

11. Learning from a Puritan masterpiece: John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face [away] his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, "What shall I do?"

An introduction to Pilgrim's Progress¹

Next to the Bible, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the best-selling Christian book of all time. Part one appeared in 1678, part two in 1684. It is a milestone in English literature. We just listened to its famous opening paragraph.

What sort of book is it? Bunyan wrote it as an experiment – neither he nor anyone else had written anything like it. He was unsure whether to publish it. In the end, the great John Owen (who once told King Charles II that he would gladly trade all his learning for Bunyan's power to preach) arranged for his own publisher to market the first edition.

Bunyan called it an "allegory", which is true from one perspective. Bunyan the pastor developed the book as a series of connected cameos illustrating all he wanted to teach about the Christian life. It is full of vivid characters, real-life dialogue in ordinary everyday Anglo-Saxon speech, Bible-infused imagery and rhetoric which reaches heights of poignancy and spellbinding power. Above all, "the supreme excellence of *Pilgrim's Progress* is as a didactic allegory setting forth Puritan profundities on spiritual life and death." (Packer, p.185).

How does it work? First, Bunyan pictures personal spiritual life as a pilgrimage – a trek to heaven, the Celestial City. Second, he develops Jesus' image of the pilgrim path as straight, narrow and taxing – and dotted with many dangers, distractions and false helpers. Third, we follow real-life individuals bearing character-names through the ups and downs of their journey – listening to their spiritual experiences, progress, and disasters. It jolts the mind, haunts the imagination and searches the heart.

"Puritan pastors, as physicians of the soul, responded to their particular situation – their listeners faced cultural instability and personal depression, and large numbers of them were yet unconverted – by preaching in a way designed to lead people along the path of assurance, joy and peace in Christ. *Pilgrim's Progress* is a narrational, novelistic template of this ministry." (Packer, p188).

The Puritans understood well the need to give God's people both logic *and* fire (in the same way that the Lord Jesus, for example, presented objective truth while often using word pictures and parables). Puritan preaching sought clearly to address both the rational and the affectionate aspects of the soul. *Pilgrim's Progress* is atypical in that it used an completely unprecedented

¹ This introduction is drawn very largely from J.I. Packer, "Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan," in *The Devoted Life: an invitation to the Puritan Classics* (eds. Kelly Kapic and Randall Gleason), pp183-199. Most of Bunyan's extracts cited below are those referenced in Packer's article. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is widely available. The quotations below are taken from the public-domain version which is reproduced online by the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (CCEL).

mode of communication. But it is also utterly typical of Puritanism in that it sort to use powerful truth and vivid colour to anchor God's word in human hearts.

What about the author? John Bunyan was born in 1628, joined a Baptist church in Bedford, became one of its preachers in the 1650s, was its pastor from 1672, and died in London in 1688. He was:

1. *A Puritan to his fingertips.* Sociologically he was an outsider: an artisan tinker – not part of that brotherhood of university educated Puritan preachers who favoured a paedobaptist national church. “Theologically, however, Puritanism was in essence a commitment to a Reformed piety that sought to make all life ‘holy to the Lord’ by living it within a frame of personal conviction, Bible-based, Christ-centred and God-fearing devotion, and thorough sanctification of family, church and community life; and in this sense Bunyan was as much a Puritan insider as any.” (Packer, p.186).
2. *A very able Puritan.* In Bedford his preaching regularly drew hundreds, and in London up to three thousand at one time.
3. *A Puritan who suffered.* All expected to, and most did in the turbulent world of the 17th century. Inwardly, Bunyan suffered 5 agonising years as he sought an assured faith in Christ. Outwardly he suffered 12 years in jail between 1660 and 1672 (with six months more in 1676-77), for his non-conformity: he refused to stop preaching at the unauthorised non-Anglican gatherings known as *conventicles* – and in 1660 the local magistrates decided to make an example of him. The “den” in which the author sees himself in the book's opening paragraph is in fact prison.

Lets now learn from the Pilgrim's Progress: its story and themes... in its own words...

1. The Bible: “made by him that cannot lie”

Through Puritanism the English became the people of a book: the Bible – first in the Geneva version and then in the King James. The Bible is for Christian, the Pilgrim, pictured as that indispensable and true word which “was made by him that cannot lie”. Its promises sustain him through the Slough of Despond, are the key that open the doors from Giant Despair's Doubting Castle, and are the crutches that enable crippled Mr Ready-to-halt to keep on hobbling forward. Three vivid images show the right *use* of the Bible:

Scripture is the *mirror* that Mercy asks for in the Shepherd's palace:

Now the glass was one of a thousand. It would present a man, one way, with his own features exactly; and turn it but another way, and it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of pilgrims himself. Yes, I have talked with them that can tell, and they have said that they have seen the very crown of thorns upon his head by looking in that glass; they have therein also seen the holes in his hands, his feet, and his side. Yea, such an excellency is there in this glass, that it will show him to one where they have a mind to see him, whether living or dead; whether in earth, or in heaven; whether in a state of humiliation, or in his exaltation; whether coming to suffer, or coming to reign. James 1:23; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 3:18.

Scripture is the *map* Mr Great-heart consulted, to avoid pitfalls on the Enchanted Ground:

But he had in his pocket a map of all ways leading to or from the Celestial City; wherefore he struck a light (for he never goes

without his tinder-box also), and takes a view of his book or map, which bids him to be careful in that place to turn to the right hand. And had he not been careful here to look in his map, they had all, in probability, been smothered in the mud; for just a little before them, and that at the end of the cleanest way too, was a pit, none knows how deep, full of nothing but mud, there made on purpose to destroy the pilgrims in.

Then thought I with myself, Who that goeth on pilgrimage but would have one of these maps about him, that he may look, when he is at a stand, which is the way he must take?

Scripture is the *sword* with which Mr Valiant-for-Truth fought off the three thieves:

When he had taken it in his hand, and looked thereon awhile, he said, Ha, it is a right Jerusalem blade.

Valiant-for-Truth: It is so. Let a man have one of these blades, with a hand to wield it, and skill to use it, and he may venture upon an angel with it. He need not fear its holding, if he can but tell how to lay on. Its edge will never blunt. It will cut flesh and bones, and soul, and spirit, and all. Heb. 4:12.

Mr. Great-Heart: But you fought a great while; I wonder you was not weary.

Valiant-for-Truth: I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand; and then they were joined together as if a sword grew out of my arm; and when the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with most courage.

Mr. Great-Heart: Thou hast done well; thou hast resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Thou shalt abide by us, come in and go out with us; for we are thy companions. Then they took him and washed his wounds, and gave him of what they had, to refresh him: and so they went together.

2. The Gospel

Puritanism was an evangelical movement shaped by the gospel as the Reformers had proclaimed it. Bunyan highlights: (i) the wonderful exchange achieved in the atoning death of Christ, who bears our sins and punishment; (ii) justification by faith, whereby we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the “brodered coat” that Christian is given as he stands before the Cross; (iii) the heart-changing effect of God’s gift of faith in Christ.

At the start of Christian’s journey Evangelist points him away from the City of Destruction and towards a narrow gate. Others seek to hold him back. He flees, and yet carries a great burden upon his back.

Now I saw in my dream, that the highway up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Isaiah 26:1. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of

the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death." Then he stood still a while, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Zech. 12:10. Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three Shining Ones came to him, and saluted him with, "Peace be to thee." So the first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," Mark 2:5; the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment, Zech. 3:4; the third also set a mark on his forehead, Eph. 1:13, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate: so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing...

Still others try to deter Christian from going the way of the Cross. There is Ignorance, the self-deceived religionist. And Talkative (all words), Formalist and Hypocrisy, and Worldly-Wiseman.

There MUST be a deliberate turning to God, so as to seek and find the wicket-gate (the small doorway, narrow and often overlooked). Here he speaks with Formality and Hypocrisy, and explains why he will never turn aside:

Christian: By laws and ordinances you will not be saved, since you came not in by the door. Gal. 2:16. And as for this coat that is on my back, it was given me by the Lord of the place whither I go; and that, as you say, to cover my nakedness with. And I take it as a token of kindness to me; for I had nothing but rags before. And besides, thus I comfort myself as I go. Surely, think I, when I come to the gate of the city, the Lord thereof will know me for good, since I have his coat on my back; a coat that he gave me freely in the day that he stripped me of my rags. I have, moreover, a mark in my forehead, of which perhaps you have taken no notice, which one of my Lord's most intimate associates fixed there in the day that my burden fell off my shoulders. I will tell you, moreover, that I had then given me a roll sealed, to comfort me by reading as I go on the way; I was also bid to give it in at the celestial gate, in token of my certain going in after it: all which things I doubt you want, and want them because you came not in at the gate.

To these things they gave him no answer; only they looked upon each other, and laughed.

In this conversation between Hopeful and Christian we learn of atonement and justification – and of the Puritan equivalent of the sinner's prayer.

Hopeful: Do! I could not tell what to do, until I broke my mind to Faithful; for he and I were well acquainted. And he told me, that unless I could obtain the righteousness of a man that never had sinned, neither mine own, nor all the righteousness of the world, could save me.

Christian: And did you think he spake true?

Hopeful: Had he told me so when I was pleased and satisfied with my own amendments, I had called him fool for his pains; but now, since I see my own infirmity, and the sin which cleaves to my best performance, I have been forced to be of his opinion.

Christian: But did you think, when at first he suggested it to you,

that there was such a man to be found, of whom it might justly be said, that he never committed sin?

Hopeful: I must confess the words at first sounded strangely; but after a little more talk and company with him, I had full conviction about it.

Christian: And did you ask him what man this was, and how you must be justified by him?

Hopeful: Yes, and he told me it was the Lord Jesus, that dwelleth on the right hand of the Most High. Heb. 10:12-21. And thus, said he, you must be justified by him, even by trusting to what he hath done by himself in the days of his flesh, and suffered when he did hang on the tree. Rom. 4:5; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:19. I asked him further, how that man's righteousness could be of that efficacy, to justify another before God. And he told me he was the mighty God, and did what he did, and died the death also, not for himself, but for me; to whom his doings, and the worthiness of them, should be imputed, if I believed on him.

Christian: And what did you do then?

Hopeful: I made my objections against my believing, for that I thought he was not willing to save me.

Christian: And what said Faithful to you then?

Hopeful: He bid me go to him and see. Then I said it was presumption. He said, No; for I was invited to come. Matt. 11:28. Then he gave me a book of Jesus' inditing, to encourage me the more freely to come; and he said concerning that book, that every jot and tittle thereof stood firmer than heaven and earth. Matt. 24:35. Then I asked him what I must do when I came; and he told me I must entreat upon my knees, Psa. 95:6; Dan. 6:10, with all my heart and soul, Jer. 29:12,13, the Father to reveal him to me. Then I asked him further, how I must make my supplications to him; and he said, Go, and thou shalt find him upon a mercy-seat, where he sits all the year long to give pardon and forgiveness to them that come. Exod. 25:22; Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89; Heb. 4:16. I told him, that I knew not what to say when I came; and he bid say to this effect: God be merciful to me a sinner, and make me to know and believe in Jesus Christ; for I see, that if his righteousness had not been, or I have not faith in that righteousness, I am utterly cast away. Lord, I have heard that thou art a merciful God, and hast ordained that thy Son Jesus Christ should be the Saviour of the world; and moreover, that thou art willing to bestow him upon such a poor sinner as I am-and I am a sinner indeed. Lord, take therefore this opportunity, and magnify thy grace in the salvation of my soul, through thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Christian: And did you do as you were bidden?

Hopeful: Yes, over, and over, and over.

Christian: And did the Father reveal the Son to you?

Hopeful: Not at the first, nor second, nor third, nor fourth, nor fifth, no, nor at the sixth time neither.

Christian: What did you do then?

Hopeful: What? why I could not tell what to do.

Christian: Had you not thoughts of leaving off praying?

Hopeful: Yes; an hundred times twice told.

Christian: And what was the reason you did not?

Hopeful: I believed that it was true which hath been told me, to wit, that without the righteousness of this Christ, all the world could not save me; and therefore, thought I with myself, if I leave off, I die, and I can but die at the throne of grace. And withal this came into my mind, "If it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, and will not tarry." Hab. 2:3. So I continued praying until the Father showed me his Son.

Christian: And how was he revealed unto you?

Hopeful: I did not see him with my bodily eyes, but with the eyes of my understanding, Eph. 1:18,19; and thus it was. One day I was very sad, I think sadder than at any one time in my life; and this sadness was through a fresh sight of the greatness and vileness of my sins. And as I was then looking for nothing but hell, and the everlasting damnation of my soul, suddenly, as I thought, I saw the Lord Jesus looking down from heaven upon me, and saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31.

But I replied, Lord, I am a great, a very great sinner: and he answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. 12:9. Then I said, But, Lord, what is believing? And then I saw from that saying, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," John 6:35, that believing and coming was all one; and that he that came, that is, that ran out in his heart and affections after salvation by Christ, he indeed believed in Christ. Then the water stood in mine eyes, and I asked further, But, Lord, may such a great sinner as I am be indeed accepted of thee, and be saved by thee? And I heard him say, "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. Then I said, But how, Lord, must I consider of thee in my coming to thee, that my faith may be placed aright upon thee? Then he said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1:15. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. Rom.10:4, and chap. 4. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. Rom. 4:25. He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Rev. 1:5. He is the Mediator between God and us. 1 Tim. 2:5. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Heb. 7:25. From all which I gathered, that I must look for righteousness in his person, and for satisfaction for my sins by his blood: that what he did in obedience to his Father's law, and in submitting to the penalty thereof, was not for himself, but for him that will accept it for his salvation, and be thankful. And now was my heart full of joy, mine eyes full of tears, and mine affections running over with love to the name, people, and ways of Jesus Christ.

Christian: This was a revelation of Christ to your soul indeed. But tell me particularly what effect this had upon your spirit.

Hopeful: It made me see that all the world, notwithstanding all the righteousness thereof, is in a state of condemnation. It made me see that God the Father, though he be just, can justly justify the coming sinner. It made me greatly ashamed of the vileness of my former life, and confounded me with the sense of mine own ignorance; for there never came a thought into my heart before now that showed me so the beauty of Jesus Christ. It made me love a holy life, and long to do something for the honor and glory of the name of the Lord Jesus. Yea, I thought that had I now a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I could spill it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

I saw then in my dream, that Hopeful looked back, and saw Ignorance, whom they had left behind, coming after. Look, said he to Christian, how far yonder youngster loitereth behind.

Christian: Aye, aye, I see him: he careth not for our company.

Hopeful: But I trow it would not have hurt him, had he kept pace with us hitherto.

Christian: That is true; but I warrant you he thinketh otherwise.

Hopeful: That I think he doth; but, however, let us tarry for him. (So they did.)

Then Christian said to him, Come away, man; why do you stay so behind?

Ignorance: I take my pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company, unless I like it the better.

Then said Christian to Hopeful, (but softly,) Did I not tell you he cared not for our company? But, however, said he, come up, and let us talk away the time in this solitary place. Then, directing his speech to Ignorance, he said, Come, how do you do? How stands it between God and your soul now?

Ignorance: I hope, well; for I am always full of good motions, that come into my mind to comfort me as I walk.

Christian: What good motions? Pray tell us.

Ignorance: Why, I think of God and heaven.

Christian: So do the devils and damned souls.

Ignorance: But I think of them, and desire them.

Christian: So do many that are never like to come there. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Prov. 13:4.

Ignorance: But I think of them, and leave all for them.

Christian: That I doubt: for to leave all is a very hard matter; yea, a harder matter than many are aware of. But why, or by what, art thou persuaded that thou hast left all for God and heaven?

Ignorance: My heart tells me so.

Christian: The wise man says, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Prov. 28:26.

Ignorance: That is spoken of an evil heart; but mine is a good one.

Christian: But how dost thou prove that?

Ignorance: It comforts me in hopes of heaven.

Christian: That may be through its deceitfulness; for a man's heart may minister comfort to him in the hopes of that thing for which he has yet no ground to hope.

Ignorance: But my heart and life agree together; and therefore my hope is well-grounded.

Christian: Who told thee that thy heart and life agree together?

Ignorance: My heart tells me so.

Christian: "Ask my fellow if I be a thief." Thy heart tells thee so! Except the word of God beareth witness in this matter, other testimony is of no value.

Ignorance: But is it not a good heart that hath good thoughts? and is not that a good life that is according to God's commandments?

Christian: Yes, that is a good heart that hath good thoughts, and that is a good life that is according to God's commandments; but it is one thing indeed to have these, and another thing only to think so.

Ignorance: Pray, what count you good thoughts, and a life according to God's commandments?

Christian: There are good thoughts of divers kinds; some respecting ourselves, some God, some Christ, and some other things.

Ignorance: What be good thoughts respecting ourselves?

Christian: Such as agree with the word of God.

Ignorance: When do our thoughts of ourselves agree with the word of God?

Christian: When we pass the same judgment upon ourselves which the word passes. To explain myself: the word of God saith of persons in a natural condition, "There is none righteous, there is none that doeth good." It saith also, that, "every imagination of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually." Gen. 6:5; Rom. 3. And again, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. 8:21. Now, then, when we think thus of ourselves, having sense thereof, then are our thoughts good ones, because according to the word of God.

Ignorance: I will never believe that my heart is thus bad.

Christian: Therefore thou never hadst one good thought concerning thyself in thy life. But let me go on. As the word passeth a judgment upon our hearts, so it passeth a judgment upon our ways; and when the thoughts of our hearts and ways agree with the judgment which the word giveth of both, then are both good, because agreeing thereto.

Ignorance: Make out your meaning.

Christian: Why, the word of God saith, that man's ways are crooked ways, not good but perverse; it saith, they are naturally out of the good way, that they have not known it. Psa. 125:5; Prov. 2:15; Rom. 3:12. Now, when a man thus thinketh of his ways, I say, when he doth sensibly, and with heart-humiliation, thus think, then hath he good thoughts of his own ways, because his thoughts now agree with the judgment of the word of God.

Ignorance: What are good thoughts concerning God?

Christian: Even, as I have said concerning ourselves, when our thoughts of God do agree with what the word saith of him; and that is, when we think of his being and attributes as the word hath taught, of which I cannot now discourse at large. But to speak of him with reference to us: then have we right thoughts of God when we think that he knows us better than we know ourselves, and can see sin in us when and where we can see none in ourselves; when we think he knows our inmost thoughts, and that our heart, with all its depths, is always open unto his eyes; also when we think that all our righteousness stinks in his nostrils, and that therefore he cannot abide to see us stand before him in any confidence, even in all our best performances.

Ignorance: Do you think that I am such a fool as to think that God can see no further than I; or that I would come to God in the best of my performances?

Christian: Why, how dost thou think in this matter?

Ignorance: Why, to be short, I think I must believe in Christ for justification.

Christian: How! think thou must believe in Christ, when thou seest not thy need of him! Thou neither seest thy original nor actual infirmities; but hast such an opinion of thyself, and of what thou doest, as plainly renders thee to be one that did never see the necessity of Christ's personal righteousness to justify thee before

God. How, then, dost thou say, I believe in Christ?

Ignorance: I believe well enough, for all that.

Christian: How dost thou believe?

Ignorance: I believe that Christ died for sinners; and that I shall be justified before God from the curse, through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his laws. Or thus, Christ makes my duties, that are religious, acceptable to his Father by virtue of his merits, and so shall I be justified.

Christian: Let me give an answer to this confession of thy faith.

1. Thou believest with a fantastical faith; for this faith is nowhere described in the word.
2. Thou believest with a false faith; because it taketh justification from the personal righteousness of Christ, and applies it to thy own.
3. This faith maketh not Christ a justifier of thy person, but of thy actions; and of thy person for thy action's sake, which is false.
4. Therefore this faith is deceitful, even such as will leave thee under wrath in the day of God Almighty: for true justifying faith puts the soul, as sensible of its lost condition by the law, upon flying for refuge unto Christ's righteousness; (which righteousness of his is not an act of grace by which he maketh, for justification, thy obedience accepted with God, but his personal obedience to the law, in doing and suffering for us what that required at our hands;) this righteousness, I say, true faith accepteth; under the skirt of which the soul being shrouded, and by it presented as spotless before God, it is accepted, and acquitted from condemnation.

Ignorance: What! would you have us trust to what Christ in his own person has done without us? This conceit would loosen the reins of our lust, and tolerate us to live as we list: for what matter how we live, if we may be justified by Christ's personal righteousness from all, when we believe it?

Christian: Ignorance is thy name, and as thy name is, so art thou: even this thy answer demonstrateth what I say. Ignorant thou art of what justifying righteousness is, and as ignorant how to secure thy soul, through the faith of it, from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effects of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ, which is to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love his name, his word, ways, and people, and not as thou ignorantly imaginest.

3. The way of the Pilgrim

Each part of Bunyan's story is about a pilgrim – Christian and then his wife, Christiana – following (or failing to follow) the way to the Celestial City. The Bible itself likens the Christian life to a "walk". The first Christians were followers of the Way (Acts 9:2, etc). The story begins with passage through the wicket-gate where one knocks, enters and first becomes a Christian. At this point you are relieved of the burden of your sins, you receive a scroll assuring you of salvation, and begin walking in the way of holiness.

On the journey ***one needs constantly to be a spiritual learner***: Christian was taught by Evangelist (a gospel minister), in the House of the Interpreter (the Holy Spirit as teacher), in the Palace Beautiful (the local church), and from the shepherds (pastoral wisdom).

There is ***a constant struggle with sin.***

Prudence: Do you not yet bear away with you some of the things that then you were conversant withal?

Christian: Yes, but greatly against my will; especially my inward and carnal cogitations, with which all my countrymen, as well as myself, were delighted. But now all those things are my grief; and might I but choose mine own things, I would choose never to think of those things more: but when I would be a doing that which is best, that which is worst is with me. Rom. 7:15, 21.

Prudence: Do you not find sometimes as if those things were vanquished, which at other times are your perplexity?

Christian: Yes, but that is but seldom; but they are to me golden hours in which such things happen to me.

Prudence: Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances at times as if they were vanquished?

Christian: Yes: when I think what I saw at the cross, that will do it; and when I look upon my brodered coat, that will do it; and when I look into the roll that I carry in my bosom, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it.

Prudence: And what is it that makes you so desirous to go to Mount Zion?

Christian: Why, there I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things that to this day are in me an annoyance to me: there they say there is no death, Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4; and there I shall dwell with such company as I like best. For, to tell you the truth, I love Him because I was by Him eased of my burden; and I am weary of my inward sickness. I would fain be where I shall die no more, and with the company that shall continually cry, Holy, holy, holy.

We must ***resist all persuasions to leave the road.*** Demas, the Flatterer, Madam Wanton, By-path Meadow, Giant Despair in Doubting Castle, the Satanic Apollyon, Vanity Fair - they all seek to draw one aside. It is a costly walk.

Christian: If you will go with us, you must go against wind and tide; the which, I perceive, is against your opinion: you must also own Religion in his rags, as well as when in his silver slippers; and stand by him, too, when bound in irons, as well as when he walketh the streets with applause.

It is sheer hard work:

A Christian man is never long at ease,
When one fright's gone, another doth him seize.

As Christian, fighting his way up the hill called Difficulty, declares:

"The hill, though high, I covet to ascend;
The difficulty will not me offend;
For I perceive the way to life lies here:
Come, pluck up heart, let's neither faint nor fear.
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe."

As Evangelist said, to Christian and to Faithful at the start of their journey, there is a race to be run:

The crown is before you, and it is an incorruptible one; "so run that ye may obtain it." 1 Cor. 9:24-27. Some there be that set out for this crown, and after they have gone far for it, another comes in and takes it from them: "hold fast, therefore, that you have; let no man take your crown." Rev. 3:11. You are not yet out of the gunshot of the devil; "you have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Let the kingdom be always before you, and believe steadfastly concerning the things that are invisible. Let nothing that is on this side the other world get within you. And, above all, look well to your own hearts and to the lusts thereof; for they are "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Set your faces like a flint; you have all power in heaven and earth on your side... and be you sure that one or both of you must seal the testimony which you hold, with blood; but "be you faithful unto death, and the King will give you a crown of life."

4. The need for companions on the road: Christian friends, and a faithful pastor

We must value and practice fellowship constantly. It is no good for any of us to be alone. Bunyan gives Christian first Faithful and then Hopeful as fellow travellers. To Christiana he gives Great-heart. Their testimonies and tales of other travellers sustain the pilgrims on their journey. The conversations they have are not just a writer's ploy to get edifying exchanges into the text. Rather, as a Puritan the author knew well that fellowship itself is indispensable if we're going to get to the Celestial City.

"When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
Yea, let them learn of them in any wise,
Thus to keep open their drowsy, slumb'ring eyes.
Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,
Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell."

The characters of the Evangelist, the "very grave Person" whose portrait Christian sees in the Interpreter's House and Mr Great-heart: these are all pictures of the model pastor. The Interpreter explains to Christian how it is necessary and indispensable to accept a pastor's oversight and care:

Christian: Sir, said Christian, I am a man that am come from the city of Destruction, and am going to the Mount Zion; and I was told by the man that stands at the gate at the head of this way, that if I called here you would show me excellent things, such as would be helpful to me on my journey.

Interpreter: Then said Interpreter, Come in; I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee. So he commanded his man to light the candle, and bid Christian follow him; so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it: It had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon its lips, the world was behind its back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.

Christian: Then said Christian, What means this?

Interpreter: The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand: he can beget children, 1 Cor. 4:15, travail in birth with children, Gal. 4:19, and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips: it is to show thee, that his work is to know, and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men. And whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head; that is to show thee, that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, he is sure in the world that comes next, to have glory for his reward. Now, said the Interpreter, I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way: wherefore take good heed to what I have showed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death.

5. Entering the Celestial City

Completing one's pilgrimage – and entering the Celestial City – is the only proof of a successful journey. But what a destination it is. When Christian and Hopeful emerge from the waters of death they are welcomed by ministering angels with whom they speak:

The talk that they had with the shining ones was about the glory of the place; who told them that the beauty and glory of it was inexpressible. There, said they, is "Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. 12:22-24. You are going now, said they, to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof: and when you come there you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity. Rev. 2:7; 3:4,5; 22:5. There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower region upon earth; to wit, sorrow, sickness, affliction, and death; "For the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:4. You are going now to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, and to the prophets, men that God hath taken away from the evil to come, and that are now "resting upon their beds, each one walking in his righteousness."

In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One; for "there you shall see him as he is." 1 John, 3:2. There also you shall serve him continually with praise, with shouting and thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty, because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you; and there you shall with joy receive even every one that follows into the holy place after you.

Now, while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them: to whom it was said by the other two shining ones, These are the men that have loved our Lord when they were in the world, and that have left all for his holy name; and he hath sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey, that they may go in and look their Redeemer in

the face with joy. Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying,
"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb."
Rev. 19:9.

6. Dying well

The only way unto the Celestial City is the way of death. And death was everyone's near neighbour in Puritan England. In part one of Pilgrim's Progress the emphasis is on difficulties and dangers – and Christian and Hopeful are depicted as having a difficult death, pressed down by memories of sins and Satan's accusations.

The Angels who encourage the Pilgrims are asked if the waters of death are all of the same depth. Their reply is profound: "you shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the place."

Hopeful encourages Christian as he nears the end:

These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters, are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of his goodness, and live upon him in your distresses.... Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. And with that Christian brake out with a loud voice, Oh, I see him again; and he tells me, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Isa. 43:2. Then they both took courage, and the enemy was after that as still as a stone, until they were gone over.

Throughout part two (Christiana's journey) the emphasis is on pastoral care rather than personal adventures, and its set piece climax is a series of death-bed close-ups of different pilgrims, dying out of their present life and into the glory beyond. The poignancy of Bunyan's blend of allegory and realism is sometimes unbearable. He weaves the vivid imagery of terminal old age in Ecclesiastes 12 into the narrative as we spectate a series of deaths – and listen to a series of final words. Of all the Pilgrims it is Mr Stand-fast who is last to receive his summons, the Messenger assuring him that "Thy wheel is broken at the cistern." The weight of the coming glory sustains him in his passage:

Mr. Standfast had thus set things in order, and the time being come for him to haste him away, he also went down to the river. Now there was a great calm at that time in the river; wherefore Mr. Standfast, when he was about half-way in, stood a while, and talked with his companions that had waited upon him thither.

And he said, This river has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me; but now methinks I stand easy; my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood while Israel went over Jordan. Josh. 3:17. The waters indeed are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that waits for me on the other side, do lie as a glowing coal at my heart.

I see myself now at the end of my journey;
my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that head which
was crowned with thorns, and that face which was spit upon for me. I
have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall
live by sight, and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself.

I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet, and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. His words I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He hath held me, and hath kept me from mine iniquities; yea, my steps hath he strengthened in his way.

Now, while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed; his strong man bowed under him: and after he had said, Take me, for I come unto thee, he ceased to be seen of them.

But glorious it was to see how the open region was filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, with singers and players upon stringed instruments, to welcome the pilgrims as they went up, and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city.

As for Christiana's children, the four boys that Christiana brought, with their wives and children, I did not stay where I was till they were gone over. Also, since I came away, I heard one say that they were yet alive, and so would be for the increase of the church, in that place where they were, for a time.

Should it be my lot to go that way again, I may give those that desire it an account of what I here am silent about:
meantime I bid my reader FAREWELL.