

Bunyan Monologue
(Bible Freedom)
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Hello, my name is John Bunyan. You may have never heard of me, but I imagine you have heard of this book I hold in my hand. It is called *Pilgrim's Progress*. I wrote it while I was in prison in the city of Bedford, England, in 1677. And why, you may ask, was I in jail? For my Baptist faith, for Bible freedom, and for preaching at times and places not acceptable to the Church of England.

It was the Bible that made me who I am, and those who know how little education I have, recognize that my ability to write books and religious tracts came from studying the Holy Scripture. So, you see, Bible freedom was very important to me and to all of my fellow Baptists.

I started life in Elstow, England, which is a little village just a few miles north of Bedford and Bedford is about fifty miles north of London. My parents were poor, and after I got some education in the local schools, I took up the trade of tinker that is, I went around from door to door and asked the good women if they had any pots and kettles to mend or scissors to sharpen. To fix a hole in a pot, a tinker puts in a little slug of metal and pounds it down to seal the bottom. People could not afford to throw away a pot when it sprung a leak in those days.

When I was a teenage lad, I was pretty wild. I had a profane tongue, and I would play tricks on people and play games on Sunday, even though I knew it was wrong. One of the worst things I did was to sneak into the church bell tower and ring the bell. People would come running thinking there was a fire or a murder or some other calamity.

The English Civil War started when I was 14, and I joined the army when I was 17. The war was a revolt against King Charles the First, and it ended with the king having his head chopped off. And fighting in the people's army were many men who had picked up the name Baptist or Anabaptist because they did not believe in baptizing babies. They would baptize people all over again when they reached the age to accept Christ for themselves. I heard these good men preach and talk in the army camps and was moved by what they said, but I did not want to give up my worldly ways. During the war, a friend of mine took my place during a siege and was killed when I should have been. That made me get more serious about life, but I was still a sinner.

When I got out of the army, I married a poor orphan girl, whose main belongings were two Christian books. Since that was all we had to read, I studied them a lot. After a while I started going to the Baptist Meeting house in Bedford, and then when I was 25 years old I immersed there. My wife kept on going to the Anglican Church and insisted on having my four children baptized by the priest.

Two years after I had joined the church I had my real conversion. Then I started really reading the Bible and ever holy book I could get my hands on, and a year later I started preaching. I was not an ordained pastor, but I could still draw pretty good crowds. I liked to make up stories and poems that would stick in the minds of the people. Here is a rhyme I made up in one of my sermons:

*An egg is not a chicken by falling from a hen,
Nor is a man a Christian till he is born again.*

When I was 32, the monarchy was restored in England. The dead king's son had been in exile while Oliver Cromwell ruled England without a crown. Those had been good times when Baptists were tolerated. But when Cromwell died and Charles the Second came to the throne, he put a stop to all preaching outside the Church of England. That's what landed me in jail. I stayed there for 12 years, where I practically memorized the Bible, until the king was forced to grant some freedom.

When I came out of prison, I became pastor of the Bedford church. Since I went about organizing other churches the people started calling me "Bishop Bunyan."

Then just like old Pharaoh whose heart was hardened, the king had a change of mind and I was back in jail again. That time was just for six months, but that gave me long enough to write this book I was showing you. It was immediately successful and sold all over England. Some folks said it was next in popularity to the Bible itself. I wrote a few other books, but this was the one that folks still remember me by.

Now, by all means, you should read your Bible. But if you want another guidebook to help you on the pilgrimage of life, I would suggest that you get my book as well. You can still get copies of my book, and it still has the power to change your life, if you'll let it. The language is a little old fashioned, but the message is fresh and clear.