

The Holy War Study Guide – Week 15

A Just Man Falls, But Rises Again

What primary Bible passages come to your mind as you read this assignment?

To what degree does the story accurately reflect Bible teaching?

He that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. These Pauline words from 1 Corinthians 10 could hang like an epitaph over the early pages of our assignment. In the euphoria of spiritual victory and growing confidence in themselves, the Mansouliaus pick a battle with Diabolus they feel certain they are to win. Rashly, they unwittingly choose the time most advantageous to him, and they opt for a field in which Diabolus can more easily outmaneuver them.

“The night of darkness and desertion was not a proper season for this exertion. This sally seems intended to describe the prevalence of a self-confident spirit, which cannot issue well” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 371).

Much surprise awaits the Mansouliaus as the forces they had hoped to route do the Mansouliaus great harm, inflict many wounds on Mansoul’s captains and soldiers, and even force themselves back into the town to work greater mischief. Mansoul, instead of finding herself invincible and strong, learns how weak and needy she truly is. At long last, faith begins to work godly sorrow within her walls, and with the aid of the Lord Secretary (Holy Spirit), successfully petitions Immanuel.

Under the guidance of Captains Credence, Experience, & Good-hope the skirmish against Diabolus outside the walls at first shows glimmers of success. Yet, in the midst of the fight, Captain Credence stumbles (faith did not endure long—*O ye of little faith!*) Credence’s stumbling leaves them vulnerable to Diabolus’ counter-attack and subject to the nearly fatal wounding of Captains Credence, Good-hope, and Experience (faith, hope, and experience).

In the original edition, Bunyan inserts a marginal note immediately following the wounding of the three captains. He writes, “Satan sometimes makes saints eat their words.” What does Bunyan mean by this?

Ironically, at the end of the skirmish, Diabolus is aglow with self-confidence and the assurance of victory. He makes bold the following day to demand the town's utter capitulation to him. Emboldened by Diabolus' nearness and impertinence, the formerly subdued Diabolonians that remained still within the walls of the town, grew bolder in their presence and began asserting themselves more overtly. They had been emboldened at the sight of Mansoul's troops going out of the walls and were even more so by the defeat suffered by the Mansoulians.

The thought . . . "For now is our time to stir and make an uproar in the town; what do they therefore but quickly get themselves into a body, and fall forthwith to huricaning in Mansoul, as if now nothing but whirlwind and tempest should be there."

What good effects does Lord Will-be-will's verbal and determined resistance to Diabolus and any known presence in the town of Diabolus' men have:

on Diabolus?

on the townsmen?

on Captain Credence (Faith)?

Never one to admit or accept defeat, Diabolus continues seeking a way to devour the city. His insatiable appetite to conquer the town causes him to let no strategy lie unconsidered. What strategy does Diabolus next adopt?

What is the significance of an attack on "weak" Feel-gate?

"They should derive their hope, not from feelings and frames in religious duties, etc., but from Jesus alone, and His perfect righteousness. But if on the contrary, they depend on their feelings, Satan may possibly enter the soul with innumerable doubts, and the fear of hell-fire may be terrible" (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 374).

The spreading, advancing cries of "Hell-fire" are designed to fill the Mansoulians' hearts with despair. They had successfully withstood the doubting army, but these cries seemed designed to make them fear that Shaddai had truly abandoned them to His wrath. Often believers can themselves cry out as Christ did on the cross, *My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?*

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. ²O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest (Psalm 22:1-2, NASB).

The entrance of Diabolus and more Diabolonians through Feel-gate sent the Mansouliaus scurrying to protect Heart Castle, very much in keeping with the spirit of Proverbs 4:20-23,

*²⁰My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.²¹Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart. ²²For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body. ²³**Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life** (NASB).*

Some fear of Shaddai yet remains in the city, and the heart is never given over. It is kept by Mr. Godly-fear, and ??????????????

The insurgence of the Diabolonians brought a negative transformation to the town and its atmosphere as the townsmen experienced the dregs of consequences of their sin. Diabolus' drummer permeated the town with his offensive beat, and the screeching cries of "Hell-fire!" accompanied it. Black clouds hung over the city, and the soldiers of Diabolus advanced and occupied rooms formerly housing the Mansouliaus. The Doubters surged, inaugurating a two-and-a-half year period of occupation when the glory of Mansoul was laid in the dust, her doubts reached lamentable peaks, and her lack of fellowship with Shaddai reached perilous depths. [I'm not sure if the time frame has any biographical significance for Bunyan.]

"Yea, where was there a corner, a cottage, a barn, or a hog-sty, that now was not full of these vermin? Yes, they turned the men of the town out of their houses, and would lie in their beds, and sit at the tables themselves. . . . Thy made great havoc of whatever they laid their hands on; yea, they fired [set fire to] the town in several places; many young children also were by them dashed in pieces, yea, those that were yet unborn they destroyed in their mothers' wombs And now did Mansoul seemd to be nothing but a den of dragons, an emblem of hell, and a place of total darkness. Now did Mansoul lie almost like the barren wilderness: nothing but nettles, briers, thorns, weeds, and stinking things seemed now to cover the face of Mansoul."

At long last, Mansoul's conviction of her sinfulness reached maturity, and she began to incline herself toward Immanuel, desiring to renew their petitions to Him energetically. Mr. Godly-fear's counsel direct them to their need to involve the Lord Secretary (Holy Spirit) in their petition – "the Lord Secretary would not set His hand to any petition that Himself had not a hand in composing and drawing up, and besides, said he, the Prince doth know my Lord Secretary's hand from all the hands in the world." The Lord Secretary would say, "True, the hand and pen shall be mine, but the ink and paper must be yours, else how can you say it is your petition!" What role of the Holy Spirit is Bunyan attempting to capture by this touching scene, and what primary Bible passage supports him?

The petition and Diabolus' response to it also provides a forum to magnify the vital role of Captain Credence (Faith) in our petitions and in our staying "faith-ful." The petition that Credence carries through Mouth-gate to Immanuel is worth extended meditation. It is not often that we get to eavesdrop on extended confessional prayers outside of Scripture. What elements stand out as noteworthy in this prayer? Are our own prayers of confession as deep as this one?

Intriguingly, the town's effort to petition Immanuel came to the attention of Diabolus, and he raised his roaring voice against them to nearly unprecedented volume and vigor, afflicting them with news of his venomous intentions against them and his pleas to have them deliver Credence (Faith) over to him. Yet for all of his raging, Diabolus' power proves ineffective to accomplish his designs while the town prays and claims the promises of Shaddai, and Diabolus can do little more than rage.

How does the message Credence brings back with him to Mansoul display genuine faith?

What is the spiritual significance of entrusting the care of Mansoul to the leadership of Captain Credence?