁶ Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 139-141, 158, 191, 196, 205, 212-213, 216, 226, pp. 43, 48, 60-61, 64-68, 71.

¹⁷ Heb. 12:16-17.

¹⁸ Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 225-228, p. 35.

- a. Esau sold his birthright and excluded the chief blessing.

CHRISTIAN: It is true that *Esau* did sell his birthright, and besides this so have many others; and by so doing they have excluded themselves from the chief blessing, as indeed that caitiff [*indulgent coward*] did.

In other words, Esau traded away his earthly birthright (Gen. 25:30-34) and therefore was excluded, through Jacob's devious claim, from receiving his greater heavenly blessing (Gen. 27:30-40). So to the present, like that "Caytiff [wretch]" Esau did, many have regarded their earthly privileges, such as a Christian home, as worth less than a mess of pottage, so that they are excluded from the greater blessing of a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

- b. Esau's birthright differs from Little-faith's jewels.

But you should recognize a fundamental difference between *Esau* and *Little-faith*, and also between their spiritual conditions. *Esau's* birthright was typical, but *Little-faith's* jewels were not so. *Esau's* god was his belly, but *Little-faith's* belly was not so. *Esau's* lack lay in his fleshly appetite,¹⁹ but this was not true of *Little-faith*. Besides, *Esau* could see no further than the fulfilling of his lusts. He said, "For I am at the point of death, so what good will this birthright do me?" But *Little-faith*, though it was appointed for him to have only a little faith, yet by means of his little faith he was kept from many extremes.²⁰ So by means of this same faith he was enabled to prize his jewels rather than sell them, as *Esau* did with his birthright.

They are as different as flesh and spirit, earth and heaven, works and faith, time and eternity. Otherwise it would be necessary to declare the similarity of Judas and Peter, of the two thieves crucified with Christ, etc.

- (1) Esau's estate was earthly, Little-faith's was heavenly.

By his interest, Esau indicates that he is in the broad way that is earthbound leading to destruction. Little-faith is in the narrow way, wounded though he be, and headed for heaven.

- (2) Esau's birthright was typical, Little-faith's was substantial.

As the first born of Isaac, Esau was heir to an earthly kingdom which was a type of that heavenly kingdom to come through the seed of Christ. But Little-faith's jewels were a direct claim upon that heavenly kingdom of Christ.

¹⁹ Gen. 25:30-34.

²⁰ Heb. 11:6.

- (3) Esau lusted materially while he never possessed spiritually.

He was carnal through and through, concerned only for his belly and not at all for his soul. Sensing death through hunger, yet still his flesh remained his chief interest, even his religion. He indicated not a flicker of spiritual interest, only a sensual appetite (Gen. 25:32).

- (4) Little-faith pursued heaven while he struggled on earth.

Because his jewels were his guarantee of entrance into heaven, they were not on the market for anyone, though he was prepared, if necessary, to let his belly and flesh be deprived. His primary interest was sound, though his secondary concerns were not in good order.

- c. Esau had no faith while Little-faith had some faith.

You will not read anywhere that *Esau* had faith, no not so much as a little. Therefore it is not surprising in the case of Esau, when the flesh alone controls a man, and it undoubtedly does when faith that works resistance is absent; for he will then readily sell his birthright and his soul and everything, even to the *Devil* in his *Hell*. Such a person may be likened to the ass who in her periods of heat, cannot be made to change direction.²¹ When their minds are fastened upon their lusts, they will have them whatever the cost. But *Little-faith* was of a different disposition; his mind was focused on things divine; his livelihood was based upon spiritual things that originate from *Heaven*.²²

Therefore, for what purpose would a person of this temperament sell his jewels, supposing that someone might have bought them, so as to fill his mind with empty things? Will a man give a penny to fill his belly with hay? Or can you persuade the turtle-dove to live upon carrion [*carcass meat*] like the crow? Though faithless ones will pawn, or mortgage, or sell what they have, and even themselves outright as well, all for the sake of carnal lusts, yet they that have faith, true saving faith, though but a little of it, cannot do so. Therefore my brother, here is your mistake.

Nowhere in the Bible is Esau described as having the slightest amount of faith, while that same book does identify certain genuine Christians as having “little faith” (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Such a distinction is that which most essentially sets apart a child of God from a child with religious parents (Heb. 11:6).

²¹ Jer. 2:24.

²² Little-faith could not live on Esau's pottage.

(1) Esau was asinine in his carnal pursuits.

Since Esau was void of faith, he followed the unbridled dictates of his flesh. He is likened to a sexually stimulated wild donkey that is determined to satisfy its passion (Jer. 2:24).

(a) He would sell his soul to the devil.

That is, to gratify his bodily drives and ambition, he would barter away his spiritual being and moral conscience, in much the same way as Goethe's Faust makes his hellish pact with Mephistopheles.

(b) He would trade his birthright for a bowl of soup.

He despised the godly heritage of his father Isaac; Esau had no mind for the great promise of God given to Abraham, and through confirmation to his father (Gen. 26:1-6). This he considered to be evangelical claptrap.

(2) Little-faith was genuine in his spiritual pursuits.

His appetite was not for Esau's pottage, but divine things; his pursuit was heavenly, so why would he even think of trading his spiritual jewels for carnal delicacies? He may have been negligent, but he was not traitorous to his mission.

(a) He would never hunger for carnal chaff.

His moral taste was for righteousness and 'union with God, even though he did not feast in this regard as often as he ought. His heart for Christ was weak, yet definitely alive.

(b) He would never devour carnal corruption.

It is unthinkable that the faithful and affectionate turtle-dove would ever stoop to corrupt itself by eating putrefying flesh. How much more incredible it would be for an authentic pilgrim to sell his God-given jewels for Satan's baubles!

(3) Application.

Yet many young people today, having received a godly birthright, that is a Christian upbringing and fellowship in a faithful local church, have flung all of this back at the feet of their parents as seemingly worthless. They foolishly discard it all for a mess of worldly indulgence. They treat this treasure as Israel treated its Messiah (Zech. 11:12-13). There are many Esau's in the world today. Other children who inherit the same privileges, while claiming the chief blessing of faith in Christ, yet fritter their lives away through the neglect of means of grace; they retain their jewels but are unproductive for

their Master. There are many Little-faith's in the church of Jesus Christ today.

(4) Faithless Esau and Little-faith are opposites.

Whatever the apparent similarity there may be on account of their involvement in the same religious environment, yet they remain antithetical in nature. One has no faith, the other has some faith; one would sell his soul, the other would save his soul; one is driven by carnal lusts, the other yields the impulses of his flesh to the will of the Spirit of God. The suggestion of Hopeful that Little-faith should learn from the example of Esau is fundamentally in error.

3. Hopeful agrees with Christian's explanation.

HOPEFUL: I frankly acknowledge it. But at the same time, your severe response has almost made me angry.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, I was rather harsh, but I did it to compare you with certain birds that are especially lively, and run to and fro in untrodden paths with the shell on their heads, like a newborn chick! But let us leave this matter behind and consider the matter under discussion, and all will be well between you and me.

His readiness to yield to the teaching of Christian is commendable. He clearly recognizes his error and bows to the truth. No doubt lesser pilgrims would have attempted to save face.

a. He nevertheless has hurt feelings.

His fellow companion is reminded of the sharpness of his manner which might have lost the attention of a less submissive pupil. Truth can be communicated winsomely rather than abruptly without the slightest compromise.

b. He yet suffers Christian's justification.

The teacher here supports his firm response by adding that Hopeful was foolishly wandering into "untrodden paths," like some blind chicken. But he will not discuss his attitude. He simply asks that they press on together firmly united in the fact that they both have saving faith. Hopeful acquiesces, and so they press forward, happy to still consider other aspects of Little-faith's problem.

D. The Three Assailants of Little-faith Considered.

The continuing interchange of ideas proves Christian's mastery of the investigation of Little-faith. Yet both pilgrims will be equally as foolish at their next encounter with a stranger. And further ahead Hopeful will prove himself stronger in faith than Christian. But now Hopeful questions his companion concerning the degree of bravery that Little-faith should have evidenced against his three attackers.

1. Their seeming weakness considered at a distance.

HOPEFUL: But *Christian*, I am persuaded in my heart that these three fellows were nothing more than a company of cowards. Otherwise, do you think that they would have been so quick to run at the sound of someone else approaching along the way? So why did not *Little-faith* pluck up greater courage? It is my opinion that he could have resisted at least one skirmish with them, and then yielded when they overwhelmed him.²³

CHRISTIAN: Certainly many have called these assailants cowards, but in reality few have found this to be true during an actual period of trial. As for *Little-faith* having a great [*courageous*] heart, he had no such thing.²⁴ And I believe that had you been the man concerned, after a short engagement you would have quickly yielded. To be truthful, while you are churned up about this matter when these opponents are distant from us, I believe you might have second thoughts about a brave confrontation if they should reappear to challenge you.²⁵

Hopeful rather brashly assumes that the sudden flight of Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, at the suspected approach of Great-grace, proves their cowardice, though this opinion is decidedly theoretical.

a. Hopeful thinks that Little-faith lacked courage.

The manifest carelessness and total lack of resistance proved that Little-faith was a spiritual wimp. At least he could have attempted to offer opposition instead of meekly capitulating. There is the boastful suggestion here that Hopeful would certainly have offered a fight had he been found in a similar situation.

b. Christian cautions that the assailants only seemed cowards.

To begin with, Little-faith, according to his weakness, did not have a great heart. Though in Part Two it will be demonstrated that the escort of Christiana and her entourage, a warrior named Great-heart, did have great faith.²⁶ But Hopeful would have done little better; it is so easy to confidently stretch out one's height, stick out one's chest, and boast of prowess when the enemy is distant.

c. Illustration.

For a boxer, courage and confidence are easily expressed during the pre-fight interview. But once in the ring it is an entirely different matter. So hopeful was immature in his assessment of Little-faith, lacking in sympathy and, as we shall

²³ Hopeful swaggers [*is very opinionated*].

²⁴ There is no great heart for God where there is little faith.

²⁵ We have more courage when we are distant from spiritual assaults than when we are close.

²⁶ Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 190.

now see, ignorant of the support that the three wayside thugs were able to draw upon.

2. Their master's ever-willing support considered from experience.

But consider again that these travelers are in fact hired thieves who serve under the *King* of the bottomless pit;²⁷ he himself, when needed, will quickly come to their aid, and his voice is like the roaring of a lion.²⁸ I myself have been engaged in a conflict like that of *Little-faith*, and I found it to be a terrifying experience. These three villains also set upon me, and while I began to resist them as a *Christian* ought, yet they were quick to call for their master's assistance, which was immediately forthcoming. As the saying goes, I would have exchanged my life for a mere penny, but, as *God* would have it, I was clothed [*accoutered*] with armor of proof [*tried armor*]. Even so, though I was well equipped, I found it hard work to prove myself as a manly pilgrim. No one can possibly understand what it is like to experience such combat, except he who has been in the thick of the battle himself.

Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt are thieves who are apprenticed to the king of the bottomless pit, that is they are undergoing training in their skill and are constantly under the tutelage of a master craftsman. Christian now relates from personal experience.

- a. Satan's apprentices are defended like a lion.

These cubs may be inept at times, but their father gives them such forceful backing that their ability, derived though it be, ought not to be underestimated (Ps. 7:2; I Pet. 5:8).

- b. Christian has been likewise assailed.

The reference here is to Christian's terrifying bout with Apollyon, though on that occasion no direct reference is made to the three robbers. However, their influence is assumed since this battle took place in the Valley of Humiliation.

- (1) Satan's assistance was overwhelming.

To his credit, Christian's resistance under attack made it necessary for the assailants to call in their master. However, upon his arrival the valiant pilgrim desired to quit and would have bargained to do so for a pittance. The battle was so terrifying that no observer should casually declare the enemy's infantry to be cowards.

²⁷ *Rev. 9:1-2, 11.*

²⁸ *I Pet. 5:8.*

- (2) Only God's resistant armor delivered him.

Christian remains well aware that his deliverance at that frightening hour was chiefly due to that expression, "but as God would have it."²⁹ In other words, the sovereignty of grace operated through the bestowed spiritual weapons of warfare. He seems ashamed to confess that he lost his sword. However, we do see confirmed here the fact that Little-faith was greatly hampered by his lack of the use of means of grace.

- (3) Only those in hot battle know how hot it gets.

There is no indication that Hopeful had, to this point in his pilgrimage, entered into as fierce a conflict with the enemy as had Christian. Hence his analysis is unproven supposition. But it is noticeable that while Christian fared much better in battle than did Little-faith, yet he shows a sympathy and understanding concerning his weaker brother that Hopeful has yet to understand (Rom. 15:1).

E. The Bravery of Great-grace Considered.

Hopeful appears to have a romantic rather than a realistic perception of pilgrims in conflict with the enemy. Hence he almost seems to relish the thought of the invincible Great-grace trouncing the three cowering and trembling robbers.

1. Hopeful suggests to Christian that Great-grace would have overcome.

HOPEFUL: Well, of course, these rogues did retreat when they anticipated that *Great-grace* was possibly drawing close in the way.³⁰

CHRISTIAN: True, they were accustomed to fleeing, and even their master, when there was the prospect of *Great-grace* appearing; however, this is not surprising since he is renowned as the *King's* champion. But I trust you will make some distinction between *Little-faith* and the *King's* champion.³¹ All the *King's* subjects are not his champions; nor can they, when tested by assailants, accomplish such valiant feats of war as he does. Is it reasonable to expect that a little child should confront *Goliath* as *David* did? Is it right to expect a wren [*small bird*] to have the strength of an ox? Some pilgrims are strong while others are weak; some have great faith, and others have little. This man *Little-faith* was one of the weaker kind, and therefore he went to the wall [*suffered exhausting humiliation*].

²⁹ Bunyan, *Works*, III, pp. 113, 149.

³⁰ *Acts* 4:33.

³¹ *I Sam.* 17:4.

No doubt the exploits of this valiant pilgrim had been heard of both in the town of Vanity and along the corridors of the narrow way. His reputation was for “conquering kingdoms, performing acts of righteousness, obtaining promises, shutting the mouths of lions, quenching the power of fire, escaping the edge of the sword, being made strong in weakness, becoming mighty in war, and putting armies to flight” (Heb. 11:33-34).

- a. Great-grace has had his victories.

Like so many military conquests, those of Great-grace have been won in preparation for battle, that is by the utilization of the means of grace and especially the doctrines of grace (Heb. 13:9). So Bunyan writes: “For the doctrine of free grace believed is the most sin-killing doctrine in the world.”³²

- b. But not all pilgrims are the King's Champion.

Great-grace was both well-trained and proven in many a battle. His skills were well-honed; his fighting ability was renowned; his victories were notable (Acts 4:33). He was a David able to slay Goliaths. But not all pilgrims are so well endowed. Children and cripples in the faith need special care and protection (Heb. 5:12-14), and of such was Little-faith.

- c. But all pilgrims do not have the same strength.

An ox does not have the same strength as a wren, nor does Little-faith have the same spiritual ability as Great-grace. In family life wise parents have varying expectations according to the ages and distinctive abilities of their children. So in the life of the family of God, wise pastors recognize these variable factors when caring for the flock under their charge (I John 2:12-14).

- d. Little-faith was a weakling and only just escaped.

Keeble comments that his need, out of weakness, to go “to the walls,” is derived from the practice in medieval churches, which normally had no pews, of setting pews for the infirm by a side or back wall.³³ Hence, the likes of Little-faith ought to be nurtured rather than scolded.

2. Hopeful wishes that Great-grace had met the assailants.

His lusting for a skirmish is more an interest in spectacle rather than “deliverance from evil” (Matt. 6:13). To be sure he desires victory for the right and true, but it is more through the conflict that other pilgrims participate in rather than the less savory participation of himself!

³² Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 358.

³³ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. N. H. Keeble, pp. 275-276.

- a. But even Great-grace needs to be vigilant.

HOPEFUL: I still wish that *Great-grace* had appeared for the sake of those scoundrels.

CHRISTIAN: If he had arrived on that occasion, he might have had his hands full. For I have to tell you that although *Great-grace* is highly skilled with his weapons, as long as he maintains a sharp sword he can do very well against such opponents:³⁴ yet if *Faint-heart*, *Mistrust*, or *Guilt*, can penetrate his armor, he will find the going hard and even take a fall. And as you know, when a pilgrim is down, what can he do?

Bunyan himself lived through civil war and, though there is no evidence that he actually participated in combat, yet he was a soldier for Cromwell and the Commonwealth, and surely witnessed the raw and brutal reality of engagement. He certainly had no romantic ideas in this respect. Thus he knew that great soldiers were yet subject to mortal, fearful, and wounding encounters.



Great-grace

³⁴ Eph. 6:17.

- (1) His weapons must always be at the ready.

Special emphasis is given to swordsmanship (Eph. 6:17), otherwise the enemy is enabled to gain the advantage.

- (2) His opponents press him sorely.

Should they be able to restrict the thrusting of Great-grace, then they stand a good chance of felling the doughty pilgrim. And once he is down, as Little-faith well knows, then he is easy prey for finishing off.

- b. But even Great-grace bore the scars of combat.

Whoever looks very closely at the face of *Great-grace* will notice scars and cuts there that will clearly prove what I say to be true. Concerning one engagement that he had with the enemy, I heard it reported that he had exclaimed about this battle, "We despaired even of life."³⁵ Is it not true that these sturdy rogues and their accomplices were able to make even *David* groan and mourn and roar with anguish?³⁶ Yes, and also *Heman*³⁷ and *Hezekiah*³⁸, even though regarded in their day as champions, nevertheless they as well were forced to arouse themselves because of the severity of the assaults they faced. And in spite of taking a fearless stand, yet their soiled and torn coats indicated subjection to brutal handling. On one occasion *Peter* tried to do what he could in a similar confrontation; but though he has been acknowledged by some as the prince of the apostles, still these assailants so roughed him up that at the end he was afraid of a pitiful girl.³⁹

So Christian destroys the romantic vision of Hopeful and replaces it with reality. Great-grace had his wounds to lick and his scars to remind him of his close encounter with Satan. He certainly had no sentimental understanding of his experiences; they were too real and sobering.

- (1) He once despaired of life.

So close was he to capitulating to the enemy that "the sentence of death" seemed to be upon him; he felt that all was lost (II Cor. 1:8-10). Bunyan describes, from his early experience as a pilgrim, one similar brush with Satan.

³⁵ II Cor. 1:8-10.

³⁶ Ps. 38:1-10.

³⁷ Ps. 88:1-18.

³⁸ Isa. 36:1-38:22.

³⁹ Luke 22:31, 54-62.

Down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt, and fearful despair. . . . I was like a man bereft of life, and as now past all recovery, and bound over to eternal punishment.⁴⁰

- (2) He could groan as did other stalwarts of faith.

David (Ps. 38:1-22), Heman (Ps. 88:3-9, 13-18), and Hezekiah (II Kings 20:1-6) all were champions as well, yet they all had their pants thoroughly dusted with the beatings they experienced.

- (3) He could be humbled as was Peter.

The Apostle Peter was also a champion who Satan desired “to sift like wheat” (Luke 22:3 1). As a result, and in spite of his braggart manner, yet he was humbled by “a sorry girl” (Luke 22:56-57) in his denial of Christ.

- c. But even Great-grace knows Satan to be very ferocious.

Besides, the *King* of these scoundrels is always at their beck and call; when they whistle, he is always within their hearing. So if at any time they are losing in battle, whenever possible, he comes to their rescue.⁴¹ And for this reason it has been said of him, “The sword that attempts to strike him cannot succeed, nor can the spear, the dart, or the javelin. He regards iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee. Sling stones are turned by him into stubble. Darts are regarded as straw. He laughs at the rattling of the javelin.”⁴² Hence in this case, what can a pilgrim do?

It is true that if a man has full access to *Job’s* horse, and has the courage and skill to ride him, then he might accomplish notable deeds for his *King*. It has also been said about this stallion, “For his neck is clothed with thunder; he will not be afraid like the jumping locust; the snorting of his nostrils is terrifying; he paws in the valley while rejoicing in his strength, and then goes forth to engage the armed enemy. He mocks at fear and is frightened of nothing; he would never turn his back from a confronting sword. The quiver trembles at him, as do the flashing spear and javelin. He races over the ground as if devouring it, on account of his fierceness and rage; neither does the trumpet sound cause him to halt. Rather, at the sound of the trumpet he exclaims, ‘Aha,’ and is drawn by the smell of distant battle, the thundering of captains and the shoutings of conflict.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Bunyan, *Works*, I, § 140, p. 23.

⁴¹ *Ps. 7:2; I Pet. 5:8.*

⁴² Job 41:26-29. Leviathan’s sturdiness.

⁴³ Job 39:19-25.

Apollyon is often whistled in to help his struggling apprentices, and when he does come, it is with a fury and anger that only the storms and thunder of hell could compare with.

- (1) He finds Satan's weapons to be formidable.

Using the might of Job's Leviathan as a model (Job 41:26-29), Christian portrays the king of the bottomless pit as a terrifying foe with monstrous strength who utterly disdains the weaponry of human nature; he mocks such puny resistance.

- (2) He needs the strength of job's horse.

Using the might of Job's warhorse as a model (Job 39:19-25), Christian portrays the necessary riposte that would be sufficient to realistically oppose the enemy. Clearly the power that is here described is supernatural and far away beyond the capacity of the natural man.



Job's horse

F. The Summing-up by Christian of Lessons to be Learned.

Neither Christian nor Hopeful are to be compared with the foregoing representations of power and combative might. They are petty “footmen” and as such of an infinitely lesser league. To appreciate this point is to establish a proper attitude for confrontation with the enemy.

1. We are not to brashly desire to meet the enemy.

But for such mere footmen [*infantry*] as you and I are, let us never eagerly desire to meet with an enemy, nor promote ourselves as if we could do so much better, that is when we hear about others who have suffered defeat or a bludgeoning; nor let us be tickled [*proudly stimulated*] with thoughts about our own spiritual manliness, for those who think this way usually suffer the worst when tried.⁴⁴ Take *Peter* for example, concerning whom I earlier spoke about. How he would swagger [*strut*]; yes, he really would. Because of his vain attitude, he would promote himself as being more ready to stand in defense of his *Master* than all other men. But tell me, who was more foiled [*defeated*] and exhausted than he when these villains were on the attack?⁴⁵

It is foolish presumption; it is a display of ignorance concerning the foe; it suggests a misplaced confidence in our ability; it demeans the effort of others who have suffered in battle.

- a. Avoid boasting in one’s spiritual manhood.

Admiration of ourselves in a mirror, fully accoutered and gleaming, has nothing to do with our combative performance. Such a self estimate is bound to be distorted; it is usually followed by a humiliating defeat (I Cor. 10:12).

- b. Avoid the confident swagger of Peter who yet fell.

Who was more self-assured in his ability to defend Christ than he (Matt. 26:33)? But how bitter were his tears or remorse when the cock crowed (Matt. 26:75). Peter was ignorant of the power of the enemy and his own powerlessness.

⁴⁴ Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 10:12.

⁴⁵ Matt. 26:33, 75.

2. We are to remember two things when assaults occur.

Therefore when we hear that such robberies take place on the *King's* highway, there are two things that we should do.

First, let us be well harnessed [*accoutered with weapons*], and especially sure that we have a shield with us. For it was the lack of this item that made it impossible for the vigorous assailant of *Leviathan* [*the ferocious monster*] to make him yield.⁴⁶ For it is certainly true that if this particular weapon is missing, then he [*the King of the bottomless pit*] will have no fear of us. That is why one of the *King's* champions [*Paul*] has advised, "Above all take the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish the fiery darts of the wicked one."⁴⁷

Second, as we travel, it is good for us to request the *King* that he provide shepherding guides, and that he go with us himself. This prospect made *David* rejoice when he was passing through the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*. Also *Moses* expressed his preference for death rather than tread one more step without *God*.⁴⁸ Oh my dear brother, if our *King* alone will go with us, why should we be afraid even though thousands shall plot to oppose us; but on the other hand, without him the proud can only find refuge under the corpses of the wicked who have been slain.⁴⁹

Robberies, like that of Little-faith, are common along the *King's* Highway since the journey is, in the main, through enemy territory. Hence it is important to be vigilant and walk circumspectly (Eph. 5:15-16). But above all:

a. Be well harnessed with armor and weaponry.

In this regard Little-faith was totally unprepared and therefore most vulnerable. Under the sovereignty of grace, the pilgrim is responsible for his equipment and skill in this regard (Eph. 6:13).

(1) Avoid overestimating one's measure of faith.

It is easy to believe when the sun shines that the harvest will ripen, but quite another matter when storms threaten (Rom. 12:3). The assault of unbelief against faith will be formidable.

⁴⁶ *Job 41:1-34.*

⁴⁷ Eph. 6:16.

⁴⁸ Exod. 33:13-15; Ps. 3:5-8; 23:4.

⁴⁹ Ps. 27:1-3; Isa. 10:4.

- (2) Give attention to the shield of faith.

Without this item brought to the fore, Satan will in no way yield ground. Rather he will sense the advantage and rain down great showers of darts that inject skepticism. For this reason, give priority to skillful use here (Eph. 6:16).

- b. Be in a convoy with the company of God.

In other words, keep in fellowship with a true body of pilgrims, that is a faithful separatist church. Crucial to such a spiritual brigade will be the vanguard of God (Ps. 23:4).

- (1) His presence satisfied David and Moses.

These champions were able to traverse many a spiritual wilderness, but they demanded that God go with them (I Sam. 17:26, 47; Ex. 33:13-15).

- (2) His presence is better than ten thousand.

It is better to be apprenticed to God, for He will have the ultimate victory; legions of the like of Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt can never separate us from his care (Ps. 3:5-8; 27:1-3).

- (3) His absence causes the proud to fall.

They fall from the heights of fantasy to join the ignominy of company with the slain (Is. 10:4). Their boasted prowess proves to be but crumbling clay.

3. We are to prefer the absence of assaults.

For my part, I have been in the thick of the battle before now, and though I am presently alive through the goodness of he who is best, yet I cannot boast in my spiritual manliness. I shall be ever so glad if I do not meet with any further clashes, though I fear we have not passed beyond all danger. However, since the lion and the bear have not yet devoured me, I have hope that *God* will deliver us from the next uncircumcised *Philistine*.⁵⁰ Then *Christian* sang:

Poor *Little-faith* has been among the thieves!
Was robbed! Remember this, whoever so believes
And gets more faith, shall then a victor be⁵¹
Over ten thousand, else scarce over three.

⁵⁰ *I Sam. 17:26-36; Prov. 28:15; Jer. 47:4.*

⁵¹ *I John 5:4.*

As a man of experience, Christian gives sound advice to the inexperienced Hopeful (I Tim. 3:6). The mature pilgrim will not toy with Satan's subjects, territory, or economy; the battle is too serious, and the wounds are exceedingly painful. He will not presume concerning his own ability or Satan's power. Rather, he will walk with closed ranks behind his able commander (I Pet. 5:8), much preferring to avoid scuffles with the enemy. His prime task is to complete his journey; it is not to reconnoiter for battles wherever they may be found.

- a. Yet when trials come, let us believe for deliverance.

If the lion and the bear (Prov. 28:15) and the Philistine (Jer. 47:4) make further assaults, let us believe, with a prepared faith, that God will deliver according to His faithfulness.

- b. Yet when trials come, more faith gains the victory.

So Christian sings of the chief principle to be learned which Little-faith so neglected: "Whoso believes, and gets more faith, shall then a victor be over ten thousand, else scarce over three"⁵² (cf. I John 5:4-5).

⁵² Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 150.