

Pilgrim's Progress II – 52 – How Christiana Decided to Become a Pilgrim

"This CHRISTIANA (for that was her name from the day that she, with her children, betook themselves to a pilgrim's life), after her husband was gone over the river, and she could hear of him no more, her thoughts began to work in her mind: first, for that she had lost her husband, and for that the loving bond of that relation was utterly broken betwixt them; for you know," said he to me, "nature can do no less but entertain the living with many a heavy cogitation in the remembrance of the loss of loving relations. This, therefore, of her husband did cost her many a tear. But this was not all; for CHRISTIANA did also begin to consider with herself, whether her unbecoming behaviour towards her husband was not one cause that she saw him no more, and that in such sort he was taken away from her. And upon this came into her mind by swarms all her unkind, unnatural, and ungodly carriages to her dear friend, which also clogged her conscience, and did load her with guilt. She was, moreover, much broken with calling to remembrance the restless groans, brinish tears, and self-bemoanings of her husband; and how she did harden her heart against all his entreaties and loving persuasions (of her and her sons) to go with him; yea, there was not anything that CHRISTIAN either said to her, or did before her, all the while that his burden did hang on his back, but it returned upon her like a flash of lightning, and rent the caul of her heart in two. Specially, that bitter outcry of his, 'What must I do to be saved?' did ring in her ears most dolefully.

"Then said she to her children, 'Sons, we are all undone. I have sinned away your father, and he is gone; he would have had us with him, but I would not go myself; I also have hindered you of life.' With that the boys fell all into tears, and cried out to go after their father. 'Oh,' said CHRISTIANA, 'that it had been but our lot to go with him; then had it fared well with us beyond what 'tis like to do now! For though I formerly foolishly imagined concerning the troubles of your father, that they proceeded of a foolish fancy that he had, or for that he was overrun with melancholy humours; yet now 't will not out of my mind, but that they sprang from another cause, to wit, for that the light of light was given him; by the help of which, as I perceive, he has escaped the snares of death' (#Jas 1:23-25). Then they all wept again; and cried out, 'Oh, woe worth the day!'

"The next night CHRISTIANA had a dream; and behold, she saw as if a broad parchment was opened before her, in which were recorded the sum of her ways; and the times, as she thought, looked very black upon her. Then she cried out aloud in her sleep, 'Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner!' (#Lu 18:13); and the little children heard her.

"After this she thought she saw two very ill favoured ones standing by her bedside, and saying, 'What shall we do with this woman; for she cries out for mercy waking and sleeping? If she be suffered to go on as she begins, we shall lose her as we have lost her husband. Wherefore we must, by one way or other, seek to take her off from the thoughts of what shall be hereafter; else all the world cannot help it but she will become a pilgrim.'

"Now she awoke in a great sweat, also a trembling was upon her; but after awhile she fell to sleeping again. And then she thought she saw CHRISTIAN her husband in a place of bliss, among many immortals, with a harp in his hand, standing and playing upon it before One that sat on a throne, with a rainbow about his head. She saw also as if he bowed his head with his face to the paved work that was under the Prince's feet, saying, 'I heartily thank my Lord and King for bringing of me into this place.' Then shouted a company of them that stood around about, and harped with their harps; but no man living could tell what they said but CHRISTIAN and his companions.

"Next morning, when she was up, and had prayed to God, and talked with her children awhile, one knocked hard at the door; to whom she spake out saying, 'If thou comest in God's name, come in.' So he said, 'Amen,' and opened the door, and saluted her with, 'Peace be to this house!' The which when he had done, he said, 'CHRISTIANA, knowest thou wherefore I am come?' Then she blushed and trembled; also her heart began to wax warm with desires to know whence he came, and what was his errand to her. So he said unto her, 'My name is SECRET: I dwell with those that are high. It is talked of where I dwell as if thou hadst a desire to go thither; also there is a report that thou art aware of the evil thou hast formerly done to thy husband in hardening of thy heart against his way, and in keeping of these thy babes in their ignorance. CHRISTIANA, the merciful One has sent me to tell thee that he is a God ready to forgive; and that he takes delight to multiply pardon to offences. He also would have thee know that he inviteth thee to come into his presence; to his table; and that he will feed thee with the fat of his house, and with the heritage of Jacob thy father.

"There is CHRISTIAN, thy husband that was, with legions more, his companions, ever beholding that face that doth minister life to beholders; and they will all be glad when they shall hear the sound of thy feet step over thy Father's threshold.'

"CHRISTIANA at this was greatly abashed in herself; and bowed her head to the ground, this visitor proceeded, and said, 'CHRISTIANA, here is also a letter for thee, which I have brought from thy husband's King.' So she took it and opened it; but it smelt after the manner of the best perfume (#So 1:3), also it was written in letters of gold. The contents of the letter was, 'That the King would have her do as did CHRISTIAN her husband; for that was the way to come to his City, and to dwell in his presence with joy for ever.' At this the good woman was quite overcome. So she cried out to her visitor. 'Sir, will you carry me and my children with you, that we also may go and worship this King?'

"Then said the visitor, 'CHRISTIANA! the bitter is before the sweet. Thou must through troubles, as did he that went before thee, enter this Celestial City. Wherefore I advise thee to do as did CHRISTIAN thy husband: go to the wicket gate yonder, over the plain, for that stands in the head of the way up which thou must go; and I wish thee all good speed. Also I advise that thou put this letter in thy bosom. That thou read therein to thyself and to thy children, until you have got it by heart. For it is one of the songs that thou must sing while thou art in this house of thy pilgrimage (#Ps 119:54). Also this thou must deliver in at the further gate.'"

Now I saw in my dream, that this old gentleman, as he told me this story, did himself seem to be greatly affected therewith. He moreover, proceeded and said, "So CHRISTIANA called her sons together, and began thus to address herself unto them, 'My sons, I have, as you may perceive, been of late under much exercise in my soul about the death of your father; not for that I doubt at all of his happiness for I am satisfied now that he is well. I have also been much affected with the thoughts of mine own state and yours, which I verily believe is by nature miserable. My carriages also to your father in his distress is a great load to my conscience; for I hardened both my own heart and yours against him, and refused to go with him on pilgrimage.

"The thoughts of these things would now kill me outright, but that for a dream which I had last night, and but that for the encouragement that this stranger has given me this morning. Come, my children, let us pack up, and be gone to the gate that leads to the celestial country; that we may see your father, and be with him and his companions in peace, according to the laws of that land.'

"Then did her children burst out into tears for joy that the heart of their mother was so inclined. So their visitor bade them farewell: and they began to prepare to set out for their journey.

Jas 1:23-25 Lu 18:13 So 1:3 Ps 119:54

“²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (Jas 1:23-25 NKJV)

““And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” (Lu 18:13 NKJV)

“Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name *is* ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.” (So 1:3 NKJV)

“Your statutes have been my songs In the house of my pilgrimage.” (Ps 119:54 NKJV)