The Pilgrim’s Progress

The Life of John Bunyan, Part 3
January, 1661

After the mittimus, Bunyan was taken to the Bedford County Jail by the jailer. He gave a parting look at the judge and said, “I am at a point with you; for if I were out of prison today, I would preach the gospel again tomorrow, by the help of God.”
Poetical Reply to a Friend

For though men keep my outward man
   Within their bolts and bars,
Yet, by the faith of Christ, I can
   Mount higher than the stars.

Here dwells good conscience, also peace,
   Here be my garments white;
Here, though in bonds, I have release
   From guilt, which else would bite.
The Truth and I, were both here cast
Together, and we do
Lie arm in arm, and so hold fast
Each other: this is true.
IN JAIL: 1660-1672
Description of Bedford’s Jail

• There were iron-gated windows on the side of the prison facing Gaol Lane.

• The jail consisted mainly of a ground floor and first floor.

• The ground floor was for felons and had two day rooms and sleeping quarters.

• There were also two underground dungeons, one in total darkness, 11 steps down.
Description of Bedford’s Jail

• The first floor, which was for debtors, consisted of four sleeping rooms and one common day room, which was also used for a chapel.

• All the rooms were 8½ feet high.

• There was also a small courtyard which was common to all the prisoners.
The county jail, in which Bunyan spent twelve years of his life, was taken down in 1801. Formerly known as Gaol Lane, it is now Silver Street again. The jail door is preserved in the vestibule (lobby) of Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, as a relic of his imprisonment.
Bunyan’s “library” in prison consisted of two books: a Bible and Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. The first English edition of Foxe’s book (published in Latin in 1554) was printed in 1563 and was about 1,800 pages long. All three of these volumes have John Bunyan’s name at the foot of each of the title pages and are located in the J.P. Morgan Museum in NYC.
“Bunyan himself never whines over his sufferings; he was too manly for that. He deliberately made his choice, and as deliberately he accepted the consequences of his choice. He gave utterance to no bitter or foolish repinings (complaints) on his own behalf; nor would he have wished anyone else to do this for him. At the same time we cannot forget that twelve years’ imprisonment more or less rigorous was
inflicted on a man of two-and-thirty with the fullness of life and love of action which that age brings; that with strong affection for wife and children, especially for his poor blind child, he was prevented from earning for them that which they needed; that from the very beginning he felt, as he says, like a man who at the bidding of conscience was pulling down his house upon the heads of those he loved best; and we remember
also that a personal friend of his tells us, ‘When he came abroad,’ again after his imprisonment, ‘he found his temporal affairs were gone to wreck, and he had as to them to begin again as if he had newly come into the world.’”
Activities in Jail

• Bunyan made many hundred gross of long Tagg’d Laces to provide for him and his family.
• He counseled those who were permitted to bring their problems to him in prison.
• He preached to the considerable congregation who were in prison with him, some of whom were from his own congregation.
Books Written in Prison

- Profitable Meditations, 1661
- Praying in the Spirit, 1663
- Christian Behaviour, 1663
- Serious Meditations on the Four Last Things, between 1663 & 1665
- Ebal and Gerizim (between 1663 & 1665)
- The Holy City, 1665
Books Written in Prison

- *The Resurrection of the Dead*, 1665
- *Prison Meditations: Dedicated to the Heart of Suffering Saints and Reigning Sinners*, 1665
- *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 1666
- *Confession of Faith*, 1672
- *A Defense of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, 1672
Post-Prison

• Pastor John Whiteman died in 1672 and Bunyan was elected pastor of the Bedford Church.
• During Bunyan’s three years of liberty, he exercised pastoral duties while occasionally working as a tinker.
• Bunyan was licensed as a teacher under Charles II’s “Declaration of Indulgence.”
• St. John’s Church, which had been without property for twelve years (meeting in homes, in fields, in the woods, etc.) purchased an orchard in Mill Lane on which there was a barn; the barn was licensed as their place of meeting.

• For the next 16 years of his life, this barn became the center of Bunyan’s activity.
Post-Prison

• Bunyan was imprisoned for six months in the Bedford jail, the latter half of 1675 and the early part of 1676.
• He wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress* when he was 47 years old.
• Between 1687 and 1688, Bunyan preached to large crowds (up to 3,000) in London (on or near the site of the Globe Theatre).
Post-Prison

• In London, he was asked to leave Bedford for London with the appeal of more money and greater influence. He refused with these words: “I dwell among mine own people.”

• In August, 1688, Bunyan set out on horseback for Reading to preach and to reconcile a father with his son (the mission was successful).
Sickness and Death

• Proceeding to London, a journey of some 40 miles, he encountered driving rain.
• On August 21, 1688, after preaching on Sunday, Bunyan had an extremely high temperature and was sweating profusely.
• On Friday, August 31, 1688, Bunyan died at the home of his London friend, John Strudwick and was buried in Bunhill Fields on Sept. 3.
Bunyan’s Tomb
Inscription on Bunyan’s Tomb

JOHN BUNYAN,
AUTHOR OF THE
PILGRIMS PROGRESS
OBST 31ST AUGT 1688,
ÆT. 60.
Relief on Bunyan’s Tomb
Relief on Bunyan’s Tomb
THREE APPLICATIONS
One: Surrender to God’s Will

“I begged of God that if I might do more good by being at liberty than in prison, that then I might be set at liberty; but if not, His will be done; for I was not altogether without hopes but that my imprisonment might be an awakening to the saints in the country, therefore I could not tell well which to choose; only I, in that manner, did commit the thing to God.”
• “Let the rage and malice of men be never so great, they can do no more, nor go any further, than God permits them; but when they have done their worst, We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.”
"I bless the Lord that my heart is at that point, that if any man can lay any thing to my charge, either in doctrine or in practice, in this particular, that can be proved error or heresy, I am willing to disown it, even in the very market-place; but if it be truth, then to stand to it to the last drop of my blood."
“In this his pilgrimage, God blessed him with four children, one of which, named Mary, was blind, and died some years before; his other children were Thomas, Joseph, and Sarah; his wife Elizabeth having lived to see him overcome his labour and sorrow, and pass from this life to receive the reward of his work, long survived him not; but in 1692 she died to follow her faithful pilgrim from this world to the other,
whither he was gone before her; whilst his works, which consist of sixty books, remain for the edifying of the reader, and praise of the author.”