

Pilgrim's Progress - Part 6

by Alfred P. Gibbs

In this sermon, Alfred P. Gibbs explores the themes of faith, companionship, and the dangers of temptation as illustrated in Christian's journey in The Pilgrim's Progress.

Duration: 57:40

Scripture: Psalm 23:1

Topics: "Pilgrim's Progress"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells the story of Christian and Hopeful as they journey towards the castle. They encounter a giant named Despair who awakens when they open the rusty door. The giant threatens to kill them unless they kill themselves by the following morning. Despite their wounds, the giant forces them to a high point where they can see the courtyard. The sermon emphasizes the importance of staying on the right path and avoiding the traps of despair and doubt.

Transcript

We have now come to the sixth episode in this wonderful allegory written by John Bunyan, entitled The Pilgrim's Progress. This time we shall follow the adventures of Christian as he leaves the city of vanity and, joined by a companion, makes his way toward the celestial city, this time being caught by a giant and imprisoned in a great castle called Doubting Castle. How he came to be caught by this giant and how they were enabled to escape from that castle will form this very interesting episode in The Pilgrim's Progress.

You will recall that we left faithful and Christian in the city of vanity. Because they refused to have anything whatever to do with the vanities offered to them, they were persecuted, ill-treated and, you recall, faithful suffered martyrdom. He was brought to the center of the market square where a stake had been erected and, around the foot of that stake, kindling wood had been placed.

A man came forward and applied the torch to that kindling wood and, soon, the body of faithful was enveloped in flames. As Christian saw his companion thus sealing his testimony with his own life, he was very sad. But presently, you remember, he saw that wonderful sight, the golden gate opening in heaven, and through that golden gate there emerged a chariot drawn by two white horses, driven by an angel in whose hand there was a crown.

As he watched, he saw the lifeless form of faithful fall on the chain that bounded to the stake, and then the spirit of faithful, that which the fires of men's persecution could not destroy, stepped out of that lifeless

body into that beautiful chariot. He saw the angel place upon him a crown, saying as he did, Thou hast been faithful unto death, behold I give thee a crown of life. And then faithful and the chariot ascended higher and higher until the golden gate came to view once more.

And as that gate opened to allow the chariot to enter, a stream of glory from within shone upon the upturned face of Christian, which glimpse of glory made him homesick for heaven ever afterwards. And then faithful entered into the joy of his Lord, to be with Christ, which is very far better. But God, who orders all things according to his own will, so decreed that after a further period of persecution, Christian was allowed to go from the city of vanity.

As he made his way from that city, along the straight and the narrow pathway, he heard someone running behind him. Looking back, he saw this man coming toward him. He inquired, Who are you, and what are you running after me for? The man replied, My name used to be Hopeless.

But through the godly life that both you and faithful lived in that cage, and the preaching of the gospel, when you told us that story of Jesus and his love, the Spirit of God convicted me of my sin and my need, brought me to realize I was without God, and without Christ, and without life, and without peace, and without the Holy Spirit, and without excuse. And had I died in that condition without escape from God's righteous judgment, he revealed to me that my name was Hopeless, for I was without God and without hope in the world. I tried in vain to save myself by my good works, by my tears, by my good results, by submitting to various rites and forms and ceremonies of religion, until at last, owning my lost and guilty, helpless and hell-deserving state, I believed the message that you proclaimed, that Christ died for my sins, that he rose again to save me.

And I came to him in all my sin and need, put my faith and trust in his finished work, accepted him as my Savior, owned him as the Lord of my life, and then my name was changed from Hopeless to Hopeful. And I want to know, Christian, if I can be your companion and take the place of faithful, tread the upward homeward way, sharing your joys and your sorrows, your victories and your defeats, until death do us part. What did Christian say to this? Oh, how glad he was! He held out his hand in welcome, took Hopeful's hand in his, and said, Hopeful, right glad am I to know that though God bears his workers, he carries on his work, and from the ashes of faithful another has risen to take his place, and to be my companion heavenward.

Come with me, dear brother, and we'll enjoy sweet fellowship together on the pilgrim pathway. Here we see the two entering into a brotherly covenant to walk that straight and narrow pathway and enjoy the things of God together. This illustrates that greatest of all privileges that a child of God has, that of leading another soul to put his trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus.

Thus Christian had the joy of the soul winner. Is this your joy, fellow Christian? Rest not, until you can say of some person, behold, I am this other soul whom thou hast given me. As they walked along together, it was a lovely bright sunshiny morning.

They presently saw a man walking ahead of them, whose name was By-ends. Presently they caught up to him. Mr. By-ends made them a low bow and said, Good morning, gentlemen.

Isn't this a lovely morning to be walking on the straight and narrow path? Christian replied, Every morning is a good morning to be walking on the narrow pathway. Well, I couldn't say that, replied Mr. By-ends, but the day was so lovely, I just couldn't resist the temptation of taking a stroll on this lovely pathway. I wonder

if I can accompany you? That all depends, replied Christian.

See, the Bible says, how can two walk together except they be agreed? We'd like to know something about you, first of all. In the first place, what is your name? My name is By-ends. And where do you live? I live in the city of Fairspeech.

Hmm, that's a rather wealthy place, isn't it? Oh yes, retorted By-ends, and some of the wealthiest people in that city are my own blood relatives. Is that so? Yes. Lord Fairspeech, from whose ancestors the town itself took its name, is my cousin.

Mr. Facing Both Ways is a nephew of mine, who has learned the peculiar art of facing north and south at the same time. My brother-in-law is a man named Mr. Anything. He's anything and everything that comes along, but the nicest man in our parish is our dear minister.

Oh, what a lovely man! The name is By-ends. He's not like some of these rude preachers one hears nowadays, who tells people they are lost and guilty sinners, and have to be born again if ever they would see or enter the kingdom of God. Oh no, he's not so crude as that.

He tells us to obey the nobler instincts of our red-blooded manhood, and rise to those sublime heights that lie dormant within us. And one day, perhaps, who knows, in the beautiful isle of somewhere, in the sweet By-end by, we shall all meet in that land that is fairer than day. Are you married, inquired Christian? Oh yes, replied Mr. By-ends with a smirk.

I've married Lady Pretender's daughter, and we get along famously, for we are agreed upon two things. First, we will never go against the wind, or the storm, or the tide, but we'll always go whichever way the wind blows. And secondly, when religion is popular, and people applaud those that name the name of Christ, then we intend to be just as good Christians as the next man.

Well, replied Christian, one thing is certain. We do not want you with us on the pilgrim journey. Oh, why not? Because if you come along with us, retorted Christian, you must be prepared to go against the wind, and against the storm, and against the tide.

You must be prepared to take your stand for Christ, when all men revile his name, and persecute those who seek to witness to his saving and keeping power. Oh no, replied Mr. By-ends, I couldn't be content with such a narrow, bigoted, tight-laced form of Christianity as that. I believe in a broad Christianity.

Yes, replied Christian, and it belongs where you are right now. Where's that? On the broad road leading to destruction. As far as I can see, you've never been saved by the grace of God.

You've never been born again by the Spirit of God. Consequently, you cannot walk with us. They left Mr. By-ends standing in the middle of the king's highway, gaping like a fish.

Now Mr. By-ends was the son of a boatman, who earned his living by looking in one direction while he rode in the opposite direction. And as John Bunyan, Mr. By-ends had acquired most of his wealth by the same means, looking in one direction while he went in the other. As Mr. By-ends stood, presently he saw coming toward him three of his old school companions.

They had been students together in Love Gain College in Coveting County, under the headship of a schoolmaster by the name of Mr. Tight-Faced, who had taught them the art of gaining wealth, either by

fraud or by flattery, but particularly by making a profession of religion. And these pupils had become so expert in that ignoble art, each one of them could quite easily have set up a school of his own. My, how they hailed each other! Well, Mr. Money-Love, how do you do, Mr. Hold-the-World, and how are you, save-all? They replied, fine, thank you, and how are you, Mr. By-ends? Doing fine, making money hand over fist.

By the way, inquired Mr. Hold-the-World, who are those two that are walking on ahead of us? Why couldn't we join with them and have a pleasant company? Oh no, retorted Mr. By-ends, those two pilgrims are narrow, tight-laced, bigoted. They actually told me if I walk with them I should have to take my stand for Christ, when all men revile those that named his name. Ah, exclaimed Mr. Hold-the-World, I see what's happened.

They have become righteous over much. Did not Abraham get rich on religion? Did not Job get rich on religion? And then he uttered this great sentiment, I believe that the person who pretends to be religious in order to better himself financially gets two good things. He gets religion, which is good, and he gets money, which is good.

And to this lovely thought, all heartily agreed, and we leave them right here. And believe me, it will be very good riddance to very bad rubbish. There are still people today who are like these four men.

People who make a profession of religion only to better themselves financially or socially, or in the business world. Hypocrites who pretend to be what they do not intend to be. And if there's anything God hates more than anything else, it is a hypocrite.

These four men were like those Pharisees of whom Christ spoke, who made long their garments, and long their prayers, and long their faces, in order secretly to devour widow's houses. His most bitter words of denunciation were addressed to those. He said, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell? But Christian and hopeful went on, until presently they came to a plain called Eze.

And it is while Christians are walking on the plain called Eze, and everything seems to be going well, that this peculiar temptation assails them. They saw to their right a hill called Money Hill. Standing on that hill was a man named Demas, of whom Paul wrote, Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.

As they were about to pass by, Demas called to them, gentlemen, just a moment of your time please. I've got a good proposition to offer you. What is that? inquired hopeful, and Demas said, in this hill on which I am standing is a mine full of rich and rare treasures, gold and silver and precious stones in great abundance, and my proposition is this.

Lead that straight and narrow path that you're walking on for a little while, not for very long. Help yourself to as much of the treasure as this mine contains, and then you can spend the remainder of your journey toward the celestial city in ease and comfort and pleasure. Said hopeful, that sounds good to me.

And he's about to go in the direction of that Money Hill and that mine, when suddenly Christian put his hand upon his shoulder and said, hopeful, don't you realize what Money Hill really means? No. Does the Bible speak about it? Indeed it does. It's a very dangerous thing, for the Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But now, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, faith and love with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. When hopeful heard these words, tears of gratitude ran down his cheeks. He shook Christian's hand and said, Christian, I thank God for you.

My feet had well nigh slipped. I'd almost gone in the direction of my evil desire. Thank God for your words.

Christian replied, many a pilgrim like you has been tempted to turn aside from the straight and narrow path of obedience to God's word and God's work and God's worship in order to help himself to money. And alas, the ground around the edge of that mine is loose and treacherous, and many a person has fallen into that mine and has never been seen on the pilgrim journey from that time on. Money Hill.

Alas, alas, how many Christians have fallen into this same temptation? You will notice that the Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil, but what it does say is this, the love of money is the root of all evil. It's not money, it's the love of money. Money makes an excellent servant, but it makes a hard taskmaster.

Money has been defined as that which is a universal passport to every place except heaven and a universal provider for everything except satisfaction. Many a child of God while poor was godly. He loved to attend the meetings of God's people, loved to witness for Christ, loved to study his Bible, loved to keep in touch with God by prayer, but alas, alas, one evil day the love of money came into that person's heart and out went the love of Christ, the love of his word, the love of meeting with his people, the love of witnessing for Christ, the love of service, and bit by bit he got away in heart from God, lost his pilgrim character, and now is useless to the Lord Jesus, useless to his fellow believers, useless to the poor unsaved around him, and useless to the assembly with which at one time he was in happy association.

Beware of the love of money which is the root of all evil. And now they came to a statue in the form of a woman. They could not understand the meaning of this statue until presently Hopeful, whose eyes were keener than Christian's, said, Christian, I see three words above the head of that statue.

What are they? They are these. Remember Lot's wife. Ah, exclaimed Christian, this is a seasonable sight, particularly after what we witnessed at Money Hill.

This is the pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was turned. As she fled from the destruction of the city of Sodom, but turned back, and God came in judgment upon her, and turned her into a pillar of salt. Tell me the story, urged Hopeful, who wasn't so well acquainted with the Bible as Christian.

So Christian told Hopeful the story of Lot's wife. He said, many years ago a man of God named Abraham had a nephew named Lot. They were wealthy in herds of cattle.

The herdsmen of these cattle began to quarrel with each other as to the right of pasture. Abram's herdsmen quarreled with Lot's herdsmen, and when Abram heard this, he called his nephew Lot to him, and said, Lot, don't let us quarrel with each other as to the right of pasture. We're living in a big country.

There's room for both of us. Let's go to yonder hill, from the top of which you can get a good view of all the country around, and I'll give you the first choice. Whatever part of the country you choose, you shall have.

I'll take what is left. If you choose the country to the right, I'll take the country to the left. If you choose the country to the left, I'll take the country to the right.

You shall have the first choice. And so they stood on that hill, and as Lot lifted up his eyes, there before him was the well-watered plain of Jordan. The river Jordan meandered through a fertile valley.

On either side of that river, lovely banks of green grass. Ah, thought Lot to himself, that will be good for my cattle, and what's good enough for cattle will be good enough for me. So he said to his uncle, Uncle Abram, I'll take the well-watered plain of Jordan.

All right, said Abraham, you've made your choice. And so they parted from each other, and Lot pitched his tent in the direction of the well-watered plain of Jordan. But in that well-watered plain of Jordan, there were five exceedingly wicked cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zoboam, and Zoar.

So wicked were they that God had to destroy them with fire from heaven years afterwards. Lot not only pitched his tent in the direction of Sodom, but presently he moved into that city, became a judge in that city, raised a family in that city. And the years went by until this city became so exceedingly wicked, God's patience was exhausted, and God determined He would destroy it with fire from heaven.

But before He did so, He sent two angels into the city of Sodom to warn Lot and his family of the impending doom of that city. Up, said they, get you out of this city, for the Lord will destroy it. Warn your family that they too may escape before it is too late.

Lot went to his sons-in-law, those that had married his daughters, and when he warned them of the impending doom of this city, they laughed in his face. Alas, alas, Lot had lost his testimony in that city for God. His voice no longer had any authority for God to his own family, until at last the angels, being merciful, took Lot forcibly by the hand, together with his wife and his two unmarried daughters, brought them to the gate of the city, and said, flee for your life, carry not in all the plain, neither look behind you, lest you be consumed.

And thus warned Lot, his wife, his two daughters, commenced to flee from the doomed city. But Lot's wife was a Sodomite at heart. She loved the city of Sodom.

She loved its sinful pleasures. She loved its pomp and popularity and fashion and politics. She loved its money.

And in spite of the angels' express command, look not behind you, she deliberately turned, doubtless with the intention of going back again into that city, for where your treasure is, your heart is also. And as she turned to go back to that city, God came in judgment upon her, and turned her into a pillar of salt. And many, many years afterwards, the Lord Jesus solemnly addressed an audience in these words, Remember Lot's wife.

Let us think of three things about Lot's wife. First, remember her privileges. Second, remember her sin.

And third, remember her judgment. First, remember her privileges. They were many.

In the first place, she was related to a righteous man, for we are told that Lot was a righteous man who vexed his righteous soul with a filthy conversation of the wicked, but he didn't do anything about it. He stayed in that city. She was related to a righteous man, but that didn't save her.

Perhaps some here may have fathers and mothers who are Christians. That will not make you a Christian. Do not presume on the fact that because your father and mother are Christians, that that means that

you're going to be saved, or that you are safe.

No, indeed. Remember Lot's wife. She was related to a righteous man, but she perished in her sins, while her husband was delivered.

Next, she was warned by two angels from heaven. Think of that. Two angels sent down from heaven to warn that woman, but in spite of that heavenly warning, she perished in her sins.

The fact that you are listening to the word of God now does not guarantee your salvation, unless you obey what the gospel proclaims. Repent. Put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus, or just as surely as Lot's wife perished, you will perish in your sins.

Third, she was the subject of the prayers of Abraham. Abraham, the man of God, prayed for her, interceded on her behalf, but did not save her. The fact that people are praying for you does not guarantee your soul's salvation.

God does not save people because of the prayers of others. He saves people because those people take their places lost in pilgrimages personally, and put their trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus. Fourth, she knew the way of escape.

She knew exactly how to be saved. Had you inquired, Lot's wife, what must he do to be saved from the doom of the city of Sodom? She would have replied, I must flee for my life. I must not carry in the plane.

I must not look behind me. She knew exactly how to be saved, but she was lost. There are people here tonight who can quote John 3.16, John 5.24, John 10.9, Acts 16.31, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and yet these people who can quote the way of salvation are not saved.

The fact that you know the way of salvation does not mean salvation. You must personally appropriate that salvation for yourself. Remember, Lot's wife, remember her privileges.

Second, remember her sin, the sin of unbelief, the sin of disobedience to God's express command. She deliberately turned, then because she turned with a desire to go back to the city of destruction, God came in judgment upon her. Third, remember her punishment.

It was sudden, unexpected, and severe. She perished in her sins when she might have been saved. Let the words of the Lord Jesus sink down deeply to your hearts, unsaved people.

Remember Lot's wife. Remember her privileges. Remember her sin.

Remember her judgment. And now Christian and hopeful came to a very lovely spot. The river of the water of life meandered through a fertile valley, and either side were swaths of lovely green grass, so soft to lie on.

Fruit trees grew in great abundance, and here the pilgrim remained for several weeks. They drank of that cool, refreshing stream. They partook of the luscious fruit, and they sang the song that an earlier pilgrim in these parts had sung.

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He restoreth my soul.

This illustrates that resting experience that comes in the Christian life, and prepares the child of God for the conflict which almost always follows. Our Savior said to his disciples on one occasion, come your part and rest a while. And it is this resting experience.

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Our Savior said to his disciples on one occasion, come your part and rest a while. And it is this resting experience that fits the believer to go on for him. That cool, refreshing stream could illustrate the word of God.

How love I thy law! O that they had hearkened unto my commandments! Then had their peace been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. The fruit could illustrate the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, faith, and self-control against which there is no law.

And here the pilgrims remained for quite a while, resting on the grass, eating of the fruit. But they couldn't stay here forever. They started on their way, and as they did so they discovered the way was very difficult indeed.

Steep hills to climb. The pathway itself was rough and stony. And every now and then Christian would stub his toe on one of those rocks.

Oh my toe! Oh my toe! And he would sit down and groan. Hopeful would say, come on dear brother, your feet have become tender by reason of your long stay on the soft grass. Come now, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

And thus encouraged, Christian would rise to his feet, walk a few more steps, and stub his other toe. Oh my toe! My toe! He would sit down and nurse the injured member. Truly, he said, rather plaintively, the flesh is willing, but the spirit is weak.

Surely the dear Lord doesn't want his people to walk on such a rough and stony pathway as this. Come now, come now, replied hopeful. Doesn't the Bible say, through much tribulation we enter the kingdom? Come on, let's have courage.

Let's go forward. Our feet will soon become accustomed to the roughness of the way. But as they continued on, Christian, very much discouraged, saw a stone alongside of the wall, which you remember was on either side of the narrow pathway.

I'm going to see what's on the other side of that wall, said Christian. So standing on that stone, he looked over the wall, and there he saw on the other side a lovely smooth meadow called Bipath Meadow. And in that meadow there was a path which apparently ran perfectly parallel to the rough and stony path upon which they were then standing.

There, said Christian, look, all we have to do is to get over that wall and we'll have a nice, easy, smooth pathway to the celestial city. Don't talk nonsense, replied hopeful. Just a minute, said Christian.

I see someone walking on that pathway. So he shouted to that individual, hey, who are you? What's your name? Where are you going? The man replied, my name is false confidence. I'm on my way to the celestial city.

Is that the way? Why, of course. Walk down the pathway a little bit and you'll come to a stile, a little way, made by the lord of the celestial city for the comfort of weary pilgrims. Cross that stile and follow me, and you'll have a nice, easy journey to the celestial city with none of the hardships of that rough and stony pathway.

There you are, said Christian. Didn't I tell you? Come on, let's cross over that stile. So Christian and hopeful walked along, and presently, sure enough, they saw that stile.

Oh, exclaimed Christian, isn't the lord good? He knew how discouraged, how wearied I would be, and so he very lovingly made this stile so we could cross over and have a nice, easy path to the celestial city. So Christian crossed over that stile into Bipap Meadow. Come on, hopeful, come on.

It's lovely in here. No, said hopeful. I'm not coming.

What? You're not coming? No. I don't believe you're doing the right thing. Although you're an older Christian than I, and know far more about the Bible than I, I believe, Christian, you're doing the wrong thing.

You're leaving the straight and the narrow path of obedience to God's word and God's will and God's work for an easier path, which is more pleasant to the flesh. I believe you're doing the wrong thing. When hopeful said that, Christian became quite annoyed.

As you look here, hopeful, wasn't I saved long before you? Yes. Haven't I had a longer experience in the things of God than you? Yes, you have. Don't I know more about the Bible than you? You certainly do.

Well, now, don't argue with me. Come now, don't be so stubborn, hopeful. Come on, join me.

The pathway is lovely in here. Well, replied hopeful, though it goes against my better judgment, because you're an older Christian than I, I'll come with you. Good, replied Christian.

Come along. So hopeful crossed the stile and joined Christian in Bipat Meadow. Did they do the right thing? We shall soon discover what happens when Christians leave the rough and stony and difficult path of obedience to God's word for an easier path, more suitable to the flesh that craves selfish ease.

As they walked along and followed false confidence, suddenly, most unexpectedly, darkness encircled them. It seemed to come upon them from behind, and before they realized what was happening, they could hardly see their hand before their face. They heard the footsteps of false confidence in the darkness ahead, and suddenly, bang! And then all they heard was a groan.

Oh, false confidence, shouted Christian. Where are you? There was no answer except another groan. False confidence had fallen into one of the pits dug by the owner of this meadow to catch false confident fools.

When Christian realized this, he turned to Hopel and said, Hopel, will you ever forgive me? I've led you astray. Here we are in the darkness. We don't know where we are, and false confidence has fallen into one of those pits.

Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do? Said Hopel, let's find our way back again. Let's get back to that stile, to the difficult path, which is the safest path for the child of God. They tried to find their way back, but they could not because of the darkness.

Suddenly, there was a flash of lightning followed by a terrific peal of thunder, and then the rain came down, and soon they were soaked through to the skin. They walked this way and that way, but they tried in vain to discover their path back to the stile. At last, about two o'clock in the morning, wet through, tired, miserable in heart, they found shelter under a bit of a rock, and there they stretched their weary limbs, and soon, through sheer weariness and sickness of heart, fell asleep.

Early the next morning, the owner of this meadow, a great giant named Despair, awakened in his castle, which was called Doubting Castle. He was sleeping alongside of his wife, whose name was Distrust, and as he awakened, like all self-respecting giants, he had a keen sense of smell. His delicate nostril quivered in the morning breeze, as he said, Ah! I can smell some pilgrims have come into my field.

Give me my club, my dear wife. His wife handed him his great club, and armed with this club, and following his nose, and after all, no one can do more than that, he made his way to where Christian and Hopeful were peacefully sleeping. Perhaps they were having a lovely dream, I don't know.

It ended in a nightmare, for the giant brought down this great big club upon the recumbent forms of Christian and Hopeful, and said, Wake up! What do you mean by trespassing on my property? What do you mean by climbing over that stile? Don't you know that trespassers will not only be prosecuted, but persecuted? Wake up! Give an account of yourself! And when Christian awakened, and saw this great big giant standing in front of them, and knowing that he was in the wrong, he became as meek as a lamb, and he stammered, Oh, please, Giant Despair, we didn't know we were doing wrong. If you let us off this time, we promise we'll never do it again. I'll take care you don't do it again, said the giant.

By the time I get through with you, I'll make you wish you'd never been born. Go ahead of me! And helping them along from the rear with that business end of the club, he drove them ahead of him, every now and then throwing his shoe at them, not even taking his foot out of the shoe. So they went on, until presently, a way ahead of them, they saw a doubting castle, its grim walls, narrow barred windows, great big iron gate, and as Christian saw that castle, his heart sank within him.

Alas, thought he, well might there be written across that gate, Abandoned Hope, all ye that enter here. The giant chuckled when he saw the effect of the sight of that castle on the pilgrims. He took a key from his belt, opened the great door of the castle, and kicked them through, and then locked the door behind him.

That brought them into the courtyard. He opened another door that led from that courtyard down a flight of steps into a dirty, dark, and stinking dungeon, and with another well-directed dropkick, he saved them the trouble of going down those steps. He opened another cell door, showed them into that cell, locked the door, and said, I'll take care of you in a short while, and left the poor pilgrims lying in that prison cell.

And there they lay, groaning in their agony. Ah, thought Christian, who would have thought that such a fine beginning should have had such a sad ending? Who would have thought that that pleasant pathway would

have led into a cell in Doubting Castle? Oh, that giant's club! Oh, that giant's boot! And they groaned again. The giant left them there all that day without a bite to eat, without a drop of water to drink.

The next morning the giant said to his wife, Well, wife, what shall I do with them? Well, said distrust, you'd better go down and give them the best beating they've ever had in all their lives. Don't kill them, but almost kill them. Let them have a real severe beating.

The giant came down the next morning with that great big club in his hand. Without a bye or leave, he began to belabor poor Christian and Hopel. Take that! Take that! Take that! He accompanied each of these words with a blow, and there they lay groaning and bleeding and almost unconscious.

At last poor Hopel cried, Oh, giant despair, have mercy on me! Have mercy on me! Don't talk to me about mercy! Growled the giant, That's the one word I hate more than any other word. Take that for your insolence! In crying for mercy to me, he gave poor Hopel another couple of blows, and then left them, murmuring these sweet words of comfort. I'll come down tomorrow morning and give you another dose of medicine.

There the pilgrims lay all that night, groaning in their agony. Next morning the giant said, Well, wife, what shall I do with them? Well, replied his wife, you've got them breathing pretty bad. Take down the bottle of poison, a length of rope, and a nice sharp knife, and advise those pilgrims, seeing their life is attended with so many evils, and there's no possibility of escaping from your clutches, they'd better either swallow the poison, kill themselves with a knife, or hang themselves with a rope.

Splendid, said the giant. According to me, the giant came down the following morning. The poor pilgrims hadn't moved all night, all night groaning in agony.

Now, there said the giant, I've come to offer you a way of escape. Escape! exclaimed Hopel. Yes, escape! And there's only one way to escape from my clutches, and from Doubting Castle.

Here are three ways. Here's a bottle of poison. Share the contents of that bottle between you, and you'll soon be outside the confines of Doubting Castle.

If you don't like the poison root, try this nice sharp knife. Run it against your throat, and you'll soon be out of your misery, and out of my clutches. But if you don't like the knife, tie one end of this rope around your miserable neck, and the other end around that beam, and hang yourselves, for there's no other way to escape from my clutches than by taking either the poison, or the knife, or the rope.

No! exclaimed Hopel. We want neither your poison, nor your knife, nor your rope. By God's grace, we'll escape.

You will? said the giant. Then I'll kill you right now. And the giant picked up that great big club, and as he made toward Hopel, a strange thing took place.

A beam of sunshine happened to find its way into the cell at that particular moment, and if there's one thing the giant despair cannot possibly stand, it's sunshine. And as that beam of sunshine struck him, he fell down in a pit on the floor. And there he lay, helpless, the door wide open.

But I'm sorry to say that neither Christian nor Hopel could do a thing. They were so faint and so weak by reason of their dreadful beating, and there they watched until slowly giant despair recovered from his

strange fainting fit, took himself, and then left the cell, locking the door carefully behind him, and saying, I'll come down tomorrow and give you some more. Next day the giant said to his wife, what shall I do with the pilgrims now? Well, she replied, if they haven't already done away with themselves, take them up into the courtyard.

Let them see the bodies and the bones and the blood of the people that you've killed, and then tell them, unless they do away with themselves, by the following morning you'll come down and do the job with that club of yours. Ah, that's good advice, my dear wife. It was a happy day when I married you.

Happy day when I married you, she said. They were a well-matched pair. So the next day down came the giant into that dungeon, and in spite of their wounds drove them up those steps to a certain eminence where they could look down upon the courtyard.

And as they looked down, the giant said, what do you see? I see the bodies and the bones and the blood of hundreds of human beings. Who were they? They were once pilgrims like you, replied the giant. And listen, unless you've done away with yourself by tomorrow morning, I'll come down and do the job for you.

Do you understand? I'll bash out your brains with this club. And then he drove them down into their cell, locked the door behind them, left them there in their misery, with a prospect of having their brains knocked out the next morning. Here is Christian and Hopeful.

And Christian, of course, took the blame for himself. It's my fault, said he. If I hadn't climbed over that stile and persuaded you, you would never be here.

Oh, will you ever forgive me, dear brother? Yes, I'll forgive you. You better give me that poison. Leave that poison alone, said Hopeful.

Other people have escaped from this castle. Why not we? Ah, but look at those walls. Look at those bars.

No human being could ever break down those walls and those bars. You better give me that knife. Leave that knife alone.

Don't you touch that knife. Look at that cell door. No human being could ever pick that lock.

You better give me that rope. Leave that rope alone. Other people have escaped from Doubting Castle.

Why not we? But how, inquired poor Christian. Well, replied Hopeful, there's one thing we haven't done yet that we ought to have done a long while ago. What's that? Let's get down on our knees.

Let's confess our sin to God. And remember that scripture. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Well, exclaimed Christian, I never thought of that. And so they got down on their knees, and Christian began. He didn't spare himself in the slightest degree.

He said, Oh God, I've been a lazy, good-for-nothing Christian. I tried to dodge my responsibilities in the Christian life because they were difficult, because they were difficult for the spirit. Here I am, locked up in this awful Doubting Castle, distrust is whispering, give up your Christian profession.

Go back to the world. Lord, I don't want, I don't want to go back to the world. And to think tomorrow morning despair is coming down to end my life.

Oh Lord, I confess my sin unto Thee. Make a way of escape, I pray Thee. Show me how to get out of this dreadful place.

I own my sin and my need, and I judge it and turn from it with loathing and detestation. And then Hopeful began to pray, also confessing his sins. And as Hopeful continued his prayer, suddenly Christian rose to his feet like one in a dream.

He exclaimed, What a fool I am! What a fool I am! Hopeful inquired, Why, what's the matter? I believe I've got a key in my bosom that can open any door in Doubting Castle. You've got a key in your bosom? Why didn't you think of that before? I never thought of it until I got through confessing my sin to the Lord. Bring it out, let's see it.

Christian put his hand into his bosom and pulled from thence a key, called the key of promise. Hopeful said, Try it in the door. Quicker than he takes to tell, Christian put that key in the door of that cell, and lo, the door was unlocked.

And they opened that door. That brought them to the fright of stairs that led up to the courthouse. Quicker than he takes to tell, they ran up those steps.

When they reached the top of those steps, there was another door leading into the main courtyard. In went the key of promise, and that door, too, responded to that key and opened. And now Christian and Hopeful entered into the courtyard, and there was the main gate of the castle itself.

Quickly they ran, inserted the key into the main door, and that door opened. But as it opened, it was rusty, and the hinges made a creaking noise, and that creaking noise awakened the giant who was sleeping alongside of his wife, Distrust. You see his beautiful face in the top right-hand corner of the picture.

And as the giant saw what was taking place, he roared to his wife, Give me my club, my presence of escaping. With one bound, he was out of bed. With the next bound, he was in the courtyard, and then began to run after Christian and Hopeful.

As Christian and Hopeful ran through that gate, Hopeful happened to glance around, and he saw the giant running after them. Quick, said he, Christian, run. I'm running as fast as I can, replied Christian.

Run faster, as hard as you can. And these two ran as hard as they possibly could, but in spite of their speed, the giant's legs being longer, he very soon caught up to them. Ah, said the giant, so you thought you could escape.

Now I'm going to kill you both. And the giant picked up that great big club, and was about to block them out, when suddenly a strange thing took place. A beam of sunshine struck that giant, and down he went again in one of those strange painting bits.

Christian and Hopeful didn't wait to administer first aid to the injured, I can assure you. They ran as hard as they could go, until presently, a way ahead of them, they saw the stile they had crossed three or four days previously, and then they threw themselves over that stile into the narrow pathway, the rough and rugged pathway, and as they lay there panting, presently when Christian had recovered his breath

somewhat, he turned to Hopeful and said, Hopeful, I don't care how rough the path is from now on, I don't care how many times I stub my toe, I don't care how many hills I have to climb, from now on I'm sticking to the straight and the narrow path of obedience to God's will, and God's word, and God's way, and God's work, and God's worship. Were they right? Indeed they were.

Christian has learned, as every Christian must learn, the only safe pathway for the child of God is the path that God has laid out for them in his word. Difficult? Yes. Rugged? Yes.

Stony? Yes. Horny? Yes. But it's the way that leads to the celestial city, and it's the only path that can bring joy and peace into the heart of the child of God.

Many a Christian trying to dodge his responsibilities, trying to palm off his work on someone else, has discovered by climbing that stile and walking in Bipath Meadow, it has only led him into Doubting Castle. Darkness envelops him. Doubts fill his mind.

Despair lashes him unmercifully. Distress whispers, give up your Christian profession. But the true child of God, in spite of his doubts and distress and darkness, will remember that within his bosom there's the key of promise.

There's a promise in God's word that can open any door in Doubting Castle. And as that key is applied, and the doors opened, the child of God will also discover that giant despair will have one of those convenient fainting bits. And the Christian will discover by experience that the only path for him is the rough and rugged path of obedience to the Lord.

Before they left the stile, Hopewell said to Christian, don't you think it would be a good idea to erect a monument at this place, so that any others coming after us who would be tempted to cross the stile into Bipath meadow may be warned by our experience? Yes, replied Christian, I think it would be a good idea. So they built a monument of stones, and on that monument they wrote on a piece of paper these words. Out of the way we went, and then we found what was to tread upon forbidden ground, and that those that come after have a care, lest they for trespassing his prisoners are, whose castles doubting, and whose names despair.

And then both Christian and Hopewell went on their way, thanking God for the wonderful escape they had had from the grip of giant despair, distrust, and doubting castle.

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