

Journey to Hell

By
John Bunyan

Dear Reader,

As I was considering what I had written in *The Pilgrim's Progress* about the journey of one traveling from this world to glory, and how that book has been helpful to many, it came to me to write about the life and death of the ungodly, and of their travels from this world to hell. As you will see, I have done that in this book entitled *Journey to Hell*, a title very appropriate for such a subject. I have written this allegory as a dialogue to make it easier for me to tell the story and hopefully for you to enjoy it. Although I have created the conversation between the two characters, I have tried to stay true to reality. As a matter of fact, what these fictitious characters relate has been acted on the stage of this world many times—even before my own eyes.

Here then, courteous reader, I present you with the life and death of Mr. Badman. I follow him in his life from his childhood to his death so that you may, as in a mirror, observe with your own eyes the steps that lead to hell and also discern, while you are reading about Mr. Badman's death, whether you yourself are walking on the same path.

Let me implore you to refrain from ridicule and mockery because Mr. Badman is dead; instead, gravely ask yourself if you are one of his lineage, for Mr. Badman has left many of his relatives behind. In fact, the world is overrun with his family. True, some of his relatives, as he, are gone to their eternal home, but thousands and thousands are left behind, including brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, and innumerable friends and associates. I may say, and yet speak nothing but the truth in so saying, that there is scarcely a fellowship, community, family, or household where he has not left behind either a brother, nephew, or friend.

The target, therefore, that I shoot at is wide. It will be as impossible for this book to go into several families and not to arrest some as for government officials to rush into a houseful of traitors and find none but honest men there. I cannot but think that this shot will hit many, since our fields are so full of this game. How many it will kill to Mr. Badman's course and make alive to the Pilgrim's progress, I cannot determine. This secret is with the Lord our God alone, and only He knows to whom He will bless it to so good and so favorable an end. However, I have put fire to the pan, and I do not doubt but that the report will quickly be heard.

I told you before that Mr. Badman had left many of his friends and relatives behind. If I survive them, as that remains to be seen, I may also write of their lives; however, whether my life is long or short, this is my prayer at present: May God stir up witnesses against them who will either convert or destroy them, for wherever they live and wallow in their wickedness, they are a pest and a plague to that country.

England shakes and totters already because of the burden that Mr. Badman and his friends have wickedly laid upon it. Yes, our earth reels and staggers to and fro like a drunkard (see Psalm 107:27) because of the heaviness of its transgressions.

Courteous reader, I advise you now, even as we stand at the door and threshold of this house, that Mr. Badman lies dead within. Be pleased, therefore, if your leisure will permit, to enter and see the state in which he is laid, between his deathbed and the grave. He is not buried as yet, nor does he stink, as he surely will before he lies down in oblivion. As others have had their funerals commemorated according to their greatness and grandeur in the world, so likewise will Mr. Badman have his funeral according to his earthly deeds. Even he deserves not to go down to his grave in silence (Psalm 31:17).

Four conventions are common at great men's funerals; I hope to allude to these customs without offense in the funeral of Mr. Badman.

First, the dead are sometimes presented to their friends in their completely adorned images, as lively as they can be by cunning men's hands. This act is done so that the remembrance of them may be renewed to their survivors—the remembrance of them and their deeds. I have endeavored to include a physical description in my memoir of Mr. Badman; therefore, I have described his features and actions from his childhood to his gray hairs. Here, therefore, you have him lively depicted in stages—from infancy, to the flower of youth, to his senior years, together with those actions of his life that he most customarily did in and under his present circumstances of time, place, strength, and opportunity.

Second, it is also customary at great men's funerals to display their badges and shields of honor, which they have received from their ancestors or have been thought worthy of for the deeds and exploits they have done in their lives. Mr. Badman has his collection, but they vary from those received by men of worth; his coat of arms heralds lack of merit in his actions. His honors all have decayed, and he has become "*an abominable branch*" (Isaiah 14:19) on his family tree. His deserts are the deserts of sin; therefore, his coat of arms is only that he died without honor, "*and at his end he [became] a fool*" (Jeremiah 17:11). "*Thou shalt not be joined with them [the honored dead] in burial....The seed of evildoers shall never be renowned*" (Isaiah 14:20). Consequently, Mr. Badman's funeral pomp will merely be the badges of a dishonorable and wicked life since "*his bones are full of the sin of his youth, which will lie down with him in the dust*" (Job 20:11).

Nor is it fitting that any should be his attendants, now at his death, except for those who conspired against their own souls in their lifetimes—persons whose transgressions have made them infamous to all who have known or will know what they have done. I have pointed out to the reader here in this little discourse those who were his associates in his life and attendants at his death. I have given a hint of some of the high villainy committed by them, as well as those judgments that have overtaken and fallen upon them from the just and revenging hand of God. All these things are either fully known by me as an eyewitness, or I have received the information from trustworthy sources whose accounts I am bound to believe.

Third, the funerals of persons of quality have been solemnized with suitable sermons at the times and places of their burials, but I have not come to that part as yet, having gone no further

than to Mr. Badman's death. Since he must be buried, after he has stunk out his time before his onlookers, I do not doubt that some like those who we read are appointed to be at the burial of Gog will do this work in my place. (See Ezekiel 39.) They will leave neither skin nor bones above ground, but will "*set up a sign by it, til the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog*" (Ezekiel 39:15).

Fourth, we usually hear mourning and crying at funerals, but once again Mr. Badman's funeral is different from others. His friends cannot lament his departure, for they do not have a sense of his damnable state. Instead, they ring him and sing him to hell in the sleep of death, in which he goes there. Good men count him no loss to the world. His workplace is better off without him. His loss is only his own. It is too late for him to recover that damage by a sea of bloody tears, even if he could shed them. Who then will lament for him, saying, "Oh, my brother"? He was but a stinking weed in his life and no better at all in his death. Those like him may well be thrown over the wall without sorrow (see 2 Samuel 20:21–22; 2 Kings 9:30–33), once God, in His wrath, has plucked them up by the roots (Jude 12).

Reader, if you are of the race, lineage, stock, or brotherhood of Mr. Badman, I tell you, before you read this book, you will neither tolerate the author nor what he has written about Mr. Badman. For he who condemns the wicked who die also passes the sentence upon the wicked who live; therefore, I expect neither credit nor approval from you for this narration of your kinsman's life. For your old love for your friend, his ways, and his actions will stir up in you enmity in your hearts against me. I imagine that you will tear up, burn, or throw away the book in contempt. You may even wish that for writing so notorious a truth, some harm may come my way. I expect that you may heap disdain, scorn, and contempt on me; that you will malign and slander me, saying I am a defamer of honest men's lives and deaths. For Mr. Badman, when he was alive, could not stand to be called a villain, although his actions told everyone that indeed he was one. How then should his friends who survive him, and who follow in his very steps, approve of the sentence that by this book is pronounced against him? Will they not rail at me for condemning him and imitate Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's friends who falsely accused Moses of wrongdoing? (See Numbers 16:1–33.)

I know it is dangerous to "*put [your] hand on the cockatrice's [viper's] den*" (Isaiah 11:8) and hazardous to hunt for wild boar. Likewise, the man who writes about Mr. Badman's life needs to be protected with a coat of armor and with the shaft of a spear so that Mr. Badman's surviving friends will be less able to harm the writer; but I have ventured to tell his story and to play, at this time, at the hole of these asps. If they bite, they bite; if they sting, they sting. Christ sends His lambs "*in the midst of wolves*" (Matthew 10:16), not to do like them, but to suffer by them for bearing plain testimony against their bad deeds. But does one not need to walk with a guard and to have a sentinel stand at one's door for protection? Verily, the flesh would be glad for such help, just as Paul was when the Jews conspired to kill him and the commander circumvented their plot. (See Acts 23.) But I am stripped naked of support, yet I am commanded to be faithful in my service for Christ. Well then, I have spoken what I have spoken, and now "*come on me what will!*" (Job 13:13). True, the Scripture says, "*He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee*" (Proverbs 9:7–8). But what then? "*Open rebuke is better than secret love*" (Proverbs 27:5), and he who receives it will find it so afterward.

So then, whether Mr. Badman's friends will rage or laugh at what I have written, I know that the victory is mine. My endeavor is to stop a hellish course of life and to "save a soul from death" (James 5:20). And if for doing so I meet with malice from them, from whom reasonably I should receive thanks, I must remember the man in the dream who cut his way through his armed enemies and thus entered the beautiful palace (a reference to *The Pilgrim's Progress*); I must, I say, remember him and do the same myself.

Yet four things I will offer for consideration by Mr. Badman's friends before I turn my back on them.

Suppose that there actually is a hell—not that I question its existence any more than I wonder if there is a sun to shine, but I say it for the sake of argument with Mr. Badman's friends. I say, suppose there is a hell, such as the Scripture speaks of, one at the remotest distance from God and life eternal, one where the worm of a guilty conscience never dies and where the fire of the wrath of God is never quenched (Isaiah 66:24). Suppose, I say, that there is such a hell, prepared by God—as there is indeed—for the body and soul of the ungodly to be tormented in after this life. Suppose hell is real, and then tell me if it is prepared for you, if you are a wicked man. Let your conscience speak. Is it prepared for you? And do you think if you were there now that you could wrestle with the judgment of God? Why then do the fallen angels tremble there? (See Isaiah 24:21–22.) Your hands cannot be strong, nor can your heart endure in that day when God will deal with you (Ezekiel 22:14).

Suppose that a sinner who is now a soul in hell was permitted to come to earth to live again, and that he had a grant that, upon amending his way of life, the next time he died, he could exchange his place for heaven and glory. What do you say, O wicked man? Do you think anyone would follow the same course of life as before and risk being damned again for sins he had already been involved in before? Would he choose again to lead that cursed life that would once again rekindle the flames of hell for him and that would bind him up under the heavy wrath of God? He would not; he would not! The Scripture insinuates it (see Luke 16:19–31); reason itself would abhor and tremble at such a thought.

Suppose again that you who live and revel in your sin have as yet known nothing but the pleasures of sin. Imagine that an angel conveyed you to a place where you could easily view the joys of heaven and the torments of hell. Suppose that from this position you might have such a view that would fully convince you that both heaven and hell are realities as the Word declares them to be. Do you think you would, when brought to your home again, choose your former life, namely, to return to your folly again? No! If belief of what you saw remained with you, you would eat fire and brimstone first.

I will make one more suggestion. Suppose that there was a law and an official capable of imposing the punishment that for every known wickedness you committed, a certain portion of your flesh would be plucked from your bones with burning pincers. Would you continue in your bold way of lying, swearing, drinking, and whoring, as you delight to do now? Surely, you would not. The fear of the punishment would make you refrain, would make you tremble, even when

your lusts were powerful. You would be sure to think about the punishment you would endure as soon as the pleasure was over.

But oh, the folly, the madness, the desperate insanity that is in the hearts of Mr. Badman's friends. In spite of the threats of a holy and sin-revenging God, and of the outcries and warnings of all good men, in spite of the groans and torments of those who are now in hell for their sins (see Luke 16:24), they continue on a sinful course of life, even though every sin is also a step of descent down to that infernal cave. How true is that saying of Solomon, "*The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead*" (Ecclesiastes 9:3). "*To the dead*"—that is, to the dead in hell, to the damned dead, the place to which those who have died as bad men are gone, and where those who now live as bad men are likely to go, when a little more sin, like stolen waters, has been imbibed by their sinful souls. (See Proverbs 9:16–18.)

I have written this book because wickedness, like a flood, is likely to drown our world. It already appears to be above the tops of the mountains. It has almost swallowed up everything; our youth, middle age, old age, and all are almost carried away by this flood. O debauchery, debauchery, what have you done? You have corrupted our young men and have made our old men beasts; you have deflowered our virgins and have made matrons madams of prostitution. You have made our earth "*reel to and fro like a drunkard, and... [totter] like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again*" (Isaiah 24:20).

Oh, that I could mourn for our country, and for the sins that are committed here, even while I see that, without repentance, the men of God's wrath are about to deal with us, each one of them "*with a deadly weapon in his hand*" (Ezekiel 9:1). By God's assistance, I have written to warn people against sin, and I will pray that this flood of evil may lessen. If I could just see the tops of the mountains above it, I would think that the waters were abating.

It is the duty of those who can to cry out against this deadly plague, to lift their voices like a trumpet against it, so that people may be awakened and flee from it, as from that which is the greatest of evils. Sin pulled angels out of heaven, pulls men down to hell, and overthrows kingdoms. Who sees a house on fire and will not sound the alarm for those who live inside? Who sees the land invaded and will not signal a warning? Who sees the devil prowling like a roaring lion, continually devouring souls (1 Peter 5:8), and will not make an outcry? But above all, when we see sin, sinful sin, swallowing up a nation, sinking it, and bringing its inhabitants to temporal, spiritual, and eternal ruin, will we not cry out? Will we not say, "*They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink*" (Isaiah 29:9); they are intoxicated with the deadly poison of sin, which will, if its malignity is not by wholesome means subdued, bring soul and body, estate, country, and all to ruin and destruction"?

In and by this outcry, I will deliver myself from the ruins of those who perish, for a man can do no more in this matter—I mean a man in my capacity—than to detect and condemn the wickedness, warn the evildoer of the judgment, and flee from it himself. But oh, that I might not only deliver myself! Oh, that many would hear and turn from sin! Then they would be protected from the death and judgment that attend it.

I have concealed most of the names of the persons whose sins or punishments I talk about in this book. The reasons I have handled the matter in this method are best known to me. In part, though, I have not revealed the names of many people because not all of their sins or their judgments are public; the sins of some were committed in private, and the judgments executed for them were kept confidential. Even though I could have learned some of their names, I would not have revealed them for this reason: I would not provoke those of their relatives who survive them. Nor would I lay them under disgrace and contempt, which would, as I think, unavoidably have happened to them had I revealed their names.

As for those whose names I mention, their crimes, or judgments, were made public as almost anything of that nature that happens to mortal men. Such, therefore, have published their own shame by their sins, and God has declared His anger by taking open vengeance. As Job said, God “*strike them as wicked men in the open sight of others*” (Job 34:26). Therefore, I cannot imagine that my warning the world of their sins should turn to their detriment since their sins and judgments were so conspicuous. For the publishing of these things are, so far as my telling of them is concerned, intended for remembrances, so that they may recall the truth themselves, repent, and turn to God—lest the judgments for their sins should prove hereditary. For the God of heaven has threatened to visit “*the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them who hate [Him]*” (Exodus 20:5).

Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment for his pride was made public—because of his sin, he lost his kingly dignity and was driven from among men to eat grass like an ox and to keep company with the beasts (Daniel 4:30–33). Daniel did not hesitate to tell Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s son, to his face about his sins and the sins of his father (Daniel 5:18–30) and to publish the account so that it might be read and remembered by generations to come. The same may be said of Judas (Acts 1:18–19), Ananias (Acts 5:1–5), and others who for their sins and punishments were known to all who lived in Jerusalem. It is a sign of desperate impenitence and hardness of heart that the offspring or relatives of those who have fallen into open, fearful, and immense sin will overlook, forget, pass by, or take no notice of such high costs imposed by God against them and their households. Thus Daniel increased Belshazzar’s crime because Belshazzar hardened his heart in pride, though he knew that for that very sin and transgression his father had been brought down from his height and made to be a companion to asses. “*But thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this*” (Daniel 5:22). This reproof hit home, but it was most fitting for Belshazzar’s continued, open practice of sin.

Let those, then, who are the offspring or relatives of such, who by their own sins and the dreadful judgments of God have become a sign (Numbers 16:38–40) and have been swept like dung from the face of the earth, beware, lest when judgment knocks at their doors for their sins, as it did before at the doors of their progenitors, it falls with as heavy a stroke on them as on those who went before them—lest they, in that day, instead of finding mercy, find for their daring and offensive sins, “*judgment without mercy*” (James 2:13).

To conclude, let those who would not die Mr. Badman’s death take heed of Mr. Badman’s ways; for his ways led to his end. Wickedness will not deliver those who given over to it even though they would cloak themselves with a profession of religion, If it was a transgression of old for a man to wear a woman’s apparel, surely it is a transgression now for a sinner to wear a

Christian profession for his coat. Wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15) swarm in this day, wolves both as to doctrine and as to practice. Some men put on the cloak of Christianity in order to gain entrance into a profession. Then they try to build an estate even if in their dishonesty they ruin their neighbors, Let such take heed, for those who do such things will receive great damnation.

Christian, make your reputation shine with conduct that conforms with the Gospel (Philippians 1:27); otherwise, you will damage religion bring scandal to your brothers, and become a "*stumbling-block*" (Romans 14:13). If you cause others to sin, "*it were better for [you] that a millstone were hanged about [your] neck, and that [you] were drowned in the depth of the sea*" (Matthew 8:6). Christian, a goldy reputation is, in these days, a rare thing; seek it, put it on, and keep it "*without spot*" (1 Timothy 6:17). It will make you white and clean, and you will be an uncommon Christian indeed.

The prophecy of the end times, as I understand from 2 Timothy 3, is that even professing men will become vile, "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*" (verse 5). I urge you to "*continue thou in the things which thou hast learned*" (verse 14), not from depraved men, nor from licentious times, but from the Word and doctrine of God, that is, according to godliness. Then you will walk with Christ in purity. God Almighty gave His people grace, not to hate or malign sinners, nor to choose any of their ways, but to keep them pure from "*the blood of all men*" (Acts 20:26). God's people are to speak and act according to His name and His rules, which they profess to know and love for Jesus Christ's sake.

- John Bunayan