Chapter Twelve

Vanity Fair

Christian and Faithful continued to talk about what they had seen on the way. Their conversation made the journey easier which, without a doubt, would have been long and tiresome for them otherwise, because now they were going through a wilderness.

Now when they were almost out of this wilderness, Faithful just happened to look back and saw someone he recognized coming behind them. “Oh,” said Faithful to his brother, “who is that coming toward us?” Christian looked and said, “It is my good friend, Evangelist.” “Yes, and my good friend too,” said Faithful, “for he was the one who showed me the way to the gate.” Evangelist soon caught up with them and greeted them.

Evan. “Peace be with you, dearly beloved. And peace be to those who help you!”

Chr. “Welcome, welcome, my good Evangelist! Just looking at you reminds me of the kindness you showed me a long time ago and of your untiring labors for my eternal good.”

Faith. “And a thousand times, welcome,” said good Faithful. “How encouraging it is for us pilgrims to have your company, Evangelist!”

Evan. “How are things, my friends, since the last time we saw each other? What have you encountered and how have you conducted yourselves?”

Then Christian and Faithful told him about all the things that had happened to them on their journey and how, with great difficulty, they had arrived at the place where they now were.

Evan. “I am so glad,” said Evangelist – “not that you experienced trials, but that you have been victorious. You have (even with your many weaknesses) continued in the right way to this very day. I am glad of this for your sakes and for mine. I have sowed, and you have reaped. The day is coming when both he who sows and those that reap will rejoice together - that is, if you continue in this way. For in due time you will reap, if you do not lose heart. ¹ The crown is before you, and it is an incorruptible one. Run that you may obtain it.² Some set out for this crown and, after they

¹ “Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together” (John 4:36).

² “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9).

² “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like
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have gone a great distance to receive it, another comes along and takes it from them. Hold on, therefore, to what you have. Do not let anyone take your crown. You are not yet out of the range of the devil. You have not resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. Let the kingdom always be before you and believe with all your heart in the things that are invisible. Let nothing that is on this side of the heavenly world get within you. And above all, guard you hearts and beware of the lusts that lie within, for they are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Set your faces like a flint; you have all power in heaven and earth on your side.”

Then Christian thanked him for his exhortation and told him they would like for him to speak further to them so they could have his wisdom concerning the rest of their journey. They knew very well that he was a prophet and could tell them about things that might happen to them, and how they might resist and overcome them. Faithful agreed with Christian’s request. So Evangelist began:

Evan. “My sons, you have heard the words of the truth of the gospel that you must ‘through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ In addition, you know that in every city chains and afflictions wait for you. Therefore, you cannot expect that you will go very far on your pilgrimage without them, in some form or another. You have already experienced the truth of these words, and more trials will immediately follow. As you can see, you are almost out of this wilderness. Before long you will come to a town that you will be able to see. In that town you will be faced with hardened enemies who will exert a lot of pressure on you and will ultimately kill you. You can be sure that one or both of you will seal your testimony of Jesus Christ with your blood. But be faithful even unto death, and the King will give you a crown of life. He who dies there, although his death will be unnatural and his pain might be great, will have it better than the one who does not die. Not only will he arrive at the Celestial City sooner, but he will also escape many hardships that the other will face during the rest of his journey. When you have come to the town and find that everything happens as I have said, then remember me and conduct yourselves like men; commit your souls to God who is your faithful Creator.”

Then I saw in my dream that when they had come out of the wilderness, they immediately saw a town in front of them. The name of the town is Vanity. This town has a Fair called Vanity Fair, which is held all year long. It bears the name Vanity Fair because the town where it is held is less than vanity. Also, all that is sold there or brought into the town is vanity. There is a saying of the wise: ‘Everything is meaningless.’

a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (I Cor. 9:24-27).

3 “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (Rev. 3:11).

4 “Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing” (Is. 40:17).

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless” (Eccl. 1:2).

“Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun…So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (Eccl. 2:11,17).
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This Fair is not a newly formed business; it has been around for a long, long time. I will show you how it started.

Almost five thousand years ago, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, just as these two honest persons are. Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their companions, knew that the path the pilgrims took to the City went right through this town of Vanity. So they decided to set up a Fair where all sorts of vanity could be sold all year long. The Fair offered all kinds of merchandise including houses, lands, trades, places, honors, promotions, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts such as prostitutes, pimps, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and other things.

At any time one may see jugglers, cheats, games, plays, fools, mimes, scoundrels, and beggars of every kind imaginable.

For no cost, anyone can see thefts, murders, adulteries, and false witnesses.

As in other fairs of less importance, there are many rows and streets, with their appropriate names, where various wares are sold. So likewise here, you have places, rows, and streets (that is to say, countries and kingdoms) where the merchandise is easily found. There is the Britain Row; the French Row; the Italian Row; the Spanish Row; the German Row - where several kinds of vanities are sold. But as in other fairs, there is one main commodity that is marketed. Rome and all of her merchandise is greatly promoted in this Fair. Only our English nation, with a few others, has objected to this.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies right through this town where this lustful Fair is held. The person who intends to go to the City and does not go through this town must actually go out of the world. The Prince of princes himself, when he was on earth, went through this town to his own country, and it was on a day when the Fair was held. I think it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this Fair, who invited him to buy his vanities. He offered to make him the lord of the Fair, if he would only worship him as he went through the town. Because he was such a person of honor, Beelzebub took him from street to street and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a very brief time. He attempted to allure the Blessed One to bid on and buy some of his vanities. But he had no desire for the merchandise and left the town without spending even a penny on these vanities. This Fair, therefore, has been going on for a long time and is an extremely large Fair.

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5 “I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world” (1 Cor. 5:9-10).

6 “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor” (Mt. 4:8).

“The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours’” (Lk. 4:5-7).
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Now these pilgrims, as I said, had to go through this Fair. And so they did. However, as they entered into the Fair, all the people there were stirred up. The whole town was in an uproar over them for several reasons. First, the pilgrims were dressed in clothes that were very different from the clothes that were sold in the Fair, so the people of the Fair stared at them. Some called them fools; some said they were troublemakers; others said they were foreigners.

Secondly, they not only thought their clothes strange, but also their speech. Very few people could understand what they said. They spoke the language of Canaan fluently. But those who managed the Fair were men of this world. So from one end of the Fair to the other, they viewed one another as foreigners.

Thirdly, it greatly amused the merchandisers that these pilgrims passed by all their wares. They did not even care to look at them. If a vendor called out to them to buy something, they would put their fingers in their ears and cry out, ‘Do not look upon vanity.’ They would then look upwards, signifying that their trade and commerce was in heaven.

One mockingly took a chance as he looked at the way the men carried themselves and said to them, “What will you buy?” But they looked at him solemnly and said, “We buy the truth.” Because of those words, the people despised the men even more. Some mocked, some taunted, some shamed them, and some called upon others to strike them. Finally, pandemonium broke out in the Fair; everyone was stirred up to the point where order was lost and everything was in confusion. Word was brought to the great one of the Fair, who quickly came down and appointed some of his most trusted friends to examine these men, on account of whom the Fair was almost destroyed. These examiners asked them where they were from and where they were going. They also asked why they were wearing such unusual clothes.

The men told them that they were pilgrims and strangers in the world and that they were going to their own country, which was the heavenly Jerusalem. They told them they had not given any reason for the men of the town, nor the merchandisers, to mistreat them, and asked them to let them go on with their journey. They maintained that the only thing they had done was to state that they wanted to buy the truth when pressed to buy something. But the men appointed to examine the pilgrims did not believe them to be anything other than troublemakers who were mad, or else men who deliberately came to introduce confusion into the Fair. Therefore, they

7 “No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (I Cor. 2:7-8).

8 “Turn my eyes away from worthless things; renew my life according to your word” (Ps. 119:37).

“Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:19-20).

9 “Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding” (Prov. 23:23).

10 “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return” (Heb. 11:13-16).
took them and beat them and smeared them with dirt. Then they put them into a cage that they
might make a spectacle of them for all the people of the Fair to see. There they lay for some
time, and were made the objects of anyone’s sport, or malice, or revenge. The great one of the
Fair was still laughing at all that happened to them.

But the men, being patient and not returning evil for evil, gave blessings instead and spoke good
words for bad ones, and returned kindness for injuries that were done. Consequently, some men
in the Fair, who were more observant and less prejudiced than the rest, began to interfere and to
blame the more corrupt men for their continual abuses against them. Responding with much
anger, the ruthless men came at these men, too, accusing them of being as bad as the men in the
cage and telling them that they seemed like allies and should receive the same treatment. The
others replied that, by what they could see, the men were quiet and solemn and did not intend to
harm anyone. They said there were many who traded in the Fair who should have been put into
the cage - yes, and also the pillory (a device with holes for the head and hands, in which petty
offenders were formerly locked and exposed to public scorn) - than the men whom they had
mistreated. So after both sides had exchanged words (all the while Christian and Faithful
behaved themselves very wisely and soberly), they began to fight and injure one another.

Then these two poor men were brought before their examiners again and were charged with the
uproar that had taken place in the Fair. So they severely beat them, put chains on them, and led
them up and down the Fair as an example to others and to strike fear in them lest any of them
should speak up again on their behalf or join with them. But Christian and Faithful behaved with
even greater wisdom. They received the disgrace and shame that was given to them with
meekness and patience. As a result, several of the men in the Fair were won to their side, even
though it was a small number compared to the whole crowd. This put the other party into a
greater rage, so much so in fact, that they decided the two men had to die. Therefore, they
indicated that neither the cage nor chains would serve their purposes. The men needed to die for
the abuses they had done and for causing injury to the men of the Fair.

Then they were ordered back to the cage again until further action could be taken with them. So
they put them in again and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Here Christian and Faithful remembered what they had heard from their faithful friend,
Evangelist. They knew these sufferings would happen because he had already told them. They
also comforted each other, knowing that whoever would be called upon to suffer would be better
off. So each man secretly wished that he might have the privilege. But committing themselves to
the all-wise disposal of him who rules all things, they remained in their situation with
contentment until their sentence was carried out.

Then, having set a date and time, their accusers brought them forth to their trial in order to
condemn them. They were brought before their enemies and arraigned. The judge’s name was
Lord Hategood. Their indictment was one and the same in substance, though it varied in form.
The charges were as follows:

That they were enemies to, and disturbers of, their trade; that they had made commotions and
divisions in the town and had won other people over to their own dangerous opinions, in
contempt of the law of their prince.
Then Faithful answered that he had only resisted those who were against him who is higher than the highest. “And,” he said, “as for the disturbance, I did not make any, being a man of peace. The people who were won to us were won by seeing our truth and innocence, and they have only turned from that which is worse to that which is better. And as to the king you talk about, Beelzebub, the enemy of our Lord, I defy him and all his angels.”

Then a proclamation was made, that those who had anything to say for their lord against the prisoner should immediately appear to give their evidence. Three witnesses came forward: Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank (a flatterer). They were asked if they knew the prisoner at the bar and what they had to say for their lord the king against him.

**Envy.** “My lord, I have known this man a long time and will attest upon my oath before this honorable bench, that he is…”

**Lord Hategood, the Judge.** “Stop; give him his oath.” So they swore him in.

Then Envy said, “My lord, this man, irrespective of his name, is one of the vilest men in our country. He does not regard the prince nor the people, the law or custom. He does all he can to control all men with certain of his disloyal notions, which he calls the principles of faith and holiness. In particular, I, myself, heard him once affirm that Christianity and the customs of our town of Vanity were diametrically opposed to one another and could not be reconciled. By saying this, my lord, he immediately condemns, not only all of our praiseworthy actions, but also us when we do them.”

**Judge.** “Do you have any more to say?”

**Envy.** “My lord, I could say much more. I just do not want to consume the court’s time. After the other gentlemen have given their evidence, if there is anything lacking that would ensure the death penalty, I will enlarge my testimony against him.” So he was told to stand by.

Then they called Superstition and asked him to look at the prisoner. They also asked what he could say for their lord the king against him. Then they swore him in. He began:

**Superstition.** “My lord, I am not very well acquainted with this man. Neither do I desire to know him any better. However, this I know, that he is a troublesome person. I talked with him the other day in this town, and I heard him say that our religion was nothing and that by our religion there was no way to please God. You know, my lord, what must necessarily follow from his sayings: that we worship in vain, are still in our sins, and will finally be damned. This is what I have to say.”

Then Pickthank was sworn in and encouraged to say what he knew on behalf of their lord the king against the prisoner at the bar.

**Pickthank.** “My lord, and all of you gentlemen, I have known this fellow for a long time. I have heard him speak things that ought not to be spoken. He has violently complained against our noble Prince Beelzebub and has spoken with contempt about his honorable friends, whose names are the Lord Old-Man, the Lord Carnal-Delight, the Lord Luxurious, the Lord Desire-of-
Vainglory, my old Lord Lechery, Sir Having Greedy, and all the remaining nobility. He has said that if all men thought like him, none of these men would have a presence in this town. Besides, he has not been afraid to speak against you, my lord, who has now been appointed to be his judge, with many other vilifying terms with which he has stained most of the noble people of our town.”

When Pickthank had told his tale, the judge directed his speech to the prisoner at the bar saying, “You drifter, heretic, and traitor! Have you heard what these honest gentlemen have witnessed against you?”

**Faith.** “May I speak a few words in my own defense?”

**Judge.** “You fool, fool! You do not deserve to live any longer. You deserve to be slain immediately - right here. Yet, so that all people can see our gentleness towards you, let us hear what you have to say.”

**Faith.** “In response to what Mr. Envy has said, I never said anything but this: that the rules, laws, customs, or people that are against the Word of God are diametrically opposed to Christianity. If I have said something wrong in this, convince me of my error. I am ready to make my retraction right here before you.

“As to the second person who spoke, namely, Mr. Superstition, and his charge against me, I only said this: that in the worship of God there is required a divine faith. But there can be no divine faith without a divine revelation of the will of God. Therefore, whatever is done in the worship of God that is not in agreement with divine revelation is only done by human faith. That faith will not give anyone eternal life.

“As to what Mr. Pickthank said, I say - avoiding terms that I supposedly said like I ‘violently complain’ and words like these - that the prince of this town, with all his riffraff, his attendants who are named by him, are more fit for hell than for being in this town and country. And so the Lord have mercy upon me!”

Then the judge spoke to the jury (who all this while stood by to hear and to observe). “Gentlemen of the jury, you see this man about whom such a great uproar has been made in this town. You have also heard what these worthy gentlemen have witnessed against him. Also you have heard his reply and confession. It now lies in your power to hang him or to save his life. Yet, I think it is necessary to instruct you as to our law.

“Legislation was enacted in the days of Pharaoh the Great, servant to our prince, that the males of a different religion should be thrown into the river to prevent these people from multiplying and growing too strong for him.\(^{11}\) There was also a law passed in the days of Nebuchadnezzar the Great, another of his servants, that whoever would not fall down and worship his golden image should be thrown into a fiery furnace.\(^{12}\) In the days of Darius, a law was enforced that

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\(^{11}\) Exodus 1.

\(^{12}\) Daniel 3.
whoever, for a period of time, called upon any god but his would be thrown into the lions’ den.\(^\text{13}\)

Now this rebel has broken the substance of these laws, not only in thought (which cannot be known), but also in word and deed. This is intolerable.

“Pharaoh’s law was made from a supposition in order to prevent problems in the future; no crime had yet been committed. But here is a crime apparent. In his second and third arguments, he disagrees with our religion. Because he has confessed his treason, he deserves to die.”

Then the jury went out. Their names were, Mr. Blind-Man, Mr. No-Good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-Lust, Mr. Live-Loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-Mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-Light, and Mr. Implacable. Every one of them gave his private verdict against Faithful. Afterwards, they unanimously agreed to bring the judge a ‘guilty’ verdict. Mr. Blind-Man, the foreman, said, “I see clearly that this man is a heretic.” Then Mr. No-Good said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth!” “Yes,” said Mr. Malice, “for I hate the very looks of him.” Then Mr. Love-Lust said, “I could never put up with him.” “Nor I,” said Mr. Live-Loose, “because he would always be condemning my way.” “Hang him, hang him!” said Mr. Heady. “A sorry low-life,” said Mr. High-Mind. “My heart rises against him,” said Mr. Enmity. “He is a scoundrel,” said Mr. Liar. “Hanging is too good for him,” said Mr. Cruelty. “Let us get rid of him,” said Mr. Hate-Light. Then Mr. Implacable said, “Even if I had all of the world given to me, I could not be reconciled to him. Therefore, let us immediately pronounce him guilty of death.” And so they did. He was immediately condemned to be taken from the place where he was to the place from whence he had come. There he would be put to the most cruel death that could be invented.

They, therefore, brought him out to do with him according to their law. First, they scourged him. Then they beat him and lanced his flesh with knives. After that they stoned him with stones and pricked him with their swords. Last of all, they burned him to ashes at the stake. This is the way Faithful came to his end.

Now I saw that there stood behind the crowd a chariot and a couple of horses waiting for Faithful, who (as soon as his enemies had killed him) was taken up into it and immediately carried up through the clouds, with the sound of a trumpet, the fastest way to the Celestial Gate. As for Christian, he had some rest and was sent back to prison. He remained there for some time. But he who overrules all things, having the power of their rage in his own hand, made a way for Christian to escape, and he went on his way. And as he went, he sang, saying:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Well, Faithful, thou hast faithfully professed} \\
\text{Unto thy Lord; with Him thou shalt be blest,} \\
\text{When faithless ones, with all their vain delights,} \\
\text{Are crying out under their hellish plights,} \\
\text{Sing, Faithful, sing, and let thy name survive;} \\
\text{For though they kill’d thee, thou art yet alive.}
\end{align*}
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\(^{13}\) Daniel 6.
The Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan first published The Pilgrim’s Progress in London after it was licensed on February 18, 1678. This edition was revised from the original in 1993 by John L. Musselman.

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