

BY-PATH MEADOW AND THE GIANT DESPAIR

A river.
Psal. 65. 9

Rev. 22.
Ezek. 47.

I saw then, that they went on their way to a pleasant river; which *David* the king called *the river of God*; but *John*, *the river of the water of life*.¹ Now their way lay just upon the bank of this river: here therefore *Christian* and his companion walked with great delight; they drank also of the water of the river, which was pleasant and enlivening to their weary spirits. Besides, on the banks of this river, on

¹ The Pilgrims came here to a pleasant river, at which they took refreshing draughts to enliven their weary spirits. This river is the deep and boundless ocean of God's Love; "The streams of this river, which make glad the city of our God," are pardon, peace, safety, adoption, justification, sanctification, audience of prayer, blessing of all providence's, and everlasting triumph in heaven. The channel through which these streams flow, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers are blessed in him with all spiritual blessings, and the Love of God, and all the fruits of it, are enjoyed in the fellowship of the Spirit. The children of God, walking on the banks of this river, feed on the precious fruit of gospel promises, where the enjoyment of present grace, and the prospect of future glory, fill their souls, as it were, with marrow and fatness. Here the weary find rest, the backsliding recovery, and the mourning consolation. These are the green pastures in which believers grow up as the calves of the stall, living by faith on unseen promises, and growing most for glory.

either side, were *green trees*, that bore all manner of fruit; and the leaves of the trees were good for medicine; with the fruit of these trees they were also much delighted; and the leaves they eat to prevent surfeits, and other diseases that are incident to those that heat their blood by travels. On either side of the river was also a meadow, curiously beautified with lilies; and it was green all the year long. In this meadow they lay down and slept; for here they might *lie down safely*. When they awoke, they gathered again of the fruit of the trees, and drank again of the water of the river, and then lay down again to sleep. Thus they did several days and nights. Then they sang:

Trees by the river.

The fruit and leaves of the trees

A meadow in which they lie down to sleep.
Psal. 23. 2.
Isa. 14. 30.

*Behold ye, how these
crystal streams do glide
(To comfort pilgrims)
by the highway side.
The meadows green,
besides their fragrant smell,
Yield dainties for them;
and he that can tell
What pleasant fruit, yea,
leaves, these trees do yield,
Will soon sell all,
that he may buy this field.*

2. So when they were disposed to go on, (for they were not as yet at

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their journey's end), they ate and drank, and departed.²

3. Now I beheld in my dream, that they had not journeyed far, but the river and the way for a time parted,³ at which they were not a little sorry, yet they durst not go out of the way. Now the way from the river was rough, and their feet tender by reason of their travels. *So the soul of the pilgrims were much dis-*

Numb. 21. 4.

² The Lord affords his people seasons of refreshment by the way; but it behooves them to remember that they are not yet at their journey's end, nor out of the reach of danger. Indeed they have never more reason to be watchful, than at such times; for Satan watches them, he grudges their privileges. As a highwayman lets the poor pass unmolested, but attacks those that have treasures, about the, so Satan, when he sees Pilgrims filled with comforts, lies in wait to entice them into by-paths, that he may rob them.

³ We have just now seen the Pilgrims on the mount of divine manifestations, favored with peculiar tokens of God's love. But the scene begins to change; the river and the way parted for a time. This road was rough and troublesome, so that they began to be discouraged. The comforts of the gospel are intended not to take away the bitter cup, but to sweeten it; not to remove the difficulties which lie in our way, but to alleviate the weight of them. But alas! How ready are we, like the Pilgrims, to shake off the painful but salutary cross: to strike out ways of our own, instead of walking in the narrow way chalked out by infinite wisdom, but in the issue we shall always find reason to lament our folly. As a punishment of our sin, we are often permitted to fall into vain confidence and carnal security, than which there can be no greater enemies to Pilgrims.

couraged, *because of the way*. Wherefore still as they went on, they wished for better way. Now a little before them, there was on the left hand of the road a *meadow*, and a stile to go over into it, and that meadow is called *By-Path-Meadow*. Then said *Christian* to his fellow, If this meadow lieth along by our wayside, let us go over into it. Then he went to the stile to see, and behold a path lay along by the way on the other side of the fence.⁴ 'Tis according to my wish, said *Christian*, here is the easiest going; come, good *Hopeful*, and let us go over.

By-Path-Meadow.
One temptation makes way for another.

4. *Hope*. But how if this path should lead us out of the way?

Strong Christians may lead weak ones out of the way.

5. *Chr*. That's not likely, said the other; look, doth it not go along by the wayside? So *Hopeful*, being persuaded by his fellow, went after him over the stile. When they were gone over, and were got into the path, they found it very easy for their feet; and withal, they looking before them, espied a man walking as they did, (and his name was *Vain Confidence*), so they called after him, and asked him, whither that way led? He said, to the celestial gate.⁵ Look, said *Christian*, did not I

⁴ The first declensions from the path of duty are, perhaps, but small, but by little and little the path winds, and we may soon wonder till we are unable of ourselves to return. He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.

⁵ Sin first deceives and then hardens, and vain confidence takes place of godly fear.

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*See what it is
too suddenly
to fall in with
strangers.*

tell you so? By this you may see we are right; so they followed, and he went before them. But behold, the night came on, and it grew very dark; so that they that were behind lost the sight of him that went before.

*Isa. 9. 16.
A pit to
catch the
vain-
glorious in.*

6. He therefore that went *before* (*Vain-Confidence* by name), not seeing the way before him, fell into a deep pit, which was on purpose there made by the prince of those grounds, to catch *vain-glorious* fools withal, and was dashed in pieces with his fall.

*Reasoning
between
Christian
and Hopeful.*

7. Now *Christian* and his fellow heard him fall. So they called to know the matter, but there was none to answer, only they heard a groaning. Then said *Hopeful*, Where are we now? Then was his fellow silent, as mistrusting that he had led him out of the way; and now it began to rain, and thunder and lighten in a very dreadful manner; and the water rose amain.⁶

8. Then *Hopeful* groaned in himself, saying, *Oh that I had kept on my way!*

⁶ If God intends finally to save us, he will not suffer us to continue long in ease and security, but will awaken us to a sense of our danger and folly in backsliding from him. Nothing less than the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai will serve to rouse us from our spiritual slumbers; and the waters of inward troubles are suffered to rise high in the soul, that we may learn to know what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord, the fountain of living waters, and be more vigilant for the time to come.

9. *Chr.* Who could have thought that this path should have led us out of the way?

10. *Hope.* I was afraid on't at the very first, and therefore gave you that gentle caution. I would have spoke plainer, but that you are older than I.

11. *Chr.* Good brother, be not offended; I am sorry I have brought thee out of the way, and that I have put thee into such imminent danger; pray, my brother, forgive me; I did not do it of an evil intent.

*Christian's
repentance
for leading
his brother
out of the
way.*

12. *Hope.* Be comforted, my brother, for I forgive thee; and believe too, that this shall be for our good.

13. *Chr.* I am glad I have with me a merciful brother; but we must not stand thus; let us try to go back again.

14. *Hope.* But, good brother, let me go before.

15. *Chr.* No, if you please, let me go first; that if there be any danger, I may be first therein, because by my means we are both gone out of the way.

16. *Hope.* No, said *Hopeful*, you shall not go first; for your mind being troubled, may lead you out of the way again. Then for their encouragement, they heard the voice of one, saying, *Let thine heart be towards the highway; even the way*

Jer. 31. 21.

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*that thou wentest, turn again.*⁷ But by this time the waters were greatly risen, by reason of which, the way of going back was very dangerous. (Then I thought that it is easier going out of the way when we are in, than going in when we are out.) Yet they adventured to go back, but it was so dark, and the flood was so high, that in their going back, they had like to have been drowned nine or ten times.

They are in danger of drowning as they go back.

17. Neither could they, with all the skill they had, get again to the stile that night. Wherefore at last, lighting under a little shelter, they sat down there, 'Till the day brake; but being weary, they fell asleep.⁸ Now

⁷ Whilst there are many paths that lead to hell, there is but one way that leads to eternal glory; and that way is Christ. It is called by the prophet Isaiah, *the king's highway*, and *the way of holiness*. How dangerous to leave this way, and what difficulty does the believer find to get into it again! His mind may be so darkened with the mists of temptation, and the floods of wrath may rise so high, that the poor soul may imagine that he will be eternally swallowed up by them. It is true that Christ will never totally or finally leave his people; but his quickening, strengthening, comforting presence, may be withdrawn to such a degree, that they may go mourning a long time without the sun; nay, by reason of their God-provoking sins, the quarrel against them may be pursued even to the gates of hell, so that they may be made to cry out, "*The arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison thereof drinketh up my spirits.*"

⁸ The poor Pilgrims with their utmost skill were not able to get into the king's high-

there was, not far from the place where they lay, a castle, called *Doubting-Castle*, the owner whereof was *Giant Despair*, and it was in his grounds they now were sleeping; wherefore he getting up in the morning early, and walking up and down in his fields, caught *Christian* and *Hopeful* asleep in his grounds. Then with a grim and surly voice, he bid them awake, and asked them whence they were, and what they did in his grounds.

They sleep in the grounds of Giant Despair.

He finds them in his ground, and carries them to Doubting-Castle.

*The pilgrims now,
to gratify the flesh,
Will seek its ease;
but, oh! how they afresh*

way that night, but finding a little shelter, they reposed themselves under it, and fell asleep. There great fault was that they stopped short of Christ, the true shelter. They run for refuge to the law, and again fell asleep in the armor of carnal security. A troubled conscience, if only lulled asleep by law duties, and not pacified by the blood of sprinkling, will when awakened, speak in more dreadful accents than ever. These Pilgrims found it so by dear bought experience. They fell into the hands of Giant Despair, who treated them so unmercifully, that one of them was ready to hearken to his suggestions of self-murder. All this despair and trouble which befell the Pilgrims, might have been prevented, if after the commission of their fault, they had immediately fled to Christ, and not betaken themselves to a false refuge. May the Lord teach us this lesson more perfectly, that, when overtaken with sin, we may instantly fly to the purifying fountain of Christ's blood, and ever remember our advocate with the Father, who is alone the propitiation for sin.

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*Do thereby plunge
themselves new griefs into!
Who seek to please the flesh,
themselves undo.*

*The grievousness of
their imprisonment.
Psal. 88.*

18. They told him they were pilgrims, and that they had lost their way. Then said the *Giant*, You have this night trespassed on me, by trampling in and lying on my grounds, and therefore you must go along with me. So they were forced to go, because he was stronger than they. They also had but little to say, for they knew themselves in a fault. The *Giant* therefore drove them before him, and put them into his castle, in a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirit of these two men. Here then they lay from *Wednesday* morning till *Saturday* night, without one bit of bread, or drop of drink, or light, or any to ask how they did: they were therefore here in evil case, and were far from friends and acquaintance. Now in this place *Christian* had double sorrow, because it was through his unadvised haste that they were brought into this distress.

19. Now *Giant Despair* had a wife, and her name was *Diffidence*: so when he was gone to bed, he told his wife what he had done, to wit, that he had taken a couple of prisoners, and cast them into his *dungeon*, for trespassing on his grounds. Then he asked her also, what he had best to do further to them. So she asked him what they were, whence they came, and whither they were bound?

and he told her. Then she counseled him, that when he arose in the morning, he should beat them without any mercy. So when he arose, he getteth him a grievous crab-tree cudgel, and goes down into the *Dungeon* to them, and there first falls to rating of them as if they were dogs, although they gave him never a word of distaste. Then he falls upon them, and beats them fear-fully, in such sort, that they were not able to help themselves, or to turn them upon the floor. This done, he withdraws, and leaves them there to condole their misery, and to mourn under their distress. So all that day they spent the time in nothing but sighs and bitter lamentations. The next night she talking with her husband about them further, and understanding that they were yet alive, did advise him to counsel them to make away themselves. So when morning was come, he goes to them in a surly manner, as before, and perceiving them to be very sore with the stripes that he had given them the day before, he told them, that since they were never like to come out of that place, their only way would be forthwith to make an end of themselves, either with knife, halter, or poison: for why, said he, should you choose life, seeing it is attended with so much bitterness? But they desired him to let them go; with that he looked ugly upon them, and rushing to them had doubtless made an end of them himself,⁹ but

*On Thursday
Giant Despair
beats
his prisoners*

*On Friday
Giant Despair
counsels them to
kill themselves.*

⁹ The children of God, though much harassed at times with desponding thoughts, and distrustful fears, yet are not totally

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The Giant
sometimes
has fits.

that he fell into one of his fits (for he sometimes in sunshine weather fell into fits) and lost, for a time, the use of his hand; wherefore he withdrew, and left them as before, to consider what to do. Then did the prisoners consult between themselves, whether it was best to take his counsel or no; and thus they began to discourse:

Christian
begins to
despair.

20. 22. **Chr.** Brother, said *Christian*, what shall we do? The life that we now live is miserable! For my part, I know not whether it is best to live thus, or to die out of hand. *My soul chooseth strangling* rather than life, and the grave is more easy for me than this *dungeon*! shall we be ruled by the Giant?

Job 7. 15.

Hopeful
comforts
him.

21. **Hope.** Indeed our present condition is dreadful, and death would be far more welcome to me, than thus for ever to abide; but yet let us consider, the Lord of the country to which we are going, hath said, Thou shalt do no murder, no not to another man's person; much more then are we forbidden to take his counsel, to kill ourselves. Besides, he that kills another, can but commit murder upon his body; but for one to kill *himself* is to kill body and soul at once. And moreover, my brother, thou talkest of ease in the grave, but hast thou forgotten the hell, whither for certain the murder-

abandoned to the dominion of them. A ray from the Sun of Righteousness shines into the midnight darkness and diffuses a gleam of hope. This state of mind is allegorically described by the Giant's falling into it.

ers go?¹⁰ For no murderer hath eternal life, &c. And let us consider again, that all the law is not in the hand of *Giant Despair*; others, so far as I can understand, have been taken by him, as well as we, and yet have escaped out of his hands. Who knows, but that God, who made the world, may cause that *Giant Despair* may die, or that, at some time or other, he may forget to lock us in; or but he may in short time have another of his fits before us, and may lose the use of his limbs? And if ever that should come to pass again, for my part I am resolved to pluck up the heart of a man, and to try my utmost to get from under his hand. I was a fool that I did not try to do it before; but however, my brother, let's be patient, and endure a while, the time may come that may give us a happy release; but let us not be our own murderers. With these words *Hopeful* at present did moderate the mind of his brother; so they continued together (in the dark) that day in their sad and doleful condition.

22. Well, towards evening the *Giant* goes down into the dungeon again, to see if his prisoners had taken his counsel; but when he came there, he found them alive; and truly alive was all; for now, what for want of bread and water, and by reason of

¹⁰ The love of God is the noblest motive to influence us to duty, and to keep us from sin; but when this is at a low ebb, the fear of threatened punishment is of great use to restrain us from the commission of sin, though it is not so filial and generous as the principle of love.

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the wounds they received when he beat them, they could do little but breathe. But I say, he found them alive; at which he fell into a grievous rage, and told them, that seeing they had disobeyed his counsel, it should be worse with them than if they had never been born.

Christian still
dejected.

23. At this they trembled greatly, and I think that *Christian* fell into a swoon; but coming a little to himself again, they renewed their discourse about the *Giant's* counsel, and whether yet they had best take it or no. Now *Christian* again seemed to be for doing it, but *Hopeful* made his second reply as followeth.

Hopeful
comforts him
again, by
calling for-
mer things to
remem-
brance.

24. **Hope.** My Brother, said he, rememberest thou not, how valiant thou hast been heretofore? *Apollyon*¹¹ could not crush thee, nor could all that thou didst hear, or see,

¹¹ We should treasure up past experiences, and the remembrance of these should encourage us to trust still on the Lord in every emergency. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And hath not the past evidenced the truth of the promise, and will he not fulfill it even unto the end? Surely he will. The Psalmist frequently had occasion to recur to past experiences, when he was brought into trials and difficulties. Psalm 42:6. "O, my God," says he, "my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill of Mizar;" where, most probably, he had obtained some wonderful deliverance. Hopeful, therefore, reminds Christian of the victory he had obtained over Apollyon, and of his courage at Vanity-fair, and proposes them as grounds of encouragement to his fainting mind.

or feel, in the valley of the Shadow of Death; what hardship, terror, and amazement hast thou already gone through, and art thou now nothing but fear? Thou seest that I am in the dungeon with thee, a far weaker man by nature than thou art; also this *Giant* has wounded me as well as thee, and hath also cut off the bread and water from my mouth, and with thee I mourn without the light. But let's exercise a little more patience; remember how thou playedst the man at *Vanity Fair*, and was neither afraid of the chain nor cage, nor yet of bloody death; wherefore let us (at least to avoid the shame that becomes not a Christian to be found in) bear up with patience as well as we can.

25. Now night being come again, and the *Giant* and his wife being in bed, she asked him concerning the prisoners, and if they had taken his counsel: to which he replied, They are sturdy rogues, they choose rather to bear all hardships, than to make away themselves. Then said she, Take them into the castle-yard tomorrow, and shew them the bones and skulls of those that thou hast already dispatched, and make them believe e're a week comes to an end, thou also wilt tear them in pieces, as thou hast done their fellows before them.¹²

¹² The apostasies and fearful ends of many, who, after having made profession for a time, have been overcome by sin and the world, are awfully discouraging to a backsliding, deserted, guilty believer, when

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On Saturday
the Giant
threatened,
that shortly
he would
pull them in
pieces.

26. So when the morning was come, the *Giant* goes to them again, and takes them into the castle-yard, and shews them as his wife had bidden him. These, said he, were pilgrims as you are, once, and they trespassed in my grounds, as you have done; and when I thought fit, I tore them in pieces, and so within ten days I will do you. Go, get you down to your den again! And with that he beat them all the way thither. They lay therefore all day on *Saturday* in a lamentable case, as before. Now, when night was come, and when Mrs. *Diffidence* and her husband the *Giant* were got to bed, they began to renew their discourse of their prisoners; and withal, the old Giant wondered that he could neither by his blows nor counsel bring them to an end. And with that his wife replied, I fear, said she, that they live in hope that some will come to relieve them, or that they have picklocks about them, by the means of which they hope to escape. And say'st thou so, my dear, said the *Giant*; I will therefore search them in the morning.

27. Well, on *Saturday* about midnight they began to pray, and continued in prayer till almost break of day.¹³

his conscience recovers its feeling, and Satan is permitted to assault him violently.

¹³ Now they begin to pray,—this was a token that deliverance was near at hand. When God intends any mercy to his people, he stirs up their minds to set a becom-

28. Now, a little before it was day, good *Christian*, as one half amazed, brake out in this passionate speech; What a fool, quoth he, am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty? I have a key in my bosom, called *Promise*, that will I am persuaded open any lock in *Doubting-Castle*. Then said *Hopeful*, That's good news, good brother, pluck it out of thy bosom and try.¹⁴

A key in
Christian's
bosom
called Prom-
ise, opens
any lock in
Doubting-
Castle.

29. Then *Christian* pulled it out of his bosom, and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt (as he turned the key) gave back, and the door flew open with ease, and *Christian* and *Hopeful* both came out. Then he went to the outward door that leads into the castle-yard, and with his key opened that door also. After he went to the iron gate, for that must be opened too, but that lock went very hard, yet the key did open it. Then they thrust open the gate to make their escape with speed; but that gate as it opened made such a creaking, that it waked *Giant Despair*, who hastily rising to pursue his prisoners, felt his limbs to fail, for his fits took him again, so

ing value upon it and earnestly to seek it; so that when the blessing is bestowed, it is not on account of their prayers, but for the sake of the promise.

¹⁴ The free promise of salvation in Christ, is the only key that can enter into the intricate wards of unbelief and despair. Faith is the hand that takes the key of the promise, turns it about in the lock, and opens the door for the fettered prisoner to escape.

that he could by no means go after them. Then they went on, and came to the King's highway again, and so were safe, because they were out of his jurisdiction.

30. Now, when they were gone over the stile, they began to contrive with themselves what they should do at that stile, to prevent those that should come after from falling into the hands of *Giant Despair*. So they consented to erect there a pillar, and to engrave upon the side thereof this sentence;

*A pillar
erected by
Christian
and his
fellow.*

OVER THIS STILE
IS
THE WAY TO
DOUBTING-
CASTLE,
WHICH IS KEPT BY
GIANT DESPAIR,
WHO DESPISETH
THE KING
OF THE
CELESTIAL COUNTRY,
AND
SEEKS TO DESTROY
HIS HOLY PILGRIMS.

31. Many therefore that followed after, read what was written, and escaped the danger. This done, they sang as follows:

*Out of the way we went,
and then we found
What 'twas to tread
upon forbidden ground.
And let them that come
after have a care,
Lest heedlessness makes
them as we to fare
Lest they for trespassing,
his prisoners are,
Whose Castle's Doubting,
and whose name's Despair. †*

NOTES:
