Chapter Sixteen

The Delectable Mountains

They traveled on until they came to the Delectable Mountains, which belonged to the Lord of that Hill about which we have spoken before. They went up to the mountains to admire the gardens and orchards, the vineyards and fountains of water. They also drank, bathed, and ate from the vineyards. Now shepherds were feeding their flocks on the tops of these mountains. They were standing by the roadside. The pilgrims, therefore, went over to them and, leaning on their staffs (as is common with weary pilgrims when they stand to talk with those who are by the wayside), they asked, “Whose delectable mountains are these? And, to whom do these sheep belong?”

Shepherds. “These mountains are Immanuel’s Land, and they are within sight of his City. The sheep are also his; he laid down his life for them.”

Chr. “Is this the way to the Celestial City?”

Shepherds. “You are on the right path.”

Chr. “How far is it?”

Shepherds. “Too far for any except those who will actually get there.”

Chr. “Is the way safe or dangerous?”

Shepherds. “Safe for those for whom it is to be safe; but transgressors will fall.”

Chr. “Is there any relief here for pilgrims who are weary and weak?”

Shepherds. “The Lord of these mountains has charged us to not forget to entertain strangers. There are good things right in front of you.”

---

1 The Hill Difficulty (see Chapter Seven).

2 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

3 “Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them” (Hos. 14:9).

4 “Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb. 13:1-2).
I also saw in my dream that when the shepherds perceived that the pilgrims were traveling by foot, they asked them questions (which they answered as they had done in other places): “Where did you come from?” and “How did you get on this path?” and “How have you persevered on this path? For only a few of those who begin to come here make it to these mountains.” When the shepherds heard their answers, they were pleased and, with much love in their hearts, looked at them and said, “Welcome to the Delectable Mountains!”

The shepherds, whose names were Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere, took them by the hand, brought them to their tents, and offered them the food that was already prepared. They said, moreover, “We would like to ask you to stay here for a while so you can get to know us better. Even more, we want you to find comfort in the good that comes from these Delectable Mountains.” Then the pilgrims told the shepherds that they would stay. And so they went to bed because it was very late.

Then I saw in my dream that in the morning the shepherds asked Christian and Hopeful to go for a walk on the mountains. So they went with them and walked for a while, having a beautiful panoramic view of the whole area. Then the shepherds said to each other, “Shall we show these pilgrims some wonders?” After they had decided to do so, they took them first to the top of the hill named Error, which was very steep on the far side. They urged them to look down to the very bottom. So Christian and Hopeful looked down and saw several men who had fallen from the top and had been dashed to pieces. Christian asked, “What does this mean?” The shepherds replied, “Have you not heard about those who fell into error by listening to Hymenaeus and Philetus and their views on the resurrection of the body?”5 They replied, “Yes.” Then the shepherds said, “Those you see dashed to pieces at the bottom of this mountain are those who listened to them. They have not been buried to this day (as you can see), so they can be an example to others who would climb too high or come too near the edge of this mountain.”

Then I saw that they took them to the top of another mountain named Caution and asked them to look at a scene in the distance. When they did, they noticed several men walking up and down among the graves that were there. They perceived that the men were blind, because sometimes they stumbled on the graves and could not escape. Again Christian asked, “What does this mean?”

Then the shepherds answered, “Didn’t you see just a little below these mountains the stile which led into a meadow on the left hand side? They answered, “Yes.” From that stile there is a path that leads directly to Doubting Castle, which is kept by Giant Despair. These men (pointing to those among the graves) once came on a pilgrimage as you are doing now. They came to the same stile. And because the right way was rough in that place, they chose the easier path which was over the stile and into the meadow. They were captured by Giant Despair and thrown into Doubting Castle. After they had been kept in the dungeon for a while, he put out their eyes and led them to the graves where he has left them to wander to this very day. The saying of the wise man is fulfilled: “A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company

5 “Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some” (II Tim. 2:17-18).
of the dead.” Then Christian and Hopeful looked at one another and began to weep. Yet they said nothing to the shepherds.

Then I saw in my dream that the shepherds led them to another place at the bottom of a hill where there was a door in its side. They opened the door and told Christian and Hopeful to look inside. Looking in, they saw that it was very dark and smoky. They thought they heard a rumbling noise like a fire and tormented cries, and also smelled the scent of brimstone. Then Christian said, “What does this mean?” The shepherds answered, “This is a path to hell, a path that hypocrites like Esau take. He sold his birthright; Judas sold his Master; Alexander blasphemed the gospel; and Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, lied and disguised the truth.”

Hope. “I sense that each one of these wanted to go on a pilgrimage as we have. Is that true?”

Shep. “Yes, and they were on their journey a long time, too.”

Hope. “How far could they have gone on their pilgrimage in their day, even though they were ultimately cast away?”

Shep. “Some could have gone farther, and some not as far as these mountains.” Then the pilgrims said to one another, “We had better look to the Strong for strength.”

Shep. “Yes, and you will need to use it when you have it, too.”

By this time, the pilgrims decided to continue on their journey, and the shepherds agreed. So they walked together towards the end of the mountains. Then the shepherds said to one another, “Let us show the pilgrims the gates of the Celestial City by having them look through our spy-glass.” The pilgrims gratefully accepted their invitation, so the shepherds led them to the top of a high hill named Clear and gave them the spy-glass. They tried to look through it, but they remembered the last thing the shepherds had shown them. It made their hands shake. Because of this, they could not hold the spy-glass steady. Still, they thought they saw something like the gate and also some of the glory of the place. Then they went on their way and sang this song:

Thus by the shepherds, secrets are revealed,
Which from all other men are kept concealed:
Come to the shepherds then, if you would see
Things deep, things hid, and that mysterious be.

When they were about to leave, one of the shepherds gave them a map to show them the right way to go. Another encouraged them to beware of the Flatterer. The third warned them not to sleep on the Enchanted Ground. And the fourth wished them God’s blessing. So I awoke from my dream.
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.

For further information, please contact:

The Jackson Institute  
P.O. Box 500071  
Atlanta, Georgia 31150-0071  
Tel: 770-518-7994  
jacksoninstitute@mindspring.com  
www.tji.org