

***ALEXANDER
WHYTE***



***BUNYAN
CHARACTERS
(2ND SERIES)***

Alexander Whyte

Bunyan Characters (2nd Series)

EAN 8596547252283

DigiCat, 2022

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BUNYAN CHARACTERS—SECOND SERIES Lectures delivered
in St. George's Free Church Edinburgh By Alexander Whyte,
D.D.

IGNORANCE

LITTLE-FAITH

THE FLATTERER

ATHEIST

HOPEFUL

TEMPORARY

SECRET

MRS. TIMOROUS

MERCY

MR. BRISK

MR. SKILL

THE SHEPHERD BOY

OLD HONEST

MR. FEARING

FEEBLE-MIND

GREAT-HEART

MR. READY-TO-HALT

VALIANT-FOR-TRUTH

STANDFAST

MADAM BUBBLE

GAIUS

CHRISTIAN

CHRISTIANA

THE ENCHANTED GROUND

THE LAND OF BEULAH
THE SWELLING OF JORDAN

BUNYAN CHARACTERS—SECOND SERIES

**LECTURES DELIVERED IN ST. GEORGE'S
FREE CHURCH EDINBURGH**

BY ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

[Table of Contents](#)

IGNORANCE

[Table of Contents](#)

“I was alive without the law once.”—*Paul*.

“I was now a brisk talker also myself in the matter of religion.”—*Bunyan*.

This is a new kind of pilgrim. There are not many pilgrims like this bright brisk youth. A few more young gentlemen like this, and the pilgrimage way would positively soon become fashionable and popular, and be the thing to do. Had you met with this young gentleman in society, had you noticed him beginning to come about your church, you would have lost no time in finding out who he was. I can well believe it, you would have replied. Indeed, I felt sure of it. I must ask him to the house. I was quite struck with his appearance and his manners. Yes; ask him at once to your house; show him some pointed attentions and you will never regret it. For if he goes to the bar and works even decently at his cases, he will be first a sheriff and then a judge in no time. If he should take to politics, he will be an under-

secretary before his first parliament is out. And if he takes to the church, which is not at all unlikely, our West-end congregations will all be competing for him as their junior colleague; and, if he elects either of our Established churches to exercise his profession in it, he will have dined with Her Majesty while half of his class-fellows are still half-starved probationers. Society fathers will point him out with anger to their unsuccessful sons, and society mothers will smile under their eyelids as they see him hanging over their daughters.

Well, as this handsome and well-appointed youth stepped out of his own neat little lane into the rough road on which our two pilgrims were staggering upward, he felt somewhat ashamed to be seen in their company. And I do not wonder. For a greater contrast you would not have seen on any road in all that country that day. He was at your very first sight of him a gentleman and the son of a gentleman. A little overdressed perhaps; as, also, a little lofty to the two rather battered but otherwise decent enough men who, being so much older than he, took the liberty of first accosting him. "Brisk" is his biographer's description of him. Feather-headed, flippant, and almost impudent, you might have been tempted to say of him had you joined the little party at that moment. But those two tumbled, broken-winded, and, indeed, broken-hearted old men had been, as an old author says, so emptied from vessel to vessel—they had had a life of such sloughs and stiff climbs—they had been in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness so often—that it was no wonder that their dandiacal companion walked on a little ahead of them. 'Gentlemen,' his fine clothes and his cane

and his head in the air all said to his two somewhat disreputable-looking fellow-travellers,—“Gentlemen, you be utter strangers to me: I know you not. And, besides, I take my pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company, unless I like it better.” But all his society manners, and all his costly and well-kept clothes, and all his easy and self-confident airs did not impose upon the two wary old pilgrims. They had seen too much of the world, and had been too long mixing among all kinds of pilgrims, young and old, true and false, to be easily imposed upon. Besides, as one could see from their weather-beaten faces, and their threadbare garments, they had found the upward way so dreadfully difficult that they both felt a real apprehension as to the future of this light-hearted and light-headed youth. “You may find some difficulty at the gate,” somewhat bluntly broke in the oldest of the two pilgrims on their young comrade. “I shall, no doubt, do at the gate as other good people do,” replied the young gentleman briskly. “But what have you to show at the gate that may cause that the gate be opened to you?” “Why, I know my Lord’s will, and I have been a good liver all my days, and I pay every man his own. I pray, moreover, and I fast. I pay tithes, and give alms, and have left my country for whither I am going.” Now, before we go further: Do all you young gentlemen do as much as that? Have you always been good livers? Have you paid every man and woman their due? Do you pray to be called prayer? And, if so, when, and where, and what for, and how long at a time? I do not ask if your private prayer-book is like Bishop Andrewes’ *Devotions*, which was so reduced to pulp with tears and sweat and the clenching of his agonising

hands that his literary executors were with difficulty able to decipher it. Clito in the *Christian Perfection* was so expeditious with his prayers that he used to boast that he could both dress and do his devotions in a quarter of an hour. What was the longest time you ever took to dress or undress and say your prayers? Then, again, there is another Anglican young gentleman in the same High Church book who always fasts on Good Friday and the Thirtieth of January. Did you ever deny yourself a glass of wine or a cigar or an opera ticket for the church or the poor? Could you honestly say that you know what tithes are? And is there a poor man or woman or child in this whole city who will by any chance put your name into their prayers and praises at bedtime to-night? I am afraid there are not many young gentlemen in this house to-night who could cast a stone at that brisk lad Ignorance, Vain-Hope, door in the side of the hill, and all. He was not far from the kingdom of heaven; indeed, he got up to the very gate of it. How many of you will get half as far?

Now (what think you?), was it not a very bold thing in John Bunyan, whose own descent was of such a low and inconsiderable generation, his father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land—was it not almost too bold in such a clown to take such a gentleman-scholar as Saul of Tarsus, the future Apostle of the Lord, and put him into the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and there go on to describe him as a very brisk lad and nickname him with the nickname of Ignorance? For, in knowledge of all kinds to be called knowledge, Gamaliel's gold medallist could have bought the unlettered tinker of

Elstow in one end of the market and sold him in the other. And nobody knew that better than Bunyan did. And yet such a lion was he for the truth, such a disciple of Luther was he, and such a defender and preacher of the one doctrine of a standing or falling church, that he fills page after page with the crass ignorance of the otherwise most learned of all the New Testament men. Bunyan does not accuse the rising hope of the Pharisees of school or of synagogue ignorance. That young Hebrew Rabbi knew every jot and tittle of the law of Moses, and all the accumulated traditions of the fathers to boot. But Bunyan has Paul himself with him when he accuses and convicts Saul of an absolutely brutish ignorance of his own heart and hidden nature. That so very brisk lad was always boasting in himself of the day on which he was circumcised, and of the old stock of which he had come; of his tribe, of his zeal, of his blamelessness, and of the profit he had made of his educational and ecclesiastical opportunities. Whereas Bunyan is fain to say of himself in his *Grace Abounding* that he is “not able to boast of noble blood or of a high-born state according to the flesh. Though, all things considered, I magnify the Heavenly Majesty for that by this door He brought me into this world to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the Gospel.”

As we listen to the conversation that goes on between the two old pilgrims and this smartly appointed youth, we find them striving hard, but without any sign of success, to convince him of some of the things from which he gets his somewhat severe name. For one thing, they at last bluntly told him that he evidently did not know the very A B C about himself. Till, when too hard pressed by the more ruthless of

the two old men, the exasperated youth at last frankly burst out: "I will never believe that my heart is thus bad!" There is a warm touch of Bunyan's own experience here, mixed up with his so dramatic development of Paul's morsels of autobiography that he lets drop in his Epistles to the Philippians and to the Galatians. "Now was I become godly; now I was become a right honest man. Though as yet I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I was proud of my godliness. I read my Bible, but as for Paul's Epistles, and such like Scriptures, I could not away with them; being, as yet, but ignorant both of the corruptions of my nature and of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me. The new birth did never enter my mind, neither knew I the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart. And as for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them." My brethren, old and young, what do you think of all that? What have you to say to all that? Does all that not open a window and let a flood of daylight into your own breast? I am sure it does. That is the best portrait of you that ever was painted. Do you not see yourself there as in a glass? And do you not turn with disgust and loathing from the stupid and foolish face? You complain and tell stories about how impostors and cheats and liars have come to your door and have impudently thrust themselves into your innermost rooms; but your own heart, if you only knew it, is deceitful far above them all. Not the human heart as it stands in confessions, and in catechisms, and in deep religious books, but your own heart that beats out its blood-poison of self-deceit, and darkness, and death day and night continually. "My heart is a good heart," said that poor ill-brought-up boy,

who was already destroyed by his father and his mother for lack of self-knowledge. I entirely grant you that those two old sinners by this time were taking very pessimistic and very melancholy views of human nature, and, therefore, of every human being, young and old. They knew that no language had ever been coined in any scripture, or creed, or catechism, or secret diary of the deepest penitent, that even half uttered their own evil hearts; and they had lived long enough to see that we are all cut out of one web, are all dyed in one vat, and are all corrupted beyond all accusation or confession in Adam's corruption. But how was that poor, mishandled lad to know or believe all that? He could not. It was impossible. "You go so fast, gentlemen, that I cannot keep pace with you. Go you on before and I will stay a while behind." Then said Christian to his companion: "It pities me much for this poor lad, for it will certainly go ill with him at last." "Alas!" said Hopeful, "there are abundance in our town in his condition: whole families, yea, whole streets, and that of pilgrims too." Is your family such a family as this? And are you yourself just such a pilgrim as Ignorance was, and are you hastening on to just such an end?

And then, as a consequence, being wholly ignorant of his own corruption and condemnation in the sight of God, this miserable man must remain ignorant and outside of all that God has done in Christ for corrupt and condemned men. "I believe that Christ died for sinners and that I shall be justified before God from the curse through His gracious acceptance of my obedience to His law. Or, then, to take it this way, Christ makes my duties that are religious

acceptable to His Father by virtue of His merits, and so shall I be justified." Now, I verify believe that nine out of ten of the young men who are here to-night would subscribe that statement and never suspect there was anything wrong with it or with themselves. And yet, what does Christian, who, in this matter, is just John Bunyan, who again is just the word of God—what does the old pilgrim say to this confession of this young pilgrim's faith? "Ignorance is thy name," he says, "and as thy name is, so art thou: even this thy answer demonstrateth what I say. Ignorant thou art of what justifying righteousness is, and as ignorant how to secure thy soul through the faith of it from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effect of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ's, which is to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love His name, His word, His ways, and His people." Paul sums up all his own early life in this one word, "ignorant of God's righteousness." "Going about," he says also, "to establish our own righteousness, not submitting ourselves to be justified by the righteousness that God has provided with such wisdom and grace, and at such a cost in His Son Jesus Christ." Now, young men, I defy you to be better born, better brought up, or to have better prospects than Saul of Tarsus had. I defy you to have profited more by all your opportunities and advantages than he had done. I defy you to be more blameless in your opening manhood than he was. And yet it all went like smoke when he got a true sight of himself, and, with that, a true sight of Christ and His justifying righteousness. Read at home to-night, and read when alone, what that great man of God says about all that in his

classical epistle to the Philippians, and refuse to sleep till you have made the same submission. And, to-night, and all your days, let *submission*, Paul's splendid submission, be the soul and spirit of all your religious life. Submission to be searched by God's holy law as by a lighted candle: submission to be justified from all that that candle discovers: submission to take Christ as your life and righteousness, sanctification and redemption: and submission of your mind and your will and your heart to Him at all times and in all things. Nay, stay still, and say where you sit, Lord, I submit. I submit on the spot to be pardoned. I submit now to be saved. I submit in all things from this very hour and house of God not any longer to be mine own, but to be Thine, O God, Thine, Thine, for ever, in Jesus Christ Thy Son and my Saviour!

"But, one day, as I was passing in the field, and that, too, with some dashes in my conscience, fearing lest all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, Thy Righteousness is in heaven! And, methought, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There, I saw, was my Righteousness. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my Righteousness better, nor my bad frame of heart that made my Righteousness worse: for my Righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. 'Twas glorious to me to see His exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of His benefits. And that because I could now look from myself to Him and should reckon that all those graces of God that were now green in me were yet but like those crack-groats and four-pence halfpennies that

rich men carry in their purses when their gold is in their trunks at home! Oh, I saw that day that my gold was all in my trunk at home! Even in Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now, Christ was all to me: all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification and all my redemption.”

“Methinks in this God speaks,
No tinker hath such power.”

LITTLE-FAITH

[Table of Contents](#)

“O thou of little faith.”—*Our Lord*.

Little-Faith, let it never be forgotten, was, all the time, a good man. With all his mistakes about himself, with his sad misadventure, with all his loss of blood and of money, and with his whole after-lifetime of doleful and bitter complaints,—all the time, Little-Faith was all through, in a way, a good man. To keep us right on this all-important point, and to prevent our being prematurely prejudiced against this pilgrim because of his somewhat prejudicial name—because give a dog a bad name, you know, and you had better hang him out of hand at once—because, I say, of this pilgrim’s somewhat suspicious name, his scrupulously just, and, indeed, kindly affected biographer says of him, and says it of him not once nor twice, but over and over and over again, that this Little-Faith was really all the time a truly good man. And, more than that, this good man’s goodness was not a new thing with him it was not a thing of yesterday. This man had, happily to begin with, a good father and a

good mother. And if there was a good town in all those parts for a boy to be born and brought up in it was surely the town of Sincere. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Well, Little-Faith had been so trained up both by his father and his mother and his schoolmaster and his minister, and he never cost either of them a sore heart or even an hour's sleep. One who knew him well, as well, indeed, as only one young man knows another, has been fain to testify, when suspicions have been cast on the purity and integrity of his youth, that nothing will describe this pilgrim so well in the days of his youth as just those beautiful words out of the New Testament—"an example to all young men in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith even, and in purity"—and that, if there was one young man in all that town of Sincere who kept his garments unspotted it was just our pilgrim of to-night. Yes, said one who had known him all his days, if the child is the father of the man, then Little-Faith, as you so unaccountably to me call him, must have been all along a good man.

It was said long ago in *Vanity Fair* about our present Premier that if he were a worse man he would be a better statesman. Now, I do not repeat that in this place because I agree with it, but because it helps to illustrate, as sometimes a violent paradox will help to illustrate, a truth that does not lie all at once on the surface. But it is no paradox or extravagance or anything but the simple truth to say that if Little-Faith had had more and earlier discoveries made to him of the innate evil of his own heart, even if it had been by that innate evil bursting out of his heart and

laying waste his good life, he would either have been driven out of his little faith altogether or driven into a far deeper faith. Had the commandment come to him in the manner it came to Paul; had it come so as that the sinfulness of his inward nature had revived, as Paul says, under its entrance; then, either his great goodness or his little faith must have there and then died. God's truth and man's goodness cannot dwell together in the same heart. Either the truth will kill the goodness, or the goodness will kill the truth. Little-Faith, in short, was such a good man, and had always been such a good man, and had led such an easy life in consequence, that his faith had not been much exercised, and therefore had not grown, as it must have been exercised and must have grown, had he not been such a good man. In short, and to put it bluntly, had Little-Faith been a worse sinner, he would have been a better saint. "*O felix culpa!*" exclaimed a church father; "O happy fault, which found for us sinners such a Redeemer." An apostrophe which Bishop Ken has put into these four bold lines—

“What Adam did amiss,
Turned to our endless bliss;
O happy sin, which to atone,
Drew Filial God to leave His throne.”

And John Calvin, the soberest of men, supports Augustine, the most impulsive of men, in saying the same thing. All things which happen to the saints are so overruled by God that what the world regards as evil the issue shows to be good. For what Augustine says is true, that even the

sins of saints are, through the guiding providence of God, so far from doing harm to them, that, on the contrary, they serve to advance their salvation. And Richard Hooker, a theologian, if possible, still more judicious than even John Calvin, says on this same subject and in support of the same great father, "I am not afraid to affirm it boldly with St. Augustine that men puffed up through a proud opinion of their own sanctity and holiness receive a benefit at the hands of God, and are assisted with His grace, when with His grace they are not assisted, but permitted, and that grievously, to transgress. Ask the very soul of Peter, and it shall undoubtedly make you itself this answer: My eager protestations, made in the glory of my ghostly strength, I am ashamed of; but those crystal tears, wherewith my sin and weakness were bewailed, have procured my endless joy: my strength hath been my ruin, and my fall my stay." And our own Samuel Rutherford is not likely to be left far behind by the best of them when the grace of God is to be magnified. "Had sin never been we should have wanted the mysterious Emmanuel, the Beloved, the Chief among ten thousand, Christ, God-man, the Saviour of sinners. For, no sick sinners, no soul-physician of sinners; no captive, no Redeemer; no slave of hell, no lovely ransom-payer of heaven. Mary Magdalene with her seven devils, Paul with his hands smoking with the blood of the saints, and with his heart sick with malice and blasphemy against Christ and His Church, and all the rest of the washen ones whose robes are made fair in the blood of the Lamb, and all the multitude that no man can number in that best of lands, are all but bits of free grace. O what a depth of unsearchable wisdom

to contrive that lovely plot of free grace. Come, all intellectual capacities, and warm your hearts at this fire. Come, all ye created faculties, and smell the precious ointment of Christ. Oh come, sit down under His shadow and eat the apples of life. Oh that angels would come, and generations of men, and wonder, and admire, and fall down before the unsearchable wisdom of this gospel-art of the unsearchable riches of Christ!" And always pungent Thomas Shepard of New England: "You shall find this, that there is not any carriage or passage of the Lord's providence toward thee but He will get a name to Himself, first and last, by it. Hence you shall find that those very sins that dishonour His name He will even by them get Himself a better name; for so far will they be from casting you out of His love that He will actually do thee good by them. Look and see if it is not so with thee? Doth not thy weakness strengthen thee like Paul? Doth not thy blindness make thee cry for light? And hath not God out of darkness oftentimes brought light? Thou hast felt venom against Christ and thy brother, and thou hast on that account loathed thyself the more. Thy falls into sin make thee weary of it, watchful against it, long to be rid of it. And thus He makes thy poison thy food, thy death thy life, thy damnation thy salvation, and thy very greatest enemies thy very best friends. And hence Mr. Fox said that he thanked God more for his sins than for his good works. And the reason is, God will have His name." And, last, but not least, listen to our old acquaintance, James Fraser of Brea: "I find advantages by my sins: '*Peccare nocet, peccavisse vero juvat.*' I may say, as Mr. Fox said, my sins have, in a manner, done me more good than my graces.

Grace and mercy have more abounded where sin had much abounded. I am by my sins made much more humble, watchful, revengeful against myself. I am made to see a greater need to depend more upon Him and to love Him the more. I find that true which Shepard says, 'sin loses strength by every new fall.'" Have you followed all that, my brethren? Or have you stumbled at it? Do you not understand it? Does your superficial gin-horse mind incline to shake its empty head over all this? I know that great names, and especially the great names of your own party, go much farther with you than the truth goes, and therefore I have sheltered this deep truth under a shield of great names. For their sakes let this sure truth of God's best saints lie in peace and undisputed beside you till you arrive to understand it.

But, to proceed,—the thing was this. At this passage there comes down from Broadway-gate a lane called Dead-Man's-lane, so called because of the murders that are commonly done there. And this Little-Faith going on pilgrimage, as we now do, chanced to sit down there and fell fast asleep. Yes; the thing was this: This good man had never been what one would call really awake. He was not a bad man, as men went in the town of Sincere, but he always had a half-slept half-awakened look about his eyes, till now, at this most unfortunate spot, he fell stone-dead asleep. You all know, I shall suppose, what the apostle Paul and John Bunyan mean by sleep, do you not? You all know, at any rate, to begin with, what sleep means in the accident column of the morning papers. You all know what sleep meant and what it involved and cost in the Thirsk signal-box the other night. {1} When a man is asleep, he is as good as

dead, and other people are as good as dead to him. He is dead to duty, to danger, to other people's lives, as well as to his own. He may be having pleasant dreams, and may even be laughing aloud in his sleep, but that may only make his awaking all the more hideous. He may awake just in time, or he may awake just too late. Only, he is asleep and he neither knows nor cares. Now, there is a sleep of the soul as well as of the body. And as the soul is in worth, as the soul is in its life and in its death to the body, so is its sleep. Many of you sitting there are quite as dead to heaven and hell, to death and judgment, and to what a stake other people as well as yourselves have in your sleep as that poor sleeper in the signal-box was dead to what was coming rushing on him through the black night. And as all his gnashing of teeth at himself, and all his sobs before his judge and before the laid-out dead, and before distracted widows and half-mad husbands did not bring back that fatal moment when he fell asleep so sweetly, so will it be with you. Lazarus! come forth! Wise and foolish virgins both: Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!

And, with that, Guilt with a great club that was in his hand struck Little-Faith on the head, and with that blow felled him to the earth, where he lay bleeding as one that would soon bleed to death. Yes, yes, all true to the very life. A man may be the boast and the example of all the town, and yet, unknown to them all, and all but unknown to himself till he is struck down, he may have had guilt enough on his track all the time to lay him half dead at the mouth of Dead-Man's-lane. Good as was the certificate that all men in

their honesty gave to Little-Faith, yet even he had some bad enough memories behind him and within him had he only kept them ever present with him. But, then, it was just this that all along was the matter with Little-Faith. Till, somehow, after that sad and yet not wholly evil sleep, all his past sins leapt out into the light and suddenly became and remained all the rest of his life like scarlet. So loaded, indeed, was the club of Guilt with the nails and studs and clamps of secret aggravation, that every nail and stud left its own bleeding bruise in the prostrate man's head. I have myself, says the narrator of Little-Faith's story, I have myself been engaged as he was, and I found it to be a terrible thing. I would, as the saying is, have sold my life at that moment for a penny; but that, as God would have it, I was clothed with armour of proof: ay, and yet though I was thus harnessed, I found it hard work to quit myself like a man. No man can tell what in that combat attends us but he that hath been in the battle himself. Great-Grace himself,—whoso looks well upon his face shall see those cuts and scars that shall easily give demonstration of what I say.

Most unfortunately there was no good Samaritan with his beast on the road that day to take the half-dead man to an inn. And thus it was that Little-Faith was left to lie in his blood till there was almost no more blood left in him. Till at last, coming a little to himself, he made a shift to scrabble on his way. When he was able to look a little to himself, besides all his wounds and loss of blood, he found that all his spending money was gone, and what was he to do, a stranger in such a plight on a strange road? There was nothing for it but he must just beg his way with many a

hungry belly for the remainder of his way. You all understand the parable at this point? Our knowledge of gospel truth; our personal experience of the life of God in our own soul; our sensible attainments in this grace of the Spirit and in that; in secret prayer, in love to God, in forgiveness of injuries, in goodwill to all men, and in self-denial that no one knows of,—in things like these we possess what may be called the pocket-money of the spiritual life. All these things, at their best, are not the true jewel that no thief can break through nor steal; but though they are not our best and truest riches, yet they have their place and play their part in sending us up the pilgrim way. By our long and close study of the word of God, if that is indeed our case; by divine truth dwelling richly and experimentally in our hearts; and by a hidden life that is its own witness, and which always has the Holy Spirit's seal set upon it that we are the children of God,—all that keeps, and is designed by God to keep our hearts up amid the labours and the faintings, the hopes and the fears of the spiritual life. All that keeps us at the least and the worst above famine and beggary. Now, the whole pity with Little-Faith was, that though he was not a bad man, yet he never, even at his best days, had much of those things that make a good and well-furnished pilgrim; and what little he had he had now clean lost. He had never been much a reader of his Bible; he had never sat over it as other men sat over their news-letters and their romances. He had never had much taste or talent for spiritual books of any kind. He was a good sort of man, but he was not exactly the manner of man on whose broken heart the Holy Ghost sets the broad seal of heaven. But for his dreadful misadventure,

he might have plodded on, a decent, humdrum, commonplace, everyday kind of pilgrim; but when that catastrophe fell on him he had nothing to fall back upon. The secret ways of faith and love and hope were wholly unknown to him. He had no practice in importunate prayer. He had never prayed a whole night all his life. He had never needed to do so. For were we not told when we first met him what a blameless and pure and true and good man he had always been? He did not know how to find his way about in his Bible; and as for the maps and guide-books that some pilgrims never let out of their hand, even when he had some spending money about him, he never laid it out that way. And a more helpless pilgrim than Little-Faith was all the rest of the way you never saw. He was forced to beg as he went, says his historian. That is to say, he had to lean upon and look to wiser and better-furnished men than himself. He had to share their meals, look to them to pay his bills, keep close to their company, walk in their foot-prints, and at night borrow their oil, and it was only in this poor dependent way that Little-Faith managed to struggle on to the end of his dim and joyless journey.

It would have been far more becoming and far more profitable if Christian and Hopeful, instead of falling out of temper and calling one another bad names over the sad case of Little-Faith, had tried to tell one another why that unhappy pilgrim's faith was so small, and how both their own faith and his might from that day have been made more. Hopeful, for some reason or other, was in a rude and boastful mood of mind that day, and Christian was more tart and snappish than we have ever before seen him; and,

altogether, the opportunity of learning something useful out of Little-Faith's story has been all but lost to us. But, now, since there are so many of Little-Faith's kindred among ourselves—so many good men who are either half asleep in their religious life or are begging their way from door to door—let them be told, in closing, one or two out of many other ways in which their too little faith may possibly be made stronger and more fruitful.

Well, then, faith, like everything else, once we have it, grows greater by our continual exercise of it. Exercise, then, intentionally and seriously and on system your faith every day. And exercise it habitually and increasingly on your Bible, on heaven, and on Jesus Christ. And let your faith on all these things, and places, and persons, work by love,—by love and by imagination. Our love is cold and our faith is small and weak for lack of imagination. Read your Psalm, your Gospel, your Epistle every morning and every night with your eye upon the object. Think you see the Psalmist amid all his deep and divine experiences. Think you see Jesus Christ speaking His parables, saying His prayers, and doing His good works. Walk up and down with Him, observing His manner, His look, His gait, His divinity in your humanity, till Galilee and Jerusalem become Scotland and Edinburgh; that is, till He is as much with you, and more, than He was with Peter and James and John. Never close your eye a single night till you have again laid your hand on the very head of the Lamb of God, and till you feel that your sin and guilt have all passed off your hand and on upon His head. And never rise without, like William Law, saluting the rising sun in the name of God, as if he had just been created

and sent up into your sky to let you see to serve God and your neighbour for another day. And be often out of this world and up in heaven. Beat all about you at building castles in the air; you have more material and more reason. For is not faith the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen? Walk often in heaven's friendly streets. Pass often into heaven's many mansions filled with happy families. Imagine this unhappy life at an end, and imagine yourself sent back to this probationary world to play the man for a few short years before heaven finally calls you home. Little-Faith was a good man, but there was no speculation in his eyes and no secrets of love in his heart. And if your faith also is little, and your spending money also is run low, try this way of love and imagination. If you have a better way, then go on with it and be happy yourself and helpful to others; but if your faith is at a standstill and is stricken with barrenness, try my counsel of putting more heart and more inward eye, more holy love and more heavenly joy, into your frigid and sterile religion.

THE FLATTERER

[Table of Contents](#)

“A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.”—*The Wise Man*.

Both Ignorance and Little-Faith would have had their revenge and satisfaction upon Christian and Hopeful had they seen those two so Pharisaical old men taken in the Flatterer's net. For it was nothing else but the swaggering pride of Hopeful over the pitiful case of Little-Faith, taken

along with the hard and hasty ways of Christian with that unhappy youth Ignorance, that so soon laid them both down under the small cords of the Shining One. This word of the wise man, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, was fulfilled to the very letter in Christian and Hopeful that high-minded day. At the same time, it must be admitted that Christian and Hopeful would have been more than human if they had not both felt and let fall some superiority, some scorn, and some impatience in the presence of such a silly and upsetting stripling as Ignorance was; as, also, over the story of such a poor-spirited and spunging creature as Little-Faith was. Christian and Hopeful had just come down from their delightful time among the Delectable Mountains, and they were as full as they could hold of all kinds of knowledge, and faith, and hope, and assurance; when, most unfortunately, as it turned out, they first came across Ignorance, and then, after quarrelling with him, they fell out between themselves over the case of Little-Faith. Their superior knowledge of the truth, and their superior strength of faith, ought to have made them more able to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and with the passing moods, however provoking, of one another. But no. And their impatience and contempt and bad temper all came at this crisis to such a head with them that they could only be cured by the small cords and the stinging words of the Shining One. The true key to this so painful part of the parable hangs at our own girdle. We who have been born and brought up in an evangelical church are thrown from time to time into the company of men—ministers and people—who have not had our

advantages and opportunities. They have been born, baptized, and brought up in communities and churches the clean opposite of ours; and they are as ignorant of all New Testament religion as Ignorance himself was; or, on the other hand, they are as full of superstition and terror and spiritual starvation as Little-Faith was. And then, instead of recollecting and laying to heart Who made us to differ from such ignorance and such unbelief, and thus putting on love and humility and patience toward our neighbours, we speak scornfully and roughly to them, and boast ourselves over them, and as good as say to them, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am wiser, wider-minded, stronger, and better every way than thou. And then, ere ever we are aware of what we are doing, we have let the arch-flatterer of religious superiority and of spiritual pride seduce us aside out of the lowly and heavenly way of love and humility till we are again brought back to it with rebukes of conscience and with other chastisements. You all understand, my brethren, that the man black of flesh but covered with a white robe was no wayside seducer who met Christian and Hopeful at that dangerous part of the road only and only on that high-minded day. You know from yourselves surely that both Christian and Hopeful carried that black but smooth-spoken man within themselves. The Flatterer who led the two pilgrims so fatally wrong that day was just their own heart taken out of their own bosom and personified and dramatised by Bunyan's dramatic genius, and so made to walk and talk and flatter and puff up outside of themselves till they came again to see who in reality he was and whence he came,—that is to say, till they were brought to

see what they themselves still were, and would always be, when they were left to themselves. “Where did you lie last night? asked the Shining One with the whip. With the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains, they answered. He asked them then if they had not of those shepherds a note of direction for the way? They answered, Yes. But did you not, said he, when you were at a stand pluck out and read your note? They answered, No. He asked them why? They said they forgot. He asked, moreover if the shepherds did not bid them beware of the Flatterer? They answered, Yes; but we did not imagine, said they, that this fine-spoken man had been he.”

All good literature, both sacred and profane, both ancient and modern, is full of the Flatterer. Let me not, protests Elihu in his powerful speech in the book of Job, let me not accept any man’s person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man, lest in so doing my Maker should soon take me away. And the Psalmist in his powerful description of the wicked men of his day: There is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. And again: They speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak. But the Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things. “The perpetual hyperbole” of pure love becomes in the lips of impure love the impure bait that leads the simple ones astray on the streets of the city as seen and heard by the wise man out of his casement. My son, say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman; that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which