

A DREAMER AND HIS WONDERFUL DREAM

The Story of John Bunyan and The Pilgrim's Progress

by

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Chapter 4

From the Wicked Gate to the Wicket Gate

OBSTINATE AND PLIABLE

Two men, however, determined to run after him and bring him back by force. Their names were Obstinate and Pliable.

They soon caught up to him, and Graceless seeing them inquired why they had followed him. They replied that they had come to take him back to the place where he belonged. But Graceless answered, "That can by no means be, for you dwell in the City of Destruction, the place where I was born, and where, if you die, you must be lost eternally. Nay, my friends, come along with me."

"What!" objected Obstinate, "and leave all our friends and comforts behind us?"

"Yes," replied Graceless, "All the pleasures of the City of Destruction are not to be compared for one moment with the glorious things laid up for them that love GOD; and if you go with me, you shall share in them for there is enough for all, for "the same Lord over all is rich unto all them that call upon Him."

At that Obstinate inquired, "What are the things you seek since you leave all the world to find them?"

Graceless rejoined, "**I seek an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away, that is reserved in Heaven for all who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.**"

When Obstinate heard this he said to his companion, "Come on Pliable, and let us leave this fool to his folly." Pliable, however, impressed by the earnestness and sincerity of Graceless replied, "Don't revile, for if what he says is true, the things he seeks are better than ours, and my heart inclines to go with him."

"What?" roared Obstinate, "more fools still! Come be ruled by me and let us go back."

But Graceless, seeing Pliable's hesitancy, invited him warmly to accompany him on the pilgrim journey, so Pliable

consented and Obstinate as angry as could be, returned to the City of Destruction.

As they journeyed together, Pliable eagerly questioned his companion as to how far off the Celestial City was, and what things he would get when he arrived there.

Graceless, as best he could, tried to describe the glories of that eternal home where all who love the Lord JESUS shall one day be gathered together. He told him of the endless kingdom and of the everlasting blessedness all its inhabitants enjoyed. He spoke of the crowns of reward to be given to the faithful, and of the garments of glory in which the redeemed shall eternally shine. He described the perfection of **"that land that is fairer than day,"** where there is **"no more crying or sorrow; where there is no more sickness, pain, or death; but where all tears are forever wiped away. He spoke of that city that needs not the light of the sun or moon, but where the Lamb of GOD is the light thereof"**(Revelation 21).

Pliable interrupted him every now and again by exclaiming, "Well said! And what else shall I get?"

Thus encouraged, Graceless continued to point out the wonderful sights he would behold in that glorious place.

He described the seraphims and cherubims whose glory would dazzle the eye.

He spoke of the holy prophets, and the noble army of martyrs who had laid down their lives for the sake of the Gospel;

- of the thousands upon thousands and thousands of thousands of the redeemed, all in robes of purest white, who would sing the great hallelujah chorus;

- of the myriads of angels who lived only to do the bidding of Him Who sits upon the throne;

- and of the Center of all heaven's glory - the Lamb of GOD Who had loved them and had given Himself for them.

As Pliable listened rapturously to this graphic portrayal of the glories of Heaven he exclaimed, "The hearing of this is enough to ravish the heart! How glad I am that I came with you! Come, let us hurry up and get there quick!"

Graceless replied, "I cannot go very fast because of this burden on my back."

THE SLOUGH OF DESPONDENCY

While they were thus busily talking about the beauties and glories of Heaven, and not looking too well to their feet, they did not notice that right in front of them was a great pond filled with mud, the name of which was the Bog, or Slough, of Despondency.

Into this mire they fell headlong and were soon covered with the filthy mud, and Graceless, because of his burden began to sink.

Then cried Pliable, "Ah, neighbor Graceless, where are you now?"

Graceless replied, "I do not know."

Pliable now began to be offended and cried angrily, "Is this the happiness you have been telling me about? If at the beginning of the journey we are thus treated, what will it be like before we reach the journey's end?"

With these words, he gave a desperate struggle or two, and climbing out of the side of the bog nearest to the City of Destruction, he made his way back to his own home, and Graceless saw him no more.

On his return to the city some called him wise for coming back, some called him a fool for ever starting out; while others mocked him for his cowardice. Thus Pliable sat sneaking amongst them, until at last tongues ceased to wag, and he returned to his old time pursuits, companions and the pleasures of sin.

John Bunyan has given us in these two men a splendid illustration of the difference between a real, earnest, sin-convicted seeker of salvation, and a mere empty, sentimental, and shallow inquirer.

You will have noticed that Pliable had no burden of sin. All he was interested in was what he was going to get.

Graceless, on the other hand, started on the journey because he realized he was a guilty sinner, needing deliverance from the burden of his sin.

Pliable is thus a picture of a mere, empty professor of religion, who, when the slightest opposition shows itself, is immediately offended and throws up the profession he has made and goes back again to the pleasures of the world. He very often terms himself "a backslider," when he has never really been "a frontslider!"

It is this type of person who brings shame and disgrace to Christianity.

Graceless, however, keeping his face turned away from the City of Destruction, struggled as best he could to get across the bog; but all his struggles but sank him deeper into the mire, and he began to despair of ever getting out alive.

Just as he was about to give up hope, a man named Help came to the edge of the bog and asked him who he was, and what he was doing there, so Graceless explained how he had fallen in.

Then Help asked him why he had not looked for the steps across the bog, but Graceless replied, "Fear followed me so hard that I fled."

Then said Help, "Give me your hand." Thus advised, Graceless placed his hand in Help's hand, and was thus lifted up out of the quagmire.

The Bog of Despondency, as its name suggests, is a picture of the desponding or sorrowful fears and doubts that fill the mind and soul of the anxious sinner, and sink him deep into despondency, doubt, darkness, and despair. These fears and doubts, suggested by the Devil, combined with the evil reasons of the sinner's own wicked heart of unbelief, all unite to suggest to the sinner that he is too bad to be saved, or failing this, that CHRIST will not receive him, even if he does come to Him. If this does not succeed he tells the sinner that he will not be able to hold on, even if CHRIST does receive him.

How many a poor soul, bowed down with the weight of his sins, is kept from trusting CHRIST because of these

lies of the devil!

Help is a picture of the promises of GOD, which are at the disposal of all in such difficulty. Inasmuch as Graceless had to grasp Help's hand in order to be lifted out of the bog, so the sinner must grasp Help's hand in order to be lifted out of the bog, so the sinner must grasp the promises of GOD by the hand of faith in order to be delivered from his despondency, doubt and despair.

If Satan suggests to the sinner that he is too bad to be saved, then here is a promise for him to grasp, "**The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luke 19:10).

If the evil one is whispering that CHRIST will not receive the sinner, then this promise will avail to deliver: "**Him that cometh to me [JESUS said] I will in no wise cast out**" (John 6:37).

If there is any doubt as to the keeping power of the Lord JESUS then this promise that CHRIST made should be grasped: "**I give unto them [His sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand**" (John 10:28).

If these, and many more exceedingly great and precious promises, are laid hold of in simple faith, the sinner will be taken out of the miry clay of his own fears, and put on the solid rock of GOD's assuring word.

MR. WORLDLY-WISEMAN

As Graceless proceeded on his way to the gate, guided by the light, he saw a man coming to meet him whose name was Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and who lived in the town of Carnal Policy. When they met, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman asked, "Where are you going in such a burdened manner?"

Graceless replied, "I am going to the Wicket Gate to be told how I may be rid of this heavy burden that is upon me."

Mr. Worldly-Wiseman next inquired if he would like some good advice, to which Graceless replied that he would, providing it was really good. His new acquaintance now proceeded to ask him who had sent him on his journey. When Graceless informed him of Evangelist's visit and counsel, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman waxed indignant and declared that Evangelist was a dangerous and troublesome man; and that the way he had directed him was wrong, as the mud of the bog of Despondency could testify. He dolefully predicted that there was worse yet in store for him if he persisted in following the light.

He then inquired how he had come to realize that he had a burden of sin. When Graceless replied by saying it was through the reading of the Bible, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, with a knowing look remarked, "I thought so, and it has happened unto you as to other weak men, who, meddling with things too high for them, get the same ideas as you have which unman them to such an extent that they start on desperate ventures to obtain what they know not."

Then continuing in an oily, smooth and self-confident tone, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman advised Graceless to reject Evangelist's counsel and turn from the light he had been told to follow, and go to a friend of his named Mr. Legality who lived nearby. He assured him that this man would give him the best advice as to how he could be eased of his burden and live in a respectable fashion.

Alas for poor Graceless! Taken in by the fair speech and apparent sincerity of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, he turned his feet from the way that led to the Wicket Gate, took his eyes off the light he had been asked to follow, and made his way in the direction of the residence of Mr. Legality or Lawyer, who lived near to a mount called Mount Sinai.

WHO ARE THE MR. WORLDLY-WISEMEN?

John Bunyan has given us in this incident a graphic description of what is occurring even now in the life of many a poor sinner.

Awakened to a sense of his guilt through the reading and the preaching of the word of GOD, the sinner is directed by some Christian to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, Who is the DOOR through Whom alone pardon, peace, and life may be obtained.

While on the way to CHRIST, he is met by some person, who, never having been born again by the Spirit of GOD, and consequently ignorant of GOD's Way of salvation, yet seeks, guided by the wisdom of this world, to advise sinners what best to do!

It is thus a case of the blind seeking to lead the blind, and the result is disastrous to both.

We are told in the Bible that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with GOD, and that **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (I Corinthians 2:14). Let us never forget that **"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God"** (I Corinthians 1:18).

Beware of any man, however well educated, eloquent and kind, who seeks to turn a sinner from CHRIST, the only way, and from the Bible, the only guide to another way that the Scriptures condemn.

But let us return to Graceless.

Presently he reached Mount Sinai; but what a fearful sight it presented! It seemed to him as though the whole mountain was about to topple over and crush him. From its summit which was encapped with clouds, came great tongues of fire as if eager to devour him! His burden of sins seemed to increase in weight and poor Graceless began to be exceedingly afraid and shake with terror at this awe-inspiring sight, and regret he had ever listened to the advise of Worldly-Wiseman.

As he thus stood, expecting nothing but death, he saw Evangelist coming towards him, who, when he came up to him asked, "What are you doing here? Are you not the man I found crying outside the City of Destruction?"

"Yes," replied Graceless faintly. "Then what are you doing here, seeing I directed you to the Wicket Gate?" next inquired Evangelist. Graceless then told him all that had befallen him concerning his meeting with Worldly-Wiseman and of the wrong advise that he had so foolishly taken.

Evangelist sternly rebuked him for his folly and sin in having turned from the path of faith to the way of human wisdom, and said, "Stand still a little that I may shew thee the words of GOD. 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape; if we turn

away from him that speaketh from Heaven," (Hebrews 12:25).

At this, Graceless fell at his feet as dead crying, "**Woe is me, for I am undone!**" But Evangelist took him by the right hand and said, "**All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Be not faithless but believing.**" With such words Graceless revived somewhat.

Evangelist next pointed out to him what evil Worldly-Wiseman had done to him, and said, "He is called Worldly-Wiseman because he savours only of the doctrine of this world, because it saves him from the Cross with its offence to the world.

You must, therefore, hath three things in this man's counsel:

- first, his turning thee out of the way;
- second, his attempt to render the Cross distasteful to thee;
- third, his putting of your feet in the way that leads only to death.

Evangelist then began to speak more fully of these three things and showed Graceless the real meaning of Mount Sinai.

THE MEANING OF MOUNT SINAI

He unfolded to him that Mt. Sinai was a picture of the holy and righteous law that GOD had given through Moses to the children of Israel long ago. This law not only revealed the righteous requirements of GOD's holiness, righteousness, justice, and truth, but at the same time exposed man's sin, for sin consisted in coming short of, or transgressing this holy law.

He pointed out to him from the Scriptures that "**By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20).

He showed him that Mr. Legality was a picture of a person who vainly imagines he can get right with GOD by an attempt to keep the law; in other words, by his own good works, good thoughts and good words. Such a person seeks to teach others this, thus leading them into the bondage of legalism and the condemnation which the law imposes on all who fail to keep it in its entirety.

After this, Evangelist called to the heavens for confirmation of the truth he had uttered, and from the mount there came in words of thunder: "**For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them**" (Galatians 3:10).

Graceless was now in a lamentable condition.

- He saw how sinful and foolish he had been in attempting to gain favor with GOD by trying to keep a law that he had already broken thousands of times. He realized as never before the holy character of the GOD against Whom he had so grievously sinned.

- His eyes were opened to the fact that by GOD's holy and righteous law he was condemned, for he had not kept it, and neither could he ever keep it.

He therefore, began to cry out most pitiably, "Is there any hope? May I now go back? I am sorry I ever listened to the counsel of Worldly-Wiseman, but may my sin be forgiven?"

To this Evangelist replied, "Your sin is great, yet the man at the gate will receive thee for he has good will to men. **"Only take heed that thou turn not aside again, lest thou perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little"** (Psalm 2:12).

Thus comforted, Graceless thanked Evangelist for his timely help, and paying no heed to anyone else, walked back till he came to the place from which he had been turned aside. Once more, by the light of the Word of GOD, he walked in the direction of the Wicket Gate.

WHAT MESSAGE DOES SINAI HAVE FOR US?

Let us, too, learn the very necessary lesson that no person can ever be justified before GOD by keeping the law.

In the first place no one has ever kept it fully and completely, except the Lord JESUS CHRIST; and secondly, because no one can ever keep it. It may be asked, "**Why was the law given, then?**" We reply in the words of Scripture, "**The law entered, that the offense [or sin] might abound**" (Romans 5:20). **In other words, it is the law that reveals our sinfulness, and therefore, our need of cleansing from those sins.**

We may well thank GOD that the same Bible that reveals to us our guilt and need, also tells us of GOD's remedy for that need in the Person and through the work of our blessed Saviour.

He fulfilled all GOD's law in His life, and yet met all the claims of that law against us (who had broken it) by His death, leaving nothing for the sinner to do to be justified before GOD but to believe in His finished work and accept Him as Saviour and Lord.

It is written, "**Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified**" (Galatians 2:16).

Turn from Mount Sinai to Mount Calvary from your own works to His finished work! Through Calvary's work alone can salvation full, free and eternal be obtained by faith in GOD's SON!

Presently Graceless saw right ahead of him the Wicket Gate to which he had been directed. When he came closer he saw written over it the words, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

He knocked therefore, saying as he did:

"May I now enter here? Will He within
Open to sorry me, though I have been

An undeserving rebel? Then shall I
Not fail to sing His lasting praise on high."

In response to his knock a person named Goodwill came to the door; who asked him who he was and what he wanted, to which Graceless replied: "Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the City of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. I would therefore, sir, since I am informed that by this gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in."

To this speech Goodwill replied by saying, "I am willing with all my heart," and opening the gate, he held out his hand in welcome. As Graceless grasped the outstretched hand and was about to cross the threshold, Goodwill gave him a pull that brought him in quickly. When Graceless inquired the reason for this action, Goodwill informed him that within bowshot of this gate, Satan had erected a strong castle, from the top of which he and his servants shot with arrows at the pilgrim, if perchance he could prevent him from escaping his clutches by crossing the threshold of the door.

When Graceless heard this he exclaimed, "I rejoice and tremble."

THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE WICKET GATE AND THE DEVIL'S ARROWS

We may well pause here and seek to learn the lesson of the Wicket Gate and of the Devil's arrows.

The Wicket Gate, as we have already mentioned, is a picture of the willingness of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and no man can come unto the Father but by Him. All who come to the Father through Him, owning their sin-burdened state, are assured of a welcome, for the Saviour said, "**Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.**"

The Devil, however, is ever ready to hinder the sinner from coming to CHRIST and uses all his wisdom, subtlety and power to keep the sinner in his clutches.

Let us name some of the arrows that Satan is using today and perhaps is even now using to deter the reader from being saved.

First, there is the arrow of Laughter.

When Satan sees a person about to trust the Lord JESUS and thus be saved, he fits into his fearful bow this arrow and shooting it at the pilgrim whispers, "Listen! If you come to CHRIST and confess Him before others as your Lord and Saviour, you will be laughed at, ridiculed and scorned, and thus lose your popularity."

Alas, many have been kept from crossing the door of decision as a result of this arrow, and have been lost when they might have been saved.

Lost through a companion's laugh! It has been well said that thousands of people have been laughed into hell but not one has yet been laughed out of that fearful place. Are you going to allow this arrow to have any effect on you?

Suppose your friends do laugh at you. It cannot hurt you. Remember the world mocked, derided, despised, and

rejected GOD's Son. Are you any better than He?

Listen to His own words: "He that is ashamed of me and of my words in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father and the holy angels."

Would you like the Lord JESUS to be ashamed of you? Then be not ashamed of Him, and let not the arrow of Laughter keep you from accepting Him and confessing Him as your Saviour.

Next, there is the arrow of Pleasure.

This terrible arrow has done great execution. When Satan shoots this, he suggests to the sinner that if he becomes a Christian he will not have any more fun or pleasure, and that all the joy of life will be gone so that he will be miserable all the while. Many have listened and believed this lie of the Devil, but the Lord JESUS said regarding Satan, "**When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.**"

There are thousands of people today who seem to imagine that to become a Christian is to be a weakling, and that the child of GOD is a sad and sorry specimen of humanity! They imagine that because the Christian does not indulge in what they are pleased to call pleasures, that therefore he has no pleasure. This is false!

There is no pleasure in the world to be compared for a moment with the pleasure that GOD gives to His children.

Not the pleasures of this world with its pomp, fashion, popularity, power, lust, and sin;

- but the real genuine pleasure and joy that comes through the knowledge of sins forgiven;
- of perfect peace with GOD;
- of the knowledge of CHRIST as Saviour and FRIEND;
- of the happy fellowship with the One Whose friendship never changes and Whose love never dies; of the assurance of a home eternal in the heavens, and of the joy that springs from the heart that has CHRIST within.

If you are not a Christian you are the one to be pitied. The believer alone can say:

"I tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but ah, the waters failed;
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled, and mocked me as I wailed,
Now none but CHRIST can satisfy; none other Name for me
There's love and life and lasting joy, Lord JESUS found in Thee."

Remember, GOD doesn't want people to "give up" things in order to be saved. He wants them to take something infinitely better than what they now have. Are you going to allow the arrow of Pleasure to rob you of your soul?

But now comes the worst arrow of all.

We will call it the arrow of "Plenty of Time."

This is Satan's most successful weapon. He will allow the sinner, if necessary, to believe all the truths of the Gospel. He will whisper, "O, yes, it's quite true you are a lost sinner."

"It's quite true that if you die in that state you will be eternally lost."

"It's quite true that GOD loves you and gave His Son to die for your sins."

"It's quite true that CHRIST by His death and resurrection has accomplished all that is necessary for your salvation."

"It's quite true that all you need to be saved is to believe the Gospel and to accept the Lord JESUS as your own personal Saviour"

"But there's plenty of time!"

"Put it off! Wait a while! Do it tomorrow, or some other time! Wait until you are older or on your dying bed, and then, like the dying thief you can be saved in the eleventh hour!"

How many have been deceived by this terrible lie!

There are thousands, right now, in a lost eternity who never intended to be there. They put off their soul's salvation to some more convenient season which never arrived and death came in, and before they were aware, their eternal doom was sealed. GOD's time is NOW!

Listen to His Word: "**Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart**" (Hebrews 3:7-8).

"**Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth**" (Proverbs 27:1).

"**Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation**" (II Corinthians 6:2).

Well did the poet sing:

"Fairest flowers soon decay,
Youth and beauty pass away,
Oh, you have not long to stay,
Be in Time!

While GOD's Spirit bids you come,
Sinner, do not longer roam,
Lest you seal your hopeless doom,
Be in time!"

~ end of chapter 4 ~