

The Pilgrim's Progress

November 10, 2019

Chapter 36 The Pilgrims Enter the Celestial City

Introduction

John Piper describing John Bunyan:

“Everything he wrote was saturated with the Bible. He pored over his English Bible, which was all he had most of the time. Which is why he can say of his writings, “I have not for these things fished in other men’s waters; my Bible and Concordance are my only library in my writings.”

The great London preacher Charles Spurgeon, who read *The Pilgrim’s Progress* every year, put it like this:

Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his soul is full of the Word of God.

Death

- **Ecclesiastes 9:1-12**

“¹But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. ²It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. ³This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. ⁴But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward for the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. ⁷Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil under the sun. ¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. ¹¹Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.”

John Calvin - Death

Innumerable are the evils that beset human life; innumerable, too, the deaths that threaten it. We need not go beyond ourselves: since our body is the receptacle of a thousand diseases – in fact holds within itself and fosters the causes of diseases – a man cannot go about unburdened by many forms of his own destruction, and without drawing out a life enveloped, as it were, with death. For what else would you call it, when he neither freezes nor sweats without danger? Now, wherever you turn, all things around you not only are hardly to be trusted but almost openly menace, and seem to threaten immediate death. Embark upon a ship, you are one step away from death. Mount a horse, if one foot slips, your life is imperilled. Go through the city streets, you are subject to as many dangers as there are tiles on the roofs. If there is a weapon in your hand or a friend's, harm awaits. All the fierce animals you see are armed for your destruction. But if you try to shut yourself up in a walled garden, seemingly delightful, there a serpent sometimes lies hidden. Your house, continually in danger of fire, threatens in the daytime to impoverish you, at night even to collapse upon you. Your field, since it is exposed to hail, frost, drought, and other calamities, threatens you with barrenness, and hence, famine. I pass over poisonings, ambushes, robberies, open violence, which in part besiege us at home, in part dog us abroad. Amid these tribulations must not man be most miserable, since, but half alive in life, he weakly draws his anxious and languid breath, as if he had a sword perpetually hanging over his neck? *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I. xvii. 10.

Summary of Chapter 36

Saying Good-Bye to Life on Earth

“The chapter begins with a messenger’s arrival with a letter summoning Christiana to meet her Master [God] within ten days. This produces a round of activities appropriate to a departure from this life—preparations for the journey across the river of death, pronouncement of blessing on the children, good-byes and final exchanges between Christiana and her fellow pilgrims. All of the pilgrims accompany Christiana to the river. No account is given of her actually crossing the river; instead the focus shifts to the responses of those who remain. The concluding phase of the story is a mini-anthology of leave takings, as the remaining pilgrims of part 2 make their preparations for death in imitation of what Christiana has done. The main action consists of last words spoken by the departing to those who remain. In turn, two subjects make up the bulk of these farewell statements—a backward glance at the person’s life and future-looking statements about entering Heaven.” Dr. Leland Ryken – Professor of English emeritus at Wheaton College

Chapter 36 – Arrival in the Land of Beulah

“Their great joy was that other pilgrims were arriving where they were, and that some were crossing the river every day. The saints who have reached Beulah Land ought to be rejoicing as they hear of pilgrims crossing the river. If we have full faith, we shall think with great joy of the dear ones who have gone in to see the King in His beauty; and, instead of saying mournfully, ‘They are dead,’ we shall exclaim triumphantly, ‘They are now beyond the reach of death!’ Instead of supposing that we have lost them, we shall realise that they have only preceded us a little while; we are on the road, and shall soon reach home, and blessed shall be the day when we rejoin them in glory.” Charles Spurgeon – Pictures from Pilgrim’s Progress

“It was only when they tasted water from the River though which they were to pass, that they thought it tasted somewhat bitter; but even that proved sweeter once it was down.” Bunyan

“Death is bitter to the flesh but sweet to the soul.” Note by Cheryl Ford

A Messenger Visits Christiana

Order of Christiana's farewells:

Great-heart – her guide; Spurgeon calls him her minister; he is happy with the news and tells her what to do and what to expect

Children – she blesses them and expresses her gladness to see them walking in the LORD

Valiant-for-truth – she asks him to keep an eye on her children

Stand-fast and Mr. Honest – She gave Stand-fast a ring and quoted

John 1:47 – “⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, ‘Behold, and Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.’” To Mr. Honest

Ready-to-halt – she encourages him, who has had a difficult journey to watch and be ready

Matthew 24:44 – “⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Despondency and Much-afraid – she reminds them to be thankful for their deliverance from Doubting Castle and from the hands of Giant Despair

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 - “⁵So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

Hebrews 3:6 – “⁶but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.”

Feeble-mind – she encourages him to repent of his tendency to be afraid and doubt God's goodness

Christiana's Departure

- Final words – “Lord, I am coming to be with You and to bless You!”

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

“¹Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’; ²before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, ³in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, ⁴and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and the one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—⁵they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—⁶before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, ⁷and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ⁸Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.”

Matthew Henry – Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

We should remember our sins against our Creator, repent, and seek forgiveness. We should remember our duties, and set about them, looking to him for grace and strength. This should be done early, while the body is strong, and the spirits active. When a man has the pain of reviewing a misspent life, his not having given up sin and worldly vanities till he is forced to say, I have no pleasure in them, renders his sincerity very questionable. Then follows a figurative description of old age and its infirmities, which has some difficulties; but the meaning is plain, to show how uncomfortable, generally, the days of old age are. As the four verses, 2-5, are a figurative description of the infirmities that usually accompany old age, ver. 6 notices the circumstances which take place in the hour of death. If sin had not entered into the world, these infirmities would not have been known. Surely then the aged should reflect on the evil of sin.

Geneva Study Bible - Ecclesiastes 12:6

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Or ever the {o} silver cord shall be loosed, or the golden {p} bowl be broken, or the {q} pitcher be broken at the {r} fountain, or the {s} wheel broken at the {t} cistern.

(o) Meaning, the marrow of the backbone and the sinews.

(p) The little skin that covers the brain, which is in colour like gold.

(q) That is, the veins.

(r) Meaning the liver.

(s) Which is the head.

(t) That is, the heart out of which the head draws the powers of life.

Ready-to-halt's Departure

Chapter. 30. Arrived at Gaius's house on crutches. Becomes companion of Feeble Mind. Remember last week in our discussion we discussed the care the party of Pilgrim's gave Feeble Mind.

"I have severed your silver cord and broken your golden bowl." – Ecclesiastes 12:6

Final words – "Welcome life!"

Feeble Mind's Departure

Chapter 29. Was in Giant Slay-good's clutch; grabbed from the way and taken to Slay-good's cave being attacked. Saved by Great-heart killing Slay-good. Sickly man; death knocked at door once a day so decided to take on pilgrim's life; from town of Uncertain; man of no strength at all of body or mind (self description); received at Gate by the Master who did not object to my weak appearance of feeble mind.

"Those looking through the windows grow dim." – Ecclesiastes 12:3

"The grasshopper drags himself along." – Ecclesiastes 12:5

Final words – "Hold out, faith and patience!"

Despondency and Much-afraid's Departure

Chapter 32. Father and daughter. In Doubting Castle. Freed after death of Giant Despair. Described as honest people.

Last words of Despondency – “Farewell, night! Welcome, day!”

Much-afraid went through the River singing, but no one could understand the words of her song

Mr. Honest's Departure

Chapter 27. Old. From town of Stupidity. He saw some who started on the pilgrimage and faded and some who persevered. Some believed they would have time to repent when it was time to die.

“And all the daughters of music are brought low.” – Ecclesiastes 12:4

Last words – “Grace reigns!”

Valiant-for-truth's Departure

Chapter 34. Met at place where Little-faith had been robbed; sword drawn and bloody face; had been confronted by three men; options – (1) join them (2) turn back (3) die on the spot; told them he was man of integrity a long time; by Great-heart – in your struggle against sin, you have resisted to the point of shedding your blood; from Dark-land; Mr. Tell-true had told him about Christian; parents had tried to discourage him

“Your pitcher is shattered at the spring.” – Ecclesiastes 12:6

Galatians 6:17 – “¹⁷From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 15:55 – “⁵⁵O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

Last words – “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

Stand-fast's Departure

Chapter 35. Met on Enchanted Ground; on his knees with his hands and his eyes lifted toward Heaven;
Mr. Honest knew him; was praying from concern of dangerous road, falling asleep; poor; approached by
Madame deception; quote page 378 of her deceptions

“The wheel is broken at the well.” – Ecclesiastes 12:6

Stand-fast's Final Word's

This River has been a terror to many; yes, the thought of it has often frightened me, too. But now I see that I am standing easily; I am standing on the same thing that priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood on while Israel went over this Jordan. The waters are indeed bitter to the palate and cold to the stomach. Yet, the thought of what I am doing, and the glorious escort that awaits me on the other side, warms my heart like a glowing coal. I now see myself at my journey's end; my days of toil are over. I am going now to see that Head that was crowned with thorns and that Face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearing and by faith, but now I am going to where I will live by sight and will be with Him in whose company I delight. I have always loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe on the earth, I have desired to set my foot, too. His Name has been to me as a priceless treasure—sweeter than all perfumes. His voice has been music to my ears, and I have more earnestly desired to see His face than those who would most desire to see the light of the sun. I have gathered His Word which became my food, and used it as a remedy against fainting along the way. He has held my course steady, and I have forsaken all my sins. Yes, He has strengthened my steps in His way." Now while he was talking to them, his countenance changed, and after saying, "Take me, for I come to You!" he was gone, and he ceased to be seen by them.

The Joy That Awaits Us

Westminster Confession of Faith

Chapter 32 – Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead

1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.
2. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.
3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor: the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honor; and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

Conclusion

From the Piper Article

“And this is what he has to show us. To serve and suffer rooted in God is to serve and suffer saturated with the word of God. This is how we shall live. This is how we shall suffer. And if we are called to be leaders among the people of God, this is how we shall help our people get safely to the Celestial City.

We will woo them with the word. We will say to them what Bunyan said to his people — and I say to you, dear reader:

God hath strewed all the way from the gate of hell, where thou wast, to the gate of heaven, whither thou art going, with flowers out of his own garden. Behold how the promises, invitations, calls, and encouragements, like lilies, lie round about thee! Take heed that thou dost not tread them under thy foot.”

Conclusion

- **“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
Philippians 1:21**
- **“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Rev 22:20**