

VALLEY OF HUMILITY



THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS
AND ITS ANTIDOTE

CHRISTIAN'S SUCCESSES

- ❖ He overcame the objections of his family and left them to start his journey
- ❖ He resisted the arguments of Obstinate and Pliable
- ❖ He did not continue to the Village of Morality
- ❖ He followed the path up the Hill of Difficulty rather than taking the easy routes
- ❖ He recovered his lost book
- ❖ He passed by the lions into the House Beautiful

THE EFFECT OF SUCCESS

Then I saw in my dream that on the next day the pilgrim arose expecting to press forward on his journey. But the Palace company invited him to stay with them yet one more day.

- ❖ Why is Christian in a hurry to leave?
- ❖ Does he not enjoy the company of the church?
- ❖ Does he not understand the significance of his need for armor?
- ❖ Does he think his trials are over?
- ❖ Is he overconfident in his ability to continue with spiritual success?

THE PRIMACY OF HUMILITY

- ❖ Christian must enter the valley of humility in order to continue on the path to the celestial city
- ❖ In the same way, humility is a prerequisite to sanctification
- ❖ While we don't have perfect humility this side of heaven, God cannot use the proud man because pride sucks glory away from God to ourselves

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3

ACHIEVING HUMILITY

- ❖ Fix your eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). As you consider the perfections of Christ, you will see yourself as small and unworthy.
- ❖ Be wary of praise from men for your good works (Matt. 6:5-6). Be careful to redirect any praise toward God.
- ❖ Embrace the trials God brings into your life because they produce humility (2 Cor. 12:10).

MANIFESTATIONS OF HUMILITY

- ❖ Have I lost my preoccupation with self?
- ❖ Do I complain when circumstances are unfair to me?
- ❖ Am I growing more impressed with others and less impressed with myself?
- ❖ Do I spend more time in prayer as concern for the kingdom of God exceeds my concern for the material world?
- ❖ Am I growing in thankfulness toward God for all things?

A PURITAN PICTURE OF HUMILITY

A castle that has long been besieged and is ready to be taken will deliver up on any terms to save their lives. He whose heart has been a garrison for the devil, and has held out long in opposition against Christ, when once God has brought him to poverty of spirit and he sees himself damned without Christ, let God propound what articles he will, he will readily subscribe to them. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

Thomas Watson

CHRISTIAN MEETS APOLLYON

- ❖ Apollyon is the "angel of the abyss" of Rev. 9:11 who commands the locusts that swarm out in the 5th trumpet judgment to torment unbelievers
- ❖ Bunyan uses him as a representative of Satan to picture how demonic forces are deployed to hinder our sanctification
- ❖ His physical description of Apollyon allegorically depicts a number of attributes of fallen angels

ATTRIBUTES OF SATAN

- ❖ Scales like a fish-- he is protected from attack by sharp weapons
- ❖ Wings-- a picture of his mobility which enables him to have global reign over his kingdom
- ❖ Bear's feet-- suggest strength and resistance to being moved
- ❖ Mouth like a lion, and fire and smoke from his belly-- pictures his penchant for consuming and destroying

SATAN'S APPROACH- PLAN A

- ❖ He begins by offering him better terms of employment that appeal to the flesh
- ❖ This is coupled with threats of much more severe danger ahead if he continues along the path
- ❖ He denies that Christ cares for his children as shown by his refusal to rescue them from temporal harm
- ❖ He reminds him of his previous failings and calls into question whether Christ will really forgive him
- ❖ He correctly accuses pilgrim of having been in part motivated by pride

SATAN'S APPROACH- PLAN B

- ❖ Failing to persuade pilgrim with logical arguments, Apollyon proceeds with a full frontal attack firing darts
- ❖ The darts could represent additional temptations or actual direct interference with circumstances designed to destroy his faith, as with the account of Job
- ❖ Note that this strategy is more successful and almost results in Christian's ruin
- ❖ The key point is that the demonic forces are very powerful and not to be trifled with or underestimated

SPIRITUAL WARFARE



Christian is assailed by Apollyon

JOB 1:8-12

The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

EPHESIANS 6:12-17

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1 PETER 5:8-10

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

JAMES 4:7-10

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

1 PETER 3:21-22

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

JOHN 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

REVELATION 20:7-10

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

CHRISTIAN DEPLOYS THE SWORD

- ❖ Christian's use of the sword of the spirit ultimately causes the demon to flee
- ❖ Note that Christian's effective attack with the sword was achieved by the direct intervention of God
- ❖ Why is God's word an effective tool against the wiles of the devil?

SATAN'S AGENDA

- ❖ Satan's sole power in the life of a believer is to entice us to sin
- ❖ His tools are temptation, and if God permits, orchestration of adverse circumstances
- ❖ The word of God is such an effective weapon because when knowing and using it, we are strengthened not to sin, and through it God thwarts Satan's objective

PSALM 119:9-16

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.

1 JOHN 2:1

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous

COLOSSIANS 3:16-17

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

CHRISTIAN'S LESSON LEARNED

- ❖ In vanquishing Apollyon, Christian quotes Rom. 8:37-- But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us
- ❖ In doing so he acknowledges the true source of his victory
- ❖ His response is a prayer of thanksgiving
- ❖ He continues his journey with his sword in his hand
- ❖ His overconfidence and pride have been subdued and he is ready to encounter the next enemy

APPLICATION

- ❖ All of us are prone to the sin of pride
- ❖ Have you considered lately that your difficulties in life might be in part due to God's work to cleanse you of pride?
- ❖ Have you felt that God has been withholding his grace from you?

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says,
“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT
GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” James 4:6

THIS WEEK...

- ❖ Think of a way you can sacrifice your interests so as to become a blessing to someone else
- ❖ Spend some time in prayer thanking God for your most painful current trial knowing that through it he is teaching you humility
- ❖ Consider your most significant success this month or this past year and give God all the glory for it
- ❖ Take the sword of the spirit out of the scabbard (off your shelf) and read and meditate on it this week so you will be prepared for the next attack of the enemy

THIS WEEK...

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4:12-13