After having enjoyed a restful and an edifying time with Patience, Prudence, Charity and the other inhabitants of the Palace Beautiful, the next stage of Christian’s journey took him into the Valley of Humiliation. There, he encountered the fearsome Apollyon. In our previous study we took account of Apollyon’s **description, deception** and **defiance**.

Let’s remind ourselves why the Lord brought Christian into that place, the Valley of Humiliation. Perhaps we can see the reason clearer in the second part of *Pilgrim’s Progress* when Christian’s wife and four sons were making the journey through the same Valley of Humiliation. Samuel, one of the sons, asked Great-Heart who was accompanying them “Sir, I perceive that in this Valley my father and Apollyon had their battle; but whereabout was the fight? for I perceive this Valley is large.” Great-Heart replied, “Your father had that battle with Apollyon, at a place yonder, before us, in a narrow passage, just beyond Forgetful Green. And indeed, that place is the most dangerous place in all these parts. For if at any time the pilgrims meet with any brunt, it is when they forget what favours they have received.” … Great Heart was explaining to Samuel the reason for Christian’s conflict with Apollyon, - he had forgotten the favours from God he had received. In other words, it wasn’t necessary to have had the battle … but through it God was teaching Christian never to forget to rely upon Him … and to trust Him for every stage of the journey.

And yes, it was taking a while, but gradually Christian *was* learning. Apollyon came to the point where he realised he could not ‘turn’ the pilgrim. As a consequence, he demonstrated the ugliness of his true character and, in a “grievous rage” he remonstrated, “I am an enemy to this Prince; I hate His person, His laws and people; I am come out on purpose to withstand thee”. …

This is the nature of the adversary … and it is necessary to identify him as soon as is possible. How much more straightforward when you face an enemy that you can clearly identify by the uniform he wears! It is easier when you can readily recognise him. It is much more difficult though when, for example, you are in an army patrol through the streets of Afghanistan and someone comes towards you … dressed as everyone else is … but hiding underneath their clothes are the explosive devices of the suicide bomber. It is much harder in those circumstances to identify the enemy because they are masquerading as an ordinary person. But, - no matter the difficulty, - you must identify the enemy, or you run the risk he will destroy you!
This is no less true concerning spiritual matters. Jude wrote of the men who had crept into the assemblies unawares. Jesus warned of the false prophets who would come in “sheep’s clothing” … and how they were “ravening wolves” (Mt. 7:15). Peter wrote, II Pet. 3:17 Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked. And Paul instructed the Colossians, 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

There is a clear warning to us throughout Scripture and we also see it in Pilgrim’s Progress to mind the company we keep, and to make sure it’s the company of which God approves. Paul warned the church in Corinth … a church that often tended to stray into areas it should have kept away from … II Cor. 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

So, as the conversation in the Valley of Humiliation develops, Christian is not ‘falling for’ Apollyon’s deceit, and so Apollyon demonstrates his true character. Unsurprisingly, conflict ensues! We can’t expect anything less from the enemy. Despite all the niceties with which he first approaches us, he always inevitably turns to opposing the people of God, - he can’t help it, it is his evil nature! … He is now standing in front of Christian, - straddling the way ahead. Christian cannot go round him, he must face him ‘head-on’! Apollyon’s not afraid though … he makes his intention clear, “Here will I spill thy soul”. …

First of all, he aims at the chest. - he “goes for the heart”. Rip the heart out of a person’s faith and they will soon capitulate! David, however, says in Ps. 28:7, The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped … His son, Solomon, also instructs us, Prov. 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart. It is the heart of the believer Apollyon attacks! If he can manage to puncture the heart of Christian, the battle would be over almost as soon as it had started! The devil goes for the heart of the believer … Again, David cried in the presence of the Lord, Ps. 13:2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? 25:17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. … And at this juncture in the battle … as Apollyon was aiming for Christian’s heart, Christian began to use the armour given to him from the armoury in the Palace Beautiful …
**HIS SHIELD**
Yes, he had a shield in his hand, - that was the right place to have it. There is no point having a shield and not making use of it! … And powerful and all as the darts of the enemy were, they could not penetrate that shield Christian was trusting in to protect him … as Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus, 6:16
Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Christian wasn’t trusting in his own ability to dodge the darts … and neither was he under any allusion that Apollyon was a ‘bad shot’ and couldn’t hit him. No, the enemy is well-practiced at mortally wounding those against whom he stands. Against him, we uphold the shield of faith … the faith from every sinew of our being that has confidence in the Lord Jesus to save us, protect us and keep us.

Next, Christian quickly realised it was time to draw …

**HIS SWORD**
This sword had two sharp edges … and it was short so you could use it quickly and powerfully (Heb. 4:12). It would pierce right into the enemy. This sword speaks of the sword of the Spirit, - the Word of God.

When you are using a weapon, - *any* weapon, - you need to be sure it will serve you and it will keep you safe. You need to be certain it won’t let you down when you are facing the enemy. And also, you need to be able to use it to its full potential … and its purpose is to eliminate the enemy.

When you translate this into the spiritual realm, you need to know the Word of God, be convinced of its claims, and to be confident neither men nor devils can stand up against it! The sword is the infallible, inspired and inerrant Word of God, and the psalmist wrote, 119:28 Strengthen thou me according to Thy word.

It is the reason the Bible is central in all our meetings for it is through God’s Word that He teaches us. When the devil tempted Jesus he referred Him to the words of Scripture … but when you examine how the devil quoted those words, you realise he *mis*quoted them. He hates God’s Word for he knows he is subject to it and that there is coming a day when, - by the word of God, - he will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity … Yes, he is afraid of God’s Word because he is no match for it!
And there is a beautiful statement coming up now that puts everything into context. The battle is raging. Christian receives wounds in his head, his hand, and foot … he nevertheless keeps on fighting. In fact, he was fighting for about half-a-day, - he would have been exhausted. As he is increasingly becoming weaker, Apollyon strides up to him confidently … takes a hold of him, and throws him unto the ground. At that point, Christian’s sword flies out of his hand … and Apollyon thinks to himself, “I surely have him now!” And Christian is just about ready to breathe his last … it seems as if it is all over … yet look at those powerful words of John Bunyan, “But, as God would have it …” Here we are now shown one of the most powerful and precious doctrines for the believer to rest upon …

**GOD’S SOVEREIGN WILL**

“But, as God would have it …” Christian has used his shield and his sword … and he has used them well, but now they have been lost in the fray, and Apollyon is about to “spill his soul”, as he threatened earlier he would do. “I am sure of thee now”, he boasted.

Christian’s head is wounded, - I wonder if he was properly wearing the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17), - I wonder if he had it properly strapped on? … His hand is wounded, - had he lost his grip on his sword? Maybe because of his tiredness he wasn’t holding as tightly as he had been previously? … And his foot is wounded, - were his Gospel shoes wearing thin?

He is ‘in a bad way’, and the devil is gloating! Christian is trying his best, but he is becoming weaker and weaker, - he has “a dreadful fall”. At that point, in the Sovereign will of God, - … when it looked as if His child was about to be defeated … “as God would have it” … He stepped in! The hymn writer says, “When we have exhausted our store of endurance, When our strength has failed ere the day is half-done, When we reach the end of our hoarded resources, Our Father’s full giving is only begun. … He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength when the labours increase, To added affliction He addeth His mercy, To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.”

Yes, God’s will for all of His people is that He would lose none of them … Every born-again believer for whom Christ has died will achieve the glories of Heaven because of the promises and purpose of God … for in the plan drawn up in eternity that is “as God would have it” … **God’s sovereign will.**
So, from the shield to the sword to the sovereign will of our Father, God’s purposes are now followed up by …

**HIS (CHRISTIAN’S) SUCCESS**

God empowers His servant to “nimbly reach out” for the sword … and with the Heavenly confidence he declares, Micah 7:8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise”. These are words our Saviour could also have uttered on the cross. Even though Satan bruised His heel, Jesus arose and bruised the enemy’s head (Gen. 3:15). Therefore, Christian could ably quote the words of Paul, Rom. 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Now strong in the strength of the Lord he arises to resist the devil’s lieutenant, Apollyon, who flees in an instant (James 4:7).

Yes … but it had taken a great toll on Christian. It was a terrible experience, … it was so frightening. But then, when it was over, and Apollyon had fled, the sighs and groans were replaced with a smile as Christian looked upward … from whence came his help. “How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe, I have fled to my refuge and breathed out my woe; How often, when trials like sea billows roll, Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.”

Christian realised it was God Who had gave him his success! Had God not been with him and watching over him, Apollyon would have won. … Eph. 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

In the quietness and peace, - after the battle, - he reflected upon what the Lord had done for him, “I will here give thanks to Him who hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion; to Him that did help me against Apollyon”. And as he recognised the hand of the Lord in his deliverance from the enemy, we then see …

**HIS SUPPLY**

He has not ‘come out of’ the battle unscathed … He is weak and in need of fresh nourishment. … And at just the right moment, his need was met, “there came to him a hand” … the hand of the Saviour … and he is given from no less than from the tree of life, and he applied the leaves to his wounds and immediately he was healed. It reminds us of what John saw in the Book of Revelation, v.1 a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ⁴In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which
bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And so his body is restored. He feeds upon the bread and wine provided earlier by his friends at the Palace Beautiful. He had just won a great battle against Apollyon, the most terrifying of opponents, the agent of Satan, but he could remember how his friends spoke to him of his Saviour having battled the greatest of all warfares to accomplish salvation for his soul. Consequently, he was now living in the victory of Christ! The Captain of his salvation had supplied all his need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

CONCLUSION At the beginning of our study I mentioned young Samuel’s enquiry concerning where his father had battled with Apollyon. Perhaps it is appropriate we return to that second part of Pilgrim’s Progress. We read, “Now they were come to the place where the afore-mentioned battle was fought. Then said the guide to Christiana, her children, and Mercy, This is the place, on this ground Christian stood, and up there came Apollyon against him. And look, did not I tell you? here is some of your husband’s blood upon these stones to this day; behold, also, how here and there are yet to be seen upon the place, some of the shivers [i.e. fragments, splinters] of Apollyon’s broken darts; see also, how they did beat the ground with their feet as they fought, to make good their places against each other; how also, with their by-blows, they did split the very stones in pieces. Verily, Christian did here play the man, and showed himself as stout, as could, had he been there, even Hercules himself. … Lo, yonder also stands a monument, on which is engraven this battle, and Christian’s victory, to his fame throughout all ages. So, because it stood just on the wayside before them, they stepped to it, and read the writing, which word for word was this—

Hard by, here was a battle fought,
Most strange, and yet most true;
Christian and Apollyon sought
Each other to subdue.
The man so bravely played the man,
He made the fiend to fly;
Of which a monument I stand,
The same to testify.”

Apollyon, – his defeat. It was the Lord Who gave the victory to the weary pilgrim … and through it we see, - in the Sovereign will and good pleasure of God, - Christian is maturing in his faith. And, hard as the battle was through the Valley of Humiliation, it was necessary for him … He had been taught how to trust in the Lord’s strength, and not his own … It’s an assurance we all need to possess for it is only in the Lord’s strength we shall successfully enter the Celestial City. May the Lord encourage us as we seek so to do! Amen.