

Chapter 9 The Valley of Humiliation

But now in this Valley of Humiliation, poor Christian was hard put to it, for he had gone but a little way before he espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him. His name is Apollyon. Then did Christian begin to be afraid and to cast in his mind whether to go back or to stand his ground. But he considered again that he had no armor for his back and therefore thought that to turn the back might give the enemy the greater advantage. So he resolved to venture and stand his ground; for thought he, Had I no more in mine eye than the saving of my life, it would be the best way to stand.

So he went on, and Apollyon met him. Now the monster was hideous to behold. He was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride), he had wings like a dragon and feet like a bear, out of him came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. When he was come up to Christian, he beheld him with a disdainful countenance and thus began to question with him:

Apollyon: Whence come you, and whither are you bound?

Christian: I am come from the City of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and am going to the City of Zion.

Apollyon: By this I perceive thou art one of my subjects, for all that country is mine, and I am the prince of it. How is it then that thou hast forsaken thy king? Were it not that I hope thou mayest do me more service, I would smite thee immediately.

Christian: I was born indeed in your dominions, but your service was hard and your wages such as a man could not live on, "for the wages of sin is death." Therefore, when

I was come to years, I did (as other considerate persons do) look out if perhaps I might mend myself. [Rom. 6:23]

Apollyon: There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects, neither will I as yet lose thee. But since thou complainest of thy service and wages, be content to go back. What our country will afford I do here promise to give thee.

Christian: But I have given myself to another, even to the King of princes, and how can I with fairness go back with thee?

Apollyon: Thou hast done in this according to the proverb "Changed a bad for a worse." But it is ordinary for those that have professed themselves His servants to give Him the slip after a while and return again to me. Do thou so too, and all shall be well.

Christian: I have given Him my faith and sworn my allegiance to Him. How then can I go back from this and not be punished as a traitor?

Apollyon: Thou didst the same to me, and yet I am willing to pass by all if now thou wilt yet turn again and go back.

Christian: What I promised thee was in my nonage. And moreover, I count that the Prince under whose banner I now stand is able to absolve me, yea, and to pardon also what I did as to my compliance with thee. Furthermore, O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak truth, I like His service, His wages, His servants, His government, His company, and His country better than thine. Therefore, leave off to persuade me further. I am His servant, and I will follow Him.

Apollyon: Consider again while thou art in cool blood what thou art like to meet with in the way that thou goest. Thou knowest that for the most part His servants come to an ill end because they are transgressors against me and my ways. How many of them have been put to shameful

deaths! Besides, thou countest His service better than mine whereas He never came yet from the place where He is to deliver any that served Him out of their enemies' hands.* But as for me, how many times (as all the world very well knows) have I delivered either by power or by fraud those that faithfully served me? And so I will deliver thee.

Christian: His forbearing at present to deliver them is on purpose to try their love, whether they will cleave to Him to the end. And regarding the ill end thou sayest they come to, that is most glorious in their account. As for present deliverance, they do not much expect it. They stay for their glory, and they shall have it when their Prince comes in His own glory, that of His Father, and that of the angels.

Apollyon: Thou hast already been unfaithful in thy service to this Prince, and how dost thou think to receive wages of Him?

Christian: Wherein, O Apollyon, have I been unfaithful to Him?

Apollyon: Thou didst faint at first setting out when thou wast almost lost in the Slough of Despond. Thou didst attempt wrong ways to be rid of thy burden whereas thou shouldst have stayed till thy Prince had taken it off. Thou didst sinfully sleep and lose thy roll, thy choice thing. Thou wast also almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. And when thou talkest of thy journey and of what thou hast heard and seen, thou art inwardly desirous of vainglory in all that thou sayest or doest.

Christian: All this is true and much more that thou hast left out, but the Prince whom I serve and honor is merciful and ready to forgive. Besides, these infirmities in me originated in thy country, for there I took them in; and I have groaned under them, have been sorry for them, and have obtained pardon of my Prince.

Then Apollyon broke out into a grievous rage, saying,

Apollyon: I am an enemy to this Prince. I cannot tolerate His person, His laws, nor His people. I am come out on purpose to withstand thee.

Christian: Apollyon, beware what you do; for I am in the King's highway, the way of holiness. Therefore, take heed to yourself.

Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way and said,

Apollyon: I am void of fear in this matter. Prepare thyself to die, for thou shalt go no farther.

And with that he threw a dart at him, but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it and so prevented the danger of that. Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir himself. Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail, by the which— notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it—the fiend wounded him in his head, his hand, and his foot. This made Christian give a little back. Apollyon therefore followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day even till Christian was almost quite spent. For you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

Then Apollyon, espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian and, wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall, with which Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon,

Apollyon: I am sure of thee now.

So Christian began to despair of life. But as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, Christian nimbly stretched out his hand for his sword and

caught it, saying, [II Cor. 1:8]

Christian: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." [Micah 7:8]

And so saying, he gave him a mighty thrust, which made him give back as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian, perceiving that, made at him again, saying,

Christian: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." [Rom. 8:37]

And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings and sped him away so that Christian for a season saw him no more. [James 4:7]

As to this combat, no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight (for he spake like a dragon also) and on the other side what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile and look upward. That battle was the most dreadful sight that ever I saw.

*A more unequal match can hardly be;
Christian must fight the Devil. But you see
The valiant man, by handling sword and shield,
Doth make him, though a dragon, quit the field.*

So when the battle was over, Christian said,

Christian: I will here give thanks to Him that delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, to Him that did help me against Apollyon.

*In this terrible fight the fiend with rage
That fearsome was did fiercely me engage.
But blessed Jesus helped me, and I
By dint of sword did quickly make him fly.
Therefore, to Christ let me give lasting praise
And thank and bless His holy name always.*

Then there came to him a hand with some of the leaves of the tree of life, the which Christian took and applied to the wounds that he had received in the battle; and he was healed immediately. He also sat down in that place to eat bread and to drink of the bottle that was given him a little before. So being refreshed, he addressed himself to his journey with his sword drawn in his hand; for he said,

Christian: I know not but that some other enemy may be at hand.

But he met with no other affront from Apollyon quite through this valley.

* Apollyon is not afraid to lie about the King of the Celestial City. In truth, God does deliver His own. He does not always do so in this world or in the way we would like, but He has His glory and our good at heart. Psalm 97:10 says, "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked."