



Saturday, July 22, 2023

Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan

Today's Reading:

House of the Interpreter

1. Hymn: We're Marching to Zion

1 Come, we that love the Lord,
and let our joys be known;
join in a song with sweet accord,
and thus surround the throne.

***We're marching to Zion,
Beautiful, beautiful, Zion:
We're marching upward to Zion,
The beautiful city of God.***

2 Let those refuse to sing
who never knew our God;
but children of the heav'nly King
may speak their joys abroad.

3 The hill of Zion yields
a thousand sacred sweets
before we reach the heav'nly fields,
or walk the golden streets.

4 Then let our songs abound,
and ev'ry tear be dry;
we're marching through Emmanuel's ground
to fairer worlds on high.

1. Opening Prayer: Bro. Obafemi Badmus

2. Memory Verses

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims—abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." **1 Peter 2:11**

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." **Hebrews 11:13**

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction—and there are many who go in by it. *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life—and there are few who find it.*" **Matthew 7:13-14.**

3. The story so far ... : Sis. Funmbi Shokoya

4. Readings

The House of the Interpreter: Sis. Bolanle Babalola

THE HOUSE OF THE INTERPRETER

Then Christian began to prepare himself for his journey. Good-will told him that when he had traveled some distance from the Gate—he would come to the *House of the Interpreter*, and knocking at the door, he would be shown some valuable lessons. (Editor's note: Bunyan portrays the *Interpreter*, as an emblem of the *Holy Spirit*.)

Christian then said farewell to Good-will, who in turn bid him Godspeed. Christian traveled on until he came to the House of the Interpreter, where he knocked again and again. At last someone came to the door, and asked who was there.

"Sir," answered Christian, "I am a traveler, who was told by a man named Good-will, to come here for help. Therefore I would like to speak with the master of this house."

So the servant called for the master of the house, who shortly came, and asked Christian what he wanted.

"Sir," Christian explained, "I have come from the City of Destruction, and

am going to the Celestial City. I was told by Good-will, the man who stands at the narrow-gate, that if I came here—you would show me some lessons which would be a great help to me on my journey."

"Come in!" invited Interpreter, "And I will show you some profitable things."

Interpreter commanded the servant to light a candle, and bid Christian to follow them. So they proceeded to a private room, and opened the door. Inside the room, Christian saw a picture of a *very serious man* hanging on the wall. (Editor's note: Bunyan portrays the *man in the portrait*, as an emblem of a *godly pastor*.)

The man in the picture had his eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written upon his lips, and the world behind his back! He stood as if he pleaded with men—and a crown of gold hung over his head.

Then Christian said, "What does this picture mean?"

Interpreter explained, "The man depicted in this picture is one in a thousand! He can beget children—and nurse them himself when they are born! And as you see him with his eyes lifted up to Heaven, with the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth written on his lips—this is to show you that his work is to understand and unfold difficult things.

"Similarly, just as you see him stand as if he *pleaded* with men, and also notice that the *world* is cast behind his back, and that a *crown* hangs over his head—this is to show you that he lightly values the things of the present world—because of his love and devotion to his Master's service. Such a one is sure to have eternal glory for his reward in the world to come.

"I show you this picture first, because the man whom it portrays is one who the Lord of the Celestial City provides to be your guide in the difficult situations that you may encounter along the way. Therefore pay attention to what I have shown you, lest, in your journey, you meet with some who *pretend* to lead you along the right path—while in reality their way leads to death!"

Then Interpreter took him by the hand, and led him into a very large *parlor* which was full of dust, because it was never swept. After Christian had contemplated this scene for a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep the room. When he began to sweep, the dust began to so thickly swirl around the room—that Christian began to be choked by it!

Then Interpreter said to a maiden who stood nearby, "Bring some water, and sprinkle the room!" After she had done this—the parlor was then swept and cleansed with ease.

"What does this mean?" Christian inquired.

Interpreter explained, "This parlor is the heart of a man which has never been sanctified by the sweet grace of the Gospel. The *dust* is his original sin and inward corruptions, which have defiled the whole man. He who began to sweep at first, is the *Law*. The maiden who brought and sprinkled the water, is the *Gospel*.

"You saw that as soon as the man began to sweep, that the dust thickly swirled around the room, and became even more difficult to cleanse, nearly choking you to death. This is to show you that the Law, instead of cleansing the heart from sin—does in fact *arouse* sin, giving greater strength to it—and causing it to flourish in the soul. The Law both *manifests* and *forbids* sin—but it has no power to *subdue* sin.

"Again, you saw the maiden sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with ease. This is to show you, that when the Gospel comes in the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart—then, I say, even as you saw the maiden subdue the dust by sprinkling the floor with water—just so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through faith, and consequently fit for the King of glory to inhabit."

I saw, moreover, in my dream, that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a little room, where two little children sat—each one in his own chair. The name of the older one was *Passion*—and the name of the younger one was *Patience*. Passion seemed to be much discontented—but Patience was very quiet.

Then Christian asked, "What is the reason for Passion's discontent?"

The Interpreter answered, "The guardian would have them wait for their best things until the next year—but Passion wants everything now; while Patience is willing to wait."

Then I saw that someone came to Passion, and brought him a *bag of treasure*, and poured it down at his feet—which he grabbed up and rejoiced in; and in doing so, he laughed Patience to scorn. But I saw that in a short while, that Passion had squandered everything away, and had nothing left to him, but rags.

Then Christian said to the Interpreter, "Expound this matter more fully to me."

Interpreter replied, "These two lads are symbolic: Passion is a symbol of the people of this world; and Patience is a symbol of the people of the world which is to come. As you see here, Passion will have everything now—that is to say, in this life. Just so are the people of this world—they must have all their good things *now*, they cannot wait until next year—that is, until the next world—for their portion of good.

"That proverb, '*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*,' is of more authority with them—than are all the Scripture testimonies of the value of the world to come. But as you saw that Passion had quickly lavished everything away, and had nothing left but rags—so will it be with all such people at the end of this world."

Then Christian declared, "Now I see that Patience showed the best wisdom—and that upon many accounts. First, because he waits for the best things; and second, because he will have the enjoyment of his good things, when Passion has nothing but rags!"

Interpreter replied, "True, and you may add another reason—namely, the glory of the next world will never end; but these earthly enjoyments will be suddenly gone. Therefore Passion had no reason to laugh at Patience— just because he had his good things first; as Patience will have to laugh at Passion—because he will have his best things last! He, therefore, who has his portion first—only has this present life to spend it; but he who has his portion last—will have it everlastingly. Therefore it is said of the rich man: You in your lifetime have received your good things, just as Lazarus has received bad things; but now he is comforted, and you are in agony!"

Christian stated, "Then I perceive that it is not best to covet present earthly things—but rather to wait for things to come."

Interpreter responded, "You say the truth—for the things which are *seen* are temporal; but the things which are *unseen* are eternal!" This is so, because present things and our fleshly appetites—are such *near neighbors* to one another; and also because worldly thinking and things to come—are such *strangers* to one another."

Then I saw in my dream, that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where a *fire* was burning against a wall. Someone was standing by the fire, continually throwing great amounts of water upon it, attempting to quench it; yet the fire burned higher and hotter.

Then Christian asked, "What does this mean?"

The Interpreter answered, "This *fire* is the *work of grace* which is operating in the heart. The one who casts water upon it, desiring to extinguish and put it out—is the Devil. Now I will show you the reason why the fire burns higher and hotter—in spite of all the Devil's efforts."

So the Interpreter took Christian around to the back side of the wall, where he saw a man with a jar of oil in His hand—which He continually but secretly, cast onto the fire.

Then Christian questioned, "What does this mean?"

The Interpreter answered, "This is *Christ*, who continually, with the *oil of His grace*, maintains the work already begun in the heart. By this means, notwithstanding all that the devil can do—the souls of His people are graciously preserved. And in that you saw that the man stood *behind* the wall to maintain the fire—that is to teach you that it is hard for the tempted believer to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul."

I saw also, that the Interpreter took Christian again by the hand, and led him into a pleasant place, where a stately palace was built, which was beautiful to behold. At the sight of which, Christian was greatly delighted. He saw upon the top of the palace, that certain people were walking, who were clothed all in gold.

Then Christian inquired, "May we go in there?"

Then the Interpreter took him, and led him towards the door of the palace. And behold, at the door stood a great company of men—just as desirous to go in—but dared not. A short distance from the door, sat a man with a book and a pen at a table—to write down the name of any who would enter therein. Christian also saw that in the doorway, many men in armor stood to guard the palace from intruders.

Christian was somewhat bewildered at this. At last, when every man stood back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man who looked very determined, come up to the man at the desk, saying, "Write down my name, Sir!"

When the man at the desk had finished writing, Christian saw the man draw his sword, put a helmet on his head, and rush toward the door to the armed men, who battled him with deadly force. But the man, not at all discouraged, started cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those who attempted to keep him out—he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace.

Then there was a pleasant voice heard from those who were within the palace, saying, "Come in, come in! Eternal glory you shall win!"

So he went in, where he was clothed with the same *garments* as those inside. Then Christian smiled and said, "I think I truly know the meaning of this."

"Now," Christian said, "let me continue on my journey."

"Not just yet," said the Interpreter, "until I have showed you a little more—and after that you may go on your way."

So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where a *man in an iron cage* sat. Now this man seemed very sad—he sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, his hands folded together, and he sighed as if his heart were breaking.

Christian asked, "What does this mean?"

The Interpreter then told Christian to inquire of the man himself. So

Christian asked the man, "What are you?"

The man answered, "I am now, what I once was not."

Christian responded, "What were you once?"

The man said, "I was once a fair and flourishing professor—both in my own eyes, and also in the eyes of others! I once was, as I thought, headed for the Celestial City; and had joy at the thought that I would get there."

Christian further questioned, "Well—what are you now?"

The man responded, "I am now a man of *despair*, and am locked up in despair—as in this iron cage. I cannot get out. O, I cannot escape!"

Christian then inquired, "But how did you get into this miserable condition?"

The man in the iron cage replied, "I stopped watching and being serious. I let my worldly lusts reign. I sinned against the light of God's Word, and His goodness. I tempted the devil—and he has come to me! I have provoked God to anger—and He has left me! I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent!"

Then Christian asked the Interpreter, "Is there no hope for such a man as this?"

Then the Interpreter said to the man in the iron cage, "Is there no hope—must you always be kept in this iron cage of despair?"

The man replied, "No, there is no hope at all."

Interpreter responded, "Why should you have no hope? Jesus is full of mercy."

The man in the iron cage answered, "I have crucified Him afresh; I have scorned His person; I have despised His righteousness; I have counted His blood as an unholy thing; I have insulted and disdained the Spirit of grace. Therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains nothing for me but threatenings—dreadful threatenings, fearful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as God's adversary!"

Interpreter then asked, "For what did you bring yourself into this dreadful condition?"

The man responded, "For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world—in the enjoyment of which, I promised myself much delight. But now, every one of those things bite me, and gnaw me like a burning worm!"

Interpreter then questioned, "But can't you now repent and turn back to God?"

The man answered, "God has denied repentance to me. His Word gives me no encouragement to believe. Yes, He Himself has shut me up in this iron cage! Not all the men in the world can free me. O eternity! eternity! How shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity!"

Then the Interpreter said to Christian, "Let this man's misery be remembered by you—and be an everlasting warning to you!"

"Well," Christian said, "this is most fearful! May God help me to always watch and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man's misery! Sir, is it now time for me to go on my way?"

Interpreter replied, "Wait until I show you one last thing—and then you shall go on your way."

So he took Christian by the hand again, and led him into a room, where there was a *man rising out of bed*; and as he put on his clothing, he shook and trembled.

Then Christian asked, "Why does this man thus tremble?"

The Interpreter then bid the man to tell Christian the reason of his trembling.

So the trembling man began, "This night, as I slept, I dreamed—and behold, the heavens grew exceedingly black; also it thundered and lightnined in a most frightening way—so that it put me into a fearful agony!

"So I looked up in my dream, and saw the clouds driven violently by the wind—upon which I heard a loud blast of a trumpet, and also saw a *Man* sitting upon a cloud, attended with thousands of angelic beings—all in flaming fire! Also the heavens were in a burning flame! I then heard a

voice command, 'Arise you who are dead—and come to your judgment!' And with that, the rocks shattered, the graves opened—and the dead came forth! Some of them were exceedingly glad, and looked upward—while others sought to hide themselves under the mountains!

"Then I saw that the Man who sat upon the cloud opened the book, and commanded all people to draw near. Yet there was, by reason of a fierce flame which issued out and came from before Him—a great distance between Him and them, as between the judge and the prisoners at the bar. Then the Man who sat on the cloud commanded the angelic beings, 'Gather the tares, the chaff, and stubble together—and cast them into the burning lake of fire!' And with that, the bottomless pit opened, just where I stood! Out of the mouth of the pit spewed forth great billows of smoke and coals of fire, along with hideous noises!

"The angelic beings were then commanded, 'Gather My *wheat* into the barn!' And with that, I saw many caught up and carried away into the clouds—but *I was left behind!* I then sought to hide myself—but I could

not, for the Man who sat upon the cloud fixed His eye upon me! My sins then came to mind—and my conscience accused me on every side! At this, I awakened from my sleep."

Christian then asked, "What was it which made you so afraid of this sight?"

The trembling man replied, "Why, I thought that the day of judgment had come—and that I was not ready for it! But what frightened me the most, was that the angels gathered up several people near me—and left me behind! Then the pit of Hell opened its mouth just where I stood! My conscience, too, afflicted me! And, as I stood there—the Judge continually kept His eye upon me, with a look of angry disapproval on His face."

Then the Interpreter said to Christian, "Have you considered all these things?"

"Yes," replied Christian, "and they cause me to both hope and fear!"

"Then," stated the Interpreter, "keep all of these things in your mind—so that they may spur you forward in the way you must go."

So Christian began to prepare himself to continue on his journey.

Then the Interpreter declared, "May the Comforter always be with you, good Christian—to guide you in the way that leads to the Celestial City!"

So Christian went on his way, saying "I have seen rare and profitable things here! Pleasant things—and dreadful things. May I think on them, and remember the lessons they taught me. I am thankful, O good Interpreter, to you."

5. Discussions

In the House of the Interpreter, Christian is shown several stories and illustrations that impart valuable spiritual lessons. These stories and illustrations in the House of the Interpreter emphasize the importance of faith, perseverance, patience, humility, and the need to guard against spiritual dangers and backsliding. What can we learn from the following stories/illustrations?

- 1. The Picture of the Serious Man.** Sis. Biodun Eseka
- 2. The Swept Room.** Sis. Yomi Sowunmi
- 3. Passion and Patience.** Sis. Dewunmi Afolabi-Ajani
- 4. The Fire and the Man with the Oil.** Bro Seun Oyedele
- 5. The Stately Palace.** Sis. Esther Omosogbe
- 6. The Man in the Iron Gate.** Dr. Gboyega Ogunwale
- 7. The Vision of Judgement.** Dr. Gboyega Ogunwale

Closing Hymn: I Need Thee Every Hour

1 I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford.

Refrain:

I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;
Ev'ry hour I need Thee;
Oh, bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.

2 I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Stay Thou nearby;
Temptations lose their pow'r
When Thou art nigh. [Refrain]

3 I need Thee ev'ry hour,
In joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide,
Or life is vain. [Refrain]

4 I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Teach me Thy will;
And Thy rich promises
In me fulfill. [Refrain]

5 I need Thee every hour,
Most Holy One;
Oh, make me Thine indeed,
Thou blessed Son.

Next Class (Sunday, July 23, 2023)

The Cross

Closing Prayer: Bro. Olaoluwa Oguntokun

