

Chapter Thirty-Two

Christian and Hopeful cross the Enchanted Ground

A. Introduction.

This major discourse section that incorporates discussion concerning Hopeful, Ignorance, and Temporary, is given a most interesting historical interpretation by Roger Sharrock. He comments:

The Enchanted Ground represents a period of peace and toleration for the faithful when moral and spiritual effort might be relaxed; the verse in I Thessalonians quoted [here by Christian] ('watch and be sober', &c.) is preceded by the passage: 'For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them.' The allusion would be to the time after the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 when meeting-houses could legally be reopened.¹

However, since Sharrock believes *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written during Bunyan's first imprisonment concluding in 1672, it seems more likely that the relative ease for Nonconformists of the Cromwellian interregnum is in mind here. Of course such a suggestion would also have to mesh with added details concerning the additional trials of this territory that are incorporated in Part Two.

1. The character of the countryside.

THEN I saw in my dream that the travelers continued on their way until they came to a particular region where the nature of the air had a tendency to make one drowsy, that is with regard to strangers passing through.

Spurgeon declares: "There are, no doubt, many of us who are passing over this plain; and I fear that this is the condition of the majority of churches in the present day. They are lying down on the settles of Lukewarmness in the Arbors of the Enchanted Ground. There is not that activity and zeal we could wish to see among them."² Note however, that this comment derives aspects of the landscape here from Part Two and not simply Part One. When Christiana and company pass this way they encounter briars and thorns, mist and darkness, the Enchanted Arbor with its soft couch, dirt and "slabbiness" [muddiness], Mr. Stand-fast who is providentially rescued from Madam Bubble, while the pilgrim band perseveres with grunting, puffing, and sighing.³

¹ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, eds. Wharey and Sharrock, p. 336.,

² C. H. Spurgeon, *Pictures From Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 182.

³ John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, George Offor, ed., III, pp. 235-239.

- a. Its air makes the pilgrims drowsy.

Obviously for pilgrims there are periodically allocated places for rest such as the Arbor on the Hill Difficulty, the Palace Beautiful, the banks of the River of the Water of Life, and the Delectable Mountains. But this present location distinguishes itself as being a place to make transient pilgrims, as opposed to residents, tired and sleepy rather than refreshed, and thus it is not a place for the weary traveler (Prov. 6:9-10). It is designed to induce, according to Spurgeon, “insensibility, inaction, and insecurity.” He further adds: “This is not the sleep of Jacob, in which a ladder unites Heaven and earth, and angels tread the ascending rounds; but this is the sleep in which ladders are raised from hell, and devils climb upward from the pit to seize thy slumbering spirit.”⁴

- b. Its length makes it a prolonged snare.

This is the longest discourse section in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and as such it indicates the great length of this stretch of highway. Yet while the temptation to sleep is therefore prolonged, the pilgrims are able to turn this occasion into an opportunity for the most mature and detailed of doctrinal discussions that the allegory affords. So Cheever comments: “While they are thus musing, singing, and talking, the fire burned, and the danger grew less and less the more they became interested. . . . Such conversation as that of Christian and Hopeful is full of awakening and edifying power.”⁵

2. Hopeful's tendency to slumber.

And it was here that *Hopeful* began to feel lethargic and sleepy. Therefore he spoke to *Christian*, “I have now become so drowsy that I can hardly keep my eyes open; so let us lie down here and take a nap.”⁶

CHRISTIAN: In no way, my brother, lest in sleeping we never awaken again.⁷

HOPEFUL: Friend, why do you say that? To the working man sleep is very sweet;⁸ in taking a nap we will be refreshed and feel much better.

While Hopeful has grown in spiritual stature through his staunch defense of the truth before Atheist, yet a lull in conflict reveals a chink in his armor. Again we see that a frontal and direct assault of the enemy is now substituted by an indirect attack by means of a seeming natural need of sleep.

⁴ Spurgeon, *Pictures From Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 182-187.

⁵ George B. Cheever, *Lectures On Bunyan*, pp. 281-82.

⁶ Prov. 6:9-10.

⁷ Ps. 13:3.

⁸ Eccles. 5:12.

- a. Having become sleepy, he pleads for a nap.

But why is Hopeful drowsy? It is because of the thinness of the air, its lack of life giving supply. Further, the air is full of spiritual pollutants that weaken all those who inhale it. To rest or even take a short nap is to yield to its paralyzing toxins and sleep the sleep of death (Ps. 13:3). To spiritually exercise is to muster strength and produce spiritual antibodies.

- b. Having labored, he justifies a snooze.

In spite of his claim, this pilgrim is not overcome by heavy laboring (Eccl. 5:12), but rather by yielding to the carnal appeal of that environment. The temptation here is to relax and be at ease, to indulge in rest and throw caution to the wind since the climate seems so relaxing and soothing (Prov. 6:9-11).

- c. Having been tested by Atheist, they are tested by lethargy.

Confrontation with the returnee was sudden and very much to the point with issues sharply drawn. But here the danger is disabling gradualism. Cheever adds: "Sleeping here there is no safety; for if you give way to your almost irresistible inclination, it becomes more irresistible, you are in imminent danger of the lethargy of spiritual death."⁹



⁹ Ibid.

3. Christian's antidote for slumber.

CHRISTIAN: Do you not remember that it was one of the *Shepherds* who exhorted us to beware of the *Enchanted Ground*? By this he meant that we should be careful not to doze there. So let us not sleep as others do, but rather let us watch and be sober.¹⁰

HOPEFUL: I do confess myself at fault, and had I been traveling here alone, by sleeping I would have been in danger of death. How true is the saying of the wise man, "Two are better than one."¹¹ Up to this point in our journey, your companionship has been a continual mercy; be assured that you shall have a good reward for your efforts.

CHRISTIAN: Now then, to prevent drowsiness in this place, let us commence with some profitable conversation.

Again the benefit of fellowship on pilgrimage becomes abundantly obvious. The contrasting strengths and weaknesses of these two Pilgrims mean that they complement one another and enable each other to persevere. Here Christian shows how his distinctive alertness fulfills the need of a fellow traveler. They demonstrate the interdependency of various members of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:21-25).

a. He fears the sleep from which there is no awakening.

Christian is aware of the strategy of the enemy. Whereas God makes the soul alive and awake (Rom. 13:11-14), Satan would lull it to sleep with "the sleep of death" (Ps. 13:3-4). Therefore, one alert pilgrim makes it his business to have a concern for another pilgrim who is careless (I Pet. 1:22).

b. He remembers the warning of the shepherd.

It was probably the shepherd Watchful who cautioned them against sleeping at this point. In other words, knowledge of the truth should take precedence over feeling. In this case, feeling is endeavoring to override the truth.

c. He calls for watchfulness and sobriety.

Christian seems almost unaffected by the stupefying vapors that nearly overwhelm his friend. Kelman describes this difference as follows: "[Christian] is all for brisk living, and is not liable to those sweeping tides of natural magic and emotion which overpower more delicate spirits. He is wide awake and able to handle Hopeful with a rough common sense which is the only wholesome thing for the sentimentalist."¹² So the stronger brother exhorts his weaker brother to be on the alert (I Thess. 5:6-8).

¹⁰ I Thess. 5:6.

¹¹ Eccles. 4:9.

¹² John Kelman, *The Road*, II, p. 131.

- d. He recommends the stimulation of good conversation.

At all costs the mind must be kept active, and that through vigorous interaction with vital truth. Spurgeon adds here:

Christians, who isolate themselves, and stand alone, are very liable to lie down on the settle or the soft couch, and go to sleep; but if you talk much together, as they did in the olden times, you will find it extremely beneficial. Two Christians talking together of the ways of the Lord will go much faster to Heaven than one alone: and when a whole church unites in speaking of the Lord's loving kindness, verily, beloved, there is no way like that of keeping themselves awake.¹³

4. Hopeful's confession of error and desire for fellowship.

HOPEFUL: Why, I wholeheartedly agree.
 CHRISTIAN: Then where shall we begin?
 HOPEFUL: Well, let us start where *God* began to work with us.
 But if you are agreeable, do begin first.
 When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,
 And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
 Yes, let them learn of them in any wise [way]
 Thus to keep open their drowsy slumbering eyes.
 Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,
 Keeps them awake, and that in spite of *Hell*.¹⁴

He snaps to attention through the arousal of his companion; his mind revives with the confrontation of truth; he repents of his sluggishness; he awakens to his danger; he acknowledges the importance of his friend and kindred company.

- a. Pilgrims alone are more likely to suffer death.

Solo Christians are as vulnerable as solo soldiers. They underestimate the enemy and overestimate their own fighting ability. We know from Little-faith's sad experience that the assailing enemy at Dead-man's Lane was an overwhelming trio of thugs.

- b. Pilgrims in fellowship experience mercy.

Hopeful humbly confesses that his friend's presence has been a manifestation of mercy to him. So it is implicit in Philippians 2:3 that, in regarding a brother as more important than ourselves, we acknowledge our dependency upon him. So in assembling together, we "stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24-25). So we receive and dispense mercy, one with another (I John 5:1).

¹³ John Bunyan, *Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 191-2.

¹⁴ The Dreamer's note.

c. Pilgrims in fellowship maintain alertness.

In operating as a team, better reconnaissance is possible concerning the surrounding world while spiritual camaraderie is internally strengthening to the church. Further, accountability and the interchange of truth maintain vigilance (Eccl. 4:9).

(1) Through profitable discussion.

To avoid loss through drowsiness, the requisite stimulant is discussion of truth that should arouse the heart. This revelation is Bible doctrine concerning the impact of the gospel upon the lives of three contrasting individuals, two of which are counterfeit children of God. For Bunyan, such interaction ought not to be based upon mere sentiment, vague devotional thoughts, or cerebral infatuation, but exact teaching that should be wrestled with personally and profoundly.

(2) Through sobering discussion.

So the two pilgrims agree to converse as they progress. But Hopeful's suggested topic is not concerned with the weather or politics; rather it is about personal and experiential testimony that calls for serious reflection. Again dreamer Bunyan interrupts the scene to poetically add his endorsement to what follows. After all, proper time management concerns avoiding hell and gaining heaven.



Hopeful tells Christian of his conversion

B. Hopeful Testifies to His Conversion at Vanity Fair.

1. Introduction.

CHRISTIAN: (Suggesting a topic to *Hopeful*) Let me ask you a question. How did you first come to think about what you are doing now?

HOPEFUL: Do you mean, how did I first come to be concerned about the healthy condition of my soul?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, that is exactly what I mean.

Gordon Wakefield is correct when he describes this testimony as “the most succinct account of saving faith in all of Bunyan’s writings.”¹⁵ It distinguishes itself also as being the author’s normative understanding of conversion when compared with his own extended and tortuous experience described in *Grace Abounding* and characterized by Christian.

- a. Hopeful has suggested they discuss their conversion.

It is notable that the language here partakes of a God-centered perspective since our pilgrim has just enquired as to “where God began with us” (Gal. 4:9). The focus here does not concern our “decision for Christ.” Consider Paul’s own testimony in this regard (Gal. 1:14-16).

- b. Christian asks Hopeful how he became a pilgrim.

The stronger personality of Christian prevails in spite of his companion’s initial request. He knows little about his companion’s early history, though Christian had testified at Vanity Fair about the awakening of his soul at the City of Destruction, perhaps within the hearing of Hopeful.

- c. Christian seeks a testimony of soul-work.

His interest here is not for spectacular and phenomenal signs, but a revelation of a change of heart in being made “dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11).

- d. Illustration.

For another representation of conversion by Bunyan, refer to his *Saved By Grace*.¹⁶ A brief outline of this penetrating analysis is as follows:

¹⁵ Gordon Wakefield, *Bunyan the Christian*, p. 90.

¹⁶ Bunyan, *Works*, I, pp. 350-4.

(1) God's carriage (movement) toward man.

He comes, "not in the heat and fire of his jealousy, but 'in the cool of the day,' in unspeakable gentleness, mercy, pity, and bowels of love: not in clothing himself with vengeance, but in a way of entreaty, and meekly beseecheth the sinner to be reconciled unto him (II Cor. 5:19-20)."¹⁷

(2) Man's carriage (movement) toward God.

This period is, "from the first day he [God] beginneth to deal with their souls, even to the time that they are to be taken up into heaven."¹⁸

- (a) The convicting Word causes the sinner to flee to carnality.
- (b) The convicting Word causes contemplation, turn or burn.
- (c) The convicting Word prompts self-reformation.
- (d) The convicting Word reveals man's filthy righteousnesses.
- (e) The Spirit comforts discouragement with the love of God.
- (f) The Spirit seals the gospel to the joyful heart.
- (g) The Spirit heals the unstable heart.
- (h) The Spirit persists with the unstable heart.
- (i) The grace of God is supplanted by grace upon grace.



Hopeful's early indulgent life

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 350.

¹⁸ Ibid.

2. Hopeful's early delights in ungodliness.

HOPEFUL: For a long time I continued to delight in those things which were on display and marketed at *Vanity Fair*; these were things which I now believe, had I continued in them, would have certainly led to my eternal damnation and destruction.¹⁹

CHRISTIAN: What were these things in particular?

HOPEFUL: All of the treasures and riches of the world. Also, I derived great pleasure from rioting, partying, drinking, swearing, dishonesty, lewdness, Sabbath-breaking, and much more, all of which tended to destroy my soul.²⁰ But at last I discovered that, by listening to and thinking about spiritual truth, this ungodly lifestyle would eventually lead to my death; I further understood that because of these carnal things the wrath of *God* falls on the children of disobedience.²¹ Such truths I heard from you, as well as beloved *Faithful* who was put to death for his faith and godly living in *Vanity Fair*.

CHRISTIAN: And did this new understanding bring about an immediate burden of conviction?

HOPEFUL: No, because right then I was not willing to know about the evil of sin or the damnation that results from obeying it; on the contrary, when troubled with the *Word* of truth, I made every effort to shut my eyes to its revealing light.

No doubt his early indulgence at *Vanity Fair* was devoted, yet Alexander Whyte suggests he later found these supposed delights to be “gall in his belly.”²² Yet he knew of no remedy for the resultant severe spiritual heartburn.

a. He traded intensely at *Vanity Fair*.

Reveling in the sensual lifestyle of *Vanity Fair*, Hopeful was a heavy trader in the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) who willingly yielded to the intoxicating merchandise that threatened “eternal damnation and destruction” (I Tim. 6:9). Doubtless the Fair bestowed upon him trading concessions and favored status.

b. He traded variously at *Vanity Fair*.

As a connoisseur of the different displays and promotions, Hopeful was able to advise others concerning the distinctive delights of much of the goods and produce on sale. This catalog of wares, especially swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and lying, were specific sins of Bunyan which he confesses in *Grace Abounding*.²³

¹⁹ I Tim. 6:9.

²⁰ Hopeful's life before conversion. This is similar to Bunyan's early lifestyle described in *Grace Abounding*, §§ 4, 8, 22, 26. Gal. 5:19-21.

²¹ Rom. 6:21-23; Eph. 5:6.

²² Alexander Whyte, *Bunyan Characters*, II, p. 46.

²³ Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 4, 8, 22, 26, pp. 8-9.

- c. He also heard Faithful's ominous preaching.

It was the transfixing proclamation of Faithful that especially gained his attention. Many of the populace raged against his call to repentance, though Hopeful felt this to be quite unjust so that he even took sides with the traveler. But in his heart he was deeply convicted of death, judgment, and the wrath of God concerning his rank disobedience (Rom. 6:21-23; Eph. 5:6).

- d. He intently shut his eyes to the light of truth.

Because of this revelation of light and the pain it produced, he made great effort to shut his eyes to the gospel (John 3:19; II Pet. 1:19). He was like a man who turns from the brilliance of the sun to walk in the darkness of his own shadow.

3. Hopeful's first stirrings through the Spirit of God.

This is a retrospective understanding of God's prevenient grace. At that time, Hopeful was unaware of who he was resisting, who was bringing new thoughts to mind, who was invading his life uninvited, who was introducing a new moral sensitivity into his behavior.

- a. As arousal to sin commenced, yet he was ignorant of the cause.

CHRISTIAN: But what was the cause of your continual resistance to these first workings of *God's* blessed *Spirit* upon you?

HOPEFUL: The causes were:

1. I was ignorant that this was the work of *God* upon me. I never understood that by means of awakening me to sin in my life, *God* first begins the conversion of a sinner.

2. Sin was very sweet to my flesh and I was most reluctant to forsake it

3. I could not contemplate parting with my established worldly companions, for their friendship and lifestyle continued to be desirable to me.

4. Those periods in which convictions seized me were so troublesome and fearful to my heart that I could not endure them, no not so much as the mere remembrance of them.

Increasingly his commitment to sin was productive of misery; he often wished he could sin in peace as was formerly the case. But this whole inner disturbance was inexplicable to him. His soul was in a state of constant agitation.

- (1) He did not know that conviction is the start of conversion.

Here is clearly indicated God's unilateral and particular work of grace that ushers the blind sinner to Christ (I Pet. 1:1-2). To look back is to marvel at God's winning ways with the wayward.

- (2) He still found sin sweet and loathed to leave it.

The appetite for ungodliness remained very strong even though the discomfort of spiritual indigestion commenced. Hopeful's dilemma was a dawning awareness of a disturbance in his soul, of ripples of unrest on account of delightful sin; as a result pleasure in sin began to be interrupted while an awakening of guilt had begun. Nevertheless, participation in sin remained energetic.

- (3) He continued to desire worldly companionship.

Longstanding friendships continued to be appealing, yet the shared familiar banter and base interests were becoming more prominent as moral conflicts. He was inwardly questioning his friends' behavior while they seemed insensitive to such concerns.

- (4) He strenuously opposed his awakening to personal sin.

It was as though he refused to look at an X-ray of a serious problem discovered by his doctor. He tried all manner of moves for the switching of his mind from the frightening thoughts that were becoming more and more difficult to suppress. His esteem for himself was rapidly deflating. He longed for distraction.



Hopeful is reminded of his former sins

- b. As sensitivity to corruption increased, sin became more apparent.

CHRISTIAN: Then it would seem that sometimes you were able to be rid of your trouble.

HOPEFUL: Yes, that is true, but then it would return again into my mind so that I would be as bad, no even worse than I was before.

CHRISTIAN: Tell me then, what was it that brought your sins to mind again?

HOPEFUL: Many things, such as:

1. If I merely met a good man in the street; or,
2. If I heard anyone read from the Bible; or,
3. If my head began to ache; or,
4. If I was told that some of my neighbors were sick; or,
5. If I heard the bell toll for someone who had died; or,
6. If I thought of my own dying; or,
7. If I heard that others had suddenly died; or,
8. But especially, when I considered my own imminent appointment with judgment.

Sometimes his attempts to expunge morbid thoughts of his own sinfulness would succeed, but only for a short time. Then outward circumstances would trigger greater awareness of his corruption. The world now appeared less glamorous. Common events in life began to take on sin-related significance.

- (1) If he met and talked with a godly man.

Such an encounter had always been discomfiting, but now the Christian seemed more holy, and he unholy, than ever before. He found it difficult to look such a man in the eye.

- (2) If he heard the Bible read or talked about.

No other book seemed to produce such a reaction. Now he was thinking about familiar Bible passages which yet aggravated his inflamed soul (Rom. 7:9-13).

- (3) If he became sick and felt afflicted.

Now he wondered if even moderate illness, whether it be the flu or toothache, was in fact divine judgment upon his sin. This was a new and miserable thought.

- (4) If he learned of his neighbors becoming sick.

Believing them to be more moral than himself, he concluded that greater ailments would eventually overtake him. Probably he was sensitive to every symptom, whether real or imaginary, that was commonly known about.

- (5) If he heard the bell tolling for the dead.

As a former untroubled bell-ringer, later Bunyan's more sensitive conscience suggested to him that the bells might fall in judgment upon him ²⁴ So Hopeful considers if the bell is really tolling for himself.

- (6) If he thought of himself dying.

For some time he had been successful in suppressing the merest suggestion of this reality. But now every hint of his dying led to the thought of numerous related fears such as lack of preparedness, sin, guilt, loved ones, heaven and hell.

- (7) If he heard of death coming suddenly on others.

He immediately identified himself with that situation, and in the circumstances wondered what his destiny would be. He concluded he was qualified only for judgment because of his ungodliness.

- (8) If he especially thought of his imminent judgment.

His weight of sin and guilt, these becoming more and more intolerable, would certainly be intolerable to God. Consequently, divine patience would soon run out and be replaced by divine retribution.

- c. As oppression from sin persisted, he became tormented.

CHRISTIAN: And at any time could you easily be relieved of this guilt of sin, that is when any of these incidents confronted you?

HOPEFUL: No, not more recently, for on appearing they seemed so rapidly to grasp hold of my conscience. And then, if I did contemplate returning to my sin, though my mind was in opposition to this, the result would be double torment for me.

CHRISTIAN: And what did you think of doing then?

HOPEFUL: I concluded that I must make every effort to improve my life, otherwise I believed I was certain to be damned.

He was certainly not a happy man. Rather his morbid thoughts fluctuated between musing on his sin and its consequences, without any hope of a peaceful resolution of his distress. His repeated cry became: "Wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24).

²⁴ Ibid., SS 33-4, p. 10.

- (1) He found guilt from sin difficult to suppress.

The convicting work of the Holy Spirit came with increased intensity (John 16:8). Now Hopeful felt spiritually ill, as though he was in the grip of a spiritual fever that needed some spiritual medication.

- (2) He was distressed through wrestling with sin.

First, his soul was tormented because of the increasing guilt and remorse that resulted from his greater sensitivity to sin. Second, still being tempted to sin in this condition, yet now was he distressed at the conflict raging between his lusting flesh and informed mind. Hence sin and its consequences were becoming more and more ugly, yet without any apparent remedy on the horizon.

- (3) He commenced to think of quitting sin.

His feverish conflict required some remedy to satisfy the guilt and quench the power of sin. So he reasoned that it was up to the sick and condemned patient to cure himself, that is by offering compensatory improvement that is self-generated. He must dig himself out of his pit; he must raise himself up from his mortal plight.

4. Hopeful's labor in the flesh to deliver himself.

CHRISTIAN: And did you actually carry out this resolve to reform your life?

HOPEFUL: Yes, and I fled from not only my sins, but also sinful company as well. Furthermore, I devoted myself to religious duties such as praying, Bible reading, weeping over my sin, speaking the truth to my neighbors, and other matters. I was involved with so many of these practices that they are too numerous to mention.

CHRISTIAN: And did you regard yourself as better off on account of this religious involvement?

HOPEFUL: Yes, that is for a while; but eventually greater trouble seemed to overwhelm me and rise way above the level of my reformations.

With serious and fervent resolve, he decided to reform his life, like a pig determined to leave its wallowing in the mire, or a leopard intent on washing away its spots (Jer. 13:23).

- a. His zealous endeavors result from a fear of damnation.

He is not so much troubled by the fact that he has offended God, but rather by the distress due to his prospective incarceration in hell. Sin troubles him because of its discomforting characteristics, not its essential ungodliness.

- (1) He resolves to flee from his sins.

By an act of will, he decides not to sin. By force of resolve, he will cease to sin. By the power of his autonomy, he will overcome inner corruption. By a change of activity he will evidence his forsaking of sin. Bunyan made similar improvements in his early life, that even impressed his friends.²⁵

- (2) He resolves to forsake sinful company.

This could certainly be a beneficial course to take, though it is done more as an offering for sin before God than as a result of reconciliation with God. The Pharisees were proudly devoted to such separation (Luke 15:2), as also was Bunyan prior to his conversion.²⁶

- (3) He resolves to fulfill religious exercises.

With great zeal he prayed, read the Bible, wept over his sin, witnessed to neighbors, and regularly attended church. His friends were amazed since his trading at Vanity Fair substantially diminished. He was even charged with being in sympathy with the teaching of Faithful. However, Hopeful did seem to have accumulated a large burden on his back!



Hopeful forsakes sinful company

²⁵ Ibid., §§ 30-32, pp. 9-10.

²⁶ Ibid., §§ 32, 43, pp.9-11.

- b. His frantic activity fails to lighten his burden of guilt.

For a short while Hopeful found his activity and fervor to be satisfying; further, he relished the congratulations of admirers. But still his heart, like some overflowing slough, continued to spew forth large quantities of sin and guilt. And this mire clung to him so that his clothing was soiled and his posture became more bowed down than ever. The result was that his outward reformations were not as glamorous as he had first thought.

5. Hopeful's awareness of the futility of the flesh.

CHRISTIAN: How could that possibly come about since you confessed to attaining reformation [*improvement*] in your life?

HOPEFUL: There were several things that brought this upon me, and especially sayings such as these, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and "By the works of the law no man shall be justified," and "When you have done all things, say, We are unprofitable," and many more like these besides.²⁷ So from this I began to reason with myself as follows; if all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and if no man can be justified by the deeds of the law, and if when we have done all, we are still unprofitable, then it is sheer folly to think of attaining *Heaven* by means of the law. I further thought as follows: if a man runs up a debt of a hundred pounds at a local shop, and then subsequently pays cash for everything else that he buys, still the original debt will remain unsettled; and in this case the shopkeeper will probably sue him and have the debtor imprisoned until he pays the debt in full.²⁸

CHRISTIAN: Yes I understand, but how does this apply to yourself?

HOPEFUL: Well I reasoned as follows concerning my own condition. Because my sins cause me to be greatly indebted in *God's* book, and all of my present reforming will not pay for what I owe, therefore I should ponder what use are all of these new improvements. For how shall I escape from the damnation that endangers me on account of my former transgressions?

CHRISTIAN: That is a very good application. But I do ask that you continue.

HOPEFUL: Another thing that troubled me, even concerning my recent amendments, was this; if I looked very closely into the best of what I now do, I still see sin, new sin, mixing itself with the best of what I do.²⁹ So now I was forced to conclude that, notwithstanding my former fond conceits regarding myself and my duties, yet I had committed enough sin in one duty to send me to *Hell*, even though my former life had been faultless.

²⁷ Isa. 64:6; Luke 17:10; Gal. 2:16.

²⁸ Gal. 3:10.

²⁹ Rom. 7:21.

For all of the variety of Bunyan's pre-conversion religious exercises, yet the wonder is that God was able to turn those boasted performances into benefits. Frustrated with the vanity of his reformation, he turned more diligently to the Bible and wrestled with its disarming doctrines.³⁰ Likewise Hopeful, his reformations seeming useless, now considers the Word of God far more seriously and painfully.

a. His conviction by the Word recalled.

For a person so committed to religious duties, the revelation from Scripture that the best of these actions were putrid in the sight of God was indeed shocking to Hopeful. However, the indictment of his supposed reformations was irrefutable (Is. 64:6; Luke 17:10; Gal. 2:16).

b. His conviction by the Word reasoned.

Here is an oblique confession of the motive behind Hopeful's strenuous campaign for self-improvement. It was for the purpose of bartering his way into heaven. Yet serious study of the Word of God now makes him to see the impossibility of such a ground of divine acceptance. Cheever comments:

The idea of justification by works in any way, when we look at our own depravity, must appear to every sound mind as irrational as it is unscriptural. The best works, performed by the best man, are imperfect and mingled with sin, and therefore need to be forgiven; so that to say that a man is justified by his works is no better than saying that a man is justified by his sins; and there is no man who will not acknowledge how great an absurdity this is.³¹

c. His conviction by way of illustration.

A man, in debt to a department store for several thousands of dollars, promises to pay cash for his future dealings. But this new arrangement does not cancel the outstanding debt; he still remains liable as a felon. To be right with the law he must fulfill all of its demands, otherwise the law is unjust (Gal. 3:10).

d. His conviction by way of application.

Hopeful reckons that he has, to date, accrued a large debt with God according to the law of His Book. However, his present performances deal strictly with the present and can in no way cancel that indebtedness which is the result of former transgressions. So a man presently reformed may yet be in danger of damnation.

e. His conviction by way of personal analysis.

But what of the quality of Hopeful's present reformations? He concludes that the best of his performances are polluted. His supposedly improved heart in fact has deep and murky currents (Rom. 7:21). Bunyan elsewhere writes: "For there is not a day, nor a duty; not a day that thou livest, nor a duty that thou dost, but will

³⁰ Ibid., §§ 46-7, pp. 11-12.

³¹ George Cheever, *Lecture On Bunyan*, p. 273.

need that mercy should come after to take away thy iniquity.”³² There can now only be the conclusion of Toplady:

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands:
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

6. Hopeful's hearing of Jesus Christ as the righteous savior.

CHRISTIAN: And what did you then do?

HOPEFUL: What did I do? Why I was at a loss to know which way to turn, that is until I laid bare my heart to *Faithful*; for he and I were well acquainted with each other. So he told me that unless I could obtain the righteousness of a man who had never sinned, then neither mine own nor all of the righteousness of the world could save me.³³

CHRISTIAN: And were you convinced that he spoke the truth?

HOPEFUL: Had he told me this when I was pleased with my own improvements, then I would have called him a fool for his trouble; but now, having seen my own corruption, and the sin that is attached to my own best performances, I have been forced to agree with his opinion.

CHRISTIAN: But when he first recommended to you a man who could rightly be described as being sinless, did you believe that such a person could be found?

HOPEFUL: I must confess that at first this recommendation sounded strange, but after some further discussion and fellowship with *Faithful*, I became fully convinced that he was right.

CHRISTIAN: And did you ask him to identify this man and explain how you might be justified by him?³⁴

HOPEFUL: Yes, and he told me it was the *Lord Jesus Christ* who dwells at the right hand of the *Most High*. So he explained, “You must be justified by him, that is by trusting in what he accomplished in the days of his flesh when he suffered by hanging on the tree [cross].”³⁵ Then I further asked, “How is it that the mighty *God*,³⁶ and that what he did in dying was not for himself, but for me. Furthermore, the righteousness of his doings [*obedient atoning work*] and their worthiness [*acceptability*] would be imputed [*reckoned*] to me if I believed on him.

³² Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 679.

³³ Job 25:4-6.

³⁴ Rom. 4:1-5.

³⁵ Col. 1:21-22; Heb. 5:7-9; 7:26; 10:11-22; I Pet. 1:3-9; 2:24.

³⁶ Isa. 9:6.

Perplexity immediately overtakes Hopeful since he now knows of his need to be saved, he knows he cannot save himself, yet he does not know of a way of salvation. Hence, an evangelist is needed and in this instance he turns out to be Faithful, a religious transient who has already made an impression upon the population of Vanity.

- a. Faithful tells Hopeful he needs the righteousness of a perfect man.

Having already spoken seriously to Hopeful, Faithful now senses that the heart of this seeker has become more tender. Hence, he straightaway focuses upon the heart of the gospel, namely “the righteousness of God” (Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26). In other words, he tells Hopeful that God, being perfectly righteous, demands perfect righteousness from those who would dwell with him. But since Hopeful is not righteous (Job 25:4-6), he must “obtain the righteousness of a man that never had sinned.” He needed a righteous savior.

- (1) Earlier Hopeful would have thought this idea foolish.

Had Faithful previously suggested that even Hopeful’s best works were as filthy rags (Is. 64:6), he would have been offended and merely confessed to natural weaknesses. And the idea of his need of a substitute righteous savior would have insulted his claim to autonomy. He would have labeled such ideas as nonsense and demeaning to the human race.

- (2) Now Hopeful is convinced of this proposal.

Because of the revelation of the Bible concerning his own heart, and especially on account of the compelling evidence supported by his conscience, he is now totally convinced of the exceeding sinfulness and pervasiveness of sin in his own life (Rom. 3:9-18; 7:13). Further, he can now appreciate that only the obtaining of perfect righteousness can save him.

- (3) Yet Hopeful wondered if such a perfect man existed.

In all of human history, since the fall of Adam, where was a sinless man to be found? And if he were to be found, could he, the righteous one, intercede for the unrighteous, the just for the unjust (Rom. 4:1-5; I Pet. 3:18)? Faithful indicated that such a substitute righteous savior was Hopeful’s only hope. Hopeful then earnestly asked for the name of such a mediator.

- b. Faithful tells Hopeful that Jesus Christ is the only perfect man.

Here in one paragraph the substance of the gospel is clearly explained to Hopeful. In particular it concerns the divine/human person of the Lord Jesus Christ and his substitutionary atoning work. For Bunyan this is not merely a theory of the atonement, but rather the essence of the one and only gospel. Here is a mini Christology for the seeking sinner.

- (1) He lives at the right hand of the Most High.

This is no ordinary man, but the ascended God/man, Jesus Christ the Lord, who was dead and is now alive seated beside the Father in glory. His completed atonement has been welcomed in heaven (Heb. 5:7-9; 7:26; 10:11-22).

- (2) He is the only means of a sinner being justified.

For the ungodly, reconciliation with the holy God of heaven, that is on a just basis, is only possible through Jesus Christ's propitiatory sacrifice that turns divine wrath to peace (Rom. 3:21-4:25).

- (3) He has suffered for sin by dying on a cross.

His sacrifice is for the sin of those who believe on him as their substitute. He takes upon himself the guilt and punishment that the believer ought to have suffered (Col. 1:21-22; I Pet. 1:3-9; 2:24).

- (4) He is qualified as God to deal justly with sin.

This man Jesus is also the "mighty God" (Is. 9:6) and thus able to offer the righteousness of God for the unrighteousness of man. The Father accepts the Son's offering as satisfactory (Heb. 1:1-3).

- (5) He is a substitute for Hopeful's sin.

Here is the answer to Hopeful's dilemma. There is only one righteous man, Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:26). But further, he willingly took Hopeful's judgment (Rom. 4:5) and became sin for him so that he might become the righteousness of God (II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24).

- (6) He is a provider of an imputed righteousness.

Hopeful's sin was credited to Christ, while Christ's righteousness, as a gift and covering, was credited to Hopeful (Rom. 5:17). Hence, in Christ, the believing sinner is clothed with a perfect righteousness (Rom. 4:6).

- c. Faithful tells Hopeful that Christ's righteousness comes by faith.

Faith is non-meritorious linkage to Christ who is the mediator of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption from God (I Cor. 1:30). Bunyan comments:

By faith we lay hold of, venture upon, and put on Jesus Christ for life. For life, I say, because God having made him the Savior, hath given him life to communicate to sinners, and the life that he communicates to them is the merit of his flesh and

blood, which whoso eateth and drinketh by faith, hath eternal life, because that flesh and blood hath merit in it sufficient to obtain the favor of God.³⁷

7. Hopeful's questions are answered by Faithful.

CHRISTIAN: And then what did you do?

HOPEFUL: I offered objections as to why I should not believe, and especially because I thought this *Christ* was not willing to save me.

CHRISTIAN: And what did Faithful then say?

HOPEFUL: He urged me to go to him and find out for myself. But I replied that I thought this was presumptuous. However, he said that this was not so since I was invited to come.³⁸ Then he gave me a book of *Jesus* in which were his very words, and these only all the more encouraged me to freely come to him. He added that every jot and tittle in this book were more firmly established than *Heaven* and *Earth*.³⁹ So I asked him what I must do when I came to *Christ*; he told me that I must first fall to my knees and plead with all of my heart and soul that the *Father* would reveal him to me.⁴⁰

Then I asked him how I should make my entreaty to this *Jesus*. He responded that I should go and find him sitting on a mercy-seat where he sits throughout each year providing mercy and forgiveness for those who come to him.⁴¹ Then I told him that I would not know what to say when I did come. And he directed me to speak in this manner, "*God*, be merciful to me a sinner, and enable me to know and believe in *Jesus Christ*;⁴² for I understand that if his righteousness was not available, or I did not have faith in that righteousness, then I would be utterly rejected. *Lord*, I have heard that you are a merciful *God* and have ordained that your *Son Jesus Christ* should be the *Savior* of the world;⁴³ and moreover, I understand that you are willing to confer him [*and his salvation*] upon poor sinners such as myself, and indeed I am a poor sinner. Therefore *Lord*, take this opportunity to magnify your grace in the salvation of my soul, through your *Son Jesus Christ*. Amen."

His objections here are not based on unbelief, as would be the case with Atheist, or disagreement, as has already been the case with Ignorance, but rather a lack of understanding. Hopeful accepts the biblical diagnosis of his problem; he now needs clarification concerning the remedy, which according to its gracious content, is an astonishing message to grasp.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 339.

³⁸ Matt. 11:28-30; John 7:37.

³⁹ Matt. 5:18; 24:35.

⁴⁰ Ps. 95:6; Jer. 29:12-13; Dan. 6:10.

⁴¹ Exod. 25:22; Lev. 16:9; Num. 7:8-9; Heb. 4:16.

⁴² Luke 18:13.

⁴³ John 1:29; 4:42; I John 4:14.

- a. Is Christ really willing for me to come to him?

The simple answer is, “taste and see” (Ps. 34:8). In dealing with this problem at length in *Come And Welcome To Jesus Christ*, Bunyan adds:

The awakened coming sinner doth not so easily question the power of Christ, as his willingness to save him. Lord, ‘if thou wilt, thou canst,’ said one (Mark 1:40). He did not put the ‘if’ upon his power, but upon his will. He concluded he could, but he was not as fully of persuasion that he would. But we have the same ground to believe he will, as we have to believe he can; and, indeed, ground for both is the Word of God. If he was not willing, why did he promise?⁴⁴



Christian directs Hopeful to Christ

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 264.

b. Is it not presumptuous for me to come to Christ?

This timidity is born of the sinner's true estimate of himself as a "worm" (Ps. 25:4-6), a "great sinner" (Luke 5:4-8), in contrast with the righteous and sovereign Son of God's perception of blindness (John 12:39-41, cf. Is. 6:1-10). Yet Hopeful is also ignorant of the purpose of Christ's coming to the human race as a whole, which is equally as unclean as he. For this reason he is directed to "a Book of Jesus," which is a synonym for the Word of God.

(1) The book of Christ invites you.

How can it be presumptuous to come to Christ if he gives a written and open invitation to weary ones such as he (Matt. 11:28-30)? The wonder of such a summons should not be allowed to obscure its reality (John 7:37).

(2) The book of Christ is entirely true.

In giving Hopeful a copy of this book, Faithful reassures him of its truthfulness. Its smallest letter and syllable are more trustworthy than the foundations of the earth (Prov. 8:12, 14, 22-23, 29; Matt. 5:18; 24:35),

c. What must I do when I come to Christ?

Some have come to him and left sorrowful (Matt. 19:22), while others have come and left rejoicing (Acts 3:1-9). Hence, a proper approach, and not mere patronage, is important.

(1) Humbly pray to the Father with heart and soul.

As a burdened sinner coming to a holy Savior "unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven" (Luke 18:13), entreat him out of earnest need (Ps. 95:6; Jer. 29:12-13; Dan. 6:10).

(2) Humbly pray that the Father might reveal His Son.

While it is not presumptuous to come to Christ on account of his free invitation, at the same time the approaching sinner should not come with presumption. He has no claims on mercy whatsoever; it is for God to dispense grace solely as He determines. Therefore, ask for that saving revelation of Christ that the Father alone distributes (Matt. 11:27).

d. How do I make my plea before the Father?

According to the terms and conditions which He has established for an acceptable approach. Man's most common and fatal error at this point is His presumptive approach on his terms, namely the arrogant offering of human merit!

- (1) Go to God's mercy-seat where He perpetually sits.

The mercy-seat is the cross of Calvary, the place of propitiation where Christ's atonement satisfies God's offended holiness and turns His attitude of wrath, toward the offending party, to peace (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20). God's real Calvary mercy-seat alludes to the lid on the ark of the (Mosaic) covenant; there the sprinkled blood interceded between the Hebrew sinner and the holy presence of God, between the holy demands of God expressed in the tables of stone, or Decalogue, contained in the ark beneath (Exod. 25:22; Lev. 16:9; Num. 7:8-9; Heb. 4:16) and God gloriously present between the cherubim above. In simple terms, Hopeful is to approach God through "the blood of the eternal covenant" (Heb. 13:20).

- (2) Ask God to give you mercy and faith in His Son.

With Hopeful not knowing how to pray, Faithful suggests a form of prayer, or cry to God that is an appropriate sinner's prayer (Luke 18:13). He is to plead for mercy and ask: "Make me to know and believe in Jesus Christ" (Luke 18:13). Saving faith is not understood by Bunyan to be a natural faculty, but rather supernatural enablement to close with Christ.

- (3) Confess your trust in God's Son for righteousness.

As with the Apostle Paul, the gospel here is fundamentally moral (Rom. 3:21-22) and then relational as a consequence (Is. 59:12; II Cor. 5:19). So Hopeful is to claim the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:11; 10:6). Bunyan's kinship with Luther at this point is very close, for the God who demands perfect righteousness is the same God who freely provides perfect righteousness, through faith alone in His Son.

- (4) Acknowledge your belief in God's willingness to save.

Notice that the appeal here is to the Father's willingness to save, through "the Savior of the world" (John 1:29; 4:42; I John 4:14), indeed God as a triunity. Further, implicit here is the truth that the Father delivers certain sinners over to the Son for him to save (John 6:37; 17:6, 9, 24). However, Bunyan, again like Luther, well understood that when sinners have feared the wrath of God, they need to be impressed with the truth that that same God welcomes repentant sinners (John 3:16). At this point they need every encouragement concerning the tender mercy of God (Eph. 2:4).

- (5) Make known your heartfelt repentance and contrition.

Since God desires a broken and a contrite heart, confess your sorrow at offending Him and your awareness of being a very great sinner (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 9:13; Luke 18:13-14; I Tim. 1:15). Confirm to Him your only hope as being the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Matt. 8:25; Rom. 3:24).

- (6) Declare your desire that His grace be magnified.

While the sinner rejoices in his being pardoned by God for Christ's sake, yet this gospel truth is not to be appreciated in mere utilitarian terms, as if God were a blessing dispenser. Rather, the true pilgrim is to exalt in the fact that his salvation displays the holy honor and glory of God's grace. This the child of God supremely delights in.

8. Hopeful's desperate seeking of salvation by Jesus Christ.

CHRISTIAN: And did you do exactly as you were told?
 HOPEFUL: Yes, over and over and over again.
 CHRISTIAN: And did the *Father* reveal his *Son* to you?
 HOPEFUL: Not on the first, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, or even the sixth occasion.
 CHRISTIAN: Then what did you do?
 HOPEFUL: What did I do? Why I could not tell what to do.
 CHRISTIAN: Did you ever consider giving up on praying?
 HOPEFUL: Yes, at least a hundred times, and then another hundred.
 CHRISTIAN: And why was it that you did not give up?
 HOPEFUL: I believed that what had been told me was true, that is that without the righteousness of this *Christ*, all of the world could not save me. And therefore I thought to myself, if I cease making these entreaties, then I die; though I can only die at the throne of grace. And moreover, this came to my mind, "If it delays, then wait for it, because it will certainly come, and will not delay."⁴⁵ So I continued praying until the *Father* revealed his *Son* to me.⁴⁶

In contrast with contemporary evangelism's quick and easy portrayal of Christian conversion, here Bunyan describes that deliverance from the "domain of darkness" unto the "kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13) as a period of intense conflict. To be sure, much of the author's own distinctive travail is included here. However, sobriety and seriousness do distinguish this testimony in a way that far more parallels the apostolic experience than does the modern idiom.

- a. His repeated seeking of the Father's revelation.

Even Hopeful has no thought of making a quick decision for Christ. Rather he doggedly pursues the bestowal of saving faith to which is attached assurance that the Father has embraced the coming sinner (Luke 15:20). Christian's expectation that the Father might reveal His Son to Hopeful indicates Bunyan's understanding of true conversion as a work of sovereign grace and not human initiative (John 1:12-13; 14:21). By way of contrast, when Ignorance is subsequently asked, "if

⁴⁵ Hab. 2:3.

⁴⁶ Matt. 11:27.

ever he had Christ revealed to him from heaven,”⁴⁷ his scornful rejection of such a proposition confirms the counterfeit nature of his pilgrim status.

- (1) He does not gain immediate understanding.

The importunate appeal to the Father is not answered straightaway (Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 18:1-8), even after numerous sessions of pleading. Yet preventive perseverance is now operating.

- (2) He does not know what to do.

Weak from “knocking” at the Wicket-gate, he buckles at the knees. Yet to turn back would be unthinkable. His desire to enter is undiminished, though he does not know what else to do, except to continue to knock.

- b. His repeated temptation to cease praying.

Loud and passionate “asking” is assaulted with hundreds of satanic temptations to quit. God is slandered as He who will not hear big sinners. But Hopeful does not yield for he weighs the evidence and considers the alternative.

- (1) Yet he knows there is righteousness only in Christ.

All that the world can offer is unrighteousness in one form or another. But Jesus Christ is the only righteous one; history bears this out. Hence he alone offers the only hope of righteousness. “There is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12).

- (2) Yet to leave off praying is certainly to die.

But suppose one were to stop praying and die in one’s sins. Would it not be supremely tragic to die in one’s soul having come so close to the throne of grace? It would be like perishing outside the very gates of heaven.

- (3) Yet to strive is certainly to attain.

The true pilgrim has the qualities of persistence in exertion, of determination in struggle, of stubborn resolve with the truth. Hence, he is not an easy quitter such as were Obstinate, Pliable, Timorous, and Mistrust. Rather, against the worldly tide, he clings to the hope set before him (Heb. 12:2) like the farmer who waits for the produce of harvest time (Jas. 5:5). So the Word encourages Hopeful to “wait for it [saving faith], because it will surely come” (Hab. 2:3).

⁴⁷ Ibid., III, p. 258.

(4) Application.

Bunyan is not justifying “tarrying,” that is a prescribed period of agonized waiting that must precede conversion, nor is he recommending “preparationism” in which a table of necessary experiential requirements prepares the way for conversion. However, he is declaring that God requires an earnest seeking after Him (Ps. 119:2, 10; Jer. 24:7) that excludes indifference and bifurcated vision (Matt. 6:24-33).

9. Hopeful’s eager embrace of Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Again the emphasis here is not Hopeful’s discovery of Christ, but rather his waiting for the revelation of Christ to his soul (Matt. 11:27). Of course many a person has “seen Christ” as described in the four gospels. But the distinction here concerns that comprehension of Christ, who has sought them out, which is personal, individual, saving, life giving, assuring, as Paul intimates in Galatians 2:20.



Hopeful's doubt gives way to faith

a. The dawning of Christ on his spiritual darkness.

CHRISTIAN: And how was he eventually revealed to you?

HOPEFUL: I did not see him with my physical eyes, but rather with the eyes of my understanding.⁴⁸ Now this is how it happened. One day I was particularly sad;⁴⁹ I think I was more sad [*spiritually depressed*] than at any other time in my life; and this bout of sadness came about through a fresh sight of the greatness and vileness of my sins. So as I was then anticipating nothing else but *Hell* and the everlasting damnation of my soul, suddenly, I thought I saw the *Lord Jesus* look down from *Heaven* toward me and beckon me with this invitation, “Believe on the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and you shall be saved.”⁵⁰

“One day” draws us to a point in time when Hopeful was converted. This is not meant to obscure the process that precedes and follows this event; but it does signify, whether we can identify such a time in our own lives or not, that there is a momentary transfer of an elect soul from Satan’s enslavement to God’s safe keeping (I Pet. 2:9). Bunyan’s own conversion in *Grace Abounding* is similarly described as happening “one day,” when it became a “good day.”⁵¹

(1) He comes to the eyes of his understanding.

This unveiling of Christ was cognitive rather than sensual; it was addressed to the understanding, formerly darkened (Eph. 4:17-18), that has now been illuminated (Eph. 1:18-19) with the light of the glory of Christ (II Cor. 4:6). This light shone into the deadness of Hopeful’s heart (II Pet. 1:19).

(2) He comes to his soul at its blackest hour.

Now Hopeful’s sins, erupting in the midst of his vile heart, seemed more damning than ever before. Gripped by melancholy and depression, he could only anticipate consignment to hell as his inevitable and just destiny. Bunyan himself had experienced such utter desolation in his soul. In *Grace Abounding* he writes concerning his pre-conversion struggles:

But my original and inward pollution, that, that was my plague and my affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me; that I had the guilt of, to amazement; by reason of that, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad; and I thought I was so in God’s eyes too; sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better

⁴⁸ Eph. 1:18-19.

⁴⁹ Hopeful’s conversion here parallels that of Bunyan in *Grace Abounding* where he also describes “one day,” when conviction of personal sin seemed to overwhelm him, that was turned into a “good day,” *Works*, I, § 115, p. 20.

⁵⁰ Acts 16:30-31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I, § 115, pp. 19-20.

heart than I had; I could have changed heart with any body; I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind; and thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.⁵²

(3) He comes with a personal invitation to believe.

It was if the Lord Jesus addressed Hopeful by name and entreated him to believe in his atoning death. There was now no possibility of him thinking that the Son of God was not willing to save him because this was such a personal invitation: "Hopeful, believe in [Me] the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31).

b. The encounter with Christ dispels spiritual doubt.

But I replied, "*Lord*, I am a great, indeed a very great sinner;" to this he answered, "My grace is sufficient for you."⁵³ Then I said, "But *Lord*, what exactly is it to believe?" Immediately I understood from that saying, "He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes on me shall never thirst,"⁵⁴ that believing and coming mean the same thing. Therefore, he who comes to *Christ*, that is runs to him because of a heart overflowing with earnest desires for salvation by *Christ*, is he who truly believes in *Christ*. Then tears filled my eyes and I further asked, "But *Lord*, may such a great sinner as I am really be accepted and saved by you?" I also heard him say, "And he who comes to me, I will in no way cast out."⁵⁵ Then I said, "But *Lord*, how must I properly think about you in coming to you; that is, how should my faith rightly behold you?" Then he responded, "*Jesus Christ* came into the world to save sinners. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. He is the mediator between *God* and us. He ever lives to make intercession for us."⁵⁶

Previously Hopeful had questioned Faithful concerning his doubts and perplexities about coming to Christ, and he had received faithful answers. But now the answers to similar questions are revealed through the direct witness of the Holy Spirit to the truth of the Word that resides in Hopeful's heart. The objective

⁵² Ibid., § 84, p. 16.

⁵³ II Cor. 12:9. This was Bunyan's cry in *Grace Abounding*, §§ 204, 206.

⁵⁴ John 6:35.

⁵⁵ John 6:37.

⁵⁶ Rom. 4:25; 10:4; I Tim. 1:15; 2:5; Heb. 7:24-25.

answers were true and helpful, but the subjective witness to the objective revelation is more convincing. So Hopeful protests to Christ:

- (1) But I am a very great sinner: Come by grace.

With his focus more on himself than Christ, Hopeful claims to be an exceptional sinner, much more odious than the average sinner. But Christ responds, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (II Cor. 12:9). Bunyan recounts his own enlightenment at this point that Hopeful now awakens to:

Wherefore, one day as I was in a meeting of God's people, full of sadness and terror, for my fears again were strong upon me; and as I was now thinking my soul was never the better, but my case most sad and fearful, these words did, with great power, suddenly break in upon me, “My grace is sufficient for thee, my grace is sufficient for thee, my grace is sufficient for thee,” three times together; and Oh! methought that every word was a mighty word unto me.⁵⁷

- (2) What is believing? Come, eat and drink.

It is to “come” unto Jesus Christ because he says “come unto me” (Matt. 11:28-30), and those who come are welcome since he offers the best of spiritual hospitality. It is to “feed” on Christ as living bread (John 6:35). It is to “drink” of Christ as living water (John 7:37-38). It is personal cognition of the truth about Christ, but more than this; it is the Spirit generated embrace of his person; it is the prodigal returning to the welcoming arms of his father (Luke 15:17-21).

- (3) Can I as a great sinner be saved? Come and be welcome.

Whereas many people, thinking they are moderate sinners, are deceived by believing Jesus Christ would certainly welcome them, Hopeful, in perceiving himself as an excessive sinner, continues to find it difficult to believe that Jesus Christ would have anything to do with him. For this reason, “the water stood in mine eyes,”⁵⁸ that is he was inwardly grief stricken at the contemptible nature of his heart, and perhaps ashamed to be asking a question again which reflected his unbelief. Jesus Christ patiently replies, “If you come and welcome me, I will [welcome you and] not turn you away” (John 6:37).

- (4) How am I to regard you in coming? Come as I designate.

Now it is perfectly true that many come to Christ with a wrong attitude, such as divided loyalty or merely out of interest in the phenomenal (Luke 9:59-62; John 6:26, 30). So Hopeful's caution here is well placed. True faith in Christ must have a right focus.

⁵⁷ Ibid., §§ 204, 206, pp. 32-3.

⁵⁸ Ibid., III, p. 156.

- (a) As the Savior of sinners.

He is not to be sought as a moral idealist, a religious innovator, a sentimental friend, or a Jewish revolutionary, even though he incorporates aspects of these categories, but rather as he who is able to rescue confessing sinners who are unable to rescue themselves (Luke 5:32; I Tim. 1:5).

- (b) As the provider of a perfect righteousness.

This righteousness is a free gift (Rom. 5:17) and as such totally excludes the offering of law/works (Rom. 10:4). Christ himself is this righteousness which, with fullness of ethic and dynamic, has abolished the summary of ethic with no dynamic which the law represents (Rom. 7:1-4).

- (c) As the ground of our justification.

Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection have negatively obtained pardon for sin and acquittal from condemnation, and positively obtained righteous standing before God (Rom. 4:25; Phil. 3:8-9).

- (d) As the cleanser of sinners.

We are to look to him, as unclean, for cleansing, as unholy, for holiness, as unrighteous, for righteousness. This renovation comes solely through Christ's shed blood or atonement (I John 1:7; Rev. 1:5).

- (e) As the mediator between God and man.

The coming sinner, in desiring reconciliation with God, looks to Christ's mediatorial office as effectual since it is acceptable to the Father (I Tim. 2:5) and proven by his resurrection (Rom. 1:4; Col. 3:1; I Pet. 1:20-21).

- (f) As the everliving intercessor.

Having a permanent priesthood, this Christ "is able to save forever those who draw near [come] to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Rom. 4:25; 10:4; I Tim. 1:15; 2:5; Heb. 7:24-25). The coming sinner then may have confidence that his advocate on high will be eternally effectual.

c. The atonement of Christ is welcomed with rejoicing.

From all of this I came to understand that I must look for righteousness in his person, and for satisfaction for my sins through his blood; and that what he did in obedience to his *Father's* law, and in submitting to its attending penalty, was not for himself, but for he who will accept it for his salvation and be thankful. As a consequence, my heart now became full of joy while my eyes flooded with tears; now my affections overflowed with love for the name, people, and ways of *Jesus Christ*.

What has been explained by Faithful and illuminated by the Holy Spirit in Hopeful's heart is now comprehended as a personal possession. The gospel is not only true as an historical event, but its meaning is now true for Hopeful in a most vital and particular manner. Having come to Christ, he has proved that the welcome is most gracious and embracing.

(1) Now he saw that his righteousness was in Christ.

In other words, Hopeful now realized that he was right with God, that his righteousness was complete in Christ, that God the Father viewed him as righteous in Christ. This revelation was transforming for Bunyan since it delivered him from uncertainty to full assurance of salvation by grace. But further, this legal imputed righteousness was productive of practical righteousness in him as well. How is this possible? He explains in *The Desire of the Righteous Granted* that, "the Spirit is an inseparable companion of imputed righteousness, and immediately follows it, to dwell with whosoever it is bestowed upon."⁵⁹

(a) Because of Christ's obedience to the Father's Law.

In his earthly sojourn, he was incarnate perfect righteousness, the embodiment of the Law (John 4:34; 8:29, 46) and thereby qualified as the unique provider of righteousness.

(b) Because of Christ's obedience to the Father's penalty.

In his earthly sojourn, he submitted to the Father's punishment for unrighteousness so that the unrighteous, by means of this substitute, might receive righteousness (II Cor. 8:9; I Pet. 3:18).

(2) Now he wept for joy with love for Christ.

With the truth of the gospel having a firm grasp on his soul, Hopeful then responded with deep emotion and rejoicing. His love for Christ now became

⁵⁹ Ibid., I, p. 749.

boundless. He could now sing, in full assurance, the words of Lutheran, Johann Rothe:

Now I have found the ground wherein
My anchor, hope, shall firm remain,
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
Before the world's foundation slain;
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
When heaven and earth are fled away.

Jesus, I know, has died for me;
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
Hither, when hell assails, I flee;
I look into my Savior's breast.
Away, sad doubt and anxious fear;
Mercy and love are written there.

Fixed on this ground will I remain
Though my heart fail and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away;
Mercy's pull power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.

10. Hopeful's resultant enlightenment of soul.

CHRISTIAN: This was truly a revelation of *Christ* to your soul. But tell me in more detail what effect this encounter had upon your spirit?

HOPEFUL: It made me understand that all of the world, notwithstanding its vaunted righteousness, is yet in a state of condemnation. It made me see that *God the Father*, while being just, can also justify the coming [*believing*] sinner.⁶⁰ It made me greatly ashamed of the vileness of my former lifestyle and amazed that I could be so ignorant in this condition. For up till that time no thought had come to my heart that revealed the beauty of *Jesus Christ*.⁶¹ It made me love a holy life and long to do something for the honor and glory of the name of the *Lord Jesus*. Yes, I now considered that if I had a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I would gladly spill it all for the sake of the *Lord Jesus*.

This summary by Hopeful of the effect upon his life of the embraced gospel is an excellent description of the evidences of true conversion. It especially deals with Christian affections, not mere sterile confession.

⁶⁰ Rom. 3:26.

⁶¹ Isa. 33:17.

- a. He saw that this self-righteous world was to be condemned.

Its pretended righteousness was nothing but a sham, a facade for the highest form of corruption, that is the enthronement of man in the place of God (Rom. 1:25).

- b. He saw that God the Father was both just and the justifier.

The truth of the wonder of the gospel, its ability to provide effectual grace while God's holy reputation was maintained, caused Hopeful to exalt in this demonstration of God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21-26).

- c. He became ashamed of his former manner of life.

Like the Apostle Paul, and Bunyan in *Grace Abounding*, reflection upon his lifestyle when not a Christian caused him to inwardly blush and tremble. It also caused him to marvel at the great mercy of God (I Tim. 1:13-15).

- d. He awoke to his former ignorance and blindness.

According to his fallen nature when unconverted, he had not the slightest interest in or appreciation of the beauty of Jesus Christ (Isa. 33:17). But through the renewal of grace in his heart, now the Son of God appeared most attractive and precious (I Pet. 2:6-7).

- e. He now longed for godliness and holiness in his life.

His love for God now focused on His holiness which had previously terrorized him. This newfound desire for godliness, that is conformity to God's moral image, was revolutionary (I Pet. 1:14-16).

- f. He now desired to labor for the glory of Christ.

This Savior had now truly become Hopeful's Lord, with the result that his life was now wholly given over to his Master's service and glorification, whatever the personal cost (Gal. 2:20).

C. Closer Reacquaintance is Made with Ignorance.

1. Introduction.

I then saw in my dream that *Hopeful* looked back and saw *Ignorance*, who they had earlier left behind, following after them. "Look," said he, to Christian, "how far that youngster is lagging behind us."

CHRISTIAN: Yes, yes, I see him, though he does not care for our companionship.

HOPEFUL: But I am sure that it would not have hurt him if he had decided to walk with us up to this point.

CHRISTIAN: That is true, though I am certain that he thinks very differently.

HOPEFUL: Yes, I agree with you here; however, let us wait for him to catch up (which they did).

As mentioned in Chapter XXVII, there is good reason for believing, as Kelman, Charrock, and Hill suggest, that Ignorance is, at least in part, a representation of Edward Fowler, Anglican rector and subsequent Bishop of Gloucester. He was a latitudinarian who in 1671 published *The Design of Christianity*, a work that alarmed not only Bunyan, but also John Owen and other dissenters. Fowler was ejected from his pastorate in 1662, but then on second thoughts, conformed. A latitudinarian was a moderate, a broad churchman, who the Bedford pastor described as follows:

You may hop from Presbyterianism, to a prelatial [Anglican] mode; and if time and chance would serve you, backwards and forwards again: yea, here you can make use of several consciences, one for this way now, another for that anon; now putting out the light of this by a sophistical delusive argument, then putting out the other, by an argument that best suits the time. A glorious Latitudinarian [is he] that can, as to religion, turn and twist like an eel on the angle; or rather like the weather-cock that stands on the steeple."⁶² This quotation is taken from the stalwart preacher's rejoinder to Fowler in 1672 entitled *SA Defense Of The Doctrine Of Justification*. However, this work aimed its thrust, beyond latitudinarianism, at Roman Catholicism and Quakerism as well.⁶³

For Bunyan, all three of these movements proclaimed a subjective gospel that offered infused rather than imputed righteousness. Along with Luther, he abominated such a "gospel."

a. The contrast between authentic Hopeful and fraudulent Ignorance.

The testimony of Hopeful and the re-emergence of Ignorance are intended by Bunyan to present a picture of diametrical opposites, even though both pilgrims are headed in the same direction. Cheever comments: "Hopeful's experience stands in fine instructive contrast with that of Ignorance; the first shows the relish of the renewed heart for pure divine truth, and the secret of it; the second shows

⁶² Ibid., II, p.322.

⁶³ Ibid., II, pp. 332-4.

the secret of the opposition of the unreeled heart against that same divine truth in its purity.”⁶⁴

b. The contrast between the gospel of Hopeful and Ignorance.

Both men accept that there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. But they sharply disagree as to the means by which their common conviction might be fulfilled. They represent two antithetical gospels, in spite of the fact that their language may, at times, seem to be almost identical. Both pilgrims are very religious, both claim experience on their side, both have traveled a long distance, both claim to believe in Jesus Christ for justification, yet one will be received into heaven while the other will be dispatched to hell. What then distinguishes their gospels?

(1) Is salvation grounded upon a work within or without the soul?

Does the gospel save subjectively or objectively, by means of Jesus entering the heart (human interior) for the purpose of renovation, or by means of his external atonement in space/- time/history? Bunyan, like Luther, decisively answers that it is the latter alternative.

(2) Is salvation grounded upon bilateral or unilateral righteousness?

In other words, is the sinner justified through his cooperation with grace that is productive of meritorious works, or is he accepted by God solely on the grounds of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ that is embodied in his person and evidenced in his life and willing sacrificial death? Bunyan, like Luther, decisively answers that it is the latter alternative.

(3) Is salvation grounded upon grace imputed or grace imparted?

When God communicates his gospel to sinners through appointed evangelists, is it to autonomous man who is able to accept or reject this truth, or is it to impotent sinful man who needs particular illumination and the gift of faith to embrace this truth? Bunyan, like Luther, decisively answers that it is the latter alternative.

c. The backward look of Hopeful toward Ignorance.

With the citizen of Conceit Country lagging further behind, Hopeful expresses pity and concern, especially since he believes that their healthy discussion would have profited him. Actually the testimony would more likely have annoyed him.

(1) But Ignorance has no desire for true gospel fellowship.

He has met with evangelicals and fundamentalists and enthusiasts and Bible fanatics before; their beliefs and experiences have only irritated him.

⁶⁴ Cheever, *Lecture On Bunyan*, p. 283.

- (2) Yet the pilgrims wait to counsel this aloof stranger.

Their persistence in witnessing, especially that of Hopeful, is commendable for its compassion though not grounded upon the slightest encouragement. However, a valiant witness to the truth will result.

2. Ignorance declares the ground of his hope in God.

Some contemporary commentators have indicated a special sympathy for Ignorance that would have surprised Bunyan. Wakefield suggests that this pilgrim,

has been judged one of Bunyan's artistic failures. His fate is perplexingly severe. ... Would Dante have consigned him to hell? And what of him, who, according to some witnesses, prayed for the ignorant as they crucified him? Ignorance represents some of the complexities of Bunyan's own life. He was dismissed by the establishment as ignorant and unfit to preach. He turns the tables by damning Ignorance who was in some ways, one fears, the epitome of Anglicanism as Bunyan saw it.⁶⁵

But Sharrock is more perceptive in pointing out that,

he [Ignorance] does, after all Christian's arguments, persist in the error of reliance on his own His reliance on the good state of his own religious feelings springs from this unshakeable vanity rather than from any theological argument. . . . The deadly vanity of Ignorance causes him to 'take pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company. He is self-sufficient; he will not learn.'⁶⁶

Notwithstanding his moral pretension in gospel terms, and especially according to Reformation doctrine, Ignorance propounds "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6-8) that the Apostle Paul would have thoroughly denounced.

- a. The initial response is cool and disinterested.

Then *Christian* spoke to *Ignorance*, "Man, come and walk with us. Why do you lag behind us?"

IGNORANCE: Because I find it pleasurable to walk alone, and much more so than with company, that is unless I find some likeable travelers.

Then *Christian* said to *Hopeful* (though softly), "Did I not tell you that he has no desire for our company? However, do join me in conversation with him so that we can better pass the time of day in this solitary place." Then *Christian* addressed *Ignorance* with some questions, "My friend, how are you keeping at the present? How is your relationship between *God* and your soul?"

The retort of Ignorance to Christian's approach is intentionally churlish, and in normal circumstances, quite off-putting. But in faithful personal evangelism, such a reaction is to be expected and passed over without any feeling of offence.

⁶⁵ Wakefield, Bunyan *The Christian*, p. 89.

⁶⁶ Roger Sharrock, ed., Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, A Casebook*, pp. 190-91.

- (1) He brazenly prefers different company.

The arrogance here is near suffocating; in effect Ignorance says: “I prefer myself for company rather than yourselves.” Even Christian and Hopeful believe in holy separation, but it is the self-righteous ground of such holiness here that is in error.

- (2) He fails to rebuff the patient pilgrims.

Having before concluded that Ignorance was a fool, and being confirmed in that opinion now, the pilgrims' intent here is to witness to the truth of the gospel rather than cultivate fellowship based upon a common faith.



Christian instructs Ignorance

- b. The sought testimony prompts Ignorance to respond.

IGNORANCE: Well, I have hope that it is good right now; as I walk along, I always seem to be full of good motions [*notions*] that come to mind and comfort me.

CHRISTIAN: What are some of these good notions? Do tell us.

IGNORANCE: Why, I think about *God* and *Heaven*.

CHRISTIAN: So do the devils, and souls that are consigned to *Hell*.⁶⁷

IGNORANCE: But I think about them and desire them.

CHRISTIAN: So do many who are never likely to reside there. The soul of the sluggard desires *Heaven* and yet has no inheritance there.⁶⁸

IGNORANCE: But I think about them and leave all that I have to obtain them.

CHRISTIAN: I doubt that very much, for to leave everything that you have is much harder to do than many are aware of. But why, or by what evidence are you persuaded that you have left all for *God* and *Heaven*?

IGNORANCE: My heart tells me so.

CHRISTIAN: The wise man declares, "He who trusts his own heart is a fool."⁶⁹

IGNORANCE: But that saying refers to an evil heart, whereas mine is a good one.⁷⁰

CHRISTIAN: But how can you prove that your heart is as good as you say?

IGNORANCE: Because it comforts and assures me concerning my hope of reaching *Heaven*.

CHRISTIAN: That may well be, though on account of its deceitfulness; for a man's heart may minister comfort with regard to his hope of something, even though he has no grounds for expecting the fulfillment of that hope.

IGNORANCE: But my heart and life are in agreement [*harmony*] with one another, and therefore my hope is well grounded.

CHRISTIAN: Who told you that your heart and life are in good harmony?

IGNORANCE: My own heart tells me this.

Christian's stimulating question is very much to the point. He asks: "How is the relationship between God and your soul?" (Job 9:2). Of course this religious man is expected to reply favorably, so that what is really being sought is the ground, the righteous basis, of such a hope. Ignorance now describes that righteous basis.

⁶⁷ *Jas. 2:19.*

⁶⁸ *Prov. 13:4.*

⁶⁹ *Prov. 28:26.*

⁷⁰ *Luke 18:11; Rom. 7:24.*

- (1) His mind is continually full of good thoughts.

In essence, this religious pilgrim has an interior hope, a hope within, a hope that is rooted in himself. As he thinks about himself and muses concerning his inner moral status, he is convinced of his inherent goodness. Thus Ignorance feels good about himself. But Christian probes further and responds.

- (a) He thinks of God and heaven; but so do the devils.

Being quite a philosopher and thinker, he ponders some of the great questions about God; he would certainly like to reside in heaven. But Christian adds that the whole population of hell thinks deeply about God and would prefer to live in heaven (Jas. 2:19).

- (b) He desires God and heaven; but many do who don't find.

The lazy pilgrim, like a Simple, Sloth, or Presumption, may have great desires for citizenship in the Celestial City, and he may dream all day long about his hope of beholding the glory of God, but such a passive faith will never obtain fulfillment (Prov. 13:4).

- (c) He has left all for God and heaven; but this is hard.

From what we know of Ignorance, has he left his conceit behind, a legacy of his home town upbringing? Has he left his self-reliance behind? Has he left his "gospel" behind? This is a difficult matter since this pilgrim is blind to the fact that he is carrying much forbidden baggage (Mark 8:34; Luke 14:26-27).

- (2) His heart is good rather than evil.

Christian has been disturbed up to this point concerning the claim of Ignorance that he thinks much about God and heaven, with great desire. But now the terminology changes as Ignorance tells of the witness of his heart to his good motives. So Christian pursues this deeper and even more being, and begins to conclude inclusive aspect of a person's being, and begins to conclude that the heart of Ignorance, that is his whole soul, is in fact deluded or blinded (II Cor. 4:3-4).

- (a) His heart is assured of heaven; but the heart is delusive.

This subjective opinion on the part of Ignorance is based, not on objective testimony, such as from his wife or a neighbor, but that center of a person's being which is polluted with sin. It is for this reason that the wise man, aware of his bias toward exonerating himself, desires an outside and unbiased opinion, even the wisdom of God (Prov. 28:26). Otherwise a prisoner charged with a crime may as well be allowed to pass sentence upon himself. So the opinion of Ignorance is unreliable.

- (b) His heart hopes for heaven; but is this hope reliable?

Ignorance reasons that an evil heart does not have such a hope, though he does, and this hope comforts him and assures him he will safely arrive. But Christian warns that such assurance may be deceitful, and especially when a person is confident of being inwardly good. Others may think we are good, but how could a true pilgrim say this about himself (Rom. 7:24)?

- (c) His heart and life agree; but who told him so?

The pride of Ignorance now becomes more evident as he declares that his outward lifestyle is equally as good as his heart, and this doubly guarantees his hope of heaven. How strange it is that he does not offer references. Christian immediately sees the folly of this and asks Ignorance if he (Christian) is a thief. Can he conclude so solely from his heart? The idea is utterly ridiculous. Rather, outside, objective evidence is necessary.

- (d) His heart and life conform to Scripture; but who says so?

Now Ignorance does introduce an external measure, that is “God’s commandments,” which he ignorantly assumes will confirm his self-righteous claims. He probably recalls the great moral imperatives of Scripture without considering the holy perfection that God requires. Here then is the nerve of the problem, for Ignorance is supremely ignorant of God. Cheever further adds: “His boastfulness is only the strong symptom of his insanity, and the sure token of his perdition.”⁷¹ So Christian suggests that it is one thing to think of oneself as being moral, and quite another to be moral in the sight of God (Job 15:15-16).

3. Christian declares the true ground by which a man has hope in God.

The discussion having now turned to the witness of the Word of God concerning good moral thoughts and living, Ignorance asks a question which will ultimately lead to his undoing. He wants to know when it is that good thinking is in agreement with Scripture. In response, Christian first considers the subject more broadly with regard to ourselves, God, and Christ. But Ignorance narrows the field and asks about good thinking in ourselves. No doubt he expects to hear of a list of moral platitudes that he is eager to confess his agreement with. Instead, Christian describes a different perspective that catches Ignorance quite unawares.

⁷¹ Cheever, *Lectures on Bunyan*, p. 285.

- a. The Word of God judges the true condition of the heart.

CHRISTIAN: My dear fellow, ask yourself if I am a thief. So your heart tells you so! Except the *Word of God* bears witness in this matter, any other testimony is of no value.

IGNORANCE: But is it not a good heart that produces good thoughts? And is it not a good life that is in harmony with *God's* commandments?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, it is a good heart that produces good thoughts, and it is a good life that is in harmony with *God's* commandments. But it is one thing to really have these qualities, and quite another to only think so.

Ignorance supposes that good thoughts about ourselves are self appreciative and self-congratulatory which the Bible agrees with and commends us for. However, Christian declares:

- (1) The witness of man about man is of little value.

Especially in the moral sphere, it is like one felon judging another felon; a proper judge of man must be holy, not unholy, righteous, not unrighteous. God then is the best judge.

- (2) The estimate of man by man is delusive.

While a good heart is obedient to the Word of God, yet how honest is sinful man in assessing a "good" heart? Often a bad heart believes it is a good heart. Again, only God can tell.

Man's ways are
crooked, perverse



b. The Word of God judges our thoughts concerning ourselves.

IGNORANCE: Then tell me, what count as good thoughts and a good life according to *God's* commandments?

CHRISTIAN: There are good thoughts of various kinds, some with regard to ourselves, some *God*, some *Christ*, and some other things.

IGNORANCE: What are good thoughts with regard to ourselves?

CHRISTIAN: Those that are in agreement with the *Word of God*.

IGNORANCE: When do thoughts about ourselves agree with the *Word of God*?

CHRISTIAN: When we pass the same judgment upon ourselves which the *Word of God* does. But let me explain further. The *Word of God* says of the natural man, "There is no one who is righteous; there is no one who does good."⁷² It also says, "That every imagination of the heart of man is only evil, and continually so."⁷³ And again, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."⁷⁴ Now then, when we think of ourselves in this sense, then our thoughts are good ones because they are in agreement with the *Word of God*.

IGNORANCE: But I will never believe that my heart is that bad.

CHRISTIAN: If that be so, then you have never had one good thought about yourself in your whole life. But let me continue. As the *Word of God* passes judgment upon our heart, so it also passes judgment upon our ways [*actions*]; and when the thoughts of our hearts, as well as our actions, are in agreement with the judgment that the *Word* brings upon both, then both types of thoughts are good because they are in agreement with that *Word*.

IGNORANCE: Please explain your meaning here.

CHRISTIAN: Why, the *Word of God* says that man's ways are crooked ways; they are perverse, not good. It says that by nature they veer from the good way and have no inclination to know it.⁷⁵ Now when a man seriously considers his ways in this manner, I mean when he is sensitive and full of heart-humiliation in his thinking, then he has good thoughts about his own ways because his thoughts now agree with the judgment of the *Word of God*.

Since God knows the hearts of all men (Jer. 17:10; Acts 1:24), He has revealed in His Word the truth about the inner human condition. Therefore our thinking is good only when we agree with God's diagnosis. But what does God's Word say about the heart of man? Are we prepared to yield to his judgement?

⁷² Rom. 3:10-12.

⁷³ Gen. 6:5.

⁷⁴ Gen. 8:21.

⁷⁵ Ps. 125:5; Prov. 2:15; Rom. 3:17.

- (1) It tells us that we are unrighteous at heart.

In other words, man is essentially ungodly; his heart is thoroughly sinful; his supposed good thoughts are in fact bad thoughts; his esteem for himself is entirely misplaced; he is a moral fraud (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9-18).

- (a) To agree is to understand comprehensively.

That is, man's pollution is pervasive, effecting his intellect, will, and emotions; his thinking, choosing, and feeling are all affected; his bias directs the whole man (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9-18). This comprehensiveness includes:

- 1) All of mankind as a totality.

The whole of the human race, since the fall of Adam, has a solidarity in sin, without exception (Gen. 6:6; Rom. 3:10-12).

- 2) All of mankind in every part.

Every part of every man, woman, and child is infected (Rom. 3:13-18), so that the range of this disease is intensive as well as extensive.

- 3) All of mankind from birth.

There is racial pollution that is passed on through birth from our first parents, Adam and Eve (Rom. 5:12). Sin in the human race is inevitable.

- (b) To agree is to think good thoughts.

Good thoughts are concerned with truth and not mere moral wishful thinking. Hence, for a pilgrim to agree with the biblical diagnosis of his sinful carnal nature is to think in a way that pleases God.

- (c) To disagree is to think bad thoughts.

The truth pierces the facade of ignorance's moral scaffolding, but not his heart. His dilemma is that while the Word just declared has such force of truth about it that it cannot reasonably be denied, yet his proud and offended heart does in fact rise up to unreasonably deny the patently obvious. Thus his stubborn comment, "I will never believe that my heart is thus bad," reveals that his unbelieving heart is really productive of bad thoughts (Rom. 1:18-25). So Christian explains this reality to Ignorance with great plainness.

- (2) It tells us that we are crooked in our ways.

Christian now takes his argument a step further since it is the thoughts of a man that direct his steps (Is. 65:2). There fore, because Ignorance has raised the matter of a man's life or walk as well as that of his heart and thinking, he now places the question of man's external moral activity under the same scrutiny of the Word of God. Again, to agree with God's revelation here is to think good thoughts.

- (a) To agree is to concur with man's perverse manner.

Because his mind is crooked, that is unrighteous, so his steps are consequently crooked; he thinks crookedly and thus walks crookedly. The lifestyle of Conceit Country, the industry and recreation there, give full proof of this proposition (Ps. 125:5; Prov. 2:14-15; Rom. 3).

- (b) To agree is to think good thoughts.

That is, when we sensitively and humbly agree with God's indictment of man's way of life, unpalatable though this conclusion may be, yet to think as God thinks is good, especially when we individually are the objects of his close investigation (Ps. 19:9; 119: 142).



Ignorance testifies
of his faith

c. The Word of God judges our thoughts concerning God.

IGNORANCE: Then what exactly are good thoughts about *God*?

CHRISTIAN: They are similar to what I have said concerning ourselves. In other words they are good thoughts about *God* when they agree with what the *Word of God* says about him. And so we should think about his character and attributes exactly as the *Word* teaches us, though I cannot presently speak about this in more detail.

However, to speak about *God* concerning ourselves, that is when we understand that he knows us better than we know ourselves, that he can see sin in us when we cannot see it ourselves, then we have right thoughts about *God*. When we understand that he knows our innermost thoughts, and that our heart, to its very depths, is always open to his scrutiny; also, when we know that all of our righteousness stinks in his nostrils, and that even with our best performances we still cannot stand with acceptable confidence before him, then we know that we have right thoughts about *God*.

Ignorance now returns to his earlier confident claim that he has often had good thoughts about God. He feels sure that his contemplation of the Great Deity is acknowledged in heaven to be acceptable, and that his religious duties are pleasing. So to divert attention from the depressing emphasis of Christian upon man's inherent sinfulness, he hopes this tack will prove himself to be genuine and worthy. He now enquires as to what are good thoughts about God. Christian responds, again focusing on the Word of God.

(1) When we know His attributes, we know God.

The perfections of God, as revealed in Scripture (Neh. 9:5-8; Rom. 11:33-36; I Tim. 1:17) are good to contemplate; the Person of God delights in the adoration of His Person (Deut. 6:4). However, it is probable that Ignorance was knowingly nodding his head at this point; he could agree here, especially concerning God's transcendent attributes. But the grace of God was not so well known to him.

(2) When we know God knows us, we know God.

To believe that nothing is hid from His sight (Heb. 4:13), including the deepest thoughts of the human heart, is inclined to cause the heart to tremble; but then to go further and confess that God knows us better than we know ourselves, that He knows what we don't want Him to know, that He knows the worst about us, that is humiliating and mouth stopping in the extreme.

(3) When we know God sees our sin, we know God.

But in seeing our sin He is not neutral toward it. His holiness is offended by the stench of our pollution. And when that unholy odor is known to be

produced by our seeming righteousnesses and moral boasting, then we truly know God. This knowledge may be profoundly disturbing, but it is still good knowledge about God. To think otherwise is more than bad knowledge; it is damning knowledge.

d. The Word of God judges our thoughts concerning Christ.

The pressure brought to bear upon Ignorance for him to confess himself to be a sinner has been considerable. He rebelled initially, that is he spurned the idea he was a great sinner as Christian had indicated, but now realizes that he ought to confess his moderate sinfulness which requires his cooperation with Jesus Christ. The following interaction is one of the doctrinal peaks of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and ought to be carefully studied and widely taught. Here the true gospel of the grace of God is insightfully compared with a false gospel that is disseminated worldwide today. Here is Bunyan, like Luther, precisely and passionately contending for the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and like Paul, not yielding a hair's breadth "so that the truth of the gospel might remain" (Gal. 2:5).

(1) Ignorance protests that he comes to Christ for justification.

IGNORANCE: Do you think that I am such a fool as to regard *God* as not being able to see any further than I do? Do you believe that I hope to come to *God* for acceptance offering only the best of my performances?

CHRISTIAN: Then tell me, what do you believe about this matter?

IGNORANCE: Why, to come to the point, I consider that I must believe in *Jesus Christ* for justification [*right standing with God*].

CHRISTIAN: But how could you consider believing in *Jesus Christ* when you do not see any need of him? You see neither your original sin nor your actual transgressions; rather you have such an opinion of yourself and what you do that you plainly qualify as one who has never acknowledged the necessity of *Christ's* personal righteousness to justify you before *God*. How then can you possibly say, "I believe in *Jesus Christ*"?

IGNORANCE: In spite of what you say, I believe well enough.

CHRISTIAN: Exactly what is it that you believe?

IGNORANCE: I believe that *Jesus Christ* died for sinners, and that I shall be justified before *God* from the curse [*of the law*] through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his law.⁷⁶ Or to put it another way, *Christ* makes my religious duties acceptable to his *Father* by virtue of his merits, and for this reason I shall be justified.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16.

⁷⁷ There is a strong distinction made at this point between grace infused via personal merit and church sacraments, and free grace or justifying righteousness imputed through faith alone in Christ's objective, perfect, once-for-all atonement.

The tepid evangelical faith of today would readily accept Ignorance's confession: "I believe in Christ for justification." But not so our Reformation fathers and their immediate children, and not so Christian. He is too doctrinally astute to be deceived.

(a) He believes in Christ as the object of his faith.

Again, the evangelical climate of today would quickly rejoice since here is, "a man who believes in Jesus." They would admit that this new convert needs some teaching for his maturation; but nevertheless they would accept Ignorance as an immature believer needing nurture. However, Ignorance protests that this pilgrim is not merely a fledgling, but ignorant of the true gospel and therefore unsaved.

1) But Christian objects, he sees no need of Christ.

Ignorance is ignorant of his inheritance of original sin, and his resultant actual sin. He sees his problem as weaknesses, failings, imperfections, rather than a mortal, pervasive disease of the soul.

2) But Christian objects, he claims no corruption.

Rather, Ignorance has such an insufferable estimate of his worth and works that, with some slight infused grace correction, he believes his righteousnesses will accumulate acceptance for him, if he is sufficiently productive.

3) But Christian objects, he does not lack righteousness.

More significantly, Ignorance does not see the need for the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness because he has sufficient righteousness of his own, though it be incomplete and imperfect. Hence Christian concludes that the focus of Ignorance's faith is radically different from his own.

(b) He believes in Christ for infused grace that justifies.

Again, notice that we are dealing here with terminology that seems almost orthodox, while the actual contrast in "gospels" presents a radical difference. So Ignorance agrees to Christian's request for a definitive statement concerning his justifying faith. The resultant twofold confession has been precisely constructed by Bunyan for the purpose of testing the reader. Obviously it is false, But why exactly is this so?

1) This is justification by sanctified works.

According to Ignorance, to be a Christian is to believe certain doctrinal propositions about Christ and man, and then commence

to follow Christ by means of living according to moral duties he has established. For many of this opinion, commencement requires baptism which instrumentally brings about regeneration, though Bunyan does not enter into this controversy here. Grace from Christ comes through church ordinances. The following Christian cooperates with grace and produces good works that cumulatively obtain acceptance with God.

a) First proposition.

Man is a sinner, cursed by the Law, because of his disobedience. He cooperates with grace received via Christ's atonement. His resulting works of obedience gradually justify him before God.

b) Second proposition.

The atoning work of Christ, through infused grace, sanctifies the religious duties of the follower of Christ, which works the Father is pleased to accept for justification.

2) This is classic Semi-Pelagian doctrine.

This form of synergistic or cooperative salvation assumes a degree of human ability and free volition along with a degree of divine limitation, God provides grace with which man autonomously interacts. As a consequence, God's sovereignty is compromised and man's sinfulness is moderated.

3) This is classic Roman Catholic doctrine.

Kelman comments: "Ignorance falls headlong into Roman Catholic theology. His doctrine . . . is a statement in which there is a suggestion not only of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification, but of the transference of the merits of the saints."⁷⁸ Further, Bunyan identifies the doctrine of Edward Fowler, personified in Ignorance, as being identical with that of the sixteenth century English Jesuit, Edmund Campion.⁷⁹

4) This is the doctrine of the Council of Trent.

At its sixth session on January 13, 1547, the Roman Catholic Council of Trent declared its *Decree On Justification*, part of which follows:

⁷⁸ Kelman, *The Road*, II, p. 154.

⁷⁹ Bunyan, *Works*, II, pp. 332-333.

[T]he instrumental cause [of justification] is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified. . . Having, therefore, been thus justified, and made the friends and domestics of God [by baptism] they through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works, increase in that justice which they have received through the grace of Christ, and are still further justified. . . . And, for this cause, life eternal is to be proposed to those working well unto the end, and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward which is according to the promise of God himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits. If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema.⁸⁰

(2) Christian strongly repudiates subjective justification.

CHRISTIAN: Let me give an answer to this confession of your faith.

1. You believe with a fantastical [*imaginary*] faith, for such a faith is nowhere described in the *Word of God*.

2. You believe with a false faith, because it takes away the personal righteousness of *Christ* from justification and replaces it with your own.

3. This faith makes *Christ* justifier of your actions rather than you as a person; then your person is justified for the sake of your actions, and this is patently false.

4. Therefore this faith of yours is deceitful, and of the type that will leave you subject to the wrath of *God Almighty* at his day of final judgment. For true justifying faith directs the soul, being sensitive of its lostness through the law, to flee for refuge to *Christ's* righteousness.⁸¹ Now this righteousness of *Christ* is not an act of grace by which he makes your obedience a justifying work that is acceptable to *God*; rather it is his personal obedience to the law in doing and suffering for us that which this same law justly required of us. Let me stress that true faith accepts this righteousness of *Christ* as if it were a skirt by which the soul may be completely covered;⁸² so by this means the soul is presented as spotless before *God*, and he accepts it and acquits such a covered person from condemnation.

Now he understands the reason for his conflict with Ignorance. Both have faith in Christ, though for very different reasons. While Christian trusts in a perfect gracious work of justification outside of himself, Ignorance trusts in

⁸⁰ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, II, pp. 95, 99, 107, 113.

⁸¹ Num. 35:11-12; Heb. 6:18.

⁸² Gal. 3:26-27.

imperfect works of justification that originate from within him, grace assistance notwithstanding.

- (a) Such faith is based on fantasy, not God's Word.

It is imagined, speculative, and contrived faith that is not revealed from heaven; it comes from the proud heart of man who fancies he is sufficiently good enough to impress God. So he fabricates a gospel according to the dimensions of his rosy understanding of human nature. It is significant that Ignorance does not refer to Scripture in defense of his opinion, although Fowler did and received an overwhelming biblical salve from Bunyan in reply.⁸³

- (b) Such faith clings to personal righteousness, not Christ's.

Despite the claim of Ignorance that the grace of Christ makes human obedience, albeit that which is imperfect, acceptable by God for justification, it remains true for this false gospel that it is human performance that increases reconciliation with God, and not Christ's perfect mediatorial righteousness. This Scripture flatly and repeatedly denies (Rom. 3:21-24, 28; 5:5, 9, 19-25; 10:4; I Cor. 1:30; 6:11; 11 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9).

- (c) Such faith is in Christ justifying our actions.

Because man is not thought to require a complete dealing with his sin by means of a total covering or atonement (Gal. 3:27; Phil. 3:9), a lesser view of human corruption requires a lesser remedy which is Christ's sanctifying of a person's actions. These imperfect works are supposed to progressively justify a person before God, though such a justification can only be designated as completely unsatisfactory. Such a process makes Christ a helper, but not a Savior.

- (d) Such faith brings the threat of God's wrath.

With Pauline passion, zealous for the maintenance of the purity of the one gospel, Christian warns Ignorance that his "gospel" will inevitably bring upon him the wrath of God; for not being properly clothed, he will be cast into "outer darkness" where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:2-13).

- 1) The awakened sinner seeks Christ's righteousness.

Sensing nakedness before God on account of his thorough sinfulness as reflected by the Law (Ezek. 23:29; Rom. 3:20), the earnest pilgrim seeks for a thorough covering of righteousness, that

⁸³ Bunyan, *Works*, II, pp. 297-300.

is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ's being, doing, dying, and resurrection (I Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9; Rev. 3: 18).

2) The deluded sinner cooperates with God's grace.

He conceives of salvation as a bilateral agreement which depends on both the moribund pilgrim's works contribution and God's grace assistance. His real danger is evidenced by his self-diagnosis of his problem as being poor health rather than a terminal condition. Hence a moderate disease requires a moderate solution (Gal. 3:1-3).

3) The awakened sinner seeks perfect righteousness.

Having had a vision of God as being absolutely holy (Is. 6:1-3) and of purest light (I John 1:5), he knows that no impure person can fellowship with Him, no darkness can be tolerated in his presence (I John 1:6). Hence only the obtaining of a perfect holiness and purity can fit the sinner for dwelling in His kingdom, and only Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God (Acts 3:14) can provide such a perfect righteousness (Heb. 7:26-27; I John 1:7).

4) Application.

The great question of Job, "How can a man be just with God?" (Job 25:4, cf. 4:27; 9:2) takes us to the very heart of biblical Christianity. Ignorance represents a popular approach that nestles well in the bosom of man convinced of his competence. For him, Jesus Christ is a model providing a superb moral image of goodness, in response to which man takes the initiative in shaping his life accordingly. Christian represents the opposite and biblical truth incompetence and Jesus Christ's concerning man's perfect competence to rescue perishing mortals. So Bunyan responds to Fowler in this respect:

Justification with God, comes not by imitating Christ as exemplary in morals, but through faith in his precious blood. In the law I read, that the Paschal Lamb was neither to be eaten sodden nor raw, but roast with fire, it must be eaten (Ex. 12). Now to make salvation principally to depend upon imitating Christ's life, it is to feed upon him raw, or at most, as sodden, not sanctified and holy: But the precept is, 'Eat it roast with fire;' is to be the antitype, as accused of God for sin, and enduring the punishment for it (Ex. 19; Deut. 33:2; Mal. 4:1). I have been pleased with this observation: that none of the signs and wonders in Egypt, could deliver the children of Israel thence, till the Lamb was slain, and roast with fire (Ex. 12:31).⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 330.

So Philip Doddridge writes:

That spotless robe, which He hath wrought,
 Shall deck us all around;
 Nor by the piercing eye of God
 One blemish shall be found.

(3) Ignorance denounces an objective justification.

IGNORANCE: What are you saying? Would you have us trust in what *Christ* in his own person has done without [*outside of*]⁸⁵ us? This conceit would certainly encourage the loosening of the reigns that restrict our lusts, and allow us to live as we are inclined. For what does it matter how we live when we may be justified from all our sin by *Christ's* personal righteousness, that is when all that we have to do is simply believe?⁸⁶

From one perspective, Ignorance is not ignorant of the gospel as Christian has explained it; he certainly understands the essence of what distinguishes his “gospel” from that of his challenger. Yet from another perspective, Ignorance is terribly ignorant since, at the bottom line, he fails to understand, or humbly confess, the pervasive depravity of his own heart and thus see the necessity of Christ’s personal righteousness rather than his own.

(a) He does not look to what Christ has done outside him.

Ignorance’s incredulous comment: “What! would you have us trust to what Christ in his own person has done without us?” reveals the sharp distinction between these two disputants. To “by faith alone” believe in Christ crucified, outside of the believer in space/time/history, so that through this faith Christ’s perfect righteousness might be imputed to the sinner for full justification by the Father, is to believe that which lacks practical credibility. It is too simple, too gratuitous, too lacking in ethical stimulus, too demeaning of human involvement. He does look inwardly to God working in his heart. Sadly, the implied relational sentiment of Ignorance, which in fact hides a much deeper problem, is all too similar to the modern evangelical “gospel” which speaks, not of believing in Christ crucified for complete and free righteousness through imputation, but of “inviting Jesus into the heart,” of “asking Jesus to take control of one’s life,” of an interior experience that justifies. By way of contrast, Bunyan’s great hope and consolation was his perfect and acceptable righteousness in Christ seated beside the Father in heaven.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ This archaic meaning describes Christ’s objective righteousness.

⁸⁶ Rom. 6:1, 15.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, I, §§ 229-32, pp 35-6.

- (b) He finds such doctrine gives license to sin.

Strangely, the objection of Ignorance that free and perfect justification through faith alone in Christ's atoning person would stimulate licentiousness clearly reveals the anti-gospel stance of this argument, at least from a biblical perspective. The opposition which the Apostle Paul faced was consistently the charge that his gospel encouraged antinomianism and moral permissiveness, not that he was too legalistic (Rom. 3:8; 6:1-2, 15; Acts 13:38-39; 21:21). So Christian is in good company here. Of course Ignorance, true to his name, completely ignores the pilgrim's regeneration through the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4; Tit. 3:5), the fruitfulness of that regeneration (Gal. 5:22-23), his election and adoption unto holiness (Eph. 1:4-5), and the constraint of grace (Rom. 5:1-5; Eph. 2:8-10).

- (c) He finds such doctrine to be legal fiction.

This common flippant rebuttal simply needs to be restated, namely that "this doctrine of justification is biblical and legal fact" (Rom. 4:5). Man's great breach with God is basically moral and then relational as a result (Is. 59:2). Justification deals with this moral rift and enables God to regenerate and sanctify. In a civil court, a judge's declaration of "not guilty" is not legal fiction; but his declaration may constrain, and he may well suggest some subsequent rehabilitative process. So justification, regeneration, and sanctification are not identical, though neither should they be isolated. But the Bible gives priority to just, or moral, or legal reconciliation before the relational breach can be closed. The gospel of Ignorance minimizes the breach and negotiates with man for relational and meritorious bridge building.

- (4) Christian denounces Ignorance as true to his name.

CHRISTIAN: You are fittingly named *Ignorance*, for you are also ignorant as a person; your answer clearly demonstrates this to be true. You are ignorant of what justifying righteousness is, and equally as ignorant as to how the soul may be safe from the severe wrath of *God* through faith in it. Yes, you are also ignorant of the true [*resultant*] effects of saving faith in this righteousness of *Christ*; these include the conquest and winning over of the heart to *God* in *Christ*, so that it loves his name, his *Word*, his ways, and his people, and not as you ignorantly imagine.

Here is the real meaning of Ignorance's name since he is not ignorant in a worldly sense. Like many a person with religious knowledge in general, Ignorance considers himself to be quite knowledgeable, even as the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees were in the time of Christ (Matt. 23:1-2). He has a form of godliness" while "denying its power" (II Tim. 3:5).

- (a) He is ignorant of justifying righteousness.

That is, he is ignorant of what the Bible clearly teaches; or better, he is unwilling to yield to what the Bible problem is willful ignorance; clearly teaches. This man's problem is willful ignorance; he chooses not to know the truth (Rom. 1:32). He "loves darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

- (b) He is ignorant of salvation from the wrath of God.

Since he does believe in sin and judgment, yet his understanding of the wrath of God is but nominal. Besides, he sees no present danger; he is secure in his own righteousness, even though such a faith insults God's gospel (John 3:36).

- (c) He is ignorant of the effects of true saving faith.

The suggestion of Ignorance that the gospel of free grace promotes licentiousness is really slanderous. It implies that there is no constraint, no compulsion, no heart melting capacity, no moral encouragement conveyed through the grace of God (Luke 7:47; II Cor. 5: 14).

- 1) The heart bows before God in love for His person.

The grace of the gospel causes aliens, haters, rebels, and enemies concerning God to become His sons, lovers, servants, and friends. They then respond, "We love [God and His children], because He first [in grace] loved us" (I John 4:19-21).

- 2) The heart bows before God in evident holy living.

The grace of God personally embraced, through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, instills new appetites, attitudes, and activities (Rom. 6:22-23; 12:1; Eph. 5:9; I Pet. 2:2-3). Bunyan writes:

Remember, man, if the grace of God hath taken hold of thy soul, thou art a man of another world, and indeed a subject of another and more noble kingdom, the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of the gospel of grace, of faith and righteousness, and the kingdom of heaven hereafter (Rom. 14:16-18). . . Here beat down thy body, mortify thy members; hoist up thy mind to the things that are above, and practically hold forth before all the world that blessed word of life (I Cor. 9:26-27). This, I say, is God's design; this is the tendency, the natural tendency of every grace of God bestowed upon thee; and herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit (Col. 3:1-4; John 15:8).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 730.

(5) Hopeful asks Ignorance if Christ has been revealed to him.

HOPEFUL: Ask him if he has ever had *Christ* revealed to him from *Heaven*.⁸⁹

IGNORANCE: What now is this? Are you a man influenced by revelations? I believe that what you, and all the rest of your persuasion, say about this matter is nothing more than the fruit of distracted brains [*an addled mind*].⁹⁰

HOPEFUL: Why man, *Jesus Christ* is so hid in *God* from the natural understanding of all flesh that he cannot be savingly known by any man, that is unless *God* the *Father* reveals him to them.

IGNORANCE: That is your faith, but it is certainly not mine. On the other hand, I have no doubt that my faith is as good as yours; though in no way do I have as many fanciful notions in my head as you do.⁹¹

CHRISTIAN: Do allow me to add a further word here. You should not speak so scornfully of this matter; for I will boldly assert, even as my good companion has done, that no one can know *Jesus Christ* except through the revelation of the *Father*.⁹² Yes, and I will add as well that even the faith that lays hold upon *Christ*, that is assuming that it is true faith, must be wrought [*forged*] by the exceeding greatness of his mighty power.⁹³ Now concerning this faith, I observe, poor *Ignorance*, that you are wholly ignorant of it. Therefore, wake up and acknowledge your own wretchedness, and then fly to the *Lord Jesus*; for only by his righteousness, which is the righteousness of *God*, he himself being *God*, shall you be delivered from condemnation.

IGNORANCE: You go so fast that I cannot keep up with you; so do go on ahead as before, and I will follow on some distance behind.

Then the pilgrims said:

Well *Ignorance*, will you yet foolish be,
To slight good counsel, ten times given thee?
And if you yet refuse it, you shall know
Before long the evil of your doing so.
Remember man in time; stoop, do not fear,
Good counsel taken well, saves, therefore hear;
But if you yet shall slight it, you will be
The loser, *Ignorance*, I'll warrant thee.

Up till now, Hopeful has been on the perimeter of this dispute. But he cannot contain himself any longer. For all of Ignorance's use of biblical terminology, yet it has become obvious to Christian's companion that this deviant pilgrim

⁸⁹ Matt. 16:16-17; Gal. 1:15-16.

⁹⁰ Ignorance angles [*baits*] them.

⁹¹ Ignorance speaks critically about that which he is ignorant.

⁹² Matt. 11:25-27; I Cor. 12:3; Eph. 1:18-19.

⁹³ Eph. 1:19.

lacks the most basic of all Christian traits, and that is conversion by means of sovereign intervention. He seems competent in verbalizing religious propositions, yet dead to the animating grace of God. He disputes as a person impressed with the importance of human cooperation in salvation, yet seems oblivious to the truth that it is God, in the sovereignty of His mercy, who saves sinners. So Hopeful, in an aside, suggests that Christian ought to question Ignorance from this perspective. But the solo pilgrim has already overheard the question, and he seems to explode in opposition. A nerve seems to have been touched, and that being human autonomy!



Ignorance reveals his false faith

(a) Ignorance derisively scorns such revelations.

Losing some self-control, he reveals not only his strong aversion to this apostolic truth revealed by Matthew (Matt. 11:27), John (John 6:37), and Paul (Gal. but also the witness of other “Calvinists” whose doctrine he has encountered at some earlier time. He labels this teaching as madly esoteric, insanely transcendent!

1) His faith is different.

This is certainly true, though it is the object of his faith, human righteousness, that so radically differs from that of Christian and Hopeful, namely Christ's righteousness.

2) His faith is yet equal.

True, his linkage to his object of faith may be as strong as that of Christian and Hopeful. Yet it will be about as helpful as it is being hitched to a truck with no gasoline in its tank!

3) His faith is not fanciful.

It is not “whimsical” or “fanciful” notion; it is not the product of “distracted brains.” Rather, it is grounded upon the “concrete reality” of subjective sinful judgment, and the avoidance of the “concrete reality” of Holy Scripture.

(b) Hopeful declares that blind souls must receive sight.

Modern “free will” and “decisionist” doctrine is eliminated by Bunyan here. The revelation of Christ in a saving manner is particular and not universal; it is according to the good pleasure and sovereign grace of God (John 1:12-13; Eph. 1:4-6). This is not so much a matter of “revelations” as divine sovereign prerogative confronting a sinfully blind human race (John 6:44; II Cor. 4:4). Only the light of the knowledge of the gospel, particularly applied, can cause a darkened soul to comprehend the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:6). In *Grace Abounding*, on several occasions Bunyan spontaneously describes how truth from the Bible suddenly dawned upon his soul. “On me it did then fasten with conviction; that sentence fell with weight upon my spirit; . . . I began to give place to the word, which, with power, did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul, Thou art my love, thou art my love; . . . that Scripture did also tear and rend my soul.”⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Ibid., §§ 47, 62, 92, 104, pp. 12-13, 17-18.

- (c) Christian declares that knowledge and faith are given.

In support of his perceptive brother, Christian presses home the truth concerning the sovereignty of God in salvation which emphasis Ignorance finds so offensive. If he merely indicated ignorance at this point and a readiness to learn, then patience and encouragement in the Word would be appropriate. However, this pilgrim would not only oppose God's gospel, but also His right to rule over the hearts and wills of mankind.

- 1) He exhorts Ignorance concerning human ability.

At this point much of contemporary evangelical Christendom needs to listen and learn. The citadel of the human will, supposedly untouchable by God, has to be seen for what it really is, that is the citadel of man's rebellion against God which needs its ramparts torn down by sovereign invasion. This God accomplishes when he saves a human soul (Acts 9:1-18).

- a) Knowledge of Christ comes by revelation.

It is primarily a particular bestowal of the Father, not a discovery of the human heart (Luke 10:22; I Cor. 1:21; 12:3; Eph. 1:18-19).

- b) Faith in Christ comes by donation.

It is primarily a particular bestowal of the Father, mediated through the power of the Spirit, not an independent human response (Acts 16:14; Eph. 2:8-9; 3:14-17).

- 2) He exhorts Ignorance to confess his wretchedness.

As difficult as this evangelistic prospect might seem, and with no evidence of softening, yet the exhortation to awake to repentance and faith, these being responses which only God can grant, is powerfully declared (Acts 2:38-40).

- 3) He exhorts Ignorance to claim Christ's righteousness.

This is Pauline evangelism which declares the gospel in terms of unrighteousness and righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-24; 4:6; 5:17; cf. Is. 59:15-17; 61:10). The righteousness of God is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5), and available only through faith in him (Rom. 10:4), sans condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

(d) Ignorance prefers to straggle along behind.

He claims to feel hot from the fast pace, but in reality this is on account on the intense pressure of the truth upon his soul. He has stoutly resisted both the truth of God (II Tim. 3:8) and the Spirit of God after the manner of the fathers of his homeland (Acts 7:51). So he falls behind,

a man of prejudice and fatal twist of mind. He is open to no new light. Light falling on him only annoys him, and it would be torture to him to lie [according to Robert Browning] 'bare to the universal prick of light.'⁹⁵

(e) Christian and Hopeful give a final caution.

As Ignorance drops behind, he hears the pleading of two pilgrims who are fully absolved concerning his guilt. He has heard the truth presented from many angles, and yet stubbornly resisted it. His blindness is now more intense than ever; his heart is more set than ever. Paul writes of him: "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19).



Ignorance prefers to travel alone

⁹⁵ Kelman, *The Road*, II, p. 159.

4. Christian and Hopeful consider Ignorance in private.

Together again, without the tension of open conflict, yet the pilgrim duo muse over many problems that remain concerning the enigma of Ignorance. How could he be so aware of Bible truth and yet so blind, so stubborn, so resistant, so falsely assured of his destiny? How could he persevere so far and yet remain in error? How could he “believe” in Jesus Christ and yet spurn his perfect substitutionary righteousness?

a. They soberly fear for the plight of Ignorance.

Then *Christian* addressed his companion.

CHRISTIAN: Well, come with me my good friend *Hopeful*, for I see that you and I must walk by ourselves once again.

So I saw in my dream that they went on ahead at a steady pace while *Ignorance* limped along behind. Then *Christian* said to his companion, “I feel great pity for this man, because in the end his journey will come to a woeful conclusion.”

HOPEFUL: Sad to say, in our *Town* there is an abundance of his kind, whole families, yes even whole streets with many being pilgrims as well. So if there are many like him in our locality, then there must be a great multitude in the place where he was born.

CHRISTIAN: This is true for the *Word* says, “He has blinded their eyes lest they should see,” etc.⁹⁶ But now that we are by ourselves, tell me what you think of such men. Do you think that at any time they have convictions of sin, and as a consequence have fears about the danger of their condition?

Glancing back, they genuinely pity him for his halting gait, as if wounded, in much the same manner as their Lord once pitied them (Matt. 9:36; II Cor. 5:20). However, concerning this goat, he is addressed by this same Lord: “You are unwilling to come to me [on My terms], that you may have life” (John 5:40).

(1) His end will be darkness and judgment.

In the light of the truth he has played the fool. He has “not delighted in understanding [from God], but only in revealing his own mind” (Prov. 18:2; cf. 12:15). For this reason, ruin will finally overtake him (Prov. 10:14; II Cor. 11:15).

(2) His numerous kin have a similar destiny.

Christian and Hopeful reflect on the multitude, like Ignorance, who inhabit the City of Destruction, the town of Vanity, and Conceit Country. Notwithstanding the fact that many of these are religious pilgrims, yet they are also perishing.

⁹⁶ Isa. 6:9-10; John 12:39-41.

(3) His stark blindness is to the work of God.

This is God's judicial blindness poured out on those who, having received days of grace, yet still turn their backs on the truth with increasing stubbornness (John 12:39-40; cf. Is. 6:10). This is God's abandonment of those who have abandoned God (Rom. 1:18-32). In commenting on the cases of Cain, Ishmael, and Esau, Bunyan describes how each of these pilgrims had days of grace which they subsequently trampled upon. Then there came a time when God rejected them.

The day of grace ended with these professors at that time when they committed some grievous sin. . . . Yet these three, after their day of grace was over, lived better lives, as to outward things, than ever they did before. . . . The day of grace ends with some men before God takes them out of this world.⁹⁷

b. They soberly ponder if Ignorance is truly convicted.

The likes of Ignorance, especially those with some religious attachment, still pose a great mystery insofar as their profession is concerned. Christian proposes that they do experience conviction of sin which in turn is productive of fear of God's judicial consequences. Bouncing this idea off Hopeful, he delves further into why this experience does not lead to repentance and faith. What is it that causes this initial sensitivity to harden?

(1) The arousal to fear is temporary for such.

HOPEFUL: No, I would rather that you answer this question yourself since, being older, you have more experience.

CHRISTIAN: Then I would say, at least it is my opinion, that at times they may have such fears.

But because they are naturally ignorant of spiritual truth, they do not understand that these convictions contribute toward their good; and therefore they strive with great effort to stifle them while presumptuously flattering themselves concerning the way [*good state*] of their own hearts.

There is initial pain over erupting inner distress; the Word of truth to which they are exposed does greatly irritate their consciences; there is some response in the same way that the seed planted in the thorny soil is briefly welcomed. But the cares of this world and materialism quickly starve that early life; the soil is content for the seed to wither; it prefers thorns and thistles (Matt. 13:7, 22).

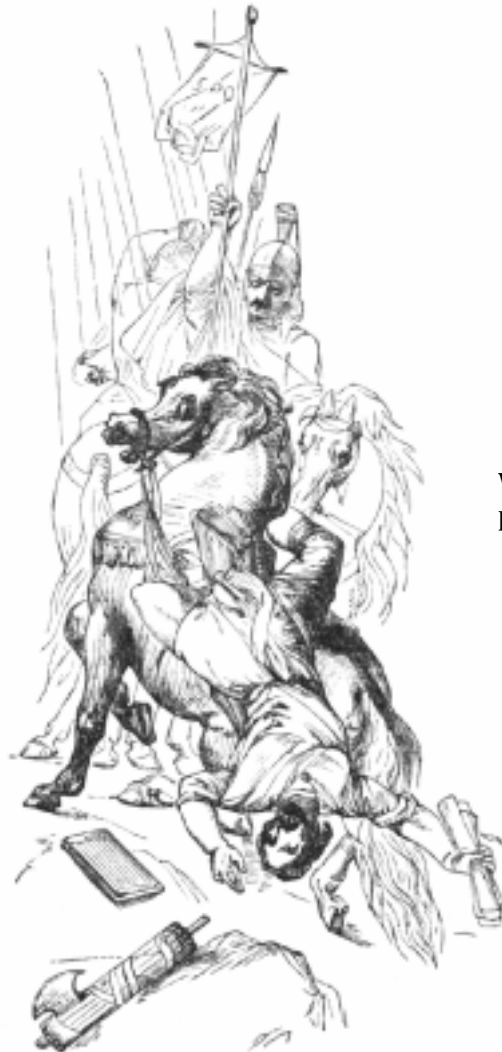
⁹⁷ Bunyan, *Works*, III, pp. 577-579.

- (a) They see no benefit in fear.

As if with the response of animal instinct, they automatically judge their growing terror as undesirable and without the slightest benefit. Such discomfort is not suitable for their relaxed lifestyle, that is in this present world. Little do they realize that this present soul disturbance may well lead to their eternal comfort in the world to come (Luke 16:19-31).

- (b) They desperately stifle fear.

This intentional suppression of anguish in the soul, such as by worldly distraction, is found to be effective, though this is only true to the degree that a drug may relieve the pain of an unknown mortal disease. Thus, feeling less distressed, they apply the same remedy again and again until the fear and discomfort permanently disappear (Prov. 29:1). Now less troubled by conviction of sin, they are renewed in their self-righteousness.



Without fear the
pilgrim perishes

(2) The arousal to fear of the Lord prompts pilgrims.

HOPEFUL: I do agree with what you say, for fear does tend to benefit men such as when, at the beginning of their pilgrimage, they are prompted to go the right way.

CHRISTIAN: Without a doubt this is what happens, that is it is right fear. For in this regard the *Word* says, “The fear of the *Lord* is the beginning of wisdom.”⁹⁸

It is the fear of the Lord that has launched many a pilgrim on his journey toward the Celestial City (Job 28:28; Ps. 111: 10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10). Christian declared to Evangelist at the City of Destruction that he “feared” that his burden would deliver him over to hell. For this reason he sought for a way of escape.⁹⁹ Ignorance did not give evidence of a burden, nor did he fear God’s judgment of his pervasive corruption.

(3) The arousal of fear of the Lord is beneficial.

HOPEFUL: How would you describe right fear?

CHRISTIAN: True or right fear is identified in three ways.

1. By its arousal. It is caused by saving convictions of sin.
2. It drives the soul to seize hold of [*believe in*] *Christ* for salvation.
3. It gives birth to and maintains in the soul a great reverence for *God*, his *Word*, and ways; so this same soul is kept tender by making it afraid to turn from these affections, either to the right hand or to the left, or to anything that may dishonor *God*, rend its peace, grieve the *Spirit*, or cause the enemy to speak [*of God*] reproachfully.

Bunyan wrote a complete volume titled, *A Treatise On The Fear Of The Lord*, at the beginning of which he writes:

I call it [the fear of the Lord] the highest duty, because it is, as I may call it, not only a duty in itself, but, as it were, the salt that seasoneth every duty. For there is no duty performed by us that can by any means be accepted of God, if it be not seasoned with godly fear. Wherefore the apostle saith, ‘Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear’ [Heb. 12:28].¹⁰⁰

So Christian now expands on “right fear.”

⁹⁸ Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 438.

- (a) It causes a serious regard for sin.

A true and fearful vision of God as thrice holy, such as confronted Isaiah, will cause the pilgrim to cry out with the prophet: “Woe is me, for I am ruined! because I am a man of unclean lips” (Is. 6:1-5). This deep contrition also led to the sovereign bestowal of grace (Is. 6:6-7).

- (b) It directs the fearful soul to Christ.

While one thief hurled abuse at Christ on the cross, the other responded to the railer, obviously convicted of his own sinfulness: “Do you not even fear God? this man has done nothing wrong.” Then in seeking mercy he is assured by Christ: “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:39-43).

- (c) It keeps the soul reverent and tender.

“By the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil” (Prov. 16:6; cf. 8:13). In other words, a right perspective of God is effecting in every area of life. And a wrong or distorted perspective also results in a commensurate way of living. Bunyan describes this principle in poetic form as follows:¹⁰¹

Is godly fear delightful unto thee,
 That fear that God himself delights to see
 Bear sway in them that love him? then he will
 The godly mind in this request fulfill.
 By giving thee a fear that tremble shall,
 At every trip thou takest, lest thou fall,
 And him offend, or hurt thyself by sin,
 Or cause poor souls that always blind have been
 To stumble at thy falls, and harder be
 Against their own salvation and thee.
 That fear that of itself would rather choose
 The rod, than to offend or to abuse
 In anything that blessed worthy name,
 That hath thee saved from that death and shame;
 That sin would soon have brought thee to, if he
 Had not imputed righteousness to thee.
 I will love them, saith God, and not depart
 From them, but put my fear within their heart,
 That I to them may always lovely be,
 And that they never may depart from me.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., III, p. 741.

- 1) The pilgrim fears to wander.

Negatively, he is aware of his heavenly Father's hand of discipline; positively, he has no desire to starve, but rather prefers the holy food of Zion.

- 2) The pilgrim fears to dishonor God.

He is sensitive in his life to the upholding of the honor of God, the sanctity of His name, the holy witness of His people, the reverencing of His Book, and the purity and proclamation of His gospel.

- 3) The pilgrim fears to grieve the Holy Spirit.

As the recipient of salvation and the fruit of the Spirit by grace, he trembles to manifest the works of the flesh such as falsehood, anger, stealing, base speech, bitterness, etc. which so offend the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:25-32; cf. Gal. 5:19-21).

- 4) The pilgrim fears to yield to the enemy.

The thought of giving way to Satan's enticements, even under the guise of relaxation, is to weigh such action as treason before God.

- (4) The arousal to fear is disturbing to Hopeful.

HOPEFUL: Well spoken my brother, for I believe that you have said the truth. Have we now almost passed through the *Enchanted Ground*?

CHRISTIAN: Why do you ask? Have you become weary of this present conversation?

HOPEFUL: Not at all, but I would still like to know where we are.

This attempt to change the subject on the part of Hopeful is not a literary device on Bunyan's part that merely introduces variety into this long discourse section. Rather, Hopeful has been moved to a point of sensitivity about the fear of God that has made him uncomfortable. He seeks a break to relieve the pressure, but is not willing to confess his troubled spirit to his companion. However, Christian appears not to be either fooled or distracted; he simply explains that there is enough distance left, where the danger of sleeping still remains, for them to further consider the abuse and defusing of God given fear. To this suggestion Hopeful meekly yields.

- (5) The arousal of fear is suppressed for various reasons.

CHRISTIAN: We now have no more than two miles to go in this region. Nevertheless, let us return to the topic under discussion. Now in general, the ignorant do not appreciate that such convictions of sin tend to cause them to fear, and thus are for their good; therefore they seek to stifle them.

HOPEFUL: Be more specific. How do they seek to stifle them?

CHRISTIAN: There are four ways.

1. They think that those fears are forged by the devil, though in fact they are the work of *God*, and in thinking this way they resist them as things that would cause their overthrow [*defeat*].

2. They also think that these fears tend to spoil their faith, even though as deluded poor men they do not have any, and therefore they harden their hearts against them.

3. They presume that they ought not to have fears, and therefore in spite of them, they put on a vain show of confidence.

4. They appreciate that these fears tend to strip them of their pathetic displays of self-righteousness; therefore they resist them with all of their might.

In his *A Treatise On The Fear Of The Lord*, Bunyan lists ten means by which this proper reverence might be desensitized. They are: 1. Little sins. 2. Prayerlessness. 3. Moral laxity. 4. Covetousness. 5. Unbelief. 6. Forgetfulness. 7. Murmuring. 8. Haughtiness. 9. Envy. 10. Hard-heartedness.¹⁰² These are closely related to Christian's description here of the ways by which people convince themselves that the fear of God ought to be quashed in their souls.

- (a) They are convinced that fear comes from the Devil.

It is true that the Devil and his angels will constantly remind the pilgrim of his many sinful failures, but only for the purpose of his wholly yielding to this course on account of the inclination of his nature. But the fear of God, bestowed through His Spirit, fosters a desire for a course that will lead to deliverance from sin and its consequences. Hence, fear that leads to the seeking of mercy from God and the maintenance of holiness is a spiritually healthy characteristic (Prov. 10:27; 19:23).

- (b) They believe fear spoils their faith.

The faithful pilgrim is a jolly pilgrim, radiant and vibrant, not full of melancholy and trembling. Fear dulls the spirit and dampens witness, but joy and ecstasy are infectious. God is not a killjoy! But elation and exuberance not being regulated by fear and reverence are empty emotion. For this reason, the authentic pilgrim is to "rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11); "bow in reverence [and] . . . sing for joy" (Ps. 5:7, 11).

¹⁰² Ibid., I, pp. 485-7.

- (c) They presume to have confidence rather than fear.

By a process of denial, declaring fear to be unworthy of the manliness of a pilgrim, they maintain that a positive and confident attitude is more befitting. Fear demeans human potential, but assertiveness is more likely to tap the full measure of resources in a pilgrim that is necessary to persevere. Fear is mistaken about the character of God whereas confidence is bold in His presence and not preoccupied with sin and holiness.

- (d) They find fear detracts from self-righteousness.

Having experienced self-holiness as affirming to the ego and encouragement for self-esteem, the injection of the fear of God is found to sour all of these good feelings. The awe and majesty and moral purity of God lead to the painful scrutiny of man resulting in agony of soul. To counter this the fear of God is replaced with sentiment and benign goodness. As a result, inner comfort and contentment are restored.

- c. Hopeful humbly confesses his past ensnarement.

HOPEFUL: I confess to knowing something of this in my own experience; for before I knew the truth about myself, my condition was just as pitiful.

The whole population of Vanity was fully convinced, as was he, of the perfectibility of man. The dominant philosophy of the schools of higher learning nearby was that fundamentalist religion was damaging to the human psyche; instead, evolutionary humanism, tolerant of liberal religion, upheld man as a flower yet to reach full bloom. But when Christian and Faithful arrived, a new analysis of the human condition was heard which seemed to strip away layers of pretence to reveal an ugly and odious condition. The result was an outbreak of fear never before experienced.

- (1) He trembles at his earlier suppression of fear.

Though well schooled in fear-suppression by many accomplished teachers, yet one factor persisted in calling into question every argument his professors raised. It was the realization of the truth of Faithful's preaching. At its root, fear suppression produced an artificial result that required constant damage control lest the truth concerning God, sin, and grace should pierce its veneer and expose reality (John 8:32).

- (2) Application.

The portrayal of Ignorance may be likened to a three act tragic play. Only the intensely sobering third act now awaits fulfillment. However, Christian and Hopeful both remain profoundly disturbed by the fact that their best evangelistic efforts failed to raise so much as a mere whimper of repentance.

The question they, and so many other pilgrims, have asked is why their clear presentation of the truth was so roundly scorned. The answer is simply that unbelief is of such a deep and dark dye, that only supernatural cleansing can purify the soul (Is. 1:18). All of man's religious seeking, reasoning, and merit-accruing activity are of no avail; these are utterly futile pursuits (I Cor. 1:21). The fact is that man "loves [CCCCC, **agapaō**]darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). He much prefers the pig-pen of his own making and Ignorance well illustrates this point. He is a master of fear suppression. Of course man's problem here is that he wants his heart, full of swill, to be appreciated as pure and wholesome; he wants the unholy to be regarded as holy. If he would cry for mercy, God would give it. But he willfully abandons the truth; so God abandons him.

D. Christian Recalls His Acquaintance with Temporary.

1. Introduction.

CHRISTIAN: Well, let us now leave our neighbor *Ignorance* by himself and decide upon another topic that is profitable for discussion.

HOPEFUL: I agree with all my heart; but still, you begin with a suggestion.

CHRISTIAN: Well then, about ten years ago, did you ever know a person named *Temporary* who came from your part of the country? At that time he was very enthusiastic about religion.

HOPEFUL: Did I know him? Yes I certainly did, for he resided in *Graceless*, a town about two miles away from *Honesty*, and he lived next door to one named *Turn-back*.

CHRISTIAN: That is right, for *Turn-back* and he lived in the same terrace of houses. Well, at one time that man was very much awakened; I believe that he then had some appreciation of his sinfulness, and of the wages that were due to him in this regard.

HOPEFUL: I am of the same opinion as you, since, my house being less than three miles from him, he would frequently come to me while his face streamed with tears. I truly pitied that man, and I was not altogether without hope for him; but as one comes to understand, it is not everyone who cries out "*Lord, Lord*" [*whoproves to be a genuine pilgrim*].¹⁰³

CHRISTIAN: He once told me that he was determined to go on pilgrimage, just as we presently are; but all of a sudden he became a friend of one *Save-self*, and after that he became a stranger to me.¹⁰⁴

HOPEFUL: Now since we are talking about him, let us enquire a little more closely into the reasons for his sudden backsliding and others like him.

¹⁰³ Matt. 7:21-22.

¹⁰⁴ Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21.

The procession of recent characters reflects Bunyan's pastoral perception of acquaintances filtered through the grid of biblical truth. For instance, if we include Atheist followed by Hopeful, Ignorance and now Temporary, we see a clear parallel with the varying responses to the truth of the gospel that Christ represented in the Parable of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). Atheist is the hard, unreceptive soil (Matt. 13:4, 19); Hopeful is the good, receptive soil (Matt. 13:8, 23); Ignorance is the thorny, choking soil (Matt. 13:7, 22); Temporary is the rocky, shallow soil (Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21).

- a. Temporary leads us to the end of the Enchanted Ground.

Here is yet further awakening truth that is able to counteract the seductive wafting breezes of this extensive territory. In Part Two the pilgrims with Christiana are instructed: '~This Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy of pilgrims has. Wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down, as when they are weary? and when so like to be weary, as when almost at their journey's end?'¹⁰⁵

- b. Temporary provides the third of three contrasting testimonies.

The brevity of this account, suggestive of a short experience, does not reflect its relative importance for today since the western world is presently strewn with ex-pilgrims. The day of reckoning will surely prove that most of these cases ought to have been recognized as pretenders and imposters rather than backsliders.

- (1) Hopeful, the authentic pilgrim.

He is a genuine Christian by reason of his awareness of his real sinful condition, his understanding of Jesus Christ as God's only mediator, and his embrace of Christ's atoning righteousness through faith alone that is evidenced by a renewed heart and perseverance.

- (2) Ignorance, the authentic heretic.

He is a counterfeit and heretical Christian by reason of his genuine belief in a false gospel, that is Christ's sanctifying of human works that gradually justify.

- (3) Temporary, the authentic apostate.

He was a counterfeit and passing Christian by reason of his fraudulent faith in the true gospel. His initial enthusiasm was through the animation of religious zeal and not the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., III, p. 237.

- c. Temporary was a pilgrim from near Vanity.

The geography and timing here are complex. The fact that this recollection of Christian's concerns an individual known ten years ago may suggest a specific character that Bunyan knew at a much earlier period.

- (1) He dwelt in Graceless, away from Honesty, next to Turnback.

Was Christian called after this town of Graceless by his parents in the City of Destruction? Graceless was his proper name before conversion. At any rate, unregenerate Temporary, while renowned for his enthusiasm in religion, yet was known for his shortfall with regard to the virtue of honesty. As a result, his regression from his faith was a frequent event.

- (2) He consulted with Hopeful concerning his sins and judgement.

Living less than three miles from Vanity, he was able to visit and discuss spiritual matters with Hopeful shortly after his conversion. The powerful ministry of Faithful had spread to Graceless where Temporary, upon hearing the gospel, had appeared to be deeply affected by it. Though how Christian had become acquainted with him, we are not told.

- (a) His state with tears was pitiful.

To begin with, he was like the stony, shallow soil that received the seed of the Word and initially responded with joy and life (Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21). At the preaching of Faithful, the awakening of Temporary was vigorous and full of good signs. Greatly disturbed at his sins and the hovering of God's wrath over him (Rom. 2:5-8), he sought advice from Hopeful who counseled him in much the same way as Faithful had to him. His crying out to the Lord for salvation seemed, from outward appearances, to be genuine and earnest. Hopeful was encouraged, though cautious about any confession that did not spring from a holy lifestyle (Matt. 7:21-22).

- (b) His resolve was to go on pilgrimage.

Faithful's recruitment of pilgrims, so that they might flee from Vanity, had affected Hopeful; so he determined to depart in the near future. Hearing of this, Temporary indicated his intention of joining him as a traveling companion, though his neighbor Turn-back was of constant discouragement in this regard; he was frequently questioning the truthfulness of Faithful's message.

- (c) He became a stranger when befriended by Save-self.

Save-self had always opposed Faithful, and he made it his business to attach himself to those who he suspected of going on pilgrimage. One such victim was Temporary who he regularly courted and eventually

seduced with his doctrine of salvation by individual initiative based upon humanism. Full realization of this truth was accomplished by means of a program of instruction designed to be intense and progressive. Individual topics studied included: Conscience desensitization; Bible reinterpretation; Guilt elimination; Self-esteem theology; Fear suppression; Broadminded social relationships; Human achievement in history; etc. As a result, Temporary completely separated himself from Hopeful.



2. Hopeful declares four reasons why Temporary fell away.

CHRISTIAN: This may be very profitable, but you be the one to begin.

HOPEFUL: Well then, in my judgment there are four reasons for this falling away.

1. Though the consciences of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed. Therefore, when the power of guilt fades away, that which stimulated them to become religious ceases to have any effect. Therefore they naturally turn to their former walk once again. We see this same reaction with a dog who becomes sick on account of what he has eaten; in continuing to be sick, he also continues to vomit; he does this not because of a free mind, if it can be said that a dog has a mind, but rather because his stomach troubles him. But when his sickness is ended, so his stomach is troubled no more, and he is no longer opposed to his vomit. So he turns about and licks it all up. And so it is true which is written, "The dog returns to his own vomit again."¹⁰⁶ Now I say that a person may be hot and enthusiastic for *Heaven*, chiefly because of a sense of fear regarding the torments of *Hell*; but as their sense of *Hell's* terror, with its attending fears of damnation, diminishes, so also do their desires for *Heaven* and salvation cool as well. So then it comes to pass that when their guilt and fear are gone, likewise their desires for *Heaven* and happiness die, and they return to their former course once again.

2. Another reason is this; they have slavish fears that overwhelm them. Now I speak here of fears that they have of men, "for the fear of men brings a snare."¹⁰⁷ So then, though they seem to be hot for *Heaven* while the flames of *Hell* are about their ears, yet when that terror abates a little, they propose to themselves some second thoughts; one is that it is good to be wise and not run the risk of losing all for something they know little about; another is that it is not prudent to bring themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary troubles; so they choose to fall in with the world once again.

3. The shame that attends religion also lies as a roadblock in their way; they are proud and haughty, and in their opinion religion is low and contemptible. Therefore when they have lost their sense of *Hell* and the wrath to come, they again return to their former ways.

4. Pangs of guilt and the thought of terror are extremely distressing to them; they prefer not to see their misery before they come to it. Though it is possible that the first sight of it, that is if they appreciate such a view, might make them flee to that refuge where the righteous hide and are safe. Yet because they do, as I hinted before, shun any thinking about guilt and terror, therefore, when they are eventually rid of those stirrings about the terrors and wrath of *God*, they gladly harden their hearts and choose ways that will harden them all the more.

¹⁰⁶ II Pet. 2:22.

¹⁰⁷ Prov. 29:25.

The perplexing problem with Temporary is the initial enthusiasm that he manifests which seems so indicative of genuine conversion. Especially impressive is his earnestness for evangelism and exuberance in public worship.

a. His conscience was awakened without his mind.

While his sensitivity here might be thought to be good, yet it was based more upon his aversion to agony of soul rather than strong conviction of doctrine. The subsidence of pain in the soul resulted in reversion to carnality. He focused more on consequences than truth (Rom. 6:17).

(1) When guilt weakens, their religion wanes.

The pangs of guilt are more troublesome than the cause of guilt. They are obedient in duty more on account of the fear of punishment than the desire to glorify God.

(2) Illustration.

By nature they remain unchanged since a temporary period of purgation is followed by the embrace of that which they formerly eschewed. Thus they are like a dog which, being temporarily ill, vomits up its regular food and, upon feeling relieved, then returns to up that which it expelled (II Pet. 2:22).

(3) When hell loses its terror, so does the desire for heaven.

They are hot for heaven because of the heat of hell rather than the holiness of heaven. They respond more to the sanctions imposed against lawbreakers than to the constraint of grace, to the fear of retribution than to reward for service.

b. His fears of men overwhelmed him.

Not having that priority for “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33), when fear of judgment in hell subsides, such individuals yield to the snare of worldly pressure for the sake of personal well-being (Prov. 29:25).

(1) He opts for his possessions when hell loses its terror.

His whole world, whether in the sphere of the religious, social, or economic, is governed by self-interest. He becomes a pilgrim for advantage, and he quits journeying for advantage.

(2) He opts for security and returns to the world.

Like Pliable, he is willing to go on pilgrimage for great gain, but the mere threat of losing or suffering in this world is sufficient reason for him to abandon his religious convictions.

- c. His dislike for the shame that religion brings.

It is the opinion of the world upon his religion that ultimately directs his steps, not Jesus Christ. Hence, the world's proud condemnation of the way of the cross eventually leads to his capitulation to the way of the world (I Cor. 1:18). When the crowd hails, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38), he joins in, and when that same crowd cries out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him" (Luke 23:21), he just as fervently joins in the chorus,

- d. His desire for relief by means of a hardening heart.

Guilt, like fear in the case of Ignorance, promotes misery since it indicates condemnation and prospective consignment to hell. But in only toying with the offered gospel, guilt persists. Yet it is discovered that a more worldly focus gradually subdues the anguish so that self-inflicted hardening is willfully increased, like an addictive drug (II Chron. 36:15-16).

3. Christian draws a conclusion concerning Temporary's fall.

CHRISTIAN: You are pretty close to the heart of this matter, for at the root of this problem in such people is a lack of any change in the mind and will. And therefore they are like the criminal who stands trembling and quaking before the judge; he appears to repent most heartily; but at the bottom of all this is his hatred of the noose, and not any detestation of his crime. This becomes evident when such a man is set free, for then he will continue to be a thief and a rogue. However, if his mind had been changed, he would live differently.

In a more succinct manner he quickly penetrates to the heart of the matter. For all of the symptoms of conversion which Temporary expressed, yet at heart he was never at any time regenerate. He was an excellent imitation who quickly wilted because he had "no firm root in himself" (Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21).

- a. There was an absence of change in the mind and will.

Outward truth, such as was proclaimed by Faithful, effected his emotions, conscience, and sense of self-preservation; but this challenge never went deeper so that the mind agreed to the truth and the will embraced it. Thus, when the emotions, conscience, and sense of self-preservation were relatively undisturbed, then the mind and will were inclined to reject the gospel and agreeably listen to Save-self.

- b. Illustration.

A convicted criminal, about to be sentenced, stands before the judge evidencing great remorse. His palms sweat, his heart pounds, his mouth is dry, his trembling lips cry out for mercy since the probable penalty will be severe. But should he be pardoned, what then would be his response? If the signs of repentance quickly

disappeared, what would we conclude about his earlier expressed conversion? Would it not be right to conclude that he merely feared punishment, but his mind and will were not at all convinced concerning righteousness? So it was the case with Ignorance. Could this also have been the case with Judas?

4. Christian describes the process of such a falling away.

HOPEFUL: Now that I have explained the reasons for his backsliding, do point out to me the manner of his falling away?

CHRISTIAN: I will do so most willingly.

1. They draw away as much of their thinking as they can from the remembrance of *God*, death, and judgment to come.

2. Then they gradually neglect their private duties such as private prayer, the reigning in of their lusts, watchfulness, sorrow for sin, and the like.

3. Then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians.

4. After that, they grow cold toward public duty such as careful listening, reading of the *Word*, godly corporate worship, and the like.

5. Then they begin to pick holes [*find fault*], as we say, in the coats [*lives*] of some of the godly; their devilish intent is to charge that religion is stained, on account of some weaknesses they have detected in these believers, and thus justify putting religion behind their backs.

6. Then they begin to attach themselves to and associate with men who are carnal, immoral, and depraved.

7. Then they yield to carnal and depraved conversation in secret; and they are glad if they can discover similar practices in those who are reputed to be honest, for these hypocrites only encourage them to be all the more bold.

8. After this they begin to play with little sins more openly.

9. And then, having become hardened, they reveal themselves for what they are. Therefore, in being launched again into the gulf of misery, unless a miracle of sovereign grace prevents it, they perish everlastingly in the ocean of their own deceit.

The gradual decline of Temporary is another lesson derived from Bunyan's acute sense of pastoral observation. However, he also draws from personal experience since in *Grace Abounding* he graphically portrays his own confrontation with Satan's persistent and tireless assaults. He recounts:

Then hath the tempter come upon me, also, with such discouragements as these - You are very hot for mercy, but I will cool you; this frame shall not last always; many have been as hot as you for a spirit, but I have quenched their zeal. And with this, such and such who were fallen off would be set before mine eyes. Then I should be afraid that I should do so too; but, thought I, I am glad this comes into my mind. Well, I will watch, and take what heed I can. Though you do, said Satan, I shall be too hard for you; I will cool you insensibly, by degrees, by little and little. What care I, saith he, though I be seven years in chilling your heart if I can do it at last? Continual rocking will lull a crying child asleep. I

will ply it close, but I will have my end accomplished. Though you be burning hot at present, yet, if I can pull you from this fire, I shall have you cold before it be long.¹⁰⁸

So the progressive decline of Temporary is now described.

- a. Serious thoughts about God are willfully supplanted.

God's holiness, death, judgment, etc. are subjects that bring pressure to bear on the unhealthy soul. On the other hand, family interests, career ambitions, and the world of media amusement are known remedies for such religious obsession. As a result, distraction is opted for since it produces comfortable, albeit temporary, relief.

- b. Profitable religious duties are gradually neglected.

Private prayer, Bible study, the reading of good books, personal discipline, self-examination, the curbing of appetites, good habit cultivation, spiritual gift application, time stewardship, etc. are neglected, perhaps by means of making excuses such as the avoidance of legalism and fanaticism, the need for recreation, etc.

- c. The company of lively Christians is shunned.

Formal participation in worship services continues, but more intimate meetings, in which personal testimony is shared, are purposely neglected. Friendship with the choicest of saints now wanes; conversation with such as these becomes brief and shallow. The company of less committed Christians is cultivated.

- d. Coolness develops toward true corporate worship.

Attendance at the main church services becomes spasmodic; their singing is now less enthusiastic; their listening lack concentration; their financial support weakens; their loyalty becomes slack; their participation in church government is withdrawn; their appreciative spirit is replaced with murmuring.

- e. They develop a critical spirit toward the godly.

With an increasingly critical attitude, they harshly judge those good saints with mere specks in their eyes while ignoring the logs in their own (Matt. 7:3-5). They grasp at anything to justify their apostate inclination. In turn this criticism is productive of resentment, bitterness, and strife in the church. When approached, these troublemakers resent even gentle exhortation.

- f. Association with godless people becomes preferable.

Social activity broadens to include doubtful entertainment, secular Sunday events that conflict with church life, and a more worldly focus in general conversation. Reacquaintance is made with godless friends they formerly associated with before becoming "religious."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., I, § 110, p. 19.

- g. They delight to detect hypocrites to justify self.

Carnal and licentious interests are pursued in secret and, with a tinge of conscience still remaining, they seek to justify their duplicity rather than repent of it. Hence, like hounds, they sniff around for whatever indications, even if ever so slight, of similar hypocrisy that are to be found in even good pilgrims. On finding such evidence, they snigger and relax feeling justified.

- h. Little sins are toyed with openly.

Many sanctimonious reasons are offered, in a jesting way, for what is really unholy living. They claim liberty under grace; they label these practices as mere concessions to the flesh; they claim such actions are necessary for relaxation from religious pressure; they charge that critics of their lifestyle are legalists.

- i. Bold godlessness then unveils their corrupt heart.

Claiming they have had deep intellectual problems with their faith for some time, they now boldly confess to being agnostics because honesty, at least for them, demands such a response. A weak confession of faith is now replaced with open denial on the grounds of fundamentalist brainwashing. Lifestyle now becomes openly materialistic and even pagan. The menu of the world, though vomited up for a season, is now reingested (II Pet. 2:22). Their latter state is now worse than their former period of unbelief (Matt, 12:43-45).



Temporary