

Called Home

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could read again the verses in John 14. John 14, reading from the beginning, where Jesus says, Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.

And receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also. Where I am, there you may be also.

I'm sure that you're familiar with the phrase, famous last words. Famous last words. It's a phrase which highlights what someone said just before they died.

And when you look up the phrase, when you look it up on the internet, when you look up the phrase famous last words, you're given lists and lists of famous people and what their last words were before they left the scene of time and entered the great eternity.

[1 : 1 4] It was their famous last words. Words. But to be honest, when you read their famous last words, they're not really worth remembering. There was one amusing phrase, which was the famous last words of a Greek philosopher called Epicurus, who died in 270 BC.

And he said his famous last words were, Now farewell and remember all my words. But you know, the majority of what Epicurus said and wrote has been lost, meaning that no one can remember any of his famous last words.

And yet everyone can remember the last words of Jesus. Everyone remembers the last words of Jesus as he hung upon that Roman cross. There were seven of them.

The seven sayings of Jesus. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. What he said to the thief on the cross, Today you shall be with me in paradise.

What Jesus said to his mother, Woman, behold your son. Or what Jesus cried in the darkness, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? When Jesus said, I thirst, it is finished.

[2 : 2 9] And Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. They were Jesus' last words. And everyone can remember the last words of Jesus on the cross because they were famous last words.

But there were also many martyrs throughout church history who were put to death for their faith. There was Stephen. He was the first martyr. And as he was being stoned to death, he looked up to heaven and he said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and do not hold this sin against them.

And you know, also in similar words to Stephen and to Jesus, while the Scottish reformer Patrick Hamilton, while he was being burned at the stake in St Andrews, he said, How long, Lord, shall darkness cover this land?

How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of men? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. It was also William Tyndale who first translated the Bible into English.

When he was being put to death, he cried, Lord, open the King of England's eyes. Of course, there were many other Christians throughout church history who were martyred for their faith.

[3 : 45] And they all had famous last words, you could say. And you can actually read about them in John Fox's book called Fox's Book of Martyrs.

John Bunyan, he certainly liked Fox's Book of Martyrs. Because next to the Bible, that was the only other book that Bunyan had while he was in prison for 12 years.

But as we come to the end of Bunyan's masterpiece, what is the pilgrim's progress? As we come to the end of the pilgrim's progress this evening, there is, for me, an element of sadness that we're not going to be walking along the King's Highway anymore with these pilgrims.

Because this evening, what we see is that one by one, all these pilgrims, they're called home. They're finally called home to the celestial city.

But as each pilgrim is called home, we'll see that they all utter famous last words. They all utter famous last words.

[4 : 51] And I'd just like us to consider this concluding section to part two of the pilgrim's progress. I want us to think about it this evening under two headings. So first of all, Christiana called home.

As he begins the concluding chapter of the pilgrim's progress, Bunyan, he writes, Now you remember last Lord's Day that there were now 16 pilgrims in the pilgrim's progress, and they were all being led by Great Heart, their guide.

There was Christiana, there was Mercy and Matthew, there was Phoebe and James, there was Grace and Samuel, there was Joseph and Martha, there was Old Honest, Mr. Feeble Mind, Mr. Ready to Halt with his crutches, Mr. Despondency, Much Afraid, Valiant for Truth, and also Stand Fast.

And all six pilgrims, 16 pilgrims, they all came into the land of Beulah to rest a while before they were called to the city of, the celestial city.

And you know, from Christian's experience in the pilgrim's progress, we know that the land of Beulah, it was a land that was sweet and pleasant.

[6 : 32] There was the sound of birds singing and flowers blooming, and there was also the song of the turtle dove in the land. And that's because the name of this land means married.

The word Beulah is Hebrew for married. And the passage which Bunyan is throwing our attention to is the description in Isaiah chapter 62.

It's a beautiful chapter about the salvation of God's covenant people. Because in Isaiah chapter 62, the Lord says about his covenant people, he says, you shall no more be called forsaken, and your land shall no more be called desolate, but you shall be called, my delight is in her, and your land shall be called married, or Beulah.

For the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be Beulah. As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

And you know what Bunyan describes as he writes about Beulah is this covenant, this covenant relationship between the bride and the bridegroom.

[7 : 48] And Bunyan actually, he writes in part one, he says, But you know what's remarkable about the land of Beulah is that as the pilgrims were there, as these 16 pilgrims were there, they all enjoyed the sights, and the sounds, and the smells of the celestial city.

The pilgrims could actually see from the land of Beulah, they could see the celestial city, they could see that it was built with pearls, and precious stones. They could see that the streets of the city were paved with pure gold.

The pilgrims could also hear singing. They could hear singing coming from the celestial city. There was shouting from those within, they were shouting, Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes.

Behold, his reward is with him. But the pilgrims, they could also smell sweet fragrances and spices. And even as you read it, you see that they used some of these spices to prepare their bodies before they crossed the final river.

The final river, of course, is an illustration of death. And as you know, there was no bridge to cross over the final river. And the final river, it was very deep.

[9 : 30] But in order to get to the celestial city, in order for every pilgrim to get home to glory, they all had to walk through the final river. They all had to pass through death.

But the wonderful thing about the final river is that it came with the Lord's promise in Isaiah 43, where we read, Fear not, for I have redeemed you.

I have called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you go through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel.

They're beautiful words of comfort and assurance for the pilgrim when they're finally called home. to go over the river and into the celestial city.

And that's what we see in this concluding chapter in the pilgrim's progress. We see that Christiana is called home. Because we read that while the pilgrims were in the land of Beulah, there was a noise in the town that a messenger had come from the celestial city with a matter of great importance to Christiana.

[10 : 45] And when Christiana was found, we're told that the messenger presented her with a letter, a letter which read, Hail, good woman. I bring you good tidings.

The master is calling for you and is expecting that you should stand in his presence in clothes of everlasting life within 10 days.

But, you know, in order to prove that the messenger and his message was genuine, Christiana was given an arrow. She was given an arrow with a pointed sharp.

Pointed, it had a sharp point on the arrow. And we're told that it was pointed sharp with love. The arrow is an illustration of Psalm 45.

Because Psalm 45 is, it's a love song. It's a wedding song where the king, in all his beauty, he's calling his bride to come to his palace.

[11 : 47] He's calling his bride to come home to him. And the king, he sends out his arrows in Psalm 45. He sends out his arrows to pierce the hearts of his people and draw them to himself.

And he draws them to himself until at last, as it is in the New Testament, the bride of Christ, the church of Jesus Christ, they're called home. And, you know, we read those wonderful words in Psalm 45, don't we?

Those words, they shall be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side and to the palace of the king, where and there they shall abide.

Then we read that when Christiana saw that her time was come and that she was the first of the pilgrims to be called home and to cross the river, like Jacob did with his 12 sons, Christiana, she called her four sons, she called them to herself to give them her blessing.

And Christiana, she told Matthew and Joseph and Samuel and James, she told them that she was glad. She was glad that they had been with her in the pilgrim's progress.

[13 : 02] And there was such a comfort to her that they had the name of Christ written upon their foreheads and that their garments had been washed and made white in the blood of the lamb.

And, you know, even reading that, you have to think that as a Christian parent just about to leave this world, you know, it must have been the greatest comfort and the greatest assurance to know that your children and even your grandchildren, they're safe and secure in Christ.

And, you know, I'm sure that for many of you, you grew up with Christian parents and grandparents and you were certainly aware of their prayers and even their longing for you to come to Christ and to be saved.

But as the years have gone by, as you know, they have since crossed the river, they've entered the celestial city, they've gone home to be with the Lord.

But maybe for you, your parents didn't see you converted. They didn't get to rejoice with you as you committed your life to Jesus Christ.

[14 : 13] They didn't sit with you at the Lord's table. But, you know, when you cross that final river for yourself, my Christian friend, when you are called home to be with Jesus, your hope and assurance is that you will see your parents and your grandparents.

You will see them face to face and you will worship the Lord with them together. But, you know, I also think of some of you this evening and you had Christian parents and grandparents and they've gone home to glory, but you still don't have that hope and assurance because you're not saved.

You're still lost. You're still in the same condition that you were in when your parents and your grandparents were still alive. And, you know, my unconverted friend, I have to say to you that with all that you've heard over the past few months, is it not about time?

Is it not about time that you began the pilgrim's progress? Is it not about time that you committed your life to Jesus Christ? Is it not about time that you cried out like the publican, God be merciful to me, a sinner?

Is it not about time that you began the pilgrim's progress? But, you know, when Christiana was called home, she not only called her children to herself, she also individually called these pilgrims to speak to them one last time.

[15 : 56] Christiana, she called for valiant for truth and she asked him to watch over her children and to continue to guide them in her absence. She said, Sir, you have in all places shown yourself true-hearted.

Be faithful unto death and my king will give you a crown of life. I would also entreat you to have an eye to my children and if at any time you see them faint, speak comfortably to them.

Then Christiana, she called stand fast and she gave him a ring. And then she said to old honest, she told him the words that Jesus said to Nathaniel, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.

To Mr. Ready to halt with his crutches, Christiana said, Your journey has been difficult but it will make your rest sweeter. Therefore watch and be ready for at an hour when you think not the messenger may come.

Mr. Despondency and his daughter much afraid, they were also called to see Christiana. And Christiana said to them, she said, You ought to remember with thankfulness your deliverance from the hands of giant despair and doubting castle.

[17 : 16] The effect of such mercy is that you have been brought here safely. Therefore be watchful, cast away fear, be sober and hope to the end.

Last of all, Christiana spoke to Mr. Feeble Mind and she said to him, you were delivered from giant sleigh good that you would live in the light and see your king with comfort.

I only advise you that you turn your fear and doubt of his goodness into joy and security because when the king sends for you, you will stand before him blushing because you doubted so many of his promises.

And you know, it's an interesting point for Christiana to say to Mr. Feeble Mind, especially as someone who was often overcome with doubts and disbelief and despondency of their salvation.

But you know, Bunyan, he's actually asking us, he's saying to us that when we are called home, when we are called to cross the river and see Jesus face to face, Bunyan is saying to us, he's saying, will Jesus ask you, why were you so fearful, O ye of little faith?

[18 : 32] Or will Jesus say to you that you walked by faith and not by sight? That you lived with, you lived by surety and security in your salvation.

You lived according to the confession of faith that Paul makes in Galatians 2. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

My friend, Bunyan wants us to leave this world in security and with surety of our salvation. And then he writes, Bunyan writes, he says, now the day drew on that Christiana must go.

So the road was full of people. They were lining the streets just like a funeral procession. They were lining the streets to see her take her final journey.

But all the banks beyond the Jordan were, they were full of horses and they were full of chariots which had come down to the river to accompany her up to the great gate of the celestial city.

[19 : 47] And so we're told that Christiana, she entered the river and with a beckon of farewell to those who were behind her, her last words were, her famous last words were, I come, Lord, to be with thee and to bless thee.

I come, Lord, to be with thee and to bless thee. You know, it had been a long and difficult journey for Christian's widow.

It had been the bitter before the sweet. But Christiana, she was finally called home. Christiana was finally called home.

But as you know, there were other Christians in the pilgrim's progress who were yet to be called home. And that's what I'd like us to consider secondly. Christians called home.

So Christiana called home and then Christians called home. Christians called home. Bunyan writes, he says, in the process of time, there came a messenger to the town again and his business was with Mr.

[21 : 00] Ready to Halt. And the messenger said to him, I have come from him whom you have loved and followed though upon crutches. And my message is to tell you that he expects you at his table to sup with him in his kingdom.

Therefore, prepare yourself for this journey. You remember that Mr. Ready to Halt, he was the one who walked the king's highway leaning upon his crutches.

His crutches which were the promises of God. And that's because Mr. Ready to Halt, he was the Mephibosheth of the pilgrim's progress. Mephibosheth, you'll remember in 2 Samuel, he was the son of Jonathan.

He was lame on both his feet. He had been lame on both his feet from about the age of 5. And yet he was invited to come and sit and eat at the table of King David just like King David's sons.

And you know, that was the summons of Mr. Ready to Halt. Like Mephibosheth, he was invited and he was instructed to come and to eat at the king's table forever.

[22 : 12] And with this, Mr. Ready to Halt, he called for all his fellow pilgrims who were left behind with him and he told them that he had nothing to leave behind in a will except his crutches.

Mr. Ready to Halt said, he said, these crutches I bequeath to my son, my son that shall tread in my steps with a hundred warm wishes that he may prove better than I have done.

Then Mr. Ready to Halt, he thanked Great Heart, the guide, for his conduct and his kindness and he made his way towards the river. And when Mr.

Ready to Halt, when he came to the banks of the river, he said, now I shall have no more need of these crutches since there are chariots and horses for me to ride upon.

And the last words, the famous last words that Mr. Ready to Halt uttered were, welcome life. Welcome life.

[23 : 17] What a beautiful statement to say at death. Welcome life. Eternal life. And after this we read that Mr.

Feeble Mind was next to be called home. In the messenger he sounded a horn and Mr. Feeble Mind, he said to Mr. Feeble Mind, I have come to tell you that your master has need of you and that in a very little time you must behold his face in brightness.

In many ways it was what Paul said to the Corinthians that now we see through a glass darkly. That was Mr. Feeble Mind. He saw through the glass darkly but then we shall see Jesus face to face.

And you know when Mr. Feeble Mind when he heard the news he called for all the other pilgrims just like those before him and he told them that he had been called home.

But said Mr. Feeble Mind since I have nothing to bequeath to any to what purpose should I make a will. As for my feeble mind that I will leave behind me for I shall have no need of it in the place where I am going nor is it worth bestowing upon the poorest pilgrim.

[24 : 36] Therefore when I'm gone I desire that valiant for truth bury it bury it in a dunghill. And you know when the day came for Mr. Feeble Mind to depart he entered the final river of death uttering his famous last words hold out faith and patience.

Hold out faith and patience. Then we read that Mr. Despondency and his daughter Much Afraid they were also sent for.

The message delivered to them read you are summoned to be ready for your king by next Lord's day so that you may be delivered from all your doubts and shout for joy.

Of course when Mr. Despondency and Much Afraid wrote a will they hoped that all of these ghosts of discouraged feelings and slavish fears which had hindered and hampered them in the pilgrim's progress they hoped that no one would receive them after their death they hoped that they would be cast away forever and that these ghosts would not make themselves known to other pilgrims but when the time came for them to depart Mr.

Despondency and his daughter Much Afraid they went to the bank of the river and were told that Much Afraid she started singing she started singing as she entered the final river and the famous last words of Mr.

[26 : 13] Despondency were farewell night welcome day farewell night welcome day because in heaven my friend we're told there is no night there only day farewell night welcome day then after a while old honest was next to be called home but at that time we're told the banks of the river they overflowed in some places but old honest he had promised that he would meet a man there he would meet a man called good conscience at the banks of the river and he did old honest and good conscience they met at the banks of the river and they helped one another cross the final river and the famous last words of old honest were grace reigns grace reigns but you know as old honest as he saw the other pilgrims cross over the river before him you know he must have wondered why as someone who was old honest he must have wondered why the lord had left him for so long and there are many pilgrims you know there are many people like old honest they've been walking the pilgrim's progress for a long long time and they're getting tired of the journey they're weary of the journey they can count more of their family and their friends among the dead than among the living and they often question

I've got an elder that often questions why has the lord left me here until now but you know Banyan's answer to that is so that you wait for good conscience you will meet good conscience at the banks of the river and you know my friend the perseverance of a Christian to the end or the preservation of a Christian right to the end of their life you know it's the greatest evidence of grace the greatest evidence of grace is the perseverance of a Christian right to the end you know that's why old honest could say after his long journey he could say that as he crossed the final river he said grace reigns grace reigns then not long after that valiant for truth was called home and when he received the summons he called for all his friends and he said my sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage and my courage and skill to him that can get it my marks and scars

I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have fought his battles who now will be my rewarder and on the day in which valiant for truth entered the river his famous last words were he said oh death where is thy sting and as he went deeper down deeper into the river he said oh grave where is thy victory oh death where is thy sting oh grave where is thy victory and then the last pilgrim to be called home was stand fast and when stand fast was summoned he immediately asked great heart he said to great heart to to relay a message to his wife and five small children whom he had left behind stand fast said tell them of my happy arrival to this place tell them of my blessed condition tell them of christian and christiana's wife and how she and her children came after her husband tell them also what a happy end she made and whether she is gone i have little or nothing to send to my family unless it be my prayers and my tears for them you know like every christian spouse stand fast he still had a burden for his unconverted wife and his unconverted children whom he had left behind he still had a care and a concern for them right up until his dying breath but you know stand fast as he entered the final river he gave this great speech this great speech of assurance he said this river has been a terror to many and the thought of it also frightened me but i see myself now at the end of my journey my toilsome days are ended i am going to see that head which was crowned with thorns and that face which was spit upon for me i have formerly lived by faith but now i go where i shall live by sight and shall be with him whose company i shall delight myself in i have loved to hear my lord spoken of and wherever i have seen the print of his shoe on the earth i have coveted to set my foot thereto his name has been perfumed to me sweeter than all sweet smells his voice has been most sweet to me and his countenance i have desired more than they that desire the light of the sun his word he says his word i did use to gather for my food and for my medicine against my faintings he has held me said stand fast he has kept me and he has kept my steps and strengthened me in his way and while stand fast while stand fast was speaking we're told there is countenance changed and he gave his famous last word take me for i am come to thee lord take me for i am come to thee and then bunyan writes that it was glorious to see all the pilgrims follow one another in at the beautiful gate of the celestial city you know bunyan is reminding us in this concluding chapter he's reminding us of the promise of jesus that we read in john 14 for jesus said to his disciples not only the disciples of the first century but also his disciples in every century jesus said in my father's house are many mansions if it were not so i would have told

you i go to prepare a place for you and if i go and prepare a place for you i will come again save you unto myself that where i am there you may be also jesus promised my friend jesus promised that he will call his people home and he will call them one by one he will call his people home so that where i am he says there you may be also but you know what's interesting is that unlike his conclusion to part one where christians spoke of ignorance and how ignorance was refused entrance to the celestial city you remember how how bunyan concluded part one with the solemn words he said so they took ignorance and carried him to the door which i had seen in the side of the hill and they threw him in then i saw that there was a way to hell even from the gates of heaven but what's interesting is that bunyan he doesn't conclude part two of the pilgrim's progress in the same way rather bunyan he concludes by writing he says as for christian's children the four boys that christiana brought with her with their wives and children i did not stay where i was till they were gone over also since i came away i heard one say that they were yet alive and so would be for the help of the church in the place where they were for a time so shall it be my lot to go that way again i may give those that desire it an account of what i am here silent about in the meantime i bid my reader adieu and that's how part two of pilgrim's progress ends that's how he concludes but you know it seems that as

Bunyan came to the end of part two he was thinking about writing part three which would have been a story about Christiana and Christian's sons and their wives and also the grandchildren but of course before he wrote part three Bunyan himself was called home as you know part two of the pilgrim's progress it was published in 1684 and Bunyan he himself crossed the final river and he entered the semestinal city on the 31st of August 1688 at the age of only 60 my friend John Bunyan he was called home before he wrote part three but he has left us a great legacy in part one and part two he has left us this great legacy in the pilgrim's progress and there's no doubt that the pilgrim's progress it's an encouraging book but it's also an evangelistic book because parts one and two of the pilgrim's progress they repeatedly remind us that it's appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment and you know with this concluding chapter filled with all these pilgrims being called home one at a time they're all being called out of the scene of time into eternity they're all being called to go through the river of death and enter the celestial city and with all these pilgrims being called home

[36 : 51] Bunyan is asking us he's asking us that great gospel question are you ready to die are you ready to die Bunyan is asking us right at the end he's saying have you fled the city of destruction have you been delivered from the slough of despond have you crossed the threshold of the wicked gate have you explored the interpreter's house have you come to the cross of Jesus Christ has your burden rolled away have you been clothed in the righteousness of Christ have you climbed the hill called difficulty have you received the pilgrim's welcome at the palace beautiful have you fought with Apollyon in the valley of humiliation have you passed through the valley of the shadow of death have you encountered the temptations of the town of vanity have you experienced the dark dungeon of doubting castle have you enjoyed the delights of the delectable mountains have you stayed awake on the enchanted ground and are you ready are you ready to cross the final river and enter the gates at the celestial city

Bunyan is asking us in 2021 are you ready to die my friend are you ready to die you know my unconverted friend you have witnessed all these pilgrims you've witnessed other pilgrims even around you you've watched them walk along the king's highway towards the celestial city but you know my friend now it's your turn now it's your turn to begin the pilgrim's progress don't put it off because now it's your turn to begin this pilgrim's progress from the city of destruction all the way to the celestial city you begin you start tonight and begin the pilgrim's progress well may the

Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray our heavenly father we give thanks to thee that we do have a father in heaven and that we also know thy son who is in heaven with thee and that we have the promise that by faith the faith that we have tonight it will one day give way to sight where we shall see thy son who is in heaven we shall see him we shall be like him we know all the blessings and all the promises to be ours and we will know that eternal life oh lord we pray that each and every one of us would be on this pilgrim's progress heading towards the celestial city and for those lord who have not begun oh we pray that they would flee that they would flee the city of destruction that they would they would come towards the celestial city and wait to be called home to be with

Jesus because to be with Jesus is far better oh lord we give thanks for this study and we pray that thou were blessed to our souls blessed and make it meaningful to our eternal well-being that it would prepare us for glory that it would prepare us for the new Jerusalem where we gather together around the throne of God and the lamb and that we worship casting our crowns before him saying worthy is the lamb who was slain all go before us and we pray bless us we ask for we ask it in it's a song which directs us to praise

God as we go towards his house and of course it's directing us towards the celestial city and in verse seven we read and' To God's praise.

[42 : 37] To God's praise.

To God's praise.

To God's praise.

To God's praise.

To God's praise. To God's praise.

[45 : 09] To God's praise. To God's praise. To God's praise. To God's praise.