
THE ENCHANTED GROUND

THE GREAT ENGLISH poet John Milton wrote a sonnet entitled *On His Blindness*, in which he comments on two postures of angelic beings:

... thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

The sinless angelic beings are able to serve their Maker with largeness of heart by flying to the furthest corners of the earth, or with equal love and zeal they can stand motionless within the radiant glory of the heavenly throne, wings folded and awaiting some divine directive to go. Either way, their creature employment is pure and holy, untainted by any of the stain of Adam's fall.

Unlike the angels, standing and waiting can in a certain sense be deadly for those of us who bear the marks of original sin. It is but a short step into lethargy and spiritual dullness if we are not watchful. The Enchanted Ground is just such a place where temporal circumstances are good, when the road has been easy on our feet and we tend to say to ourselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Material and circumstantial prosperity is the blessing of God, and yet we must notice how Bunyan sets the lay of the land in his allegory. Enchanted Ground is situated near the end of the Way, not far from Beulah Land. Those who have spent many years on the Way, fighting with Apollyon, climbing Hill Difficulty and dealing with Giant

Despair can sometimes wish to coast the last mile of the Way and fall into a deadly inertia which can bring them into spiritual ruin right within sight of the gates of the Celestial City.

The second part of *Pilgrim's Progress* is not as well known, yet it follows the pilgrimage of Christiana, the wife of Christian. Her encounter in the Enchanted Ground is very instructive.

... for this Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy of pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the Way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? And when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is placed so nigh to the land of Beulah, and so near the end of their race. Wherefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happens to them as it has done to many, that, as you see are fallen asleep, and none can awake them.

Paul warns in 1 Thessalonians 5:5–6 (NKJV):

You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.
