

Aim:**Refer:****Resources:** Pictures of Pilgrims Progress are available here: <http://www.bunyanministries.org/>

Open Bibles to Mark 10:46-52 – the last story of that chapter. Put a marker in the page.

What was the beggars name? (Bartimaeus)

What was wrong with the beggar? (blind)

What did he should when he heard Jesus was coming? ("Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!")

Jesus asked what he wanted. What did Bartimaeus say he wanted? (To see)

Verse 52 says, "Jesus said to him, 'Go, for your faith has healed you.' Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road."

In Pilgrims Progress: As Christian and Hopeful walked past the enchanted ground, Christian said to Hopeful, "Did you know, about 10 years ago, one called Temporary, who was a forward man in religion then?"

"Know him! Yes." Replied Hopeful. "He dwelt in Graceless, a town about two miles off of Honesty, and he dwelt next door to one Turnback."

"Right," said Christian, "Well, that man was much awakened once; I believe that then he had some sight of his sins, and of the wages that were due thereto."

Hopeful agreed, "I am of your mind, for, my house not being above three miles from him, he would oftentimes come to me, and that with many tears. Truly I pitied the man and was not altogether without hope for him; but one may see, it is not every one that cries, Lord, Lord."

Christian continued, "He told me once that he was resolved to go on pilgrimage, as we do now; but all of a sudden he grew acquainted with one Save-self."

Hopeful suggested that since they were talking about Temporary, they should consider the reasons for his backsliding, and Christian agreed, asking Hopeful to begin.

They are talking about someone who realises they are a sinner, who learns about Christianity, who starts coming to church, reading the Bible, praying, but then who stops after a while. The word 'backsliding' means to go back to bad ways, or bad habits.

Hopeful suggested that the problem is their minds are not changed. Instead, they are driven by guilt and fear, but when the fear and guilt subside, their thoughts of Heavenly things also subside, and that they really see religion as a shameful thing.

Christian agreed and suggested the analogy of a criminal standing before a judge, trembling in fear, and seeming to repent, but once he is free, he returns to his crimes.

Have you heard of people like that? When someone is afraid they will be in trouble, and says they will never do something again, but then later they change their mind, and don't think it was so bad after all.

Then Hopeful asked Christian to explain how such people return to their sinful ways.

Christian suggested they tried to avoid thinking of God, death and the judgement to come. Then they gradually cease their private religious duties, including prayer and Bible study, and at the same time, they begin to avoid the company of active Christians. After this they lose interest in public religious duties, and then begin to find faults with the godly. They begin to associate more and more with those who have no interest in religion, beginning to follow their ways, at first secretly, and later, publicly.

Is this a sudden change or a slow change? (Slow)

Notice, that the change starts at home, when they stop doing their personal prayer and Bible study.

About this time, Christian and Hopeful passed the Enchanted Ground and entered the country of Beulah where the air is very sweet and pleasant, and here they stayed for a season. In this land the birds continually sing, and the flowers bloom, the sun shineth night and day, for this land is beyond the reach of the Valley of the Shadow of Death and the Giant Despair.

Here they were within sight of the celestial city and met some of the inhabitants of the city, for in this land, the Shining Ones commonly walk, because it is on the borders of Heaven. In this place there is an abundance of every good thing. And voices could be heard from the city saying, "Thy salvation cometh! Behold, His reward is with Him!" And the Pilgrims were called, "The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord."

Can you tell? Are Christian and Hopeful in Heaven now, or still on earth? (They are still on earth, but their Christian journey has come to the point where they are no longer tempted by despair, or doubts, or worries, or fears, or traps.

As they drew nearer the city, they had a more perfect view thereof. It was built of pearls and precious stones, and the street paved with gold. But the reflection of the sun on the city made the Pilgrims sick at times with desire.

As they came closer there were orchards, vineyards and gardens bordering the highway. The gardener told them these belonged to the King, and were planted for His delight and for the comfort of Pilgrims. And he had them into the vineyards, where they stayed for a time.

Two thoughts to finish with.

1. Something that Temporary didn't do, and something that Christian and Hopeful were doing, and I'm sure Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus, did as well. Grow. **Read Ephesians 4:15 and 2 Peter 3:18**
How much do we need to know and grow to be saved? (We only need to know Jesus.) – But after that, for as long as we live, whether that is a short time, or a long time, we need to keep growing Spiritually. Because if we are not growing, then we are shrinking – there is no such thing as just staying the same.

2. The other thing to think about is Beulah – the place where Christian and Hopeful were where doubt could not reach them, and the discouragements, traps and difficulties that they went through in the valley of the shadow of death can't reach them anymore.

Have you ever heard or read stories of people who didn't get discouraged no matter what happened to them?

There is something really amazing about the peace that God can give **Read Philippians 4:7**