

Intro:

Last week we had a couple of points of confusion. One was over the meaning of a name, the other was over a quotation our guide had us fill in.

I. Giant Despair's wife, Diffidence**Diffidence¹**

Dif"fi*dence\, n. [L. diffidentia.]

1. The state of being diffident; distrust; want of confidence; doubt of the power, ability, or disposition of others. [Archaic]

That affliction grew heavy upon me, and weighed me down even to a diffidence of God's mercy. --Donne.

2. Distrust of one's self or one's own powers; lack of self-reliance; modesty; modest reserve; bashfulness.

It is good to speak on such questions with diffidence. --Macaulay.

An Englishman's habitual diffidence and awkwardness of address. --W. Irving.

Syn: Humility; bashfulness; distrust; suspicion; doubt; fear; timidity; apprehension; hesitation.

Diffident²

—adjective

1. lacking confidence in one's own ability, worth, or fitness; timid; shy.

2. restrained or reserved in manner, conduct, etc.

3. Archaic. *distrustful*.

[Origin: 1425–75; late ME < L *diffident-* (s. of *diffidens* mistrusting, despairing prp. of *diffidere*), equiv. to *dif-* dif- + *fid-* trust + *-ent-* -ent]

So from this it seems that Bunyan means to use Mrs. Giant's name to describe the state of mind of Christian and Hopeful, rather than her attitude towards them as I suggested last week.

Christian and Hopeful in their despair and depression:

- Lack confidence
- Are timorous and hesitant – they do nothing about their condition, just go into deeper misery
- Are doubtful of their own fitness for their calling, etc.

¹ diffidence. Dictionary.com. *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*. MICRA, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/diffidence> (accessed: November 02, 2008).

² diffident. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/diffident> (accessed: November 02, 2008).

II. “Few of them that begin to come hither, do show their face on these mountains”

This quotation comes from the beginning of the conversation with the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains. Here is the whole paragraph:

I saw also in my dream, that when the shepherds perceived that they were wayfaring men, they also put questions to them, (to which they made answer as in other places,) as, Whence came you? and, How got you into the way? and, By what means have you so persevered therein? for but few of them that begin to come hither, do show their face on these mountains. But when the shepherds heard their answers, being pleased therewith, they looked very lovingly upon them, and said, Welcome to the Delectable Mountains.³

The sentence is given as a reason for the questions the shepherds ask, note the “for” that was left out of our quotation on the study guide.

The questions the shepherds ask are guarded questions directed towards the credibility of the pilgrim’s testimony. Notice again the particular carefulness of the questions:

- Whence came you?
- How got you into the way?
- By what means have you so persevered therein?

Upon hearing the answers, the shepherds were glad to welcome them into their company.

Their reason for carefulness was that in the pilgrim journey, very few make it this far and gain the spiritual standing attained by these pilgrims.

What standing had they arrived at?

Knowledge
Experience
Watchful
Sincere

These words describe in part the place Christian and Hopeful have come to, and they also seem to describe wise pastors who guard the flock of God and are careful of whom they admit to their company.

³John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress : From This World to That Which Is to Come* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).