

Pilgrim's Progress II – 55 – Knocking at the Wicket Gate

And now Mr. SAGACITY left me to dream out my dream by myself. Wherefore methought I saw CHRISTIANA, and MERCY, and the boys, go all of them up to the gate. To which when they were come, they betook themselves to a short debate about how they must manage their calling at the gate, and what should be said to him that did open to them. So it was concluded, since CHRISTIANA was the eldest, that she should knock for entrance; and that she should speak to him that did open for the rest. So CHRISTIANA began to knock; and as her poor husband did, she knocked and knocked again. But instead of any that answered, they all thought that they heard as if a dog came barking upon them. A dog, and a great one too; and this made the women and children afraid. Nor durst they for awhile to knock any more, for fear the mastiff should fly upon them. Now, therefore, they were greatly tumbled up and down in their minds, and knew not what to do. Knock they durst not, for fear of the dog; go back they durst not, for fear that the keeper of that gate should espy them as they so went, and should be offended with them. At last they thought of knocking again, and knocked more vehemently than they did at the first. Then said the keeper of the gate, "Who is there?" So the dog left off to bark, and he opened unto them.

Then CHRISTIANA made low obeisance, and said, "Let not our Lord be offended with his handmaidens, for that we have knocked at his princely gate."

Then said the keeper, "Whence come ye, and what is that ye would have?"

CHRISTIANA answered, "We are come from whence CHRISTIAN did come, and upon the same errand as he; to wit, to be, if it shall please you, graciously admitted by this gate into the way that leads to the Celestial City. And I answer my Lord in the next place, that I am CHRISTIANA, once the wife of CHRISTIAN that now is gotten above."

With that the keeper of the gate did marvel saying, "What, is she become now a pilgrim, that but awhile ago abhorred that life?" Then she bowed her head, and said, "Yes; and so are these my sweet babes also."

Then he took her by the hand, and let her in and said also, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me;" and with that he shut up the gate. This done, he called to a trumpeter that was above over the gate, to entertain CHRISTIANA with shouting and sound of trumpet for joy (#Lu 15:7). So he obeyed and sounded, and filled the air with his melodious notes.

Now all this while poor MERCY did stand without, trembling and crying for fear that she was rejected. But when CHRISTIANA had gotten admittance for herself and her boys, then she began to make intercession for MERCY.

Chris. And she said, "My Lord, I have a companion of mine that stands yet without, that is come hither upon the same account as myself: one that is much dejected in her mind; for that she comes, as she thinks, without sending for, whereas I was sent to by my husband's King to come."

Now MERCY began to be very impatient, for each minute was as long to her as an hour; wherefore she prevented CHRISTIANA from a fuller interceding for her, by knocking at the gate herself: and she knocked then so loud, that she made CHRISTIANA to start. Then said the keeper of the gate, "Who is

there?" And said CHRISTIANA, "It is my friend."

So he opened the gate, and looked out; but MERCY was fallen down without in a swoon, for she fainted, and was afraid that no gate would be opened to her.

Then he took her by the hand, and said, "Damsel, I bid thee arise."

"Oh, sir," said she, "I am faint; there is scarce life left in me." But he answered that "one once said, 'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thy holy temple' (#Jon 2:7). Fear not, but stand upon thy feet, and tell Me wherefore thou art come."

Mer. I am come for that unto which I was never invited, as my friend CHRISTIANA was. Hers was from the King, and mine was but from her; wherefore I fear I presume.

Keeper of Gate. "Did she desire thee to come with her to this place?"

Mer. Yes; and, as my Lord sees, I am come. And if there is any grace or forgiveness of sins to spare, I beseech that I, thy poor handmaid, may be partaker thereof.

Then he took her again by the hand, and led her gently in, and said, "I pray for all them that believe on Me, by what means soever they come unto Me." Then said he to those that stood by, "Fetch something, and give it to MERCY to smell on, thereby to stay her fainting." So they fetched her a bundle of myrrh, and awhile after she was revived.

And now was CHRISTIANA and her boys, and MERCY, received of the Lord at the head of the way, and spoke kindly unto by him.

Then said they yet further unto him, "We are sorry for our sins, and beg of our Lord his pardon; and further information what we must do."

"I grant pardon," said he, "by word and deed: by word, in the promise of forgiveness; by deed, in the way I obtained it. Take the first from my lips with a kiss, and the other as it shall be revealed" (#So 1:2 Joh 20:20).

Now I saw in my dream that he spake many good words unto them, whereby they were greatly gladdened. he also had them up to the top of the gate, and showed them by what deed they were saved; and told them withal, that that sight they would have again as they went along in the way, to their comfort.

So he left them awhile in a summer parlour below, where they entered into talk by themselves. And thus CHRISTIANA began, "O Lord, how glad am I that we are got in hither!"

Mer. So you well may; but I, of all, have cause to leap for joy.

Chris. I thought one time, as I stood at the gate (because I had knocked, and none did answer), that all our labour had been lost; specially when that ugly cur made such a heavy barking against us.

Mer. But my worst fear was after I saw that you were taken into his favour, and that I was left behind. Now, thought I, 't is fulfilled which is written, "Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (#Mt 24:41). I had much ado to forbear crying out, Undone, undone! And afraid I was to knock any more; but when I looked up to what was written over the gate, I took courage. I also thought that I must either knock again, or die. So I knocked; but I cannot tell how, for my spirit now struggled betwixt life and death.

Chris. Can you not tell how you knocked? I am sure your knocks were so earnest, that the very sound of them made me start; I thought I never heard such knocking in all my life. I thought you would have come in by violent hands, or have taken the Kingdom by storm (#Mt 11:12).

Mer. Alas! to be in my case, who that so was could but have done so? You saw that the door was shut upon me; and that there was a most cruel dog thereabout. Who, I say, that was so fainthearted as I, that would not have knocked with all their might? But pray, what said my Lord to my rudeness? Was he not angry with me?

Chris. When he heard your lumbering noise, he gave a wonderful innocent smile. I believe what you did pleased him well enough; for he showed no sign to the contrary. But I marvel in my heart why he keeps such a dog. Had I known that afore, I fear I should not have had heart enough to have ventured myself in this manner. But now we are in, we are in; and I am glad with all my heart.

Mer. I will ask, if you please, next time he comes down, why he keeps such a filthy cur in his yard. I hope he will not take it amiss.

"Ay, do," said the children; "and persuade him to hang him, for we are afraid he will bite us when we go hence."

So at last he came down to them again; and MERCY fell to the ground on her face before him, and worshipped, and said, "Let my Lord accept of the sacrifice of praise which I now offer unto him with the calves of my lips."

So he said unto her, "Peace be to thee: stand up."

But she continued upon her face and said, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee; yet let me talk with Thee of thy judgments (#Jer 12:1-2): wherefore dost Thou keep so cruel a dog in thy yard, at the sight of which such women and children as we are ready to fly from thy gate for fear?"

He answered, and said, "That dog has another owner; he also is kept close in another man's ground, only my pilgrims hear his barking. He belongs to the castle which you see there at a distance, but can come up to the walls of this place. He has frightened many an honest pilgrim from worse to better by the great voice of his roaring. Indeed, he that owns him doth not keep him of any good will to Me or mine; but with intent to keep the pilgrims from coming to Me, and that they may be afraid to knock at this gate for entrance. Sometimes also he has broken out, and has worried some that I love; but I take all at present patiently. I also give my pilgrims timely help; so that they are not delivered up to his power, to do to them what his doggish nature would prompt him to. But what! My purchased one, I trow, hadst thou known never so much beforehand, thou wouldst not have been afraid of a dog. The beggars that go from door to door will, rather than they will lose a supposed alms, run the hazard of the

bawling, barking, and biting too, of a dog; and shall a dog, a dog in another man's yard, a dog whose barking I turn to the profit of pilgrims, keep any from coming to Me? I deliver them from the lions, their darling from the power of the dog."

Mer. Then said MERCY, "I confess my ignorance; I spake what I understand not: I acknowledge that Thou doest all things well."

Then CHRISTIANA began to talk of their journey, and to inquire after the way. So he fed them, and washed their feet; and set them in the way of his steps, according as he had dealt with her husband before.

So I saw in my dream that they walked on in their way, and had the weather very comfortable to them.

Then CHRISTIANA began to sing, saying:

"Blest be the day that I began
A pilgrim for to be;
And blessed also be that man
That thereto moved me.

'Tis true, 't was long ere I began
To seek to live for ever:
But now I run fast as I can-
'T is better late, than never.

Our tears to joy, our fears to faith,
Are turned, as we see:
Thus our beginning (as one saith)
Shows what our end will be."

Jon 2:7 So 1:2 Joh 20:20 Mt 24:41 Mt 11:12 Jer 12:1-2

““When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went *up* to You, Into Your holy temple.” (Jon 2:7 NKJV)

““THE SHULAMITE Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—For your love *is* better than wine.” (So 1:2 NKJV)

““When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.” (Joh 20:20 NKJV)

““Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.” (Mt 24:41 NKJV)

““And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Mt 11:12 NKJV)

““¹ ¶ Righteous *are* You, O LORD, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about *Your* judgments. Why

does the way of the wicked prosper? *Why* are those happy who deal so treacherously? 2 You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; They grow, yes, they bear fruit. You *are* near in their mouth But far from their mind.”
(Jer 12:1-2 NKJV)