

***“The Pilgrims Progress”  
Doubting Castle***

**Introduction:**

1. If You Remember:
  - From Our Last Message:
    - Through The Pilgrims Progress:
  - Christian & Hopeful:
    - Were On Their Way Back:
      - From Going Astray:
        - In By-Path Meadow:
          - Which Laid Beyond A Fence:
            - They Were Not Meant To Cross!
  - Of Course:
    - That Is A Scene:
      - That Is All To Familiar:
        - In Our Own Pilgrimage As Christians:
          - Sad To Say!
2. But - Though They Were On Their Way Back:
  - To That “Straight & Narrow” Pathway:
    - It Was Difficult Going:
      - To Say The Least!
  - This Is Because:
    - They Were Being Constantly Smitten In Their Consciences:
      - Due To Their Failure:
        - To Follow God’s Way:
          - To The Celestial City:
            - Which Was The King’s Highway!
  - And So - Since It Was:
    - So Dark & Dangerous:
      - They Lay Down For The Night:
        - Still On The Wrong Side Of The Fence:
          - And Fell Asleep!
3. And This Is Where We Pick Up The Story:
  - On Page 70, Paragraph 9:
    - *“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 until the day-break; but, being weary, they fell asleep!”*
  - Read Through:
    - Page 74, Paragraph 2:
      - *“Whose castle’s Doubting, and whose name’s Despair!”*
4. The Passage We Just Read:
  - Is Considered To Be:
    - One Of John Bunyan’s Finest Descriptions:
      - Of The Inner Heart:
        - Of Wayward Christians!
  - George Cheever Even Describes This Episode As:
    - *“In Some Respects The Very Gloomiest And Very Brightest Part Of The Pilgrim’s Progress! For It Shows At Once To What A Depth Of Misery Sin May Plunge The Christian, And Also To What A Depth Of Mercy Of God In Christ May Reach!”*
      - And - The Depth Of God’s Mercy Reaches Much Further Than The Depth Of Our Misery & Sin!
  - And - I Think As We Read These Words:
    - You Probably Sensed That:
      - These Events Have Played Out In Your Own Life:
        - At Some Point Or Another:
          - When You Strayed From The Lord’s Path:
            - And Sinned Against Him!
  - Because In Those Times:
    - It Is Both Natural & Easy To Feel:

- Beyond The Reach Of God's Grace!

5. Well - Tonight:

- I Want To Revisit Three Things:

- About Doubting Castle:

- Which, Hopefully, Will Help Us Learn:

- Not Only How To:

- Avoid It - But Also:

- To Escape It:

- Once You Find Yourself In It!

- So - First - We See:

1. ***The Keep Of The Castle!***

- The Keep Of The Castle:

- Which Is The Dungeon Of Guilt:

- And The Feelings Of Doubt!

- And It Was Into This Dungeon:

- That Giant Despair Threw Our Pilgrims!

- In Psalm 88 - Which Bunyan Used:

- As A Prototype For Doubting Castle:

- We Find A Man Named Heman:

- Going Through The Same Struggles!

- Psalm 88:1-18 - "O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day [and] night before thee: / 2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; / 3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. / 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man [that hath] no strength: / 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. / 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. / 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted [me] with all thy waves. Selah. / 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: [I am] shut up, and I cannot come forth. / 9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee. / 10 ¶ Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise [and] praise thee? Selah. / 11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? [or] thy faithfulness in destruction? / 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? / 13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. / 14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? [why] hidest thou thy face from me? / 15 I [am] afflicted and ready to die from [my] youth up: [while] I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. / 16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. / 17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. / 18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, [and] mine acquaintance into darkness!"

- From This Psalm & From Bunyan's Story & From Our Own Experience:

- We Know Of The Absolute:

- Misery Of Doubting Castle!

- It Is A Miserable Place To Be!

- In Psalm 51 - King David Describes This Misery:

- In Terms Of "Bones" Which God Himself Had "Broken!"

- Bunyan Described The Dungeon:

- As Very Dark, Nasty & Stinking Place:

- For Christian & Pilgrim!

- But - As We Know:

- From The First Part Of The Story:

- This Dungeon Was One Of Their Own Making! Because The:

- Making Of Doubting Castle:

- Was Not Only Their Sin:

- But Also - Their Avoidance:

- Of God's Means Of Grace:

- To Help Them Out Of Its Keep!

- Like Few Other Places In His Story:

- Bunyan Points Out The Days & Times:

- When Christian & Hopeful:

- Were Imprisoned In Their Doubt!

- From Wednesday Morning To Saturday Evening!
  - And In All That Time:
    - They Had No Food, No Drink, No Light, And No Fellowship!
      - I Think Bunyan Probably Means That For The Greater Part Of The Week - Those Two Pilgrims:
        - Did Not Spend Time In God's Word, Or In Prayer, Or With The Spirit, Or In Fellowship With God's People!
    - All Of Which God Gave Us:
      - As Means Of Grace:
        - To Help Us Overcome The Guilt & Doubt That Overwhelms Us:
          - When We Sin & Stray From The Lord!
  - This Is Instructive Because:
    - The End Of The Week:
      - Can Easily Become The Most Dangerous Part:
        - If We Don't Maintain A Sunday Spirit & Attitude:
          - Throughout The Rest Of The Week!
  - But - Though Doubting Castle:
    - Is Often A Prison Of Our Own Making:
      - We Also See The:
        - Manifestation Of Doubting Castle:
          - In The Names Of:
            - The Giant & His Wife!
          - The Giant's Name:
            - Is Despair:
              - Which Makes Sense:
                - Since That Is What Will Come To A Conscience Stricken With Sin & Guilt!
              - George Cheever - "Giant Despair will never die so long as unpardoned sin remains, or a sense of it burdens the conscience; nor is there any security against falling into its hands but in the care and mercy of One who is mightier than it, even Jesus Christ!"
          - But The Giant's Wife's Name:
            - Is Diffidence:
              - Which Wouldn't Make As Much Sense:
                - If We Didn't Experience It Ourselves!
            - Diffidence Means:
              - To Be Anxious & Apprehensive:
                - Because Of Distrust!
        - And The Reason Why Christian & Hopeful:
          - Remained In Doubting Castle For So Long:
            - Is Because They Did Not Trust:
              - In The Mercy & Grace Of God:
                - Even Toward Them:
                  - As Pilgrims!
      - And Yet - How Many Times:
        - To We Choose To Remain In The Keep Of The Castle:
          - Forgetting That Even Though:
            - Psalm 130:3-4 - "If Thou, Lord, Shouldest Mark Iniquities, O Lord, Who Shall Stand? But There Is Forgiveness With Thee!"
        - There Is No Reason:
          - For Any Christian:
            - To Remain In The Dungeon Of Despair:
              - For Any Length Of Time!
                - Because - 1 John 1:9 - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!"
        - But - Instead - What Do We Do?
          - We Languish In The Prison:
            - Of Our Own Guilt! And Then Face:
              - What Christian Faced:

## 2. *The Killer Of The Castle!*

- The Killer Of The Castle:
  - Which Is The Chain Of Hopelessness!
    - The Despair & Distrust:
      - Christian Felt:
        - “Crushed” Him, Bunyan Tells Us:
          - Even To The Point That He Considered:
            - Suicide!
  - He Even Uses The Words Of Job:
    - From Job 7:15 - “So that my soul chooseth strangling, [and] death rather than my life!”
      - What Sad & Senseless Words!
        - Especially For One Who Professes To Be A Christian!
- Now - In The Conversation Between:
  - Christian & Hopeful:
    - Bunyan Portrays The Puritan Understanding:
      - Of Suicide:
        - In Which - “For One To Kill Himself, Is To Kill Body And Soul At Once!”
    - In Other Words:
      - Since Suicide Is Self-Murder:
        - And - 1 John 3:15 - “No Murderer Hath Eternal Life Abiding In Him!”
          - Then - Suicide Was A Would Manifest That Person’s True Condition:
            - Before The Lord! Lost!
  - However, I Don’t Believe This To Be Universally True:
    - Otherwise - It Would Make Murder:
      - An Unforgivable Sin & Crime Against God - Which Is Clearly Not The Case:
        - In The Lives Of David & Paul & Countless Others!
    - Those Who Persist As Murderers:
      - With Hardened & Unrepentant Hearts:
        - Are The Ones I Believe John Has In View!
  - But Still - To Be So Hopeless:
    - As To Consider Taking Your Own God-Given Life:
      - Is A Serious Sin:
        - And Not To Be Taken Lightly!
          - And So - Hopeful Encourages Christian To Remember Some Things:
            - To Fight Of The Killer Of Hopelessness!
  - Remember God’s Holiness:
    - And God’s Law:
      - To Prevent Him From Sinning:
        - In An Even Greater Way!
          - True Christians Can Say From Their Hearts:
            - “O How Love I Thy Law!” (Psalm 119:97)
          - Also:
  - Remember God’s Help:
    - In The Past! Hopeful Tells Christian:
      - “What Hardship, Terror, And Amazement Hast Thou Already Gone Through! And Art Thou Nothing But Fear?”
        - Have You So Quickly Forgotten:
          - God’s Grace To Help You:
            - In So Many Of Your Time’s Of Need?
    - Don’t Let The Despair & Distrust:
      - Kill Off Your Hope:
        - In Your Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ!
      - He Is The Shepherd Of Luke 15:4-7 Who:
        - “Doth . . . Leave The Ninety And Nine In The Wilderness, And Goes After That Which Is Lost, Until He Finds It! And When He Hath Found It, He Layeth It On His Shoulders, Rejoicing! And When He Cometh Hope, He Calleth Together His Friends And Neighbors, Saying Unto Them, Rejoice With Me; For I Have Found My Sheep Which Was Lost!”
      - Jesus Is That Shepherd:
        - When We Are:
          - Those Kind Of Sheep!

- So - How Do We Get Out Of Our Dungeon's Of Doubt & Distrust?
- We Need To Use:

### 3. *The Keys Of The Castle!*

- The Keys Of The Castle:
  - Which Are The Promises Of God:
    - That We Find In His Word!
      - And Though Christian Had One Key:
        - There Are Yet Many Keys:
          - That Will Break Open Those Rusty Locks:
            - That Hold You In Your Despair!
  - But - For Christian & Hopeful:
    - It All Started With A Renewal In Their:
- Prayer To The Lord!
  - What Happened That Saturday Night - About Midnight?
    - They "Began To Pray!"
      - And Then - They Prayed Even Until The Morning!
        - Of What Day? Sunday! The Lord's Day! A Special Day For Bunyan & The Puritans! A Special Day For The Early Church! And What Still Should Be A Special Day For All Of God's People!
          - Because It Is The Day Of Christ's Own Resurrection!
  - And I Like The Remarks Of John Kelman:
    - About This Scene:
      - "Be Assured, That When The Spirit Of Prayer Comes, Deliverance Is Nigh At Hand!"
    - And This Is Oh, So True:
      - For Christian & Hopeful!
        - Because - After Praying All Night Or All Morning:
          - Christian Realizes - "I Have A Key!"
  - Now - There Are Some Who Think:
    - This Is Preposterous!
      - How Can A Person Forget They Have A Key In Their Possession?
        - Well - Its No Ordinary Key! It Is A Spiritual Key Of:
- Promises From The Lord!
  - How Many Times Does God Bring:
    - A Key Of Promise To Your Mind:
      - Which You Forgot You Had - Or:
        - You Even Forgot:
          - You Knew!
  - In 2 Peter 1:3-4 - Peter Tells Us This:
    - "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: / Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust!"
  - Like Christian - As Christians:
    - We Have An Abundant Supply:
      - Of God's Keys Of Promises!
        - And - How Did Hopeful Respond?
          - "That Is Good News!"
- And He Sure Was Right!
  - The Keys Of Promise Are Nothing Less Than:
    - The Promises Of The Gospel!
      - Promises Like:
        - The Promise Of God's Possession!
          - Isaiah 42:1 - "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine!"
            - You Belong To The Lord & To No Other!
        - The Promise Of God's Presence!
          - Matthew 28:20 - "Lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world!"
            - God Is With You No Matter Where You Are & No Matter Where You Go!
    - The Promise Of God's Purpose!

- Romans 8:28 - “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose!”
- The Promise Of God’s Pardon!
  - Psalm 130:4 - “But there is forgiveness with Thee!”
- All Of These Promise-Keys:
  - Along With Many Others:
    - Are Indeed “Good News” & Make Up The “Good News” Of The Gospel!
- And - As Christian Pointed Out:
  - Just Like His Key - Any Of These Keys:
    - Can “Open Any Lock In Doubting Castle!”
    - And - It Did!
  - Harkening Back To The Time:
    - When The Lord Opened The Locks & Doors:
      - Of The Prison Peter Found Himself In:
        - In Acts - Christian & Hopeful Were Able To Use That Key:
          - To Hope Two Doors & An Iron Gate, Until They Were Finally Free!

**Conclusion:**

1. Tonight:
  - When You Find Yourself In:
    - Another Dungeon Of Doubt, Despair, Or Distrust:
      - Remember The Keys Of Promise:
        - That God Has Given To You:
          - In His Word!
2. And - If You Can’t Find One:
  - Pray!
    - Even If You Find It Hard To Pray!
      - Pray!
  - John Bunyan Himself Faced This Difficulty:
    - Which He Explains In His Autobiography - “Grace Abounding”:
      - “But Oh! Twas Hard Work For Me Now To Have The Face To Pray to This Christ For Mercy, Against Whom I Had Thus Vilely Sinned: Twas Hard Work, I Say, To Offer To Look Him In The Face, Against Whom I Had So Vilely Sinned; And, Indeed, I Have Found It As Difficult To Come To God By Prayer After Backsliding From Him, As To Do Any Other Thing!”
  - And Yet - Pray He Did!
    - And When He Did:
      - Like Christian - God Poured Out His Promises To Him With A Freshness:
        - That Can Only Come From The Lord!
  - 3. And So - Through Prayer To God & Promises From God:
    - You Will Find This To Be True & Clear:
      - “As A Key Enters All The Intricate Wards of A Lock, And Throws Back Its Bolts, So The Precious Promises Of God In His Word, If Turned By The Strong Hand Of Faith, Will Open All The Doors Which Unbelief And Despair Have Shut Upon Us!” (George Burder)
    - And In This Way:
      - From Doubting Castle:
        - You Can Be Freed!

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