

Lesson Twenty-One

TIMOROUS AND MISTRUST

We resume our study on Pilgrim's Progress. We left the Christian last week right in the midst of the Hill of Difficulty. That is a long time to leave anyone there in difficulties, but sometime we have that to occur in our life. As Christians, we encounter difficulties in our Christian experience, and they are not always of the nature that will enable them to soon leave. Sometimes those difficulties stay with us for days, weeks and months until finally the Lord grants relief from them through His grace.

In reviewing our last week's study, we found that the Christian was walking down the pathway of the cross, or self-denial, with the two false pilgrims named Formalist and Hypocrisy, and they came to the Hill of Difficulty. The way of the cross led right up over that hill. When the two false pilgrims saw how difficult it was going to be, they took the easiest courses, as always the false pilgrims will do. They will look for the easiest way to get out of a given circumstance. However, the true Pilgrim looked at the hill and saw that the way of the cross led right up over that hill in the path of obedience, and therefore he stayed on that path. We found that he stopped at the bottom of the hill and drank at the spring which represented a clear understanding of the pure doctrine of the gospel of God's grace. That simply taught us that whenever we encounter any difficulty, we must go afresh again to the spring of the doctrine of God's pure grace in the gospel in order to enable us to go through that particular difficulty.

The Christian went on the way up the hill. In the midst of that difficulty we found that God has a place of ease, an arbor, or a place of rest whereby He encourages and strengthens the cast-down, discouraged, despondent spirit of a Christian who is encountering difficulties. We pointed out some of those difficulties last week. They might be the loss of a loved one or some financial setback. They might be some injury to one's pride, or whatever it might be that would cause us to have difficulties in our life. But in the midst of the Hill of Difficulty God measures out grace sufficient to go with that particular trial. He has promised that with any temptation we are placed in, He **"will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."** (I Corinthians 10:13). He gives more grace, and even when the great Apostle Paul asked for God to remove the difficulty in his life, to enable him to

be a better Christian and to serve the Lord better, (II Corinthians 12:7) he received the answer, "No, this is where I want you to serve me, and My grace will be sufficient for you in the midst of that particular circumstance or difficulty." But then something happened, and that is where we left off last week. Now follow me carefully, even when God grants grace when we are going through a difficulty, it is to restore and strengthen our spirits, but it is not to relieve us of our duty. This is a danger. Whenever God blesses us and makes that difficulty become a time of ease, there is another danger to watch out for, and Bunyan brings this out. I will begin reading tonight as we find him here in the middle of the Hill of Difficulty.

Now about the midway to the top of the hill was a pleasant arbour, made by the Lord of the hill, for the refreshment of weary travellers. Thither, therefore Christian got, where also he sat down to rest him: then he pulled his roll out of his bosom, and read therein to his comfort;

Now, remember the roll was his assurance of his acceptance into the Celestial City. Then we read:

he also now began afresh to take a review of the coat or garment that was given to him as he stood by the cross.

What is he doing? In the midst of difficulty, he is reexamining afresh his salvation experience with Jesus Christ. That is what difficulties ought to do to us, beloved, that when difficulties come, it ought to cause us to sit down and examine afresh the gospel of Jesus Christ to see the assurance that it gives, and to see the coat of righteousness which we have. So rather than moaning and complaining about difficulties, difficulties can even be a blessing in disguise. As Christian is sitting there, we read,

Thus pleasing himself a while, he at last fell into a slumber, and thence into a fast sleep, which detained him in that place until it was almost night; and in his sleep his roll fell out of his hand.

Now this may sound strange to some of you, particularly if you have not been in the Lord very long. One of the easiest places to become spiritually drowsy is in the study of the Word. One of the easiest places for a preacher to backslide is when he is going through college or seminary. When you are exposed to the Word day in and day out, and you receive so much refreshment and understanding of it, if you are not careful, you will go to sleep right in the

midst of all of that. This can also happen to church members. If you sit in your Sunday School class or under your pastor's teaching day after day, week after week, having the word of God given to you to refresh your soul, you might say, "This is helping me in

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my difficulties." However, remember God is only giving you that time of refreshment to strengthen your spirits, not to make you lazy in your duties before God. Do you see that? In other words, because you receive some refreshment from the Lord, do not think that it is alright to let up in your Bible study, prayer, and in your sharing of what God is doing in your life to others. No, God refreshes us in order that we might be strengthened from times of discouragement, but don't use these seasons of refreshing to become drowsy spiritually. Watch yourself because that can happen to you. I found it happening to me in Bible college. We had classes for about six hours a day, one class right after another listening to those teachers breaking the Word of God, showing you things out of the Bible that you had never seen before. I just became dependent entirely upon the professors and teachers, and sort of indifferent in my own spiritual life and the duties that God had for me. It can happen to a preacher, it can happen to you as a layman. So watch carefully that you don't go to sleep in the midst of the Hill of Difficulty.

When Christian went to sleep, his role fell out of his hand. Remember his role represents his assurance. We won't be dealing with this tonight, but Lord willing, we will cover it in our next setting because Christian is going to go up the hill, and he is going to run into a problem. Then he is going to find that he has lost his assurance of acceptance with God. If that has never happened to you, then be patient, that can happen to a Christian. Be patient with someone who says this has happened, and don't try to advise them like this. "Don't you believe the Bible? Don't you know the Bible says that when a person has truly accepted Christ, that he will be accepted? There is no reason for you to question or to doubt." However, it is possible for a true Christian to so go through circumstances in life that for a temporary period of time he may lose assurance of his acceptance with God. The Bible says, **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."** (I Corinthians 10:12). So be patient when you run across someone like that, and rather than being extra strict with them because you think they are doubting the Lord, be patient with them because you may go through that same thing. You have to sit where a person sits to really appreciate

what they are experiencing. So be patient. So we are not going to deal with how Christian recovers his roll now, we will have to let that go until next week. We do want to proceed now as he goes on up the hill and runs into two more characters that Bunyan develops for us. Their names are Timorous and Mistrust, and I will read to you the account of them in the book.

Now when he was got up to the top of the hill, there came two men running amain; the name of the one was Timorous, and the other Mistrust: to whom Christian said, Sirs, what's the matter? you run the wrong way. Timorous answered, That they were going to the city of Zion, and had got up that difficult place: but, said he, the farther we go, the more danger we meet with, wherefore we turned, and are going back again.

Yes, said Mistrust, for just before us lie a couple of lions in the way, whether sleeping or waking we know not; and we could not think, if we came within reach, but they would presently pull us in pieces.

Then said Christian, You make me afraid; but whither shall I fly to be safe? If I go back to mine own country, that is prepared for fire and brimstone, and I shall certainly perish there; if I can get to the celestial city, I am sure to be in safety there: I must venture. To go back is nothing but death; to go forward is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it: I will yet go forward. So Mistrust and Timorous ran down the hill, and Christian went on his way.

Here are two more characters that Bunyan is developing for us. Who are Timorous and Mistrust? They are two more false pilgrims like Formalist and Hypocrisy. You have to use your imagination. They are professing to be in the way of the cross, and yet because they have certain characteristics about them, eventually things happen that reveal to them and to others that they are not true Christians. So Timorous and Mistrust are false Pilgrims in the way.

Now what was their trouble? They had already gone up part of the Hill of Difficulty. They almost reached the top where there is a castle. We will be spending a few weeks in that castle in the next lessons. That castle is called the "House Beautiful" and it stands for identification with the visible church, or with a body of Christians. Christian is going to find a lot of refreshment in the House Beautiful, but just before you get into this public profession of your Christianity, Timorous and Mistrust see some lions or dangers in the way. Bunyan was

merely saying that in the time he lived for anyone to publicly profess faith in the pure doctrine of grace, they were immediately exposed to persecution by the state religion and by the government of the state. So there were many people in that day who had a tendency to profess Christianity, but they would not profess it openly because of the persecution associated with it. So Bunyan was describing for us these types of people. They are very timid and are not very trustful. We will run across some individuals later on in the story, one who was named "Little Faith," who is a true Christian even though he just has a little faith. But here are some individuals who are but professors, and when the real danger of persecution comes, they run back down the hill.

When Christian got close to the top of the hill, he met these two false believers coming down the hill. Christian asked Timorous, ***"what's the matter? You run the wrong way. Timorous answered, that they were going to the city of Zion and had got up that difficult place; but, said he, the farther we go, the more danger we meet with."*** This tells us that even a person who is not a true Christian can make it through some difficult times in life. They may experience the loss of a loved one. People who are not Christian have people die who are close to them, and they go on, don't they? But there is one thing that a false Pilgrim will not tolerate, and that is, he will not tolerate persecution and danger. Because of this, we will read the account given in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Matthew regarding our Lord's account of the parable of the sower and the stony ground hearers. ***"He that received the seed in the stony places, the same is he that heareth the word and at once with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but he endures for awhile, but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."*** This is describing a "Mistrustful" person who cannot truly trust the gospel. He cannot truly commit the safety of his soul unto the hands of Jesus Christ. The mistrustful people have tried to the best of their ability, but they have not been rooted into the grace of God. They are in just a shallow ground. As a result, when persecution or tribulation arises, they wither and fall by the wayside.

This, I think can best be expressed to you young people here this evening. Here is a young Christian, and he is just about to make his public profession of faith when he sees an acquaintance who professes to be a Christian, but now he is running back the other way. If you see that happening, don't let that discourage you. It could if you did not understand what was going on. The other day, I heard a fellow tell about a friend who was excited about

going off to college, and he was so excited to get into those college classes. He went through the enrollment courses, and he met this fellow coming out of the Dean's office. This fellow was sort of uncouth and not very well dressed. He came up to him and said, "Say, where are you going?" He said, "I am starting my freshman year in college." The fellow said, "Oh well, I have been there three years and it hasn't done me any good, I'm quitting!" Now, you talk about knocking the wind out of your sails! This young man is thrilled about the aspects of college life, and here comes a fellow going back. Now listen, if you are a young Christian, and somebody who you highly regard in the Lord lets you down, and he goes back into the world, maybe committing some terrible sin, don't let that cause you to stumble. When I left California to attend Bible school and prepare for the ministry, my pastor in California said this to me and I will never forget it. He said, "Jim, don't ever put your trust in any man, for man will always let you down." I have found that to be true. I know that I have let many people down, because I am a human being, but at the same time, men and women I have looked to in the ministry have disappointed me. Some of them have completely denied the Lord and are living in indescribable situations. What are they doing? They are going back. Not all of them are non-Christians, but evidently some of them are giving evidence and reason to question whether they were ever truly in the Lord or not.

The point is this. As you are going up the Hill of Difficulty, and you are about to make a public profession and identify with Christ, you may find people going back. You come to church Sunday after Sunday, and you see people joining the church, and you look around and notice that some are not there anymore. They don't want to come anymore and are going back. Don't let that become a stumbling block to you as a young Christian. Don't let that discourage you. Go on and stay in the middle of the path of obedience, and God will grant you grace to enable you to live a Christian life. Don't put your hope of a Christian life in some man, some preacher, some individual that you look to because sooner or later that person will do something that will let you down. If all your hope is in some person, then you also will falter by the wayside. So Timorous and Mistrust left because of the danger. Then Mistrust runs on down the road and says, "Yes there are a couple of lions up there in the way and we don't know whether they are awake or asleep, but we know if we go on, they will surely eat us up."

Now, we will skip over and read a portion after Timorous and Mistrust have already gone down the road. Christian has gone back and recovered his role, and he is heading on

toward the House Beautiful. We read:

Now also he remembered the story that Mistrust and Timorous told him of, how they were frighted with the sight of the lions. They said Christian to himself again, These beasts range in the night for their prey; and if they should meet with me in the dark, how should I shift them?

At this time, Bunyan was writing about some of the dark places of his life. When you become drowsy, that is when the devil comes around. When you become sort of backslidden and indifferent toward the things of God, that is when the devil will attack you, and he may get you in a darkened place. Christian wanted to get to the top of the hill before night came so he could be with the fellowship of Christian people. He said, "I've got to get on. How will I make it being left out here in the dark, the lions will tear me to pieces?"

Thus he went on his way, But while he was bewailing his unhappy miscarriage, he lift up his eyes, and behold there was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was Beautiful, and it stood by the highway-side.

So I saw in my dream, that he made haste, and went forward, that if possible he might get lodging there. Now before he had gone far, he entered into a very narrow passage, which was about a furlong off of the Porter's lodge; and looking very narrowly before him as he went, he espied two lions in the way. Now thought he, I see the dangers that Mistrust and Timorous were driven back by.

But listen to this:

(The lions were chained, but he saw not the chains.) Then he was afraid, and thought also himself to go back after them, for he thought nothing but death was before him.

You see, here is what can happen because of persecution. I remember a man in St. Louis that had an awful time in his Christian profession. He was a Roman Catholic, and made a profession of faith in Christ, but he just would not submit to baptism. Why? It was because all of his family were Roman Catholics, and he knew that they would disown him when he was baptized. You see, like Timorous, he was exhibiting hesitancy. I have prayed for this man that he would go ahead and openly profess what he says he has done.

Anyway, here is Christian who has reached this point, and because of this danger and difficulty that he is in, he is about ready to go back.

But the Porter at the lodge whose name is Watchful, perceiving that Christian made a halt as if he would go back, cried unto him, saying, Is thy strength so small? Fear not the lions, for they are chained, and are placed there for trial of faith where it is; and for discovery of those that have none;

Do you see that? God says in the Bible that our faith is going to be tried. What are these dangers out here? What are the lions? What are these testings and trials? They are put there to reveal those who truly have faith and those who do not. Then here is the answer:

keep in the midst of the path, and no hurt shall come unto thee. Then he went on, trembling for fear of the lions; but taking good heed to the directions of the Porter, he heard them roar, but they did him no harm.

Now I want to spend the rest of the message dealing with something very practical. We have seen three individuals who go up the hill and they all see the lions in the way. I want to ask you a question. Do you ever have any lions in your way? Are there some lions in your path right now? Are there some things that are about to cause you to halt in your Christian growth, in your Christian progress? Look out there at the two lions sitting beside the way, and right behind them is the House Beautiful. The path of obedience goes right between those two lions. What was Mistrust and Timorous' problem? They saw the lions, but they couldn't see that the lions were chained. Do you get the picture? Do you see what God is setting forth here? God will not allow any circumstance to occur in the true Christian's life that will go beyond what is referred to as His permissive will. No matter how loud the lions roar, He has them chained. What are the chains? They are the decrees of God. You ask, "Pastor Gables, what do you mean by God's decrees?" We mean those things that God has ordered shall come to pass. Do you realize that God has the devil chained through the gospel in the hearts of His people? Do you realize that? The devil and all of his foes can go no further in touching a Job than what God permits him to go. Do you have a dog and have had him on a leash to keep him out of a chicken coop? Dogs are usually raring to get to those chickens. I remember back when I was a boy, my father had some bird dogs, and they got loose one day in Grandma's chicken yard. That was a sight that I never will forget. There were dead chickens everywhere. Dad's dogs got loose off of the chain. But listen, through

the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the power of the devil is broken in the life of the believer. God has him chained, but when he begins to roar, it causes us to worry and fear. Listen to me, the devil can go no further than what the decree of God allows

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him to go. Knowing this is what helps us to go on in the path of obedience. When the devil is roaring on both sides of our path, and it looks like he is about to destroy us, we must look to God, believing that He is the One who is in control. We must walk right on through the path of obedience, and we will see that there was no reason to really worry about all those things, because God was in control of the situation. How many of you have had something you knew was going to happen that you just dreaded and fumed about for two weeks, and then it never did happen? Have any of you experienced something like that? I just went through something like this. We had to pay our quarterly estimate on our taxes, and we fretted about how we were going to do this? The lions were roaring, and I thought, "oh me" of little faith. But God just took us right through that, and He took care of the funds that were due. We saw the lions roar and then we saw that God had chained them. He had them chained all the time. When we look at things far off, and see those lions up there that look like they are about ready to devour us, and then when we go on by faith and get to that point, then we see that those problems and those dangers have been chained by God. They go no further than what God allows for our own edification. Maybe He wants us to be humbled, like we prayed about a moment ago. He may humble us by putting a lion in our path, and we think he is going to destroy us. The Porter (the Holy Spirit who is watching from the House Beautiful) cries out just then, "Wait, is your strength so small? Where is your faith? Come on, stay in the middle of the path for the lions are chained." We even read in the book of Revelation that for a thousand years the devil is going to be chained. (Revelation 20). Now, I know a lot of people take that in a literal sense, that God is going to take a ten-foot iron chain and put it on a spirit. I don't know how you would do that, but what is that chain talking about? It is merely that God has decreed that for a thousand years the devil is not going to deceive the nations. He has restrained him with His chain of His decree that the devil shall go no further than He allows, and he is not going to deceive the nations any more for a thousand years. So now, in your life and mine as believers, having been joined through true faith in Christ, Jesus has said, **"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."** (John 12:31). So let us stay on that straight and narrow path. Your lion may be

different than my lion, and yours may be different than your neighbor's, but we all have certain lions and dangers that we worry about. When those lions roar, whatever those lions may be, we wonder how they are going to be taken care of. Let the lions roar, because they will go no further than what God's chain has decreed they shall go.

Do you remember old Job when the devil came before God and said, "Look at that hypocrite down there, you have a hedge built around him where I can't get to him. If you will take that hedge away, he will curse you to your face." (Job chapter 1). So what did God say? "I will give you twenty feet of chain." Are you following me? The devil could do anything he wanted except he couldn't take Job's life. God just let out a little more chain in Job's life and didn't tell Job about it. Do you wonder what was going on in Job's life? The devil and God were having a battle on a football field of Job's heart. One time the football was being kicked this way, and one time that way. They were using Job's heart for the field, but they just never bothered to tell Job what was going on. Do you ever feel like that is going on in your life sometimes? Satan said, "You've got a hypocrite there, he doesn't love you because you are protecting him and I can't get to him." God says, "Alright, I will give you five foot of chain and I will show you that he is a true believer." So He lets the devil loose. What is Job's hope? Is his hope in the free will of the devil or in the free will of man, that the devil or man are now running the show? No, Job said, **"though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him."** (Job 13:15). Do you see that? God is in control of the whole thing. The devil is not even here in that sense. You read the book of Job and see how many references that Job gives unto Satan. Even though it was Satan who destroyed his home and took the lives of his children, what does Job say? **"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed by the name of the Lord."** (Job 1:21). The Lord is in control of all this, and that is what enabled Job to listen to the Porter (Holy Spirit) instead of what his wife said, **"Curse God and die."** I imagine old Job thought that was maybe the best way to go, but suddenly there was a call of the Holy Spirit who said, "No, stay in the middle of the path, Job," and he went on saying, **"Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him."** Now when you talk about humiliating Satan, you are talking about humiliating the foes of God. Satan's power was broken because of God's grace working in Job's life, so that even though the lions were roaring, Job walked right on because he heard the call of the Porter. "Don't stop, they are chained, they can go no further than what God allows them to go.

Now lets get down to something practical in your life and mine, and I hope you will

understand what I am about to say. None of us are perfect in the sense that we have a perfect faith. We all have such a weak faith that we have to repent of our very believing. All of us fall and come short of what we ought to be and how we ought to trust God in every given circumstance. But let me share something with you, and ask you this question. Do you parents fume and fret day by day about whether or not something is going to happen to your kids? Are you robbed of your present joy worrying about your kids or maybe whether your husband or wife will die today? Do you go through your whole life like that? That is a miserable way to have to live. Don't you see that God has these things in His hands? These things are out of our control, and they are in God's hands. At that time when these things happen, we can be enabled by God's grace to sit down and say, "The Lord gave, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." God is in control of the chain. He is in control of the lions. He will grant grace to enable us to live through that particular period when it comes, rather than having to continually face each day with worry and skepticism as to what possibly might happen when all types of lions start roaring out here. `

I think I was about eleven years old when I began to think about what would happen if my Dad would die, and what would happen if both my Mother and my Dad were both taken? What would I do? I began to reflect upon those things. But, young person, if you are a Christian, you don't have to live each day of your life in fear and anxiety about things that might occur, because they are not in your hands. They are in the hands of the omnipotent God who is ruling over all. The lions may roar, and you may think you may never go on, and yet God is controlling these things. Don't be mistrustful of Him. Put your trust in God who rules over all, and it is God who will bring us safely home by His decrees of mercy which He has not revealed to us. You see Ladies and Gentlemen and Young People, God has not given us a road map of what is going to occur one after another in our lives. We have to live by faith and put our faith in the God who is ruling over all. So let the lion roar, and commit those children who are so precious that God has given to you unto the Lord. Do you not have to do that when your youngsters go overseas in the service of our country? It doesn't mean that you won't have any moments of anxiety or any midnight oil having to be burned in the prayer closet. However, my friend, when a mother has to commit her child unto the hands of God because he is in a foreign country and it is out of her hands, then about the only thing she can do is to go before God and say, "God, you gave them to me, I have taught them the gospel, and now they are yours. You've got to watch over them." By doing so, you are trusting them to whatever God sees is best. You young parents here this evening, may God

help you do that. You ask, "what would happen if God took me on now, and left my two little ones?" Remember, the Lord who feeds the birds of the air and the foxes, also takes care of the human children who are His. David said **"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."** (Psalm 37:25). Do you see that? God takes care of His own. Let the lions roar, and let the Mistrusts and Timorouses run back saying we don't want anything to do with this thing called Christianity any more, but you stay in the middle of the path. Listen to the Holy Spirit who is saying "Come on, come on, the lions are chained son, they are chained daughter, and they will go no further than what the loving heavenly Father permits them to go."

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we commit this lesson to You this evening. We do ask that if there are those here who have lions in their path right now, maybe it is a loved one in need of prayer, maybe it is a financial need, or maybe it is some sin they are wrestling with in their life, God we would pray that You might reveal unto them, that through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that those things are chained, and that as we walk through the path of obedience, these things cannot hurt or harm us, but that as Sampson walked by the path that day and he saw the lion there, and he saw that it had killed one of the men in the story, yet later when he came back and that lion was dead and defeated, he looked in the midst of it and there was honey flowing out of it. Father, I would pray that you might show us that through the dangers and experiences that we have that out of those very things that we worry the most about, that honey and the sweetness of the pure gospel comes forth to restore our soul. Help us to see that in the packages of danger that we encounter that when they are unwrapped, we see the grace of God is found there in Jesus Christ. Apply your balm in Gilead to any seeking soul here tonight, unbeliever or believer, that would enable them to go on and follow You in the light of the gospel, for we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.