

CHRISTIAN AT THE GATE

Mat. 7. 8

So in process of time *Christian* got up to the gate. Now over the gate there was written, *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* He knocked therefore more than once or twice,¹ saying,

*May I now enter here?
Will He within
Open to sorry me,
though I have been
An undeserving rebel?
Then shall I
Not fail to sing
His lasting praise on high.*

2. At last there came a grave person to the gate, named *Goodwill*, who asked, Who was there? and whence he came, and what he would have?

3. **Chr.** Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the *City of Destruction*, but am going to

Talk
between
Goodwill
and Chris-
tian.

¹ If we would expect an answer of peace to our prayers, it is not enough that we now and then go to prayer in a formal way; but we must be frequent in the duty, besieging heaven with our cries, and importunate with God for a blessing: though we may meet for a time with a seeming denial, this ought not to discourage us. The woman of Canaan met with a repulse more than once, yet she succeeded beyond all expectation, and obtained the highest encomium: "*O woman! Great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*"

Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come; I would therefore, Sir, since I am informed that by this gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in?

4. **Goodw.** I am willing with all my heart, said he: and with that he opened the gate.

*The Gate will
be opened to
broken-
hearted-
sinners.*

5. So when *Christian* was stepping in,² the other gave him a pull. Then said *Christian*, What means that? The other told him, A little distance from this gate, there is erected a strong castle, of which *Beelzebub* is the captain: from thence both he, and they that are with him, shoot arrows at those that come up to this gate, if haply they may die before they can enter in. Then said *Christian*, I rejoice and tremble. So when he was got in, the man of the gate asked him who directed him thither.³

*Satan envies
those that
enter the Strait
Gate.*

*Christian en-
tered the Gate
with joy and
trembling.*

² Every saved sinner is a brand plucked out of the fire by the loving arm of Christ. Zech. 3:2

³ Satan is no enemy to formal prayer. He never disturbs such in what they call their devotions, but to the prayer of a broken-hearted sinner he has a peculiar enmity, and therefore he shoots his arrows, and injects wandering, and sometimes blasphemous thoughts into his mind, that he

CHRISTIAN AT THE GATE

Talk be-
tween
Goodwill
and Chris-
tian.

6. **Chr.** *Evangelist* bid me come hither and knock, (as I did) and he said, that you, sir, would tell me what I must do.

*He that will enter in
must first without
Stand knocking at the gate,
nor need he doubt,
That is a knocker,
but to enter in,
For God can love him,
and forgive his sin.*

7. **Goodw.** *An open door is set before thee, and no man can shut it.*

8. **Chr.** Now I begin to reap the benefits of my hazards.

9. **Goodw.** But how is it that you came alone?

10. **Chr.** Because none of my neighbors saw their danger, as I saw mine.

11. **Goodw.** Did any of them know of your coming?

12. **Chr.** Yes, my wife and children saw me at the first, and called after me to turn again: also some of my neighbors stood crying and calling after me to return; but I put my fingers in my ears, and so came on my way.

13. **Goodw.** But did none of them follow you to persuade you to go back?

may interrupt his communion with God though he cannot finally destroy it.

14. **Chr.** Yes, both *Obstinate* and *Pliable*: but when they saw that they could not prevail, *Obstinate* went railing back; but *Pliable* came with me a little way.

15. **Goodw.** But why did he not come through?

16. **Chr.** We indeed came both together, until we came at the Slough of *Despond*, into the which we also suddenly fell. And then was my neighbor *Pliable* discouraged, and would not adventure farther. Wherefore, getting out again on that side next to his own house, he told me, I should possess the brave country alone for him: so he went his way, and I came mine; he after *Obstinate*, and I to this gate.

17. **Goodw.** Then said *Goodwill*, Alas, poor man! is the celestial glory of so small esteem with him, that he counteth it not worth running the hazard of a few difficulties to obtain it?

18. 20. **Chr.** Truly, said *Christian*, I have said the truth of *Pliable*, and if I should also say all the truth of myself, it will appear there is no betterment betwixt him and myself.⁴ 'Tis true, he went back to his own house, but I also turned aside to go into the way of death,

⁴ A truly humbled sinner will not ascribe the difference betwixt himself and another that falls away from his profession, to his own superior management and conduct, but wholly and entirely to the distinguishing grace of God in Christ Jesus.

*A man may
have com-
pany when
he sets out
for Heaven,
and yet go
thither
alone.*

*Christian
accuseth
himself
before the
man at the
Gate.*

CHRISTIAN AT THE GATE

being persuaded thereto by the carnal arguments of one Mr. *Worldly Wiseman*.

19. 21. **Goodw.** Oh! did he light upon you? What! he would have had you have sought for ease at the hands of Mr. *Legality*! They are both of them a very cheat. But did you take his counsel?

20. 22. **Chr.** Yes, as far as I durst; I went to find out Mr. *Legality*, until I thought that the mountain that stands by his house would have fallen upon my head; wherefore there I was forced to stop.

21. 23. **Goodw.** That mountain has been the death of many, and will be the death of many more: 'tis well you escaped being by it dashed in pieces.

22. 24. **Chr.** Why truly I do not know what had become of me there, had not *Evangelist* happily met me again as I was musing in the midst of my dumps; but it was God's mercy, that he came to me again, for else I had never come hither. But now I am come, such a one as I am, more fit indeed for death by that mountain, than thus to stand talking with my Lord. But oh! what a favor is this to me, that yet I am admitted entrance here!

Christian comforted again.

John 6.37

23. **Goodw.** We make no objections against any, notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither. They in no wise are

cast out. And therefore, good *Christian*, come a little way with me, and I will teach thee about the way thou must go. Look before thee; dost thou see this narrow way? THAT is the way thou must go. It was cast up by the patriarchs, prophets, Christ and his apostles, and it is as straight as a rule can make it: this is the way thou must go.

Christian directed yet on his way.

24. **Chr.** But, said *Christian*, are there no turnings nor windings, by which a stranger may lose his way?

Christian afraid of losing his way.

25. **Goodw.** Yes, there are many ways butt down upon this; and they are crooked and wide: but thus thou mayest distinguish the right from the wrong, the right only being strait and narrow.⁵

Mat. 7. 14.

26. Then I saw in my dream, That *Christian* asked him further if he could not help him off with his burden that was upon his back, for as yet he had not got rid thereof, nor

Christian weary of his burden.

⁵ Many professors of our day seem to have forgotten our Lord's exhortation, "*Enter ye in at the straight gate,*" &c. Matt. 7:13, 14. Let us try ourselves by this scripture: Are we walking in self denied obedience to the Master's will, not cutting and carving for ourselves, but with godly simplicity and sincerity seeking after conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection? Then are we his disciples indeed. BUNYAN was as strenuous an asserter of free grace as any in our day can be, and yet he was no less strenuous in inculcating the precepts of mortification and self denial in the way to the kingdom.

CHRISTIAN AT THE GATE

could he by any means get it off without help.⁶

NOTES:

There is no deliverance from the guilt and burden of sin, but by the death and blood of Christ.

27. He told him, As to thy burden, be content to bear it, until thou comest to the place of deliverance; for there it will fall from thy back of itself.⁷

28. Then *Christian* began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his journey. So the other told him, that by that he was gone some distance from the gate, he would come at the house of the *Interpreter*, at whose door he should knock, and he would show him excellent things. Then *Christian* took his leave of his friend, and he again bid him God speed. ✠

⁶ Poor Christian, was no doubt, in a state of acceptance, and yet he was not wholly rid of his burden. The Lord finds his people when he convinces them of their sin and danger; but they find not him till a sense of reconciliation quiets their consciences, and they obtain the knowledge of their salvation through the remission of their sins.

⁷ Though we cannot too earnestly desire comfort and victory, yet it behooves us to exercise submission to the will of God. We are prone to an impatience in waiting, which is very unsuitable to the state of a sinner, who ought to count it a mercy that he is out of hell and upon praying ground.
