

## 46 - The Last Difficulties

These men asked the pilgrims whence they came, and they told them; they also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures they had met in the way; and they told them. Then said the men that met them, "You have but two difficulties more to meet with, and then you are in the City."

CHRISTIAN then, and his companion, asked the men to go along with them; so they told them they would. "But," said they, "you must obtain it by your own faith." So I saw in my dream that they went on together till they came in sight of the gate.

Now I further saw that betwixt them and the gate was a river; but there was no bridge to go over: the river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the pilgrims were much astounded; but the men that went with them said, "You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate."

The pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they answered, "Yes, but there hath not any, save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path since the foundation of the world, nor shall until the last trumpet shall sound" (#1Co 15:51-52). The pilgrims then—especially CHRISTIAN—began to despond in their minds; and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth? They said, "No"; yet they could not help them in that case, for said they, "you shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the place."

They then addressed themselves to the water; and entering, CHRISTIAN began to sink. And crying out to his good friend, HOPEFUL, he said, "I sink in deep waters, the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me."

Then said the other, "Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good." Then said CHRISTIAN, "Ah! my friend, the sorrows of death have compassed me about; I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey. And with that a great darkness and horror fell upon CHRISTIAN, so that he could not see before him; also here he, in great measure, lost his senses, so that he could neither remember nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage. But all the words that he spake still tended to discover that he had horror of mind, and hearty fears that he should die in that river, and never obtain entrance in at the gate; here also, as they that stood by perceived, he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. 'Twas also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits; for ever and anon he would intimate so much by words. HOPEFUL, therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother's head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then ere awhile he would rise up again half dead. HOPEFUL also would endeavour to comfort him, saying, "Brother, I see the gate, and men standing by it to receive us." But CHRISTIAN would answer, "'Tis you, 'tis you they wait for; you have been hopeful ever since I knew you." "And so have you," said he to CHRISTIAN. "Ah, brother," said he, "surely, if I was right, he would now arise to help me; but, for my sins, he hath brought me into the snare, and hath left me." Then said HOPEFUL, "My brother, you have quite forgot the text where it is said of the wicked, 'There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men' (#Ps 73:4,5). These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind

that which heretofore you have received of his goodness, and live upon him in your distresses."

Then I saw in my dream that CHRISTIAN was as in a muse awhile, to whom also HOPEFUL added this word, "Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole "; and with that CHRISTIAN brake out with a loud voice, "Oh, I see him again! and he tells me, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee'" (#Isa 43:2). Then they both took courage, and the enemy was after that as still as a stone, until they were gone over. CHRISTIAN therefore presently found ground to stand upon; and so it followed that the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus they got over. Now upon the bank of the river, on the other side, they saw the two shining men again who there waited for them; wherefore, being come up out of the river, they saluted them, saying, "We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be heirs of salvation." Thus they went along towards the gate. Now you must note that the City stood upon a mighty hill; but the pilgrims went up that hill with ease, because they had these two men to lead them up by the arms; also they had left their mortal garments behind them in the river; for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They therefore went up here with much agility and speed; though the foundation upon which the City was framed was higher than the clouds. They therefore went up through the regions of the air, sweetly talking as they went; being comforted, because they safely got over the river, and had such glorious companions to attend them.

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1Co 15:51-52 Ps 73:4,5 Isa 43:2

“<sup>51</sup> ¶ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1Co 15:51-52 NKJV)

“<sup>4</sup> For *there are* no pangs in their death, But their strength *is* firm. <sup>5</sup> They *are* not in trouble *as other* men, Nor are they plagued like *other* men.” (Ps 73:4-5 NKJV)

“When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.” (Isa 43:2 NKJV)