

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS IN COLOUR

JOHN BUNYAN

WITH COLOURING BY

JIM THORNTON



CHURCH HOME GROUP RESOURCES LTD

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS IN COLOUR

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THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
IN COLOUR

*From This World,
To That Which is to Come*

*... This Book is writ in such a Dialect,
As may the minds of listless Men affect:
It seems a Novelty, and yet contains
Nothing but sound and honest Gospel strains.
Woulds't thou divert thy self from Melancholy?
Wouldst thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?
Wouldst thou read Riddles, and their Explanation,
Or else be drowned in thy Contemplation?
Dost thou love picking-meat? Or wouldst thou see
A Man i'th Clouds, and hear him speak to thee?
Wouldst thou in a moment laugh and weep?
Wouldst thou lose thy self, and catch no harm?
And find thy self again without a charm?
Wouldst read thy self, and read thou knowest not what,
And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
By reading the same Lines? O then come hither,
And lay my Book, thy Head, and Heart together.*

INTRODUCTION

Some of my friends get upset when I suggest that Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is unreadable. What I mean by this is that if you are reading it to find encouragement for your spiritual journey, it is hard work. First, you have to translate it into normal English, then you have to rethink it from the 17th to the 21st Century, and then you have to work out if what you have read is any help.

Many people have done a translation job. Some have done update jobs, but the problem is how to make Bunyan's one dimensional characters into real people. Who of your friends and acquaintances would you say is most like Mr BY-ENDS? Or the INTERPRETER? Or FAITHFUL? Is it better to flesh the characters out, or do they work only as cardboard cut-outs, spelled out in capital letters?

There has been a renewed interest in Puritan theology in some parts of the church. What did they believe about the Holy Spirit? Where is the Spirit in Pilgrim's Progress? What does 'sin' mean to this generation, and is it something they worry about? If not, does Bunyan have anything to say to this generation other than trying to frighten them with the threat of hell? What would John Bunyan say to Hans Kung or Rob Bell or Marcus Borg or Steve Chalke? Does it matter?

Well, I myself would rather like to know the answers to some of these questions, and I suspect some others might as well, so I set out on this journey with seven points in mind:

1. This book has had a profound effect on the spiritual journey of probably millions of Christians since it was written. If it has indeed become unreadable, then if it became more accessible, would it help a new generation in any way?

2. I am sure you are not interested in my view on what Bunyan meant by certain comments. I am sure you want to know exactly what Bunyan said. Every so often you will find words in *italics* which are the direct quotes from the original. These may be phrases which are better left as he wrote them, or where I am uncertain as to precisely what he meant. Mostly they are there just to reassure you that we are still with Bunyan.
3. I have taken the liberty of trying to make some of the characters more human and real, but given the constraints, this has inevitably simply meant making them two dimensional rather than one dimensional. I have kept with a tradition of having the person's name in capital letters.
4. I have tried to paint some coloured background, and I have tried to break up the lengthy dialogues, but the purpose is always to keep the interest going rather than insert some theology.
5. So I have followed James Patterson and broken the work up into short chapters, trying to end each chapter with a page-turner.
6. I have changed the Bible Quotations from Authorised Version to 21st Century King James Version, and put them in **Eras Bold ITC**. The whole work is riddled with Biblical quotations, so I have put all the References in Bunyan's Margins into an Appendix, listed by chapters.
7. Finally, the work that Jorj Kowszun, CHGR and I do is aimed at helping provide Church Home Groups with useful material for Christians of all traditions, especially thinking evangelical pente-catholic Christians (© N T Wright). The Coffee Breaks have some suggestions to get a discussion going.

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1 A MAN IN A MESS

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I found myself in a little local difficulty. The bed in the Police Cell was pretty basic, but I was able to sleep, and I had a dream.

I dreamed I saw a man in jeans and a tee-shirt standing at a bus stop. He was carrying a huge rucksack, strapped tightly to him with chains and padlocks.

He held a Book, and I saw him open the Book and begin to read. He climbed on the bus when it arrived, and carried on reading during the bus journey. I could see he was beginning to get a bit emotional.

As he stepped off the bus, overcome with distress, he cried out:
“What shall I do?”

In this state, he walked home and tried not to let his wife and children see how upset he was. But he could not hide his feelings from them for long. They stared at him as he sat on a stool in the kitchen with his head in his hands, the rucksack weighing him down.

“I am in a mess,” he said. “This weight is more than I can bear. And I am convinced that this place is to be destroyed, along with everyone in it. I have to find some way for us all to escape.”

His family looked at him with horror.

They did not think for one minute that his doomsday prediction was true, but they were panicking at the thought that he might be having a nervous breakdown. His wife told him to have a hot bath and go to bed, and she told the children to go and watch television.

But he couldn't sleep. He tossed and turned all night, sighing and groaning. In the morning, he staggered down for breakfast and when his daughter asked him how he felt, he said, "Terrible".

"I'm so worried," he went on. "We're in real danger and I don't know what to do..." His wife said sharply that the children were late for school and they had to go.

For days he was in a state of permanent anxiety.

His wife thought he should go to the doctor and get a prescription for Prozac; his mother came round with her medicinal prune and Brussels sprouts cheesecake; his brother said he just needed to go out for a pint; his sister-in-law suggested aromatherapy; his father told him to pull himself together.

But I could see that none of their well-meant prescriptions were helping a man with a *sick soul*. After a while they got annoyed, and stopped talking to him.

"Let him stew in his own juice," they said.

He shut himself in his garden shed, sometimes pitying his family and their short-sightedness, sometimes pitying himself. He went for long walks in the field behind his house, all the time carrying the heavy rucksack, turning over his thoughts in his mind and occasionally stopping to read and to pray.

I was watching him like this, pacing the field and reading his Book, growing more and more distracted, when he suddenly stopped and burst out: "*What shall I do to be saved?*"

He stared this way and that, like a cornered animal not knowing which way to run. An elderly man, out walking his dog, paused and came across to him.

“Are you all right?” asked the man, as his dog sniffed rabbit trails in the grass. “My name is EVANGELIST. What’s the matter?”

The man took a deep breath and opened up to him. “This Book,” he said, “tells me I’m condemned to die and face judgment. I don’t want to die and I’m terrified of being judged.”

“What’s so bad about death?” asked EVANGELIST. “Life is so full of troubles, why not have an end to them?”

“Because this burden on my back is so heavy, it will sink me lower than the grave and drag me down to hell,” he said. “And if I have to face judgment, I’m afraid that I’ll be condemned.”

“Well,” said EVANGELIST, “why are you standing here? Why don’t you come to a meeting I am speaking at next week?”

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a printed flyer with details, and gave it to him. The title of the talk was: “*Flee From the Wrath to Come!*”

“That’s it!” said the man. “I feel I must run – but where to?”

EVANGELIST pointed across the fields. “Can you see a small gate over there?”

“No,” said the man, squinting into the distance.

“Can you see a shining light?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Well keep that light in your line of vision and head towards it. As you get nearer, you will see a little wicket gate. When you knock, you’ll be told what to do.”

“Thank you,” said the man. “I couldn’t have known that without you.”

“No, indeed,” said EVANGELIST, and he put his dog on the lead and went off.

So I saw the man shift his heavy rucksack on his shoulders and start to run. He wasn’t far from his house, and at that point his youngest son came out to call him in for tea. “Dad!” he shouted, “Dad! Where are you going? It’s spaghetti carbonara!”

But the man ran on, putting his fingers in his ears and shouting out: *“Life, life! Eternal life!”*

The neighbours heard the noise and came out into their back gardens to see what was going on. Everyone was staring at the man, who was keeping up a good pace despite his heavy load.

“Faster, faster!” jeered one.

“He’s heading for a heart attack,” called another.

“Do something!” begged the man’s wife.