

**Pilgrim's Progress:
Christiana's Story (3) –
Hill Difficulty**

Romans 5:18

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Now turn with me if you would to Romans 5, and we are going to read together the closing verses of Romans 5, beginning at verse 18. Now the reason we're reading these particular verses is because in the particular section of *Pilgrim's Progress* Part II that we're considering this evening, we are going to see Bunyan emphasizing the doctrine of justification, and Bunyan emphasizing more than just justification, but the crucial importance of the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Now it would not be too much to say that this is an issue that is right to the heart of some of the debates going on just now on justification, and therefore what Bunyan is going to tell us here in the allegory of *Pilgrim's Progress* has a particular relevance for us.

Before we read the passage, let's come before God in prayer.

Father, we thank You for Your word. We thank You for the Scriptures. We thank You that holy men of old wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. We ask now for Your blessing. In all that we do and in all that we say this evening, we ask that Your great and holy name might be honored and magnified and exalted, and this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Romans 5:18...

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. May God add His blessing to that reading of His holy and inerrant word.

Now if you have the map from last week tucked away in your copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* or in your Bible, as I see many of you do, we're still in that first column. There are three columns, you remember, and we're working our way up. And you need to find about half way up, Interpreter's house, and the next location on the map is Mount Calvary. And we're just outside of Interpreter's house. You remember Christiana and Mercy and the boys have been shown round the house of Interpreter. He's shown them many things. In addition to the things that he showed Christian in Part I of *Pilgrim's Progress*, now there are seven more things that Christiana is shown, including, you remember, the Man with the muckrake who's looking down at the ground, and above him there is a crown of gold which he never sees, because he's always looking down.

Well, having slept through the night...although Mercy found it difficult to sleep because of all the things that she had seen, and she has a great deal of joy in her heart. Mercy, you remember, is one of these Christians that Bunyan depicts with weak faith. She's not the great heroine, perhaps, that you might have expected in Part I of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Many of the characters in Part II are those who are struggling, those who have weak faith. But she has been filled now with joy, having entered through the Wicket Gate, having experienced the joy of forgiveness of sins, having seen these extraordinary things that Interpreter has shown her and Christiana. Now they're about to embark on the journey.

Before they embark, they are bidden to take a Bath. And they bathe, and they make them clean from the soil which they have gathered by traveling. And Bunyan is probably picking up from John 13 and Jesus' washing the disciples' feet and how that is a portrayal of washing away ongoing sins...sins that we commit day by day as we make our journey through this weary land.

Then they are given a Seal, a mark between their eyes, that they might be known in the places whither they were yet to go. Paul speaks about the seal of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13. The seal is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God. It's the seal of assurance — assurance that we are the Lord's, assurance that our sins are forgiven.

Then they are given "fine Linen, white and clean," the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Now as they're about to leave Interpreter's house (and for the rest of the journey tonight), they're going to be joined (Christiana and Mercy and the four boys) by one of the great characters in *Pilgrim's Progress*, a man by the name of Mr. Great-heart. He's a wonderful man, and Bunyan portrays him in that way. And there is no doubt that Mr. Great-heart is probably depicting John Gifford, who was Bunyan's minister. He was Bunyan's pastor in the Bedford Baptist church during those years, twelve years, when Bunyan was in prison. And he was an extraordinary man of great pastoral insight. And Mr. Great-heart is a figure who's going to lead now these two women and the four boys through many a danger, and he's going to fight battles on their behalf. And they are going

to set out, and he's going to escort them to the house called Beautiful. And as they go, they begin once again to sing.

And it's a wonderful thing. I think that Bunyan, having spent twelve years in prison, missed the joy of congregational singing. I have a picture of Bunyan who was always singing to himself. I think Bunyan was a man of extraordinary joyfulness. He doesn't seem to bear any grudges whatsoever for this incarceration that he's experienced for twelve years, and he often depicts (both in Part I and in Part II) Christians as they make their journey singing.

Now you remember that back at the Wicket Gate Christiana recalls that it was said to her that they would receive pardon by word and by deed... by word and by deed. And now she begins to inquire of Mr. Great-heart what this means — what the word is, and what the deed is; that there was more than just words of forgiveness, but there was a deed that also accompanied it.

And this launches now into a lengthy and important section on the doctrine of justification, of justification by faith alone in Christ alone, and that doctrine of justification as it relates to double imputation: the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of His righteousness to our account.

Now Bunyan actually wrote a lengthy treatise on the doctrine of justification roughly at the time of the first printing of Part I of *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was a doctrine that he was greatly exercised about, because in the seventeenth century, like our own times just now, the doctrine of justification was up for a great deal of debate. And two things become apparent for Bunyan. As you read the text of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II, two things immediately come up to the surface. One is the importance of substitution. Bunyan has a Reformed view of substitution.

Now what do I mean by that? He believes that the atonement, that what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary, can only be explained and only understood in the language of substitution. Great-heart explains to Christiana and Mercy that the pardon that they have received, as well as the boys, was obtained by another—by the obedience of another, by the substitution of another. "...To wit, by Him who let you in at the Gate," he says. He's giving us a clue that the Man who let them in at the Wicket Gate was, in the allegory, Jesus Christ.

Now he's doing it because it wasn't that clear in *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part I; and Bunyan received some criticism in the six years between the publication of the first book and the second book, so now in Part II he's making that abundantly clear: that the One who let them in at the Gate was none other than Jesus Christ.

He died for us. He died in our room and stead. He bore the judgment that our sins deserved. He took upon Himself the consequences, the just deserts of our sin. He was made sin for us, in our room, in our stead: the doctrine of

substitution.

Well, that is an issue that has come up for criticism even in our own time, and there are those who have said in recent years that the doctrine of substitution is cosmic child abuse; that for Jesus to suffer as an innocent the consequences of the guilt of others is inherently unfair and unjust. And here is Bunyan saying the cross can only be understood in the language and in the terminology of substitution. He died for us.

But more than that, it can only be understood within the categories of double imputation. "He hath obtained in this double way: He has performed righteousness to cover you, and spilt His blood to wash you in," Great-heart says. Jesus not only paid the penalty for a broken law, satisfying all of the demands of divine justice, but He also fulfilled the law's demands by offering up a profit obedience to the covenant of works. Bunyan believed in the doctrine of the covenant. Bunyan was one of those theologians in the seventeenth century who saw that the way to understand the Bible, the way to have a coherent understanding of the Old Testament and the New Testament, is to see the central idea of covenant: that God covenants with His people, and in the Garden of Eden He established a covenant with Adam that said, 'If you do this, you will live.' But Adam failed. And so God sends a second Adam, the last Man, who perfectly obeys all of God's holy and righteous demands. So that's how Bunyan understands the doctrine of justification: by substitution and double imputation.

And for Bunyan... (and Great-heart explains this to Christiana and Mercy)... and it's interesting, isn't it, that this is an allegory in which Great-heart is explaining to two women and four children the intricacies of the doctrine of justification? Bunyan saw no anomaly in that, and he saw no anomaly in going into the finer details of the doctrine of justification by faith in such a context.

Now why is he doing that? Well, let me very, very briefly point to one or two things in the background. In 1684, when Part II of *Pilgrim's Progress* is being published, the church has seen the emergence of Arminianism. Arminianism, which according to Bunyan and according to Puritans like him, made free will of such a nature that we are justified on account of something we do: namely, our faith.

And Bunyan wants to remove every last vestige of works. Even our faith, Bunyan says, is a gift of God. (He's of course citing the second chapter of Ephesians.) Now there are other issues going on in the background. And even within Puritanism and even within some of Bunyan's friends, and those no doubt he would have looked to with great admiration and affection, there was a misunderstanding in the nature of justification.

Right at the beginning of this journey as they're setting out now from Interpreter's house, Bunyan waxes eloquent on justification. I'm going to read just a little

section of it to you. This is Great-heart speaking to Christiana:

With all my heart; but first I must premise, that he of whom we are now about to speak, is One that has not his fellow [there's no one like him]: He has two Natures in one Person, plain to be *distinguish'd, impossible to be divided*. Unto each of these natures a righteousness belongeth, and each righteousness is essential to that nature. So that one may as easily cause the nature to be extinct, as to separate its Justice or Righteousness from it. Of *these* righteousnesses therefore we are now made partakers, so as that they, or any of them, should be put upon us, that we might be made Just, and live thereby. Besides these, there is a righteousness which this Person has, as these two natures are joined in one. And this is not the righteousness of the *God-head*, as distinguished from the *Man-hood*; nor the righteousness of the *Manhood*, as distinguished from the *God-head*, but a righteousness which standeth in the Union of both natures....

That's a whole lot of theology in one paragraph, right there in the middle of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II! And it's classic Reformed teaching on the person of Jesus Christ that stretches all the way back to Chalcedon in the fourth and fifth centuries, and Bunyan is picking up on these themes in this allegory.

Now as they journey on, they come to a place where Simple, Sloth, and Prejudice are hanged up in irons. Now, Christian had met these in Part I of the allegory, but they were merely sleeping when Christian met them. They had persuaded many to their opinion, including characters like No-heart and Linger-after-Lust, and Sleepyhead. And there's now a warning, and there's a plaque warning people who pass by they are opposers of holiness.

Then Great-heart recounts how Christian had first drunk from the Spring before embarking on Hill Difficulty. And then the stream when Christian came to it was clear, but now it is muddied. And the two ladies and Great-heart take some water in a flask and allow the sediment, to fall to the bottom before they drink from that source. And at the foot of the Hill were two by-ways, where in Part I of *Pilgrim's Progress* Formality and Hypocrite lost themselves.

And then they begin to climb the Hill and they get exhausted in the process, and it's very hot. Mercy and one of the little boys want to rest, but Great-heart urges them on to a place called the Prince's Arbour. Now it was there, you remember, that Christian fell asleep and he lost...he forgot when he woke up...he left in a hurry and left behind his Certificate. And you remember he has to go back and find it again. Well, Christiana also will lose a bottle of Spirits, meant I think, to be a reference to the Holy Spirit, and the same kind of thing as the Certificate. It's all to do with assurance. And Mercy will call this place a losing place. The Prince's Arbour is a losing place, and unless we keep close ties with God, unless we keep short accounts with God, we are liable to lose our assurance of our forgiveness of sins.

And then Great-heart speaks with one of the boys, James. Now he's not that young, because in the next section, next week, James is actually going to get married. I'll hold you in suspense as to who he marries! And one of the other sons, Matthew, will also get married. There are two weddings in next week's installment. The boy says he has learned from his mother that the way to heaven is up a ladder, and the way to hell is down a hill, "but I had rather go up a ladder to heaven than down a hill to hell." And there's a proverb that to go downhill is easy, but the day will come when going down the hill will not be easy. A warning once again so typical of Bunyan on the need to make our calling and election sure. Another warning from Bunyan to persevere, because it's they that persevere to the end that will be saved.

And then they eat. And at the top of this hill at Prince's Arbour they begin to eat. And they eat pomegranates and honeycomb, and some of the bottle of Spirits which Interpreter had given to them when they left the house. Now I like to think that Bunyan in writing Part II of *Pilgrim's Progress*, just as he did in Part I, there are these times when they have these wonderful meals and there's lots of food and lots of rejoicing. And I think Bunyan liked his food, and I think when he was in prison he probably missed his food. And when he's writing this allegory he dwells a little on the joyfulness of eating, and eating in company and fellowship with God's people. And Bunyan adds — if you have a text of *Pilgrim's Progress* where you have the notes in the margin, Bunyan in later editions of *Pilgrim's Progress* added little notes. When people asked him what this meant, he went back and explained what it meant. And sometimes he'll add "Mark this." And what he wants us to see is that both Christian and Christiana left something behind in Prince's Arbour. Christian left his Certificate, and Christiana left that bottle of Spirits behind.

And this is the lesson:

"Pilgrims should watch and remember what they have already received under their greatest enjoyments, but for want of doing so, oft times their rejoicing ends in tears and their sunshine in a cloud."

And unless we persevere, and unless we maintain the discipline on our assurance, sometimes even on our pilgrimage to the Celestial City there can be these periods when sunshine turns into a cloud.

Well, next they come to a place where Timorous and Mistrust have been burned through their tongues with a hot iron, and they've been placed on a stage. And then they come within sight of Beautiful Palace, where there are Lions outside. Now remember from Part I of *Pilgrim's Progress*, these two lions are on chains, but it doesn't always appear to pilgrims making this journey to Beautiful Palace that there are chains. You remember in Part I these two lions were thought to represent the persecuting church on the one hand, and that would be not

necessarily Catholicism, but the Church of England in its persecution of the Puritans. And of course the state, the restoration of Charles II and all that followed in 1660 with the Acts of Uniformity and the Five-Mile Act, which made it very difficult for Puritans to worship according to their conscience.

Well, now it's not just the two lions, but there's a figure that appears who is either called Grim or he's called Bloody-Man. And there is a battle. There is a fight scene now, and Great-heart draws his sword and engages Grim. Grim is eventually killed, and the women are able to pass by. But they're terrified as they pass by.

And they come then to the Porter's Lodge, and it's at this point that Great-heart returns home. He goes back to Interpreter's house, much against the pleadings of the women and the children. And again Bunyan has a lesson here: They had not asked Great-heart to go with them all the way; and had they asked, they would have been given. Now of course there's grace and mercy with the Lord, and when he goes back to Interpreter's house, they will request that he be sent back to them, and of course Great-heart will return. But he does go back in order to teach them the lesson that we have not because we ask not.

Now that night in the Porter's Lodge of Palace Beautiful, they ate lamb and mint sauce, which is a very English thing to do! And I can't but imagine that Bunyan did not have lamb and mint sauce when he was in prison, and how much he enjoyed the lamb and mint sauce when he got out of prison, perhaps.

And then "musick"—wonderful "Music in the house, music in the Heart and music also in Heaven, for the Joy that we are here." And I find that an extraordinary, beautiful thing; that here's this man who's been incarcerated for twelve years, and whose first-born daughter Mary, born blind, to whom Bunyan was wholly devoted, dies while he is in prison; and still there's this joy. It's like Philippians, the "epistle of joy" that Ligon is taking us through on Sunday mornings. And Bunyan exudes this joy, this holy joy that comes from knowing the Lord.

Well, that night Mercy has a dream, and Christiana makes a comment that we need not stay up all night talking to God; He can come to us while we are asleep and speak to us.

And next, they decide to stay there for a while, and they talk to three women: Prudence, Piety, and Charity. And Prudence asks the boys if they can be catechized, and she begins with James. Now Bunyan, between Part I and Part II of *Pilgrim's Progress*, actually wrote a Catechism, and this is what he called it:

Instruction for the Ignorant, Being a Salve to Cure that Great Want of Knowledge which so much Reigns in Both Young and Old, Prepared and Presented to Them in a Plain and Easy Dialogue, Fitted to the Capacity of the Weakest.

Don't you love the titles they gave books in the seventeenth century? Well, that was Bunyan's Catechism.

Mercy then is pursued by a man called Mr. Brisk — and give me sixty seconds on this little point and we'll bring it to a close. But this is a wonderful section. It tells us a lot about courtship and marriage, and a Puritan view of marriage. You know it's often said [and Ligon may help me out here]...it was a biographer of Luther, I think, who once said that “we fall in love in order to get married, but they got married in order to fall in love.” Well, I think you see that here so eloquently.

Mr. Brisk sees that Mercy is always working, and thinks that she'd make a good wife. And when Mercy asks the other women about this man, they say about him that he pretends to religion but does not know its power. And then she says, “I will look no more on him; for I purpose never to have a Clog in my Soul.” It's a lesson about courtship. Whatever the outward appearance of this man (and at first she was attracted to him), the fact that he has not the soul of the matter in him...for Mercy that's the end of the matter. She will not have anything more to do with him, and the reason is because her sister married badly and unwisely, and her husband turned her out of his doors.

Now the boy Samuel, first of all, gets ill. You remember right back at the beginning of the story, just as they were entering the Wicket Gate, they picked some fruit that was overhanging a Garden where the mastiff dogs were. They shouldn't have done that, and it's returning now to haunt them. And we'll pick up next week this wonderful little tale about a physician called Skill, who brings to the women some tablets that cures them. And the tablets are made from the flesh and blood of Christ, that the sins of these boys are cured by the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. She orders from Skill twelve boxes of these tablets, because as a mother she knows that she's going to need these again with her four boys.

Well, next week we'll take the journey on to the very edge of the City of Vanity.

Let's pray together.

Lord our God, we thank You for all of Your mercies to us, and we thank You for this tale that Bunyan tells from it. We thank you for the insights that he gives to us of those pastoral lessons which Your word teaches. Bless them to our soul, we pray. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please stand; receive the Lord's benediction.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

[Congregation sings *The Doxology*]

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