

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.

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Chapter 8

CHRISTIAN SETS OUT FOR THE CELESTIAL CITY

SIMPLE, SLOTH AND PRESUMPTION, CHAINED AND ASLEEP

As Christian went on his way singing and making melody in his heart unto the Lord, he came to a place where three men lay fast asleep. While they slept Satan had placed chains on their legs thus making them his slaves. When Christian saw these men in such a perilous plight, and utterly unconscious of their danger, he did what every Christian should do. He took them each by the shoulder and shook them and cried, "Wake up! For the Devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour! Wake up! and I will help you off with your fetters!"

- At this one of the men named Simple awoke, and after looking around a little murmured, "I see no danger," and went to sleep again.
- The next man named Sloth drawled sleepily, "I want a little more sleep" and he went to sleep again.
- The third man, Presumption by name, angry at having been awakened, replied to Christian's kindly counsel by protesting, "Every tub must stand on its own bottom."

You are doubtless thinking to yourself, "What foolish people they were to reject the kind advice of Christian!"

Strange though it may appear, there are thousands of people today who are doing exactly the same thing; and perhaps the reader may be one of them.

John Bunyan has well pictured the state of every unsaved sinner as asleep to his true state before GOD.

- He is asleep to his danger of being without CHRIST;
- asleep to the fact that he is the bond servant of sin;
- and asleep to the fearful consequences of dying in his sins.

Many, when they are aroused by some earnest Christian, or by reading of Gospel literature, reply like Simple, "I

don't see any danger. I don't see that I am a guilty, lost sinner. I don't see that I am in danger of going to hell. I don't feel afraid of dying and of meeting GOD." These people imagine that because they do not see or feel any danger, that there is no danger!

The writer once knew a little boy, who, while happily playing tag around an open well, fell in, and before he could be brought out, was drowned. He did not see or feel he was in danger, but this was due to his ignorance of the truth.

All out of CHRIST are in danger of the wrath of GOD.

Listen to the solemn warning, "**Because there is wrath beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee**" (Job 36:18). GOD hates sin and must punish it. The Lord JESUS declared, "**If ye die in your sins, where I am, there ye cannot come**" (John 8:21, 24). Remember, "**The wages of sin is death,**" and though a person may not realize his need of CHRIST or his danger, it does not alter the fact that he is in danger and therefore needs to be saved.

SLOTH

The next person, Sloth by name, is a typical example of many today.

When this person is aroused from the sleep of sinful pleasure, he replies, "I want a little more sleep." In other words, "Let me alone for a while longer, so that I can enjoy the world, do as I please, say what I please, and go where I please. By and by I will wake up and become a Christian; but just now, I want a little more sleep." Alas! There are thousands in a lost eternity at this present moment.

When they had their opportunity of being awakened and saved, they chose to put off the matter of their soul's salvation until a more convenient season which never arrived.

Then came that grim visitor, Death, and while they were still asleep to eternal realities, their souls were ushered into eternity and their eyes were opened, like the rich man of Luke 16, in hell.

If the reader sees himself pictured in the case of Sloth, let not the Devil lull you to sleep with this world's pleasures any longer; but awake up ere it be everlasting too late, and trust the Lord JESUS and the shackles of sin will be broken.

PRESUMPTION

The third man, Presumption, is a picture of another class of persons, who, when aroused to a sense of their need of CHRIST instead of being grateful for what they hear, get angry with the messenger and the message, and cry indignantly, "Every tub must stand on its own bottom!" In other words, "Every man must look after his own affairs!"

Don't you worry about me! I'll look after myself! You mind your own business and let me mind my own. I'll take my chance with the rest!" The person who adopts this attitude is very foolish. One might just as well quarrel with a good doctor because he diagnoses the disease and prescribes the only remedy.

GOD, Who knows the sinfulness of sin, and Who has described the heart by nature as being "**deceitful above all**

things and desperately wicked," has also, in equally plain language, prescribed the remedy - "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

The person who objects, "I will take my chance with the rest" is guilty of wicked presumption, for GOD's Word does not speak of a "chance" of salvation or of a "chance" of being eternally lost. The Bible contains "certainties" not "chances." There is no "chance" of the sinner being eternally lost if he dies in his sins; he will most assuredly be lost! Neither is there any "chance" of being saved if the sinner will believe the Gospel and accept the Saviour; he will most assuredly be saved that very moment!

Christian thus had to leave these three men fast asleep by the wayside, exposed to danger, death and damnation. Is it to be so with you, dear reader? As you read these pages ask yourself the question, "Am I ready to meet GOD? Am I awake to my spiritual needs?" If you cannot honestly say so, heed the friendly and faithful counsel of one who loves your soul, and wake up and trust in the Lord JESUS as your own personal Saviour for

"Life at best is very brief, like the falling of a leaf,
Like the binding of a sheaf, be in time!
Fleeting days are telling fast that the die will soon be cast,
And the fatal line be passed, be in time!"

Be in time! Be in time!
While the voice of JESUS calls you, be in time!

If in sin you longer wait, you may find no open gate,
And your cry be just too late - be in time!"

FORMALIST AND HYPOCRISY

As Christian continued on the pilgrim pathway, which, you will recall, was bordered on either side by the walls of salvation; he perceived two men climbing up from the other side of the wall until they reached the top, when they leaped into the straight and narrow way.

At this Christian asked them who they were and where they were going, to which they replied, "Our names are Formalist and Hypocrisy. We were born in the land of Vain-Glory and we are going for praise to Mount Zion."

Christian demanded, "Why came you not in at the gate which standeth at the beginning of the way? Know ye not that it is written, '**He that entereth not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber?**'"

Formalist and Hypocrisy however, would not give heed to Christian's faithful counsel.

They declared that the way to the gate from their town was altogether too far around; so they had followed the custom of the inhabitants of their city and had made a short cut by climbing over the wall. They further assured Christian that such a time-honored custom would be admitted as being 'quite proper' by an impartial judge.

They concluded their argument in these words: "If we get into the way, what matter is it which way we came in? If we are in, we are in. Thou art but in the way, who, as we perceive, came in at the gate! We are also in the way

that climbed in over the wall. Wherein, now, is thy condition better than ours?"

To this Christian gave an effective reply: "I walk," said he, "by the rule of my MASTER. You go by the rude working of your fancies. You are counted thieves already by the Lord of the way. You came in by yourselves without His direction, and shall go out by yourselves without His mercy."

To this they gave little reply except to sneeringly point out to Christian that they could not see any difference between him and them, except the coat he wore, which they suggested must have been given him by some of his neighbors to hide the shame of his nakedness. When Christian heard this, he gave answer by telling them that by their laws and ordinances they would never be saved and added, "As for this coat on my back, I wold have you know it was given me by the Lord of the place whither I go, and that, as you say, to cover my nakedness with, for I had nothing but rags before. I have also a mark on my forehead that one of the Lord's most intimate Associates placed there the day that my burden fell off my shoulders. I have also a roll to comfort me by reading as I go." When Formalist and Hypocrisy heard this, they looked at each other and gave a contemptuous laugh, and followed Christian along the narrow way.

WHAT FORMALIST AND HYPOCRISY REPRESENT

John Bunyan has given us in this incident another forceful illustration of what thousands of people are doing in this present day.

Formalist, of course, is a picture of the person who is trusting to religious forms, rites, ceremonies, and creeds for an entrance into Heaven. He imagines that because he passed through certain forms and ordinances, that he is therefore, by those forms and ordinances, made into a Christian and placed on the narrow road that leads to Heaven. What a fearful error is this!

- Substituting a rite for the REDEEMER,
- a symbol for the Saviour;
- a creed for the new creation,
- and an ordinance for the Lord JESUS CHRIST!

When such a person is asked whether he is on the way to Heaven and how he knows it, he will reply, "O yes, I hope I am on the way to Heaven, for I have been baptized," or, "I have been confirmed," or, "I take communion regularly," or, "I am a member of the Church," or, "I engage regularly in religious exercises and am a Church worker," etc.

- He never mentions a word about having seen himself as a lost sinner and believing that CHRIST's death on Calvary satisfied GOD on his account.
- He knows nothing of coming to the Lord JESUS CHRIST Who said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."
- He has experienced nothing of the regenerating power of the HOLY SPIRIT upon acceptance of CHRIST as Saviour and Lord.
- He makes no mention of the word of GOD as the ground of his certainty of salvation.

All he knows and speaks about are the rites, forms, and ceremonies he has been through; and the religious practices that he engages in as often as possible.

Let us say at this point, that the two ordinances the Lord JESUS instituted, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are only for those that are already saved and on their way to Heaven.

The sinner gets on to the narrow pathway through faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the only and only Door. Listen to His own words: "**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**" (John 14:6).

Having entered into the way of life through CHRIST, the believer should be obedient to His divinely appointed ordinances. He should be baptized as a believer on the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and by it confess to the world that he has died with CHRIST, that he has been buried with Him, and that he is risen with Him to walk in newness of life (See Romans 6:1-11). Thus he obeys the Lord in baptism, not in order to become a Christian but because he is already one.

The same applies to the remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of the bread. Many, alas, make this ordinance the door to salvation, thus robbing the Lord JESUS of His rightful place as the only Saviour, REDEEMER and MEDIATOR.

Any person who thus substitutes a mere outward form for the inward reality is a Formalist who has climbed over the wall.

Hypocrisy needs little explanation

He is a picture of the person who pretends to be what he is not. He puts on a great show of religion but only in order to cover up a deceitful life. The Pharisees in our Lord's time were called hypocrites because they pretended to be all right. They made long prayers at the street corners, and wore great religious garments, and gave alms with a great outward show. But while they made clean the outside of the cup, the inside - that which GOD saw - was full of evil.

GOD wants reality, not sham; not an outward show, but a true inward heart-devotion to Himself. Would it not be well if each one examined himself right now.

If we profess to be Christians, let us ask ourselves:

- How did I become a Christian?
- When did I become a Christian?
- Where did I become a Christian?

Let us test our answer with the Scriptures, and see whether we are real or sham.

If we discover from the examination that we have never been really born again, then the sooner we climb back over that wall and come in by the Door, the better it will be for each of us!

HILL OF DIFFICULTY

As Christian proceeded, he presently came to a very steep hill called the Hill of Difficulty.

He perceived that the straight and narrow way led right up it, and that there were two side roads, one leading to the left and the other to the right, at its base. At the foot of the hill was a spring. Christian first refreshed himself at it and then began to ascend the hill, saying as he did so -

"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."

When Formalist and Hypocrisy arrived and saw the extremely difficult pathway that led right up the hill, they consulted together, and decided it would be better to see whether they could not find an easier way, some short cut that would save them the long and arduous journey. They then perceived the two other roads and concluded that they led around the base of the hill and met the narrow path on the other side. One of these roads was called Danger, and the other Destruction.

They agreed to separate and each take a different route, and meet where these roads conveyed into the narrow path, accordingly, one of them took the road called Danger which led him into a great forest where he was miserably lost. The other, taking the road called Destruction, soon found himself in a great plain filled with dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell and rose no more.

Thus perished Formalist and Hypocrisy, as every mere formalist and hypocrite shall.

How true is that message from the good Book which says, "**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death**" (Proverbs 14:12).

A mere outward form, or empty profession will not avail in the dread hour of death, or before the great white throne. Let us make certain of our eternal security now, lest the fate of Formalist and Hypocrisy be ours also.

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