“GRACE LED MY WANDERING FEET, TO TREAD THE HEAVENLY ROAD”

When Spurgeon was preaching on this section of Pilgrim’s Progress, he made the observation, “I believe the shortest way to faith is to consider well the object of faith”. It is a very simple statement, and yet it has real depth. The “object of faith” is, of course, the Lord Jesus and His work of redemption on the cross ... and if you “consider well”, - focus your attention, - upon Him, faith is the ready consequence of how you believe.

The Lord Jesus explained to Nicodemus this “object of faith” by using an Old Testament example. He concentrated the mind of this leading Pharisee upon an “object”, Jn. 3:14 as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ... The story behind the verse is found in Numbers chapter twenty-one ... The Israelites had sinned and God judged them harshly, - but no more harshly than they deserved, v.6 the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Fearing even more judgment, the remainder of the people came to Moses and pleaded with him, v.7 We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 9And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. ... The lesson behind such an illustration is that the “object of our faith” is in trusting in Christ alone and what He did for us on the cross of Calvary.

Christian has been walking along the highway, - protected on both sides by the wall of Salvation. He had been guided thus far and now, - just a short distance in front, - he would arrive at the cross. He has already entered through the gate, and he is already a child of God ... so, the cross is the place where the burden on his back will eventually roll away.

Remember, he has only recently entered through the gate. Therefore, he still has a simple grasp ... a simple belief. The Christian life is ‘all very new’ to him. He is a young believer, and he had not yet come to learn the deep complexities concerning the work of salvation ... To speak to him of the doctrines of election, justification, redemption, adoption, sanctification, etc ... it would all have been far too much for him! He was saved, and that was all he needed to know at that particular time in his new experience with God.

He simply longed to stand at the foot of the cross and look to where His Saviour had died for him. ... STANDING ... Such was his excitement that, - even with the load on his back, - “he ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre”. The cross was empty ... the tomb was empty ... and yet, as he stood looking up, ...
he would have been in absolute amazement … There, he would have wondered how Jesus could have loved him, “a sinner, condemned, unclean”. It was as real to Christian as if he was standing there on the day Jesus was crucified, when “He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own; He bore the burden to Calvary, And suffered and died alone.”

And yes, as he stood there, he saw how the plan of God had led him out of the City of Destruction, … and he saw the purpose of Evangelist within that plan, and how he was pointed in the right direction. He saw how, - in the grace and mercy of God, - he was lifted out of the Slough of Despond, and encouraged to keep going. He recognised the hand of God as he was brought back unto the proper path after falling under the influence of Mr. Worldly Wiseman. God had brought him from his home in the City of Destruction, through the wicket gate and up to the cross, - God had done it all, and to God be the glory!

You see, regardless of how heavy his burden was, he persisted because he knew he needed to come to the cross. There, he had been assured he would lose the burden of his sin forever! Yes, his eyes were fixed on that cross, below which he saw an open sepulchre, - no longer sealed, for its Occupant was no longer there! He had arisen! “The world behind me, the cross before me … no turning back!” Christian testified later, “I had only gone a short distance ahead when I saw, as it were in my mind, a man hang bleeding on a tree; and the very sight of him made my burden fall from off my back, which load had caused me to groan so much; yes, it did actually drop from off my back!” … As he looked by faith, and as he approached the cross, he felt the weight loosening from him … and falling off … and tumbling down the hill and into the open tomb.

What is this all about? Bearing in mind, his salvation has occurred earlier as he entered through the wicket gate … what does it then mean when we read about him coming to the cross and his burden falling from off his back? …

Sometimes you hear of someone genuinely believing in Christ but the burden of their sin continues to weigh heavily upon them. For example, Pearl and I know a man who was a member of a terrorist organisation, and he came to Christ … The very moment he believed, Jesus forgave him all his sins, - even the murders, and the bombings, and the robberies he had committed. And yet, -even after coming to Christ for salvation, - that man couldn’t sleep at night because he was carrying an awful burden. What he had done previously was constantly on his mind. His crimes had not been found out by the police but, since he became a believer in the Lord Jesus, the burden of his guilt was too heavy for him to bear. …
He went and confessed what he had done to the pastor and in order for him to move forward with Christ and lay his burden at the foot of the cross he had to come to that place “somewhat ascending”… and he had to go to the police station and admit his guilt. Yes, he was given life imprisonment for his crimes … but, - for him, - it was as if the burden he had been carrying at last fell from off his back, rolled down the hill and into the open sepulchre where it became forgotten forever. … And it doesn’t matter what we have been carrying with us … Jesus, our Saviour, has forgiven us and the cross is the proof that the penalty of our sin has been paid in full by Him, Heb. 10:17 their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Augustus Toplady wrote, “Complete atonement Thou hast made, And to the utmost farthing paid Whate’er Thy people owed; … Payment God cannot twice demand.”

Yes, we see Christian standing at the cross. We also see him standing SATISFIED at the cross. The chorus says, “Leave it there, leave it there, Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. If you trust and never doubt, He will surely bring you out. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.” As John Bunyan watched, he wrote, At this, Christian felt glad and overjoyed, and in his excitement he exclaimed, “He has given me rest by means of his sorrow, and life by means of his death.” Then he stood still for a while to look with wonder and amazement; for it was so surprising to him that the sight of the Cross should accomplish the release of his burden. Therefore he looked again and again, even until inward springs of water flowed down his cheeks.

It had been a long hard journey, but the Lord brought him to that place, - the only place, - where satisfaction from the burden of his sin was met. As he stared at the empty cross, the thought arrested him, “Jesus died there for me. He died there to free me from my burden … He took upon Himself my burden, so I need no longer bear it”. … How could you not be touched when you consider that all your transgressions were paid for by the perfect and sinless Son of God! Only you and God know the depths to which you sank into sin … and, it is no one else’s business! But, as you think of it, God was even more aware of how far you had fallen than you could ever imagine! Even the very best of us was so far gone, - the fires of Hell awaited us! And it wasn’t the earthly example of Christ that brought you to that place of victory … it was His death and how He purchased your salvation. That was the point where you realised within the very depths of your soul, We love Him, because He first loved us (I Jn. 4:19). … “Dying for me, dying for me, There on the cross He was dying for me; Gone my transgressions and now I am free, All because Jesus was dying for me.” … You see, I am no longer my own for I have been bought with a price (I Cor. 6:20), - and that is what it means to be ‘redeemed’. I cost my Saviour His life on Calvary. …
Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold three Shining Ones [angels] approached and saluted him with the benediction, “Let peace be upon you.” … **Standing, satisfied** … **SECURE,** So the first Shining One said to him, “Your sins have been forgiven.” The second stripped Christian of his rags and clothed him with a complete change of garment. The third also set a mark upon his forehead, and gave him a scroll with a seal on it, which he directed should be looked at as he ran and handed in upon arrival at the gate of the Celestial City. So these messengers went their way.

It’s **good** news because it’s **God’s** news! It’s the Gospel. The burden I was carrying has been removed from me forever. My sins have been forgiven completely. … Sometimes we are prone to revisit those experiences that resulted in us carrying those burdens. The devil likes to remind us of what we once were and what we once did. He wants to remind us so that he can begin to accumulate another burden and place it on our backs. He wants to hinder our progress in the Christian path, to slow us down, and to inevitably make us so weary we feel we cannot continue. … And yes, of course, many of us have been involved in activities we are now ashamed of, and the devil tries to remind us … Well, how do you combat him? … You don’t … you walk away … away back to the cross! James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Don’t stray from the cross. The cross, - the Gospel, - is the centre of our salvation, for it reminds us it was there Christ died for us.

… And it is also why those of us in the pulpits must never stop preaching the cross, - preaching Christ crucified, - because it doesn’t matter whether you are saved or unsaved, the cross must continue to be preached! It is the highlight of our message. Christ’s atonement for our sin is the only means of our salvation, and to achieve it He had to die on the cross … **And it is an empty cross!** Christian saw it empty! Christ wasn’t there, He had arisen! … And yet, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Rom. 1:16).

When the Lord Jesus told the lame man his sins were forgiven, and to get up off the ground, he caused a furore among the Pharisees … **But that man** got up off the ground … and his sins were forgiven! He was a brand new creature in Christ. His old life had finished, and he set out on a new future. In the same way, Christian’s sins were forgiven. At the cross, his burden fell off … they had gone forever … changed from the inside out!

That day, at the cross, he received the assurance his sins were all forgiven, - *cleansed.* The rags were removed, and from the wardrobe of Heaven, he was *clothed.* And, marked with the indelible imprint upon his forehead, he was handed the scroll, and given the new directions, he was *claimed,* Is. 43:1 I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. Cleansed – Clothed – Claimed … **Standing, satisfied, secure** … and finally, …
SINGING

Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing:

Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could anyone ease the grief that I was in,
Until I came here. What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the cords that bound it to me crack?
Blessed Cross! Blessed sepulchre! Blessed rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me.

Do you remember the chorus? … “There’s a new song in my heart Since the Saviour set me free; There’s a new song in my heart, - ’Tis a Heavenly harmony. All my sins are washed away In the blood of Calvary. O what peace and joy, nothing can destroy, There’s a new song in my heart.”

Christian had now begun to possess his possessions in Christ. At the cross, he claimed his inheritance. Yes, he had been saved when he passed through the wicket gate but, should his old burden have remained, he would have been so greatly disadvantaged on such future experiences where, for example, he would meet Apollyon and Giant Despair. No, we can’t afford to keep carrying the old burdens … and that is how Christian was able to begin singing … and singing with such gusto and such victory! … “There’s victory in Jesus, My Saviour, forever. He sought me and bought me With His redeeming blood; He loved me ere I knew Him, And all my love is due Him, He plunged me to victory, Beneath the cleansing flood”.

… When the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, Moses led them in singing. Later on, David led them his people in singing … In Heaven, the citizens are singing … and the words are all centred upon Christ, - they are the old Redemption Songs, Rev. 5:9 … Thou art worthy … 14:3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. … 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Standing, satisfied, secure, and singing. … Cleansed, clothed, and claimed. … However you want to describe it, here was a man who the Lord saved out of his old city and brought him through the gate and to the cross. What a testimony to God’s saving and keeping grace … the grace that will one day bring us safely home to Heaven, for … “’Twas grace which kept me to this day, And will not let me go.”