

THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS

The Delectable Mountains.

They are refreshed in the mountains.

They went then till they came to the *Delectable Mountains*; which mountains belong to the Lord of that hill, of which we have spoken before; so they went up to the mountains, to behold the gardens and orchards, the vineyards, and fountains of water; where also they drank and washed themselves, and did freely eat of the vineyards.¹

¹ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. The poor Pilgrims having made their escape from Doubting Castle, are brought to the Delectable Mountains, where they are fed with the precious fruit of gospel promises. The children of God have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of. They cannot comprehend how the soul can live upon unseen promises, and be satisfied with a happiness only in prospect. But the true sheep find this the most delightful feeding: one promise of faith applied to the soul, yields the most solid nourishment. And as they are thus fed in green pastures, so they are led forth to the still waters, to the pool of ordinances, where, in the use of the appointed means, living streams flow down upon their thirsty souls from that spiritual Rock that follows them, and that rock is Christ. Christ is their all in all. He is their shepherd; he is their meat and drink, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; and graciously invites. If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. Here the faint, weary, thirsty sheep come, and drinking deep at those salutary streams, and washing away their daily contracted filthiness in this purifying fountain, their decayed strength is restored to them.

Now there was on the tops of those mountains, shepherds feeding their flocks, and they stood by the highway side.²

*Mountains delectable
they now ascend,
Where shepherds be,
which to them do commend
Alluring things, and things
that cautions are,
Pilgrims are steady kept,
by faith and fear.*

2. The pilgrims therefore went to them, and leaning upon their staves, (as is common with weary pilgrims, when they stand to talk with any by the way) they asked, *Whose Delectable Mountains are these? And whose be the sheep that feed upon them?*

Talk with the Shepherds.

3. **Shepherd.** These mountains are Emmanuel's land, and they are within sight of His city; and the sheep also are His, and He laid down His life for them.³

John 10.
11.

² Though Christ is the chief shepherd, the shepherd by way of eminence; yet he appoints under-shepherds to feed his flocks with the pure word of his grace.

³ As Moses from the top of Pisgah, got a view of the goodly land, so believers in the use of appointed means, sometimes get a

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4. **Chr.** Is this the way to the Celestial City?

5. **Shep.** You are just in your way.

6. **Chr.** How far is it thither?

7. **Shep.** Too far for any, but those that shall get thither indeed.

8. **Chr.** Is the way safe or dangerous?

9. **Shep.** Safe for those for whom it is to be safe, *but transgressors shall fall therein.*⁴

Hos. 14. 9.

10. **Chr.** Is there in this place any relief, for pilgrims that are weary, and faint in the way?

11. **Shep.** The Lord of these mountains hath given us a charge

view by faith of the King in his beauty. *I am,* said Christ, *the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* As they are so dearly purchased, he will not, cannot suffer them to perish, but will give unto them eternal life, the seal and earnest of which they are made partakers of here below.

⁴ How then is it said, The righteous scarcely shall be saved? Doth this not imply a possibility of a believer's falling short of heaven? By no means. This is to be understood of the extreme difficulties, troubles, sufferings, and apparent dangers through which the righteous are to pass in their way to heaven, and not of any real hazard as to the event, with respect to the purpose, promise, and power of God, for accomplishing it.

not to be forgetful to entertain strangers, therefore the good of the place is even before you.

Heb. 13. 1, 2.

12. I saw also in my dream, That when the *shepherds* perceived they were way-fairing men, they also put questions to them, (to which they made answer as in other places) as, Whence came you? and how got you into the way? And by what means have you so persevered therein? For, but few of them that begin to come hither, do shew their face on these mountains.⁵ But when the shepherds heard their answers, being pleased therewith, they looked very lovingly upon them, and said, *Welcome to the Delectable Mountains.*

The shepherds welcome them.

13. The shepherds, I say, whose names were *Knowledge, Experience, Watchful,* and *Sincere,*⁶ took them by the hand, and had them to their

The names of the shepherds.

⁵ The Delectable Mountains may in one view represent a church-state, under the care of faithful ministers; in another, a state of advanced and confirmed experience in the ways of God, when the soul is in good measure taught to live above the world, and enabled by faith, to look within the veil, and behold the things that are to a mortal eye invisible; but few, comparatively, of those who appear at one time or other under serious impressions, attain to this

⁶ The names of the shepherds pointed out the principle characters of a true minister of Christ. One who has knowledge of the gospel doctrines; experience of their power and who is watchful over the people committed to their charge, and faithful in delivering to them that which he has received from the Lord.

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tents, and made them partake of that which was ready at present. They said, moreover, We would that you should stay here a while, to be acquainted with us, and yet more to solace yourselves with the good of these Delectable Mountains. They then told them, that they were content to stay; so they went to their rest that night, because it was very late.

14. Then I saw in my dream, that in the morning the shepherds called up *Christian* and *Hopeful* to walk with them upon the mountains. So they went forth with them, and walked a while, having a pleasant prospect on every side. Then said the shepherds one to another, Shall we shew these pilgrims some wonders? So when they had concluded to do it, they had them first to the top of an hill, called *Error*, which was very steep on the furthest side, and bid them look down to the bottom. So *Christian* and *Hopeful* looked down, and saw at the bottom several men dashed all to pieces by a fall that they had from the top. Then said *Christian*, What meaneth this? The shepherds answered, Have you not heard of them that were made to err, by hearkening to *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*, as concerning the faith of the resurrection of the body? They answered, Yes. Then said the shepherds, Those that you see lie dashed in pieces at the bottom of this mountain are they; and they have continued to this day unburied, (as you see) for an example for others to take heed how they clamber too

They are shewn wonders.

The hill of Error.

2 Tim. 2. 17, 18.

high, or how they come too near to the brink of this mountain.⁷

15. Then I saw that they had them to the top of another mountain, and the name of that is *Caution*, and bid them look afar off;⁸ which when they did, they perceived, as they thought, several men walking up and down among the tombs that were there; and they perceived that the men were blind, because they stumbled sometimes upon the tombs, and because they could not get out from

Mount Caution.

⁷ All errors are hurtful, some dangerous, some destructive; the last sort of errors are what the author has in view in this place; for he is describing the state of apostates who fall and perish finally.

⁸ Mr. Bunyan speaks here in conformity to the scripture, which abounds in frequent admonitions, cautions, &c. Far from proving the total apostasy of true believers, these cautions are proper on two accounts, to awaken from carnal security, hypocrites and self-deceivers, intermingled with, though not true members of the church; and to promote the holiness, and secure the perseverance of real Christians. An event may be absolutely certain, and yet to bring it about, a particular means may be absolutely necessary. Paul had assured those in the ship with him, that "there should be no loss of any man's life amongst them." Acts 27:22-25. And yet, "When the shipmen were about to flee from the ship, he says to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved" ver. 31. In like manner, though Christ gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, yet diligence and watchfulness are necessary, as means of their preservation; and in this view of things Mr. Bunyan is to be understood, when he seems to speak in this conditional way.

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among them. Then said *Christian*,
What means this?

16. The shepherds then answered, Did you not see a little below these mountains a stile that led into a meadow, on the left hand of this way? They answered, Yes. Then said the shepherds, From that stile there goes a path that leads directly to *Doubting-Castle*, which is kept by Giant *Despair*, and these men (pointing to them among the tombs) came once on pilgrimage, as you do now, even till they came to that same stile.⁹ And because the right way was rough in that place, they chose to go out of it into that meadow, and there were taken by Giant *Despair*, and cast into *Doubting-Castle*; where, after they had a while been kept in the dungeon, he at last did put out their eyes, and led them among those tombs, where he has left them to wander to this very day, that the saying of the wise man might be fulfilled, *He that wandereth out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the congregation of the dead*. Then *Christian* and *Hopeful* looked one upon another, with tears gushing out, but yet said nothing to the shepherds.

⁹ To see or hear of others who have been ruined by the same temptation and evil by which we have been entangled, though mercifully delivered by grace, may well make our tears gush out, and our hearts melt. Many believers meet with cases, which remind them of their past sins and dangers, though perhaps there are reasons why they cannot mention the resemblance to others.

17. Then I saw in my dream, that the shepherds had them to another place in a bottom, where was a door in the side of a hill, and they opened the door, and bid them look in. They looked in therefore, and saw that within it was very dark and smoky; they also thought that they heard there a rumbling noise, as of fire, and a cry of some tormented, and that they smelt the scent of brimstone. Then said *Christian*, *What means this?* The shepherds told them, This is a by-way to Hell, a way that hypocrites go in at; namely, such as sell their birthright with *Esau*; such as sell their Master, with *Judas*; such as blaspheme the gospel, with *Alexander*; and that lie and dissemble, with *Ananias* and *Sapphira* his wife.

*A By-way
to Hell.*

18. Then said *Hopeful* to the shepherds, I perceive that these had on them, even every one, a shew of pilgrimage, as we have now, had they not?

19. *Shep.* Yes, and held it a long time too.

20. *Hope.* How far might they go on pilgrimage in their day, since they notwithstanding were thus miserably cast away.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hypocrites may for a time wear the garb of religion, and seem to belong to Christ in the eyes of the world. Some may go on for a considerable time before a discovery be made of their hypocrisy; nay, it is probable that some may retain a specious appearance to the last. Witness the five foolish virgins.

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21. **Shep.** Some further, and some not so far as these mountains.

22. Then said the pilgrims one to another, *We had need cry to the strong for strength.*

23. **Shep.** Ay, and you will have need to use it, when you have it, too.

24. By this time the pilgrims had a desire to go forwards, and the shepherds a desire they should; so they walked together towards the end of the mountains. Then said the shepherds one to another, Let us here shew to the pilgrims the gates of the Celestial City, if they have skill to look through our *perspective-glass*.¹¹ The pilgrims then lovingly accepted the motion: so they had them to the top of an high hill, called *Clear*, and gave them the glass to look.

The shepherds perspective glass.

The hill Clear.

25. Then they essayed to look, but the remembrance of that last thing that the shepherds had shewed them, made their hands shake; by means of which impediment, they

could not look steadily through the glass; yet they thought they saw something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place. Then they went away and sang this song:

The fruits of servile fear.

*Thus by the shepherds secrets
are revealed,
Which from all other men
are kept concealed:
Come to the shepherds then,
if you would see
Things deep, things hid,
and that mysterious be.*

26. When they were about to depart, one of the shepherds gave them a *note of the way*. Another of them bid them *beware of the Flatterer*. The third bid them *take heed that they sleep not upon the Enchanted Ground*. And the fourth bid them *God Speed*. So I awoke from my dream. †

A two-fold caution.

NOTES:

¹¹ Faith takes up the glass of the promise, and looks beyond death to the land that is afar off. Strong faith gets clear discoveries, and rejoices in hope in the glory of God; while weak faith, with a trembling hand, laying hold of the promise, sees heavenly objects more confusedly and obscurely. This is true in general, but it does not appear that their faith was weak at this time so as to occasion a trembling hand, rather their reflection on the dreadful doom of hypocrites had this effect upon them.

