

## **Lesson Eighteen**

### **SIMPLE, SLOTH & PRESUMPTION**

Tonight we resume our study of the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is the story of a person who has come to realize that there is more to this life than just living few days, then dying, and that is the end of it. He has come to see there is a life hereafter and that there is a path that he must tread to enter into that life. So we want to proceed in our journey to the point that he has reached. In our last setting we rejoiced with Christian as he finally reached the cross and saw what his Savior had done on his behalf, and we saw that with no self effort the guilt of his sin rolled off of his back, and rolled down into the sepulchre which, of course, stood for the tomb of Christ, never to be seen again. So Christian leaps for joy as the three Shining Ones, who represented the Trinity, came to him, and they each gave him a message. Then they gave him a role, some type of parchment, with a seal upon it. That role represented his assurance that he was one of God's children, and that he could then go on his journey.

Now tonight we come to a very interesting portion of the book when Christian leaves the cross and encounters three individuals. We want to read this account to you so listen carefully.

**I saw then in my dream that he went on thus, even until he came at a bottom, where he saw, a little out of the way, three men fast asleep, with fetters upon their heels. The name of the one was Simple, another Sloth, and the third Presumption.**

**Christian then seeing them lie in this case, went to them, if peradventure he might awake them, and cried, You are like them that sleep on the top of a mast, for the Dead Sea, is under you, a gulf that hath no bottom: awake, therefore, and come away; be willing also, and I will help you off with your irons. He also told them, If he that goeth about like a roaring lion comes by, you will certainly become a prey to his teeth." With that they looked upon him, and began to reply in this sort: Simple said, I see no danger. Sloth said, Yet a little more sleep. And Presumption said, Every tub must stand upon its own bottom. And so they lay down to sleep again, and Christian went on his way.**

**Yet he was troubled to think, that men in that danger should so little esteem the kindness of him that so freely offered to help them, both by**

**awakening of them, counseling of them, and proffering to help them off with their irons.**

We have seen several characters thus far that are now developing in the book. The main character, Pilgrim is fulfilling the title of the book because he is "making progress." He is not the same person that we saw when we first started out on the journey. He has been made anew. He is no longer troubled of mind, not assured where he was going, in tattered rags and burdened down with a load of sin, but now he is a new man. So he is making progress. After the cross he immediately comes upon three individuals whose names are Simple, Sloth, and Presumption. Who are these individuals? We see them laying sound asleep, and they are bound with chains about their feet. They are bound, but yet they do not recognize that. Simple, Sloth and Presumption are persons who characterize "religious indifference." They are entirely indifferent to the things about religion and the true gospel. They are like the pilgrim in that they are not far out of the path. We read that they are a little way out of the way. The way is Jesus Christ Himself. These are not atheists, but are people who are just a little way out of the way. These are those that you and I will come in contact with, usually day in and day out of our lives. They may be church members (no doubt Presumption is a church member), but they are people who are indifferent to the things of religion. They are not necessarily individuals who are atheistic or antagonistic toward religion, but they can just take it or leave it. They are just happy-go-lucky people who don't get excited about anything, whether it be religious or whether it isn't religious.

So Simple, Sloth and Presumption represent religious indifference, and Bunyan would have us to recognize this, so that we would be able to recognize individuals who characterize themselves in this way. In our next study, we will see two more false pilgrims who are entitled, Formalist and Hypocrisy. These are those who have been deceived by self into believing that they are religious. But Simple, Sloth and Presumption are just totally indifferent toward the gospel of Christ.

Christian sees them lying in this situation, and he tries to witness to them. This is what a new convert should do (an old convert for that matter.) It ought to trouble every true Christian when he sees people who are indifferent to the gospel of Jesus Christ. God help us to never become so hardened toward our fellow man when we see their pitiful condition, that

our heart does not go out to them, and we try to show them their need. So Christian tries to witness to all three of them and doesn't have any of them converted. Perhaps as a young Christian, that may have been your case. You were excited about your new-found faith and set out to witness to others, and no one showed any interest.

**Keep on witnessing, but recognize that there will not be any instant success apart from a Divine work of God opening the blinded eyes of Simple, Sloth and Presumption who continue to lay there and say, "We are in no danger."**

Notice that as you go through the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, you are not going to find any instant success stories. You are not going to find any of the so-called "evangelistic keys," to use that will give you all these special victories in your life. When you read a lot of books on witnessing today, they give you the impression that if you will just use this particular method, you can have 25 or 30 people a week converted to the Lord. Here is a very sincere young Christian. The first three people he witnesses to are totally indifferent toward the gospel. Don't let that discourage you. Let it even give you an increased burden as you see the blinded condition that other people are in. Keep on witnessing, but recognize that there will not be any instant success apart from a Divine work of God opening the blinded eyes of Simple, Sloth and Presumption who continue to lay there and say, "We are in no danger."

Now lets look closely at each of these individuals. Christian asks them, "**Why are you here like this?**" Don't you see what danger you are exposing yourselves to when he who goes about as a roaring lion comes by, you are going to be devoured!" That is a quotation from I Peter 5:8 in reference to the devil who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. These three persons are related to each other, and many of these people are found among us where the true gospel is preached. They hear, learn and will talk about the gospel. They may have some conviction of sin, but yet they are soon quieted down and satisfied. They cleave to the things of the world, and rest even more securely in Satan's bondage of their sin. They feel that they have professed religion and now they are secure in it. Remember, these people are not Atheists, but are people who are just a little bit out of the way. They might be likened to many of our modern day church members who at one time were excited, made a profession of faith, and joined a church, but they absolutely have no interest whatsoever in the things of the gospel. They are not IN the way, but out of the way. Although they are close, knowing how to talk about the gospel and about Christ, but they are

indifferent toward the things of Christ. They can take it or leave it.

Look at how they replied to Christian when he went over and began to witness to them. The first man named **"Simple"** says, **"I see no danger."** Christian replies to this man, "Don't you see what danger you are in? You are like someone sleeping on the mast of a sailing ship. If you try to sleep on that great big mast, it is a precarious situation and you are about to fall into the sea. You are exposing yourself to Satan himself who goes about as a roaring lion. Don't you see what danger you are in?" The reply is "I see no danger." What is Simple's problem? His problem is not that he is lacking in mentality. When we talk about a simple person, we are not talking about a person who is lacking in mental capacity or who doesn't have all of his mental faculties. The Bible describes to us what a "simple" person is. I want to read to you from the book of Proverbs 1:22-25; 29 **"How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"** (Now take note that "fools hate knowledge.") **"Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you, because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof . . . For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."**

The Bible describes a simple person as someone who utterly refuses to think. It isn't that he doesn't have a brain, it is just that he hates knowledge. He wants to remain simple. By that, God says, "I have come and offered understanding to you, I've tried to teach you, but you wanted nothing to do with it." That is a simple person, and he is in great danger. He is a person that you cannot get to think and take anything seriously. You try to give him a good book, and he has no time or interest in it. If you can get him to think on anything serious about this life, he has no time for it. He wants to remain just a simple, easy-going person thereby not having any problems. He looks about and sees the man who studies and has problems, so he reasons, "if I don't study, I will just live a normal simple life and won't have any problems." But God says he is a fool because He said "I have extended wisdom and knowledge to you, and you wanted nothing to do with my counsel. You hated knowledge and you did not choose the fear of the Lord."

Look in Proverbs 7:6-7, where we have another description of a simple person. ***"For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding."***

Now, what is a simple one? It is a person who is willfully void or lacking in understanding. It is not a person who has never been exposed to understanding, but it is a person when understanding is presented, he willfully says, "I don't want anything to do with that." Then the writer of Proverbs goes on to describe that particular characteristic in Proverbs 8:5 - ***"O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart."*** Do you see how the Bible describes a simple person? He is not someone who is lacking in mental capacity, but is someone who refuses to use the brain that God created him with to seek out after the truth of God. He refuses God's truth, and will not seek out after it, or have anything to do with it. This is why he is sound asleep and sees no danger. Of course, he doesn't see any danger, because he has never sought after the truth of God. He doesn't know anything about the fear of the Lord, so he is a very simple person.

Now lets look at the second person whose name is ***"Sloth"***. A Slothful person is a lazy person. He is a little more intelligent than Simple. When Sloth is warned of the danger he is in, he replies, ***"Yet a little more sleep."*** Sloth says, "Yes, I know there is danger, but it is

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not imminent. I know there is going to be a judgment, but it is not going to happen today." He says, "Just give me a little more sleep. Let me go on my way and do what I want to do, and one of these days I will get around to correcting the danger that I am

in." The man does not see that there are already chains about his feet which he cannot shake loose. These chains represent evil habits and characteristics of life. If there is any soul here tonight who is without Jesus Christ, and you say, "Well, Pastor Gables, I know there is danger, and I need to be converted, and one of these days, I'm going to do it. But I am going to have my fill of the things of this life first, then one of these days I'm going to become a Christian and turn to Christ." Listen unsaved person, there is great danger in that way of thinking. Why is that? Because the longer a person treads a certain path, the more hardened he becomes in that path. Do you know that there is not one person here tonight who is the same person you were yesterday? Did you know that a large part of your body has changed?

I don't know the exact amount, but it is amazing how many of our cells die and are reproduced every day. I have read that about every four or five years we are an entirely different person physically. We don't have the same cells that we had then. You are not the

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same person you were 10 years ago physically. If you don't believe that, go out and try to run a 100 yard dash, and you will find out that you are not the same person you used to be. We are all changing physically, and we are also changing spiritually. We are either making progress

like the Pilgrim or else we are hardened and going on in that particular way. To the person who says, "Pastor, one of these days, I am going to be saved," you don't know how much harder it is going to be one of those days. This is because the longer you neglect this matter and say, "Just give me a little more sleep," the tighter those chains are going to grip around you so that you will love your sin more and more, the harder and harder it is to say, "I want to be a Christian." So the man says, "Just give me a little more sleep."

Lets look at Sloth in Proverbs, the book of wisdom. Bunyan was a genius in that he knew his Bible and knew how to use these passages of Scripture to draw a picture of those who he had come in contact with. Listen to Sloth in Proverbs 24:30-34 - ***"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."*** Here is the characteristic of a lazy or slothful person who has a vineyard. Notice that he doesn't tear down his vineyard, he just neglects it. What happens is that all the thorns and thistles come up and choke all the flowers and the fruit that grew in the vineyard. The walls broke down. All that is necessary to let a garden destroy itself is to just let the weeds grow. This is the characteristic of the Slothful person. He doesn't destroy himself by actual activity, but just a lack of doing anything. Here is his philosophy - when he is warned to go out and get the weeds out of his garden, here is what he says, "Oh, just a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands." That is what the

lazy person is in spiritual things. Let a Christian witness to him and point out his danger, and he will say, "I know that I am not right with God, and I know there is a coming judgment, but I don't believe that judgment is going to come just right now, so therefore, I am going to take a little more sleep, a little more slumber and let my vineyard go, and that is what happens. This question is set forth in Hebrews 2:3 - **"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"** This describes the slothful man. He just neglects the opportunities of God's mercy being offered to him. He says, "I know there is danger." He is wiser than Simple who says he sees no danger, but he says he does not believe that the danger is going to come today. Therefore, he tells the Pastor, "just go on your way and come back again some later day." When Paul witnessed to Felix, he said, **"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."** (Acts 24:25). That is the slothful man, but he didn't feel that judgment was that close.

Let's go on to the third person named **"Presumption."** He said, **"Every tub must stand upon its own bottom."** What on earth does that mean? It simply means Presumption was saying, "You mind your own business and I will mind my business. You don't have any business coming around here telling me about my spiritual condition. You just stay out of my business and I will stay out of yours. Every tub must stand on its own bottom." Now there is a sense in which that is true, God does give every person the right of private judgment. But God help us that we might not misuse that privilege. Rather than using that right of private judgment, we must get into the Bible and see what it is that God requires out of us. When you have talked to someone about the Lord, have you ever had them tell you to mind your own business and stay out of theirs? They say, "what business is it of yours whether I go to church or read the Bible? Just keep your nose out of my business." That is what Presumption says. Presumption may even be a religious person. What does it mean to presume? It is to come to a conclusion that something is going to happen or isn't going to happen when there is no basic thought or reason.

So we read that after these three had given their reply to Christian, **they lay back down to sleep again and Christian went on his way.** Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a small community here in Osceola, Missouri. How many Simple, Sloth and Presumptions do we have here in this community? Have you tried to witness to them? Have you received replies like these? You that are here who love to see the church of God grow faster, remember these

are the people to whom you are witnessing. Keep witnessing to them, but at the same time recognize that they are people to be pitied. They are people who Satan has utterly blinded their eyes to the truth. And remember also, that they are your neighbors who you have to live by. I would give you a word of wisdom. Rather than reading some high-powered books today on personal soul-winning, (which I certainly believe in personal soul-winning,) I think it would be best if you get up each day and ask God, "How can I witness to my neighbor when I have already told him half a dozen times what he needs to do? He has always said, 'You mind your own business, stay out of mine.' How can I witness to that type of person?" Remember, all of us may be coming in contact with that same person each day, and he says, "Leave me alone, there is no danger, I'll get around to it later, you mind your own business." Remember you can't get up each day at 8:00 and run over there and open a Bible and say to him, "Here is what God says for you to do today." You have to live with that person every day. You can't just do like some evangelist, give a witness, and then go somewhere else. You have to live with that neighbor day in and day out. In a community such as ours, may God grant unto us the wisdom to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves in our witnessing to these people who are indifferent to the things of the gospel. Perhaps one day through some circumstance, God might intervene into their life and they will look at things in a different light.

Now I want to give a word of warning regarding these three individuals. I want to read to you from the second part of "*Pilgrim's Progress*." The second part deals with Christian's wife, whose name is Christiana, and his children after Christian has already reached the Celestial City. Do you remember back when we first started, the pilgrim had to leave his wife and kids because they didn't want anything to do with him? Bunyan goes back in his real life, his own wife and children are also converted. At first they didn't want anything to do with him. So then Bunyan writes this second sequence to the Book *Pilgrim's Progress*, and he brings Christiana, his wife and all the kids through all these experiences. When they come to Simple, Sloth and Presumption, I want to read to you how they found these individuals. I am beginning on page 407 in my particular copy. You will find that these three men are not the same people, just like Pilgrim is going to progress in holiness, so these individuals are going to progress in sin. Instead of seeing the chains about their feet, when Christiana and the children come by, the chains are about their necks now and they have hanged themselves. Let me read to you.



***Now I saw in my dream, that they went on until they were come to the place that Simple, and Sloth, and Presumption, lay and slept in, when Christian went by on pilgrimage: and behold, they were hanged up in irons a little way off on the other side.***

***Then said Mercy to him that was their guide and conductor, What are these three men? and for what are they hanged there?***

***Greatheart says this, "These three men were men of bad qualities; they had no mind to be pilgrims themselves, and whomsoever they could they hindered: they were sloth and folly themselves, and whomsoever they could persuade they made so too; and withal taught them to presume that they should do well at last. They were asleep when Christian went by; and now you go by, they are hanged.***

***Mercy says, But could they persuade any to be of their opinion?*** (Could Simple, Sloth and Presumption persuade any person to believe the way they believed?)

***Greatheart says, "Yes, they turned several out of the way. There was Slow-pace that they persuaded to do as they. They also prevailed with one Short-wind,***

(do you know what it means to be short-winded? If you try to run and get out of breath, Paul says, ***"You did run well, what did hinder you?"*** (Galatians 5:7). Here are some different types of people that Simple, Sloth and Presumption persuaded to give up their Christian life.)

There was one with ***No-heart***. He had no heart for the things of the gospel.

***There was one Linger-after-lust, and with one Sleepy-head, and with a young woman, her name was Dull. And besides, they brought up an evil report of the your Lord persuading others that He was a hard taskmaster. They also brought an evil report of the good land, saying, It was not half so good as some pretended it was.***

Let me interrupt here. You need to watch out because you will run across people like this even within the fellowship of the church you are a member of. As you begin to talk with them, watch and see if they say, "This thing of being a Christian is not what it is cracked up to be." They will try to discourage you from going on and serving the Lord. Watch out, because you are dealing with Simple, Sloth and Presumption. They are individuals who will try to discourage and hinder you from your service of God. May I say something else before I read

on? When you are a member of a church, how wise it is that you devote most of your fellowship with those who will help you grow in your faith. Deal with people who are spiritual. Within any fellowship, I don't care if it is just twelve, you can have a Judas in the midst, and those who have no heart for spiritual things. They can sap your life of spirituality. Find out who those are that are interested in the things of God and fellowship with them. That doesn't mean that you don't have anything to do with the others, just like you don't ignore your neighbor who isn't a Christian. That isn't true. But when you are going to fellowship in the things of the Lord, find out who is spiritual and make friends with them. How often I have seen zealous people come into a church, and then they take up with some who are cold and indifferent. It isn't long before they are out of church. That can happen to you. I've seen this very thing happen to young men in college who are training for the ministry. They fall out by the way and leave their very training. These cold and indifferent members can bring up an evil report about heaven and talk about God demanding too much, being a hard taskmaster, then **they begin to vilify His servants and to count the best of them meddlesome, troublesome, busybodies**, that preacher, he is always bothering me. Watch him, they are always in somebody else's business. **Further, they would call the bread of God, husks; the comforts of his children, fancies; the travail and labour of pilgrims, things to no purpose.**

Do you know anyone who is slothful, simple, or presumptuous? If they are that way now, as they get older and remain in that state, they are going to become antagonistic toward the gospel. Those habits they thought they could shake off and were merely chains around the feet, are now chains about the neck, and they can't do it. I hope that doesn't describe anyone here this evening. I hope you can look within your heart and see that you have a heart for the things of the gospel, you love the Lord, you love the Bible, you love to communicate and talk with those about the things of the Bible. I'm not suggesting that you have to carry a Bible around with you all day long, and open it in every conversation that comes up, but I merely mean that you have a heart for the things of God. How sad it is to see those who drifted through Sunday School and church in their younger life, and in their older life, they say, "Oh well, this is not for me, I don't need that." Then as they grow old, they become hardened with no use for the pastor, no use for the Bible, no time for prayer, no time for meditation, talking things over with God and their fellow Christians. What has happened? They have either been Simple, Slothful, or Presumptuous, and they are a little

way out of the way. Now they are enemies to the true faith. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, our heart is burdened this evening as we see the reality of this. As we see the great indifference that has so encompassed our great land in which we live. The land in which in all our external rights we give recognition that you are the true God, and yet a land which has virtually turned away in religious indifference toward the truth of the gospel. Lord, if unbelief and infidelity has slain its thousands, we truly believe that religious indifference has slain its tens of thousands. We would pray that you might stir up our heart anew as we make progress on with the pilgrim, and we see the heavenly journey that is ahead of us, that we might not become discouraged by those who would say "give it up, don't pay any attention to it, it is not what it is supposed to be, I've tried it." And those who would try to cast our eyes upon the things of this world, may Thy grace set our eyes afresh upon our calling in Christ Jesus and we go through this life as pilgrims, strangers in this life looking for a City which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. Bless the message tonight and examine each heart and may there be no one here who would be qualified to be simple, who doesn't want instruction in the Bible, who is slothful who says, "Yes, one of these days I will get around to it," or presumptuous in presuming that they are in a state of grace when in reality, they have no heart for the things of the gospel. Search the heart as only You can through Thy Spirit, and we will be careful to give Thy name all the praise, in Jesus name we pray, Amen.