When we were introduced to Pilgrim (as he was known then) in the City of Destruction he was severely troubled with the heavy load on his back … the burden of his sin. It was the reason he had left his family, and under the direction of the man called Evangelist, and he had headed towards the wicket gate, away in the distance. However, he had to come up against the two very different types of opposition, - Obstinate and Pliable … one very dogmatic, and the other completely the opposite, but nonetheless dangerous. After having struggled his way through the Slough of Despond, and coming out the other side, he is back on the path again. But, then, he meets another man, - a ‘gentleman’, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and he tells him about an ‘easy’ way to shed the load of the burden of his sin. Mr. Worldly Wisemen pointed him in the direction of another ‘gentleman’, - Mr. Legality, who lived in the village of Morality, along with his son, - probably another ‘gentleman’, Mr. Civility.

To arrive in the village of Morality, all Christian had to do was follow Mr. Worldly Wiseman’s simple and easy-to-understand directions, “By that hill you must go, and the first house you come at is his” … Very handy!

… And he followed this wrong advice … “So Christian turned out of his way to go to Mr. Legality’s house”. … He was being directed along a different path as to the one Evangelist had instructed. He listened to and heeded the opposite advice. He thought by turning “out of his way” he might arrive earlier and easier at the place where he could be rid of his burden. But, after he had turned off the path, when he approached the hill that didn’t look so formidable when he first started towards it … he realised he was going to be no better off! This was a mammoth task in front of him! The hill was actually far higher and more imposing than it had looked even less than a mile back! And it was a treacherous climb, especially as he was carrying his burden. There was also “flashes of fire” that warned him how he would be placing himself in even more jeopardy if he went any further. These flashes of fire from the high hill were like the ‘thunders and the lightnings’ Moses and the Israelites experienced when the holiness of God descended upon Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-18). It represented the total inability to measure up to the righteous standards of God … and the more the sinner contemplates the righteous demands of the Law, the more wretched he recognises his sinful state. The hill God’s law requires us to climb is far higher than we are ever able to manage! Consequently, Christian came to realise how totally ill-prepared he was.
At this point the enormity of his mistake overwhelmed him, “he began to be sorry that he had taken Mr. Worldly Wiseman’s counsel”. It’s a good thing when the Lord cause us to realise the path we are on is the wrong path! I’m sure each of us could look back and recognise those occasions when God sent the ‘thunders and lightnings’ to warn us before we journeyed too far along the wrong road. It’s a good thing also when He showed us we needed to retrace our steps. How many individual believers and churches have failed to consider the dangers of neglecting the Gospel, and the Word of God! Of course, there are other routes we could take, - they branch out in all directions, - but there is only the one right way, and that is along the path God guides us through His Word!

Christian might not have realised it at the time … but the Lord was placing the obstacles before him. It was the Lord Who was causing him to reconsider the unwise counsel he had previously been given by Mr. Worldly Wiseman. Indeed, Prov. 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. In grace, the Lord was hindering him from going any further. The Lord knows those who are His (II Tim. 2:19), and He will allow nothing to interfere with their progress to salvation!

At this point, - when he was feeling sorry for taking the wrong advice and making the wrong decision, - he saw Evangelist approaching him. Yes, Christian was embarrassed for he knew he had chosen to disobey the instructions Evangelist had given him on his departure from the City of Destruction. Christian was in his present problem because of his failure to follow the word he had been given when he set out on his journey.

Let’s see how Evangelist counsels Christian, though, to direct him back onto the path he never should have left …

STRAIGHT-TALKING
Christian wandered into this situation by heeding the deceptive false gospel of law and works. He had listened to someone who gave him the wrong message … He had been told that, basically, he was in control of his own salvation. He could determine how he might achieve it.

Such foolishness! Salvation is not of man, but of God (Ps. 37:39; Jonah 2:9). Initially, Pilgrim’s yearning for salvation was such that he ran out of his house, and away from his family, with his fingers in his ears shouting repeatedly, “Life! Life! Eternal life!” That was what he longed for. That was the purpose of his journey … but along the road he had been attracted to another gospel. … And faithful Evangelist could not overlook the harm Christian was doing to his
own soul. Therefore, Evangelist didn’t waste his words. He engaged Christian in **straight-talking**! “What doest thou here, Christian?” … “Art not thou the man that I found crying without the walls of the City of Destruction?” … “Did not I direct thee the way to the little wicket-gate?” … “How is it, then, that thou art so quickly turned aside? for thou art now out of the way.”

By the time Evangelist had questioned him further we read that Christian “stood trembling” … When Evangelist first questioned him, “Christian knew not what to answer … he stood speechless”. … We don’t particularly want to harass anyone with the Gospel so that we make them into a ‘shivering wreck’, but you do see what Evangelist was doing? … He was showing Christian the great mistake of listening to anyone else when the Word of God makes itself so clear! … The instruction of the Word of God spoke plainly about the gate, **Mt. 7:13**

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

It’s so much easier to follow the wrong path than it is to follow the path that leads to Christ. Yes, - as Christian indicated to Evangelist, - it was made all-too-easy and attractive for him to take the other road … the wrong road. But you can now hear the passion in his voice as he addressed Evangelist, “Yes, dear sir … Yes, dear sir”. … You see, the Lord was working in his heart. The Lord had ‘connected’ with him, and Christian truly understood how he never should have left the road that would lead him to the wicket gate. … And Evangelist exhorted him, “Stand still a little, that I may show thee the words of God”.

There is no substitute for obedience to the Word of God … That is why the devil is so adamant about getting us away from it. I have no doubt Mr. Worldly Wiseman had his Bible … and Mr. Legality and Mr Civility too … And they would have taken from it what they wanted to delude other people with. Evangelist, though, was concerned with showing to Christian once again the never-changing Gospel that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save sinners. Evangelist confronted Christian, “Thou art the man that art running into misery, thou hast begun to reject the counsel of the Most High, and to draw back thy foot from the way of peace, even almost to the hazarding of thy perdition”.

Evangelist wasn’t interested in making a convert out of Christian for his own benefit or gain. He wasn’t trying to turn him into a member of some local fraternity. He wanted to see Christian go through that wicket gate and come to the cross, where his burden would roll away. Consequently, he had only one message for him, - it was the same message he would have told everyone else.
Yes, Evangelist was **straight-talking** for anything else would have detracted and distracted from the Gospel he was sent to deliver.

**STRAIGHT-WALKING**

Indeed, Evangelist took him to the Word and showed him his continued need. … He needed to leave that path he was presently on and start walking again on the path he had departed from. And as he rightly understood how his faithlessness was condemning him, Christian acknowledged his true sinful state, “Woe is me, for I am undone” (Is. 6:5). … And look at what Evangelist did next. In a scene reminiscent of the occasion when the apostle John fell at the feet of Jesus as though dead (Rev. 1:17), Evangelist took Christian by the right hand, and raised him to his feet. He gave him fresh hope … “Keep on going”, he told him, “Be not faithless, but believing” (Jn. 20:27). … **Straight-walking.**

Evangelist gave him advice we could all do with often in our Christian walk, “Give more earnest heed to the things that I shall tell thee of”. Jeremiah put it, 6:16 Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. … He told him about Mr. Worldly Wiseman. He would have had his own church, in his own town, to suit his own kind, and to meet the needs of his own self. He fashioned religion after his own desires. The saying very well suits him, “In the beginning God created man … and as time went on, man returned the compliment!” Mr. Worldly Wiseman had created a “God” that suited his own requirements. These kind of people, - Evangelist told Christian, - will turn you out of the way, they will make the true Gospel of salvation sound burdensome and unnecessary, and they will point you along a path that leads in completely the opposite direction to the way of the cross. … But Christian, you must keep **straight-walking!**

Look ahead, Christian … don’t look back or don’t look around you … Look ahead! Yes, **straight-talking, straight-walking** and …

**STRAIGHT-FORWARD**

Is. 48:17 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. As for the other paths you are tempted along, Evangelist told Christian, “First, thou must abhor his turning thee out of the way; yea, and thine own consenting thereto: because this is to reject the counsel of God for the sake of the counsel of a Worldly-wiseman. … Secondly, Thou must abhor his labouring to render the cross odious unto thee; for thou art to prefer it before the treasures in Egypt. … Thirdly, Thou must hate his setting of thy feet in the way that leadeth to the ministration of death.”
Any gospel preached that does not wholly concentrate on the Saviour is no gospel, and no true child of God should be even remotely associated with them. The ecumenists in their hurry to fall over themselves to accommodate each other are willing to pick through the scraps to formulate something that suits them all … but they are robbing our Gospel of its unique confidence in Christ. And the liberals have stripped the cross of the Saviour until it is nothing more than a sentimental ornament. There are those also who have added that which it is not necessary to add. They highlight a baptismal regeneration or a church membership … but neither saves, otherwise Jesus could not have given the thief on the cross any sure and steadfast hope for eternity!

The Mr. Worldly Wisemen are plentiful … and they are over-populating the religious arena, even in the pulpits. They are out to ensnare the gullible and those who are not confiding in the truth of God’s Word. The message of the Lord Jesus was direct, Mt. 6:33 seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Don’t turn off to one side or the other … I don’t think it is inappropriate to quote from an old war song, “Keep right on to the end of the road, Keep right on to the end. Though the way be long, let your heart be strong, Keep right on to the end.” Mt. 24:13 he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

CONCLUSION

Straight-talking, straight-walking, and straight-forward … It is not an easy road to salvation, and neither is it an easy road to Heaven … but it will be more than worthwhile when we arrive there! Paul wrote, Phil. 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

As we draw our study to a conclusion, pay very close attention to the way Evangelist did the work of the Lord with this man who was so sincerely searching. His initial severity, - the means by which he confronted Christian, - was measured to a degree that it was done gracefully in the truth of God’s Word. There was no haranguing of Christian. Evangelist’s tenderness was encouraging. He didn’t lambast Christian, but when he “fell down at his feet as dead, crying”, … “Evangelist caught him by the right hand” and lifted him so that “did Christian again a little revive, and stood up”. And the consequence of how Evangelist met with Christian’s need was that he went on his way. Yes, he returned to the narrow path that would eventually lead him to the wicket gate and the cross. He is back to that resolute and unwavering disposition he had previously. He returns to the safety of the King’s Highway.