

9 – Goodwill - The Keeper of the Wicket Gate

So he went on with haste, neither spake he to any man by the way; nor, if any asked him, would he vouchsafe them an answer. He went like one that was all the while treading on forbidden ground, and could by no means think himself safe, till again he was got into the way which he left to follow Mr. WORLDLY WISEMAN'S counsel. So, in process of time, CHRISTIAN got up to the gate. Now, over the gate there was written, "Knock; and it shall be opened unto you" (#Mt 7:7). He knocked therefore, more than once or twice, saying—

"May I now enter here? Will he within
Open to sorry me, though I have been
An undeserving rebel? Then shall I
Not fail to sing his lasting praise on high."

At last there came a grave person to the gate, named GOODWILL, who asked who was there? and whence he came? and what he would have?

Chr. Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the city of Destruction; but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. I would, therefore, sir, since I am informed that by this gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in.

Goodwill. "I am willing, with all my heart," said he. And with that he opened the gate.

So when CHRISTIAN was stepping in, the other gave him a pull. Then said CHRISTIAN, "What means that?" The other told him, "A little distance from this gate there is erected a strong castle, of which Beelzebub is the captain; from thence both he and them that are with him shoot arrows at those that come up to this gate, if haply they may die before they can enter in." Then said CHRISTIAN, "I rejoice and tremble." So when he was got in, the man of the gate asked him who directed him thither.

Chr. EVANGELIST bade me come hither and knock, as I did; and he said that you, sir, would tell me what I must do.

Goodw. An open door is before thee; and no man can shut it.

Chr. Now I begin to reap the benefits of my hazards.

Goodw. But how is it that you came alone?

Chr. Because none of my neighbours saw their danger as I saw mine.

Goodw. Did any of them know of your coming?

Chr. Yes, my wife and children saw me at the first, and called after me to turn again; also some of my neighbours stood crying and calling after me to return; but I put my fingers in my ears, and so came on my way.

Goodw. But did none of them follow you, to persuade you to go back?

Chr. Yes, both OBSTINATE and PLIABLE; but when they saw that they could not prevail, OBSTINATE went railing back; but PLIABLE came with me a little way.

Goodw. But why did he not come through?

Chr. We indeed came both together until we came to the Slough of Despond, into the which we also suddenly fell. And then was my neighbour PLIABLE discouraged, and would not adventure farther. Wherefore, getting out again on that side next to his own house, he told me I should possess the brave country alone for him: so he went his way, and I came mine; he after OBSTINATE, and I to this gate.

Goodw. Then said GOODWILL, "Alas, poor man! Is the celestial glory of so small esteem with him, that he counts it not worth running the hazard of a few difficulties to obtain it?"

Chr. "Truly," said CHRISTIAN, "I have said the truth of PLIABLE; and if I should also say all the truth of myself, it will appear there is no betterment 'twixt him and myself. 'Tis true he went back to his own house; but I also turned aside to go in the way of death, being persuaded thereto by the carnal arguments of one Mr. WORLDLY WISEMAN."

Goodw. Oh, did he light upon you? What! he would have had you seek for ease at the hands of Mr. LEGALITY, they are each of them a very cheat. But did you take his counsel?

Chr. Yes, as far as I dared. I went to find out Mr. LEGALITY, until I thought that the mountain that stands by his house would have fallen upon my head; wherefore there I was forced to stop.

Goodw. That mountain has been the death of many, and will be the death of many more: 'tis well you escaped being by it dashed in pieces.

Chr. Why, truly I do not know what had become of me there, had not EVANGELIST happily met me again as I was musing in the midst of my dumps; but 'twas God's mercy that he came to me again, for else I had never come hither. But now I am come, such a one as I am, more fit indeed for death by that mountain, than thus to stand talking with my lord. But oh, what a favour is this to me, that yet I am admitted entrance here!

Goodw. We make no objections against any; notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither, they in no wise are cast out (#Joh 6:37) and, therefore, good CHRISTIAN, come a little way with me, and I will teach thee about the way thou must go. Look before thee: dost thou see this narrow way? that is the way thou must go. It was cast up by the patriarchs, prophets, Christ, and his apostles; and it is as straight as a rule can make it: this is the way thou must go.

Chr. "But," said CHRISTIAN, "are there no turnings nor windings, by which a stranger may lose his way?"

Goodw. Yes, there are many ways butt down upon this, and they are crooked and wide: but thus thou mayest distinguish the right from the wrong, the right only being strait and narrow (#Mt 7:14).

Then I saw in my dream that CHRISTIAN asked him further if he could not help him off with his

burden that was upon his back; for as yet he had not got rid thereof, nor could he by any means get it off without help.

He told him, "As to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance; for there it will fall from thy back of itself."

Then CHRISTIAN began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his journey. So the other told him that when he was gone some distance from the gate, he would come at the house of the INTERPRETER, at whose door he should knock, and he would show him excellent things. Then CHRISTIAN took his leave of his friend; and he again bade him Godspeed.

Mt 7:7, Joh 6:37, Mt 7:14

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (Mt 7:7 NKJV)

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” (Joh 6:37 NKJV)

“Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Mt 7:14 NKJV)