

# “The Pilgrim’s Progress”

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These words are very familiar to most of you. No doubt some of you have read Bunyan’s beautiful allegory that he calls by this name, in which he sets forth experiences of the Christian, from the time he starts out from the city of destruction, the land of sin, until he reaches the beautiful city of the great King, along whose highway he has been travelling.

Do you know that in His Word the Lord has given us a living picture of the very same thing? Have you read the history of God’s people, the Children of Israel, whom He led forth out of Egypt, the land of darkness, sin, and hard bondage? He had promised to their fathers to give them the beautiful land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and when His time came for fulfilling the promise,

“He led them forth by the right way,  
That they might go to a city of habitation.”

In the seventy-eighth Psalm we are told of a few of the experiences that they met with in the way, as they journeyed through “the waste, howling wilderness.”

“He led forth His own people like sheep,  
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.”

“He clave the sea, and caused them to pass through;  
And He made the waters to stand as an heap.

“He led them safely, so that they feared not  
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.”

“In the daytime also He led them with a cloud,  
And all the night with a light of fire.  
He clave rocks in the wilderness,  
And gave them drink abundantly, as out of the depths,  
He brought streams also out of the rock,  
And caused waters to ran down like rivers.”

“He commanded the skies above,  
And opened the doors of heaven;  
And He rained down manna upon them to eat,  
And gave them of the corn of heaven.  
Man did eat angels’ food,  
He gave them meat to the full.”

Would you not think that such a people,—led by God, sheltered by the cloud that He spread over them for a covering, fed with bread from heaven, and fresh water

flowing from the smitten rock,—would you not think that they would have been happy and content, and thought themselves most highly favoured?

But no; they were constantly murmuring against God, and against Moses, whom God had placed over them. They even grumbled at the angels' food which He gave them, to make them strong and healthy, and wished that they might have some of the things that they had been used to in Egypt, although they were not good for them. In spite of all that God had done to show His love for them, and His power to save them, yet

“For all this they sinned still,  
And believed not in His wondrous works.

“How oft did they rebel against Him in the wilderness,  
And grieve Him in the desert!”

But did God cast them off because of their sin and murmuring, and leave them to perish in “the waste, howling wilderness”? On, no; for He is Love; and “like as a Father pitieth His children,” so He pitied, forgave, and loved them still.

“But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not;  
Yea, many a time turned He His anger away,  
And did not stir up all His wrath.  
And He remembered that they were but flesh  
A wind that passeth away and cometh not again.”

Now in all these things the Lord is giving us an Object Lesson, He is picturing before us the trials and temptations that will come to us, and showing us the sinfulness of our own hearts. In His tender care for His people He is teaching of His Fatherly love for us; and in all the mighty works that He did for them, He wants us to see His power to save us from all our enemies, to provide for all our needs, and to keep us from all evil.

Speaking of these things,—of Israel in the wilderness, of the sea through which they passed and of the cloud that covered them, of the manna, and the water from the rock, and of the sinful murmuring of the people against God, Paul says:—

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition.” That is, these things are examples of what we shall have to meet in our journey through the wilderness of this world, to the better country God has promised us, and they are written to teach us not to make the same mistakes that they did.

In the seventy-eighth Psalm from which we have been reading, we are told just why the Psalmist was moved by the Holy Spirit of God to tell us these things:—

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,  
And His strength, and His wondrous works which He hath done,

That they should make them known to their children:  
That the generation to come might know them,  
even the children which should be born;  
Who should arise and tell them to their children:  
That they might set their hope in God,  
And not forget the works of God,  
But keep His commandments."

Oh, then, here is something for the children; something that the Lord had written out especially for you, even before you were born. Here is something that the Lord wants all the children to know, so that the children "may set their hope in God," and learn to love and trust Him. He had this written so that the children might "not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."

Then, children, let us, in the weeks to come, take this journey together, starting out with the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, following the pillar of cloud by day, and cheered and warmed and protected by the pillar of fire by night; let us go with them through the sea that swallowed up all their enemies; feed with them upon the heavenly bread, and drink the living water from the rock.

And as we do this together, may the Lord Himself teach us all what He wanted them to learn, so that we, pilgrims going through this world to the world to come, may be daily stepping heavenward, making true progress on the highway to Zion, seeing God's works, and thus learning His ways.