

Conversion: At the Gate or the Cross?

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[0:00] Well, our study is Pilgrim's Progress. Pilgrim has made it as far as the gate.! That's where he's at this morning as we pick up the account.

He's just been welcomed in by Goodwill, who actually jerked him in, you remember, the effectual call of Christ to bring us in, lest Satan's arrows hit us even while we're lingering around the gate of conversion.

And then Bunyan says, Then I saw in my dream that Christian asked him, that's asked Goodwill further, if he could not help him off with his burden that was upon his back.

For as yet he had not got rid thereof, nor could he by any means get it off without help. And he told him, As to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance.

For there it will fall from thy back of itself. Now, you know who have read the story, later on, Christian comes to the cross and it's gazing upon the cross that the burden falls off and rolls into the empty tomb.

[1:17] And that's what Bunyan is referring to when he says, Be content to bear it until you come to the place of deliverance. For there it will fall off thy back of itself.

Now, it's this continuing burden that has led some to question whether Christian's conversion takes place here at the gate or later down the road at the cross where the burden falls off.

And I left you with that conundrum, that question last week. And so you've all been thinking all about it and reading Bunyan and you come now as experts to weigh in and vote.

How many of you think Bunyan's pilgrim is converted at the gate? Vote. All right. And how many of you think he was converted at the cross? Vote. Vote. And how many of you are thoroughly confused?

All right. There is some confusion here. And you're not the only ones. Indeed, anybody who reads the allegory must have some confusion at this point.

[2:28] Now, first of all, let's be clear on the place of the cross in our conversion. The place of the cross in any true conversion. The Bible says that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

And without faith in Christ's blood, there is no conversion. That's why whenever Paul, wherever Paul went, as when he came to Corinth, he says, I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. The message of the cross is the power of God unto salvation.

And he says later on in 1 Corinthians 15, for what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins.

According to the scriptures, there's no gospel without the cross of Christ. And there's no conversion without faith in that work of Christ on the cross.

[3:46] So let's be clear on this then. Saving faith looks to a crucified and risen Savior. So if Christian was converted at the gate, then it was by faith in Christ crucified.

But the difficulty comes in that we read nothing of Christ crucified at the gate. That's later on in the journey that we come to the cross.

So that may sound like one point for conversion at the cross. All you who said he's converted at the cross, you say, yeah, there I've got it, you see. But what evidence is there that conversion takes place at the gate?

Have any of you thought of that? Chuck? Jesus is the gate. And he comes to the gate and he enters through the gate.

All right. Good. Any other evidence? That conversion is at the gate. All right. He's going to...

[4:52] At the gate, Christian is placed on the narrow road. And later on, that narrow road is called, quote, the highway fenced on either side with a wall that was called salvation.

This road that he's on is the road of salvation. He's already been given entrance into the gate. He's now on the narrow road of salvation. And as we read on, we'll meet different characters who meet up with Pilgrim.

And one of the key questions that is always put to these characters is, how did you enter the way? Oh, I see you here.

But how did you get on to this way? And we'll meet some who tumbled over the wall. Well, there's only one right answer to that question. How did you get on the way? And it's through the gate who is Christ.

That's the only way to be found truly on the way that leads to life. So there's a point for conversion at the gate. But we still must answer the problem.

[5:59] Then why the continuing burden on Christians back here at the gate? And I want to give credit to where credit is due. Ed Withrow helped point out that point on the narrow gate, the whole matter of these characters along the way and the question about the way.

How did you get in? But it'd be helpful for us to see if we wonder why is Christian then converted and yet still laboring under this burden.

It's helpful if we remember that the burden on the back is not sin itself, but a conscious sense of sin, a sense of guilt that is felt.

It's an important distinction to make. Because Christian didn't always have the burden on his back, did he? What put the burden on his back? Reading the book.

The book in his hand accounted for the burden on his back. So before he started to read the book, he had no burden on his back. Did he have sin? Yes. Yes. So the burden does not represent sin.

[7:16] He had plenty of sin. But it was only when he began to read that he saw his sin and began to feel the burden of his guilt.

For by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3.20. Through the law, we become conscious of sin. And you remember that fellow pliable. Did he have a burden?

There he was in the slough of his spine. And he hops right out and goes back home. Why is he so nimble? Because he has no burden on his back. Did he have sin? Sure he did. But he has no felt guilt and sense of sin.

So it's important for us to make that distinction. The burden on the back is not sin itself, but is a sense of sin and guilt. It's one thing to have your sins forgiven through faith in Christ and him crucified.

It is another thing to have a sense of sins forgiven. To have the joy and peace that all your sins are forgiven. It's one thing to have your sins taken away.

[8:20] And it's another thing to have the burden of your sin taken away. Now sometimes those two things happen at the same time. That upon faith in Christ and him crucified, not only does God take away sin from us, but he also takes away the burden of sin.

Remember the thief on the cross. He had immediate sense of assurance. Even as he placed faith in Jesus, Jesus says, Today you will be with me in paradise. And sometimes those two things happen at the same time.

But other times not. There are those who are really forgiven. Their record is cleared of all sin in heaven. But sometimes the enjoyment of it comes later.

It may be some time before the Christian enjoys the assurance of being forgiven of all his sin. So that a sense of sin and guilt may linger.

And he may go on with this burden on his back. That's to say that though a Christian may be saved from sin, he may still wrestle long and hard with assurance of his salvation.

[9:36] Another way to explain this is to distinguish between objective and subjective guilt. Between real, true guilt and feelings of guilt. Let's think first of objective guilt.

True guilt. This is guilt regardless of how I feel. To be guilty is to be blameworthy. It's to be in the wrong.

It's to be on the wrong side of the law. I'm liable to punishment. I deserve to be punished because of my behavior.

To be guilty, objectively guilty, is to be culpable. I have an outstanding debt to pay. And as I said, all this regardless of how I feel. True guilt.

And I may or may not have a second kind of guilt. Guilty feelings. This is subjective guilt. That heaviness and burden that comes from knowing that I am culpable and deserving of punishment. [10:42] Guilty feelings. Because I know that I am guilty. Objectively guilty before God. Let me give you an example. Let's say that I come up to you today. And in a nasty way, I slice and dice you with very unkind words and then just walk away.

I've sinned. I am a lawbreaker. I am guilty before God. I deserve punishment. Because I am to speak the truth in love.

I'm to let no unwholesome word come out of my lips. But only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. That it may benefit those who listen.

So, I've sinned. I'm guilty before God. I'm in the wrong. But I may or may not have any feelings of my guilt. I may just go right on my way whistling, having a great day and not caring a bit about how you feel and what I just did to you.

I could be unaware of my guilt before God. I could have a conscience so hardened and seared that I don't even think about God. I don't even think about what I've done to you and how it's such a gross violation of love.

[11:56] Does that lessen my real guilt before God? No. I am still guilty. I have guilt. But I don't have a sense of guilt.

Or if my conscience is tender, then along with my guilt before God, I will have feelings of guilt and a heaviness upon my heart.

So, it's one thing to have true objective guilt. It's another thing to have subjective feelings of guilt. Now, how does this come into play in Pilgrim's Progress? Well, at the gate of conversion, Christian comes to Christ and he calls on him to save him.

And he's saved. He's forgiven of his sins for Jesus' sake. All his sins were punished upon Christ at the cross. So, he bears them no more.

As for his guilt, he's declared not guilty. That's what it means to be justified. The judge brings down the hammer. God says, as to this man and how he stands before me and the law, he is righteous.

[13:02] He's in a right position with the law. He is not guilty. He's no more liable to punishment because Christ took his punishment. There's no outstanding debt to pay for Jesus paid it all.

Now, that's what happens at the gate of conversion. But due to ignorance of the Bible, due to faulty understanding, remaining unbelief, doubts and fears, this same man may have guilty feelings and uncertainties of his sins being forgiven.

To put it bluntly, though he is saved, he may have no assurance yet that he is saved. The peace and joy and assurance of salvation.

How does it come? Well, it comes through clear views of Christ crucified. Clear views of the cross. It's the blood of Christ understood and believed on that cleanses our conscience from sin and guilt. Turn to Hebrews chapter 9. Notice how it is that a consciousness of guilt is removed.

[14:21] I know I'm guilty. I have this awareness that I deserve punishment before the judge.

How is that taken away? Hebrews 9 and the whole chapter and this whole section and indeed the whole book is wanting us to see that the Lord Jesus and his shed blood is the one atoning sacrifice that takes away sin and guilt.

And so he's contrasting the Old Testament pictures of the redemption that's ours in Christ and in his blood. And he says in verse 13, Hebrews 9, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. It's an outward ceremony. The most it can do is make them outwardly clean, able to go into the temple, able to go into the holy precinct and worship God there.

So if if these blood of goats and bulls, if that blood will make them outwardly clean, how much more? Verse 14. How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences?

[15:49] That's not outward cleansing. That's inward cleansing. Our very conscience that we're guilty before God. How much more will the blood of Christ cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, sin, that we might worship and serve the living God?

So it's the blood of Christ that cleanses our consciousness and our consciences from sin. And the more that the cross and the blood of Christ is understood and believed, the more our assurance grows.

Look at chapter 10. The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves.

For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[17:04] So rather than truly cleansing from sin and washing the conscience from sin, those annual sacrifices were just reminders that you still have sin.

How much more then will the once for all offering of Christ actually cleanse our consciences from sin? Over in verses 19 and following.

Therefore, brothers, verse 18. And where these have been forgiven, that is our sins and lawless acts, I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Because that sacrifice is the sacrifice of Christ, as he's just proven. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence, assurance to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way open for us through the curtain that is his body.

And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

[18:14] Having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. There is an inward work.

There is an inward washing of the heart by the blood of Christ that cleanses the guilty conscience of that burden that we're guilty before God.

And it's faith in the crucified Jesus. That's the faith that saves you at conversion. It is also the same faith that gives you assurance that Christ is yours and you are his and the guilt is gone forever.

And you are righteous in the sight of God. It is through the cross and clear views of the cross that assurance comes. Take your Trinity hymnal and turn to number 531.

You don't need to clear your voice. We're not going to sing. But I want you to see from another John, John Newton, just a testimony to this same dynamic of the spiritual life, the Christian life.

[19:26] John Newton, the converted slave trader. We studied his life a couple of years ago.

Do you suppose John Newton ever felt guilty for what he had done to slaves? I'm talking about after he's a Christian, after he's put his faith in Jesus Christ. Do you think he ever wrestled?

There were days when he was under a cloud of guilt and a sense of his sin. And oh, God, will you forgive that sin? Well, he gives us a little peek into his heart here when he's telling us how to pray and to come before God.

And he's saying, come, my soul, your suit prepare, your case prepare. Jesus loves to answer prayer. He's bid you pray, therefore he will not say you nay.

So I'm going to prepare my suit. I'm going to come to this king with big petitions. And verse three, with my burden, I begin. Oh, but John, you've already trusted in Christ.

[20:34] I still have burdens of sin on my back. With my burden, I begin. Lord, remove this load of sin.

Let thy blood for sinners spilt. Set my conscience free from guilt. Do you see it? As believers, we know what it is to have this burden, this load of sin.

Even though we've trusted in Christ, we're united to him by faith at conversion. Yet we can carry a load of guilt on our conscience. And where does Newton find freedom from the guilt of sin?

At the cross. The only place there is freedom from the guilt of sin. Let thy blood for sinners spilt. Set my conscience free from guilt.

So again, we're seeing. It's one thing to have sin and guilt before God. Objective guilt and sin that's removed at the moment of conversion. At the moment we put faith in the blood of Christ, we're forgiven.

[21:42] But it's another thing to have the enjoyment of the assurance that it's all forgiven. And that's what he prays for here. And that's what he looks to Christ again and again.

To have his conscience cleansed from guilt. And you're familiar. We just taught through or preached through the book of 1 John. What's the purpose of the letter of 1 John?

Do you remember? These things I have written to you that you might. To you that believe that you might. No, it's a book for assurance. It's a book to give assurance to believers in Jesus. The very purpose of the book posits the fact that people can have true faith, belief in Jesus Christ. In whom is life.

And so they have life, eternal life. And yet they may need to know that they have eternal life. They may need to know better that they have eternal life.

[22 : 41] And so 1 John is written. To teach Christians to come to this assurance of salvation. There are degrees of assurance.

And ups and downs. And people can have strength of assurance. And then go through valleys where they doubt. And this letter is written. That those who believe might know of a certainty. I can't help but see as I reflected upon that study of 1 John. How Christ crucified is emphasized in that letter. A letter written to give assurance of salvation.

And the apostle John holds up Christ in him crucified. Why? Because it is only through the blood of Christ that the guilty conscience is cleansed from sin. That there is the awareness that all my sins on Jesus were laid.

And therefore I have no guilt before God. I have no sins. It's been paid. It's completed. It's a finished work I rest in. And assurance is thereby given.

[23 : 48] Chapter 1 in verse 7. And in that letter we read. The blood of Christ.

His own son. The blood of Jesus his son. Purifies us from all sin. He's directing us. We who struggle with assurance. The blood of Jesus. Purifies from all sin.

From every sin. Chapter 2. My dear children. I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if any of you do sin. We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense.

Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is the propitiation. The atoning sacrifice for our sins. Believers. But you might know that eternal life is yours. Look again to your advocate in heaven. He is the atoning sacrifice. He is the one who has satisfied the wrath of God. On your behalf by taking the wrath himself.

[24 : 51] Chapter 3. Verse 16. This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. The cross.

Chapter 4. Verse 10. This is love. Not that we love God. But that he loved us. And sent his son. As an atoning sacrifice. A propitiation. One to satisfy God's wrath. Against us for our sins. So. Over and over.

We have these. Words about Christ crucified. In this letter. That's meant to give assurance. To true believers. Now. Some believers.

Have such clear views of the cross. Initially at conversion. That they enjoy immediate peace. Immediate sense of relief. From all the burden. It's gone off their back.

[25 : 54] But as I said before. It can. No. Increases and decreases. That burden can return. Later on. Now. Sin. Does not return.

To your account in heaven. It's not like. Well. I believed on Christ. And all my sins. Were placed on Christ. And he took them. And he put all his righteousness. On me. But later on. Down the road. Some of my sins.

Might be placed back. On my. My record in heaven. And I might really be liable. To God's punishment. No. That never happens. But down here on earth. I can have the guilt of sin. Back on my back. I can pull back. Something of the load. Of my sin. And feelings of guilt. And because of that. I need. To go to the cross again.

It's clear understanding. Of Christ crucified. That brings assurance. Or brings a stronger assurance. And that's why the scene. Of Christian losing his burden.

[26 : 48] At the cross. Is on down the road a bit. In Bunyan's allegory. Because not all. Not all Christians. Have that full assurance. Immediately.

Upon believing. And again. I would say. That this is not to say. That the cross is not central. In our conversion. It is. It is for all.

Who are converted. Faith in his blood. Is what takes our sins away. And brings the righteousness of God. Righteousness of Christ. To our account. But I wonder. How many of you.

Understand the cross of Christ. Better now. Than you did when you first believed. Do you understand more. Of what happened at Calvary.

That day. Two thousand years ago. On a cross. Over on the other side. Of the world. In real space time history. In a real man. Jesus of Nazareth.

[27 : 43] Who was also. God's eternal son. Do you. Do you understand. More today. About what happened there. For you. And I ask you.

Does that knowledge of Christ. That. That deeper insight. Into the cross. Does that. That do anything. For your assurance. Of salvation. Does it. Does it do anything.

To. To give you the peace. And joy. Of believing. That your sins. Are gone. That there's no guilt. In heaven. Before God.

Of course it does. The cross. Is central. To our. Assurance. And. To our. Ongoing.

Awareness. Of. What. How secure. We are. As Christians. How. How secure. We are. To never be able.

[28 : 38] To lose. Our salvation. The fuller. You understand. Christ. Damned. In your place. At Calvary. Then. The stronger. Your assurance. In the Christian life.

Now. You who are familiar. With pilgrim's progress. Knows. Know that in part two. We have the journey. Of. Christiana. This is. Christian's wife.

The one who. Initially. Just put him to bed. And said he'll feel better. And didn't understand at all. His conviction of sin. Or his reason for going on this spiritual trek. Later on.

She does. Come to trust in Christ herself. And she arrives at the gate. Of conversion. And it's interesting. As. As you read. The experience of Christiana.

At the gate. When Christiana. And her children. And mercy. Came to the gate. They were let in. And goodwill. Took them up to the top of the gate house. And showed them. By what deed. They were saved.

[29 : 34] The footnote says. Christ crucified. Seen afar off. At the gate. They saw Christ crucified. So Bunyan is not ruling out.

Christ crucified at the gate. We see it. And. Explicitly stated. In Christiana's conversion. It was Christ crucified. Seen afar off.

And then they were told. That that sight. They would have again. To their comfort. As they went along the way. In other words.

Christ in him crucified. Is not something. That you will just find comfort at. Here at your conversion. But along the way. That sight will be there for you. To encourage you. And to comfort you.

Along the way. So we looked. By faith to Christ. Crucified at conversion. It's very part of conversion. Christiana was drinking. So deeply from the fountain.

[30 : 30] That. She had. This great assurance. Of salvation. Right there. At the gate. But even clearer views. For her. Were still ahead. For her comfort.

And we also find. That Christiana. Didn't have to wait. Long. For her. Her burden of guilt. To be gone. It fell off. And she didn't have. The long struggle. In the slalom. Despond. As her husband did. So there were. Differences. About her. Testimony of conversion. Than. The way. Christian. Was converted. Well.

Know if you want to vote again. Where does conversion take place. At the gate. Or at the cross. Let me just say. Pilgrim's progress.

Remind you. And you don't need to remind. But I'm going to remind you anyway. Pilgrim's progress. Is not inspired. It is not the word of God. And maybe Bunyan.

[31 : 27] Erred here. He could have at least. Had some reference to the cross. In. In Christians conversion. We would have liked to have seen. The cross more central.

And more stated. Right at the gate. For Christian. Even as he at least mentions it. In. Christianus conversion. In the cross. In the cross. In the cross. Because the message of the cross.

Is the power of God. To salvation. Charles Spurgeon had some criticism for his friend John Bunyan at this very point.

And I'm ready to hear a criticism from Charles Spurgeon about John Bunyan because he read The Pilgrim's Progress some hundred times in his lifetime. He's a friend of The Pilgrim's Progress. He's a friend of John Bunyan.

He's not one of these guys that's read it halfway through and has all these criticisms about the book. No, he speaks highly of it. He wrote a book called Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress.

[32 : 29] But he does have this criticism. I don't know that I've read any other criticism for Bunyan except at this point. And let me just read what he says in Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress.

Charles Spurgeon. I always feel inclined to blame evangelists. And he's saying this at the Slough of Despond. There's poor Christian with the burden on his back, sinking deeper and deeper in the Slough.

And Spurgeon says, I always feel inclined to blame evangelists for some of the discomfort that poor Christians suffered in the Slough of Despond. I am a great lover of John Bunyan, but I do not believe him infallible.

And the other day I met with a story about him, which I think a very good one. There was a young man in Edinburgh who wished to be a missionary. He was a wise young man.

So he thought, if I am to be a missionary, there is no need for me to transport myself far away from home. I may as well be a missionary in Edinburgh. There's a hint to some of you ladies who give away tracts in your district and never give your servant Mary one.

[33 : 40] Well, this young man started and determined to speak to the very first person he met. He met one of those old fish wives. Those of us who have seen them can never forget them.

They are extraordinary women indeed. So stepping up to her, he said, Here you are coming along with your burden on your back. Let me ask you if you have got another burden, a spiritual burden. What? She asked. Do you mean that burden in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress? Because if you do, young man, I got rid of that many years ago, probably before you were born.

But I went a better way to work than the pilgrim did. The evangelist that John Bunyan talks about was one of your parsons that do not preach the gospel. For he said, keep that light in thine eye and run to the wicked gate.

Why, man alive, that was not the place for him to run to. He should have said, do you see that cross? Run there at once. But instead of that, he sent the poor pilgrim to the wicked gate first.

[34 : 42] And much good he got by going there. But did you not, the young man asked, go through any slough of despond?

Yes, I did. But I found it a great deal easier going through with my burden off than with it on my back. Spurgeon. Spurgeon. The old woman was quite right.

John Bunyan put the getting rid of the burden too far from the commencement of the pilgrimage. If he meant to show what usually happens, he was right. But if he meant to show what ought to have happened, he was wrong.

We must not say to the sinner, now sinner, if thou wilt be saved, go to the baptismal pool. Go to the wicked gate. Go to the church. Do this or that. No, the cross should be right in front of the wicked gate.

And we should say to the sinner, throw thyself down there and thou art safe. But thou are not safe till thou canst cast off thy burden and lie at the foot of the cross and find peace in Jesus.

[35 : 49] Later on, when Spurgeon's commenting on the fellow help who who helps pilgrim out of the slough to spawn.

He's challenging us to be true helpers to others in distress about their sin. And he says, do, if you would help souls, point them to the Savior.

Do not trouble them with irrelevant matters, but direct them at once to the precious blood of Jesus. For that is the one source of pardon and cleansing.

Tell the sinner that whoever trusts in Jesus shall be saved. Do not point to the wicked gate as evangelists did. For that is not the truest way. But bid the sinner go straightway to the cross.

Poor Christian need not have wallowed in the slough to spawn if he'd met with a fully instructed believer. To direct him at the first. Oh, do not scold the mistaken evangelist.

[36 : 46] But seek by always pointing the sinner to Calvary. To undo the mischief he wrought to the pilgrim. Well, you may agree with Spurgeon. You may disagree with him.

You can't disagree with the fact that we need to hold the cross before sinners. I guess the only question is, was that implied in Bunyan's directing him to the wicked gate, which was Christ and him crucified.

And he must come to this crucified Savior to get on the narrow way. Was it implied, well, should it have been more explicit? Should it have been had the cross right there before the wicked gate, right there with the gate?

So I think in fairness to Bunyan, and Spurgeon is fair to Bunyan, when he says, if he is describing what often is, he is right.

If he's describing what ought to be, he is in the wrong. And so we give deference and we put the best construction on his writing. We say, what Bunyan is doing here is not describing what ought to be, but what was and often is the case.

[37 : 54] You see, it's another page from Bunyan's own testimony, from his own experience. He had, remember as we studied it before we started Pilgrim's Progress, he had long struggles with assurance of salvation.

Even once he was a member at the Bedford Church, he struggled long with the assurance that his sin and guilt was gone, with the burden, you see, of guilt.

Quote, He, God, allowed me to be afflicted with temptations about these truths and then revealed them to me. This is Bunyan's own testimony, speaking about himself.

Sometimes, for instance, I would be under a great burden of guilt for my sins and crushed to the ground by them. And then the Lord would show me the death of Christ and so sprinkle my conscience with his blood that where the moment before the law raged against me, now suddenly there would be rest and peace and the love of God through Christ.

He had both. He had periods where he felt this great burden and guilt of sin, and then he felt this great relief that came again through the blood, the sprinkled blood of Christ.

[39 : 07] So his allegory is bearing testimony how he came to Christ. And in his experience, even after conversion, he found yet struggles with the assurance that his sin and guilt was gone.

Bunyan's footnote, as Christian is told here at the gate, that deliverance from the burden will fall, or that Christian is told that at the place of deliverance, the burden will fall from his back by itself.

And in the footnote, Bunyan says, there is no deliverance from the guilt and burden of sin, but by the death and blood of Christ. So our brother is dead on when it comes to, there's no conversion, there's no deliverance from the wrath of God, from the burden and guilt of sin, but by the death and blood of Christ.

And so Bunyan struggled with assurance of salvation, and later on he writes as a mature Christian, and he says, I find to this day seven abominations in my heart.

And number three is a leaning to the works of the law. That is a propensity to think that his standing with God is based on how well he's doing at obeying God's commands today.

[40 : 26] I find this abomination in my heart, this leaning to the works of the law for my standing before God. Well, that's the surest way to the burden of guilt.

And Bunyan says, but you know, God in his wisdom even takes that perversion in my heart and works it for my good, because it convinces me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness and shows me the necessity of flying to Jesus.

When I lean to my own obedience as my standing before God, I'm thrust down under sin and guilt, and it spans me and it shows me, sinner, you've got to look to Christ and Christ alone.

Oh, it is a good thing to be on our knees with Christ in our arms before God. So goodwill does not help him off with his burden at once.

Sins are forgiven at once, but assurance that they're forgiven is something he must wait on God for. And I do believe Bunyan is teaching us that rather than trying ourselves to give a new convert who professes faith in Christ immediate assurance, we ought to labor at pointing them to Christ.

[41 : 43] Be sure you are trusting in Christ. Be sure you enter truly into Christ the gate. Be sure you rest on Christ's righteousness alone. And then leave the burden to God.

He's the one to give assurance in his own time and way, and it's sight of Christ and him crucified that will remove that doubt. And the more you see it now, the more you will enjoy the comfort of it. And this all might sound a bit strange upon our ears today, as many Christian workers and pastors labor as soon as someone has prayed the sinner's prayer to say, OK, now, does God not say whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved?

Yes. Romans 10, 13. Did you call on the name of the Lord? Yes. Then that means you are saved. Don't ever doubt it. It will be the devil trying to get you to doubt your salvation.

And so you have Christian workers speaking to people who are just professing. I mean, that would be like giving assurance to Pliable. He hopped in and followed along with Christian.

[42 : 50] OK, Pliable, never doubt that you're lost again. And we see the problem that that's created in filling the church with false professors in our own day.

Better to press people to Christ and Him crucified and let the realities of that fact be pressed home to their hearts by God and a true assurance be given by God rather than by some Christian worker.

Well, our time is gone. May the Lord help us to glory in Christ and Him crucified and may we come to know the peace and joy that comes from believing it.
We're dismissed.