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## BATTLE WITH APOLLYON

IMMEDIATELY after leaving the House Beautiful, Christian descends into the Valley of Humiliation. This valley is carefully placed to show us what can happen after a man associates with a local body of Christian believers. Not only in Bunyan's day, but in many parts of our world today Christians are subjected to scorn, ridicule, public censure and outright persecution simply because they identify themselves with the visible assembly of God's people. Many pay the price because they seek to worship the living God according to the dictates of their conscience in the congregation of His people. Jesus told us, "If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

Now there is a greater trial ahead of the pilgrim as he proceeds. Fortunately he is clad with the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, shoes of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Word of God, all of which were given him at the armory in the House Beautiful (Ephesians 6:10–18). He sees the devil, Apollyon the Destroyer, coming to meet him and he fears because the absence of armor for his back convinces him that he must stand and fight rather than turn and run. Of course, the referenced passage is, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

There is a real battle raging between the soul of the believer and the devil (Bunyan expands this theme of spiritual warfare in his

book *The Holy War*). The battleground is the human heart and the stakes are extremely high. There is a dreadful reality in spiritual battle that eclipses all other forms of combat. Even as Satan met Jesus to tempt Him in a weakened state in the wilderness, so Apollyon the Destroyer met Christian in a debilitated condition in the Valley of Humiliation. The battle is fierce, and Christian is wounded in his head, his hand and his foot. It seems that we would be made to see that the head wound weakens his understanding of salvation, the hand wound causes him to lose confidence in the Word of God and the foot wound affects his walk as a believer.

At age 16 Bunyan was conscripted to fight in the parliamentary army, and though he did not see much action throughout his military career, he understood close hand-to-hand combat. Warfare with demons is of this nature in the sense that it can take the form of close encounters, the theater of operation being the mind. Apollyon reminds Christian of all of his sins against God, his spiritual omissions and his many moral lapses. Christian's classic response is, "All this is true, and much more which thou hast left out; but the Prince whom I serve and honor is merciful, and ready to forgive."

It is significant to the allegory that Apollyon is wounded by Christian with the sword of the Word of God and that Christian continues on his journey with his sword drawn and in his hand.

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