Christian and Hopeful, having engaged in a thorough and beneficial conversation about Little-faith, the scoundrels who robbed him (Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt), and Great-Grace, agreed that they would continue to walk on the King’s highway under two conditions: (1) they would make sure their armor was strapped on, and (2) they would always take the shield of faith with them.
They learned from Little-faith that they needed an escort from the King to protect them on their journey. Better yet, that the King would go with them Himself. And with that, the pilgrims traveled on while Ignorance followed.
Christian and Hopeful came to a fork in the road and were confused over which path to take. Both seemed equally straight. Therefore, they stood still and did not know what to do.
The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

Robert Frost
1874-1963
“Cheshire-Puss,” she began, rather timidly, as she did not at all know whether it would like the name: however, it only grinned a little wider.

“Come, it’s pleased so far,” thought Alice, and she went on. “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.
“I don’t much care where _____” said Alice. “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat. “_____ so long as I get somewhere,” Alice added as an explanation. “Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”
Forgetting The Important

• You may recall that before Christian and Hopeful left the Delectable Mountains, the shepherds gave them a map to “to show them the right way to go.”

• When they came to the fork in the road and “stood still,” they forgot to look at their map for directions. They subjected their decision to their own reason but did not carefully examine Scripture or pray for divine guidance.
Gradual Deviation

- In this situation, there was no stile to pass over, so it must denote some very plausible and gradual deviation from the simplicity of the gospel.
- “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:6).
The lookout station of the Titanic was without binoculars. For some reason, they had been removed before the ship left Southampton, so they couldn’t see far enough ahead to avert disaster.

- Don Lynch, *Titanic: An Illustrated History*
“Take one step at a time, every step under Divine warrant and direction. Ever plan for yourself in simple dependence on God. It is nothing less than self-idolatry to conceive that we can carry on even the ordinary matters of the day without his counsel. He loves to be consulted. Therefore take all your difficulties to be resolved by him. Be in the habit of going to him in the first place – before self-will, self-pleasing, self-wisdom, human friends, convenience, expediency. Before any of these have been consulted go to God at once. Consider
no circumstances too clear to need his direction. In all your ways, small as well as great; in all your concerns, personal or relative, temporal or eternal, let him be supreme. Let the will be kept in a quiet, subdued, cheerful readiness to move, stay, retreat, turn to the right hand or to the left, at the Lord’s bidding; always remembering that is best which is least our own doing, and that a pliable spirit ever secures the needful guidance.”
The Man In The Light Robe

• A man in a white robe came over to them and asked them where they were going.
• When they told him they were going to the Celestial City, he asked them to follow him, claiming to be going there himself.
• Gradually the road curved so much that they were actually going in the opposite direction.
• Before long, he led them into a net.
The white robe fell off his back, and Christian and Hopeful saw where they were. They were upset for quite a while because they could not free themselves. They had forgotten the shepherds’ counsel to “beware of the Flatterer.”
Flattery

• Why is the Flatterer such an important metaphor for us to consider as we make our way to the Celestial City?
• How can flattery lead us off God’s path and right into a net?
• What can we do to avoid the Flatterer and his net?
• The Hebrew word for *flattery* is from the root word which means “be smooth, slippery.”
What Is Flattery?

• To praise or compliment unduly or insincerely (verb).
• Insincere words of extraordinary praise that are used to deceive or seduce others into some devious path.
• The act of giving excessive compliments, generally for the purpose of ingratiating oneself with the subject.
• “Flattery is the worst and falsest way of showing our esteem” (Jonathan Swift).
• In 1659, J. Ray Corr said, “I would not be flattered, I am not so fond of my own conceits.”
Flattery In The O.T.

• “Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet” (Prov. 29:5).

• “My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords” (Ps. 55:20-21).

• “So you will be delivered from the forbidden (strange) woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words” (Prov. 2:16; cf. 6:24; 7:21).
Flattery In The O.T.

• “Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue” (Ps. 5:8-9).

• “Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue” (Prov. 28:23).

• “A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin” (Prov. 26:28).
• “Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak” (Ps. 12:1-2).

• “For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness – nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority” (I Thess. 2:5-6).
The Progression of Flattery

1. Over time, people learn to “smooth” their words and entice by using flattering speech.

2. The flatterer overcomes the resistance of another’s heart and mind, and routs him away from the right path.

3. If a person is caught in the web of the flatterer, he becomes entangled to his own ruin and destruction.
The Flatterer’s Net?

• The doctrine of man’s goodness?
• Minimizing the nature of man’s total corruption?
• A general gospel without specific application?
• The promises and privileges of the gospel without the accompanying trials and obligations?
• Venial (as opposed to mortal) offenses?
The Flatterer's Net?

• Justification by the works of the law?
• The sufficiency of reason in matters of religion?
• The goodness of the heart?
• “It would be a manifest impropriety to suppose these pilgrims hearkening” to these, “for experienced Christians cannot be thus imposed on” (Scott).
What Is Accessible To Flattery?

• Thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought.
• Spiritual pride.
• Accomplishments and success.
• Failing to be on the alert and watchful.
• Open to consult our own inclinations, ease, or interest instead of the will and glory of God.
• The feeling that we are entitled to distinction.
• Sensing we are exempted from the rules – we’re special.
What Is Accessible To Flattery?

• Believing we are too well acquainted with Satan’s devices to be deceived.
• Secretly believing that our opinion is the standard of right and wrong.
• Thinking we are more talented and gifted than others.
• Not being open to rebuke or correction.
• Insecurity.
What Is Accessible To Flattery?

• Omission of the spiritual discipline of reading and studying the Word of God.
• A weakened faith.
• A lack of prayer and dependence upon God.
• The fear of man rather than living before an audience of One.
“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds” (II Cor. 11:13-15).
“In the present state of religious profession, a more important caution, I apprehend, cannot be given by the united voice of all those ministers, whom the shepherds represent, than this, ‘Beware of the Flatterer’; of all teachers who address the self-preference of the human heart, and thus render men forgetful of ‘taking heed to their way according to the word of God.’ For if men overlook the precepts of Scripture, and
A Supreme Caution

forsake practical distinguishing preachers, to follow such as bolster up their hopes in some smoother way, they will either be fatally deceived, or drawn out of the path of truth and duty, taken in the net of error, and entangled among injurious connections, and with perplexing difficulties: at length indeed they will be undeceived in respect of these fine-spoken men, but not till they scarcely know what to do,
or what will become of them. For when the Lord plucks their feet out of the net, he will humble them in the dust for their sin and folly, and make them thankful to be delivered, though with severe rebukes and corrections.”

- Mason
“Follow me so I can put you back on the right path again.” Then he led them back to the way which they had left to follow the Flatterer. He asked them, “Where did you sleep last night?” They said, “With the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains.” Then he asked them, “Did they not give you
directions for your journey?” They answered, “Yes.” “But did you,” he said, “take your note and read it when you were standing there trying to decide which way to go?” They answered, “No.” He asked them why. They told him they forgot. He then asked, “Did the shepherds warn you to beware of the Flatterer?” They answered, “Yes; but we could have never imagined that this man who spoke so well was he.”
“Then I saw in my dream that he commanded them to lie down. Then he chastised them to teach them to walk only in the good way. As he chastised them, he said, ‘Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.’ Having done this, he invited them to go on their way and to pay attention to the other directions the shepherds had given them. So they thanked him for all his kindness and went peacefully along the right way.”
“Does God punish his children? He does send us trials and hardships designed to strengthen our faith in him. Adversities are aids to bring us into a closer fellowship with God. But God does not punish us. He punished the Son of God, especially on Calvary’s cross, where he poured out his wrath on Jesus by forsaking him. As sin-
bearer, Jesus bore God’s wrath for us, so that we who believe in him will never be forsaken by God. God does not punish us, because Jesus received our punishment. We are disciplined, not punished.”
“He that loves to be flattered is worthy of the flatterer.”