

“The Pilgrims Progress”
“The Most Dreadful Mistake”
(Matthew 7:21-23)

Introduction:

1. For The Last Couple Of Weeks:
 - In Our Series Through The Pilgrims Progress:
 - We Read About:
 - The Long-Anticipated Arrival To:
 - And Entrance In:
 - The Celestial City - By Our Two Pilgrims:
 - Christian And Hopeful!
 - And - If *We* Were Writing The Story:
 - We Might Have Thought That That:
 - Would Have Been A Good Place To End!
2. But - That's *Not* How:
 - John Bunyan Thought It Best To End!
 - Because - In The Final Paragraph:
 - We Discover The True Mission:
 - As Well As:
 - The True Heart:
 - Of Our Puritan Guide!
 - You See - Before John Bunyan:
 - Was Ever A Famous Author:
 - He Was A Country Pastor:
 - In The Old Back-Water Town Of Bedford!
 - And What We Will Read Tonight:
 - Reflects His Pastor's Heart:
 - For Pilgrims Who May Not Finish Their Pilgrimage At The Destination:
 - They Thought Belonged To Them!
 - But Instead - Hear The Fateful Words Of Jesus:
 - “I Never Knew You!”
3. So - Lets Turn Back In Our Editions Of The Pilgrims Progress:
 - To Page 102 - Where - On The Second To The Last Line:
 - We Read: *“Now While I Was Gazing Upon All These Things, I Turned My Back To Look Back, And Saw Ignorance Come Up To The Side Of The River!”*
 - Remember Him?
 - Read Through Page 103: *“Then I Saw That There Was A Way To Hell, Even From The Gates Of Heaven, As Well As From The City Of Destruction! So I Awoke, And Behold It Was A Dream!”*
 - And That's The End Of The Pilgrim's Progress!
 - But - Its Not The Ending:
 - We Would Have Expected:
 - Or Even Wanted:
 - From A Book Of Fiction:
 - Is It?
 - But - It's The Way That:
 - Pastor Bunyan Wanted To End It:
 - So As To Prick The Hearts Of All Those Who Read His Story!
 - So That We Might All - In The Words Of Peter:
 - “Give Diligence To Make Your Calling And Election Sure!” (2 Peter 1:10)
4. Because - When It Is Your Turn - And:
 - When It Is Your Time:
 - To Knock At The Gate:
 - Of The Celestial City:
 - You Do Not Want To Make The Same Mistake:
 - That Ignorance Made!

- And - What Was That Mistake?
 - In The Words Of Commentator George Cheever:
 - “The Most Dreadful Mistake” Is:
 - To “Dream On Of Heaven – Only To Awake And Find Yourself In Hell!”
 - What A Dreadful Mistake Indeed!

5. And Yet - It Is A Mistake:

- That Jesus Himself Anticipated!
 - Let’s First Turn In Our Bibles To:
 - Matthew 7:21-23 - Where Jesus Said:
 - “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. / Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? / And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity!”
- Note Carefully In These Verses:
 - That The Person Who Approaches Jesus:
 - To “Enter Into The Kingdom Of Heaven”:
 - Thinks That:
 - He Knows Him! He:
 - Thinks That:
 - He’s Serving Him! He:
 - Thinks That:
 - He’s Following Him!
 - He Even Says Unto Jesus:
 - “Lord, Lord!”
 - But - According To Jesus:
 - If That’s As Far As It Goes:
 - He Knows Nothing Of Him!
 - And The Gates Of The Kingdom:
 - Will Remain Closed - While:
 - He Is Escorted To Hell:
 - Where He Truly Belongs!

6. Now - That Not A Feel-Good End:

- To The Story!
 - But - Bunyan Believed:
 - It Was The Most-Necessary End!
- Because - As Bunyan Himself Would Write In Another Place:
 - “There is no such loss, as to the nature of loss, as is the loss of the soul; for he that hath lost his soul has lost himself. . . . A man may lose his wife, his children, his estate, his liberty, and his life, and have all made up again. But when a man has lost himself, his soul, then all is gone to all intents and purposes!”
- So - What Caused Ignorance:
 - To Make This “Most Dreadful Mistake?”
 - And - How Can We Make Sure That:
 - We Don’t?
 - This Is What I’d Like For Us To Consider In The Rest Of Our Time Tonight!

* First - He Had:

1. No Encouragement In Life:

- As To The Condition Of His Soul:
 - And So - He Had No Encouragement:
 - And No Assurance:
 - At His Death!
 - Bunyan Gave This Man The Name:
 - “Ignorance” - Not Because:
 - He Was *Ignorant* Of The Truth:
 - But Because:
 - He *Ignored* The Truth!
 - So - He Was:

- “Willingly Ignorant” - As So Many Are:
 - Even Today!
- He Willingly Ignored The Warnings:
 - Of The Word Of God:
 - Thinking They Were Meant:
 - For Others - And Not For:
 - Himself!
 - Instead - When He Came Up To The Gate:
 - And Saw The Words Of Blessing:
 - Written In Letters Of Gold:
 - He Automatically Thought:
 - That They Belonged To Him!
 - But - He Was Sadly & Tragically:
 - Mistaken! Also:
 - He Willingly Ignored The Witnesses:
 - Of The Word Of God:
 - Including The Strong Testimonies:
 - Of Christian & Hopeful:
 - That We Heard With Our Own Ears:
 - In Those Deep Paragraphs As They Were Walking Along The Pathway Together!
 - Earlier - Christian Even Warned Him:
 - About Approaching The Gate Of Heaven Unprepared! He Said:
 - “But Thou Camest Not In At The Wicket-Gate! Thou Camest In Hither Through That Same Crooked Lane! And Therefore, I Fear, However Thou Mayest Think Of Thyself, When The Reckoning Day Shall Come, Thou Wilt Have Laid To Thy Charge That Thou Art A Thief And A Robber, Instead Of Getting Admittance Into The City!”
 - Well - That Day Of Reckoning Had Arrived!
 - And Ignorance Remained Wilfully Ignorant:
 - Of Both The Savior & Himself!
 - Because Also:
 - He Willingly Ignored The Weakness:
 - Of His Soul - As Revealed:
 - Through The Word Of God!
 - If You Remember:
 - Ignorance Was From The “Country Of Conceit!”
 - And So - His Character:
 - Reflected The Character:
 - Of The Prince Of That Country:
 - Prince Lucifer!
 - Turn With Me To Isaiah 14:
 - Where - In 14:12-14:
 - The Words Of His Prince:
 - Were The Feelings Of His Own Heart!
 - “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! / For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: / I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High!”
 - Like Lucifer - Ignorance Thought He Had A Claim On Heaven!
 - But - He Was Never Convinced Of His Own Weakness & Of His Own Wickedness:
 - And So - He Never Sought For Salvation In Christ Alone! And So:
 - In 14:15 - The Lord Says To Him:
 - “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit!”
 - And So He Was!
 - Ignorance Had A False Assurance Of Heaven:
 - Because It Was A Self-Assurance!

- His Faith Was In:
 - Who *He* Was - And In:
 - What *He* Did:
 - Instead Of Who *Christ* Was & What *Christ* Did!
- His Faith Was In:
 - His Own Merits:
 - Instead Of The Mercy Of Christ!
- And So - From The Word Of God:
 - He Had No True Encouragement:
 - As To The Condition Of His Soul!
 - Not In Life, Nor At Death!
 - And That Was A “Most Dreadful Mistake!”

* But Then - Second - He Had:

2. *No Escort In Life:*

- And So - He Had No Escort:
 - At His Death!
 - Well - He Had One Escort:
 - And That Was In The Ferry Of:
 - Vain-Hope - Which Carried Him Across The River Of Death:
 - “Without Half The Difficulty” Of Christian & Hopeful!
 - It Was A Fairly Smooth Ride Across For Him!
 - But - As We Read:
 - That Is No Guarantee Of Heaven!
 - Since Even Asaph Understood That Many Times - For The Wicked - “There Are No Bands In Their Death!” (Psalm 73:4)
 - Which Means That - At Death - Many Have “No Fears, Doubts, And Sorrows, No Terror From The Enemy!”
 - Why? Because The Devil Already Has Them:
 - Right Where He Wants Them!
 - But - Apart From:
 - His Ferry Crossing:
 - Ignorance Had No Other Escort:
- Across The River!
 - When Ignorance:
 - Started To Ascend The Hill:
 - He Did So:
 - Alone!
 - But - When Christian & Hopeful:
 - When Up The Hill:
 - They Were Guided By Two Angels:
 - Whose Held Them Up:
 - By Their Arms!
 - When Ignorance:
 - Came Up To The Gate:
 - He Did So:
 - Alone!
 - Yet - When Christian & Hopeful:
 - Went Up To The Gate:
 - They Were Encouraged By The Angels:
 - With The Hopes Of Heaven!
 - When Ignorance:
 - Knocked At The Gate:
 - He Did So:
 - Alone!
 - Not Even Christian & Hopeful:
 - Dared To Knock!
 - But Ignorance thought That His “Entrance” Would Be “Quickly

Administered!”

- But Ignorance Remained:
 - Outside The Gate:
 - Alone! And The Reason For That:
 - Was Because:
- Before The River:
 - In His Life:
 - He Had No Escort!
 - He Had No “Certificate” / No Proof Of His Citizenship In The Celestial City!
 - No Passport Stamped With The Approval Of God!
 - Turn With Me Now To 1 John - Where In 1 John 3:24:
 - We Are Told:
 - “And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us!”
 - And In Romans 8:9 - Paul Writes:
 - “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his!”
 - The Seal Of God:
 - Is His Spirit!
 - And Without *His* Escort In Life:
 - You Are Not Ready For Death!
 - In 1 John 3:9-10:
 - We Are Told:
 - “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. / In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother!”
 - And In 1 John 5:1 - John Also Writes:
 - “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him!”
 - The Birth-Marks Of Christians:
 - Include Faith & Obedience & Love!
 - And We Can Add To These The Rest Of The “Fruit Of The Spirit” In Galatians 5!
 - But - Without Being Escorted In Life:
 - With This Fruit:
 - You Are Not Ready For Death!
 - And So - When Ignorance Was Asked:
 - To Produce His Certificate - The Very Proof:
 - Of His Citizenship In Heaven:
 - He “Fumbled In His Bosom For One, And Found None!”
 - And Since He Had Been:
 - All Alone *Before* He Crossed The River:
 - In His Life:
 - He Was Left All Alone:
 - Even At His Death!
 - And That Too Was A “Most Dreadful Mistake!”
 - A Mistake He Didn’t Have To Make!
 - If He Had Just Swallowed His Pride And Trusted In His Savior’s:
 - Effectual Call To Find “Rest Unto His Soul!”

* And Then - Third - Since He Had:

3. No Entrance In Life:

- He Would Find No Entrance:
 - Into Heaven:
 - At His Death!
- Turn With Be Back To:
 - Luke 13:23-28 - Where Bunyan Saw Ignorance Being Described By Christ:
 - “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, / Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall

not be able. / When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: / Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. / But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all [ye] workers of iniquity. / There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you [yourselves] thrust out!”

- Isn't This What Ignorance Said:

- When He Arrived At The Gate?

- He Told The Gatekeepers:

- “I Have Eat And Drank In The Presence Of The King!”

- He Claimed To Be:

- A Friend Of The King!

- He Claimed To Have Enjoyed:

- The Fellowship Of The King!

- And Even More:

- He Claimed To Be:

- A Follower Of The King, When He Added:

- “And He Has Taught In Our Streets!”

- But - All Of These Claims:

- Proved Nothing:

- Except That He Thought More Of:

- His Own Importance & Influence:

- Than The King!

- And So - When Jesus Came:

- And Knocked On His Door:

- As We Find In Revelation 3:20:

- He Never Let Him In!

- If Only Ignorance Had Answered:

- When Jesus Called!

- “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me!”

- But Since There Was:

- No Entrance Given:

- *To* Christ!

- There Would Be:

- No Entrance Given:

- *By* Christ!

- Instead - There Will Be That:

- Dreadful Sound Of Rejection:

- “Depart From Me, Ye Workers Of Iniquity!”

- No Entrance *To* Christ:

- In Life - Will Lead To:

- No Entrance *By* Christ:

- At Death!

- And That Is:

- A “Most Dreadful Mistake” Indeed!

Conclusion:

1. Now Even Though:

- To The Narrator Of Our Story:

- All This Was But A Dream:

- To Bunyan, It Was A Dream:

- “About The Deepest Of Realities! Biblical Reality, Moral Reality, Eternal Reality, Soul Reality!” (Barry Horner)

- And - As John Kelman Once Wrote:

- “That Dream Of His Was And Still Remains Truer Than Most Men's Waking Thoughts!”

- And So - We Must Not Make:
 - The Dreadful Mistake:
 - Of Thinking Of The Pilgrims Progress As Just Another:
 - Fantasy Tale Or Work Of Fiction!
2. Because - It Addresses:
- The Most Serious Issues:
 - Of Life And Death!
 - And - To Miss Jesus Christ:
 - As “The Way, The Truth, And The Life”:
 - Is The “Most Dreadful Mistake” You Can Ever Make!
3. So - If You Wonder:
- About The Condition Of Your Own Soul:
 - How You Can Prevent:
 - This Same Mistake?
 - I’d Like To Close:
 - With These Words From George Cheever:
 - “There Is Safety Where Christ Is! There Is Safety Where There Is Watchfulness And Growth In Grace! There Is Safety Where There Is Much Secret Prayer! There Is Safety In Giving All Diligence To Make Your Calling And Election Sure! There Is Safety In Lying Low At The Feet Of The Savior! There Is Safety And Blessedness Unspeakable, Even Here, In A World Of Darkness And Trial!”
4. So - Make Sure Your Soul:
- Finds Its Rest And Safety:
 - Not In Any Part:
 - Of Yourself!
 - But Only:
 - In Your Savior!
 - And In This Way:
 - You Will Not Make:
 - The Same Dreadful & Fateful Mistake!

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