

The Pilgrims' Way: Progress, Regress or Egress. Bunyan, Lewis and Kreeft on Christian Discipleship

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[0:00] Sorry to give you whiplash there, Bill. I didn't realize that being a director of a homeless shelter would have that effect on you. Actually, I thought when you said that you gave you a bit of whiplash, I went to school in Columbus, Ohio, at Ohio State University, and my wife was in school at the University of Michigan, and so that's how I went from one place to the next.

And that's actually what people get whiplash from, actually thinking, I know this may be lost on you guys, but a Buckeye being married to a Wolverine. So good, you do get a little bit of that. So that usually does have a whiplash effect on people.

So today it is great to be with you and to be able to share with you some of what my own journey has actually been, although I won't really digress much in that direction.

But the title of this is The Pilgrim's Way, and the subtitle that I put on this is To Celebrate the Story and Signs of the Gospel Among Sojourners.

And when I helped launch the Church Holy Cross out in Abbotsford, we did then some of what St. John's is actually doing now, and looking at the values of the church, and then going on to look at vision, and then doing some strategic planning around ministry and mission.

[1:25] And so when we launched the church, that's what we did, and going through that process of establishing values, and then identifying a vision, we came up with this statement, which is really more like a motto than it probably is a vision statement, but it's to celebrate the story and signs of the gospel among sojourners.

And I don't know what comes to your mind when you hear that phrase. Really, it's not a full sentence. But I want to read something for you.

It's right out of the prayer book. And when we were developing this vision statement, really this is what I actually had in mind. And some of the people that were a part of our leadership team to launch the church were Anglicans, but many of them were not.

And so I don't know that they were even aware of Article 19 of the 39 articles, which reads like this. And when I read this, bear this statement in mind as well.

It says, And so that's what I was thinking about, and we were actually thinking about when we were trying to identify what would be the vision of this church that we were going to be launching, to celebrate the story and signs of the gospel.

[3:16] But also to add to that, among sojourners. We were looking at not only the life gathered as Christians, but also scattered throughout the world.

And how could we be true to the Christian faith that was passed on to us, once delivered to us, in the world in which we lived in, among other people? How could we genuinely be instruments of God's grace, that good news, and the world in which we lived?

And we wanted to do that among people. And it wasn't too hard to do because we didn't have our own church building. And we were renting facilities to do that, which really put us out there, especially even on Sunday mornings.

We found ourselves in places where there was a really high rate of pedestrian traffic. And we were trying to engage with those people in their places, actually their own places of worship.

And so some of my interest in this pilgrim's way comes from that and immediately kind of draws my attention, and hopefully yours as well, to this word sojourner, which really is another word for pilgrim.

[4 : 29] And so this morning I want to look at a couple things. I don't have a historical background on pilgrims and pilgrimages. I don't know where that started, and I haven't spent the time to do research in that, but I just want to look a little bit of it biblically, and then also look at it a bit traditionally in some forms of literature, which I know that are familiar to you.

And we'll get to that in a minute. But first of all, let's just look at these two words briefly. The first one is pilgrim, and then the second one is way. Now, the word pilgrim doesn't actually appear in the Bible very often.

It probably all depends on which translation you use, but most translations never use the word pilgrim. The only translation that I could find, and I didn't survey all of the translations, but the more popular one that uses that term is the King James Version.

Just about probably any other version that you use doesn't use the word pilgrim. And even that, in the King James Version, it only appears eight times. And whenever it does appear, it doesn't appear in the singular.

It always appears in the plural. So let me just read for you a few selections. I'll just read one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament when the word pilgrim, or actually pilgrimage, is used.

[5 : 47] The first one is from Exodus 6, verse 4. And read, And I have also established my covenant with them to give them a land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

That's God speaking to Moses about the land that he's giving to the Israelites. And then this one is probably more familiar, and so the word pilgrims may stand out to you more in this verse.

This comes from Hebrews 11, verse 13. These all died in faith. It's the famous passage about faith. Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

So the author of Hebrews gives that long list of those who had this faith that was entrusted to them, and then describes them in the terms that they confessed, and they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

So that word, pilgrim, in these incidences, and other incidences throughout the Bible, and in other translations, tends then to be translated as a sojourner.

[7 : 05] And when that's the case, sometimes in those cases, it's not translated as sojourner, but there are other times that it's translated, which I think is actually helpful when thinking about a pilgrim, as those who are exiles, or who are aliens.

And even sometimes it's not named as such, a pilgrim as an exile or as an alien when it's translated, but it's actually described. And in some of those instances when it's described, these people are described as those who dwell.

I think it's actually quite interesting, because we have this idea of a pilgrim as a person, but a pilgrim was someone who dwelt in a particular place at a particular time, but they weren't actually intended to be there permanently.

So it's something of a description of what a pilgrim was. So these are the pilgrims, these are the sojourners, and they weren't permanent residents of a geographic region, but they're more like foreigners who are at the mercy of their hosts while they're actually on to another place.

So I think it's really important in all of those cases, this wasn't an ideal situation. Sometimes there can be a tendency to, I think, romanticize what it means to be a pilgrim or pilgrimage in the world in which we live.

[8 : 24] But that was actually not the case biblically, and even in the literature read, it's not the case either. So the pilgrim has no place really to call his own, has no secure dwelling place, and in some respects that's like Jesus, who had no place to lay his head to rest.

So the other term in terms of the pilgrim way is just the word way then. Sorry, I should have moved this on. Pilgrim or the word road.

Pilgrim is someone who's on the way, who's actually on this road. And the first followers of Jesus, we know, were actually called the way. When Saul was actually persecuting Christ in the church, he identified those who were following Jesus as the way.

Now it's not clear how universal this identity of the way was to describe the Christians, the followers of Jesus. That's actually the only incident that it's used.

But it is clear that Jesus is actually the way. And so when we think about pilgrim, we think about sojourn, we think about those who are on the way, we think about, I think, Jesus, who identified himself as the way, the truth, and the life.

[9 : 39] So when we think about pilgrimages, there are probably a whole host of things that may come to our mind, one of which is geographic pilgrimage.

How many of you have been on some kind of pilgrimage before? One, some others. Jim and Annette Ferguson actually lead people on pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

And I've been to the Holy Land, although I'm not sure that I actually would have called that a pilgrimage. I do have an interest in kind of my five- or six-year plan of going on a pilgrimage to the Camino de Santiago.

Does anyone know about that one? Have you been? I'm going. You're going. Way to go. It's in about my six-year plan, seven-year plan. I'll be around 55 by then.

I thought, oh, no, man, I don't know if I really want to do this, if I'm really up to it. And lo and behold, I read of another pastor who is at a Bible college, a seminary, a Mennonite one in Indiana.

[10 : 36] And at that age, he did one too and published his work about his track, his pilgrimage with InterVarsity Press. But there are also biblical pilgrimages.

When we read through the Scriptures, the one that comes immediately to my mind are the set of Psalms, Psalms 120 through 134. When we read the superscript of that, it says that it's the psalm of ascents.

But there's another translator, more of a paraphrase, of those psalms in the rest of the Bible who calls those the pilgrim's psalms or the pilgrim's psalms. The idea was that Psalms 120 to 134 would be read by the Hebrews as they made their way from wherever they lived up to Jerusalem.

Well, so those are geographic and biblical images of pilgrimage, but there are also spiritual ones.

There's one actually in the BCP in that tradition, but there are also literary or narrative traditions as well, which is what I want to look at.

And let me look at this one just briefly with you. I don't want to spend a lot of time on it, but this is a pattern, I think, of pilgrimage that's set out by Father Robert Krause, the late Father Robert Krause of King's College in Halifax at Dalhousie University.

[12 : 00] And he's put out this logic of Lent, which is based on the Gospel, the Epistle, and the Collect for the Sundays before Lent, which is called pre-Lent, which we just finished up, and then the season of Lent.

I'm not going to go through the details of it, but I want you mostly just actually to look at the theme that's been identified here and the language that's used in it. It identifies the season of pre-Lent as, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and this is the call to pilgrimage.

So there's that word, which may or may not be very long in the history of Anglicanism, but at least one of our leaders, past leaders, Father Krause, identified this season as a call to pilgrimage.

He drops the word in the next two panes that I'll show to you, but he inserts another one, which I think is a synonym for pilgrimage, and that is in the theme that we see as well, the hazard of the journey conflicts with the devil.

Those are the themes that are carried through in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Colics. And then finally, that's actually supposed to be for the Lent 1, 2, and 3, so we pick up for the Lent 4, Passion Sunday, and Palm Sunday.

[13 : 20] He repeats this word again, not using the word pilgrimage, but using the word journey again. So the theme is the journeys in Jerusalem above and divine mediation, pointing us in the direction of Jesus Christ.

So those themes, I think, are helpful for us when we're thinking about pilgrimage. And as I was thinking about what it is that I would speak about, I had identified this, and then I thought to myself, you know, why on earth am I doing this now?

What kind of difference does it make? And lo and behold, you know, we're in this season of Lent, and at least here is one tradition that sees it in terms of a pilgrimage. We're headed in a particular direction.

We're not standing still. It's not static. It's rather, it's dynamic. And such is what a pilgrimage and a pilgrim's way is about.

So why? Why do I think it's important, I think, to speak about, think about, what it means to be a pilgrim, what it means to be a sojourner?

[14:26] And I think that there are some biblical principles laid down for that. And one reason is that we would walk and not faint. This comes right out of Isaiah chapter 40, verse 31.

You remember Isaiah's talking about mounting up like wings on eagles. And one of the phrases is, and the reason that we will do that is so that we would walk and not faint.

And Christian discipleship comes with frustrations and fatigue, and it calls forth some perseverance in our life as well. And so there's this encouragement as pilgrims, knowing that that's what we are, so that we would walk and not grow faint.

And one of the things that you'll notice is that in all of these, it's about walking, and walking seems to be at least intrinsic to what it means to be a pilgrim. Literally, as you think of those geographic ones, but not only literally, but spiritually and metaphorically, so that we might walk, keep walking and not faint, but also that we would walk not in the counsel of the wicked.

So there's a moral factor, there's a moral factor, in the life of a pilgrim. This comes from Psalm 1, verse 1, where he says, blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers.

[15:54] So there's this moral aspect to the life of a pilgrim. Not only that, but one more in negative terms is so that we would walk not in darkness. This comes from John 8, verse 12.

So there's this eternal and a kind of a cosmic perspective when it comes to being a pilgrim. There is darkness in the life of a pilgrim, or darkness at least around the life of a pilgrim.

And it's important to be mindful of that. But not only is there darkness, in the same verse, chapter 8, verse 12 of the Gospel of John, we are encouraged to walk in the light.

And so there's this personal walk that we take in our relationship with Jesus Christ. And it is also about truth because Jesus is the light. And we walk in that light.

Two more then, along the lines of walking. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 7, we're encouraged then to walk by faith. And the contrast to that, which isn't written there, is that we wouldn't actually walk by sight.

[16:59] In this world now, we don't walk by sight, but we do walk by faith. So it requires a sense of trust and also assurance of our faith in Jesus Christ.

And so that's how we walk as pilgrims, by faith. And then finally, the last one, from Galatians 5, verse 25. And there's lots of other imagery throughout the Bible in terms of walking and being on this pilgrimage.

And that is that we walk by the Spirit. That is Christ's Spirit is which we walk by and not by the law. This comes from Paul's epistle to the church in Galatia where he's encouraging him not to return to the law, but actually return to being saved by grace through Jesus Christ.

So there are six principles in terms of the pilgrimage that I think that are laid down. And if you do a search throughout the Bible, there's lots of imagery, lots of metaphors which the image of walking is used.

There's lots of other images in the Bible of discipleship too. And another one that comes to my mind, and you could probably come up with some others, is that of a soldier, that we're in a battle, right? And we wage a certain war.

[18:19] We don't fight with the weapons of the world, but we're given weapons of Jesus Christ like the Word and other weapons. So that certainly is another image or metaphor of discipleship, but this is the one that I'm just looking at today, that we are pilgrims or that we're sojourners and really walking in the way of the Lord.

And then there are three pieces of literature. That's kind of the biblical background for a pilgrim, but there are a number of pieces of literature that figure into what it means to be a pilgrim.

And the three that I want to look at today that I think will help us, that we can actually even see as companions in our journey as pilgrims, are the pilgrim's progress, the pilgrim's regress, and the pilgrim's egress.

Now I'm sure that most of you have heard of the first two, but maybe not the third one. And you probably read some of them as well. I wonder if I should ask how many of you have read the pilgrim's progress.

I'm sure some of you have read it more than once. And what about the pilgrim's regress? How many of you have read the pilgrim's regress? Fewer. But nevertheless, that's a good one to read.

[19:42] And then what about the pilgrim's egress? How many of you have even heard of the pilgrim's egress? Okay. All right. Well, let's just look at these briefly. And what I really want to do is encourage you.

I'm thinking about just doing a three-year pattern of reading the pilgrim's progress, the pilgrim's regress, and the pilgrim's egress. The pilgrim's progress and egress and regress, I've all read more than once, but I think they're worth reading on a regular basis.

And maybe at this time of year, though, let me say that you shouldn't substitute the reading of this for the reading of Scripture. Okay? And there's a great temptation to. And the interesting thing about the pilgrim's progress, which I've learned recently, is that when missionaries would go on the missionary field, they would first go into indigenous communities and they would translate the Scriptures into that indigenous language.

But often, the second book that they would translate into those languages would be the pilgrim's progress. That's how significant this book was. And so let's just look at the pilgrim's progress and maybe it would be a helpful companion to you along the way in Christian discipleship.

Just some things about the author who's John Bunyan, who lived from 1628 to 1688. He was converted under the ministry of a pastor by the name of John Gifford at St. John's in Bedford.

[21 : 08] You probably know this, that John Bunyan was a Puritan and those Puritans that were broadly in the Reformed tradition and they required all of their life to be wholly surrendered, wholly given over to the Lord.

In 1657, John Bunyan was made a deacon at a church called St. John's under the leadership of John Gifford.

And then in 1678 and then probably subsequently the second part of the pilgrim's progress was published in 1684. So that's when the pilgrim's progress was published.

This is my copy. It looks old. I don't know if it looks that old to you, but it's not as old as the original one. But it's a book that continues to have a great appeal and influence on Christians.

It's an allegory in two parts telling the salvation story of a man named Christian and then the second part is the story of salvation and pilgrimage of Christiana and their four sons.

[22 : 18] There's a bit of a pattern that I want to use to look at these three books and it follows along these lines.

It follows along what are the qualifications for pilgrimage? Who are the companions for the journey? What about how it all gets started? And where does Christ and the cross play in pilgrimage?

And finally, in at least two of the cases, I'll look at conversion. But first of all, it's very interesting that when you think about a pilgrimage, one of the things you think about is, you know, what is it that I need to take along with me?

What are the qualifications to be a pilgrim? If you're doing that geographically, or even if you're kind of setting out for a hike, wouldn't you? You would think, what is it that you need to take along with you?

You think of, you know, the shoes that you might take along, you think about the food that you take along, what kind of clothing you're going to wear, how long are you going to be on this? And it's really interesting.

[23 : 22] In many of these cases, those kinds of qualifications or needs for pilgrimages are set out. And in the Pilgrim's Progress, it doesn't actually come out very nearly until the end in Chapter 6 of the second book, as it were.

And in that, we learn that the two qualifications are courage and purity. I'll quote this from the second book.

Mr. Holy Man said, then, said Mr. Holy Man to Mr. Feeblemind, there are two things that they have need to possess who go on pilgrimage. Courage and an unspotted life.

If they have not courage, they can never hold on their way. And if their lives be loose, they will make the very name of a pilgrim stink.

That's kind of surprising, isn't it, when you think what it takes to go on pilgrimage, that it would need these two things. In some ways, it may seem self-evident, I mean, after you reflect on that, but it requires courage and purity or an unspotted life.

[24 : 39] It's a matter of, I think, counting the cost. When you set out, what is this going to cost me? What is it going to require? When I get in this and along the road, and I'm a year and 15 and 30 years down the road, you know, what does it take from the beginning and all the way through to the end?

And Mr. Holy Man to Mr. Feeblemind says that it needs these two things. Christian's cost is great.

And for him, it actually meant leaving behind his family and other friends. And it's very interesting. Along his pilgrimage, at various times, you'll encounter someone like Faithful or this stranger, and there'll be this question to him about, do you have a family?

Did you ask them to come along with you? And it wasn't just kind of a one-off question. It was a question that had a follow-up question to find out why didn't the family come along with you?

Didn't just kind of leave it at that. So it was no small thing. He counted the cost. It required courage. And purity was utmost important for him. So at least in the Pilgrim's Progress, those are the two things that are required in starting out, courage and purity.

[25 : 55] That's not all that it required in starting out or even how it actually started out for him. Conviction of sin was another significant experience, should I say, in his life that got him started in the first place.

It begins with the conviction of sin that was actually brought about, this is how it all got started for him, by the reading of the Bible. The pilgrimage is from the city of destruction to the celestial city and Christian is weighed down by his burden but seeks deliverance from evangelist who comes along and directs him toward the wicked gate for deliverance.

He then enjoys the help of companions along the way including an interpreter but more specifically in the person of faithful and hopeful. But there are numerous, numerous adversaries including none other than Apollon who is a demon.

But there are also other humans who are his adversaries and try to keep him off the road in his pilgrimage to the celestial city. Well, he arrives at Wicked Gate and Goodwill, this is a man named Goodwill, directs him to deliverance via what's called the King's Highway and it later comes out that this man, Goodwill, is in fact Jesus.

He's the one who directs him that way. Well, he ends up at the house of the interpreter where he's directed to a place of deliverance and that place is where there is the cross and the sepulchre or grave and it's there where his burden is relieved.

[27 : 35] The burden is cut off his back when he looks upon the cross and it rolls into the sepulchre. That's where he is relieved or delivered from his burden. But, but this is important, the pilgrimage isn't over.

He ends up going to places like the house of beautiful, the valley of humiliation, the valley of the shadow of death, vanity fair, by path meadow, doubting castle. There he comes by a key which is a promise to open the door and to get through and then he's off to the delectical mountain, the Mount, Mount Clear, the river of death, enchanted ground into the land of Bala and then the river of death on the Mount of Zion before he finally gets to the celestial city.

What's important to note about the first part of the pilgrim's progress is that his deliverance happens very early on, very early on in the book and then it's the rest of the book that this pilgrimage continues until he gets to the celestial city.

Now some of us may feel like that. Our deliverance came early on and we have the rest of the way to go and that's true, isn't it?

There's all kinds of temptations, there's all kinds of difficulties, there's all kinds of despair, there's all kinds of temptations that come along our way and the journey is long.

[28 : 58] The pilgrimage isn't over really until it's over, is it? And that's the case for Christian in the pilgrim's progress.

But I think it's worth noting about his companions for the journey. He has two companions in particular that come along and help him. One is faithful and the other is hopeful. And I think it suggests strongly that in our pilgrimage we don't do it alone.

Right? There are companions that one, we can come alongside of but two, need to come alongside of us so that we can complete that journey. And they have great dialogues with one another about what's going on.

And I almost would say kind of rescue operations but it's not that because the only one who does rescue is Jesus Christ. But through hopeful and faithful there are times which Christian needs some rescue.

Faithful actually doesn't make it to the end. he is martyred but hopeful is with Christian right up to the end. The other thing that's worth noting is the place of Christ and the cross in the pilgrimage.

[30 : 16] I already mentioned that the man goodwill directs Christian to the cross.

he encounters him by direction of the interpreter but he shows him this cross and it's at the point of seeing the cross that his deliverance occurs.

And he is at that point where the burden is overwhelming in his life. It is just so heavy on him because of his conviction of sin that it is only the cross and the cross only that can bring about that deliverance for him as he accepts what was achieved for him on the cross.

Let me I have time I'll come back to this but let me go on to the next story then. The next kind of companion in our pilgrimage in our journey as sojourners is the pilgrim's regress.

this is written by C.S. Lewis whom I know that you know and if the pilgrim's progress by Bunyan was about the Puritan way then I think that C.S.

[31 : 37] Lewis's is about the merely Christian way that's what we would expect. He's most known for his book Mere Christianity and I know there are fewer of us who've read the pilgrim's regress than probably not only the pilgrim's progress but also Mere Christianity but this is actually the first book that Lewis writes after he's converted and interestingly enough it starts out in some ways the way that Mere Christianity does and Mere Christianity actually starts out with a natural law and in this book he starts out with the law as well but Pilgrim's regress is autobiographical it's published in 1933 after his conversion which was in 31 and he addresses the problem between what we desire and imagine on the one hand and the rules that we are to follow on the other I wonder how many of us have experienced that before

I'm sure that we have rules that we know that we ought to follow we also have these desires at the same time and sometimes they seem to be in conflict but sometimes they seem to be in tandem with one another well the main character in this is John and he leads Puritania to a road with many diversions on the way and he encounters someone by the name of Mother Kirk he's unhappy in Puritania due to the rules and he struggles with disciplining his desires and so he departs he has a companion he picks up whose name is Virtue who is probably the child of the enlightenment which was quite influential in the life of Lewis at the time it is the beginning he is enslaved by what's called the spirit of the age this is John and he wanders off the road to the north meeting anti-romantics and to the south meeting what are called sensualists and there's one figure who's called the little brown girl there are times when he gets back on the road and one of the things that helps him from time to time is reason he comes to a canyon eventually which addresses actually the fall and worldliness well while he's on this journey he sees an island which he first noticed before he set out and left the garden he sees an island in a dream but he comes to a valley of humiliation and something called the house of wisdom and now we end up two-thirds of the way through the book and it's in book eight that he comes across something called well the title of it is called at bay and John and his companion virtue together are at this place and it is where he becomes finally a theist he doesn't become a

Christian at this point but he at least accepts God it's actually not long after this that his companion doesn't seem much like a companion at all but virtue actually tries to kill John and then what happens is John gets help from a man it's a man that appeared back actually in the second book and he's trying to escape from virtue kind of go down this cliff the man persuades him not to go down the cliff but he must continue with virtue again in fact this man is suggested that it's actually that it's Christ he's given food then by Christ this man and John is finally caught or at this point really gives himself over to God there's a poem or a prayer when he comes across someone who is a hermit conveying the death of the soul but it is Christ who thinks for him desires for him and then lives for him in him doing for him in himself what he cannot do for himself this is all by way of prayer and description through this hermit but as we come to book 9 finally now not only has John given himself over to God but he's converted when he accepts death but tells himself this that is throw yourself down confidently this is this image that Lewis uses to convey what it means then to be converted that he's to throw himself down confidently to God this phrase of throwing down confidently is actually a phrase that comes from Augustine but it's also similar to one that Lewis knew from George MacDonald and here's the voice of God he hears the voice of God and this is what he hears for this end I made your senses and for this end your imagination that you might see my face and live well he's then guided John in virtue and their eyes are cleared so that they can then see again and book 10 begins at the western edge there's this north south and a west east that's the kind of the landscape for this pilgrimage and they're taken actually back through the journey from the beginning and it seems like it's the same and yet it's different they're told this they're told to take courage and to see the land as it really is after the conversion and they're going

back through it hence I think this is why it's called the pilgrim's regress so you have the pilgrim's progress the progress in John

Bunyan's from the city of destruction to the celestial city you have this other pilgrimage and this journey that C.S. Lewis has but he's actually taken back to go through it again it seems similar and yet now it's different because he sees things differently now that he's become a Christian and he says this he set out to find an island but in the end what he found was the landlord the lord of his life the lord of the land of this pilgrimage so what are the two things that are required for this pilgrimage interestingly enough one of them is repeated the same one that was in John Bunyan's work the pilgrim's progress and that is courage right but the other one that's required that Lewis figures in on significantly is desire that is joy desire longing and happiness seem to be significant and important in this pilgrimage it really is this longing this desire for God that's required to go on this pilgrimage if there is any meaning in life there is any happiness to be found any joy it is only discovered through God who gives us this desire for himself at one point

[38 : 55] John says this to virtue because virtue isn't the same kind of person that John is but John says this to virtue about this desire he says to him he says give in he says yield to desire have done with your choosing want something and virtue becomes a Christian as well but he's saying this desire has a place this longing which is only satisfied God has a place in your life but it's not only desire it's also courage because to see the world as it is requires this kind of fortitude this perseverance this ability to stick with what you've started with and seeing it up right to the end and finding the place that you've longed for well let me look then here not only at what it takes to go on this pilgrimage but also the companion for the journey

Christian had two significant companions the one was faithful and the other was hopeful but in this case John has just one companion it seems and it's this man called Virtue he is he's not like John he's probably a disciple of Immanuel Kant or like Immanuel Kant he was governed by what he ought to do that's what set him out by duty and this universal awareness of obligation that he thought was actually at the heart of what was good what was right what was moral it wasn't the result of interest or feelings or some kind of inclination but the willingness to abide by some kind of universal law universal rules in the world that were identified by man and by that then following through on them this is who his companion was along the way which I think is really interesting the two men are very different but they're still on the same journey they may start in different places but the way the place that they end up the world as they then see it when they're converted is the same that's his companion for the journey there is a man also in this journey that comes along just as there was a man along the journey in the pilgrim's progress and this happens in book eight chapter five he brings

John bread after John cried out as if it were in a prayer and then the man says that John is saved John admits not wanting when he encounters the man to keeping all the rules John has a conviction of sin as well because he's broken the rules and to him then he uses this metaphor of a thorn it's like a thorn to John there's this doesn't say that it's a thorn in the flesh like Paul does doesn't say where the thorn is that's in the heart but there's this thorn and it's left him with this need to get it out a thorn that he himself cannot remove and so then someone in the person of mother Kirk comes along and converses with John and virtue and the conversion is then made analogous to simply ceasing to do something that's what's said to

John and virtue simply cease doing something you have to let yourself go that's the way in which conversion is framed it actually implies that someone else has to do something for you it's not as if John has to do nothing but he has to cease doing something and therefore then conversion for John is an abandoning of all efforts at self preservation that line is actually in there no longer can one preserve yourself it's not about preserving yourself it's about being saved by another by Jesus Christ and Jesus is the one who pointed them there okay 7-2 let's take a look briefly at this other piece called The Pilgrim's Egress the book actually isn't called The Pilgrim's Egress the book is called The Journey the subtitle is

A Spiritual Roadmap for Modern Pilgrims it's written by Peter Kreeft and Bunyan's was a Puritan way and Lewis's was a merely Christian way Kreeft is an apologetic way he's a philosopher at Boston College he's a Catholic as well and he writes a lot of material on apologetics InterVarsity Press loves his work they just keep producing kind of one after another of his when it comes to apologetics but his journey this Pilgrim's Egress is different it was published in 1996 it's a pilgrimage to find the meaning of life or it's an egress or an escape from wrong turns in life that's why it's called

an egress and it's about choosing then what is the real meaning of life what is the philosophy of life that I can actually live by

[44 : 54] I think I'm introducing this not because I think it is on the same level as the pilgrim's egress or the pilgrim's progress I think those two are in a different category perhaps than this one but I think this one is really significant because he presents systems of thought philosophies that are ancient actually that we still live among and see and hear that influence our life politically socially spiritually in the world in which we live with so let me recap what the story begins with it lies as all the other ones which I failed to mention actually begin with a dream all of these start with John with Christian and the pilgrim in this case with a dream and in this case pilgrim has dreamed about he chooses a companion and then follows with ten choices in life and here are the ten choices the first one is shall I have a question is there any question to ask the second is there hope is there any hope of having answers to our questions third is there meaning to life and fourth if there is meaning to life is there objective truth about this meaning of life and if it is the meaning of life is there any meaning to it

I know that sounds repetitious but when you come to the next question is is the meaning of life spiritual then following from there if it is spiritual is it moral with a right and a wrong following on from there is there a right and wrong if there is then is there a God and if there is a God is he imminent or is he transcendent and then if both imminent and transcendent are the Jews the prophets prophets or the mouthpiece of God and if the Jews are prophets is Jesus the Messiah so in this he addresses the skeptic the cynic the nihilist the materialist the relativist the atheist the pantheist the deist and finally the Jew and all of those people in one form or another we encounter in the world in which we live in today each question that requires a choice or a decision an answer introduces a system of thought or philosophy here's what's neat about it if you've kind of read philosophy and found some of it understandable but some of it not very understandable what he does is he links an ancient philosopher with a current thinker who represents this let me give you an answer this is what he uses this kind of phrase it's really interesting that it's not a reincarnation of these thinkers but a re-indoctrination so for example the pilgrim recognizes

Epicurus but he looks like Hugh Hefner or he recognizes Protagoras but he looks like Jean-Paul Sartre and I think it's really helpful right because you hear about these ancient Greek philosophers if you read them you can and sometimes find a difficult to understand them but they you know there's nothing new under the sun right these systems of thought keep getting reintroduced into our culture and so we come through modernity new areas to post-modernity and is it really new is it okay well it does follow modernity but what's so new about it is there thinking in that system of thought that preceded it and this is what I think is helpful about it and this is why I suggested so interestingly enough the companion

I don't know if I were to ask if Kreef were to choose a companion as a philosopher to join him along the way who might you think would come along with him okay I'll answer the question it's he chooses Socrates the ancient Greek philosopher from 400 B.C.

who offers to him he says to him I will give you maps advice arguments it is you who though must choose at each fork in the road he is he says to him that he is sent as an outsider to him but what makes Socrates a good companion what makes him a good companion is that I think that he's he's somewhat rabbinic he knows how to ask questions to help the pilgrim along his way and I think that that's what is helpful to us in our pilgrimage as well is to asking the right questions finding the answers to those to those questions ultimately which I believe are satisfied through the scriptures and in the person of Jesus Christ but that's who his companion is along the way is the Messiah in his book yes the Messiah is in here what happens is Moses is the prophet that points the pilgrim in this book to the Messiah the Jews as he says were God's mouthpiece with the perfect law from the perfect God who is all powerful and all knowing after the pilgrim leaves Moses then he comes to a river

[50 : 55] Moses is then actually replaced or followed by Jesus it's explicit in this where it isn't as explicit as in a man or a stranger in the other two books and at this point then it turns actually from a dream in this pilgrimage to a vision and the cross is in full view on a hill which isn't enough there's a he sets up this mirror actually image of another set of crosses crosses that are represented by different philosophies but they all have to do with money sex and power so there are these other crosses that are a cross from the one with Jesus on it and then there's another guy who comes along to witness to Jesus and suggests to the pilgrim that look Jesus is not just some kind of

teacher or not just some kind of prophet but rather he's God and the pilgrim is amazed and at first he thinks that this is ridiculous but the companion comes along and convinces him by saying why couldn't

Jesus be God couldn't an author write himself into his own novel as one of his own characters and then he makes the case for Jesus in Lewis's words as either a liar a lunatic or a lord resting on the authority of scripture and after this then the pilgrim is converted conversion isn't unreasonable it is reasonable to a certain degree and he's led to the idea of conversion or the need for it through reason but reason won't bring to him conversion and he says this so if reason leads you to Christ what holds you back and he says his cross the bloody mess the splinters I don't want to be up there with him I want to control my own life whose life is it anyway conversion for him becomes a throwing himself into Jesus's arms the motivation isn't fear as much as it is love and pilgrim recognizes that he has a choice and then he says this he says

I looked into the face on the cross who was still patiently inviting me into an adventure that had no limit no guarantees no strings attached an adventure that simply demanded my all my me so that's what I wanted to share with you today about this pilgrim's way which I think that we're all on and their biblical imagery in terms of being a pilgrim a sojourner interestingly enough in the Old Testament when the term sojourner comes up when it seems like it no longer applies to God's people but they're settled in the promised land they're always encouraged to be generous to sojourners why?

because God's people were once sojourners and but we still journey in what is not our permanent home here we're not permanent residents here we have another home to which we journey to much like Christian did from the city of destruction to the celestial city and so we journey on thanks for listening again what is the full title of Peter's book?

oh it's the journey a spiritual road map for modern pilgrims yes he's called Christian right at the beginning of the film of the program do we assume that he's in the faith not just in the church but he's in the faith and he's dealing with the burden of sin which we can have after salvation and do that right hmm hmm wow wow wow I don't know the theology of Bunyan any better than what the pilgrim's progress shows so hmm yeah I don't know it seems like he

[56 : 02] I mean I know I'm just repeating myself but he has a conviction of sin when he reads the Bible early on and that's what sets him on his pilgrimage but his burden isn't relieved he isn't delivered from that until the man points him to the cross who is Jesus and it's there where he's delivered from that that burden so there's someone in the room who has got a lot better knowledge of Bunyan than I do but pardon me pardon me John Newton had the same problem he was converted and yet he was not sure of all his sins have been dealt yeah so maybe that's it he has assurance of faith once he's delivered from his burden and he carries on his pilgrimage but I don't know I don't have an answer to that can I defer to you sorry no no

I don't I don't I don't think I don't think he's in danger of a works a salvation by works and not by grace I mean I think it's very clear I mean here's the interesting thing in the three books is Bunyan's the cross comes in full view and he's directed there by a stranger who's said to be Christ but but it's the cross and only the cross and the sepulchre that that he accepts and delivers him from his burden so it is by grace and it's not by works the cross and the interesting thing is the cross doesn't actually come into clear view and I'm not suggesting that it isn't significant for Lewis but it doesn't come into clear view in the pilgrim's regress there's these two kind of interesting images that he uses there both of which are a meal that are significant for in the pilgrim's regress and I'll read I'll close today by reading the last poem the pilgrim's regress to you because it's really powerful but I don't know Dr. Packer what do you think well it is a fact that in the 17th century the Puritans used the word conversion in a

God centered way for the whole process of God's work of making a Christian out of someone who by nature isn't a Christian so the process of conversion begins with conviction of sin no it begins before that begins with a sense of the need to seek God which is the point where Bunyan starts Christian is reading the Bible because he's seeking God seeking the celestial city and he's being told about his sin and so he starts his pilgrimage without any sense that his sin is forgiven and as yet it isn't but he knows he's got to find

God's way of getting rid of it and all of that for a Puritan like Bunyan is included in the concept of conversion God converting us you see God changing us from the beginning of the process until it's completed in assurance the Bunyan's idea I think was that Bunyan is on the way to assurance right

from the start and God has him in hand and won't let him go until he's got there now we use the word conversion much more narrowly for the call it the experience or awareness or discovery or embrace of forgiveness of sins through the cross but as I said the Puritans used it more broadly and so for Bunyan

Bill's question or Bill's puzzle isn't a puzzle at all the very fact that Bunyan is reading his Bible seeking the celestial city and terribly upset at the discovery that he's a sinner that's the beginning of conversion so he may well be called Christian because that's the identity that God is beginning to give him and God will complete the process that he started does that make sense?

[61 : 02] makes a lot of sense so conversion isn't an event at one point in time right it's a process a process which has the event that we focus on as a key part of it the climax of it in one way thanks and that isn't notion that Lewis is working of course in the pilgrim's recourse although he starts with the desire for God which gets John moving in the first place he he is clear in his own mind that he wants us to be clear in our minds that John isn't a Christian yet he is a wanderer in the wilderness out of the blessing of God and well

Lewis hasn't anything like as much to say about the sovereign grace of God as William has he longs for this island but he has no idea what it is it's not as definitive as the celestial city for instance it's not there's nowhere near the clarity for him well that's right and John begins his pilgrimage by turning his back on the island and walking away from it right and to his defense it's autobiographical so he's giving something of a description of his life up until this point which is very present for him in 31 and 33 when he publishes the book so he's describing how he's actually got how he's got to this point and so it is you know it is as Lewis can be sometimes very descriptive this is in the case with something like the problem of pain well

Lewis in a way played fair because he wrote an autobiography of his life up to the time when he understood himself to have become a Christian called surprised by joy people treated the title as a joke because of the name of his wife but that's not what it's about it's about how he as a pilgrim walked in the wrong direction for a long long time until God got hold of him and began to shake him in the last 20 pages of the book right right right yeah yeah isabel yeah living

If people are coming from a place where just the thought of God is in their mind, they haven't really defined what that is, then their ideas of purity, I thought that was an unusual term to have because they would not be seeking at the same time purity.

I mean, well maybe in the world that they were living in it would be a bit different, but if you bring that into our modern world. Right. I mean, one of the reasons that I included it was because I was so, I was surprised by it as well. But I, you know, things that surprised me that I tend to kind of think about.

[65 : 22] And, you know, when I was first thinking about this and wanting to do this, of these three authors, these three Christians, I missed, I mean, it's not my own idea. Peter Kreeft identifies the Pilgrim's Regress and the Pilgrim's Progress in his introduction. So it's not, I didn't come across these three books and think, oh yeah, wouldn't it be great to do this?

But I thought actually, you know, all three of them were doing something different, which I think they are. But I also thought that maybe they were, you know, they were disagreeing with one another as well, which I don't think they completely are. And that certainly wasn't their motivation. And there's research that shows that Lewis was very complimentary of John Bunyan and he read the Pilgrim's Progress early on and was, you know, it had some impact on him. But what really surprised me is that when I came, when I continued to read the Pilgrim's Regress and Lewis identifies the importance of courage as well in the pilgrimage. So, but you're right. I mean, I can see how, you know, the world in which we live in, you know, why, you know, why, you know, that would be difficult as we sojourn along with, you know, other people in this world. But having said that, I mean, I think that given that it starts with a conviction of sin, right, which is where Christians starts, nevertheless, it's still, it requires some courage then to do what he did, which was try to influence his family to come along with him who wouldn't.

And despite that, decided that he would count the cost and do it anyway. And I think, so this is where I'm out of my area of knowledge. But he, because of his conviction of sin, has, now I'm using Lewis's language, I realize this, but desire for purity. I mean, he doesn't, I mean, his sin is a burden to him. You know, he's not, he's not content with it. So it's something that he, that he wants. And I don't know, I mean, I think that in the world in which you and I live in, I think God is at work, his gentle grace, and I think that, yeah, people, people seem content with the lack of purity in their life

and continuing on in sin. But, but I wonder about that. I really, I really do.

Not, not, but a different meaning or a desire for purity. Yeah, I know. Than the word purity. I realize that, yeah. So, thank you. I have to sit in, um, I recently read that the, in the Jewish economy by and large, they don't believe in original sin, they believe in original choice. And that, uh, helped me significantly because in original sin, we kind of hate something within ourselves. But original choice, something means I can make a wrong choice or a right choice. Hmm. So do you have a question or is it just a comment? I think that she's taking advantage of the space to say something. Right. Right. I have, well, I haven't heard that before. And, uh. Yeah, I was surprised.

And I certainly think in our, uh, our evangelical tradition, uh, benefits of Augustine, uh, you know, I would, I mean, I certainly think that we have original sin, uh, that we're infected right from the beginning by sin. Because of Adam. Yeah. But I, but I think that also, I mean, it is true that we have, you know, we have choices to make, uh, but that, I don't, I don't think that means, I don't, I don't think it means that, you know, that, you know, that we don't have, that there is an original sin. But, yeah, I mean, I didn't know that about the Jewish tradition.

[69 : 28] Yeah. Okay. So, like, for example, in John Benedict's day, you know, a 17th century ago, if you feel like that, it just strikes me that there's a lot so far, I mean, there's all the morality and suffering. Right, right. But, it just seems the life is just free of so many things, you know, and maybe the focus would be more on if people were in poverty, they wouldn't throw the truth, they would become a Christian, they would pray to the God, they would pray to the godly ancestors.

Whereas today, everything seems much more self-sufficient. I can manage something very much on my computer, my internet, and I'm self-sufficient.

I don't need anyone to advise me. It just seems a simpler, more focused, perhaps easier for them in a lot of ways to focus on the faith rather than now with all these computerized chapters.

I mean, that may be the case, but what I want to do is strongly commend these books, and I would go back and read them in these order, too. And I think what's so great about Bunyan's work is that it's just so biblical, right?

And it just brings its back to that in a way that I don't know that there is anything else out there like it. And I think, despite the fact that we may live in a more kind of complex world, I don't think that that means that our world is actually more difficult than Bunyan's.

[71 : 02] I think they live in a difficult world, and it wasn't easy. But I think, I mean, I think, I think it's imperative that we read it because it's so biblical.

And I think that Lewis addresses some of the complexities of moving out of a world and a culture that took reason, in some ways, I don't know, I was going to say, not for granted, but believed in, you know, that if you reason something, then you acted based upon that.

He talks about that in the Screwtape Letters. Now it hasn't come down to reason, it's come down to, you know, to power, who has power, which I think, you know, has complicated and made things more kind of convoluted.

Thank you, James. Welcome. Thank you. Thank you.