

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

September 5, 2019

My dear Friends:

As you'll hear Sunday morning when I make reference to it, this past week has brought me back to one of my favorite books, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It really is one book that every Christian needs to read at least once; I try to read it once every other year or so. It tells the story of Christian, who leaves the City of Destruction and walks the straight and narrow path of discipleship on his way to the Celestial City. After the initial success of the book, and some criticism as well, Bunyan wrote "part two," which gives the account of Christian's wife, Christiana, who makes the same pilgrimage with their children under the care of Mr. Great-Heart, her guide.

There is so much truth in this book, which is an allegory in the truest sense of the word: most of the characters stand in for something about the Christian experience. While Christian's story tends to focus on his own singular pilgrimage to the Celestial City, there are still places of Gospel refreshment, pictures of the church and its pastors; and Christiana's story focuses on the church as a group making its way to heaven, yet there is still the need for individuals to come to faith in Christ. Both parts together, though, warn us about the possibility of hypocrisy, doubts and fears, spiritual waywardness, spiritual sleepiness and lethargy.

And the book not only teaches these things; *Pilgrim's Progress* represents so much of what Bunyan himself experienced, whether personally or pastorally as he cared for others. If you compare *Pilgrim's Progress* to Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, you see the parallels obviously enough. Bunyan was a man who knew spiritual struggle and found the grace of God in Jesus Christ to be sweet medicine for his soul. That pastoral bent comes through in everything that he writes.

I can't commend *Pilgrim's Progress* highly enough to you. It is one of those books that proves itself a faithful companion over and over again. And that's because it points us to our faithful Savior, Jesus, and his great grace for sinners like us.

In the grip of God's grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long tail on the 'n'.