

Christiana's Progress

Adapted From
Orion's Gate's

Pilgrim's Progress Part II: Christiana

By
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(Bunyan is sitting in his cell writing. Enter Warden.)

Warden: (to Joseph B) You have been in Bedford Jail for five years. Every year, we ask you to swear on the Holy Scriptures that you will give up preaching. Once again, if you swear, you will be released immediately.

Bunyan: (resolutely) Sir, the Lord Jesus Christ has called me to preach. It is my duty. I can do nothing else.

Warden: (angrily interrupting) Nay! It is your duty to mend pots and kettles. You are a tinker, nothing more. Hold to that, agree to preach no more in England, and you will walk away from this jail a free man.

Bunyan: The apostles said, "It is better to obey God rather than men."

Warden: (purple) In England every man will obey the King! (soften a little) Yet the King is ever merciful, say you will preach no more in England and you shall go free.

Bunyan: (with quiet firmness) If you let me out today, I will preach again tomorrow.

Warden: (angry and exasperated) You and you alone hold the key to releasing yourself. Meditate on that, Joseph Bunyan, as you rot in prison! (exit)

(Bunyan returns to his work and writes during this introduction after which he begins to read his finished book.)

Master of Ceremonies: John Bunyan remained in Bedford Jail for twelve years. During this time he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* which has become one of the best-loved books of all time. However, it is little known that he also wrote *Christiana's Progress* as a sequel to *Pilgrim's Progress*. The story is about Pilgrim's wife Christiana, and their children left behind in the City of Destruction. And so today, we have brought to you our adaptation of *Christiana's Progress*.

Act I, Scene I

Narrator: As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I alighted upon a familiar place, where was a den. And as I lay down in that place to sleep, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed that, behold, I saw a woman standing at the door of her home. Her face was turned away from her own house, and her eyes looked with longing across a distant wide field. And as she looked, she wept and trembled.

Christiana: Oh, my husband! my dear husband! I have treated you in a most vile manner! I have driven you away by my evil words and still more evil actions. And all the greater is my sorrow that now I believe your words; this city is indeed doomed to destruction. Oh, how I wish I had fled this place long before this. But now, I am lost, and upon my hands I bear the blood of my children who, but for my example, might have gone on with you.

(enter Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James)

Matthew: Mother, do you weep again?

Christiana: Yes, and that more than before. (wearily) I'm sorry.

Matthew: Father has been gone a long time. Why does our grief not grow dim as with others who have lost a loved one?

Christiana: Because I was the one who sent him away by my evil treatment of him. For such as I, grief can only grow greater with the passing of time. And what makes my sorrow all the greater is that I kept you boys and James from going on with him, when he

begged you to join him!

Samuel: Then Mother, let us put aside our tears and go on after him.

Joseph: Yes, let us start packing our clothes; then may be we can catch up with him.

Christiana: Nay, it is too late. Oh, if only we had gone with him in the day of his merciful invitation. Then things would have gone much better with us than they are ever like to do now.

Matthew: Then why did we not go with him? Would it not have been easier to follow after him then, than now?

Christiana: Yes, my son, much easier. But in my fleshly thoughts, I thought he was misled by foolish imaginings. But now, I realize that he had his eyes fixed on something much greater. He has beheld the Kingdom of light and by beholding, he has become changed. He has entered the narrow pathway and thereby, escaped the snares of death.

James: Oh, Mama, how rudely we did behave toward him. He was only trying to lead us to a better land.

Matthew: Mother, is there still any hope for our souls?

Christiana: I do not know, my son, I do not know.

Matthew: Ahh.

Christiana: Well, let us be done for the day. Tomorrow will come all too soon.

Narrator: Now I saw in my dream that Christiana slept restlessly that night. And her in tossing there came to her a dream. And behold, she saw an angel holding before her a broad parchment in which were recorded the total sum of her deeds. And as she looked, she saw that she must soon come to the judgment seat of God to answer for her evil treatment of his friend. Therefore she did cry out for mercy.

Christiana: Ah, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

James: (awakened suddenly) What's that!

Joseph: Go back to sleep. It is only mother, having another nightmare.

James: Another one?

Matthew: Aye, she cannot sleep while thinking of her evil treatment of Father. And to be the more honest, neither can I.

Joseph: Nor I. What do you think, Matthew, is there no way we could redeem the time and go on after our Father?

Matthew: I don't know, Joseph. I wish it could be, but since we did partake of the evil, I see no reason why the King of that country should look upon us with any favor.

Joseph: Ah, neither do I. (pause)

James: (sighs) Sleep tight.

Matthew: (sighs) How I wish I could.

Narrator: I saw next that Christiana had another dream wherein she thought she saw two evil spirits come into the room and speak thus...

Demon #1: Did you hear her cry out for mercy?

Demon #2: Hear her?! It sent chills down my spine. It was like to have sent me packing back to our master.

#1: Aye, I had thought to do the same, but I feared the wrath of him who pulled a third of us down from heaven.

#2: As well you might. But, back to this woman.

#1: Well, if she keeps going on like this, crying out for mercy, we will lose her as we lost her husband.

#2: Aye. And if she goes off on pilgrimage, it may be that Apollyon himself may not be able to stop her.

#1: Therefore, we must seek to take her mind off the thoughts of what shall be hereafter. If we fail in this, there is nothing in the world that would stop her from becoming a Pilgrim. And if that should come to pass, ahh. (shudder)

#2: Therefore, we must call for reinforcements and surround her with darkness.

#1: Aye, let us call for a legion.

#2: Or two, or ten! for she must not escape us.

#1: She will not, but if she does set out on Pilgrimage, we shall attack her virtue and thus send her packing back.

#2: As we did the Children of Israel, at the borders of Canaan.

#1: Aye, let us hope that our good advice to her will not be rejected.

(exit laughing)

Narrator: The next morning when Christiana had risen and breakfasted with her sons, there came a knock on the door.

(knock)

Christiana: If you come in God's name, come in.

Secret: Amen. (enter Secret)

Christiana: Good morning.

Secret: Peace be upon this house.

Christiana: Thank you.

Secret: My name is Secret; I dwell with those who are on high.

Christiana: Oh! I fear to meet one so good as that.

Secret: Fear not, Christiana, for I have come to bring you good tidings of peace.

Christiana: Say on.

Secret: It has been rumored, in heavenly places, that you have a desire to go there. It has also been rumored that you are aware of the evil you have done to your former husband and you know of the hardness of your heart and the wrong you did by keeping your children here in ignorance.

Christiana: My heart sinks at the thoughts there of. Hope! Hope! Oh, for one small pinch of hope.

Secret: (with compassion) Christiana, would you indeed have hope?

Christiana: Yes, I desire it with all my soul, for if I find it not, I am doomed to sink beneath the waves of despair.

Secret: Then hear the Word of the Lord who has sent me to tell you that He is a God ready to forgive and He delights in forgiving of offenses.

Christiana: (amazed) Even for one such as I?

Secret: Yes, truly!

Christiana: Bless Him! Bless Him!

Secret: Further more, He desires for you to come dwell with Him in heaven and sit with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Christiana: Oh, such words be too high for me!

Secret: I have something more than words for you. (bring out a letter, sealed and hand to Christiana:)

Christiana: More yet?! A letter? For me?

Secret: Aye, from thy husband's King. Here, take it.

(takes letter as if it were very brittle; smell letter)

Christiana: Ahh... sweet perfume such as a rose would covet to bear. May I open it?

Secret: (amused) Yes!

Christiana: Why it is written in letters of gold! (reads slowly and with increasing joy)

"The King of the Celestial City doth invite thee, Christiana, to go on Pilgrimage as did thy husband. For that is the way to come to my city and to dwell in My presence with joy Forever." Oh! Did you hear? It is a royal invitation to join my husband in the Celestial City!

Secret: Aye, will you accept?

Christiana: Yes, with all my heart.

Secret: (joyfully) Then I shall return to my King with glad tidings.

Christiana: Secret, take me and my children with you that we may also worship this King.

Secret: Christiana, the bitter is before the sweet. You must enter the Celestial City through trouble as did Christian before you.

Christiana: (resolutely) Then what do I next?

Secret: Go to the Wicket Gate over yonder plain for that is the beginning of the way you must go. Further more, I advise you to keep this with you 'till your journey's end for you must deliver this in at the farther Gate if you would gain admittance there in.

Christiana: I shall, dear Secret, I shall.

Secret: And now I must depart. I hope to meet thee on the farther shore. Adieu, Christiana.

Christiana: Farewell, dear messenger. Rest assured that we shall meet again. (Secret leaves. Softly continue) Aye, we shall... and that right soon! Children! Come, come quickly.

(Enter Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James, all are concerned)

Matthew: What is it mother?

Samuel: Is all well?

Christiana: Yes! and more than well. Look!

James: What is it mama?

Joseph: (aside) 'Tis a letter silly head.

James: I know but what does it say?

Christiana: 'Tis an invitation from the King of Kings. We are invited to go on Pilgrimage as did your father!

Matthew: Can it be, even after the way we treated him?

Christiana: Aye. Look for thyself. (hand letter to Matthew) Is it not wonderful? (weeps) Is it not - . Oh me, oh me.

(Matthew takes letter and reads silently with all around him)

Samuel: Weep not, dear mother, this be good news.

Christiana: I know my son.

Joseph: Then why do you weep?

Christiana: It is the nature of womankind to do so when they are overflowing with joy.

Samuel: (aside to James) What did she say?

James: She's crying because she's happy.

Samuel: Oh. Why?

James: That's just the way ladies do.

Joseph: Why?

James: (importantly) Only girls know why.

Joseph: (giving up) Ohh.

Matthew: Mother, this is news greatly to be rejoiced over.

Christiana: Yea, more than you know. For the thoughts of how I had hardened my heart and yours against your father - they were likely to have carried me to the grave with sorrow. But then there comes this letter from heaven itself to give me hope. Ahh, you cannot know the joy that fills my soul!

Samuel: Three cheers for the King! Hip-hip-Hurrah! (all say Hurrah together with Samuel. leading on all) Hip-hip-Hurrah! Hip-hip-Hurrah!

James: Why do they do that, Mama?

Matthew: Only boys know why.

Christiana: Come, my children, let us pack up and go to the gate that opens toward the Celestial country.

Samuel: Yes!

All: Hurrah!

(Move set and pack bags)

James: Will I need my walking shoes, Mama?

Christiana: Yes, and a warm coat as well.

Narrator: Now there came to the door three neighbors who came to see the cause of such joyful shouting, for I must tell you that, in the City of Destruction, although there be much laughter, there is precious little joy.

(Timorous: knocks)

Christiana: If you come in God's name, come in.

Timorous: (scornfully) Did you hear? "In God's name," she said.

Inconsiderate: I suppose we could enter in God's name as well as the next, open the door. (all enter)

Christiana: Greetings, Neighbor Timorous, Mrs. Inconsiderate.

Timorous: Good evening.

Inconsiderate: How do you do?

Christiana: Hello, Mercy.

Mercy: Good day, ma'am.

Christiana: Pardon if I do not stop to entertain thee, but I must be off on a journey this day.

Timorous: (shocked) What? So late in the day?

Christiana: (regretfully) Aye. 'Tis true I should have been gone long 'ere this. (resolutely) But late is better than never.

Timorous: And where will your journey take you?

Christiana: (tearfully) I do-, I -, I do follow in the steps of my dear husband.

Timorous and Inconsiderate: What?

Timorous: On pilgrimage?!

Christiana: Aye.

Timorous: (with dramatic sorrow) Oh, I hope not so, dear neighbor. Pray, for your own good, do not take such risks as that.

Christiana: I care not for this mortal flesh if I can only see the face of Him who sits on the

throne.

Timorous: (somewhat flustered) Well, then for thy poor children's sake.

Matthew: Nay! But we will all go. Hip-hip- Hurrah.

Christiana: As you see, there is not one willing to stay behind.

Timorous: Well, what on earth has brought you to such a mind as this?

Christiana: Oh, dear friend, if you only knew as much as I, you would be with us in a flash.

Inconsiderate: And what knew knowledge is this that will separate you from your neighbors and send you packing off to who knows where?

Christiana: As you know, I have been sorely afflicted since my husband left...

Timorous: (with sympathy) Aye.

Christiana: But what made my grief greater was my evil treatment of him while he was under his great conviction.

Timorous: (vehemently) Bah! 'Twas a distracted brain from which he suffered.

Christiana: (with equal vehemence) Nay, but conviction from God. And that same conviction now presses itself upon me....

Timorous: (dramatically) Oh, no.

Christiana: ...and nothing will ease my mind but to follow after.

Timorous: Oh, woe the day.

Christiana: The Prince of that place has also sent for me with words and promises of hospitality if I shall come to him. His messenger was here but a moment ago.

Inconsiderate: You mean that distinguish lady we saw departing your door?

Christiana: Yes, the same.

Timorous: Hmmm. You say she brought you words of invitation?

Christiana: Yea, more than words. She brought a letter from the Lord of the Hill.

Timorous: (surprised) A letter! (aside to Inc) Perhaps there is more to this than we thought.

Christiana: (bring out letter and give to Mercy who stepped forward with interest) Look!

Mercy: (take letter) It smells heavenly.

Timorous: Shush Mercy. This is a serious matter.

(while all this is going on, Christiana sends children out.)

Mercy: Look! It is written in letters of gold. Do read it, please.

Timorous: The King of the Celestial City doth invite thee, Christiana, to go on Pilgrimage as did thy husband... Hmm, and you believe it to be genuine?

Christiana: Yea, with all my heart.

Timorous: Oh, the madness that has possessed thee and thy husband to run yourselves upon such difficulties. Certainly, you heard Obstinate and Pliable's report on the difficulties that did attack him at his first setting out?

Christiana: Yes.

Timorous: And everyone has heard that he met with lions, Apollyon, the shadow of death and many other things, not to mention Vanity Fair and its inquisitors.

Christiana: (wearily) Aye.

Timorous: Well, if his companion was killed there and he, a man, scarcely escaped with his own life, what can you, being a poor woman, hope to do?

Christiana: Well, (thoughtfully) Having waited so long it may be that work which could have been done in relative peace and safety will now have to be done under more difficult

circumstances. But the bitter must come before the sweet and the more bitterness endured the more sweetness enjoyed.

Timorous: But-

Christiana: And since you did not come to my house in God's name as I said, I pray you to be gone and not disquiet me further.

Timorous: (indignantly) Well, if you are determined to play the fool and cast yourself into the jaws of death, I am clear of thy blood. Come Neighbor Inconsiderate, Mercy.

Mercy: (hesitatingly) Uhh.

Timorous: Well, what be the catch girl?

Mercy: Ah, since Christiana is taking her last farewell of home and country, I think I shall walk with her a little way to help her.

Inconsiderate: (scornful) Help her! The only way you can help her is to try to talk her out of this madness.

Mercy: Yes, ma'am.

Inconsiderate: (with a wise air) Well, just be careful you do not fall into her same distraction. While we are out of danger we are out but when we are in, we are in.

Mercy: Yes, Ma'am.

Inconsiderate: (throw letter at Christiana:.) Then here, take thy foolish letter and I bid you adieu.

(Exit muttering with Inc.)

Christiana: Ah, Mercy. What an unexpected favor this is to have you join me a little way in my journey.

Mercy: If the truth be known, I should like to go more than but a little way.

Christiana: What? Go on Pilgrimage?!

Mercy: Aye. If I thought there was any hope for me I would never return to Destruction.

Christiana: Well, dear Mercy, do cast in thy lot with me. I well know what the end of our pilgrimage will be.

Mercy: But I was not invited.

Christiana: You go upon my invitation. Besides He has said Himself, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." Did He not have you in mind as he spoke these words?

Mercy: I would fain to hope so, but-

Christiana: But what?

Mercy: (timidly) There have been many girls called Mercy.

Christiana: (earnestly) Aye, and all that were true to their name obtained mercy too.

Besides, I can hire you as my maid and so get you through. We will go as sisters - all things in common, only set your mind to go with me.

Mercy: Oh, I want to. If only I could know that I would be accepted. If I could here it in a dream or visit I would go on no matter how tedious the way.

Christiana: Well then, loving Mercy, do this: go with me to the Wicket Gate and there I shall inquire for thee. And if you do not receive ample encouragement, I will let you return. I shall pay thee wages for thy good service. What do you think?

Mercy: (encouraged) Me thinks I will accept your advice. Whatever befalls I must at least give it a try.

Christiana: Good girl! You shall have no cause for regret.

Mercy: May the Lord of that place grant it to be so.

Narrator: Then Christiana was glad in her heart not only that she now had a suitable companion