

The Palace Beautiful

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could first of all just turn back to one verse I want us to think about this evening, Matthew chapter 16 and verse 18. Matthew 16 and verse 18, where Jesus says to Peter, or even all the disciples, I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my charge and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. On this rock I will build my charge and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now as you know this evening we're continuing our study in the pilgrims progress and as we've walked with John Bunyan's pilgrim we've walked along the King's highway and we've walked from the city of destruction and we're going towards the celestial city and as we've walked with Christian we've witnessed the change that has taken place in his life. We witnessed first of all the change of his name. His name changed from graceless to Christian. Then his burden of sin was removed and it rolled away into the tomb never to be seen again. His clothing also was changed. He was transformed from rags to righteousness. His heart was then filled with assurance instead of anxiety. Everything has changed in Christians experience. He has become a new creation in

Christ. The old has passed away and all has become new. And as we've walked with Christian along the road we've walked in the pilgrims progress and along the way we've fled from the city of destruction. We've been delivered from the slough of despond. We've passed through the wicked gate. We've explored the interpreter's house. We've stood at the cross where his burden rolled away. And last week we persevered up the hill called difficulty.

And we saw Christian, we saw him keep persevering after he had encountered seven characters. Seven characters all of whom at one point were heading towards the celestial city but for one reason or another they took a wrong turn or they gave up altogether. And these seven characters you'll remember the first three were simple sloth and presumption. They were found asleep at the foot of the cross. Then there was formalist and hypocrisy. They took a shortcut onto the king's highway but it all ended for them when one took the way of danger and the other took the way of destruction. And then we also met timorous and mistrust.

They were found running. They were running back the way heading back towards the city of destruction. They were going in the opposite direction to the celestial city. And these seven characters which we met last Lord's Day, they were to be a reminder to Christian and to every Christian that we need to persevere to the end. We need to persevere to the end because the road towards the celestial city it's filled with dangers, distractions and difficulties. So we need to persevere to the end. But you know after it was after Christian had overcome the hazards and hypocrites and a hill, it was after that that he arrived at the palace. Beautiful. And Bunyan he writes, he says, Christian lifted up his eyes and behold there was a very stately palace before him. The name of which was beautiful and it stood just by the highway side. Now I want to say from the outside this evening that the palace beautiful, it's a description and a depiction of the church. The palace beautiful is the church of Jesus Christ. Because you know for Bunyan, for Bunyan the church was like a stately palace. The church was beautiful. And you know in order to appreciate what Bunyan is expressing here, we have to remember that the church was precious to Bunyan because

Bunyan was unable to attend church for 12 years. You remember that for 12 years Bunyan was confined to the four walls of his prison cell. He was unable to gather with the body of Christ. He was unable to be with the body of believer. He was unable to gather together in the Lord's house with the Lord's people on the Lord's day. And you know in a small measure throughout this past year and in a strange way we've experienced what it would be like to be kept from gathering together in the Lord's house. We've also tasted what it's like for those who are housebound, those who are confined to their homes, those who find their home like a prison all year round. And you know I hope and pray that this year, this year of 2020 that it's taught us and reminded us of how beautiful and how beneficial and how much of a blessing the church is in our lives. My friend you know in the past our church attendance on the Lord's day and midweek, it might have been half hearted or even half hazard. But if this past year has taught us anything, it should have taught us that we are not to take these things for granted. We're not to take these things for granted.

[5 : 34] And you know Bunyan is reminding us in this section that the church is a glorious body of people. It's a body of people from all nations, tribes and tongues and they've been called out of the darkness of sin and called into the marvellous light of salvation. The church is this beautiful entity that has been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. The church says Bunyan is palace beautiful. The church is palace beautiful. And you know as Christian climbs up the hill called difficulty. He climbs up this hill and he reaches the palace beautiful and he wants to lodge there for the night. In fact Christian ends up lodging there for four nights. But it's while Christian is lodging at the palace beautiful that he discovers that it's a house of faith, a house of fellowship, a house of family and a house of fame. Four things. So while while he's lodging at the palace beautiful, Christian discovers that it's a house of faith, a house of fellowship, a house of family and a house of fame. So first of all a house of faith. The palace beautiful is a house of faith. So Bunyan writes he says, so I saw in my dream that Christian made haste and went forward that if possible he might get lodging there. Now before he had gone far he entered into a very narrow passage which was about a furlong off the porter's lodge. And looking very narrowly before him as he went he aspired two lions in the way. So as Christian approached the gate to this the stately grounds of the palace beautiful he could see the porter who was on the inside of the gate. And we were told in the passage that the name of the porter was called watchful and he lived at the porter's lodge next to the entrance. And at the entrance to the grounds of palace beautiful there was two large pillars that held this large gate. But in front of these two large pillars stood two lions. And in order to enter into the grounds of palace beautiful Christian had to walk past this narrow way between these two lions. But when Christian saw the lions he realized he realized straight away why Timorous and mistrust had turned back in the opposite direction.

And the thing is Christian thought about doing the same because when he looked at these lions he was afraid and he thought that there was nothing but death before him that these lions were just going to devour him. But as Christian stood there halting between two opinions whether to go forward or whether to go back he was halted between two opinions and it was then that watchful shouted to him. He shouted to him from inside the gate and said is thy strength so small fear not the lions for they are chained and are placed there for the trial of faith where it is and for the finding out of those that have none keep in the midst of the path he says and no hurt shall come to thee. And you know what Bunyan is describing in this scene of Christian entering the gates of palace beautiful what he's describing is Christian's experience of becoming a member in the church of Jesus Christ. Christian is entering the household of faith to lodge there and he's confessing his faith he's publicly professing his faith in Jesus Christ. And you'll remember that this was similar to Bunyan's own experience because you remember that having received an action and discipleship from the godly Mr. Gifford who's been portrayed as watchful in this scene it was then that Bunyan joined the Bedford Church in 1653 and he was baptized in the River Ooze near Bedford and Bunyan you could say he entered the household of faith he came forward confessing and professing that Jesus Christ is his Lord and Savior.

But you know my friend how often is it the case that when a Christian wishes to become a member in the church and publicly confess and profess the name of Christ as their Savior how often is it the case that the devil is right there to try and stop you. And like it was for Christian trying to enter through the gate of of the palace beautiful it was a trial of faith because the devil continued to go around like a roaring lion seeking whom he made a vow and even at the entrance gate to the palace beautiful the devil is there he's seeking to devour Christian with his doubts and disbelief he's trying to deter Christian from from going forward telling him to go back. And you know my friend that's how the devil works isn't it he dishonours the name of Christ he discredits the Christians faith he fills us with doubts and disbelief but you know what I love is the reminder that despite the devouring that the devil is determined to do what I love is the fact that the devil is chained the devil is chained he can only do so much and he can only go so far until the Lord says as he did with job that's enough that's enough Christian could have turned back but but he would have missed out on the blessings and the benefits of palace beautiful so he listens to watchful he listens to the porter and we're told that Christian he went forward he went forward trembling for fear of the lions but taking good heed to the words of the porter he heard them roar but they did him no harm they were chained and Christian passed by the roaring lions on either side of him he passed by and he entered the gate into the grounds of palace beautiful and it's there that Christian said to watchful sir what house is this and may I lodge here tonight and watchful he gives this beautiful answer in order to to describe the palace beautiful he says this house was built by the lord of the hill and he built it for the relief and security of pilgrims this house was built by the lord of the hill and he built it for the relief and security of pilgrims but you know what's remarkable is the location of palace beautiful because as you know it was located on the top of a hill and on the one side of this hill on the one side of palace beautiful was the hill difficulty which christian had just climbed up to but on the other side you could say on the other side of the palace beautiful was the valley of humiliation where christian would come face to face with a polyon and god willing we'll consider that next lord's day but you know the location of palace beautiful it's right on the top you could say of a rock the location of palace beautiful it ought to remind us of that discussion which we read there in matthew 16 where Jesus had this discussion with his disciples and Jesus asked the question who do you say that I am and as we read Peter he stepped forward he stepped forward confessing and professing his faith he said you are the christ the son of the living god and it was then that Jesus responded by saying I tell you you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it now we have to be clear the rock upon which Jesus was going to build his church

the rock wasn't the apostle Peter Peter wasn't the rock Peter wasn't the first pope as the roman catholic church claims the rock my friend was peter's confession the confession you are the christ the son of the living god the rock was peter's confession and jesus affirms that it would be upon that rock upon that confession of the christian that jesus would build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it and you know my friend far better for us to stand on this rock and to stand on the side of christ than to be overcome by the powers of hell because as christian was reminded the palace beautiful it was built for the lord by the lord of the hill for the relief and security of pilgrims but it was also built in enemy territory it was built against the walls of hell itself it was built just on the top of the valley of humiliation and it was built there it has been built there upon the confession and the profession of the christian that's why as christian entered the grounds of palace beautiful he was asked by watchful to give a confession of his faith he was asked to give the confession of the christian and christian says to watchful he says well at first my name was graceless but now my name is christian i have come from the city of destruction and i am going to mount sion i am a pilgrim i am going to the celestial city and you know with christian's confession watchful the porter he then rings the doorbell of the palace he rings the doorbell of palace beautiful and he says i will call out one of the women of this place who will if she likes your talk bring you into the rest of the family according to the rules of the house and then we're told that the door is opened and a young woman answers the door and her name is discretion and as her name suggests it would be at her discretion to allow christian to enter into the palace beautiful or not and so after a while of listening to to christian's confession of faith discretion then calls for three more members of her family she calls for piety prudence and charity and they were to welcome christian into their family home of the palace beautiful and you know as christian then steps over the threshold of the door into the palace beautiful what he discovers is that the palace beautiful is a house of fellowship it's a house of fellowship that's what we see secondly so while lodging at the palace beautiful christian discovered that it's a house of faith but it's also a house of fellowship a house of fellowship that's what we see secondly so when christian was welcomed into the palace beautiful we're told that he was then led into what would have been a living room and he was there he was to sit there he received a drink and he was to sit there with with piety prudence and charity and they were to talk with him while supper was being prepared and so piety is the first one who speaks to christian and she says come good christian since we have been so loving to you to receive you into our house this night let us if perhaps we may better ourselves thereby talk with you of all the things that have happened to you in your pilgrimage what move you at first to be take yourself to a pilgrims life you know when christian entered the palace beautiful piety asked christian to share his

testimony she asked him to speak about his pilgrimage she asked christian to to share his story of salvation she asked christian to give an answer for the reason for the hope that was within him and that's because the palace beautiful was a house of fellowship you know this is something that's so important in the life and growth of the church that christians testify to their faith in jesus christ it's important that christians are are willing to come out on the side of the lord it's important that they're willing to to speak about their pilgrimage it's important that they're willing to nail their colors to them to the mast it's it's important that christians are ready to give an answer for the reason for the hope that is within them because you know my friend testimonies are important in the life and growth of the church not only for those who are listening but also for those who are testifying because you know testimonies are a means of of encouraging and strengthening one another in the faith and testimonies they remind us they reassure us that although every story is different we all go through the same struggles with sin sickness suffering and sorrow and we're taught that we need to bring it all we need to bring it all to the sovereign saviour jesus christ you know before i became a christian i used to attend the ym and storm away on a sunday evening and every week i would hear the testimony of a christian i would hear a different story of salvation and as i listened to all these testimonies i could relate to some of their experiences i could relate to how they felt and what they went through and even their their struggles when seeking the lord in fact at one point i became i became jealous that they were christians and that they had a story of salvation but i didn't you know that was actually one of the ways in which the lord used to to draw me to himself because i wanted a story to tell i wanted to tell a story of how the lord had worked in my life and changed my heart and transformed my experience and you know i'll never forget the night that i had to stand in the ym and tell my story of salvation and speak about how the lord had worked in my life and you know i was so thankful to the lord for all he had done but you know my friend that's why fellowship is so important in the life and growth of the church that's why christians should always testify to their faith in jesus christ that's why christians should always nail their colors to the mast and share their story of salvation that's what fellowship is all about in fact that's what fellowship is fellowship is sharing that's what the word fellowship means it means sharing this is actually something paul reminded the church in Corinth he said to the church in Corinth that they have been called out of out of friendship with the world and called into fellowship with jesus christ and paul said that it's through our fellowship with christ and other christians that will grow in our faith that's because my friend fellowship is fundamental to our faith fellowship is fundamental to our faith yes we're to read the bible yes we're to pray but fellowship is fundamental to our faith you know that's why i can't understand why people in our own congregation aren't at testimony evenings or at the bible study on a wednesday night these things are there for our growth and fellowship

[22 : 16] is fundamental to our faith and it's not you know it's not just these things are not just about discussing the final finer points of theology or trying to answer the unanswerable questions of scripture fellowship is all about faith fellowship is about sharing our faith fellowship is about sharing our christian experience fellowship is about discussing the problems and pitfalls as well as the joys and sorrows of the christian life my friend fellowship is about sharing what we're learning in order that it will be of benefit and maybe even a blessing to others maybe even those who are younger in the faith maybe they need to be encouraged and built up in their faith my friend fellowship is all about iron sharpening iron so that we'll be spurred on to faithful and godly living and that's what christian experienced in the palace beautiful he discovered it to be a house of fellowship because piety she asked christian about his pilgrimage she asked him about his journey she asked him to share his testimony she asked why he had left the city of destruction she asked who he had met along the way she asked what did you learn at the interpreter's house she asked what he received at the cross and how he persevered up the hill difficulty she asked how did he get to the palace beautiful my friend when christian had fellowship in the palace beautiful piety asked him about the past but prudence asked him about the present prudence asked do you think sometimes of the country from whence you came and christian said yes but with much shame and detestation truly he says if i had been mindful of that country from whence i came out i might have had an opportunity to a return but now i desire a better country that is a heavenly one and prudence goes on to ask what makes you so desirous for mounzion to which christian gives this reason for his hope and confidence in the lord he says it is there i hope to see him alive that did hang dead on the cross and there i hope to be rid of all these things that to this day are in me an annoyance to me there they say there is no death and there i shall dwell with such company as i like best for to tell you the truth i love him because i was by him eased of my burden and i am weary of my inward sickness i would feign be where i shall die no more and with the company that shall continually cry holy holy you know it's a beautiful confession of faith in palace beautiful but then charity begins to speak to christian and she reminds him that the palace beautiful is a house of family which is what we see thirdly a house of family so while lodging at the palace beautiful christian discovered that it's a house of faith a house of fellowship and thirdly a house of family a house of family so by the right he says then said charity to christian have you a family are you a married man and christian said i have a wife and four small children then she says why did you not bring them along with you but christian wept and said oh how willingly i would have done it but they were all of them utterly against my going on pilgrimage and christian he went on to explain to to charity that he had pleaded with his family to begin the pilgrims progress with him but he said his wife was too afraid of losing this world and his children were given over to the

foolish delights of youth so even though christian was welcomed into the palace beautiful as part of the family even though he had gained a family of brothers and sisters in christ he still had a burden for his own flesh and blood christian still had a burden for his own wife who was a stranger to grace and to god and he's still at a burden and a concern for his children who were on the broad road leading to destruction and you know my friend maybe that's what you've come to discover for yourself when you came to the palace beautiful because you may have lost your burden of sin but is it not true that you've gained a burden of sorrow because the reality is you still care and you still have a compassion and you still have a concern for those whom you have left behind and when you began the pilgrims progress when you left and fled from the city of destruction you would have done anything to take your spouse and your your children with you but you had to leave them you had to leave them in the city of destruction and to this day it breaks your heart and it burdens your soul that they're still not with you they're still not saved and maybe after all these years of praying and pleading for them to take up their cross and and follow Jesus still there's there's nothing there's no movement you don't see anything happening in their life do you know my Christian friend I want to say to you this evening don't give up don't give up whatever you do don't stop pleading and don't stop praying for your spouse don't stop pleading and praying for your siblings don't stop pleading and praying for your sons and daughters don't ever give up pleading and praying for their soul and you know you know my unconverted friend you know as someone who may have a a Christian spouse or a Christian sibling or a Christian son or daughter you know I want to tell you that just because they love Jesus doesn't mean they love you any less in fact it means that they love you more because they can see you're lost and what they long for more than anything else is that you will come to Christ for salvation they long for the day when you'll join them in the household of faith and you'll share in their fellowship and you'll be part of their family like Christian they long for the day when you'll come to come with them to the Lord's house on the Lord's day and sit with them at the Lord's table and partake of the Lord's supper they long for the day when you'll have in common with them in common with them both your confession and conversion and and even your conversation about the Christ because that's what Christian had in common with those in the palace beautiful his confession his conversion and even his conversation it was all about the Lord of the hill it was all about the Lord of the hill and we're told that they talked together until it was late at night and after they had committed themselves to the Lord for protection they provided Christian a large upper chamber called peace where he slept until morning and it was in the morning that

Christian discovered that the palace beautiful was also a house of fame which is what I want us to consider lastly a house of fame so while launching at the palace beautiful Christian discovered that it's a house of faith a house of fellowship a house of family and a house of fame a house of fame Bunyan writes he says in the morning they all got up and after some more talking together they told Christian that he should not depart till they had shown him the rare rarities of that place they first took Christian into the study where they showed him the history of the Lord of the hill they then read to Christian some of the worthy acts that some of the Lord's servants had done in faith and we find all these acts in Hebrews 11 where all of the Lord's servants they acted in faith were told when the conquered kingdoms wrought righteousness obtained promises stopped the mounts of lions quenched the violence of fire escaped from the edge of the sword but of weakness were made strong waxed valiant in fight and turned to flight to the armies of the enemy and then were told the next day they took Christian into the armory where they showed him all manner of weapons which the Lord had provided for pilgrims and according to Ephesians 6 the Lord provided the whole armor of God he provided a helmet of salvation a breastplate of righteousness a shield of faith shoes of gospel blessing and he had a sword of the spirit which is the word of God and what makes what makes this remarkable is that there was enough armor in the armory to provide armor for all the servants of the Lord so every pilgrim who came to palace beautiful there was enough armor for them to fight the good fight of faith but were also told that they showed Christian some of the things which the Lord's servants used in their service to the Lord they showed him Moses's rod which turned to a snake they showed him the hammer a nail which jail used to kill Cicera they showed Christian the pictures trumpets and lamps which Gideon used to terrify the armies of Midian they showed him the ox's gold which

Shamgar used to kill 600 men they showed him the jawbone which Samson used to kill the Philistines they showed him the sling which David used to kill Goliath of Gath and they showed Christian the sword which the Lord will kill the man of sin on the last day they showed him all these excellent things were told and then it reads Christian was delighted he saw this house as a house of fame and he was delighted but you know with all these biblical references that were that we read through in these pages were being shown that Bunyan was a man who had a great knowledge of scripture in fact it was actually Spurgeon who said of John Bunyan he said that he was a living Bible Spurgeon said prick Bunyan anywhere on his body and his blood will flow be blind the very essence of the Bible he says flows out from his veins Bunyan was a man my friend who was saturated in scripture he knew his Bible and he's a great example for us to imitate and emulate Bunyan was an example of a Christian who knew their Bible and lived their Bible Bunyan was a living Bible

I wonder if the same could be said of me or of you that we are living Bibles that we are as Paul says living epistles seen and read of men but then those final day at the palace beautiful Christian was given a glimpse of what lay ahead for him and he was led up to the top of the palace with the palace that was on the top of this hill and he was led up to the very top of the palace where he could see into the distance the delectable mountains and Christian was told that the name of that country which where the delectable mountains were was called Immanuel's land and they're told that he was told that when he reaches there he will see the gate to the celestial city but before Christian was allowed to continue his journey towards the celestial city he was taken into the armory again and he was dressed from head to toe in armor and when he was armed for assault assault which comes in the valley of humiliation Christian sets off down the hill he leaves the palace beautiful and he continues his pilgrims progress down the hill towards the valley of humiliation and god willing next week it will see what happens to Christian in the valley of humiliation as he continues walking the pilgrims progress well may the lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray together. O Lord our gracious god we give thanks for the church of Jesus Christ and we pray that it would continue to be built upon the confession of the Christian that Jesus is the Christ he is the son of the living god that we would all be able to say that I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith and the son of god who loved me and gave himself for me. O Lord bless us we pray we pray that the Taoist enable us to to increase our faith that we would look ever more to Jesus that we would increase our fellowship we pray Lord that we would learn from one another and listen to one another that we might be built up as a spiritual house holy and acceptable unto thee we pray O Lord for our homes and our families we pray for those in our home who are still strangers to grace and to God husbands who are out of Christ wives who are still on that broad road children who have no thought of eternity all father have mercy upon them draw them to thyself with cords that cannot be broken and help us Lord day by day to bid on the whole armor of God to be ready to stand firm against the wiles of the devil and having done all to stand O Lord keep us we pray even in the week that lies before us that whatever is in our cup whatever providence comes our way help us to be assured that there are the one who is still with us who will never leave us and never forsake us go before us then we pray take away our iniquity receive us graciously for Jesus sake amen well we're going to bring our service to our conclusion this evening and we're going to sing the words of Psalm 17 Psalm 17 in the sing Psalms version and we're going to sing from verse six down to the verse mark eight and then the last verse verse 15 Psalm 17 at verse six

[37 : 53] I call on you O God for you will answer me will turn your ear towards my prayer and hear my earnest plea display your steadfast love and save with your right hand all those who flee for help to you when foes against them stand in shadow of your wings hide me in times of strife and as the apple of your eye preserve and guard my life but I in righteousness your face will surely see and with your likeness when I wake I satisfied will be these verses of Psalm 17 to God's praise see display your steadfast love and save with your right hand all those who flee for help to you when foes against them stand in shadow of your wings hide me in times of strife and as the apple of your eye preserve and guard my life but I in righteousness your face will surely see and with your likeness when I wake I satisfied will be