

The Holy War Study Guide – Week 16

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

To what degree does the story accurately reflect Bible teaching?

The Bible's promise that the Devil will flee from those who resist him is true; however, it is always wise for us to be aware that the Devil does not stay gone. His flights are often short, and his stays away brief. In fact, it is probably accurate for us to envision him simply using the flight as a time of reprieve and preparation ("council of war") for an assault of still another kind, designed ultimately to cause the heart to capitulate to him.

The opening "council of war" is suggestive and thought-provoking. Diabolus' aim continues to be what it always has been – he is dogged in his determination to rule in the hearts of men. His practical aim is make men sin—to practically side with him. Whether he can accomplish that best from a distance or up close is no matter to him. Whether it is by subterfuge or confrontation, or by prospering or by depriving, is superfluous. Whether splurging obvious attention on men or pretending to ignore them, Diabolus plods on in his insatiable appetite for Mansoul's destruction. His mind runs in a single track, though that track runs very deep.

Sin is more than falling – it also opens the door to greater falls and more perilous snares. It is one of the paths that opens the door to embracing false teaching:

¹⁸ For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, ¹⁹ promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them (2 Peter 2:18-21, NASB).

Sin, particularly, sustained sin inclines us to consider Satan's way increasingly pleasant. The devilish counsel has plotted before to cause Mansoul to make provision for the flesh by having something that feigns to be good to live with acceptance among them, and they once again deign to make a foothold for the Devil by having evil cloak itself as good. The devilish counsel is even willing to suffer temporary losses if only they might get what they consider to be eternal gain.

What an interesting collection of cloaked evil is assembled to implement the Laodecian strategy against Mansoul! How they are willing to see the town satiated with plenty so that they can echo the words of the Laodecian church as they destroy themselves - "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

"Yea, may we not by this means so cumber Mansoul with abundance, that they shall be forced to make of their castle a warehouse, instead of a garrison fortified against us, and a receptacle of men of war."

Notice the colorfully-named characters:

- Mr. Penny-wise-pound-foolish (might be better understood by us as Mr. Penny-wise-dollar-foolish)
- Mr. Get-i'the-hundred-and-lose-i'the-shire

"Penny-wise and pound-foolish, [and "Get-i'the-hundred" and "lose-i'the-shire"] are proverbial expressions, denoting the folly of those who are anxious to obtain small gains, while they neglect large profits. Satan having found that his doubts and fears did not succeed, but had rather kept men alert, now purposes to try the effect of worldly prosperity, as likely to produce carelessness. And indeed, great is the danger, when the castle, (the heart) which should be the temple of the Lord, is turned into a warehouse (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 396).

The following excerpt from Alexander Whyte provides a helpful, practical discussion of the way these characters manifest themselves in our lives (*Bunyan Characters*, vol. 3, ch. 13):

'For, what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—Our Lord.

This whole world is the penny, and our own souls are the pound. This whole world is the hundred, while heaven itself is the shire. And the question this evening is, Are we wise in the penny and foolish in the pound? And, are we getting in the hundred and losing in the shire?

1. Well, then, to begin at the beginning, we are already begun to be penny-wise and pound-foolish with our children when we are so particular with them about their saying their little prayers night and morning, while all the time we are so inattentive and so indolent to explain to them how they are to pray, what they are to pray for, and how they are to wait and how long they are to wait for the things they pray for. Then, again, we are penny-wise and pound-foolish with our children when we train them up into all the proprieties and etiquettes of family and social life, and at the same time pay so little attention to their inward life of opening thought and quickening desire and awakening passion. When we are so eager also for our children to be great with great people, without much regard to the moral and religious character of those great people, then again we are like a man who may be wise for a penny, but is certainly a fool for a pound. When we prefer the gay and the fashionable world to the intellectual, the religious, and the philanthropical world for our children, then we lose both the penny and the pound as well. Almost as much as we do when we accept the penny of wealth and station and so-called connection for a son or a daughter, in room of the pound of

character, and intelligence, and personal religion.

Then, again, even in our own religious life we are ourselves often and notoriously wise in the penny and foolish in the pound. As, for instance, when we are so scrupulous and so conscientious about forms and ceremonies, about times and places, and so on. In short, the whole ritual that has risen up around spiritual religion in all our churches, from that of the Pope himself out to that of George Fox—It is all the penny rather than the pound. This rite and that ceremony; this habit and that tradition; this ancient and long-established usage, as well as that new departure and that threatened innovation;—It is all, at its best, always the penny and never the pound. Satan busied me about the lesser matters of religion, says James Fraser of Brea, and made me neglect the more substantial points. He made me tithe to God my mint, and my anise and my cummin, and many other of my herbs, to my all but complete neglect of justice and mercy and faith and love. Whether there are any of the things that Brea would call mint and anise and cummin that are taking up too much of the time of our controversially-minded men in all our churches, highland and lowland, to-day is a matter for humbling thought. Labour, my brethren, for yourselves, at any rate, to get yourselves into that sane and sober habit of mind that instantly and instinctively puts all mint and all cummin of all kinds into the second place, and all the weightier matters, both of law and of gospel, into the first place. I wasted myself on too nice points, laments Brea in his deep, honest, clear-eyed autobiography. I did not proportion my religious things aright. The laird of Brea does not say in as many words that he was wise in the penny and foolish in the pound, but that is exactly what he means.

Then, again, the narrowness, the partiality, the sickliness, and the squeamishness of our consciences,—all that makes us to be too often penny-wise and pound-foolish in our religious life. A well-instructed, thoroughly wise, and well-balanced conscience is an immense blessing to that man who has purchased such a conscience for himself. There is an immense and a criminal waste of conscience that goes on among some of our best Christian people through the want of light and space, room, and breadth, and balance in their consciences. We are all pestered with people every day who are full of all manner of childish scrupulosity and sickly squeamishness in their ill-nourished, ill-exercised consciences. As long as a man's conscience is ignorant and weak and sickly it will, it must, spend and waste itself on the pennyworths of religion and morals instead of the pounds. It will occupy and torture itself with points and punctilios, jots and tittles, to the all but total oblivion, and to the all but complete neglect, of the substance and the essence of the Christian mind, the Christian heart, and the Christian character. The washing of hands, of cups, and of pots, was all the conscience that multitudes had in our Lord's day; and multitudes in our day scatter and waste their consciences on the same things. A good man, an otherwise good and admirable man, will absolutely ruin and destroy his conscience by points and scruples and traditions of men as fatally as another will by a life of debauchery. Some old and decayed ecclesiastical rubric; some absolutely indifferent form in public worship; some small casuistical question about a creed or a catechism; some too nice point of confessional interpretation; the mint and anise and cummin of such matters will fill and inflame and poison a man's mind and heart and conscience for months and for years, to the total destruction of all that for which churches and creeds exist; to the total suspense, if not the total and lasting destruction, of sobriety of mind, balance and breadth of judgment, humility, charity, and a hidden and a holy life. The penny of a perverted, partial, and fanaticised conscience has swallowed up the pound of instruction, and truth, and justice, and brotherly love.

2. 'Nor is the man with the long name at all inferior to the other,' said Lucifer, in laying his infernal plot against the peace and prosperity of Mansoul. Now, the man with the long name was just Mr. Get-i'-the-hundred-and-lose-i'-the-shire. A hundred in the old county geography of England was a political subdivision of a shire, in which five score freemen lived with their freeborn families. A county or a shire was described and enumerated by the poll-sheriff of that day as containing so many enfranchised hundreds; and the total number of hundreds made up the political unity of the shire. To this day we still hear from time to time of the 'Chiltern Hundreds,' which is a division of Buckinghamshire that belongs, along with its political franchise, to the Crown, and which is utilised for Crown purposes at certain political emergencies. This proverb, then, to get i' the hundred and lose i' the shire, is now quite plain to us. You might canvass so as to get a hundred, several

hundreds, many hundreds on your side, and yet you might lose when it came to counting up the whole shire. You might possess yourself of a hundred or two and yet be poor compared with him who possessed the whole shire. And then the proverb has been preserved out of the old political life of England, and has been moralised and spiritualised to us in the Holy War. And thus after to-night we shall always call this shrewd proverb to mind when we are tempted to take a part at the risk of the whole; to receive this world at the loss of the next world; or, as our Lord has it, to gain the whole world and to lose our own soul. Lot's choice of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Esau's purchase of the mess of pottage in the Old Testament; and then Judas's thirty pieces of silver, and Ananias and Sapphira's part of the price in the New Testament, are all so many well-known instances of getting in the hundred and losing in the shire. And not Esau's and Lot's only, but our own lives also have been full up to to-day of the same fatal transaction. This house, as our Lord again has it, this farm, this merchandise, this shop, this office, this salary, this honour, this home—all this on the one hand, and then our Lord Himself, His call, His cause, His Church, with everlasting life in the other—when it is set down before us in black and white in that way, the transaction, the proposal, the choice is preposterous, is insane, is absolutely impossible. But preposterous, insane, absolutely impossible, and all, there it is, in our own lives, in the lives of our sons and daughters, and in the lives of multitudes of other men and other men's sons and daughters besides ours. Every day you will be taken in, and you will stand by and see other men taken in with the present penny for the future pound: and with the poor pelting hundred under your eye for the full, far-extending, and ever-enriching shire. Lucifer is always abroad pressing on us in his malice the penny on the spot, for the pound which he keeps out of sight; he dazzles our eyes with the gain of the hundred till we gnash our teeth at the loss of the shire.

'He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief, who, for the love of thing that lasteth not, despoils himself for ever of THAT LOVE.'

- Mr. Sweet-world
- Mr. Present-good

From Another Corner

Eavesdropping on the counsel of hell can make us quite fearful and lead to despair. A timely return to Captain Credence and Immanuel arouses us from our focus on what Diabolus is doing and reminds us that he does not have the final word.

Immanuel not only knows of Diabolus' plans, but with the help of the Lord Secretary (Holy Spirit) he alerts Captain Credence to the danger of the traitorous design against them and gives him the foresight to prepare an offensive against it. In addition, Immanuel gives the town an intimation of His soon presence and abundant help to be close at hand, invigorating them and renewing and increasing their faith until they are willing to prepare and act.

The more that hope rises in the hearts of the Mansoulans, and the more they yield to the words of Captain Credence (Faith), the more uncomfortable the lingering Diabolonians are. Sensing difficulty, they alertly withdraw from the town to an easier and seemingly more advantageous place.

Growing, emboldened faith marks the Mansoulans in the preparation and during their battle with Diabolus. What are some of the ways that their faith evidences itself?

The entry of Immanuel is full of vitality and creativity – creative measures drawn up to convey their homage, joy, and delight in Immanuel and His return. Like the woman who anointing Jesus’ feet with oil and dried His feet with her hair, how often do we give creative, unscripted thought to ways we can express our love to Christ?

The Mansoul’s disposition following Immanuel’s return to Mansoul remained humble and willing to examine themselves carefully.

I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search (Psalm 77:6, KJV).

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? ²² I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies. ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; ²⁴ And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:21-24, NASB).

“Thus the victory was completed. All doubts of God’s grace and love were utterly destroyed; and pains were taken that, if possible, the succeeding generation might never be plagued with the name of a Doubter. The design of all of this is to show that doubt and distress as to the love of Christ, contrary to the declarations of His word, should be utterly suppressed, as being infinitely dishonorable to our faithful covenant with God, and unspeakably pernicious to our own souls” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 412).