

The Pilgrim's Progress
Chapter 14– “The Pilgrims Deal with Giant Despair”
October 8, 2014

“Who could have thought that this path should have led us out of the way?” – Christian

“John Bunyan’s own experience enters deeply into these terrible pages. In composing these terrible pages, Bunyan writes straight and bold out of his own heart and conscience. The black and bitter essence of a whole black and bitter volume is crushed into these four or five bitter pages. Last week I went over *Grace Abounding* again, and marked the passages in which its author describes his own experiences of doubt, diffidence, and despair, till I gave over counting the passages, they are so many. I had intended to illustrate the passage before us to-night out of the kindred materials that I knew were so abundant in Bunyan’s terrible autobiography, but I had to give up that idea. It would have taken two or three lectures to itself to tell all that Bunyan suffered all his life long from an easily-wounded spirit. The whole book is just Giant Despair and his dungeon, with a gleam here and there of that sunshiny weather that threw the giant into one of his fits, in which he always lost for the time the use of his limbs. Return often, my brethren, to that masterpiece, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. I have read it a hundred times, but last week it was as fresh and powerful and consoling as ever to my sin-wounded spirit.” – Alexander Whyte

- I. Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle being kept by Giant Despair
 - A. How they ended up in Doubting Castle
 - a.i.1. Christian forgot that the narrow way was fenced
 - a.i.2. The older Christian led Hopeful **(don’t follow any man further than what they believe the right path to be)**
 - a.i.3. The way was **easier** and **agreeable**.
 - a.i.4. They saw another man **(VainConfidence)** walking to the Celestial City.
 - B. VainConfidence - **a projection of a trait that Christian exhibits in this chapter. It was Christian’s idea to cross the stile into By- path Meadow, whereas Hopeful had urged them not to do so. Christian displayed confidence in his own judgment, and it was a false or “vain” confidence that got him into trouble.**
 - C. Doubting Castle and Giant Despair represent those seasons of **doubt** bordering on **despair** into which God’s people sometimes fall.
 - D. There are various ways into which people may be brought to Doubting Castle and under the power of Giant Despair
 1. Conviction of sin **unaccompanied** by a sense of God’s **mercy** in **Christ**
 2. Unbelief
 3. Self-indulgence
 4. By falling into some gross sin
 5. Lack of **watchfulness** and **prayer**
 6. Gloom and despondency of mind
 7. Dwelling upon the **threatenings**, to the neglect of the **promises**, of God
 8. Some small compliance with **sin** or some relinquishment of **duty**

- II. What we can learn from the backsliding believers
 - A. The way becomes difficult, dark and **dangerous**.
 - B. Vain-Confidence's death represents the **beneficial** effect produced upon believers when death or some awful judgment overtakes those who for a time have been leading them out of the way
 - C. It is **easy** to depart out of the way but **hard** to get back.
 - D. Sometimes returning believers take refuge in **duties** instead of Christ and only find temporary ease.

- III. Christian and Hopeful at Doubting Castle
 - A. Diffidence: Giant Despair's wife. The name means distrust and represents distrust of:
 - a.i.1. The **mercies** of God
 - a.i.2. The **promises** of God
 - a.i.3. The **means** appointed by God (**no prayer until the 3rd night**)
 - B. Hopeful's argument against the temptation offered by Giant Despair
 1. Thou shalt not murder
 2. All the law is not in the hand of Giant Despair
 3. Others have escaped
 4. God may cause Giant Despair to die
 5. He may forget to lock us in
 6. He may, in a short time, have another of his fits before us, and may lose the use of his limbs
 7. The time may come that may give us a happy release
 8. Apollyon could not crush thee
 9. All that thou didst hear, or see, or feel, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death could not crush thee
 10. Remember how thou playedst the man at Vanity Fair, and wast neither afraid of the chain nor cage, nor yet of bloody death
 - C. The Key called Promise
 - a.i.1. Christian had carried the key since he entered the Wicket Gate yet had forgotten it
 - a.i.2. It represents one of the promises (may vary depending on the need)

- IV. What did Christian and Hopeful learn? (Lecture on Pilgrim's Progress by Rodgers and McElwee)
 - A. The **bitterness** of departing out of the way. (It becomes dark, difficult and dangerous)
 - B. It is better to follow the path of duty, even though it is rough and hard, and enjoy the light of the Father's countenance, than to walk in the ways of iniquity, though they appear ever so pleasant.
 - C. Sometimes returning believers take refuge in **duties** instead of Christ and only find temporary ease. (**How did this play out in the allegory?**)
 - D. That they should show **gratitude** to God for our great deliverance by putting up an inscription that others may be kept from the power of evil.

- V. Next Week: DVD #11 "The Delectable Mountains" and Chapter 15 "The Pilgrims Reach the Delightful Mountains"

