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## BY-PATH MEADOW

THE TWO PILGRIMS have just experienced an unusually rich season of spiritual refreshment on the Way. The Puritan Thomas Brooks referred to such times as “heaven on earth.”

Now the landscape begins to change, and the Way and the River begin to part and follow separate courses. We must keep in mind that the Way represents God’s will as it is revealed to us in His Word, and the River represents a “mountain-top experience” of heightened spiritual renewal. It is understandable that the two ways should digress, because the normal daily walk is not usually one of continual elevated ecstasy.

As the pilgrims walk for a while, they find that the Way is unusually rough and hard on their feet, and they begin to wish for an easier path to follow. As they would have it, there appears a stile leading to By-path meadow just on the other side of the Way.

It is natural for us to seek “a better way.” After all, a path that contains less hardship, minimal trouble or even a reasonable degree of comfort is our right, is it not? Life, liberty

and the pursuit of happiness are guaranteed us. How often the older generation laments, “I don’t want my kids to have to go through what I went through.” The point that Bunyan is trying to make is that the revealed will of God will not always put us in the way of comfort and safety. Even as Elizabeth Bunyan pleaded with Judge Twisdon to release her husband for her sake and the sake of the four children in her care, she had to answer the question, “Will your husband leave preaching?” Her answer could have been the choice of a better, more comfortable way, but she knew the dangers of By-path meadow and answered, “My Lord, he dares not leave preaching as long as he can speak.”

It is so very scientific to lean upon our God-given common sense, our logic, our ability to reason, but a natural sense of direction in spiritual things can be deadly. Scripture reminds us, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5).

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