

Intro:

Today I want to begin our long anticipated study of Pilgrim's Progress.

Our lesson today is introductory in nature.

I. Why Study Pilgrim's Progress

- A. Next to Bible, best-selling Christian book of all time
- B. Bunyan's allegory turns Christian doctrine into adventure

"A person who thoroughly understands *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an accomplished theologian."¹

- C. Men of God since Bunyan's time have made the book an object of study:
 - 1. Charles Spurgeon read it at least 100 times
 - 2. Spurgeon: "Prick John Bunyan and he will bleed Bible." (*Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 6)²
- D. The story of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the story of the Christian life.

II. Biographical and Historical Notes

- A. Background of Protestant reformation
 - 1. John Wycliffe: translated Bible into English from Latin, preached salvation by grace alone and absolute authority of Scriptures (d. 1384)
 - 2. Hus: disciple of Wycliffe, pre-reformer in Prague, burned to death (d. 1415)
 - 3. Luther led Protestant Reformation beginning in 1517
 - 4. William Tyndale: translated NT into English from Greek, much of OT, martyred by Henry VIII 1536, prayed "Lord, open the King of England's eyes"
 - 5. Elizabeth 1: Act of Uniformity
 - a. Every man must accept *Book of Common Prayer*
 - b. Every man must attend church once a week (or be fined)

¹ Maureen L. Bradley, *The Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide*, p. 1.

² Quoted in Bradley, p. 1.

c. Puritans objected:

- 1) Some stayed in agitating for reform, known as Presbyterians (some of these formed Massachusetts Bay colony as Non-separating Congregationalists)
- 2) Some went out and were known as Separatists (later some of these came to Plymouth, MA on the Mayflower)

B. The Stuarts and the Commonwealth

1. James 1 authorized King James Version as a means of exerting his power over church
2. Charles I with Archbishop Laud attempted to enforce Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity
 - a. John Bunyan born three years into Charles' reign
 - b. Parliament struggled with king over his authoritarianism and the religious turmoil, finally erupted in Civil War
 - c. John Bunyan served in Cromwell's parliamentary army 1644-1647
 - d. Charles executed by parliament 1649
3. Cromwell, Commonwealth, Lord Protector 1649-1658
 - a. Great political and religious freedom for Puritans
 - b. Time of Bunyan's spiritual awakening

C. John Bunyan

1. Born in Elstow, England, 1628
 - a. Father a 'tinker' – a man who made and repaired pots and pans
 - b. John had little opportunity for education
 - c. Lived a life of wickedness until his awakening
2. Bunyan married and began a period of spiritual struggle during Cromwell's rule
 - a. Encountered Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians
 - b. Thought it could have been 'written out of my heart' (identified with Luther's spiritual struggle)
 - c. After struggling with concern about his soul, he finally came to assurance of salvation

3. Initial Christian experience
 - a. Joined the church of John Gifford (the model for 'Evangelist' in his book), an independent church pastor (not C of E) by believer's baptism (1653)
 - b. Began serving as a lay preacher at various independent gatherings around the countryside
4. Cromwell dies, Charles II comes to throne, resumes Act of Uniformity
 - a. Nonconformists refuse *Book of Common Prayer* and refuse to attend C of E services
 - b. Bunyan arrested November 1660 for failure to conform to king's edicts
 - c. Spends next 12 years in prison
 - 1) Possessed two books while in prison (Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*)
 - 2) Supported himself and family in prison by making shoelaces
 - 3) Also wrote several books as a means to support his family
 - a) *Profitable Meditations*
 - b) *Christian Behaviour*
 - c) *The Holy City*
 - d) *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*
5. Bunyan released from prison May 1672
 - a. Became pastor of Baptist church in Bedford
 - b. Jailed again in 1677 for preaching without a license (6 months)
 - c. Completed *The Pilgrim's Progress* during this imprisonment
 - d. Upon his release, continued writing and preaching
 - e. Died Sept 3, 1688 from a cold caught while traveling on horseback trying to reconcile a father and son (drenched in a downpour)
 - f. Buried in Bunhill Fields, a Non-conformist cemetery in London

"John Bunyan died in 1688 at the age of sixty, having been one of those violent men who take the kingdom by force (Mt 11.12)."³

³ Bradley, p. 4.