

Pilgrim's Progress - Part 7

by Alfred P. Gibbs

The sermon explores the journey of Christian and Hopeful, emphasizing the importance of faith, obedience to God's word, and the dangers of doubt and false teachings on the path to salvation.

Duration: 1:10:10

Scripture: Romans 3:10

Topics: "Pilgrim's Progress"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of shepherds in the assembly of the Lord's people. He explains that these shepherds are chosen by God to guide and feed the flock based on their knowledge of the word of God, watchfulness in the things of God, experience of God's ways, and sincerity in the way of God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of younger members in the assembly listening to and learning from their elder brethren, who have a longer experience of God's ways. The sermon also touches on the story of a man named Ignorance who is afraid to die and seeks help. He is directed to come to Christ as a lost sinner and trust Him as his Savior to enter the celestial city. The sermon concludes with the pilgrims being shown a telescope that represents faith, and their encounter with shepherds who care for the sheep that belong to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Transcript

We have now come to the last of our talks on this wonderful book, The Pilgrim's Progress, and we shall follow the adventures of the pilgrims, Christian and hopeful, as they make their way from Doubting Castle until they enter the glorious Celestial City. We left Christian and hopeful on the right side of that stile, having learned by bitter experience that the rough and rugged path of obedience to God's word, God's will, God's way, God's work, God's worship, is the only safe path for the child of God. The path of peace and joy.

Many and many a child of God has been made to experience the same thing, as he has tried to avoid his responsibilities in the Christian life, avoid the typicalities that come with treading that straight and narrow pathway. Oh, how often their mind has been beclouded by doubts. Despair has lashed them unmercifully.

Distrust of God's promises has whispered, give up your Christian profession, go back into the world. Darkness has enshrouded their spirit. Until at last, like Christian and hopeful, they come to that point where they are prepared to honestly and openly and frankly confess their sin.

As they do so, and turn with loathing and detestation from that sin and that indifference and that laziness that led to their departure in heart from God, then God reveals that his promises, long forgotten, form a key that can open any door in doubting castle. Whatever the doubt may be, there is a promise of God that can deliver that child of God from that particular doubt. And Christian and hopeful learn, as they apply the promises of God to their doubts, that every door open, and even the giant himself, could not stand the sunshine of the word of God.

And Christian and hopeful, climbing over that stile, confess that the only safe and joyous path for the child of God was the path that God had laid down for them in his word. And then you recall, before they left this spot, hopeful suggested it would be a good idea to put a cairn of stones at that stile, lest any seeing by that meadow should be tempted to follow their example. And on that cairn of stones they placed this notice, out of the way we went, and then we found what draws 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.

So they went on their way. Presently they came to the delectable mountains, and there they saw many hundreds of sheep feeding on the hillside. And in charge of those sheep there were four shepherds, whose names were Knowledge, Watchful, Experience, and Sincere.

As they approached the shepherds, the pilgrims inquired, Who are you, and to whom do these sheep belong? The shepherds replied, These are the sheep for which the good shepherd gave his life. As the great shepherd he keeps his sheep, and one of these days he will come and gather them into that fold whence non-constrained, and where there are pastures evergreen. These are the sheep of the good shepherd, and to each one of them he says, I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, when the good shepherd goeth before his sheep.

He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. These are the sheep, each one of whom can say, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. And who are you, inquired Christian? The shepherds answered, Our names are Knowledge, Watchful, Experience, and Sincere, and we are overseers among the flock, set here by God himself.

We may guard the flock, lead them into right pastures, feed them with food convenient, so that they shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and their Saviour. Then the shepherds inquired, And who are you? They replied, Our names are Christian and Hopeful, we are on our way to the celestial city. How do you know, inquired the shepherds? Christian and Hopeful replied, Because we have been saved by the grace of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us, through our acceptance of him by faith as our Saviour, and confession of him as the Lord of our lives, the word of God has assured us, we are saved by his grace, and shall be kept by his power till travelling days are done.

And then the pilgrims inquired of the shepherds, How far is it from here to the celestial city? The shepherds answered, It is far for those for whom it is far, near for those for whom it is near. We know not just how far the celestial city is from here. And when the shepherds saw that the pilgrims were real Christians, they extended to them the right hand of fellowship.

Now these four shepherds illustrate those in an assembly of the Lord's people, who by reason of their knowledge of the word of God, watchful in the things of God, experience of the ways of God, and sincerity in the way of God, are thus pitted by the Lord Jesus, the Good and Great and Chief Shepherd, to be under shepherds who shall feed the flock of God. Therefore in an assembly of the Lord's people, those who are

younger should take good heed to the voice of their elder brethren, for they have had a much longer experience of the ways of God than they have, and they have been set as elder brethren in that assembly, in order to guard and guide and feed the people of God. Now said the shepherds, Would you like to see some of the sights of these parts? Indeed we would, replied the pilgrims.

So the shepherds showed them some of the wonderful sights. First they took them to the top of a very high hill, called the hill of error or wrong doctrine, one side of which was very steep. Christian and Hopper were asked to look over the precipice and describe what they saw beneath.

As Christian and Hopper looked over the edge of that precipice, to their horror, they saw lying at the foot of that cliff hundreds of bodies lying unburied. They inquired of the shepherds, What place is this, and who are those bodies lying at the foot of this cliff? The shepherds answered, This is the hill of wrong doctrine or error. Those bodies you see lying there were those who would not give heed to sound teaching, but after their own evil desires they heaped to themselves teachers having itching ears, who turned away their ears from the truth and turned them unto fables.

They received wrong doctrine, which blinded them to the truth of the word of God, and their bodies lie unburied at the foot of that cliff as a warning to all who come after to take heed what you hear, to prove all things and to hold fast that which is good. This hill of error still remains today and there are many, many, many false teachers in the world. Modernists, who deny the divine inspiration of the word of God, deny the deity of our Lord Jesus, deny the necessity for the shed blood of Christ to secure salvation for lost humanity, deny the necessity for being born again of the spirit of God if we would see or enter the kingdom of God, who deny the reality of heaven and the reality of hell.

Many false teachers are in the world today, therefore we must test all that people say by what the word of God declares. To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this book, there is no light in them. Error has a mesmeric effect upon people.

It mesmerizes them, hypnotizes them, blinds them to the truth of the word of God. Let us thank God for every sound fundamental preacher and teacher of the word of God. Let us be on our guard, lest we be led away through the error of the wicked one, and our bodies lie unburied as a warning to all that come after to take heed what we hear and how we hear.

Then the pilgrims were taken to a hill called Mount Caution, from the top of which they were asked to describe what took place in the valley beneath. As Christian and Hopel watched, they saw some men wandering among tombstones. These men did not seem to know where they were going, for they bumped into one another and fell over these tombstones.

Christian and Hopel inquired, what place is that, and who are those men among the tombstones? The shepherds answered, this is the end of Bypass Meadow. Those people were caught by a giant named Despair, put into a castle called Doubting Castle, and because they did not take advantage of the key of promise which each Christian has in his bosom, after a while Giant Despair took a red-hot poker, burned out their eyes and blinded them, and then turned them loose amongst these tombstones, so that in these people might be fulfilled the saying of God's word which says, they that wander out of the way of understanding shall dwell in the congregation of the dead. What a tragedy! Christians who have had the light of their testimony put out by their doubt and distrust and despair, and now the light that is in them is darkness.

They're in the world, but they're only stumbling block in the way of those who are spiritually dead. Unsaved worldly people look at the lives of these people who once professed to be Christians and say, what? That man a Christian? And I don't want to become a Christian if that's a sample of what Christianity produces. That person born again? And I don't want that kind of thing if that's the thought of life it produces.

Thus these Christians who have lost their testimony bring shame and disgrace to the name of the Lord Jesus and become stumbling blocks in the way of the ungodly who see in their worldly lives no recommendation whatever of Christianity. Is there anyone here who is in Doubting Castle tonight? Use that key of promise. Ere giant despair puts out the light of your testimony, and you join this company of those who dwell in the congregation of the dead.

The pilgrims were next conducted to a side door in a hill, and behind that side door there came the smell of burning and the sound of those who were within that dreadful flame. Christian inquired, what lies behind that door? Open it and you shall see. Christian opened that door and out came a great tongue of flame.

Christian shrank back and then heard in that flame the sound of voices. He heard one saying, cursed be the day that I was born that I should have come to a place like this. I always intended to be saved.

I always intended to trust Christ as my savior, but I kept putting it off, putting it off, and then death suddenly came, and before I was aware my soul was eternally lost, and here I am weeping, wailing, gnashing my teeth. He heard another say, what time is it? The answer came, time is no more. It is eternity, eternity, eternity.

Christian couldn't stand anymore. He closed the door and then with awed voice and trembling limbs he inquired of the shepherds, what dreadful place is this? They replied, this is the side door to hell into which mere empty professors go. Those who profess to be saved but have never trusted Christ as their savior.

Those who intended to be saved but died before they trusted the savior. This is the side door to hell. Pay good heed to this picture because we shall see this dreadful place again before we conclude this story of the pilgrim's progress.

Make sure that this side door to hell shall not be your fate. Come to Christ, trust in him who loved you and gave himself for you. Receive him by faith as your savior and own him as the lord of your life, and you will never come to this dreadful place.

The pilgrims were then taken to the top of a high mountain. They were given a telescope. The shepherd said, now if you look through that telescope on a clear day and your hand is steady enough, you can actually see the celestial city.

Christian took up that telescope, but the scenes he had so recently witnessed so affected him his hand was shaking. He could not see very clearly, but what he did say was this, I think I see a golden glow in the distance. Then Hopeful took the telescope.

His hand was a little steadier than Christian's and as he looked through the telescope he said, I see one of the gates of the city and it makes me long to be home with the lord who loved me and gave himself for me. That telescope illustrates faith. Faith is the telescope through which we can see the realities of God's word.

There's a land that is fairer than day and by faith we can see the far and our father waits over the way to give us a welcome there. So both Christian and Hopeful were encouraged by their visit to these poor shepherds. After bidding them Godspeed they proceeded on their way.

As they continued their journey they saw someone coming toward them with his back to the celestial city. It was a man named Atheist and when Atheist came up to them he inquired who are you and where are you going? They replied our names are Christian and Hopeful and we are on our way to the celestial city. What is your name? He answered my name is Atheist and then Atheist inquired however did you get the idea there is such a city as the celestial city? Christian replied because God's holy word tells me so.

My savior has said in my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also.

At this Mr. Atheist gave a loud empty laugh. Celestial city there's no such place. I've been living in this area for 40 years.

Haven't so much as clapped eyes on it once and as for the bible being the word of God it's nothing the kind. Just a collection of old wives fables, fairy tales all very well for little girls and boys and old folks who are in their dotage but not for free thinking people like myself. I believe as I please.

I neither believe in God nor in the son nor in the holy spirit nor do I believe the bible is the word of God nor do I believe in heaven or in hell. Well replied Christian here is a strange thing. Taking out his bible he said through the reading of this book many years ago God showed me my need of a savior.

Showed me I was a lost and guilty sinner helpless unable to do one thing to save myself deserving only of eternal wrath. Through the reading of this book God showed me that he so loved me as to give his son the Lord Jesus Christ to come into a world of sin and darkness and go to the cross of Calvary and allow himself to be crucified in order that on that cross he might bear my sins and take my place and die in my stead and rise again that I through faith in him might be saved. I responded to what the word of God told me.

I came to Jesus as I was weary and worn and sad and I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad and through the reading of this book God has filled me with joy and peace through believing I have a peace that passeth all understanding and garrisoning my heart and my mind as I speak to you. I have a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory and an assurance of future blessedness. How do you account for this wonderful change in my life if this bible is as you say Mr. Atheist simply a collection of old wives fables and fairy tales? Mr. Atheist had no reply to this personal testimony but with another empty loud laugh he went his way.

You'll meet this man, meet him in high school, meet him in college where the professors will seek to deny that the bible is the word of God and ridicule those who place their faith and their trust in this divine revelation. There's only one way to meet such people, a good experience of God's saving grace, a godly life accompanying that and a testimony to the saving and satisfying power of the blessed son of God. This will put to silence the objections of men like atheists who are described in God's word as being fools for the fool hath said in his heart there is no God.

Presently as they continued their journey they saw to their left a large city called Conceit and leading from that city there was a crooked little pathway which wound in and out amongst the hills and the valleys until eventually ended in the straight and narrow path. Walking along that crooked pathway was a young man and as Christian and Hopeful watched him they decided they would wait at the intersection and discover who he was and where he thought he was going. Presently this young man came into the straight and the narrow pathway so Christian and Hopeful accosted him.

Christian inquired excuse me who are you where are you from and where are you going? He replied rather briskly my name is Ignorance. I have come from the city of Conceit and I hope like everybody else I'm on my way to the celestial city. Well replied Christian one thing is certain and that is this you will never get there the way you've started out.

What do you mean? There is only one way to enter the straight and the narrow path and make sure you will end in the celestial city continued Christian and that is a gate that lies at the beginning of the way and that gate is the owner of the pathway the Lord Jesus who said I am the door by me if any man enter in he shall be saved. All but Mr. Ignorance replied you don't seem to understand who you are talking to. I'd have you know sir I was baptized when I was a child and confirmed I'm a member of the church in good standing too.

I'd have you know that I attend church services quite regularly. I recite the creeds I say my prayers I live a fairly decent respectable life and surely that's all that is needed to enter the celestial city. Christian replied ignorance is thy name ignorant is thy nature.

Going about to establish your own righteousness you have not submitted yourself to the righteousness of God. Mr. Ignorance did you ever see yourself to be a lost and guilty sinner helpless hopeless and hell deserving. Well of course not replied Mr. Ignorance indignantly.

I've never been a lost sinner. I've always been a Christian. I was born a Christian.

Christian answered listen to these words the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself addressed to one of the most religious and moral men of his day. Verily verily I say unto you except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. He must be born again says the Lord Jesus who is the Lord of the celestial city and so Mr. Ignorance if you've never been born again by the Spirit of God one thing is certain you will never enter the gates of the celestial city.

Again Mr. Ignorance protested his own goodness. Then Christian very kindly but very faithfully opened the bible to Mr. Ignorance. Showed him first of all from the word of God what God said about him.

There is non-righteous no not one. There is none that understand it. There is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way. They're together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good no not so much as one.

There is no difference for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And after he had shown Mr. Ignorance what his true condition in the sight of God was then he showed him from that same book the love of God. How God so loved the world of poor guilty sinners he sent his own son from heaven's highest glory.

How Christ became the babe of Bethlehem in order that as man he might die for man his creatures sin. He showed to Mr. Ignorance that the Savior by his death upon that cross as he bore our sins took our place had satisfied all God's claims against sin and the sinner and there was nothing left for sinners to do to be saved to be secure but to trust the Savior who had loved them who had given himself for them. Then he pled with Ignorance.

Oh Ignorance I beseech of you do not trust any longer in your own goodness in your religious rites and poems and ceremonies in your sincerity in your good works in your good resolves. Come as a poor lost and guilty sinner and put your trust in the Savior. What was the effect of this on Mr. Ignorance? Did he thank Christian and hopeful for having opened his eyes? No indeed.

He lost his temper. He snarled. You walk too fast for me.

You talk too fast for me. How dare you tell me a respectable church member a man with a clean moral life. How dare you tell me that unless I'm what you call born again I'll never see the kingdom of God.

I'll never be in the celestial city. I've got my own beliefs. You have your beliefs.

Doesn't matter much what a man believes providing he's sincere in what he believes. You go your own way. I'll go my own.

Christian replied, Ignorance remember this the Lord Jesus the Lord of the celestial city who died for sinners and rose again to be their savior has declared emphatically except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God in as much as you've never taken your place as a sinner as you've never trusted Christ as your savior but are resting in your own goodness. Therefore if you die in that condition there will be no escape from the just and righteous judgment of a holy God. That's enough said Mr. Ignorance.

You go your way. I'll go mine. He stepped back.

Christian and Hopeful went on their way and Ignorance followed at a distance. Christian said to Hopeful, seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Mark this Mr. Ignorance.

We're going to see him again before we conclude the story of the pilgrim's progress. Ask yourself the question, does Mr. Ignorance represent me? Am I like Mr. Ignorance? Instead of trusting in Christ and in his finished work as my alone foundation for hopes of heaven, I'm trusting in my church membership, my baptism, my confirmation, my communion, my sincerity, my good works, my moral life. If so, you're a lost soul.

May God in mercy open your eyes before it's eternally too late. And now that's enough said Mr. Ignorance. You go your way.

I'll go mine. He stepped back. Christian and Hopeful went on their way and Ignorance followed at a distance.

Christian said to Hopeful, seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Mark this Mr. Ignorance. We're going to see him again before we conclude the story of the pilgrim's progress.

Ask yourself the question, does Mr. Ignorance represent me? Am I like Mr. Ignorance? Instead of trusting in Christ and in his finished work as my alone foundation for hopes of heaven, I'm trusting in my church membership, my baptism, my confirmation, my communion, my sincerity, my good works, my moral life. If so, you're a lost soul. May God in mercy open your eyes before it's eternally too late.

And now Christian and Hopeful came into a lovely country. It was called Beulah Land. Here there was no need for the sun to shine by day nor the moon by night.

For the land was the light in this beautiful spot. Here the melody of birds and the fragrance of flowers filled the air. Here the covenant between the bride and the bridegroom was renewed.

Here they saw those shining ones who would appear to them at the cross. Here they were far removed from the noise and the bustle of vanity fair. This is Beulah Land.

What is Beulah Land? Beulah Land is that experience to which many a child of God goes just before he is taken to be with the Lord Jesus which is far better. He lies upon his deathbed. His thoughts are far removed from worldly things.

The things of time and sense mean nothing to him. Nothing is quite so unreal as so-called real estate when a man is on the borderline of eternity. The Savior as it were, wins the Christian's heart from the things of the world.

Makes him long to be sweet home with his Lord and with his Savior. This is Beulah Land, the borderland of the believer's eternal rest. Here they saw on the top of an exceeding high hill the celestial city shining like the sun in his strength.

They saw the angels of God ascending and descending that hill. Every now and then they heard the song of the redeemed and oh how it filled their hearts with holy gladness as they realized that the homeland was not very far away. As they sat under one of the trees partaking of the luscious fruit, Christian turned to Hopel and said, if you see my beloved, tell him I am sick with desire to enter into his glory.

I sat down under his shadow. His fruit was sweet to my taste. Here then Christian and Hopel are prepared for that last wonderful step out of time into eternity.

As they were walking in Beulah Land one day, two angels suddenly appeared who inquired, where the pilgrims are you going? They answered, we are on our way to the celestial city. How do you know? inquired the angels. Christian answered, because I've been saved by the grace of God through faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Hopel answered, and I'm another sinner saved by sovereign grace abound into the chief of sinners. I too have come to know him, hope to know his life eternal. Then said the angels, be assured of this, a warm welcome awaits you on the other side.

We have come to tell you of a difficulty you must face ere you could enter the celestial city. What is that? inquired the pilgrims. The angels replied, you must cross a river called the river of death.

When they heard this they were stunned. They hadn't thought of dying. Could you not make an exception in our favor? they inquired.

Could we not enter that city without going through that river of death? No, replied the angels. From the beginning of time until now only two people have entered the celestial city without going through the river. One was named Enoch, he was translated, he should not see death.

The other was named Elijah, who was taken by a whirlwind to heaven. Since then all that have entered that city do so by way of the river of death. But they added, for your comfort be it said, there's a time we know not when, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel in the trough of God, and the dead in Christ arise first, and those that are alive and remain unto that coming shall be raptured, caught up without dying, to be with their Lord, and to be with the redeemed forever.

Until then be content to go through the river. Is it deep or shallow? inquired the pilgrims. The angels replied, it all depends on your faith in the Lord of the city as to whether the river shall be shallow or deep, but it matters not whether the river is deep or shallow.

Knowing Christ as your savior, to depart is to be with him, which is very far better. A few days after this, they went down to the edge of that sullen stream of death, and every one of us, unless Christ comes in our lifetime, must make this same journey through this same river. I wonder how many here are prepared to enter that river.

Only those who are saved by God's grace, born again by God's spirit, cleansed by that precious blood, are fit to go through the river of death and be assured of a welcome on the other side. So Christian and Hopeful entered the stream. As they did so, Christian stank like a stone, and a great horror of darkness came over him, as the devil began to bring to his mind all the sins he had committed both before he was a pilgrim and during his pilgrimage.

He was put into a doubt as to whether he'd receive a welcome on the other side, but Hopeful put his arms around his companion, and lifting him up said, Christian, I can feel the bottom of the stream, and it's good. Ah, groan, poor Christian, it's good for you, Hopeful. You've been so true-hearted, so loyal, so faithful, so full of hope and peace and joy, but alas, I've been such a poor, poor Christian.

I'm afraid I'm not going to get a welcome on the other side. Ah, if I'd Hopeful, the devil is using your weak physical condition to cloud your mental faculty. Don't you remember what David said in Psalm 73? The wicked have no bands in their death.

Their strength is firm. They're not plagued as other men are. Christian, I see two angels on the other side waiting to welcome us.

No, sigh, poor Christian, they're not waiting to welcome us. They're waiting to welcome you. Go and get the welcome you deserve, and let me die here in the darkness.

No, no, said Hopeful. Look, Christian, Jesus Christ makes thee whole. As he uttered these words, Christian looked up, his face suffused with joy, and he said, I see thee, Lord Jesus.

I hear thee say, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee. I see thee, thou blessed man of Calvary. I come to be with thee.

And then the water became comparatively shallow, and both Christian and Hopeful crossed the river with ease. As they reached the other side, the two angels came down to meet them with a smile of welcome on

their faces. And as they held out their arms to them, they said, we are ministering spirits, said to be ministers unto them which shall be heirs of salvation.

We have come to escort you into the presence of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Thou shalt see the King in his beauty. Thou shalt enter the land that is fairer than day.

Come ye blessed, blood-washed sinners of earth. Welcome to the celestial shore. And as Christian and Hopeful stepped on shore, they breathed a new air, celestial air.

The garments of their mortality fell off. No longer had Christian any further need of his armor. His fights were over.

He is now on the other side. Then said the angels, come, let us escort you up the hill of the Lord, and thou shalt enter the gates of the celestial city. And so they mounted that hill with comparative ease, for all earth's encumbrances had been left behind.

And as they rose higher and higher, they heard the song of the redeemed. Oh, what a lovely song it was. Unto him that loved us, and looted us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us unto our God a kingdom of priests.

Unto him be glory and dominion forever and ever. And over that vast assembly of the redeemed, who has swept the amen of millions of sinners saved by grace. And Christian and Hopeful shouted with a loud voice, yes, be to praise and bless the Lamb of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.

As they rose still higher, every now and then glimpsing the celestial city through the clouds, a company of trumpeters came out to meet them, who blew a blast upon their trumpets, and these were the words they heard. Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Yea, blessed Christ, blessed are they.

As they rose still higher, between the clouds every now and then they caught a glimpse of the celestial city. But they were occupied not so much with the beauty and the glory of that city, as the one that made that city what it was. For the Lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land.

Presently they came to the gate of the city. At that gate they knocked. A voice inquired, who is there? Christian replied, a sinner saved by sovereign grace, cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, who loved me and gave himself for me, kept by the mighty power of God.

Hopeful answered, another sinner, saved by that same sovereign grace, cleansed, sanctified, justified, kept by God's mighty power. The voice from within said, open ye the gate, open ye the gate, and let these blood-washed sinners in. And those everlasting doors swung open.

A stream of glory came out that transfigured the garments of Christians and hopefuls. Crowns were placed upon their heads as they stepped through the gate of the celestial city. And John Bunyan, as he described this scene, added rather wistfully, as I watched them go in, I wished that I were among them.

Do you wish that you were among them? You can make certain you'll be among those who in that day shall sweep through the gates of the new Jerusalem, washed in the blood of the Lamb. And the only way you can make certain is to come to Christ. Trust him as your Savior, and own him as your Lord.

Live for his glory. And then to be with Christ would not so much be a change of company as a change of place. As Christian and hopeful entered the celestial city, the first object that met their gaze was a throne.

On that throne, the loveliest man they had ever seen, crowned with many crowns. As they looked, they saw there were scars in his hands and feet. And with one voice they said, it is our blessed Lord, let us worship him.

They took the crowns off their heads, and they threw it at the feet of him that sat upon that throne. And they said, Lord Jesus, we bless thee for thy wonderful grace in going to the cross for poor sinners like us, for bringing us to a knowledge of thyself, for cleansing us by thy precious blood, saving us by thy wonderful grace, keeping us by thy marvelous power, fulfilling our hearts with joy and peace as thou didst company with us on the way. And now, Lord Jesus, in thy presence, we fall at thy feet to worship and praise in the Lord thy name forever.

Thou art worthy, for thou art slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tribe and tongue and nation. Worthy is the land that was slain to receive honor and riches and glory and blessing forever and ever. And the Savior looked down upon them, smiled upon them, and then said with a voice like as the voice of many waters, Christian, hopeful, inasmuch as while on earth thou didst own thyself to be lost in good decisions, and thou didst believe that on that cross I bore thy sins and died in thy stead and rose again for thy justification, inasmuch as thou didst trust me as thy Savior and confess me as the Lord of thy life, enter thou now into the joy of thy Lord.

And with everlasting joy over all, Christian and hopeful, were in the celestial city. Oh, what joy was there! Joy eternal. No more sin, no more darkness, no more pain, no more curse, no more sorrow, no more death, no more sighing.

Live Christ, which is very, very far better. Make sure this will be your portion by coming to Christ right here and now and receiving him as your Savior. But our story is not ended.

Down to the side of that river of death, some years later, came poor ignorance as he stood there looking at death's cold, sullen stream and realized that the sun of his life was setting and that he was all alone and that eternity was near. He was afraid. He remembered the words which Christian and hopeful had spoken to him, how they had told him unless he was born again, he would never see or enter the kingdom of God, and unless he came to Christ as a poor, lost sinner and trusted him as his Savior, he would never enter the celestial city.

As he stood there, fear clutched his heart and he cried, help me! Won't someone please help me? I'm afraid to die! Help! Help! Help! And just then, there was a boatman on the river, and when this person named Paul Pope, who rowed the boat, heard his cry, he came rowing quickly to where ignorance stood on the shore. And he inquired, did I hear you cry for help? Yes. Can you help me? That's my business.

My name is the Reverend Mr. Paul Pope. I spent many years in the theological seminaries, learning how to give people a nice, comfortable journey across the river of death, for a very small and nominal charge. Is your boat safe? Perfectly safe.

I've conducted hundreds across the river, preached a wonderful funeral sermon, put a lovely, lovely epitaph on their tombstone, don't be afraid, get me to my boat. And so ignorance stepped into the boat of Paul Pope, and Paul Pope began to row him across the stream, and as Paul Pope rowed toward the other

shore, he noticed a look of terror on ignorance's face, and he inquired, Mr. Ignorance, you seem to be afraid. I am.

What are you afraid of? I'm afraid of what comes after death, particularly after what a man named Christian and hopeful told me. They told me that unless I was born again by the Spirit of God, unless I was saved by the grace of God, I would never have a welcome on the other side. They told me that my church membership, and that my rites and poems and ceremonies of religion, and all my good works were utterly in vain to merit a place in heaven.

Come now, come now, said Paul Pope smoothly. Don't talk like that. Why, those two men were nothing but religious fanatics.

Who were ignorant people who had never seen the inside of a theological seminary? What do they know about these things? Let me say, Ignorance, are you a member of the church? Yes, sir. Oh, that just is lovely. My, I can hear the angel saying, here comes a church member, let's give him a warm welcome.

Did you attend church service quite regularly? Well, as much as I could. Splendid. What about your life? Well, I'm not perfect, you know, of course not.

No one is perfect. To err is human, to forgive is divine. But you have tried to do the best you could sometimes, didn't you? Yes, that's just lovely.

Lovely. Why, you don't need to be afraid. You're all right.

There's a beautiful isle called Somewhere. Somewhere in that beautiful isle, in the sweet by and by, will all be in heaven. There now, don't worry anymore.

Don't you feel better already? Yes, that's good. And while Porthope was smoothing him down, the boat slowly neared the shore. Oh, how many people like Ignorance are given a nice comfortable journey across the river of death by men like Porthope, who have never been saved by the grace of God themselves, and slew the poor dying man or dying woman with false promises, not based on the word of God at all.

Don't wait until you come to lie upon a dead bed, because some man like this may come to you. And with false promises, with false comfort, may make you feel quite comfortable. And all the while, you should be owning yourself to be a sinner and trusting Christ as your savior.

The boat reached the other side, but there was no one to welcome Ignorance. The spirit of Ignorance mounted the hill until, at length, he came to the gate of the Celestial City, which had opened to receive Christians and hopefuls. He stood there and knocked.

A voice inquired, Who is there? Ignorance replied, I'm a respectable church member. I've been baptized and confirmed. I've taken communion regularly, and I've tried to live a fairly good life.

Please Lord, open the gate and let me come in. The voice replied, Have you been born again? No Lord. Did you ever own yourself to be a lost and guilty sinner, and trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior, and confess Him as the Lord of your life? No Lord.

Did not my two servants, Christian and hopeful, solemnly warn you from the Word of God, that unless you are born again by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ, you would never enter the gates of this city? Yes Lord. Did they not show you from the Word of God what you really were? In the sight of God? A lost and

guilty, helpless, hopeless, hell-deserving sinner? Did they not show you from that same book, that if you came as such, and put your trust in the Lord Jesus, received Him by faith as your savior, and rested on His finished work, you would be saved by God's grace, and born again by God's Spirit? Yes Lord. Then why did you refuse to listen to their voice? Why did you in the pride of your heart, turn away your ears and your heart from the truth of God? It is now too late.

The day of mercy is over. The day of judgment must begin for you. Because I called, and ye refused.

Because I stretched out my hand, and you would not come to me. Now, you must receive the wages of your sin, of unbelief and rejection. Instead of trusting in me, you've trusted in your own good works, your own sincerity, your own morality, in spite of what the Word of God has declared.

Poor Ignatius cried pitilessly as he knocked and knocked and knocked again, Lord open unto me, open unto me Lord, open unto me Lord. The voice from within said be gone from me, ye worker of iniquity. I never knew you.

Then that same voice which had warmly welcomed Christian and hopeful, now said to those same two angels, take that man, bind him hand and foot, cast him into utter darkness, where there shall be eternal weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. And those same two angels who had escorted Christian and hopeful into the celestial city, now took poor Ignatius in all his religion, in all his morality, in all his empty profession, found him hand and foot, carried him over the hills and over the valley, until that dreadful spy daughter Hell came to view once more. And as they opened that door, a sheet of flame came up, and into that awful place, poor Ignatius, in all his folly and unbelief and pride and religion, was thrown to mingle his voice with the weeping and the wailing of the lost in Hell.

And John Bunyan agreed with it. And I perceived that there was a way to Hell, leading from the very gates of the celestial city, as well as from the city of destruction. How sad.

Oh may God grant that not one, now with me, shall suffer this dreadful fate. No longer trust in your own goodness, in your own sincerity, or your morality, or even your religion. Religion does not say, come as a poor lost sinner to the Lord Jesus, believe that He loved you and died for you.

Trust in His finished work for you, and not in your own works. Accept Him as your Saviour, own Him as your Lord. Live for His glory, and the celestial city shall be your eternal home.

But despise and neglect Him, and the fate of ignorance shall be yours. Why not come as graceless Cain? Come to the Saviour, make no delay. Come to the One that loved you.

Believe what graceless believed when He came to the cross. That the Lord Jesus, in wonderful love, had borne His sin, had taken His place, had died in its stead. Say to Him, as graceless said, Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me.

Thank You for bearing my sins. Thank You for dying for me, and obtaining my eternal salvation through the shedding of Your precious blood. Lord Jesus, just as I am without one plea, for that my blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

Took the action of the Word. Trust Christ as your Saviour. Remember the perfect plea, in the words of Charlotte Elliot, just as I am, without one plea, without one single excuse.

Here I am, Lord Jesus, just a poor lost sinner. But I've learned from Thy precious Word that You loved me, and that You gave Yourself for me. I come now as a poor sinner.

With this plea, You loved me. You died for me. You rose again for me.

Just as I am without one plea, for that my blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come. Come to Christ. He will receive you, and pardon you, and cleanse you, and relieve you.

God grant that this decision may be Your decision. My decision. Owing myself to be a guilty, lost, helpless, and hell-deserving sinner, but believing that the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross, there o'er carried my sins, took my place, and died for me, I now, right here and now, in simple faith, receive Him to be my own personal Saviour, and shall confess Him as my Lord before the world.

Make that decision now in your heart, and this series of talks on the Pilgrim's Progress, from this life to the life that is to come, shall not have been in vain. God grant, as a result of these talks, many people. Now, come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal, whom to know is to love.

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