At the conclusion of our previous study we left Pilgrim in a state of utter confusion, “I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because … he could not tell which way to go.” … He knew he had a need, but he didn’t know what to do. He was aware he had to flee from the wrath of God, but he didn’t know what way to take. He did not yet understand what conversion was all about.

He had been wandering alone in the fields, carrying a Bible, and struggling with the conflict of sin raging in his heart. … How true it is that when real and genuine conviction of personal sin confronts the sinner with their need of salvation, there is nowhere they can escape from God. Whether they are in a church meeting, at work, at home, or anywhere … there is no place to hide!

**Desperation**

“he could not tell which way to go”

He didn’t know where he ought to be, but where he was, he knew was not the right place! The City of Destruction was no longer for him. His friends there and all its attractions held no appeal for him. Even … even … the love for his family wasn’t able to keep him from searching for the answer to the deep need of his soul.

How difficult it must be for those of you whose family has no interest in the things of God. You have tried so many different ways to introduce Him. You have offered your loved ones a Bible, and Christian books to read. You have invited them along to the special services in the church. You have tried to have conversations with them about the Lord … but they don’t want to listen. … They are lovely people, but they don’t want to know! … Remember, though, when the Lord first started working on you. And, as He continued, how the thoughts were entering your mind as to the sacrifice this would mean if you accepted Christ as Saviour. It was a daunting and formidable thing to consider following Christ! Like Pilgrim, you would be embarking on a journey without your family and friends for none of them had any interest in walking along the road to salvation with you. You were seeking answers, but you had nobody around you willing to talk about the issue with you.

Yes, it can be a lonely path to the Saviour, and you walked that path on your own. You would have loved to have come to the Lord Jesus with your husband/wife/children at your side, but they wouldn’t. It is a hard thing to come to Christ without your family, but the Lord Jesus has very special words for you, Lk. 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and
wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. What He means is that He needs to take priority, - He must come first … even before our loved ones, - and we trust that He would bless our obedience, and that He would save our loved ones also. … Again, I remind you of the second section of Pilgrim’s Progress where the Lord wonderfully brought Pilgrim’s family to salvation. You have been faithful to the Lord, - you have put Him first, - therefore, trust He will reward your obedience and work in your family for their salvation.

Yes, he loved his wife and his children … but he had to deal with the spiritual need of his soul, and it brought him out into the place of desperation. … However, the Lord never does anything without having a reason for doing it, and His reason is always in accordance with His eternal plan, Jer. 29:11 I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord. God knew what He was doing when He troubled Pilgrim to leave the City of Destruction. Therefore, it was no ‘accident’ he was out in the fields, and it was God Who had the Bible in Pilgrim’s hands, and it was God Who was leading him along the path … even though Pilgrim himself had no idea as to what direction he should take.

… And, onto the scene, God sent someone to bring Good News to Pilgrim … news he needed to hear, and longed to hear. As Pilgrim cried, “What must I do to be saved?” … God had already provided someone to bring him the answer. This man’s name was Evangelist.

Now, notice it wasn’t along some busy street in the City of Destruction that Pilgrim was challenged by Evangelist. He didn’t find Evangelist among the friends he used to have, or among his workmates. In actual fact, - when you read it carefully, - you will discover Pilgrim didn’t find Evangelist, Evangelist was sent to find him!

Again, that’s a wonderful work of God, how he brought into your situation the right person in the right circumstances to start you off on the road to Christ. It might have been someone in a church. It might have been an invitation to Gospel meetings. It might have been someone at work … Whoever or whatever it was, God began the process whereby you would come to Him.

So, God took Pilgrim out of his home in the City of Destruction … He took him into the fields … He placed a Bible in his hands, and for days Pilgrim cried out to God for something he wasn’t totally sure about, - “I know I need something, … I don’t know what I need, but I know I need it!” …
And he meets the man of God, - Evangelist, - and is asked a simple and direct question, “Wherefore dost thou cry?” ... Pilgrim was in a place of desperation, and Evangelist saw his tears. Then we find Pilgrim in the place of …

**DECISION**

Pilgrim, without any hesitation, poured out his heart, “I believe what this Bible I have in my hands is telling me, and it is telling me I am a lost sinner and I am condemned to die … not just to die, but in the judgment that follows I know I am not ready to meet God.” … Job 16:21 O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour! 22 When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return. Yes, he was in fear of the Lord, Ezek. 22:14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it. Not even the mightiest and the most powerful will be able to stand on that day. God has declared, Is. 45:23 unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. … The fear of God had gripped this troubled sinner, Pilgrim!

Remember, he continues in the fields of desperation. He doesn’t know what route to take to leave that place … but now he has been given a command to look! “There is life for a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for thee; Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved, Unto Him Who was nailed to the tree.” His attention had been arrested by Evangelist, and his mind was even more firmly fixed on his personal dilemma.

In John Bunyan’s own experience, the evangelist was Pastor John Gifford who spent night after night explaining the Gospel and pointing Him in the way that he should go. Evangelist was doing the same with Pilgrim. He asked him, “If you are so miserable, why don’t you want to die … and get away from it all?!” Notice how Pilgrim didn’t need to spend time searching for an answer, he replied straightaway, “Because I fear …” He had the dread within his soul of entering out into eternity without knowing the answer to His predicament … the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Paul** wrote, II Cor. 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord … but that wasn’t the case with Pilgrim. If I die, I’ll take this heavy burden I’m carrying with me … “I am not fit to go to judgment” … I’m not ready, I’m not prepared … “and the thoughts of these things make me cry”.
Now, here is the question that must have thrust into Pilgrim’s heart like a dagger, “If this be thy condition, why standest thou still?” What a question! “What are you doing about it?!” … Immediately, - notice there’s never any hesitation to the seeking soul in which God is at work, - Pilgrim replied in tones so genuine, “Because I know not whither to go”.

We are surrounded by people who have all kinds of problems, to a degree the most of us could never understand … and yet, when you introduce Christ, and their need of salvation, they will not listen. They will turn to almost everything else, but not Him! … How do you make people listen to the Gospel, and how do you make them believe in Christ to be saved? … The answer is very simple … you and I can’t! Not even the best sermon in the world preached by the greatest preacher in the world can cause a single moment of true conviction of sin in the heart of the unbeliever … It must be the inner working of God, the Holy Spirit. He alone is the One Who stirs the heart, and begins to move it along to where the sinner will hear and listen to and accept the Gospel.

Crusades and Gospel campaigns, of themselves, save no-one. It is only through God’s riches in mercy and grace towards us that any are saved … and, in particular, only through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit that the eyes of sinners are opened to see their need of Christ and come to Him in believing and saving faith. And the means of grace by which this salvation is directed is by the Word of God, for the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple (Ps. 119:130).

… And Evangelist directs Pilgrim to the Word, Mt. 3:7 flee from the wrath to come. It’s an old message, but it is a warning the sinner must heed! … And with eagerness, - the eagerness that was placed in his heart by the Holy Spirit, - Pilgrim heeded the warning. With fear in his voice, he asked the important question, “Whither must I flee?” I don’t want to wait until the wrath of God rains upon me, because I know I must flee … but where must I flee to!?” Can’t you hear the distress in his voice? This man was afraid to spend another moment in such a desperate situation … in case it might be his last!

But where did Evangelist point him? He didn’t say to him … “There’s a lovely big church in the centre of the City of Destruction. People are piling into it, and they are having a great time with their ‘vain janglings’ (cf. I Tim. 1:6). Go back down to it, and and see if you might hear something that might ‘help’ you”. No, he didn’t say that. The Lord had directed Pilgrim out of the City of Destruction, so he was to leave it and never return.
There was no Saving Gospel in that City, and Evangelist’s instruction carried with it the message, II Cor. 6:17 come out from among them … I Jn. 4:1 because many false prophets are gone out into the world. … And if a preacher is not preaching the truth of God, they are preaching a false gospel that falls under the judgment of God, and is leading lost sinners to Hell! There is no ‘in-between gospel’, - there is only one Gospel that saves, and Paul wrote, II Cor. 4:5 we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord … I Cor. 9:16 for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! …

And Evangelist directed Pilgrim’s gaze, “Do you see yonder wicket gate?” No, Pilgrim couldn’t see it … He tried hard, but he couldn’t see it! Evangelist could see it. It was a narrow gate, and Evangelist could clearly make it out in the distance. He had been at that gate, and through that gate he had gone. Yes, he could clearly see it … but Pilgrim couldn’t … not yet.

Instead of carrying the conversation on and making Pilgrim feel inadequate at not being able to see it, Evangelist wisely and carefully and lovingly changed tact, “Do you see yonder shining light?” Pilgrim was looking into the distance. His eyes might have been ‘squinting’, but yes, he could make something out shining away at the very edge of his vision. “I think I do”, he responded. Little by little, stage by stage, God was working in this man’s life. God was gradually opening his eyes.

You know, sometimes we try to rush things. We almost try to ‘force’ the unsaved to see Christ … and sometimes it can do harm. It can turn people off, and they raise a barrier. … Evangelist here, though, was being led by God to work with this sinner at the right speed. He had confidence that God was working in this man’s life. Sometimes we can be in too much of a hurry, and we can cause damage. Consider how Evangelist counselled Pilgrim, “Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.” … One stage at a time, - see it first, and then when you arrive … knock on the gate!

From out of the fields of desolation, Pilgrim was being guided to the place of decision, and, - with the Holy Spirit working in his heart, - from there he set out in the right direction.
**DIRECTION**

“Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate”. Follow the light and it will bring you to the entrance! When you’re in darkness, the light attracts your eye. No matter how dark it is, the darkness cannot stop you from seeing the light … even if it does seem to be away in the distance. When God is working within the sinner to bring them to salvation, Jn. 1:5 the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not! When He opens the eyes to see, they will see … no matter how dark, and how much darkness there is! God’s grace is irresistible … The sinner who is attracted to the Light Who is the Lord Jesus Christ cannot help himself/herself from accepting God’s wonderful offer of full and free grace. Indeed, it is made unto them so appealing … that, - like Pilgrim, - they must have it!

“Keep that light in your eye”! Keep heading towards it. Don’t turn off. Don’t lie down, or anything else until you reach it … and when you reach it you will come to a gate, lift your hand up, and knock. Don’t only stand looking at it … knock on the gate and … “when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do”. … Mt. 7:7 knock, and it shall be opened unto you. That’s the promise!

It’s a journey that begins the moment the Holy Spirit begins to quicken the soul, and He brings you to the place where you will find Christ. There’s no doubt about it, Prov. 8:17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me … Jn. 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.

It’s the Gospel! It’s the Good News of Sovereign and Saving Grace … and there is only one direction you can take to find it, and it is to Christ, Jn. 6:37 him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out … Mt. 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest … Is. 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

There is only one road that takes you to Heaven and it is by looking at “yonder shining light” … to Christ Who said, Jn. 8:12 I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And Pilgrim, - with the heavy burden on his back, - began to run. Each step he took, he was moving further and further away from his home City of Destruction, and nearer and nearer to the gate. Yes … and God’s irresistible grace is such that there is ‘no turning back’ when He has made effective His plan of salvation to the soul of the sinner.
CONCLUSION
Desperation, Decision, Direction … God has it all worked out perfectly in His plan! Previously, Pilgrim’s family had “thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head” … Not so anymore! They are running after him now. They see that he is serious. They are shouting and crying at him, “Come back! Come back!” But he had his fingers in his ears, and he ran along the road shouting, “Life! Life! Eternal life!” As the hymn writer wrote, “Life! life! eternal life! Jesus alone is the Giver: Life! life! abundant life! Glory to Jesus forever!”

And John Bunyan tells us, “So he looked not behind him”. He had put his hand to the plough, and he wasn’t for looking back (Lk. 9:62). If he had looked back, he would have seen his family crying and weeping for him to return … and the sight would have torn at his heart-strings. Yes, his neighbours came after him too, and they tried a different ploy. “You’re stupid”, some of them said. “Come back here, or we’ll come and get you”, others threatened. But no, Pilgrim wasn’t for going back. The voice inside him was calling, Gen. 19:17 Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou.

What a wonderful picture of God’s grace at work! … “Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.” And what a wonderful work God has done for our salvation! “Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled. … Marvellous, infinite, matchless grace, Freely bestowed on all who believe!”

May the Lord encourage us through our study, to enjoy our salvation more! And, also, may our service for Him be worthy of His most precious Name! Amen.