

"COMFORT ON THE JOURNEY"

John Bunyan's, The Pilgrim's Progress, is an "immortal classic." I noticed something interesting as I was thinking and writing on this week's Encouragement theme – the title of Bunyan's work. We tend to say "Pilgrim's Progress." However, the full title is "The Pilgrim's Progress." That one little word tells me that I am the Pilgrim, aka Christian. I consider myself as the "The" in the title. A pilgrim is one who journeys in a foreign land. The apostle Paul tells us that we are a "sojourner." We are basically on a "stopover." We are on our way, but we have a short layover here for now. Additional word pictures of who we are and what we are doing here are: We are lodging here or boarding for a time. I don't see it as a staying somewhere; that implies no movement. We are not bound to stay here. We will be and should be moving on, to our heavenly calling. Now that's encouraging.

The story is Bunyan's dream that is happening to one called "Christian." Christian leaves the city of Destruction (his hometown). Bunyan sees a man dressed in rags, with a *Book in his hand and a great burden on his back. He opens the *Book, and reading it, he begins to weep and tremble. He bursts out and cries, saying, "What shall I do," or as the "Book" writes,

This starts a long journey for Christian. He meets many individuals along his journey to the narrow gate. Christian meets many of the same individuals, has the same experiences, and the same emotions that we have. For example, there is: Obstinate, Pliable, Mr. Civility, Mr. Legality, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, to name just a few. I will leave it up to you to examine each of these during your own reading of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, if you so desire. (You can find a copy in the church library.)

Bunyan's defense for writing *The Pilgrim's Progress*, I believe makes it clear that Christian(s) can be comforted, encouraged, by the words found in the *Book.

*"And now, before I do put up my Pen
I'll show the profit of my Book, and then
Commit both thee and it unto that hand
That pulls the strong down, and makes weak ones stand.
... It also shows you how he runs, and runs
Till he unto the Gate of Glory comes.
This Book will make a Traveller of thee,
If by its Counsel thou wilt ruled be;
The Blind also delightful things to see.*

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by: John Polzella

*It seems a Novelty, and yet contains
Nothing but sound and honest Gospel strains.
O then come hither,
And lay my Book, they Head, and Heart together."*

Bunyan is telling us that we have a comforter, a counselor, to encourage us, and will be by our side during every journey and through every obstacle.

"The Book" tells us that "I, even I am he who comforts you (Isa 51:12)." "...I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth" (John 14:6 14:16). Jeremiah cries out to the Lord that "no one is near to comfort me" (Lamentations 1:16, 21). However, in 3:21ff he proclaims:

*"Yet this I call to mind and, therefore, I have hope...The Lord is my portion;
Therefore, I will wait for Him." **Lamentations 3:21ff***

May the One who carries our burdens bless you and keep you, and encourage you.

In Christ,

John Polzella



*The "Book" is the Bible