Chapter Seventeen

Ignorance and Little-Faith

I slept and dreamed again. I saw the same two pilgrims going down the mountains along the highway towards the City. Now a little below these mountains, on the left side, lay the country of Conceit. From this country came a crooked lane which merged into the way on which the pilgrims walked. Here they met a very energetic young man who had come out of that country. His name was Ignorance. Christian asked him from what part of the country he had come and where he was going.

Ignorance. “Sir, I was born in the country over there, on the left side of this path. I am going to the Celestial City.”

Chr. “How do you think you will get in at the gate? For you may find some difficulty there.”

Ign. “As other good people do.”

Chr. “But what do you have to show at the gate that will ensure it will be opened to you?”

Ign. “I know my Lord’s will and have lived a good life. I repay every man I owe. I pray, fast, tithe, and give other offerings. I have left my country for the place I am going.”

Chr. “But you did not come in at the Wicket-gate, the entrance to this path. You came in at the crooked lane. Therefore I fear, no matter what you think of yourself, that when the day of reckoning comes, you will be charged as a thief and a robber and will not gain admittance into the City.”

Ign. “Gentlemen. You are total strangers. I do not know you. You follow the religion of your country; I will follow mine. I hope it will work out for all of us. As for the gate you speak of, the whole world knows that it is a long way from our country. I cannot think of any man from our country who knows the way to it. Nor does it matter whether they do or not. As you can see, we have a fine, pleasant, green lane that comes down from our country and merges with this path.”

When Christian saw that the man was wise in his own eyes, he whispered to Hopeful, “There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

In addition, he said, “Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.”

“Shall we talk further with him? Or, should we go ahead of him and leave him to think about what he has heard already and then stop later on to see if we can gradually help him?”

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1 “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 26:12).

2 Eccl. 10:3.
Then Hopeful said,

Let Ignorance a little while now muse  
On what is said, and let him not refuse
Good counsel to embrace, lest he remain  
Still ignorant of what’s the chiefest gain.
God saith, Those that no understanding have,  
(Although he made them) them he will not save.

Hope. “I do not think it is good to say everything to him at once. If it is agreeable with you, let’s go ahead of him and talk to him later - if he is able to handle it.”

So they both continued on, and Ignorance followed after them. When they were a short distance past him, they entered a very dark path. There, they met a man whom seven devils had bound with seven strong cords. He was being carried to a door in the side of the hill. Good Christian began to shake and so did Hopeful, his companion. Yet as the devils led the man away, Christian looked to see if he knew him. He thought it might be Turn-away who lived in the town of Apostasy. But he did not get a good look at his face, because his head was hanging in shame like a thief who had been caught. As he went by, however, Hopeful looked at him and spotted a sign on his back with this inscription, “Perverse professor and damnable apostate.”

Then Christian said to his friend, “Now I remember what I was told about something that happened to a man in this vicinity. The name of the man was Little-faith. He was a good man and lived in the town of Sincere. This is what happened: at the beginning of this path there is a lane that comes from Broadway-gate called Deadman’s Lane. It is called this because of the murders that happen there so frequently. Little-faith was going on his pilgrimage as we are and happened to sit down there and fall asleep. At that time, three rugged scoundrels came down the lane from Broadway-gate. Their names were Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt. Seeing Little-faith, these three brothers hurriedly went over to him. Now this good man had just awakened from his sleep and was getting up to go on his journey. So the men came over to him and, with abusive language, made him stand up. At this, Little-faith looked as white as a sheet and did not have the strength to fight or to run. Then Faint-heart said, ‘Give us your wallet!’ But Little-faith was in no hurry to part with his money, so Mistrust ran up to him, put his hands in his pocket, and pulled out a bag of silver. Then Little-faith cried out, ‘Thieves! Thieves!’ With that, Guilt struck Little-faith on the head with a large club and knocked him to the ground. There he lay bleeding to death, while the thieves just stood by watching. Suddenly, they heard someone coming down the road. They were afraid it might be Great-grace who lives in the city of Good-confidence. So they ran away and left this good man to manage for himself. After a while, Little-faith came to and, getting up, managed to struggle on his way. This was the story.”

Hope. “Did they take all he had?”

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3 “Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation” (Mt. 12:45).

“The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast” (Prov. 5:22).
Chr. “No. They were not able to find his jewels, so he was able to keep those. But, as I was told, the good man was in so much pain over his loss because the thieves got most of his spending money. As I said, they did not get his jewels. He also had a little change left but not enough to take him to the end of the journey.4 No, if I was not misinformed, he was forced to beg as he went along in order to stay alive (he did not sell his jewels). So he begged and did what he could but continued on ‘with many a hungry belly’ for most of the rest of his journey."

Hope. “Does it surprise you that they did not take his certificate by which he was to gain admittance at the Celestial Gate?”

Chr. “It is surprising that they did not get that, although they did not miss it because Little-faith was so clever. He was so dismayed over their attack that he did not have the power or the skill to hide anything. So it was more by good providence than by his efforts that they missed it.5

Hope. “It must be comforting for him that they did not get this jewel from him.”

Chr. “It could have been a great comfort to him had he used it as he should have. But those who told me the story said that he did not make much use of the jewel for the rest of the journey, because he was so disheartened over the loss of his money. For the most part, he forgot about it. When it did come to his mind, he had peace. Then he would once again have fresh thoughts about the loss of his money and would be overwhelmed with those thoughts.”

Hope. “Poor man! His heart must have been filled with grief.”

Chr. “Grief! Yes, grief indeed! Would it have not been the same for any of us if we had been robbed and wounded in a strange place like he was? It is surprising that he did not die of grief, poor man! I was told that he traveled almost the whole way with nothing but sad and bitter complaints. He would tell everyone whom he saw on the road where he was robbed, how it happened, who did it, what he lost, how he was wounded, and that he barely escaped with his life.”

Hope. “It is surprising that he did not have to sell or pawn his jewels in order to survive on his journey.”

Chr. “How could you say such a thing! For what would he pawn them? To whom could he sell them? In the whole country where he was robbed, his jewels had no value. And he did not want to obtain relief by selling them, either. Besides, if his jewels had been missing when he came to the gate of the Celestial City, he would have been excluded from an inheritance there. That would have been worse for him than being robbed by ten thousand thieves.”

4 “And, ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’” (I Pet. 4:18).

5 “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you - guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (II Tim. 1:14).

“If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment” (II Pet. 2:9).
Hope. “Why are you being so hard on me, my brother? Esau sold his birthright for some lentil stew. That birthright was his greatest jewel.\(^6\) If he did it, why shouldn’t Little-faith do it also?”

Chr. “Esau did sell his birthright; many others do the same. But they also exclude themselves from the chief blessing as that wretched man did. You must distinguish between Esau and Little-faith and between their situations. Esau’s birthright was symbolic; Little-faith’s jewels were not. Esau’s belly was his god; Little-faith’s belly was not. Esau’s desire was in his fleshly appetite; Little-faith’s was not. Besides, Esau could not see further than the fulfilling of his lusts: ‘Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’\(^7\) But Little-Faith, though he had only a little faith, was kept from being extravagant by his little faith and prized his jewels enough not to sell them, as Esau did his birthright. You do not read anywhere that Esau had faith; no, not so much as a little. Therefore, it is not surprising that where the flesh has its way (as it will in the man who does not have the faith to resist), he will sell his birthright, his soul, and all things to the devil of hell. For it is the same as it is with the ass, who in her heat cannot be restrained.\(^8\) When their minds are set on their lusts, they will obtain them, whatever they cost. But Little-faith had another disposition. His mind was on divine things. He focused on things that were spiritual and from above. Therefore, for what purpose should someone with this disposition sell his jewels (even if there had been anyone to buy them)? To fill his mind with empty things? Will a man give a penny to fill his stomach with hay? Or, can you persuade a bird to live on dead flesh, like the crow? Though faithless people can pawn, mortgage, or sell what they have (including their own lives) for carnal lusts, those who have faith, saving faith, cannot do so, even if the faith is small. Here, therefore, my brother, is your mistake.”

Hope. “I acknowledge it. But your severe words almost made me angry.”

Chr. “All I did was question your reasoning. But let’s forget that and consider the subject of our debate. Everything will be alright between you and me.”

Hope. “But Christian, I am persuaded that these three fellows are nothing but a bunch of cowards. Otherwise, do you think they would have run as they did when they heard someone coming down the road? Why didn’t Little-faith have more courage? I think he might have fought them off, at least until he saw it was impossible.”

Chr. “Many have said that the three brothers are cowards. But few have found that to be true when they have been attacked by them. As for courage, Little-faith had none. And I perceive, my brother, that had you been the man we are talking about, you would have fought but then given in. You may speak this way now that they are some distance from us. However, should they come upon you as they did him, you might have second thoughts.

\(^6\) “See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son” (Heb. 12:16).

\(^7\) Gen. 25:32.

\(^8\) “...a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving - in her heat who can restrain her?” (Jer. 2:24).
“Consider this once again - they are only thieves learning their trade. They serve under the king of the bottomless pit. If he needs to, he will come to their aid himself, and his voice is as the roaring of a lion.” I myself have been engaged in this sort of battle as Little-faith was, and I found it to be a terrible thing. These three villains came upon me. As a Christian, I began to resist when they called out - and in came their master. As the saying goes, ‘I would have given my life for a penny.’ But as God would have it, I was clothed with the armor. And though I had each piece of armor strapped on, I found it hard work to conduct myself like a man. No man can tell what combat is like unless he has been in the battle himself.”

**Hope.** “But they ran, you see, when they thought Great-grace was nearby.”

**Chr.** “True. They have often fled, both they and their master, when Great-grace appeared. This should not surprise us, for he is the King’s Champion. But I trust you will see the difference between Little-faith and the King’s Champion. All the King’s subjects are not his champions. Neither can they engage in war - like he can - when they are tried. Is it right to think that a little child could fight Goliath the way David did? Or, that a wren has the strength of an ox? Some are strong, some are weak. Some have great faith, some have little. This man was one of the weak. Therefore, he was not strong enough to do battle.”

**Hope.** “I wish it had been Great-grace for their sakes.”

**Chr.** “If it had been he, his hands might have been full. I must tell you that Great-grace is an expert with his weapons and has done (and can do) well in battle with them, as long as he keeps them at sword’s length. But if they get inside him - Faint-Heart, Mistrust, or the other - there will be a fierce battle, but they will win. When a man is down, you know, what can he do?

“Whoever looks carefully at Great-grace’s face will see scars and cuts there. Those easily demonstrate what I am saying. Once when he was in combat, I heard him say, ‘We despaired even of life.’ How did these tough rogues and their friends make David groan, moan, and cry out? Also, Heman and Hezekiah, who were champions in their day, yet were forced to move vigorously against their enemies when attacked. However, they were soundly beaten. Peter, at one time, tried what he could. But even though he is called by some the Prince of the Apostles, his enemies handled him in such a way that finally they made him afraid of a mere servant-girl.

“Besides, their King is at their command; he is never out of range of hearing. If at any time they find themselves in trouble, he comes in, when possible, to help them. And of him it is said, ‘The sword that reaches him has no effect, nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin. Iron he treats like straw and bronze like rotten wood. Arrows do not make him flee; slingstones are like chaff to him. A club seems to him but a piece of straw; he laughs at the rattling of the lance.’ What can a man do in this case? It is true, if a man could have Job’s horse at every turn and had the skill and courage to ride him, he might do notable things: ‘Do you give the horse his strength or

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9 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

10 Job 41:26-29.
clothe his neck with a flowing mane? Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword. The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, “Aha!” He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.\textsuperscript{11}

“So even though we are good foot soldiers, let us never desire to meet with an enemy, nor think we could do better when we hear of others who have been defeated. Nor are we to be proud of our own manhood, for some experience worse things when they are tried. Think of Peter, whom I mentioned before. He would boast; yes, he would. His vain mind prompted him to say that he would do better and take a stronger stand for his Master, more so than other men. But who was it who was more thwarted and run down by these villains than he?

“When, therefore, we hear that such robberies are done on the King’s highway, there are two things we must do: first, to go out with our armor strapped on and to be sure to take a shield with us. Even though a foot soldier may attack Leviathan vigorously, if he lacked a shield he would not be able to defeat the enormous beast. If we do not have a shield, he does not fear us at all. Therefore, the wise apostle, Paul, said, ‘In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.’\textsuperscript{12}

“Secondly, it is good for us to desire an escort from the King. Better still, that he will go with us himself. This made David rejoice when he was in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. And Moses would have rather died where he stood than to go one step without his God.\textsuperscript{13} Oh, my brother, if he will go along with us, why do we need to be afraid of the tens of thousands who set themselves against us? But without him, the proud helpers fall under the slain.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Job 39:19-25. 
\textsuperscript{12} Ephesians 6:16. 
\textsuperscript{13} “Then Moses said to him, ‘If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here’” (Exodus 33:15).
\textsuperscript{14} “I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw; you have broken the teeth of the wicked. From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people” (Psalm 3:5-8).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident” (Psalm 27:1-3).

“Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised” (Isaiah 10:4).
“For my part, I have been in the battle before. And though I am, by his goodness, alive, yet I cannot boast of anything I have done. I will be glad if I meet with no more blows. However, I fear we are not beyond all danger. Since the lion and the bear have not devoured me yet, I hope God will also deliver us from the next uncircumcised Philistine.”

Then Christian sang:

_Poor Little-faith! Hast been among the thieves!  
Wast robb’d? Remember this, whoso believes  
And gets more faith, shall then a victor be  
Over ten thousand, else scarce over three._