

**“The Pilgrims Progress”
I Have Gone Astray**

Introduction:

1. Tonight - As We Return To Our Journey:
 - Through The Pilgrim’s Progress:
 - At First - It Seems Like:
 - So Much Of The Challenges:
 - Christian & Hopeful Faced:
 - On The Pathway Out Of Vanity Fair:
 - Are In The Rear-View Mirror!
 - But - In Reality - As We Will Soon See:
 - Their Challenges Are Only Beginning - And:
 - Their Challenges Will Be:
 - Of Their Own Making & Choosing!
2. Which - Sadly:
 - For Us In Our Christian Lives:
 - Is All Too Often The Case!
 - Even As The Psalmist Himself Wrote:
 - In The Very Last Verse Of Psalm 119:
 - That Great Psalm About How God’s People Relate To God And His Word!
 - But - After Everything He Tells Us:
 - About The Law Of God:
 - In Psalm 119:176 - We Hear Him Say:
 - “I Have Gone Astray Like A Lost Sheep; Seek Thy Servant; For I Do Not Forget Thy Commandments!”
3. How Many Times In Scripture:
 - Are We Described In Terms:
 - Of Sheep!
 - And One Of The Things Sheep Are Known For:
 - Is Going Astray - And:
 - Disregarding The Instructions And Guidance:
 - Of The Shepherd!
 - **IE:** A Friend Of Mine Posted A Brief Video On Social Media Of Someone Trying To Tug & Pull Out A Sheep That Was Stuck In A Narrow Ditch - With The Caption - “Me: Lord, If You Get Me Out Of This Mess, I Promise I’ll Never Do It Again!” - But After Getting Rescued - The Happy Sheep Runs & Jumps Until It Bounds Right Back Into The Ditch - With The Caption - “Also Me!”
 - All Too Often:
 - Instead Of Our Testimony Being One Of:
 - Revival & Readiness & Renewal:
 - Like We Learned This Morning:
 - From Romans 13!
 - It Becomes The Testimony Of:
 - Psalm 119:176 - “I Have Gone Astray!”
4. And This Is What We Find Happening:
 - To Christian & Hopeful:
 - In Our Reading Tonight!
 - So - Lets Head Back To *Page 68, Paragraph 4:*
 - Where Bunyan Writes - “I Saw, Then, That They Went On Their Way To A Pleasant River; Which David The King Called ‘The River Of God,’ But John ‘The River Of The Water Of Life!’”
 - Read Through:
 - Page 70, Paragraph 8:
 - “Yet They Adventured To Go Back, But It Was So Dark, And The Flood Was So High, That In Their Going Back They Had Like To Have Been Drowned Nine Or Ten Times!”
5. Tonight:
 - We Are Going To See What Its Like:
 - When Christians - For One Reason Or Another:

- Go Astray:
 - From The Lord - The Good & Great “Shepherd Of The Sheep!”
- And First - We Need To Learn About:

1. *The Caution Of Going Astray!*

- That Is - We Need To Be Cautious As Christians:
 - All The Time We Are Sojourning:
 - As Pilgrims & Strangers In This World!
 - And This Includes Especially:
 - Those Times When We Experience The Refreshment Of The “River Of God” That Christian & Hopeful Did!
- The “River Of God” Was:
 - A Taste Of Heaven On Earth:
 - For Our Pilgrims!
 - Especially After The Spiritual Battle They Were Involved With:
 - As They “Earnestly Contended For Their Faith” With Mr. By-Ends And His Company!
 - The Spiritual Waters:
 - Were Cool & Refreshing!
 - The Spiritual Path:
 - Was Smooth & Pleasant:
 - And Went Right Along With The River!
 - And:
 - The Spiritual Meadow:
 - Was Green & Lush:
 - In Which They Were Able To:
 - Lie Down Safely & Get Some Much Needed Rest!
 - It Was A Lot Like:
 - The Arbor That Christian Enjoyed:
 - Half-Way Up:
 - The Hill Of Difficulty!
 - It Was Also Like:
 - The Palace Beautiful:
 - Where He Enjoyed Friendship & Fellowship & Became Fortified:
 - For The Journey To Follow!
 - William Mason - Who Wrote One Of The Earliest Commentaries On The Pilgrim’s Progress:
 - Describes This River Of God In This Way:
 - “By This River . . . We May Understand Clear And Comfortable Views Of God’s Everlasting Love And Electing Grace! They Could See In It God’s Glory Shining In The Face Of Jesus Christ! This Is The River, ‘The Streams Whereof Make Glad The City Of God!’ The Streams Which Flow From This River Of Electing Love, Are Vocation To Christ, Justification By Christ, Sanctification In Christ, Perseverance Through Christ, Glorification With Christ, And All Joy And Peace In Believing On Christ! All This These Pilgrims Now Enjoyed, And All This Every Fellow-Citizen Of The Saints Is Called To Enjoy In His Pilgrimage To Zion! God Hath Chosen Us In Christ, And Blessed Us With All Spiritual Blessings In Him! O, How Happy, Peaceful, And Joyful Are Pilgrims, When The Spirit Takes Of The Things Of Christ, Shows Them To Us, And Blesses Us With A Sense Of Interest In All The Love Of God, And Finished Salvation Of Jesus!”
 - And - You Probably Know Something:
 - Of The Peace & Joy:
 - Of This River Yourself:
 - If You’ve Been A Christian:
 - For Any Length Of Time!
 - But - We Must Remember That:
 - This Is Just A “Taste Of Heaven!”
 - And Not Yet The Very:
- Touch Of Heaven!
 - We See From John Bunyan’s Own Life:
 - That He Actually “Feared Such Times” As Pilgrim & Christian Were Enjoying:

- On Their Pilgrimage!
 - Why?
- Because - He Knew His Own Nature:
 - In "Such Times!"
 - Because - Instead Of Being Cautious:
 - They Can Lull Us Into A Sense Of Comfort & Complacency:
 - Until We Forget About Our Duties:
 - As We Bask In Our Delights!
- And - Without This Healthy Caution:
 - Even As We Walk Along:
 - The "River Of God" - It Will Not Be Hard:
 - To Return To Our Old, Sheeply Ways:
 - Isaiah 53:6 - "All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray; We Have Turned Every One To His Own Way!"
 - So - Maintain Caution:
 - Lest You Go Astray!
 - Because - What Happens Next:
 - To Our Pilgrims?
 - The River & The Pathway Part:
 - And The Path Itself:
 - Became Rough On Their Tender Feet!
 - And That Led Them To A Place:
 - Where We See:

2. ***The Compromise Of Going Astray!***

- Christian Especially:
 - Was Not Pleased With The Challenges Of The Pathway:
 - That Became Dry & Dusty & Difficult!
 - And He "Wished For Something Better!"
 - And So - He Became:
- Discouraged!
 - As One Write Described It:
 - Christian May Not Have Been Quarreling With God:
 - But He Was "Quarreling With The Way!"
 - But That Was The Way God Wanted Him To Take!
 - And So - That Discouragement:
 - Turned Into:
- Discontent!
 - In 2 Timothy 2:3 - Paul Tells Timothy To:
 - "Endure Hardness, As A Good Soldier Of Jesus Christ!"
 - But - Instead Of Enduring Hardness:
 - Christian Was Willing To Escape Hardness:
 - At Just About Any Cost!
 - And So - As They Saw:
 - Another Meadow:
 - Where The Grass Was Greener:
 - On The Other Side Of The Fence:
 - He Thought - There Must Be Another & An Easier Way!
 - But Once That Discontentment:
 - Settled In His Heart:
 - It Didn't Take Too Long For:
 - Deception:
 - To Get Their Attention!
 - Because - A Stile - Or - A Way Over Or Through The Fence:
 - Became Apparent!
 - Now - This Probably Wasn't The Only Way Across The Fence:
 - But - Once They Started Looking For One:
 - They Quickly Found It!
 - Isn't This Also The Case:

- With Temptations In Our Own Lives?
 - Its Not Like The Opportunities To Sin:
 - Disappear From Our Pathway!
 - The Devil Is Always Making Stiles So That He Might Deceive Us To Leave God's Path, So He Might Be Able To Devour Us!
- But - When You Start Looking For Opportunities:
 - To Escape The Hardships:
 - Of Following Christ:
 - Instead Of Enduring:
 - Those Hardships:
 - You Will Always Find A Stile Over The Fence!
- And That Will Lead To:
 - Compromise!
 - As George Cheever Once Wrote:
 - "I Wish For A Better Is Followed By I Will Have A Better; And So The Soul Goes Astray!"
- And This Compromise:
 - Often Brings Others With It:
 - Even As Christian Persuaded Hopeful:
 - To Go Along With Him!
- We Need To Beware Of:
 - Discouragement & Discontentment:
 - As We Follow God's Will!
 - Even Though, At Times, It Will Require Us To "Endure Hardness!"
 - To Try To Escape That Hardness:
 - Often Leads To Compromise!
 - And - Along With That Compromise:
 - We Can See Also See:

3. *The Cost Of Going Astray!*

- By-Path Meadow:
 - Was Not All That It Seemed To Be!
 - Because - It Soon Became A Place:
 - Of Darkness & Gloom:
 - As Well As Rain & Lightning & Thunder!
 - And It Got So Bad:
 - That Hopeful Even Wondered:
 - "Where Are We Now!"
 - When You Go Astray:
 - You Are Sure To Get Lost:
 - Even To The Point:
 - Where You May Not Even Know The Way Back!
 - Its Been Said That:
 - "A Man Who Will Go As Far As He May, Is Sure To Go Farther Then He Ought!"
 - So - We Must Not Go Astray:
 - In The First Place!
 - Because - There Will Always Be:
 - Some Great Costs:
 - To Our Compromise!
 - Even As It Was For Our Pilgrims!
 - It Almost Cost Them:
 - Their Friendship!
 - With Each Other!
 - But - Out Of The Spirit Of Grace:
 - Christian Sought Forgiveness:
 - And Then Received Forgiveness:
 - From Hopeful!
 - It Almost Cost Their Friendship!
 - But It Did Cost Them:

- Their Fellowship:
 - With The Lord:
 - For A Time!
 - Even Though The Voice Of Their Shepherd Came To Them:
 - In The Words Of Jeremiah 31:21:
 - “Set Thine Hart Toward The Highway!”
 - Yet - They Didn’t Quite Make It!
 - Instead - They Faced Even More Dangers:
 - On Their Way Back!
 - The Darkness Was Thick!
 - The Floods Were Rising!
 - And They “Had Like To Have Been Drowned Nine Or Ten Times!”
- In Other Words:
 - The Light & The Peace & The Joy:
 - Of The River Of God:
 - Was Missing!
 - Perhaps They Had Already Forgotten The Lesson:
 - Of Lot’s Wife!
 - Their Feet Were Pointed Back:
 - In The Direction Of The King’s Highway:
 - But Their Hearts:
 - Were Still Hoping For:
 - The Soft Grass Of By-Path Meadow!

Conclusion:

1. But What Was It:
 - That Led Christian Astray In The First Place?
 - What Caused Him:
 - To Throw Caution To The Wind?
 - What Caused Him:
 - To Compromise God’s Principles?
 - What Caused Him:
 - To Suffer The Great Costs:
 - Of Going Astray?
2. The Answer Is Summed Up:
 - In The Man They Met With:
 - In By-Path Meadow:
 - Mr. Vain-Confidence!
 - In Truth - It Was Christian’s Own:
 - Vain-Confidence:
 - That Led Him Astray!
 - I Like How John Kelman Puts It:
 - “Vain-Confidence Is Just Christian In His Recent Mood! Needing No Company, Asking For No Advice, Mistaking His Own Will For Wisdom, And Making It His Law, He Has No Need Of Them Or Any Others To Confirm Him In His Opinion!”
 - Isn’t This What We Are Also Told In:
 - Proverbs 14:12 - “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death!”
 - After All He Did & All He Said:
 - As A Strong Christian:
 - In Vanity Fair & To Hopeful & To Mr. By-Ends:
 - It Seems As If He Forgot:
 - That He Still Needed A Shepherd To Guide Him On His Path!
 - He Thought He Could Do Things By His Own Might & Wisdom & Strength!
 - But Instead - His Vain-Confidence:
 - Led Him Astray!
3. So - What Are We To Do?
 - And - How Can We Stay With The Lord:

- Instead Of Straying From The Lord?
 - Remember:
 - The Caution Of Going Astray!
 - The Compromise Of Going Astray! And:
 - The Cost Of Going Astray!
- And Then - Remember:
 - Proverbs 3:5-6 - “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. / In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths!”

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