

The Pilgrim's Progress: A Study

Week 5: Section 3b- The Cross and Various Encounters (Pastor's Notes)

Cover the Narrative

First, review the Interpreter's House section.

Let's take time to discuss the basic story of pages 34-42, focusing on these key questions:

1. After departing the Interpreter's House, what way did Christian travel?
On the straight highway, bordered on both sides by a wall called Salvation.
2. Why is Salvation pictured like a wall guarding the way?
Because we can only rightly enter at the wicket gate.
3. What does Christian see as he ascends the hill?
A cross at the top of the hill, with a sepulcher below it (at the bottom of the hill).
4. What happens as Christian approached the cross?
His burden is loosed from his back, rolls down the hill, and enters the sepulcher- never to be seen again.
5. How does Christian react to this moment?
He is glad and free. He stands, marveling at the glorious cross; he weeps.
6. Who, in that moment, attends to Christian?
Three shining ones- likely ministering angels- who bid Christian peace.
7. What do they give him?
The first says to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The second gives him a change of raiment. The third gives him a seal on his forehead and sealed roll.
8. Christian excitedly speaks a poem. What does it ultimately say?
It speaks to the burden of his guilt of sin, his previous inability to deal with it himself, the blessed cross and tomb. Yet most blessed of all, he declares, is the Man who bore Christian's shame for him (Christ).
9. Who does Christian spot at the bottom of the other side of the hill?
Three sleeping men (Simple, Sloth, and Presumption), chained at their feet.
10. In waking them, what does Christian compare them to?
Christian compares them to those who would sleep on the top of the ship's mast while sailing the Dead Sea. In other words: ones who would slumber while keeping watch on a sea prone to violent storms and great loss.
11. What danger did Christian alert them to?
The danger of the enemy, who is like a roaring lion, ready to pounce upon them.

12. What is each of their responses?

Simple (Personifying ignorance) sees absolutely no danger; he is completely aloof to the spiritual danger. Sloth (symbolizing those in spiritual slumber) is too tired to listen at all. Presumption (symbolizing religious entitlement) tells Christian to mind his own concerns. They are perfectly willing to stay exactly as they were found.

13. A little further down the road, Christian encounters two men. Who are they?

Formalist and Hypocrisy.

14. What detail does Bunyan give us in mentioning their place of origin?

They were from the land of Vain-glory, which speaks to their desire to glory in their own righteousness. Further, they tell Christian that they are going for praise to Mount Sion. Notice that they are not going to praise, but they think that they will be praised for their vain religion.

15. How does Christian address them?

He warns them that they must come in by the gate as commanded by the Lord. He tells them that all who come in another way are but a "thief and a robber" (John 10:1).

16. Do they listen? What is their response?

They have no interest in the arguments of Christian. They argue their case on tradition, stating that their people have come this way for over a thousand years (a reference to Catholicism). Further, they argue pragmatism: what does it matter how we got in if we are in. You are on the way, so are we...we stand exactly the same.

17. How does Christian respond?

By telling them that they are wrong. He is rightly on the road, having entered by the commandment of the Lord of the Way, while they have entered only according to their own wisdom and desires. The day of judgment will certainly demonstrate the difference.

18. What obstacle does Christian encounter next? How does Christian handle it? How do the others handle it?

A great hill which the straight path ascends- the path is thus called difficulty. Christian handles it by staying on the way, climbing with much effort. The others take the side paths which depart from the straight way. They are called Danger and Destruction and lead to complete loss.

19. What important event happens on the Hill Difficult and how does it affect the narrative?

Christian stops to take a rest during the day, falls asleep looking at the roll, and drops it. As he wakes and continues his journey, he forgets the scroll, leaving it where he slept. Later, as he needs assurance (which the scroll represents), he does not have it. He must turn back to retrieve, losing time and having to travel at night.

20. Who are the final two men that Christian encounters in this section? What is their warning to him?

They are Timorous and Mistrust, who are running back toward Christian. They warn him of serious dangers ahead...dangers that they are fleeing. These men picture those who claim to be on the way, but are too afraid and untrusting to persevere to the end.

Theological Discussion

- Discuss the significance of the Cross. Why is it here that the burden drops from Christian's back? Is Bunyan picturing Christian's salvation or the loss of his guilt over his sins?
- An interesting group of characters are encountered in this week's reading. Discuss what they represent:
 - Simple, Sloth, and Presumption- discuss connection to Anglicanism.
 - Formality- outward observance of religion.
 - Hypocrisy- Self-deluding self-righteousness.
 - Reference with Formality and Hypocrisy to their traditions lasting for more than 1,000 years- Catholicism.

Assignment for next week:

For next Wednesday night, please read pages 42-53 in the supplied book.

- **The Palace Beautiful** (Page 42),
- **About the Lord of the Hill** (page 49)

If you can, fill out your worksheets, and look up the Biblical references in your Bible.

-I look forward to seeing you again, then!