

THE HILL OF DIFFICULTY



I saw then in my dream, that he went on thus, even until he came at the bottom, where he saw, a little out of the way, three men fast asleep, with fetters upon their heels. The name of the one was *Simple*, another *Sloth*, and the third *Presumption*.¹

Sleep, Sloth
and Pre-
sumption.

2. *Christian* then seeing them lie in this case, went to them, if peradventure he might awake them, and cried, You are like them that sleep on the top of a mast, for the Dead Sea is under you, a gulf that hath no bottom: awake, therefore, and come away; be willing also, and I will help you off with your irons. He also told them, If he that goeth about like a *roaring lion*, comes by, you will certainly become a prey to his teeth. With that they looked upon him, and began to reply in this sort: *Simple* said, *I see no danger*; *Sloth* said, *Yet a little more Sleep*; and *Presumption* said, *Every tub must stand upon his own bottom*. And so they lay down to sleep again, and *Christian* went on his way.

Prov. 23. 34.

1 Pet. 5. 8.

There is no
persuasion
will do if
GOD open-
eth not the
eyes.

3. Yet was he troubled to think, that men in that danger should so little esteem the kindness of him

¹ These characters abound but too much even where the gospel is preached. Some remain grossly ignorant; in some indolence smothers conviction; others are obstinate, and will not be warned. God sends light, but they will not be warned.

that so freely offered to help them, both by the awakening of them, counseling of them, and proffering to help them off with their irons. And as he was troubled thereabout, he espied two men come tumbling over the wall, on the left hand of the narrow way; and they made up apace to him. The name of the one was *Formalist*, and the name of the other *Hypocrisy*. So, as I said, they drew up unto him, who thus entered with them into discourse.

4. *Chr.* Gentlemen, whence came you, and whither do you go?

Christian
Talked with
them.

5. *Form. and Hypo.* We were born in the land of *Vain-glory*, and are going for praise to Mount *Zion*.

6. *Chr.* Why came you not in at the gate which standeth at the beginning of the way? Know you not that it is written, that *he that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber*?

John 10. 1.

7. *Form. and Hypo.* They said, That to go to the gate for entrance, was by all their countrymen counted too far about: and that therefore their usual way was to make a short cut of it, and to climb over the wall, as they had done.

They that come
into the Way,
but not by the
door think that
they can say
something in
vindication of
their own
practice.

8. *Chr.* But will it not be counted a trespass against the Lord of the city, whither we are bound, thus to violate His revealed will?

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9. **Form. and Hyp.** They told him, that as for that, he needed not to trouble his head thereabout: for what they did, they had custom for, and could produce, if need were, testimony that would witness it, for more than a thousand years.

10. **Chr.** But, said *Christian*, will your practice stand a trial at law?

11. **Form. and Hyp.** They told him that *custom*, it being of so long standing as above a thousand years, would doubtless now be admitted as a thing legal by an impartial judge: and besides, said they, if we get into the way, what's matter which way we get in? If we are in, we are in:² thou art but in the way, who, as we perceive, came in at the gate; and we are also in the way, that came tumbling over the wall: wherein now is thy condition better than ours?

Who's this? The pilgrim.
How! 'Tis very true.
Old things are pass'd away;
all's become new.
Strange! He's another man,
upon my word;
They be fine feathers,
that make a fine bird.

² Formalists and hypocrites walking in the way of outward profession, think themselves safe, because they so far agree with believers! But they still differ as much as the blind from those that see. They only who enter in at the gate, are capable of enjoying the light of the gospel: it shines upon others, yet they walk in darkness.

12. **Chr.** I walk by the rule of my Master: you walk by the rude working of your fancies. You are counted thieves already by the Lord of the way; therefore I doubt you will not be found true men at the end of the way. You come in by yourselves without his direction; and shall go out by yourselves, without his mercy.

13. To this they made him but little answer; only they bid him look to himself. Then I saw that they went on every man in his way, without much conference one with another; save that these two men told *Christian*, that as to laws and ordinances, they doubted not but they should as conscientiously do them as he. Therefore, said they, we see not wherein thou differest from us, but by the coat that is on thy back, which was, as we trow, given thee by some of thy neighbors to hide the shame of thy nakedness.

15. **Chr.** By laws and ordinances you will not be saved, since you came not in by the door.³ And as for this coat that is on my back, it was given me by the Lord of the place whither I go; and that, as you say, to cover my nakedness with. And I take it as a token of his kind-

³ Formalists and Hypocrites being wholly unacquainted with their fallen nature, do not see the necessity of regeneration, the imputation of the Redeemer's righteousness, or the continued influences of the Spirit as a Sanctifier and Comforter, and therefore ridicule the real Christian, and treat his experience as the effect of enthusiasm, and overheated brain

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ness to me; for I had nothing but rags before. and besides, thus I comfort myself as I go. Surely, think I, when I come to the gate of the city, the Lord thereof will know me for good, since I have his coat on my back! A coat that he gave me freely in the day that he striped me of my rags. I have moreover a mark in my forehead, of which perhaps you have taken no notice, which one of my Lord's most intimate associates fixed there in the day that my burden fell off my shoulders. I will tell you, moreover, that I had then given me a roll sealed, to comfort me by reading, as I go on the way; I was also bid to give it in at the celestial gate, in token of my certain going in after it; all which things I doubt you want, and want them, because you came not in at the gate.

16. To these things they gave him no answer, only they looked upon each other, and laughed. Then I saw that they went on all, save that kept before, who had no more talk but with himself, and that sometimes sighingly, and sometimes comfortably: also he would be often reading in the roll, that one of the Shining Ones gave him, by which he was refreshed.

17. I beheld then, that they all went on till they came to the foot of the hill *Difficulty*, at the bottom of which was a spring. There were also in the same place two other ways besides that which came strait from the gate; one turned to the left hand, and the other to the right, at the bottom of the hill: but the narrow way

lay right up the hill, and the name of the going up the side of the hill is called *Difficulty*.⁴ *Christian* now went to the spring, and drank thereof to refresh himself,⁵ and then began to go up the hill, saying:

Isa. 49. 10

*This hill, though high,
I covet to ascend,
The difficulty will
not me offend.
For I perceive the
way to life lies here:
Come pluck up heart,
let's neither faint nor fear;
Better, though difficult,
the right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy,
where the end is woe.*

19. The other two also came to the foot of the hill. But when they saw that the hill was steep and high, and that there were two other ways to go; and supposing also that these two ways might meet again with

*Christian
has talk with
himself.*

*He comes to
the hill Dif-
ficulty.*

⁴ Christian had some trials before he entered the gate. But the Believer meets with the greatest exercises after he is in some measure established in the faith. When we come to the Cross and sepulchre we are ready to think the worst is past. But the hill *Difficulty*, the fight with Apollyon, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, the Giant Despair's castle, and the Enchanted Ground, are as yet unseen. Thus the Israelites rejoiced when they saw the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, and little thought of the wilderness they had to pass through and that their greatest troubles were yet to come.

⁵ A wise and gracious God generally vouchsafes more than ordinary supplies of his spirit and grace to those whom he calls out to difficulties and labor. Christian, before he climbs the hill *Difficulty*, takes a refreshing draught from the spring of divine consolation.

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that up which *Christian* went, on the other side of the hill; therefore they were resolved to go in those ways. Now the name of one of those ways was *Danger*, and the name of the other *Destruction*. So the one took the way which is called *Danger*, which led him into a great wood, and the other took directly up the way to *Destruction*, which led him into a wide field, full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell, and rose no more.

*The danger
of turning
out of the
Way.*

20. I looked then after *Christian*, to see him go up the hill, where I perceived he fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and his knees, because of the steepness of the place. Now about the midway to the top of the hill, was a pleasant *Arbor*, made by the Lord of the hill, for the refreshment of weary travelers; thither therefore *Christian* got, where also he sat down to rest him: then he pulled his roll out of his bosom, and read therein to his comfort; he also now began afresh to take a review of the coat or garment that was given him as he stood by the cross. Thus pleasing himself a while, he at last fell into a slumber, and thence into a fast sleep, which detained him in that place until it was almost night; and in his sleep his roll fell out of his hand.⁶ Now as

*A word of
grace.*

*He that
sleeps is a
loser*

⁶ *Christian*, in his ascent up the hill, was favored with a view of his interest in the death and righteousness of Christ, signified by the pulling the roll out of his bosom, and taking a view of the coat or garment that was given him as he stood by the cross. But, alas! That which befell him frequently

he was sleeping, there came one to him, and awaked him, saying, *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.* And with that *Christian* suddenly started up, and sped him on his way, and went apace till he came to the top of the hill.

Prov. 6. 6.

21. Now when he was got to the top of the hill, there came two men running against him amain; the name of the one was *Timorous*, and of the other *Mistrust*: To whom *Christian* said, Sirs, what's the matter you run the wrong way? *Timorous* answered, That they were going to the city of *Zion*, and had got up that difficult place: but, said he, the farther we go, the more danger we meet with; wherefore we turned, and are going back again.

*Christian
meets with
Mistrust and
Timorous.*

22. Yes, said *Mistrust*, for just before us lies a couple of lions in the way; (whether sleeping or waking we know not) and we could not think, if we came within reach, but they would presently pull us in pieces.

23. **Chr.** Then said *Christian*, You make me afraid; but whither

befalls his fellow pilgrims. Instead of humbly and thankfully adoring the Giver, we begin to rest satisfied with the gift. We fall into a self-pleasing, self-righteous frame of mind, a forgetting that all our receipts are from the Lord; we vainly arrogate them to ourselves, as if they were our own. Whilst we thus shine in our own eyes, and fancy ourselves to be the first favorite of heaven, we remit our watchfulness, fall into a spirit of security, and carnal confidence, which obscures our evidences for heaven.

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Christian
shakes off fear.

shall I fly to be safe? If I go back to mine own country, that is prepared for fire and brimstone, and I shall certainly perish there; if I can get to the celestial city, I am sure to be in safety there: I must venture. To go back, is nothing but death: to go forward, is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it: I will yet go forward. So *Mistrust* and *Timorous* ran down the hill, and *Christian* went on his way. But thinking again of what he had heard from the men, he felt in his bosom for his roll, that he might read therein, and be comforted; but he felt, and found it not.

*Shall they who wrong
begin yet rightly end?
Shall they at all have
safety for their friend?
No, no, in head-strong
manner they set out,
And head-long will they
fall at last no doubt.*

Christian
missed his roll
wherein he
used to take
comfort

He is per-
plexed for his
roll.

25. Then was *Christian* in great distress, and knew not what to do; for he wanted that which used to relieve him; and that which should have been his pass into the celestial city. Here therefore he began to be much perplexed, and knew not what to do. At last he bethought himself that he had slept in the *Arbor* that is on the side of the hill; and falling down upon his knees, he asked God forgiveness for that his foolish act, and then went back to look for his roll. But all the way he went back, who can sufficiently set forth the sorrow of *Christian's* heart? Sometimes he sighed, sometimes he wept,

and oftentimes he chide himself for being so foolish to fall asleep in that place which was erected only for a little refreshment from his weariness. Thus therefore he went back, carefully looking on this side and on that, all the way as he went, if happily he might find the roll that had been his comfort so many times in his journey. He went thus till he came again in sight of the *Arbor* where he sat and slept; but that sight renewed his sorrow the more, by bringing again even afresh, his evil of sleeping into his mind. Thus therefore he now went on bewailing his sinful sleep, saying, *O wretched Man that I am!* that I should sleep in the day-time! that I should sleep in the midst of difficulty! that I should so indulge the flesh, as to use that rest, for ease to my flesh, which the LORD of the hill hath erected only for the relief of the spirits of pilgrims! How many steps have I took in vain (Thus it happened to Israel, for their sin they were sent back again by the way of the Red Sea) and I am made to tread those steps with sorrow, which I might have trod with delight, had it not been for this sinful sleep. How far might I have been on my way by this time! I am made to tread those steps thrice over, which I needed not to have trod but once: yea, now also I am like to be benighted, for the day is almost spent. Oh that I had not slept!

Christian
bewails
his foolish
sleeping.

Rev. 2.
1 Thess. 5.
7, 8.,

26. Now by this time he was come to the *Arbor* again, where for a while he sat down and wept; but at

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Christian findeth his roll where he lost it.

last (as *Christian* would have it) looking sorrowfully down under the settle, there he espied his roll, the which he with trembling and haste caught up and put into his bosom. But who can tell how joyful this man was, when he had gotten his roll again? For this roll was the assurance of his life, and acceptance at the desired haven. Therefore he laid it up in his bosom, gave thanks to GOD for directing his eye to the place where it lay, and with joy and tears betook himself again to his journey. But, O how nimbly now did he go up the rest of the hill! Yet, before he got up, the sun went down upon *Christian* and this made him again recall the vanity of his sleeping to his remembrance; and thus he again began to condole with himself: O thou sinful sleep! how

for thy sake am I like to be benighted in my journey! I must walk without the sun, darkness must cover the path of my feet, and I must hear the noise of doleful creatures, because of my sinful sleep! Now also he remembered the story that *Mistrust* and *Timorous* told him of, how they were frighted with the sight of the lions. Then said *Christian* to himself again, These beasts range in the night for their prey, and if they should meet with me in the dark, how should I shift them? How should I escape being by them torn in pieces? Thus he went on his way; but while he was thus bewailing his unhappy miscarriage, he lift up his eyes, and behold there was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was *Beautiful*, and it stood just by the *Highway* side. †

Notes:
