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Andrew M. Davis

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“Away with your book!”

Obstinate: *“What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?”*

Christian: *“I seek an ‘inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,’ [1 Peter 1:4] and it is laid up in heaven, and secure there, to be bestowed at the time appointed on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, in my book.”*

Obstinate: *“Tush! Away with your book! Will you go back with us or no?”*

John Bunyan left the Church a remarkable legacy in his timeless allegorical account of the Christian life, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. The work was written while he was in prison for preaching the gospel. In 1675, he was incarcerated in a jail located on a bridge over a river in Bedford, England, but instead of wallowing in despair at being separated from his wife and blind daughter, he redeemed the time by writing this allegory. It continues to bless the Church 325 years later, for it describes the entirety of the Christian pilgrimage from initial hearing of the gospel through conversion and into the journey of sanctification until the Christian reaches heaven.

At the beginning of the allegory, a man named “Christian” begins to fear for his soul when he reads of the judgment of God over sin as recorded in a Book he reads. The Book can be no other than the Bible, for as he is reading it he becomes “greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read he burst out, as he had done before, crying, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’” He is soon led to flee his home in the City of Destruction, pursuing vigorously the salvation of his soul which the Book enjoins.

Soon some townspeople join him and begin to mock him as he runs out of the city. Two of them come along with him to persuade him to return. Their names are Obstinate and Pliable, and Christian invites them to run with him out of the city. Obstinate refused and the conversation I've written out above occurs.

In the written Word of God are both threats and promises, and we who are born under the judgment of God as objects of wrath (Eph. 2:3) would do well to heed them and flee to Christ. These words of warning and of hope in Christ are only found from Scripture, and therefore the essential issue is the attitude one has toward the Bible. The mocker, the unbeliever, is scornful toward the Scripture as a human book full of antiquated ideas and irrelevant stories from long ago. The world has long said to the Bible-believer, "Tush! Away with your book!" But the book will not go away. For Jesus plainly said, "Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18). It is just as Isaiah had said earlier, "All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall... but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8). Theologian Bernard Ramm adds this testimony:

"A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow, the corpse never stays put! ... No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What other book on philosophy or religion or psychology from classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every single chapter, line and word? The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions and studied by millions."

This Book will never go away! It is best rather to submit to its teachings and live the eternal life it promises through faith in Christ.