

A DREAMER AND HIS WONDERFUL DREAM

The Story of John Bunyan and The Pilgrim's Progress

by

Alfred P. Gibbs

Author of: "*The Marvelous City of Mansoul*," "*The Gospel Choruses for Young and Old*," "*Worship: The Christian's Highest Occupation*," "*The Preacher and His Preaching*" etc.

Copyright © 1935 by Gospel Folio Press

Chapter 7

GRACELESS BECOMES CHRISTIAN AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

THE TREMBLING MAN

Graceless was now beginning to realize more the fearful responsibility that rests upon the hearer of the Gospel: and what an awful fate awaits the one who dies in his sins after rejecting the offered mercy of GOD. The Man of Despair had impressed this fact indelibly on his heart, and he was now anxious to get rid of his burden.

The Interpreter, however, had yet another scene for him to witness.

He now conducted him into a room where he saw a man rising from a bed. His face was pale, and he was trembling in every limb. Graceless inquired, "Why does this man tremble?" The Interpreter then asked the man to explain to Graceless the cause of his terror, and the man replied, "This night as I was in my bed asleep, I dreamed, and behold the heavens grew exceeding black, and it thundered and lightened in a fearful way; so that I was in an agony. I perceived that the clouds moved at an unusual rate upon which I heard a great sound of a trumpet, and saw the Son of Man riding upon a cloud, attended with the thousands of Heaven, who were all in flaming fire, as also were the whole heavens.

"Then I heard a voice crying, 'Arise ye dead and come to judgment!'"

At this, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the dead came forth, and were brought before a great white throne upon which the Son of Man was now seated.

A great flame separated the JUDGE from those who now stood before Him. Then I heard a voice proclaim, '**Gather together the tares, the chaff, and the stubble and cast them into the burning lake,**' With this, the bottomless pit opened at my feet, out of which came smoke and coals of fire and hideous noises. Then came another voice which said, '**Gather the wheat into my garner,**' and with this, many were caught up and carried away into the clouds, but I was left for judgment. I tried to hide myself, but could not, for the Judge's eyes of flaming fire were ever upon me. My sins came up before me, and my conscience accused me on every side. Upon this I awakened out of my sleep, and behold it was a dream!"

"But what was it that made you so afraid of the sight?" inquired Graceless. The man replied, "Because I thought the day of judgment had come, and that I was not ready for it. The thing that frightened me most, however, was the fact that the angels gathered up several and left me behind; and also that the pit of hell opened her mouth just where I stood, and I thought the JUDGE had always His eyes upon me with indignation in His countenance."

Then the Interpreter turned to Graceless and said, "Hast thou considered all these things?"

Graceless replied, "Yes, and they put me in hope and fear."

"See then," continued the Interpreter, "that you keep these things in your mind, that they will be a spur to you to keep you going forward in the way you should go."

THE HORROR OF DYING WITHOUT CHRIST

We may well linger a little longer and learn from this man's dream the fearful result of dying without trusting the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

There is a time coming when the Son of GOD, now despised and rejected, will come in power and great glory, attended by all His saints and the host of Heaven, to execute judgment upon all who have neglected, rejected or despised Him. Listen to the words of Scripture, "**The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power**" (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). This man's dream will be an awful reality to every CHRIST rejecter at the coming of the Lord. All who have refused to receive Him as their Saviour, shall, in that day, face Him as their JUDGE, and hear from His lips the dread sentence of eternal banishment: "**Begone from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels**" (Matthew 25:41).

Are you, my reader, ready for the coming of the Lord JESUS? Are you saved? Have you been born again? If not, then you are unprepared; and there remains only a "certain fearful looking for of judgment!" How different it shall be with those who have been saved by His grace through receiving Him as their Saviour! They can look forward with glad anticipation to His coming, for He will receive them unto Himself, and conduct them to that glorious place that He is even now preparing for all who love Him. The believer will never have to stand before the great white throne to be judged for his sins, because all his sins have been borne and judged in another - his divine SUBSTITUTE, SIN-BEARER and SAVIOUR. Flee then to those loving arms that were outstretched for your sins on Calvary's Cross. Come to Him, as you are and where you are, and grasp the glorious fact that

"All thy sins were laid on JESUS,
JESUS bore them on the tree;
GOD Who knew them laid them on Him,
And believing thou art free!"

Listen to the words of the Saviour Himself. "**He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24).

GRACELESS CONTINUES ON HIS WAY

After Graceless had thus been shown the wonderful sights of the Interpreter's house, he began to be very anxious to get rid of the burden he was bearing. What he had seen convinced him that the greatest and most important thing in life was to be right with GOD. Has the reader come to this same conclusion?

If so, the "*Pilgrim's Progress*" will not have been written in vain. Graceless, after thanking the Interpreter for all his kind and good counsel, went on his way saying:

"Here I have seen things rare and profitable,
Things pleasant, dreadful, things to make me stable.
In what I have begun to take in hand;
Then let me think on them and understand
Wherefore they showed me was, and let me be
Thankful, O good Interpreter, to thee."

As Graceless proceeded he perceived that on each side of the road was a wall called the Salvation. Soon he perceived ahead of him a little hill on which was a cross with an open grave at the foot. This naturally brought to his mind very forcibly that wonderful scene described in the Scriptures, when the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the eternal Son of the eternal GOD, laid down His life as a sacrifice for the sin of the whole world. He recalled the holy sinless life that the Saviour had lived, which had so completely satisfied and pleased the Father. He remembered the purpose for which the Lord JESUS came to this sinful world, "**For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many**" (Mark 10:45).

He brought to mind all the despising and rejection of men that He had endured. He thought of Pilate's question, "**What then shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ?**" And the terrible answer of the very people He had come to save, "**Let him be crucified!**" He recalled the sad procession to Calvary with the weary, thorn-crowned Saviour bearing His cross, until they came to the place where they nailed Him to it, and between two thieves had crucified Him, heaping taunts, ignominy, and shame upon Him as they did so. Despised and rejected by men, forsaken of His GOD, with the awful burden of the sin of the world upon Him, the Saviour had bowed His head and died. The remembrance of these things moved Graceless greatly.

HE COMES TO THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Presently he came right to the foot of the Cross.

By the eye of faith, guided by GOD's Word, he saw the Lord JESUS on that Cross.

As he looked he realized the glorious truth of that Scripture which says, "**He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Graceless now realized that the Lord JESUS, on the Cross of Calvary, had known all about his sinful state, and in wondrous love and grace had borne all his sins in His Own body on the tree. He had taken his place and had died for him, and therefore all the work necessary for his salvation had all been accomplished to GOD's complete

satisfaction. Graceless from the depths of his heart now accepted the Lord JESUS CHRIST as his personal Saviour. Immediately the burden of his sin and built rolled off his shoulders, and fell into the open grave at the foot of the hill, and he saw it no more for ever.

His eyes now became a fountain of tears. Tears of sorrow, as he thought of the holy SON of GOD made sin for him, and of all the cruel suffering and shame He had endured, so that one so vile as he might be cleansed through His precious blood. Tears of joy, because he realized that the Lord JESUS had hung there as his SUBSTITUTE, his SINBEARER, his REDEEMER and his Saviour; and that the shedding of His precious blood had purchased his salvation from sins' awful penalty.

He could now say like Paul, "**The son of God loved me, and gave himself for me!**" (Galatians 2:20). This filled him with joy and peace through believing, so that he exclaimed, "He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death!"

Has the experience of Graceless been yours, my reader?

Have you realized your need of the Saviour yet? Are you conscious of your lost condition as a guilty sinner before GOD?

If so, then do as Graceless did. Come in all you sin and need to the One Who said, "**Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**" (Matthew 11:28).

Believe that on the Cross of Calvary the Lord JESUS CHRIST bore away your sins, and died in your place. Rest in His finished work on your behalf, and accept Him in your heart as your own personal Saviour. You, too, shall know the joy of sins forgiven, of peace with GOD, and of the assurance from GOD's own word that you are eternally saved.

You will have noticed that it was not Graceless' prayers, tears of repentance, good resolutions, or religious rites and ceremonies that caused him to lose his burden. It was a simple childlike belief in the truth of the gospel, and an acceptance of CHRIST as his own Saviour. Will you not, even as you read this, say from your heart,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me;
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of GOD, I come."

JESUS said, "**Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**" Trust Him then, just as you are, and where you are; and together with Graceless and many thousands more, you will prove the reality of His saving grace and keeping power all along life's highway 'till the Celestial City is reached, for

"CHRIST the Lord is risen! Victory is won!
All the work that saves the sinner has been done!
Now through faith in Him, GOD offers full and free
Pardon, peace and joy and glorious liberty!"

THE THREE SHINING ONES

As the pilgrim thus stood thanking and praising the Lord JESUS for all He had done for him, three shining ones appeared to him.

The first said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee!" This is the first blessing the sinner receives when he trusts in the Lord JESUS. All his sins are forgiven. The black sins of the past are forever blotted out; and peace, perfect peace, is given for the present, and glory is assured for the future. GOD puts the sins of the believer out of reach for He says, "**As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us**" (Psalm 103:12).

GOD also puts them out of sight, for we read, "**Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea**" (Micah 7:19). GOD puts them out of mind for He declared, "**I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more**" (Jeremiah 31:34). Can it be said truthfully of you, my reader, "**I write unto you . . . because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake**"? (I John 2:12).

If not, make sure of this wondrous blessing by heeding and obeying the Gospel call which says, "**Be it known unto you . . . That through this Man [The Lord JESUS] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things**" (Acts 13:39).

The next shining one stripped him of the filthy rags of his own righteousnesses, and clothed him in a garment of spotless purity, even with the righteousness of GOD. What a beautiful illustration this is of the act of GOD whereby He imputes, or puts to the account of the believer, that perfect righteousness secured by the finished work of His Son.

This righteousness is like a robe that completely covers the Christian, and makes him fit for the presence of GOD and gives him a perfect standing before Him. Just as the prodigal son on his return had the best robe put on him, so GOD puts the beautiful robe of righteousness on every soul that receives CHRIST.

This righteousness is CHRIST, so that the believer is said to be "**in Christ.**"

As GOD sees the believer "**in Christ,**" He can see no fault nor spot in him, for we read, "**As he [CHRIST] is, so are we in this world**" (I John 4:17); and, again, "**God hath made him [CHRIST] to be sin for us . . . That we might be made the righteousness of God in him**" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Are you, my reader, still trusting in our own righteousness that can never satisfy GOD; or can you say as one long ago, "**I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my Lord; for he hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness**" (Isaiah 61:10)?

The third shining one set a mark on his forehead and gave him a roll with a seal upon it. This, of course, speaks of the sealing of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD by which the believer is made secure until the day of redemption. This mark is an invisible one, but all Christians have this seal upon them. The Bible makes this very plain, "**In whom [CHRIST] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise**" (Ephesians 1:13). Thus the HOLY SPIRIT indwells and makes His abode in all who are saved, so that the body of the Christian becomes the temple of GOD (I Corinthians 3:16). The roll is an illustration of the assurance and consequent joy of salvation that results

from the realization of the possession of all these blessings in CHRIST JESUS.

GRACELESS BECOMES CHRISTIAN

Not only was Graceless condition changed, but his name was also changed. His name was no longer, "Graceless," but "Christian," and from this point, this will be his name until the end of the journey.

What made him a Christian? Was it his prayers? his tears? his good resolutions? his good deeds? his joining the church? or some religious rite of ceremony? No! Ten thousand times no! It was simple faith in the finished work of GOD's dear SON and acceptance of Him as Saviour and confession of Him as Lord that made him a Christian.

A Christian is one who belongs to CHRIST.

Are you a real born again Christian, my reader? Are your sins which are many all forgiven? Are you clothed with the righteousness of GOD? Have you been born again? Do you have the assurance of a present and eternal salvation? If not, make sure of all these blessings in the same way that Graceless did. Come in all your sins to the One Who died for sinners. Believe He died for you, and trust simply and entirely in His completed work. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!"** (Acts 16:31). May it be yours to say

"Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For GOD the JUST is satisfied,
To look on Him and pardon me."

After these blessings had come to Christian, he gave three leaps for joy and went on singing:

"Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
'Till I came hither; what a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bind it to me crack?
Blest Cross! Blest Sepulchre! Blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!"

~ end of chapter 7 ~