



8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (Heb 11:8-16)

Our ancient father Adam enjoyed the bliss and blessings of a paradise beyond our understanding. He was placed in the midst of the Garden at Eden with an immortal soul which was not forfeited by disobedience; however, he forfeited his eternity in the Garden and opened his physical body, and those of every other creature, up for a physical death that would free their souls to an eternity elsewhere – either Heaven or Hell.

All Christian yearn in for that home on high which was forfeited by Adam – a place where beauty and love rules supreme, even among the wild beasts of the field. They yearn for a justice that is only elusive on earth, but will be tempered by Grace in Heaven. The obscure memory of Eden lurks in the misty corridors of our conscious mind, but we know that it yet exists in Heaven. All that was lost in Eden was found in Heaven: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* (Rev 2:7)

So we remember the Tree of Life was removed along with Eden, but to what place? We are clearly told in Revelations of St. John! *1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.* (Rev 22:1-5)

It is quite normal for the loving and gentle soul to seek a home that is compatible

with his sentiments of love and grace – that place is Heaven. From conception until death, we are pilgrims bound for that destination of Paradise just mentioned by John the Revelator.

We reaffirm our cherished desire in the closing lines of the 23rd Psalm: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.* (Psalms 23:6) That clinches our desire – to *dwell in the House of the Lord forever.*

How does a Christian navigate the pitfalls and quicksand of the worldly wilderness, and with what hope. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan beautifully illustrates that journey – a journey that he courageously made in contempt of ungodly churchmen. If we are lost on the Sahara, there may be only one source of navigation – the light of the Sun or stars (if we can read them). But we all know that that brilliant orb rises in the east and sets in the west. So we will need to get our bearings early at first light, just as a Christian should seek the face of the Lord at first Light – for God is our Light! *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* (Psalm 63:1-2) The Son of Righteousness is our best, and only, means of navigating to Heaven.

There is an old Twilight Zone feature that is one of my all-time favorites of an old man and his dog – The Hunt. The old man went coon hunting with his dog. Both drowned in a river crossing. But that is not immediately revealed. The two are walking down this dry, dusty road on a very warm day. They are tired, hungry, and lost. Suddenly, they come to a large, ornate gate of great magnitude for width. There is a well-dressed, venerable appearing gentleman at the gate. The old man asked, “Where does this gate lead?” to which the gate-keeper responds, “Heaven. Welcome, friend.” As the old man starts through the gate, his dog is fast on his heels, but the gateman says, “Just a minute, friend. No dogs allowed in Heaven.”

Obviously upset at such a prospect, the old man replies “Look here, mister. This dog has saved my life more than once. I will not enter Heaven if no dogs are allowed!” and he continued walking the dusty road with his trusty friend. Finally, they came to a plain fence gate – far less attractive and much narrower than the other, at which a gentleman sat who appeared to be, like the old man, a farmer. “Howdy, mister,” the man at the gate said. “You look like you could use a drink of cold water - your dog, too!” “Why, yes, we could,” responded the old man. “Well come on in the gate and have a seat under that old oak tree there. You may drink all you want from that cool spring beneath the tree.”

The old man was delighted – his dog, too. The man at the gate then said, “Supper will be ready soon. You can satisfy your appetite on the best food on this side of Heaven.” The old man said, “Where is this place, anyway?” “Why, this is Heaven!” was the answer. “But I thought no dogs were allowed in Heaven,” responded the old man. “What! How could it be Heaven without the company of innocent dogs, cats, and all other creatures!” the gateman replied.

“But we just passed another place with a beautiful high and wide gate that we were told was Heaven!” said the old man. “Oh, no,” said the man at the gate. “Many people are deceived by that wide, ornate gate. That is not Heaven – that place is Hell.”

We are pilgrims in a wilderness world of sin. We are not at all satisfied with what the world has to offer – so we are looking for a better place, just like the pilgrims on the Mayflower. And, just like the pilgrims on the Mayflower, and pilgrims everywhere, we must travel lightly, only with the minimal essentials for our voyage. A pilgrim travels

only with that which he can carry on his shoulders – much like bearing a cross. The pilgrim of God is seeking a better place – a City on a Hill not made with hands - one which is resplendent with light and love. The pilgrim of God will settle for nothing less. So he is in constant search of that City. He must confront the bandits and vagabonds of the road, but the Good Samaritan will treat his wounds and care for his needs.

The pilgrim of God is an illegal alien in the world. He is a traveler without papers and documentation of the Prince of that place – the Prince of the Air. So he travels on seeking the City to which he may claim citizenship. That place is Heaven. We are not of this world, but of our Father's home in Heaven.

There are times when our journey is hard and treacherous, and other times when it is of little hurt. But we must continue to face every evil specter as it raises its ragged and sinful head. Never weaken, but press on, and on, and on until, by and by, we come to the narrow gate that leads to the Kingdom for which we have made our pilgrimage. The Good Samaritan will heal our every wound and restore our every loss, plus much, much more.

In the meantime, we may find it necessary to serve our Sovereign as an emissary to the poor souls along our pilgrimage to teach them the terms of Citizenship to that Kingdom of God. Perchance, the Lord has sent those very souls to us for that purpose, and we must not let our Lord and sovereign down. We act with His authority and not our own. Whatsoever even an emissary or diplomat of the world does must have the seal and approval of the sovereign power he represents. So must we in the pilgrimage. We speak to the constitutional terms provided in our letters and orders of appointment – and those are the terms of the Holy Scriptures with which we have been provided by our King and Master.

Thusly, we travel; and thusly we arrive at the Fair Havens beyond Jordan Waters.