

Pilgrim's Progress - Part 1

by Alfred P. Gibbs

John Bunyan's life was marked by spiritual struggles and a deep desire for salvation, but ultimately he found peace and became a powerful preacher of the gospel of God's grace.

Duration: 56:21

Scripture: Psalm 119:130, Isaiah 59:2, John 14:6, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 12:24

Topics: "Pilgrim's Progress"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the life and transformation of John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan was initially a lost and guilty sinner, but through reading the word of God, he came to understand the holiness of God and the dreadful nature of sin. He sought salvation and peace with God, and eventually found it through faith in Jesus Christ. After his conversion, Bunyan began preaching the gospel in the very city where he had once engaged in sinful behavior. His simple and passionate preaching attracted people, including children, who were amazed by his message of Jesus' love, power, and glory.

Transcript

Tonight, we begin a series of talks on John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. These talks will be divided into seven. Tonight, we shall consider the life of John Bunyan, where he was born, how God saved him, how he came to write the Pilgrim's Progress.

The second talk will concern itself with the story itself, and we shall follow the adventures of the Pilgrim from the city of destruction to the gate. Our third talk, from the gate to the place where he loses the burden, the cross. At the cross, where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away.

The fourth night, we shall follow the adventures of the Pilgrim from the cross to the Castle Beautiful. On the fifth, from the Castle Beautiful to the city of Vanity Fair. The sixth talk, from Vanity Fair to Doubting Castle.

And the last talk, from Doubting Castle to the Celestial City. Don't miss any one of these meetings. Across these adventures of the Pilgrim, in this immortal allegory, the Pilgrim's Progress has been classed as second only to the Word of God.

Here is John Bunyan, author of the Pilgrim's Progress. Born many years ago in England, in the year 1628, in the little village of Elstow, near to the town of Bidforth. His father was a very poor man, a tinker to trade, and as John Bunyan himself tells us, my descent was of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that was the meanest and the most despised occupation in those days.

Just a tinker, and yet this was the man that God saved and used so wonderfully in writing a book that has been classed as second only to the Bible. The reason being, it is so full of Bible truth. John Bunyan's schooling was very short, only nine months, and he tells us in the story of his life, I soon forgot the little I had learned.

I became an idle boy who, forswearing, lying and blaspheming, had few if any equals. This, then, is the man who wrote the Pilgrim's Progress. Truly, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.

The base things, the things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, the things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. This is the old cottage in which John Bunyan was born in 1628. This cottage has long since fallen into ruin, not a trace of it remains.

Little did the people of that day realize, as they heard the cry of that newborn child, they were listening to the voice of one who should make the whole world listen to the gospel of the grace of God through the wonderful books that he wrote, and particularly the Pilgrim's Progress. At a time when most boys and girls are going to school and not liking it very much, John Bunyan couldn't go to school. Only nine months of schooling was his.

Had you been living in those days, you'd have heard his shrill, boyish treble up and down the streets and lanes of the nearby villages, crying, pots and pans to men, and the people would bring out their old pots and pans, and little John Bunyan would take them to his father, and under his father's expert care, those pots and pans were mended, and thus the family was kept in food. At the early age of 19, John Bunyan got married. He was a very brave man, not only because he got married, but all he had, as far as worldly possessions were concerned, were but two spoons.

His wife was the proud possessor of two books given to her by her father. One was called The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven, and the other The Practice of Piety. By this time, John Bunyan had forgotten the little he had learned at school, but his wife retaught him his letters, and here we see the young couple sitting in the humble cottage in the old chimney corner, and by the light of the flickering fire, Mrs. Bunyan is teaching her husband how to read, and through the reading of these two excellent books, John Bunyan received his first early impressions as to eternal things, and he began to think about God, think about his sins, think about death, and what came after death.

Sunday in those far-off days was, as it is today, a mixture of the grave and the gay. On Sunday morning, everyone in the village repaired to the village church. After the service was over, they returned to their homes, and the afternoon was spent on the ringleader in these games, but one day when he attended divine service, there was a strange minister in the pulpit, and he spoke of the evils of using the day that celebrates the rising from the dead of our Lord Jesus as a day to be devoted to mere sport and pleasure.

He preached so eloquently that John Bunyan was moved. As he sat there, he determined he would not play any more on Sunday, but alas for those good results, like mother's pie crusts made only to be broken. John Bunyan, after dinner, eased his conscience, went out on the village green, and together with his

companions engaged in those sports and pastimes.

He was playing a game called cat, when suddenly, as he took the bat in his hand, he seemed to hear a voice from heaven which said to him, John Bunyan, wilt thou have thy sins and go to hell, or wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven? John Bunyan said, I knew that God was speaking to me, and without a word of explanation to my friends, I left them, went out into a field where I was all alone. As I thought of God, and as I thought of my sins, and as I thought of judgment, I was appalled. But suddenly this thought came to me, seeing I am already a sinner, and therefore doomed to be eternally lost, I might just as well be lost for many sins as for a few sins.

So I determined then and there I would go on in my evil ways, and thus I shut my ears to the voice of God, returned to my companions, and went on with the game as though nothing had happened. What a dreadful thing John Bunyan did, and yet what he did is being done by many today. Perhaps there may be some in this audience who have done the very same thing that John Bunyan did.

You have heard the voice of God perhaps through your Sunday school teacher, perhaps through the reading of the Bible, perhaps through the singing of some hymn, or the reading of some gospel tract, or the kind word of a faithful Christian friend. What has been the effect of God's word to you? Has it brought you to know Christ as your Savior, to repentance and faith in Christ? Or, like John Bunyan, have you returned to your sins? You're going on as though God had never spoken to you. From now on, John Bunyan went from bad to worse.

He became the ringleader in all the wickedness of that village. One day he was sitting outside an alehouse, mingling dreadful profanity with his ungodly friends, when a woman of evil reputation happened to pass by, and listening to the bad language issuing from John Bunyan's lips, she rebuked him and said, John Bunyan, you're the worst young man in this village, and if you continue the way you're going on now, you'll soon have the whole village as bad as yourself. Shame on you, John Bunyan! Shame on you! And these words, coming from a woman of that character, so shamed John Bunyan that he determined he would turn over a new leaf and become a better man.

And he did. He attended divine service more regularly. He repeated the responses with the best of them.

He said his prayers. He cut out a number of the sins, the outward sins of his life, and everybody remarked at the wonderful change that had come over John Bunyan. They thought he had become a Christian, but alas, he had become nothing of the kind.

He had only turned over a new leaf, but the old pages on which the record of his sins were found were still there. He had never been born again, and our Savior said to one of the most religious and moral men of his day, ye must be born again, for except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Turning over a new leaf will never atone for the record of the sins in the old leaves.

We need to be born again. John Bunyan had the idea that many people have today, and that is that if you turn to certain nice prayers that we say, good deeds that we do, religious rites and forms and ceremonies to which we pass, religious services that we attend, and good results that we make, God in some way will be more pleased with us, and save us because of our good works. That's what John Bunyan thought.

He had yet to learn that by grace are ye saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, this faith is countenance to him for

righteousness. John Bunyan loved to ring the village bells in the old Belfry Tower, but he thought if I give this up maybe God will be more pleased with me, more inclined to be merciful toward me, and so he refrained from joining his companions and ringing the bells.

But he used to stand at the door looking longingly within, afraid to enter lest one of those bells should fall from its hanging and kill him on the spot. But one day as he stood there this thought came to him, supposing this whole tower fell, then I'd be a goner, and so no more Belfry Tower for John Bunyan. Day by day and in every way, in his own estimation and in the estimation of his friends, he grew better and better and better.

But alas, he tells us in the story of his own life, during this period I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite. All that I did and all that I said, I said and did to be seen and well spoken of by man. I knew not God, I knew not Christ, I did not have faith, I did not have peace, I was not born again by God's Holy Spirit.

But better days were to dawn for John Bunyan. One day as he was walking through the streets of Bedford, crying as his tray demanded, pots and pans to men, he came across three ladies sitting outside a rather humble home, speaking in a way such he had never heard anyone speak before. These ladies were speaking about a knowledge of their sins forgiven.

They spoke of peace with God, of their possession of eternal life, that God was their Father, Christ their own Savior, and the Holy Spirit their indwelling Comforter. Christians their heaven-born, heaven-bound, heaven-bent companions, and the celestial city as their eternal home. They spoke with assurance about these things, for they based all that they believed on the Word of God.

John Bunyan was astounded. He had been brought up to believe that no one could know that he was saved until after he died, and then if his good deeds outweighed his bad deeds, he'd go to heaven. If not, he'd be lost eternally.

But these ladies seemed to know that they were saved by God's grace. When they saw that John Bunyan was interested in their conversation, they invited him to take a seat, which he did, for John Bunyan was quite willing to talk religion. But these Christian women were not interested in religion.

They were interested in Christ himself, and so very soon they began to show John Bunyan that all he had was a mere empty profession, that he was not saved. He was nothing but a poor, guilty sinner, and what he needed more than anything else was to be born again by the Spirit of God, if he would ever see or enter the kingdom of God. After this conversation, John Bunyan returned home, said to his wife, wife, bring me out the Bible.

I've been listening to three women speaking in a wonderful way, and they showed me from the Bible that I was wrong, but perhaps they have a different Bible to what I have. Bring out the Bible. I noted down some of the scriptures, and let's see if they're the same in my Bible as in their Bible.

John Bunyan read his Bible, and as he read that Bible, he discovered that those ladies were right, and that he was wrong, and the more he compared the Bible with what those women had told him, the more he became convinced that they were right, and that he was wrong, and then God began to deal with him about his sins. Often at night, after the day's work was over, John Bunyan and his wife would sit together in the cottage, reading the pages of Holy Scripture. The entrance of thy word give it light.

It give it understanding to the simple, and as John Bunyan read the book, more and more he was brought to see the holiness of God, and the dreadful character of sin, and that he himself was a sinner, lost, and guilty, and helpless, and hopeless, and deserving only of eternal banishment from God's presence in hell. He now began to retire to his attic upstairs, and there alone with the word of God before him, he would be in an agony of soul. His one constant cry was, how can I, a poor, lost, and guilty sinner, ever hope to be acceptable to that holy God in heaven, who hates sin, and must because of his holy character visit his righteous judgment both on sin and the sinner? Oh, what must I do to be saved? How can I know my sins were given? How may I be at peace with God? How can I be born again? He now began to ask these ladies questions that they couldn't answer.

John Bunyan was blessed with a very vivid imagination, and what would have satisfied most folks utterly failed to meet his need. As fast as one question was answered, another problem presented itself, and at last these ladies said, John Bunyan, we cannot answer your questions, but we know a man who knows far more about the bible than we do, and I'm sure he'll only be too glad to be of all the help he possibly can to you, and show you from the word of God the way of salvation, and answer your questions. So they advised him to go to a man named Mr. Gifford.

Mr. Gifford, at one time, had been a major in the British army, a drunken, dissolute wretch, but God had marvelously saved his soul, put within his heart the love of souls, and in the city of Bedford was a little congregation of people known as non-conformists, because they would not conform to the rules and regulations of the Church of England, which then was in power. Accordingly, John Bunyan presented himself one day at the home of Mr. Gifford, explained the purpose of his visit, propounded some of his problems and questions to this good man of God, and under Mr. Gifford's able teaching, quite a number of John Bunyan's difficulties were cleared up. But, as we mentioned before, John Bunyan was possessed of a most vivid imagination.

As fast as one difficulty was solved, he would think up another. You may read of these problems, and these questions, and his experiences in the book that he wrote, which is quite a classic. It is called *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

The more John Bunyan knew of God, the more he realized how holy, and righteous, and just God was, that to him all things were open and naked, and that he hated sin, and therefore must visit his judgment upon sin and the sinner. The more John Bunyan knew of this God, the greater his distress of soul became, and now, when the day's work was over, he would go alone into a field, and he would be in an agony of soul. Thoughts of eternity crowded into his mind.

His one cry was, what must I do to be saved? He gladly would have exchanged his life for that of a dog. Sometimes he thought he was possessed by a demon. At other times, he was tempted to commit suicide, but he was afraid to do this, lest that should seal his eternal doom.

And so, not knowing what to do, and not knowing the way of salvation, and blinded by the God of this age, poor John Bunyan walked to and fro in that field, crying as though his heart would break. Oh, what must I do to be saved? Truly, there is no trouble like soul trouble. God's Holy Spirit was dealing with John Bunyan, putting him through a deep experience, so that when John Bunyan ultimately was delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, he became a great power for God because of the experiences to which he had passed.

One day, the thought came to John Bunyan, you have committed the unpardonable sin. And now, poor John Bunyan was in the very depth of despair. But one day, he saw an old Christian.

He thought, I'll unburden my heart to him. He's been on the road a long while. He knows far more about the Bible than I do.

Perhaps he will help me. So, he seated himself beside the old Christian and told him all his troubles, and finally wound up by saying, I'm afraid I've committed the unpardonable sin. What do you think? And instead of that Christian being a help to him, all he did was to agree that perhaps John Bunyan had done that very thing, and that therefore there was no hope of salvation for him.

Truly, vain is the help of man. John Bunyan early learned that only God can give deliverance, and only the word of God can answer all the questions that arise in the human heart. Of course, John Bunyan had not committed the unpardonable sin.

No one who has committed that sin suspects for one moment he has done it. He's utterly indifferent to spiritual realities. Sometime after this, John Bunyan was in the kitchen reading his Bible, when suddenly he turned to his wife and said, wife, where is that scripture in the New Testament which says, ye are come unto Jesus? His wife wrinkled her brow, I'm sure I don't know, John Bunyan.

Well, I must find it out. I can't go out today, my distress of soul is so great. And so, sitting in that kitchen, John Bunyan found his way through the New Testament, for he had no concordance, and presently he came to the verse that he was looking for.

It was in the epistle of the Hebrews. Ye are come unto Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. And as John Bunyan read those words, it seemed as though a flood of light shone into his soul.

He saw now that Christ, through the precious blood he had shed upon that cross, had satisfied all God's claims against John Bunyan's sins. His death had atoned for his guilt. All that was left for him to do was to rest in the work that Christ did, the work with which God was so perfectly satisfied he had raised him from the dead.

And so, sitting in that kitchen, John Bunyan took his place as a lost and guilty sinner, rested in Christ for salvation, and he tells us in the story of his life, I could not sleep that night for joy. The joy of the knowledge that my sins were all forgiven, that I was a child of God, that I was at peace with God, that I was a possessor of eternal life, and God's precious word assured me of my possession of these things. But John Bunyan had many doubts, even after this experience.

Some days he would be up, some days he would be down, some days he would think he was saved because he felt so happy, and other times he was doubtful because he felt so sad. Up and down, up and down. But one day, as he was crossing the field, he tells us, this sentence fell upon my soul, thy righteousness is in heaven.

And, said Bunyan, with the eye of my soul, I like that, with the eye of my soul, I saw that the Lord Jesus in heaven was my righteousness, my peace, my life, my hope, my all in all, that my good feelings did not make my righteousness any better, and my bad feelings did not make my righteousness any worse. My righteousness was in the person who was the same yesterday, today, and forever. And, said Bunyan, when I realized this, my doubts dissolved just as the mist dissolves before the morning sun, and I was

delivered, brought into the full assurance of faith.

And now John Bunyan began, in his own simple, untutored passion, to preach the gospel of God's grace. And where did he preach? In the very city, the streets of which had echoed and re-echoed with his drunken brawlings and his blasphemy. And as he stood there in the open air, carrying out the story of Jesus and his love, of a dying Savior's love and a risen Savior's power, and a coming Savior's glory, people were amazed.

Who is this preaching taper? Boys and girls loved to come and listen to him, for John Bunyan didn't use any long, unpronounceable words. He didn't know any. He confined himself to simple English words that everyone understood, and he became well known in that area.

Rich and learned people came out to hear him, and the poor people heard him gladly. Here, then, we see John Bunyan preaching the gospel of the grace of God, telling poor lost and guilty sinners of the wonderful love of Christ, seen in his death upon the cross for their sins. And God used him, and he had the joy of seeing quite a number brought to know Christ as their Savior through the ministry of the word of God.

But he still continued to mend pots and pans. Had you inquired, John Bunyan, what is your business? He would have replied, my business is to preach the gospel, and I mend pots and pans to pay expenses. And as he mended those pots and pans, he would have a little word to those who stood around.

And thus, his gift which God had given him of expounding the word of God increased, as it always does, through use. He would go from house to house calling pots and pans to men, and everywhere he went, he would leave a little message of the gospel. When some lady would hand him a pot that was utterly past mending, with a smile he would return it to her, saying, I'm sorry, madam, I can't do anything with that pot.

It's past redemption. It's like the sinner, lost, guilty, helpless, and hopeless. What God wants is a new creation in Christ Jesus, and madam, you need to get a new pot.

And thus, he would leave that message everywhere he went. In the open air, he was seen at his best. Here we see him proclaiming the good news of the glorious grace of God as found in Christ Jesus.

Look at that woman there, awakened through the preaching of the word of God, like an arrow from the bow of God. It's gone to her soul. God is stripping her of the filthy rags of her self-righteousness, revealing to her the dreadful fact that she's a sinner, lost and guilty, needing to be saved by God's grace.

But, in the days in which John Bunyan lived, there was a law to the effect that no one should be allowed to preach except in a building licensed for that purpose. Moreover, no one should be allowed to preach unless he had been licensed for that purpose by the high church party. John Bunyan didn't bother himself where he preached, nor did he bother about a license.

He had his orders from the commander-in-chief, his Lord and Savior, who had said, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And so, in obedience to his Lord and Master, John Bunyan went wherever the door was open, wherever there was an opportunity to proclaim the good news of God's redeeming grace. John Bunyan took advantage of that, and preached.

And God accompanied the preaching of that word with signs following in the shape of souls being saved. He was stripping her of the filthy rags of her self-righteousness, revealing to her the dreadful fact that she's a sinner, lost and guilty, needing to be saved by God's grace. But, in the days in which John Bunyan lived,

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And so, in obedience to his Lord and Master, John Bunyan went wherever the door was open, wherever there was an opportunity to proclaim the good news of God's redeeming grace. John Bunyan took advantage of that, and preached. And God accompanied the preaching of that word with signs following in the shape of souls being saved.

But, this brought him into suspicion and disrepute with the authorities. They would see him going on one of these preaching missions, and say, there goes that preaching taker. There he goes, preaching in buildings that haven't been licensed for that purpose, preaching in kitchens and barns and the open air, preaching without a license.

Let's get the police on his track. So, they informed the police. And the police, in turn, secured a writ for his arrest.

John Bunyan was warned that the police were after him. It was rumored he would go to preach in a little village called Samson, in the home of a father. His friends came to him and said, John Bunyan, if you go to Samson, we feel sure that you'll be arrested, and brought to trial, and perhaps tended to a term of imprisonment.

What are you going to do? John Bunyan said, I'm going to go to Samson. I'm going to preach the gospel as God has bidden me, cost what it may. And so, the memorable Samson meeting began.

In the farmer's dining room, behind an improvised pulpit, John Bunyan opened his Bible and read his text. Dost thou believe on the Son of God? As he began to preach on that text, suddenly there was an interruption. The door opened.

In walked a police, a constable, with a warrant for his arrest. Placing his hand upon John Bunyan's shoulder, he said, John Bunyan, I arrest you in the name of the king. What is your charge, inquired John Bunyan.

And the charge was read. It read something like this. John Bunyan, laborer of Bedford, has maliciously, and perniciously, and devilishly persisted in absenting himself from divine service.

Furthermore, he has maliciously, and perniciously, and devilishly persisted in preaching in buildings not licensed for that purpose. Furthermore, he has maliciously, and perniciously, and maliciously preached without a license, to the no small consternation of his majesty's good subjects, and the breaking of the laws of our sovereign Lord the King. And on that charge, John Bunyan was taken away from the midst of that gospel service, and brought before Justice Wingate.

Think of it. In the middle of a gospel service, for the crime merely of having a purpose firm, and daring to make that purpose known, John Bunyan was arrested and brought to trial. Why don't these things take place today in this country? For the very good reason that men like John Bunyan have paid in terms of

blood and sweat and tears, and secured for us this liberty that we now enjoy in this country.

Let us thank God for the noble army of martyrs who love not their lives unto death, and who would rather have a clear conscience before God than enjoy their liberty amongst men. Here is the warrant for John Bunyan's arrest. Those various seals around are the seals of the Justices of Peace that made that document legal.

And thus, in Great Britain, nearly 300 years ago, John Bunyan was arrested for preaching the gospel of the grace of God. He was brought before Justice Wingate, who said to him, look here, John Bunyan, I don't want to be hard on you. I understand you're a good husband to your wife, a good father to your children, and you're a good tinker.

Why don't you keep to your tinkering? Why bother about this preaching business? I'll tell you what I'll do. If you promise to give up preaching, and from now on confine yourself to tinkering, I'll let you go. But if you don't, I have no other course than to commit you to the assignment, which will meet in six weeks' time, and you probably then will receive a term of imprisonment with hard labor.

What's it going to be, John Bunyan? Tinkering? Preaching? Or prison? John Bunyan answered, as long as God gives me grace, I shall preach the gospel of his grace wherever I have the opportunity. So John Bunyan was committed to the assignment. Six weeks afterwards, he faced Judge Keeley on the king's bench.

Without being allowed a single witness in his defense, John Bunyan was savagely condemned by Judge Keeley, who said, John Bunyan, you have persisted in preaching in buildings not licensed for that purpose. You have persisted in preaching without a license from the church party. I therefore sentence you to nine months in prison with hard labor, at the end of which you'll be transported from this country to another country, and if you dare return without a special license from the king, you'll hang by the neck.

Jailor, take him away. As the jailor laid his hand upon John Bunyan's shoulder, John Bunyan said in a clear voice, heard by all in that courtroom, Judge Keeley, if I had my liberty tomorrow, I would preach the gospel of the grace of God. And with those brave words echoing and re-echoing through that courthouse, John Bunyan was led away to Bedford jail.

This prison was situated on the middle of the bridge that crossed the river Ouse in the city of Bedford. And there, for the next 12 years of his life, John Bunyan was a prisoner in Bedford jail. Think of it.

Some of you girls and boys are not 12 years of age. Longer than you have lived, John Bunyan spent that time behind the walls of that prison, all because he had dared to have a purpose firm, and dared to make that purpose known, all because he had dared to obey God rather than man. So, he paid in terms of suffering, and privation, and loss for his christened experience.

Someone as wealthy, our christened experience is worth to us what it costs us. Remember that at this time, John Bunyan was married and had a family. His eldest girl was born blind.

And oh, how he loved that little sightless girl, and how she in turn loved her father, whom she had never seen. And here we see John Bunyan parting from that little girl, never knowing whether it would be the last time he would see her. And then the door of the cell clanged, and he was left alone.

John Bunyan, a prisoner, for Christ's sake. Perhaps some of you girls and boys may be wondering, how did Mrs. Bunyan and her family live while the wage earner, the breadwinner, was behind those prison bars? The same God who gives the birds of the air their nests, and feeds them daily, and clothes the lily of the field, fed and clothed John Bunyan and his wife and family during those twelve long years that the father and the husband was behind those prison walls. John Bunyan helped to earn his living in that prison by making shoelaces.

His wife and family were allowed to visit him at times, and sometimes the cell in which she was kept was occupied by 14 or 15 of the worst characters in Great Britain. And John Bunyan took advantage of this to preach the gospel of the grace of God to those wicked men, and who knows how many of them, through the hearing of faith, were brought to a knowledge of the Son of God, whom to know is life eternal. Perhaps some of you may be wondering, why did God allow John Bunyan to go to prison? Do you think it was a good thing that John Bunyan was allowed to go to prison? Why, of course it was.

If it hadn't been a good thing, all the king's horses and all the king's men could never have put John Bunyan in that prison cell. God said, is it worth it, John Bunyan? Bunyan? Yes, Lord. I want you to come with me into the university of Bedford jail.

I want you to bring your Bible with you, Foxe's Book of Martyrs, and a concordance to find texts in the Bible. And while you are there, I want you to so keep in touch with me, so live for my glory, so study your Bible that you will be enabled to write a book which you couldn't possibly have time to write while you were busily engaged preaching from place to place. And so, in obedience to God's call, John Bunyan came into the university of Bedford jail.

And here we see him pleading with God, reading his Bible, learning from that holy, precious book, the deep things of God. And it was while he was in this prison cell that he wrote the immortal allegory, The Pilgrim's Progress. Surely God's purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour.

The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower. While the enemies of John Bunyan were chuckling with unholy glee and saying, we've silenced the voice of that tinker preacher, God, sitting in heaven, John Bunyan was also laughing, saying, yes, I've got John Bunyan exactly where I want him. I've got him in the place where he can do far more good in proclaiming the gospel and spreading the good news abroad than ever he could while he had his liberty.

John Bunyan, the immortal dreamer in his prison cell. Truly, walls are not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage, when those walls enclose, and those bars encage one whom the Son of God has made free. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, said our Lord Jesus.

And he added, if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. And so John Bunyan, in that prison cell, wrote this wonderful story we are to consider for the next few nights. The story of The Pilgrim's Progress, written in the form of a dream.

It was not the result of a dream, but it's written as though John Bunyan was having a dream. In my dream I saw this, in my dream I saw that. You'll find these words occurring quite frequently in The Pilgrim's Progress.

Under these depressing circumstances, in that lonely prison cell, John Bunyan, alone with God, penned this masterpiece of English literature which God has so mightily used during the years that have followed

its publication. The Pilgrim's Progress. In his vision, he saw a man starting out from home with a great big burden on his back, until he came to a place where he saw someone hanging in agony and blood upon a cross, bearing his sins and dying in his state.

And lo, the burden fell from off his back as he trusted in that Savior who loved him and gave himself for him. And then John Bunyan follows the adventures of that pilgrim from the time he loses that burden, passing onward and upward and homeward until at last he reaches the river of death. Crossing that river, he goes through the gates of splendor into the celestial city where all is joy and peace.

That, in brief, is the story of The Pilgrim's Progress. Here is the title page of the first edition of Pilgrim's Progress, published in 1678. Note the old English.

The Pilgrim's Progress, from this world to that which is to come, delivered under the similitude of a dream, and then the name of Nathaniel Ponder, the printer, and under the sign of the peacock in the poultry near Cornhill, London, 1678. And, by the way, if you happen to have a copy of the first edition of The Pilgrim's Progress, let me congratulate you. You are worth approximately \$50,000, for that's what any good book lover will give you if you have a real genuine first edition copy of The Pilgrim's Progress.

Here is the scene outside Nathaniel Ponder's bookstore under the sign of the peacock in the poultry. The popularity of this book was immediate, and before John Bunyan died, ten years afterwards, over 100,000 copies of this book had been sold in Great Britain alone. And that was a wonderful thing, because not too many people in Great Britain at that time could read.

Mrs. Bunyan made many attempts to secure the release of her husband. She made many journeys to London, talked to the Lord Chief Justice of England about the injustice being done to her husband, but nothing seemed to be done about the matter until a Quaker by the name of Carver came into the presence of Charles II of England, and looking at him intently, the king inquired, what are you looking like that at me for? Don't you recognize me, inquired Mr. Carver? I never saw you before, replied the king. Well, I've seen you.

Where did you see me, inquired the king? And Carver said, you remember when you had to flee from this country at the time of the revolution, when your father was beheaded? Yes. You remember someone carried you on his shoulders to a boat, which took you to a ship, which in turn landed you in France? Yes. But I was the man who carried you on my shoulder.

What do you want, inquired the king? Well, I did you a favor when you were in need. I want you to do me a favor. And what is that favor? I want you to open the prison doors and allow these non-conformists to come out.

They are good men. They've done nothing to deserve imprisonment. The king said, I will consider your petition.

And shortly afterwards, the prison doors opened and those non-conformists imprisoned for conscience sake were allowed to come forth from the prison, including, of course, John Bunyan. He now occupied this house, which is still standing in the little village of Elstow. I visited that little house, entered that door, said to the lady inside, it must be a wonderful thing for you to live in the same house as John Bunyan lived.

Yes, she replied, it is. I then asked, do you know the same savior that John Bunyan knew? Do you know him as your own savior? All she replied was, well, I hope so. My, what a pity.

Living in the house that John Bunyan lived in, in which he wrote the second part of the Pilgrim's Progress on the Holy War, and yet did not know his savior as her own personal savior. This is one of the many chapels in which John Bunyan preached. Zoar Chapel in South Ark, London.

Often at six o'clock in the morning, John Bunyan would preach in that chapel, and workmen would get up extra early in order to have the opportunity of listening to John Bunyan before they went to their work. Uptimes, that place was crowded, and many, many precious souls were brought to know Christ as their savior through the impassioned preaching on the part of John Bunyan. Owen, one of the great Puritan divines, said, I wish I had that man's mind.

I wish I knew my Bible as John Bunyan did. I wish I could preach as he. Yes, when God takes a man, and that man is wholly yielded to God, then God can use that man to the glory of his name, and the blessing of the unsaved, and the building up of his own dear people.

Here are some scenes concerned with John Bunyan's early life. There is the Moot Hall, still standing on the village green, where John Bunyan heard that voice from heaven. Down below is the old church building and the tower, and the tower is still standing.

It hasn't fallen. These, of course, are only of interest as they concern John Bunyan. The village of Elstow and the town of Bedford is only known because, in those two places, John Bunyan's life was lived, and the message of the gospel came from him.

Here's the old church. When I visited there, I looked in the registry and saw in crabbed handwriting the name of a baby that was born in 1628. John Bunyan was his name.

Little did that clerk of that church realize, as he penned that name, he was putting down the most illustrious authors whom God has so greatly used in the years that have passed. Here are some of the relics of John Bunyan, the pulpit behind which he preached, the chair on which he sat, and some other interesting objects all associated with that Tinker of Bedford. In the Bedford Memorial Church in Bedford, you will see the actual cell door behind which John Bunyan spent those 12 long years, a prisoner of the Lord Jesus.

There's that famous chair on which he sat, perhaps the chair on which he sat as he wrote the Holy War, which is an even greater allegory than the Pilgrim's Progress. How wonderful to think that God took that man whom the world despised and rejected, and put behind the prison bars, and used him so mightily to his glory. Sixteen years after John Bunyan's release, a young boy ran away from home, went to London to make his fortune, but discovered when he arrived in that city that he lost three things.

First, he lost his breakfast. Second, his dinner. Third, his supper.

He had a Christian father and mother who loved God, and who read the Word, and who kept him in order. And this young man, as he wandered up and down the streets of that city, finally went to Mr. Bunyan and said, Mr. Bunyan, will you please go back to my father? Tell him I'm sorry I ran away from home, and will you please take me back again? John Bunyan, whose heart was as big as his body, said, why sure. And so he mounted his horse, made a special journey to his boy's father, saw to it that the father and mother were willing to receive back again their boy, and on his way back from that errand of mercy, he was overtaken in a rainstorm, soaked through the skin, contracted a cold which resulted in something far more serious, and soon the news was spread throughout Great Britain.

John Bunyan is dying. His friends that came to see him stood beside, his bedside wept, and as John Bunyan saw them weeping, he said, weep not for me, I am going to be with my Savior who loved me, who gave himself for me, enter that fair celestial city. And with words like this upon his lips, John Bunyan, the immortal dreamer, went to be with Christ, which is far better, where there are no more dreams, but where all is glorious reality.

Here is a tomb underneath which lies the body of John Bunyan. It's in Bunhill Field Cemetery in London, the non-conformist cemetery. Not far from this tomb is the grave of Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley.

A little bit to the right is the tomb of Isaac Watts, who wrote that lovely hymn, When I Surveyed the Wondrous Cross. Now, John Bunyan is not buried here. All that is buried beneath that tomb is the body of John Bunyan.

John Bunyan is with Christ, which is very, very far better. This tomb is visited by thousands of people who go to see the grave of one of England's most famous citizens. Here is a statue of John Bunyan in the heart of the city of Bedford.

It shows him with his eyes looking toward heaven. The best of books is in his hand. The world is behind his back.

He stands as though he fled with men. The immortal dreamer, author of The Pilgrim's Progress. For this monument, like all other monuments made by man, will crumple and fall.

The greatest monument in the memory of John Bunyan is the book that he wrote, that lives in the hearts of thousands of men and women and girls and boys who, through the reading of its pages, have been brought to realize their lost and guilty state, have come as such to the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who loved them and gave himself for them, have received him by faith as their Savior, have owned him as the Lord of their life, have lived their lives to his glory. The Pilgrim's Progress in the similitude of a dream. The next time we come together, we shall consider the actual story itself, see a man starting out from his home with a great burden on his back, and we shall follow his adventures as he loses that burden and goes on his way upward, homeward, and heavenward to the celestial city.

May he bless his word to our hearts for his name's

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