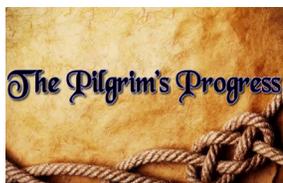


# American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 [www.americandecency.org](http://www.americandecency.org)  
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts October 2018

## Pilgrims in a Post-Christian Culture

By: Voddie Baucham



In John Bunyan's classic *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the Wicket Gate is a symbol for entrance into the Christian life. There, the main character, Christian, encounters the gatekeeper, Good-Will. Their encounter, like the rest of the book, is filled with layers of meaning to which modern pilgrims would do well to pay attention:

So when the pilgrim was fully inside, Good Will asked him, "Who directed you to come this way?"

CHRISTIAN: *Evangelist exhorted me to come this way and knock at the Gate, just as I did. He further told me that you, sir, would tell me what I must do next.*

GOOD-WILL: *An open door is set before you, and*

*no man can shut it.*

CHRISTIAN: *Now I begin to reap the benefits of my hazards.*

GOOD-WILL: *But how is it that you have come alone?*

CHRISTIAN: *Because none of my neighbors saw their danger as I saw mine.*

### The Battle Has Just Begun

As pilgrims on this journey to the Celestial City, we must recognize the fact that coming to faith in Christ is the end of our enmity with God, but it is in nowise an end of warfare. Obstinate, Pliable, the Slough of Despond, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman had all been obstacles on Christian's journey to the Wicket Gate. However, in many ways, the worst still lay ahead. Similarly, our battle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil only intensifies once we have crossed from death to life.

Old patterns of thinking, cultural trends, and the

constant bombardment of images and ideas can obscure the path to the Celestial City. Entering the Wicket Gate is not the end of the matter. The world may no longer be our "home," but it is still where we live. And as pilgrims, we must recognize our need to renew our minds constantly (Rom. 12:2), crucify the flesh (Gal 5:24), and resist the Devil (James 4:7).

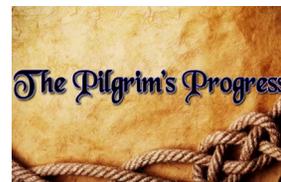
Like Christian, we must war with Apollion and fight to stay on the "straight and narrow path." Then, of course, there is the temptation of Vanity Fair. And the worst thing that can happen there is not to forfeit one's life, but to lose one's witness. The greatest danger to the pilgrim is growing to love something, anything, more than one loves the Celestial City. Therefore, the ordinary means of grace become more important as time goes by. The preaching of the Word, the feast and fellowship of the Lord's Table: these are the priceless jewels that remind us of the fading glory of the things we know, and cause

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**Spiritual death happens  
one compromise  
at a time**

us to echo the Apostle's cry: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

## There Are Others in Need of That Which You Have Found

It is impossible for a pilgrim to stand before the Wicket Gate without thinking about his friends, neighbors, and family members who have not made it. This is what Paul experienced in Romans 10:1 when he wrote, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved." Every man, woman, and child on his or her way to the Celestial City has felt this same yearning. Yet we must journey on.

For Christian, there is the constant tension between the call of the Celestial

City and his love for friends and family who have not "seen their danger as he saw his." And he, like all pilgrims, must recognize that leaving the path is not only unthinkable from the standpoint of his calling, but also catastrophic for those whom he desperately yearns to join him. The only way to commend the path to others is to stay on it.

This post-Christian culture would have us believe that the only way to bear witness to Christ effectively is to "contextualize" in a way that essentially leaves the path. We must walk like, talk like, dress like, live like, and love like the world in order to win the world. However, the opposite is actually true. It is, in fact, the straight and narrow path to the Celestial City that conforms us to the image of Christ. The path is where we learn the very truth to which we bear witness. And our desire is to have others join us on the path, not distract us from it.

As Christian pilgrims, we must realize that the journey we are on is long and fraught with difficulty. The gatekeeper did not come to bring peace but a sword

(Matt. 10:34). Moreover, He promises that we will be hated by the world (John 15:18; 17:14). Nevertheless, we are no better than the world that hates us. The only difference is the grace we have received. As such, we have no room to boast (Rom. 3:27), but we have much more cause to rejoice and a message to share with a world full of neighbors who simply have yet to see their danger as we saw ours.

[Used with permission: Ligonier.org, August 2012]

***"The chief danger of the Church today is that it is trying to get on the same side as the world, instead of turning the world upside down. Our Master expects us to accomplish results, even if they bring opposition and conflict. Anything is better than compromise, apathy, and paralysis. God give to us an intense cry for the oldtime power of the Gospel and the Holy Ghost!"***  
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