The Pilgrim’s Progress

Chapter 1: Christian Begins His Journey, Part 1
“The book begins with a wilderness and ends with the crossing of a river. This parallels the history of the nation of Israel. The Israelites wandered as pilgrims in the wilderness for forty years, then crossed the Jordan River to enter the promised land. The Puritans looked upon the church as God’s Israel and this world as spiritual wilderness” (Warren Wiersbe).
“As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I arrived at a certain place where there was a jail.”
“THE WILDERNESS OF THIS WORLD”
How is living life on earth like living in a wilderness?
Bunyan’s Wilderness

• Bunyan does not mean a literal wilderness – a wild and uncultivated land – but uses the figurative meaning of the word.

• The OED defines this wilderness as “a region of a wild or desolate character, or in which one wanders or loses one’s way; in religious use, [it is] applied to the present world or life as contrasted with heaven or the future life.”
Bunyan’s Wilderness

• Bunyan is affirming that he is making his way through this present world, with all the accompanying temptations, trials, difficulties, and challenges, while looking forward to his eternal reward in heaven.

• “By faith Moses...considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward” (Heb. 11:24,26).
Bunyan’s use of *wilderness* reminds us of the Israelites who were redeemed by God from their bondage in Egypt, but continually rebelled against Him until He finally pronounced judgment upon them.

“Your children will be shepherds here (in the desert) for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies
lies in the desert. For forty years – one year for each of the forty days you explored the land – you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die.”
The World: An Enemy of God

• “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age (world), according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal. 1:4).

• “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Rom. 12:2a).
The World: An Enemy of God

• “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (I John 2:15-16).
“When Paul says, ‘And stop allowing yourselves to be fashioned after the pattern of this (evil) age,’ he is warning the membership then and now against yielding to the various manifestations of worldliness by which they are being constantly surrounded; such as the use of dirty or offensive language, the singing of scurrilous songs, the reading of filthy books, the wearing of tempting attire, engaging in questionable
pastimes, associating, on intimate terms, with worldly companions, etc. There is hardly any end to the list.”
“Anyone who does not see the vanity of the world is very vain himself.”

- *Pensées*, 36
C.S. Lewis

“Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.”
Most Remarkable!

What follows Bunyan’s opening sentence is the most remarkable exposition of a Christian’s journey through this earthly life that the world has ever seen.
CHRISTIAN'S PLIGHT
Bunyan chose the word *plight* to describe man’s condition and probably had in mind the notion that the troubled man also felt himself to be in grave peril and danger (i.e., the danger of eternal separation from God).
Bunyan’s Description of Christian

• A man who was **clothed with rags**;
• He was **standing** in a certain place;
• He was **looking away** from his house;
• He had a **book** in his hand;
• He had a **great burden** on his back;
• He was **weeping and shaking**;
• He broke down saying, “**What shall I do?**”
Illustration from Sproul’s *Tabletalk*
Woodcut (1867)
Christian Troubled
Illustration by J.D. Watson (1864)
Engraving on Wood & Steel (1861)
William Blake’s Watercolor

Christian reading in his book

William Blake
1757-1827
Paradise Lost

John Milton (1608-1674) presents an account of our first parents’ fall into sin and the Son of God presenting to his Father the prayers of Adam and Eve, who are now repenting. In the first line, he speaks of their *lowliest plight*, meaning they have just eaten of the forbidden fruit, have sinned against God, lost the perfection of Eden, and have been called to account for their actions.
Thus they in **lowliest plight** repentant stood
Praying, for from the mercy-seat above
Prevenient grace descending had removed
The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breathed
Unutterable, which the spirit of prayer
Inspired, and winged for heav’n with speedier flight
Than loudest oratory.
What is Sin?

“Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.”

- Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 24
Consequences of Sin

• Hereditary corruption (Federal headship)
• Depravity of our nature extending to all parts of our souls (volitional, emotional, intellectual, spiritual) and bodies.
• Broken communion with God.
• Lost original righteousness.
• Death.
Consequences of Sin

• A schism is introduced into our souls ("conscience uttered its condemning voice" – A.A. Hodge).
• Guilt.
• Under the wrath of God and the curse of the Law.
• Spiritual, temporal, and eternal misery.
Consequences of Sin

“The spiritual miseries which sin brings upon the unforgiven in this life are set forth as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections.”

- A.A. Hodge
“Protestantism affirms that all sin is serious. Even the smallest sin is an act of rebellion against God. Every sin is an act of cosmic treason, a futile attempt to dethrone God in His sovereign authority.”

R.C. Sproul
1939-
When people come to make a public profession of faith, they must assent to the following declaration and promise, by which they enter into a solemn covenant with God and His Church:

- Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?