**Community Baptist Church Ladies’ Book Study**

**Pilgrim’s Progress Chapter 18; October 11, 2016**

1. Review
2. At our last meeting we had the great privilege of being ministered to by Carolyn Staley, who not only has studied Pilgrim’s Progress for many years, but has personal experience with the subject covered, The Valley of the Shadow of Death.
3. She spoke to us of the nature of a season of sore trial that threatens to consume us. Yet it all is designed and governed according to the will of the One Who loves us and will not let us go.
4. She described the Valley experience as a refining one that necessarily burns off the dross of pride and vain confidence. “As we are reduced in rank and brought low—as our flesh is mortified and self is diminished—the beautiful character of our Lord shines forth more clearly in us.”
5. In this valley, faith comes under fire in the form of fear and unbelief. Unbelief sees only the difficulty, unable to see the good purpose of God in it. Nevertheless, Christian presses through armed with the Word of God to ward off these voices.
6. Christian treads carefully on a narrowing pathway seeking to avoid the deep dark chasm of “Error”. Any misstep could be his undoing.
7. The voice of temptation sends out its siren song when we feel weak and alone. How important it is in those times to hold dear the Word of God (to hear His Voice in the valley) and to stick close to His Church, which is His provision for our help.
8. We would avoid such valley experiences if we could, but God intends them for our spiritual growth. In those times, we realize our utter weakness and insufficiency and that through Him we are more than conquerors!
9. The Meeting of Two Sojourners
10. As Christian continues on his journey, he spots up ahead a fellow traveler and shouts for him to let him catch up. But Faithful replied in the negative for he was running for his life. This reply moved Christian to muster his strength and catch up with him. He, in fact, raced right past him, smiling with a sense of self-congratulation (oh-oh!). Not paying attention to his feet, he fell and could not get up until Faithful came to assist him.
11. At the *Palace Beautiful* we saw the value of corporate fellowship, that is, fellowship within the church. Here we will see the value of individual fellowship…one-to-one…and the spiritual intimacy and mutual encouragement that comes when we commune with another about the things of God.
12. Christian was proud of his progress. He temporarily forgets that our purpose is not to compete with other pilgrims, but that we make it to our desired goal: the *Celestial City*, the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. Our battle is against the *Avenger of Souls*, not with each other. We are to serve and help one another.
13. In this passage we see that while we journey to the same destination, each believer is a unique individual and the points of temptation are not the same. If we are to be of help to one another, we must not think of ourselves as more advanced than our brother if we are not running from the same temptation, but humbly acknowledge our own struggles, and meekly work to restore the one that has fallen, lest we also be tempted (Gal. 6:1)
14. Faithful is gentle and loving in his approach to his fallen comrade.
15. Humility and love are key in cultivating relationships in fellowship. Pride and an arrogant spirit will drive a wedge and prevent us from enjoying true communion.
16. As Charles Wesley wrote:

All praise to our redeeming Lord,

Who joins us by His grace,

And bids us, each to each restored,

Together seek His face.

He bids us build each other up;

And, gathered into one,

To our high calling’s glorious hope

We hand in hand go on.

1. Catching Up On City of Destruction News
2. Upon the providential crossing of paths, the two friends set off together. Think for a moment about the people God has brought into your life throughout your Christian pilgrimage and the role they have played in your sanctifying. They may have been in your life for just a part of the journey, but it was ordained by God for your help.
3. Christian begins to ask what happened after his departure from his home town.
4. After his departure, there was much talk about the possibility of coming destruction. Citizens of an earthly kingdom can know fear of coming judgment, but it is temporary and not enough to stir them to flee what their hearts love.
5. They spoke of Christian with ridicule and contempt. He was misunderstood and misjudged, as we will be. The dead cannot understand the living.
6. Concerning Pliable, the one who turned back at the first sign of trouble, he was disdained. Even the world has no respect for a quitter, nor does the quitter have self-respect, but in shame avoids the subject.
7. Faithful’s Encounter With Wanton
8. As they move along, Christian wants to hear of Faithful’s experiences heretofore. Unlike Christian, Faithful escapes the Slough of Despond, but was severely tried by the lewd woman, Madam Wanton.
9. She uses flattery and the promise of carnal pleasure as tools for her solicitation. By her many have suffered a mortally wounded conscience. Read Proverbs 7:21-23
10. Joseph stands as an example in his resistance of and fleeing from Potiphar’s wife…”how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? (Gen. 39:9)
11. Her speech seemed as sweet as honey, but in reality proves to be bitter as wormwood that leads to the pit of hell; a banquet in the grave. It is a high price to pay for momentary pleasure.
12. Wantonness or sexual temptation is a powerful weapon when directed at those who have a propensity for those things. Faithful was sorely tried and knew himself well enough to expect that he may have future battles with this temptress. He says, “I am still not sure if I have totally escaped her pleading.” He shuts his eyes and does not gaze on this strange woman, thus breaking the power of her seductive looks. “ I will set no wicked thing before my eyes.” Ps. 101:3
13. Faithful’s Meeting With Adam The First
14. Faithful then describes his meeting with one named “Adam the First”. He hailed from the Town of Deceit. As Faithful engages with him, Adam the First seeks to tempt him to reside there. If he does, he will be offered many delights including the hand of his three daughters, “The Lust of the Flesh”, “The Lust of the Eyes”, and “The Pride of Life”. All of this lasting as long as he himself lived.
15. Initially, Faithful began to be swayed by his fair speech. That is, until he saw the ominous message on his forehead: “Put off the old man with his deeds.”
16. Adam the First depicts the “old man” or the natural man, our flesh, which continues to give us trouble as long as we are in this life. The flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. The temptations to this flesh are strong.
17. Though under a different name and a broader tent, Adam the First is kin to Madam Wanton. Both have a strong appeal to the flesh, promising sensuality and freedom, but they deliver only slavery and bondage.
18. How we need the mirror of God’s Word to be able see things clearly. Many are the temptations without and the pull of the flesh within. We must daily crucify this flesh with its affections and lusts. As we identify with Christ and the Cross, our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Rom. 6:6)
19. Moses’ Merciless Assault
20. Faithful no soon escapes this last temptation than he is overtaken by one swift as the wind that strikes him and leaves him for dead. Reviving a little, Faithful asks this one why he has treated him so cruelly. The answer to which is that it was on account of Faithful’s secret inclination towards Adam the First. He strikes him again, beating him down to the ground and into unconsciousness. Faithful awoke, pleading for mercy, but the assailant replied that he did not know how to show mercy and knocked him down again. He most certainly would have been killed had not another rushed in and put an end to the assault.
21. This Deliverer was none other than the Lord Himself, known by the holes in His hands and side. Due to this deliverance, Faithful was able to proceed up the Hill.
22. The order of this experience is this: temptation, beat up by the Law, and delivered by the Wounded Christ.
23. As long as we are in this flesh, we will encounter temptations that are agreeable to it. Our tendency will be to try to fix the problem by doing better, but the flesh is unable to keep the Law and the Law is incapable of showing mercy. The letter kills; the Spirit gives life. Our only hope of overcoming is in Christ, His keeping of that holy law, and His wounds that plead for me. There is no freedom in the law. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
24. Possible meaning of Faithful’s Bypassing of the Palace Beautiful
25. This question plagued me somewhat. Why/How could Faithful have completely bypassed the Palace Beautiful? Was Bunyan endorsing a disassociation from the local church? That seems highly unlikely given his love for and teaching of the necessity of the local assembly of believers.
26. Here is a possible interpretation: If you’ll remember, we spoke of how the lions near the Palace Beautiful represented the tyranny of the state church in Bunyan’s time. Perhaps Faithful is representative of those who chose to remain in the Church of England with the hope of purifying from within. In Bunyan’s own ministry, it is documented that he maintained fellowship with nonseparatists in his area.
27. Faithful’s Valley Experiences
28. The first person he encounters in the Valley of Humiliation is one by the name of “Discontent”. He tries to persuade Faithful to turn back so as not to displease his “friends” like Pride, Arrogancy, Self-conceit, and Worldly-glory. He would make a fool of himself to wade through this Valley.
29. Faithful essentially said that though these claimed to be his friends, they were really no friends at all. God’s kingdom is upside down to the inhabitants of this world. In God’s kingdom, the path to honor is humility and the way to a fall is pride or love and promotion of self.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

1. Read Philippians 3:8
2. And next comes “Shame”, who would be more appropriately named “Shameless”.
3. He hurls out such arguments as (in modern vernacular): 1)”You’re a wimp; a poor excuse for a man. We live in the age of freedom and yet you walk around bound up with a tender conscience. 2)Very few of those in the intelligent, wise, & noble class hold to that which you stand for. Well-studied, learned men hold to what can be proven by science. 3)Why would you sacrifice ALL for something so iffy, when science is based on fact? 4)You will never get rich or have much impact on the world if you hold to what cannot be seen or proven. 5) Live for the now; gain all you can. Don’t you know how foolish you look? 6)You waste your time and your life worrying too much about sin. 7)Aren’t you ashamed?!
4. Faithful recounts that he was nearly overcome with red-faced shame until he remembered these words: “that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” He also realized that in the end he would not be judged by the men of this world, but according to the law of the Most High God. Those that are ashamed of Christ before men cannot expect a future blessing.
5. Shame was a nagging culprit and not easily dismissed or overcome. He would continue to whisper doubts in Faithful’s ear, yet he would stand by anchoring himself in the truths of God’s Word.

Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star.
He sheds the beams of light divine
O'er this benighted soul of mine.

Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend?
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.

 Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may
When I'v no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no joy to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then--nor is the boasting vain--
Till then I boast a Savior slain.
And oh, may this my portion be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!

1. Conclusion
2. So here we see a capsule of the Christian life. We see that while we are on the same path, we are each individuals and being individuals our experiences will vary.
3. We see the help that it is to have companions in the journey, who will in humility help us up when we fall, and enjoy true fellowship in the experience of traveling homeward through this fallen world.
4. We see that there are enemies of our soul, whose appeal seems sweet, but whose end is bitterness and death. We do well to know ourselves and to know that the victory of one battle does not mean the end of temptation. We must stay on the alert, immersing ourselves in the warnings of God’s Word and keeping our feet far from the path of danger.
5. We see that we are not only susceptible to one sin, but that our flesh can be influenced by innumerable evils that would pull us from God. In our flesh dwells no good thing. Any satisfaction that may come is only temporary and ultimately leads in death.
6. We see that after being hounded by temptation and worn down by perhaps even a fall, we may tend to run to the law for an improved state in the sight of God. The law, however, knows not how to extend mercy, and can only sentence us to death.
7. Our only hope is in a wounded, risen Savior, Who pleads for us, prays for us, and has purchased our double-cure for sin freeing us from its guilt and power.
8. Throughout our journey, shame will be at our heels in various forms, tempting us to quit swimming upstream and get with the flow to avoid the contempt of the world and causing us to doubt God. “Hath God said?” If we resort to human reasoning, we will fall every time. The only way we will be able to stand against shame is to immerse ourselves in the only standard for truth: the divinely inspired Word of God. May we look to God for grace to stand.