

On a Journey

*"...they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"
Hebrews 11:13*

Why is it that an English fiction book by an uneducated man has become the best selling fiction of all time? Who would have guessed that this man whose profane tongue was known for its ability to string out profanities would be the best selling author in history?

The man who wrote the best selling fiction book in history was John Bunyan (1628-1688). His remarkable best seller is entitled *Pilgrim's Progress*. Translated into over 200 languages, we are told that this book has never been out of print. It is the story of "Christian", a man whose journey through this world to heaven is told as an allegory. Its literary merits have received words of universal praise.

Although Bunyan stated that he went to school, it is unknown for how long or where this school was. In the early years of his life he was a vulgar, foul mouthed person. He took up the trade of a "tinker" which was a travelling tin

smith who repaired kitchen and other household utensils. The Lord turned his life around completely and soon his tongue, that was so accustomed to uttering profanities, came to be used to preach the Gospel of God's grace.

Bunyan was a Baptist Puritan and became a remarkably powerful and influential preacher. His preaching was so moving that the wonderfully brilliant contemporary scholar John Owen, a contemporary of Bunyan's, once said that he would give up all of his learning for the "tinker's way with the hearts of men."

Bunyan knew persecution and suffered as he was separated from his family and home for long years because of his refusal to stop preaching. Yet, his influence was profound. Rare is the Christian author whose works have never been out of print. Bunyan regarded Christians as pilgrims who are on a journey to Celestial City (heaven). His book *Pilgrim's Progress* is well

worth reading as it deals with the many alternatives that can stop a Christian from making progress on their journey to God's eternal home.

If your journey toward that Celestial City has been burdensome you would do well to get a copy of this Christian classic and read it from cover to cover. The imagery is so rich that some people stumble at it. If you try it for a few pages you should get into the swing of the literary form that is not used as much today.

In Hebrews 11:16 we read of these "pilgrims", "...they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one." (NIV). Christians who have suffered for their faith and grown in the knowledge of God as a result are a people who are "homesick for heaven". They have a desire to be away from this life and at home with the Lord. May all of my readers have such high expectations for their future.

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