

Prince



From Another Realm

Imaginary Story

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Introduction

In a Kingdom far away and above what mortal men could see, lived a prince in the palace of the King of All. Though he had all he could wish for, there was much to be done to ensure the welfare of the citizens of the Earth settlement.

This prince determined to give up the comforts, for the time being, and do all that was needed for the good of the King and His kingdom.

And so, with a mission entrusted into his hands, this prince was sent below, along with a faithful companion, who was stout and true to the causes of the King and the welfare of the land and its peoples.

Chapter

I

Four things a man must learn to do
If he would make his record true:
To think without confusion clearly;
To love his fellow-men sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and Heaven securely.

—Henry Van Dyke

Chapter 1

The grey sky looked bleak and foreboding. “Shall we continue our climb up Mt. Impassable?” Prince Wilbert asked his faithful squire and friend. “I don’t know. It looks rather dark and gloomy. We could be in for a bit of a storm,” Frank replied.

The prince from the Kingdom beyond the clouds, set high, too high for those in the surrounding villages to see, had been sent off on a mission. It was a mission of discovery, of adventure, of gathering information, and of helping those along the way.

It wasn’t meant to be a leisurely journey, of basking in the warm sunshine, or strolling along the lowlands, laughing with the cowards who had not the hearty nature to venture beyond the comforts of the lush valleys.

It was a trip that took every bit of courage, strength and determination, in order to make it. How long it would take, Prince Wilbert didn’t know. But he was determined to finish what he had set out to do—what he was commissioned to do.

The two took shelter for the night, under a large tree, whose branches reached far, and with foliage that was thick. They made a fire and roasted their day’s ration of food.

Covering warmly with their coats, some rest was savoured, amid the storm that surrounded them throughout the night.

“Crash!” it was still dark in the early morning when what little restless sleep they’d had was shaken from them, in a sudden moment.

A tree in the nearby embankment had suddenly thundered to the ground. It had stood for more than a century, and the storms and wet climate of this area of late had brought it to its end. A flash of lightning told that it was the final stroke to its life.

“I’m glad we were here for the night. Even though not as comfortable as a good night’s rest at the village inn, we stayed dry for the most part, and best of all, we were safe. At daybreak we shall continue on—if the storm lets up.” Prince Wilbert said.

Frank agreed, while turning over, and trying to snatch another wink or two of sleep, before the hard climb was upon them. The days seemed long, and the nights seemed too short. But the journey had its own rewarding moments. The views were breathtaking. The air the cleanest they’d ever known. The talks they had along the way, and the friendship that grew between them was heartening.

When Frank woke he saw Prince Wilbert looking out over the ravine, and up yonder to the next peaks to be reached.

“It’s not going to be easy,” Prince Wilbert pondered. “Though the rain has subsided, and the thunder has calmed, there isn’t a pathway that has been beaten for us. We’ve never been this way before, and by the looks of it, neither has anyone else. It’s all new ground.” He then knelt down to pray a heartfelt prayer, as it was his custom at each day’s break.

“Dear God, I don’t know how I will make it to the next peak, and through all that will beset us in our efforts to make it there. I know we must explore and chart out this territory. It must be put on the map, and a way made for others to pass, should they choose to travel this way likewise. But though a prince, I am just a man. I cannot do this thing alone. But with You as my companion, I can reach any goal You call me to reach.”

After his prayer he waited in silence. Then he heard it. It never failed to come, if he really listened, and waited in prayer long enough to hear. The voice of God spoke to his heart and into his mind, words of courage, of strength, of guidance, and of faith. He now felt ready.

Frank was up and preparing their morning meal when he walked back. They chatted and discussed ideas and ways to tackle this next part of the climb.

When they both felt ready, they headed off to enjoy, yes, enjoy the next day of adventure, and whatever the day held for them.

Chapter

II

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

—Edgar A. Guest

Chapter 2

A tremor began to shake their already unsure footing, as Prince Wilbert and Frank inched their way along a very narrow ledge, hugging the mountain's side. The drop was far. They chose not to look down.

The movement and shaking was too much for Frank, his hands gave way, and he was slipping. In a sudden move, Prince Wilbert leapt over to the side, where he found safety.

Frank was clinging to whatever branches and vines could be grasped to prevent his fall all the way down. Earthquakes in these parts were not uncommon, but to be in a precarious position when they happened, one would hope to not be.

Prince Wilbert had to save his friend. They needed each other on this trek. He remembered the saying, *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Since Prince Wilbert was on stronger ground now, he quickly took his rope from his pack, tied it around a tree, and around his waist. He then moved out to where Frank was trying to hold on.

Using the rope they both could climb up to safety.

A rather shaken, trembling Frank sat to rest. The two prayed a prayer of thanksgiving for having made it safely through that dangerous bend.

It was at times like this they needed to have “reminder time” as they called it—to remind and encourage themselves why they were on this mission in the first place, and to remember that no matter what happened, God was with them, and would work all things out for good.

Prince Wilbert opened a small book and read a favourite passage aloud:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The LORD of hosts is with us.”

(Psalm 46: 1-3, 11)

Just as they finished, Frank blurted out, “Look down there! It seems a cave has opened up!”

“What?! A new cave entrance?” Prince Wilbert was intrigued. “Was it the reason for the earthquake? If it had come at another time, we wouldn’t have been sitting here noticing the new entrance. Shall we go check it out?” He asked his friend.

They both had learned by now to never do anything on impulse. It seemed for sure that it was what they were supposed to do, the time seemed right. But there was plenty they didn’t know, and plenty of dangers. Prince Wilbert led them both in prayer, to see what God had for them next.

It was a good thing that they had stopped, for the earthquake was but half over, and worst was yet to come.

Hardly had they bowed their heads to pause before carrying on exploring when a terrible tremble shook them. Holding on to the tree they sat under, kept them from falling yet again.

When things had calmed, Prince Wilbert said, “I’m never disappointed that I stopped to pray and get my directions clear. It always works out best.”

“I can see that now,” Frank added.

“Not only are we still safe, but look over there, the way into the cave is even wider now.

“After we confirm our plans with the King of Kings, I’m sure it will be an interesting time of exploration.”

Chapter

III

Thundering on through dearth and doubt,
Calling the plan of the Maker out.
Work, the Titan; Work, the friend,
Shaping the earth to a glorious end,
Draining the swamps and blasting the hills,
Doing whatever the Spirit wills--
Rending a continent apart,
To answer the dream of the Master heart.
Thank God for a world where none may shirk--
Thank God for the splendor of work!

—Angela Morgan

Chapter 3

After the precarious climb down, the adventurous and sturdy team made it safely down to the mouth of the cave. A light would be needed, as all was dark inside. Pulling out their torches to light the way, the prince and his companion began to peer inside, and in wonder realised just how vast and deep it was.

“Do you think this cave goes all the way through the mountain, and has an exit at the other side?” asked Frank. “It would save us lots of time to merely go through it, rather than over it, don’t you think?”

Prince Wilbert thought quietly for a moment, then these words came to him clearly: “I have set before thee an open door, and narrow is the way that leads to life.”

He knew it was a message coming from the Prince of Peace, the Lord who looked after him each step of the way.

“Yes,” he responded to the waiting and eager-to-get-going Frank. “I believe it is what we are meant to do, at least this time. However, on the way back it might be the time to go over the mountain, as part of the mission is to check out the territory. The cave might not always be open; rocks may continue to fall, so alternative paths may need to be explored and made.”

Frank thought the counsel was sound, and after a prayer for safe keeping, they cautiously began to enter deeper into the cave. It was not a fast walk by any means. A lot of the time they literally crawled and climbed over rocks, stepping around stalagmites, squeezing through narrow passage ways that then led to larger “rooms”.

One passage between two large boulders was so narrow that they had to take off their back packs and push, pull, and hand it through separately. However, when at last they made it, they were in awe at what they saw.

“Wow!” said Prince Wilbert, as he turned on a second torch to give them more light to see around the cave room they had just entered. It was by far the biggest they’d seen yet, in fact the biggest they’d ever seen. And the stalactites on the upper part of the cave were all sort of shapes and designs.

Some stalactites were as big as trunks of trees, some were thin “curtain” type hanging from the ceiling. They looked just like a curtain curved and rounding as the cloth hung up.

There was a large pool of water, crystal clear, with a decorative border of tall white coned stalagmites around it.

Frank pulled out his fold-out measuring stick. He wanted to find out just how deep the pool was.

“Two-and-a-half meters, from where I can check it. Might be deeper more towards the centre,” Frank informed.

If it hadn't been so cold in the cave, they might have enjoyed going for a swim, in this clear natural pool, with so fine a decor surrounding it. “A pool fit for a Prince,” Frank said.

Prince Wilbert too could imagine under water lights set in the pool, other gentle lighting illuminating the rest of the large “entertainment hall”, guests seated on lounge chairs, and majestic music echoing for all to hear. But back to reality and their mission, they must press on.

“Let's go then, there's more to explore,” Prince Wilbert suggested. “A perfect life of ease isn't for now,” he thought, chiding himself. And on they pressed.

To mark their way, as they went along, Frank put up markers on a rock here and a spot there. He had an older rope or cord, and cut off a piece of it each time he wanted to mark a spot.

He'd have to find a way to place it, but he was clever and marked the way well.

If or when they needed to find their way back through the cave they could do it by finding the markers and using them as guides, reminding them of where and how to get back through.

Chapter

IV

Did you tackle that trouble that came your way
With a resolute heart and cheerful?
Or hide your face from the light of day
With a craven soul and fearful?
Oh, a trouble's a ton, or a trouble's an ounce,
Or a trouble is what you make it,
And it isn't the fact that you're hurt that counts,
But only how did you take it?

—Edmund Vance Cooke

Chapter 4

The trek through the cave system of this large mountain had been going remarkably well, then all of a sudden Frank blurted out, “I bet were never going to make it through; were lost and wasting our time. Why did we ever come in here after all? Is all this effort doing any good, anyway? What’s the use!”

Prince Wilbert was taken back a bit by this sudden despair. It was not Frank’s usual temperament or conduct. He was usually the one that helped to pull others along, and always liked to be the first to explore new territory.

Sensing something was causing it, Prince Wilbert paused for prayer. He didn’t just want to attempt to answer the questions, and then possibly also get pulled down with the negative attitudes. He knew the only way to finish the mission was to carefully follow the instructions of their commanding King, the one who set them forth.

The words came clearly to Prince Wilbert’s heart and mind: “It’s upside down! The ‘d’ is meant to be a ‘p’. Turn it around and see what happens.”

Not fully understanding quite what this cryptic message meant, Prince Wilbert began looking around for any signs of a ‘d’ on the walls

of the cave. Then he spotted it. As if it was written with black charcoal, scratched on a rock was a large letter 'd'.

"I thought something was wrong here... Someone's trying to give us messages—and they are not the right kind. Like radio waves sending messages to listeners, this 'd' is being a transmitter of all kinds of disparaging, discouraging, despondent thoughts set to make us dismay, doubt, and feel depressed, that we are going to only be disappointed."

Frank was looking up to see the 'd' that Prince Wilbert was pointing out, and heard the long list of 'd' words he was saying. It seemed to be a description of the wave of negativity that he was suddenly being hit with, and didn't know why.

As Prince Wilbert neared this 'd' he remembered the instruction. He was to "turn it around and see what happens."

However, the closer he went to it, the louder the terrible vibes and feelings began, until he also was feeling such negativity he wanted to just quit, and he blurted out, "This trip was a crazy idea—why are we stuck in this strange cave anyway?! Not very princely if you ask me."

Frank had been alerted by this time, however, and knew that something unusual and

strange was happening. It was a trap; something to get them to give up. His curiosity roused and he thought, “If something or some ‘d’ type of character is trying so hard to get us to quit, there must be something really good and especially important for us to discover that we’ll be delighted we didn’t deviate from the plan.”

Frank yelled out so loud, that it even shocked him, “Turn it around! Do it! Turn the ‘d’ around!” then he ran with a force up to Prince Wilbert and pushed him towards the ‘d’, and he, himself landed there due to the speed he lunged with.

There was no time to deliberate and be turned away by the repulsions of this evil message broadcasting ‘d’. In desperation, Prince Wilbert reached out his hand, forcing himself against all the feelings that were trying to stop him, and he called out:

“Jesus Christ, by your invincible power, I command that this ‘d’ and all the DEvices it has sought to DELay us with, would be DEMolished and DESTROYed. And that instead all plans of the enemy would be turned upside down. I command this ‘d’ to be a ‘p’ by the power of the Prince of Peace—You, Dear Jesus.”

They waited for a second for something to happen, until Frank got the idea to simply push on the line coming up, as you would turning a water wheel. “Just push it around, just turn it,” he suggested to Prince Wilbert, demonstrating what he meant.

To their amazement, it literally turned, until it was completely upside down—or should I say it was now properly right-side-up. As it turned, their feelings likewise changed.

Thank God! Praise God! He wins every time! Prince Wilbert and Frank were saying, as their heart was now on the upbeat. They felt completely different.

Their hearts and minds were now being filled with the power of the positive “P’s”: They praised God, they prayed, they heard encouraging words of prophecy that boosted their courage to continue to make progress on their pioneer mission. They knew now they would be given protection, and all the provisions needed, as they carried on. They felt at peace, and would patiently complete the journey. They claimed and reviewed God’s promises to them, and felt renewed power as they did.

With a hint of wonder and curiosity, with a smile on their faces, they picked up their bags, and were eager to be on their way.

What was next, they didn't know, but they were sure that God was with them.

Prince Wilbert whispered a promise from the Holy Scriptures that the "turning" situation reminded him of.

"Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out My spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you." (Proverbs 1:23)

He knew that they would be enabled to complete their mission, no matter what or who tried to stop them, if they would only be willing to do that: Hear the Words of the Lord and turn around, or turn right-side-up, whatever God said needed to be changed.

Chapter

V

Never go gloomy, man with a mind,
Hope is a better companion than fear;
Providence, ever benignant and kind,
Gives with a smile what you take with a tear;
All will be right,
Look to the light.

Morning was ever the daughter of night;
All that was black will be all that is bright,
Cheerily, cheerily, then cheer up.

—Anonymous

Chapter 5

Prince Wilbert and Frank were ever so glad when they saw what came next on their adventuresome exploration through this untrod territory—the newly discovered cave system.

After pushing onward they came to a rather small and narrow passage way. At first it seemed like they would not be able to carry on, and would need to trace their steps back to find another route. But they decided to at least give it a try.

Frank thought he should be the one to check it out and see if it was even possible to make it through. He took off his backpack, and while Prince Wilbert held the lantern, Frank began to ease himself between the large rock walls.

Once he saw that it was possible, and also wasn't that far to go until the pathway widened, he asked for his back pack and pulled it through.

Prince Wilbert handed Frank the lantern and began to do the same manoeuvre, until they both had made it through the tight spot. The light hadn't yet been shone on the next part of the pathway, but as soon as they had safely stood ready to continue they shone it around and were amazed at what they saw.

“This place is absolutely enormous!” Frank yelled out, his voice echoing all around.

“And look at the sizes and shapes of those artistic looking stalactites hanging down!” Prince Wilbert exclaimed. Some look like straight tusks, other looked like thick curtains hanging down. Some were as wide as tree trunks, others were narrow. Each one added their attractive appearance to this hidden secret room.

This was worth the struggle it took to get here. With their lantern they took a look all around. There were huge pillar shaped stalagmites growing up from the floor, as well as a crystal clear deep pool of water.

Prince Wilbert decided it was a great place to take a break and be refreshed. He lit up a second and third lantern, pulled out some lunch and relaxed leaning against a rock.

Frank thought he'd go for a dip. Though the water, and air, were cold, he was used to brisk mountain air and cold mountain streams. This place was too good to miss.

He didn't swim for long, but found it, as he put it “very invigorating”.

Prince Wilbert took time to write of their adventures thus far in his journal. He wanted to have a full, detailed and accurate account of things to share when he returned.

He knew many would be curious and plenty of questions would be asked.

Frank had brought a small traveller's camping stove, as well as dried soup mix. He filled a little pan with fresh water from one of the cave's pools, and began to make himself some warm soup.

As he sat there warming up, and taking in the amazing surroundings, he could only imagine how glorious it would be to have the King's Orchestra performing in this fabulous theatre.

He played out in his mind how awesome it would be to have lighting of all sorts set up all around, and have music played live in this cave. Perhaps he'd choose something like "In the Hall of the Mountain King" by Edvard Grige, or Beethoven's 9th Symphony, or Handel's "Messiah" oratorio.

He was lost in thought when a drop of water from above landed on his forehead. "Oops, I almost forgot where I really was," Frank said aloud. "If we don't want stalagmites growing on us perhaps we best continue on our interesting, explorative journey."

Prince Wilbert nodded, as he too felt it was time to move on.

Chapter

VI

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When duty whispers low, *Thou must,*
The youth replies, *I can.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Chapter 6

Prince Wilbert and Frank packed up their belongings after their nice time of relaxation in the grand cave room. It was time to continue on with their journey. However, they paused before making definite plans.

Prince Wilbert then felt something more than could be seen. He felt a presence of some being or creature, though looking around they saw nothing yet. Suddenly the rubble shook and stones rolled closing up the already narrow passage way they had squeezed through to get into this big room.

Frank and Prince Wilbert prayed for God's leading and protection. They knew they were in His hands, and all would work out right, though they were unsure just what the next step would be.

When they opened their eyes they gasped at what they saw. Standing, almost as if guarding the place they had entered was a very tall angel. He was looking towards the opposite side of the cave, and pointing in a clear direction.

Thoughts came into their minds at the same time, from this being who seemed to be there to protect them and keep them going in the right direction.

“You are to go there!” this angel mentally imparted to them.

Not wishing to delay, and having received so fast and clear an answer after their prayer, they immediately made their way in the direction pointed out to them. After a moment they looked around to get one more glimpse of their protective Heavenly guardian, but he was no more to be seen. However, they still sensed his presence and knew they were not alone.

To conserve on fuel, they decided to put away the two extra lanterns, and again use just one for their continued cave exploration. They shone it on the rocky wall they reached, that the angel had pointed towards.

The travellers both looked at each other with a “are you sure this is where we are meant to be?” kind of look. It wasn’t just a narrow passage way, there didn’t seem to be any way at all through the strong, thick mountain wall of rock and dirt.

Prince Wilbert glanced around, hoping to get some more clear guidance. But they didn’t have to wait for long. As soon as Frank pressed his hand against the wall, he felt it begin to vibrate and move. As long as he laid his hands on it, this continued, until the wall had moved over, clearing a gap for them.

As the wall moved, the light from outside streamed in. They were at the other side of the mountain! They had made it safely through, and could see a pretty mountain meadow just outside.

As they stepped outside through the gap, Prince Wilbert smiled and lifted his arms to praise God, while Frank looked over his shoulder to see what would happen to the mysteriously moved mountain wall. Nothing. It stood open, and looked as if it had always been a gap into the cave.

“That’s interesting...” he pondered, when a thought beamed to him, much like the one the angel had given to them directing them out of the cave: “Some things that stand in your way aren’t meant to be. With the hand of faith you can move them out of the way.”

There was a spot of blue above the travelling companions, and the welcoming and warm sunlight bathed them.

However, the beauty of the moment was rather short-lived, for new dangers suddenly awakened their senses. Shrieking sounds from over head, growls from the rocks to their side, and a large slithering creature was passing nearby.

“Whoah! What’s going on?” Prince Wilbert asked as he took in the new surroundings and beastly challenges.

Frank quickly pulled out two torches he had kept and lit them. The fire would send a signal to any would-be predators to stay away. They needed to take control of their wits and not allow any fear to overtake them. They were on a mission and were determined to complete it.

“I will not fear...” Prince Wilbert began to quote the commanding part of scripture, telling his own heart and mind what he was to do.

“Nothing shall by any means hurt you...” Frank added another.

(Psalm 118:6; Luke 10:19)

Chapter

VII

There will always be something to do, my boy;
There will always be wrongs to right;
There will always be need for a manly breed
And men unafraid to fight.
There will always be honour to guard, my boy;
There will always be hills to climb,
And tasks to do, and battles new
From now till the end of time.

—Edgar A. Guest

Chapter 7

Prince Wilbert called out a prayer, filled with faith and confidence:

“Lord of Heaven and Earth, the sea and all that is in the world. You have to but speak the word and mountains flee, rivers part, and stars are made. Keep us in the palm of Thine hand, and disperse any would-be trouble from the natural surroundings and creatures of any sort.

“You have control over all—whether physical or spiritual. So in the name of Jesus Christ I say, ‘Depart from us, all that would jeopardise our mission. In His Name do we go, and by His name are we safe.’”

Frank whispered: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.”

The roaring got louder and soon the lion-like beast was prowling on the pathway facing them, blocking their way.

Frank picked up a large branch from a tree that was on the ground and handed it to Prince Wilbert, “Here!” Prince Wilbert would need to manage the branch and the torch. But he was strong and used to challenges.

Frank then began to hurl some stones with one hand, and hold his torch with the other. The two undaunted men charged, yelled, waved the

stick and sent stones flying the beast's way. "Depart in the name of Jesus! Be gone, never to return!" they were heard to yell as they showed their authority.

The beast made a lunge at Prince Wilbert, but his jaw was filled with the branch, and his teeth that sunk into the wood seemed stuck for good.

Prince Wilbert, with unearthly strength swung around holding the branch, sending the beast flying through the air, and hurdling down over the mountains side. A roll and tumble were seen but what became of him, they weren't sure, however the path was clear and so onward they walked.

The flapping wings of the largest bird they'd ever seen was accompanied by a terrible scream from its beak. It seemed to be defending its territory. Whatever was the case, Prince Wilbert and Frank ran under the nearest tree. With the long and low branches hiding them they had a moment to catch their breath and think about what to do next.

Prince Wilbert dropped to his knees and took off his backpack. Frank stood guard, holding the torches. They knew they were dependant on the providence of the Almighty.

“Look out!” Frank yelled to the praying Prince Wilbert.

Looking up, there he met face to face, with the large serpentine creature who seemed posed to strike. Prince Wilbert, filled with the bravery and confidence of one who has just committed himself to God’s keeping, commanded, “Be gone, you disobedient troublemaker.”

Frank threw a torch down to the ground, between Prince Wilbert and the creature. The fire seemed to grow bigger by some supernatural energy, and engulfed the serpent, who was reduced to ashes before their eyes. Prince Wilbert picked up the torch and handed it back to Frank.

“They always come in two...” Frank muttered, however. “Its mate is probably around...”

“There’s another one,” Prince Wilbert pointed out. It was several meters away.

Just then a swooping of wings was felt, as a large eagle touched down on the pathway. It picked up the serpent in its claws and carried it off to where they did not know.

Prince Wilbert exclaimed, “This is more exciting than I imagined. I’m glad now for that time of relaxation in the cave.”

How long the bird would be kept busy with its serpentine prey, the men didn't know, but it seemed a good time to be on their way. Quickly Prince Wilbert put his backpack on and took hold of his torch once again.

"Let us carry on," Prince Wilbert said with a nod, and one step after another they made their uncertain way along an uncertain path.

The sun was getting lower in the sky, and the men wondered what nightfall would bring them. But they needn't have worried, for all their steps were being carefully watched by the One who cares.

Chapter

VIII

Can you sing a song at the close of the day,
When weary and tired, the work's put away,
With the joy that it's done the best of the pay,
Can you sing a song?

—Joseph Morris

Chapter 8

As they fought their way through bushes, holding their torches high so as not to create wildfire, the light of day was growing dimmer by the moment.

“Look there!” Frank spotted it first.

Prince Wilbert looked over to see and smiled. There was a lone stone cottage—a welcoming sight. Nearly running with excitement and curiosity, the travel companions made their way to this timely place of provision.

A water pump stood outside, and was gratefully used. Fresh was the water to drink. Soon faces, hands and feet were washed. A pot was filled to be heated on the fire they wished to build.

Prince Wilbert sat down on a log bench and was putting his shoes back on, when something caught his eye. A playful creature ran past and under the bench and off into the woods. The singing of evening birds was heard.

“I wonder what is over there?” he thought. But with only faint light left, it would need to wait until the morning.

Meanwhile Frank had gathered some sticks and cut some wood for the fire. Beside the bench Prince Wilbert formed a fire pit with some stones.

They could watch the stars come out, be warmed by the fire, and have some soup.

Frank, knowing what types of plants were good to eat, plucked some leaves from nearby, to be added to their meal. Frank would relax now and watch over the fire and their supper, as he stretched out for some moments of rest on the bench. It felt good to camp. When he blinked his eyes open, a swarm of fireflies were dancing nearby and landed in a tree.

“Ah, such wonders! Almost looks like a Christmas tree, filled with lights and pine cones for baubles,” Frank thought. The joy of the moment made him burst out in some song about the Saviour’s nativity.

Meanwhile, Prince Wilbert took his torch to go and check out the interior of this small stone cottage. Assuming it to be vacant, he first peered into the window. It was a hole with some sticks forming a grate or bars to keep small wildlife out.

The torch nearly out, Prince Wilbert went back to get his lantern instead, and propped the torch between some rocks near the fire.

“A bit safer I think... don’t want to catch anything on fire in there,” he mused.

Taking the lantern, Prince Wilbert then approached the old wooden door which easily

gave way and opened to his gentle push. Using a stick he tapped around, and prodded under the simple furnishings. “Just seeing if any small residents are calling this their home.”

A mouse scurried out as Prince Wilbert opened the creaking door of the only cupboard. Off he ran into the woods, not wishing to be of any consequence to be noticed or troubled with.

A rough hewn table was in the middle of the room, held up by a wide slice of log. The cupboard was empty, but big enough for the men to place their backpacks in it for the night.

There was a set of bunks to one side of the wall. Just wooden planks set up sturdily. A barrel with a spout, over a deep hole in the ground filled with rocks, could be filled with water from the pump outside to provide indoor water for washing and cooking. Two chairs made of reeds and rope were on the other side of the one-room cottage, beside the window.

A stone fireplace with its chimney was on the wall beside the bunks, and a stack of cut wood was ready for use. The dusty cottage room looked like it had been unused for many months at least.

Prince Wilbert decided to get the fire going in the cottage fireplace, to warm up the place.

After their meal under the stars they would be happy to lie down to sleep by the light of the fire.

“Dinner is ready,” Frank called as he peered into the stone cottage. “Ah, not bad...” he said as he looked around. They both set their backpacks to rest in the cupboard, and went out to eat.

Prince Wilbert held his bowl of soup and warmed his hands, while he uttered a praise of thankfulness to the one who cared and provided all that was needed. Frank bowed his head and led out in prayer then for safe keeping and continued guidance.

Chapter

IX

Can you sing a song to greet the sun,
Can you cheerily tackle the work to be done,
Can you vision it finished when only begun,
Can you sing a song?

—Joseph Morris

Chapter 9

The planks of wood forming the bunk bed were as strong as they were firm to sleep on. But neither of the travelling men minded. The crackling fire was warm and beautified the rude dwelling place.

Frank was soon fast asleep.

Prince Wilbert however, felt the need to commune about the coming day's journey. He needed to be sure they would be going the right way. He wanted time alone under the stars, to pray and think and plan.

Quietly he descended from the upper bunk, and grabbed a couple pieces of cut wood from the pile. He slipped out of the cottage and shut the creaking door behind him. The coals of fire were still red, and before too long the fire was burning again.

Prince Wilbert looked up at what seemed countless stars, and shook his head. "Just think, each of those stars has a name. God's named them all. Certainly He cares and knows about me."

After presenting himself to the Lord of all, and their mission needs for the coming day, Prince Wilbert remained quiet and contemplative. If any guidance was to be given, he was ready and eager to receive it.

His thoughts began to wander, thinking about the affairs of the day, so much had happened.

“Thank you Lord for each difficulty, danger and challenge You helped us through. Any progress made is due to Your wonderful care and provision. Even this place, just when we needed it, just as we needed it to be, shows Your tremendous prevision and endless providence. If we keep in step with You, the guide of our days, completion of our journey will be known.

“I see there are many pathways and places we could take from here. There is the forest, or the rocky mountain edge. There is the way through the meadow. Or perhaps another cave and tunnel awaits us. Where do you want us to go to reach our destination?”

Prince Wilbert looked up and just then saw the biggest shooting star he remembered seeing. It travelled across the sky and then descended to the horizon. The direction it was going seemed to be the answer to his prayer. In his heart he knew where he was to go. The woods were to be their next terrain to travel through.

Prince Wilbert remembered the scurrying little creatures he'd seen the evening before, heading off also in that direction. Perhaps they were also helping to point the way to him.

With that settled, Prince Wilbert ended his time of prayer by quoting a psalm he knew by heart, as he walked back to bed. More time had gone by than he realised, and it was nearly midnight as he lay down to rest. Though short, the sleep was sweet and refreshing.

He woke to hear the birds chirping, and the sounds of pots and pans outside. Frank, who had gone to sleep early had woken up early. Early enough to see the sun rising, and gave him time for a quiet walk a short distance into the woods.

As he too prayed for their coming day, he felt the woods were calling them. It was then that he found a bush of ripe edible berries. Using his hat, Frank picked a good portion of them—leaving some of course for the birds and other creatures in the woods.

That morning Frank was making something special. The flour he had brought was made into dough with some boiled water. He then wrapped this dough around sticks he'd collected. Several of them were roasting over the fire. Fresh bread sticks, along with a warm drink of water and a bowl of berries, the breakfast was ready.

Prince Wilbert wandered out of the hut, after some time of reading his Bible and committing the day to the Lord in prayer, he was happily surprised at the morning meal that

awaited him. Prince Wilbert gave Frank a hug of thanks and hoped he'd had a good night's sleep.

Frank said he had slept well and told of his time in the forest. They were glad to see how both their thoughts had been led, individually, to realise where their path was to go that day. Having the same mind and unity of heart and plans, would make for a great day with much progress.

Prince Wilbert told Frank how he had come to the understanding about their day's journey, and the shooting star. Both men were encouraged, and heartily enjoyed the food and water provided for them.

As Prince Wilbert finished his meal, Frank led out with reading a passage from the Bible. Then Prince Wilbert took a turn. With faith and vision fortified, they were ready to take on, with God's help, whatever challenges awaited them.

Chapter

X

How do you tackle your work each day?
With confidence clear, or dread?
What to yourself do you stop and say
When a new task lies ahead?
What is the thought that is in your mind?
Is fear ever running through it?
If so, just tackle the next you find
By thinking you're going to do it.

—Edgar A. Guest

Chapter 10

Breaking camp took hardly any time. Frank ensured that both fires were thoroughly quenched; while Prince Wilbert checked the cottage and outdoor area for any items mistakenly left behind.

Frank had cooked a bit of extra bread which they could use later on, which he safely tucked away in his backpack. Prince Wilbert filled their drinking water containers from the fresh water pump. They were now set to go.

The forest looked dark and rather foreboding. Not much sunlight was getting through the thick foliage, but the wildlife seemed active enough. Bird calls of all sorts were heard; squirrels could be seen scurrying on this or that tree branch. Every now and then a swarm of some sort of insect would buzz nearby or around them.

At one point Frank thought he saw a fox or some other small furry and fast four legged forest inhabitant run past in the distance. A few rabbits were seen hopping from one bush to the next, and then disappearing down their hole.

Prince Wilbert looked at Frank as they headed into the woods, with no real pathway to lead them, "Are you ready for this?" he asked with a smile of adventure.

Frank replied, “I’m not sure what we’re being ready for, but I guess we’ll find out.”

The wildflowers seen here and there, whenever there was a small break in the trees and light could stream down, added their ray of cheer.

After making their way through the dense forest for about two hours, they could see they were coming to a clearing or meadow of sorts. But just then the sound of large flapping wings was heard. They both looked at each other, remembering well that sound from the day before.

“I think it must have come from that tree over there—that enormous tree!” Frank pointed out.

“That looks big enough to house the largest of eagles!”

Not sure if they should walk quickly in another direction, or if they should approach this massively wide and very tall pine, Prince Wilbert and Frank paused to pray. They knew they needed each part of their journey to be guided by God’s invisible and caring hand, pointing the way.

Just then this large flying creature landed down on the ground in front of them, looking at them and screeching while poising his wings as if ready for flight any moment.

Frank and Prince Wilbert made a sudden move and each stood behind the trunks of two big trees. This would block them somewhat if the bird took a sudden lunge at them. Praying fervently as they hid, suddenly a thought came to mind.

“It wants food... I wonder if...” Frank thought as he quickly rummaged through his backpack to get some of the bread he had packed.

He motioned to Prince Wilbert that he was going to throw this bread over to the bird. Then hopefully, while this huge creature was turning to examine and pick up the bread, they could make a dash for it. The massive tree was obviously where it had its nest, so they just needed to get further away, and hopefully go unnoticed.

First the men scanned around on the ground looking for fallen branches. If they were to carry them, this could be a defence also, from troubling winged creatures. Then with a nod as the cue, with branches in hand, the men ran out. Frank tossed the bread as far as he could to the opposite side where the bird, thankfully, took notice.

They ran through the clearing as fast as they could lumber with packs on their backs and branches in hand, into another part of the forest.

Feeling relieved to be somewhat out of immediate trouble, they took a moment to catch their breath. But not more than a moment was afforded them, when out from under a large bush rambled a bear cub, growling at them.

“That’s just the cub!” Prince Wilbert exclaimed. “Mama is around... I suggest we keep on the pace and make an exit.”

The men turned to run, once again to cross using the clearing. Their tracks were stopped suddenly as the mama bear was just returning and met with them face to face. They didn’t have any tricks to try, no one to call for but God who could tell creatures what to do.

With their hearts ringing out a help call to Heaven, they looked at the creature. It was large, strong, and wild. If they had chosen to focus on its size and strength compared to their own, fear might have taken hold. But the brave men chose to think about its size in comparison to God’s size and strength.

Compared in that way, it was a very small and weak creature. With God on their side, they could face any conflict or trouble or challenge, and anything would be small compared to God Almighty.

“You Go!” demanded Prince Wilbert, “In the name of Jesus Christ, who rules over you, you go!”

With that the bear lumbered off, and seemed to be in a hurry to get back to its cub.

Wiping his brow of the sweat that broke, Frank looked at Prince Wilbert, “Praise God,” he said.

“Then let us be off—if God be for us, who can be against us?” Prince Wilbert said.

Chapter

XI

Faith is not merely praying
Upon your knees at night;
Faith is not merely straying
Through darkness to the light.
Faith is the brave endeavour
The splendid enterprise,
The strength to serve, whatever
Conditions may arise.

—S.E. Kiser

Chapter 11

A lovely bird with shining wings flitted around just up ahead of Prince Wilbert and Frank. It seemed to be beckoning them. The men looked at each other, making the decision to see where this bird was calling. As they followed it several meters they saw, with great delight, a wonderfully filled bush of edible berries.

Knowing better than to just eat whatever they came across, the adventurers paused for prayer and confirmation from the Guide of their life.

After more careful inspection, Prince Wilbert noticed something wasn't quite right with the berries and the bush.

To the unobservant passer-by it would look just like an ordinary bush full of berries. However, as the men prayerfully looked more closely, they could see it was entangled with another sort of bush—the kind with poisonous leaves. It would be nearly impossible to pick and eat the berries without getting harmed from the bad leaves that were growing up and winding their way throughout.

The bird, that had looked rather lovely, now squawked an ugly sound and flew away. The shine seemed to have vanished. Its true nature was revealed by the Master of all.

“That was a close one!” Frank said as the men turned away, leaving the bush untouched.

Prince Wilbert added, “We can’t do things that seem nice and right, without staying in constant communication with our protector. I see it’s not just the big bears that present a danger to us, but things that appear in disguise to be attractive that can get us seriously off course and delayed, and cause harm.”

Sobered and more determined than ever to walk in step with the One who was leading them, they continued on their journey. After walking for quite awhile, they noticed something curious.

“Are you sure we are heading in the right direction?” Frank asked. “I thought I saw that area about an hour ago.” He pointed out ahead of them. “I certainly don’t want to be going in circles.”

Prince Wilbert paused. “I don’t think we have repeated any steps, but you’re right, I do recognize something about that: The ivy going up the trunk of that tree, and beside it the old and rotten stump. Hmmm. Let’s pray.”

“Dear Lord,” Prince Wilbert prayed, “We seek You for Your guidance. We don’t want to waste time or get lost. We don’t know where to go or what to do, unless You show us. We believe it was Your will for us to travel through

the forest, and You have kept us safe through all the challenges of the day. Please show us now what to do and where we are to go. Have we just walked in a circle in this last hour or so?"

The men then paused to listen.

"Tweet-tweet" came the reply, in a form of a bird, small and cheery.

The last bird that led them, wasn't helpful at all, and endangered their wellbeing. But this time, the cheery call came with the words in their heart, "You've missed something. Find what it is. You've retraced your steps because there is something I know you don't want to miss."

What had looked to these men like a big mistake and waste of time, was in actuality, going to save them more time in the future.

"Follow the bird!" came the clear message to Prince Wilbert's mind from God their guide.

"I think it's safe to follow this messenger," Prince Wilbert said, and Frank who was at first hesitant, paused until he too received peace that it was right to do so.

First the bird landed on an overhanging branch and sang a lovely melody. When it was through, it was joined by its mate, and together they sang the song they were designed to sing.

Together they flew, and circled back, as if making sure the adventurous team was following in the direction they were taking.

Then another bird, and another, joined in. It seemed they had all been waiting for this moment to lead in a parade of sorts, or procession. The further the men walked, the more little birds joined the team. Sometimes all the little birds landed in a tree to sing, and then when they were sure the men were walking in the right direction, they would carry on.

This seemed to go on for about 10 minutes or more. Then when the birds were sure they had led the team of travellers to the right location, they all dispersed and flew this way and that way, leaving the men standing there, wondering, waiting, and watching.

Chapter

XII

The south wind is driving
His splendid cloud-horses
Through vast fields of blue.
The bare woods are singing,
The brooks in their courses
Are bubbling and springing
And dancing and leaping,
The violets peeping.
I'm glad to be living:
Aren't you?

—Gamaliel Bradford

Chapter 12

“There’s a tunnel, look!” exclaimed Frank with excitement.

“Let’s go have a look,” replied Prince Wilbert, then paused.

Both men knew better by now than to walk into the next situation without caution and prayer. As they paused for confirmation from Above, their hearts whispering, “Lord, is this where you want us to go next?” all of a sudden the team of cheery birds that had led them there came back and started chattering and flying low and swooping around the entrance to the tunnel that led down into the ground.

The men smiled, their hearts told them this was their answer, and so with confidence they made their next move.

This was a rather deciduous part of the forest, for fallen leaves from trees, bushes and vines covered the forest floor here. There were vines hanging from the trees and winding their way to neighbouring bushes and stumps.

The entrance of the tunnel was decorated also with thorny vines. Perhaps it once had roses on it, in the right season. For now it was a mix of brown, copper, orange and yellow leaves, with red rosehips or seed buds it seemed.

Frank, being good with plants, stopped for a moment to imagine it clothed in flowers, rather like an archway with roses and flowers. Thinking of it in this way, it did seem rather welcoming.

Prince Wilbert led the way and stepped down the stones that formed steps down into this tunnel through rock and soil. Frank sized up the situation and decided a bit of lantern light would be appreciated. He took off his backpack and took out a lantern. Prince Wilbert looked back to see Frank now approaching with a light.

“Just the thing I was thinking of,” Prince Wilbert thanked Frank for his timely assistance and practical foresight. “Seems to be going from dim to dark in this tunnel—or passage way, is it, perhaps?”

The men continued, one cautious step at a time. The rock and dirt walls and ceiling were damp and dripping in some places, and a chill filled the air. With the light they could make steady steps in this narrow small place. The tunnel seemed to go lower and get steeper with rocks placed in the soil to form stairs.

“This is interesting,” Prince Wilbert said aloud and then led out with a song to break the stillness and the sense that the walls were very close. The lack of open space could be disconcerting.

“I know, I’ll hum and tune, and you guess what song it is. When we are through singing the song, then it can be your turn to hum a tune.” Prince Wilbert suggested to Frank, who was beginning to feel uncomfortable in this dark and confining place.

And so they did, and their blithe voices seemed to penetrate the walls, and carry their spirits soaring out and beyond. Suddenly the atmosphere changed, with the ringing out of joyful and united singing.

Instead of the confining and dark situation closing in around them, they were charged with the feeling of being on an adventure. And their hearts echoed once again the words told to them, about this being something they did not want to miss.

What could it be leading to? With the lantern lighting the way, and the songs of joy lighting their hearts, they could steadily carry on.

Prince Wilbert then heard Frank gasp, as he drew in a breath. It had taken him totally by surprise what he saw. Then Frank laughed.

“It’s just a picture!” Frank called out.

Prince Wilbert looked, and embedded into the wall of the tunnel there was a painting of Jesus Christ. It had looked so real, that Frank

had momentarily thought it was a real apparition of the Son of God.

They held up their lantern to get a closer look at it. It was a painting of Jesus looking straight out and beckoning with His hand for the onlooker to come. Behind him, in the picture, was an open door. Beside the door were briars and thorny plants, but through the open door in the picture could be seen a light-filled garden of an array of flowers and other natural beauties. It made those looking at the picture just wish they could do as bidden, walk through this door.

Prince Wilbert saw an engraved inscription at the bottom of the painting, it said: “Jesus said: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’”

It was clear that to get to a place of beauty, such as the one depicted, knowing Jesus Christ and following where He beckoned, was the way to find it.

“Do you think there is a door somewhere here?” Prince Wilbert wondered. His eyes scanned the area surrounding the picture. Perhaps it is a clue for serious seekers.

Chapter

XIII

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

—Alfred Tennyson

Chapter 13

Though he couldn't see a secret door at first, as Prince Wilbert stepped back from the picture embedded in the wall of the tunnel, a clear line was seen around the painting. It was an arched shape over the top and straight lines on the sides and bottom.

Frank then noticed it too. "A secret door or passage way?" he questioned aloud.

Prince Wilbert replied: "It appears so, and Jesus is in the centre of it. Perhaps the writing on the picture gives the clue. Only those with light would have seen it—both the painting and this door. Those groping in darkness would just have stumbled deeper down into this tunnel. Or how far does it actually go?"

Frank shone the lantern to see if the path carried on much farther. He then announced what he saw: "Just a pit a short distance down. A pit that we would have fallen into, filled with murky mud! Without the light, we would have been real messed up, and missed the point of the tunnel."

Prince Wilbert mused and thought: If only someone had been here to hold the light and point the way to the place where Jesus' face looked out and where He was beckoning, many more could have been spared the unhappy ending to their exploration of this tunnel—a

journey that reminded him of life's journey.

The next question on their mind was how and if they were to get this secret door to open, that seemed to be reserved just for those who looked on the picture of the Lord Jesus, believed what He'd said that was engraved there, and then desired to walk in His way, know His truth, and receive the life—the marvellous life, He was offering.

Before too long it became clear to these brave men, that to get this mysterious door to open would take something beyond skill or time. It wasn't something mechanical that they could figure out. It wasn't a test of cleverness or character, as it wasn't something that even the best and smartest man around could do.

It almost seemed it was in another dimension. For when they tried to lay their hands on the edges, or push against it, they could feel nothing—no edge, no movement.

“Does it really exist? I can see the form and it seems clear that it could easily be a passage way. But it's beyond my touch. I can't grasp it with my bare hands.” Prince Wilbert expressed.

Frank, not one to be deterred away from a mystery, remembered that doors need keys, especially locked doors. Even doors without handles could be opened with a key.

With this thought, he began scanning the area for any signs of something resembling a key.

Frank was kneeling on the ground, feeling around with his hands for anything—a key, a box, a latch, a hole where something might be hidden, when he felt a sensation, a compelling feeling. Then almost like a whisper the words like a wave washed into his being: “Just ask Me.”

It was a new thought. Just words? Just say words? Just ask Jesus to open the door.

As he was on his knees, Frank looked up to the picture and said, “Please open the door to paradise for us. We know You, Jesus, are the only way, the only truth, and the one that gives life eternal.”

Prince Wilbert seeing an unearthly glow begin to form and radiate from Frank, joined him and knelt down too. He bowed his head, and said, “Yes Lord, we come to you, to let us through, that the journey of our life may be with you always. You are the way, the truth, and the life.”

A rumble was felt, and the sides of the tunnel were shaking and vibrating, even undulating. Something was going on. They had indeed found the key that had unlocked this mysterious, other-dimension doorway.

It seemed from one moment to the next they were transported to a whole new place with new surroundings. They had been transported through the doorway and now stood in a bright and lovely place. Grass and trees and flowers were all around. A brook of crystal water was singing its way over the shiny rocks, and formed a sparkling pool of water. A rainbow was in the sky, and angels came flying to their side bringing baskets of refreshments.

“Thank you!” the men nodded to their angelic servers, and took the baskets filled with scrumptious delights.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.” Prince Wilbert quoted as he took in the scene.

Frank added, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Chapter

XIV

Let me but find it in my heart to say,
This work can best be done in the right way.
Then shall I see it not too great, nor small
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the laboring hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best.

—Henry Van Dyke

Chapter 14

“Welcome. I’m so glad you have joined Me,” a deep and resounding voice seemed to fill all that surrounded the travellers in the Heavenly place they suddenly found themselves.

Prince Wilbert and Frank turned to look. Walking towards them was Jesus Himself, smiling, and truly glad to see them. He warmly hugged each one of them, and with the embrace melted away all troubles and fears. The love they felt while held in the arms of their Saviour, Lord, and Master, was overwhelming.

“Come,” He said. “Let’s us sit and dine, beside the still waters, and on the green pasture.”

The two men smiled. He had obviously heard their quoting of the scriptures, and they felt secure they could trust in Him to be as good to them as a shepherd cares for his sheep—or much better, indeed.

“Now that you know that I am the way to life eternal, and I can open to you the gates of paradise and give you joy unending, the journey of your life will take on a new dimension. More beauty will surround you and flow through you out to others.

“You’ll have to wait to enjoy the full treats of the lovely things I have reserved for those who

have taken the step to accept Me into their life, and have walked through the door I have offered them—using the keys of asking Me to grant them forgiveness and eternal life. But I wanted you both to have a little taste or sample of what it is like, when you at last arrive at your Heavenly destination,” Jesus explained.

“I didn’t know it would be so simple...” Frank said.

“I didn’t know it would be so beautiful...and this is only a sample of what is to come...”

Prince Wilbert commented.

Jesus smiled, then continued.

“Though you are citizens of this marvellous place, and have the key to entry granted to you, the keys of salvation, of course you realise that the delightful splendour awaits, and for the time being you’ll need to carry on your earthly struggle and mission. But now with this place and all its beauties in your mind, the vision of it will help you endure through the hard times. Just remember these glories that await,” Jesus imparted to them.

After a time of picnicking on the heavenly food and drinking in of the invigorating waters from the clear brook, the men stretched out on the grass to rest and enjoy this time of refreshing.

They knew their tough journey would carry on soon, and they wanted to absorb all the Heavenly inspiration that they could.

Jesus had enjoyed their picnic time along with them, even calling for angels to bring them this or that addition to their feast.

“Do you have any questions you’d like to ask Me, before I send you off on the next part of your journey?” Jesus asked.

Frank, not wishing to miss this special opportunity, propped up on his elbows and gave a hard think. But while he was pondering, Prince Wilbert led out with a thought first. “How much longer is our journey to go on for, at least before we have finished this one mission of exploration over the mountains?”

Jesus responded, “It’s not just about the passage of time, but rather the ground covered and the progress made. If you were to sit in one place, not carrying on your journey and just let time pass, this obviously would delay you quite a bit and add much more time to your mission than it might have originally taken.

“So keep up a good pace, and reach for your goal vigorously, and time will pass much more quickly. And be glad you still have the time to take these journeys. It’s a privilege some no longer have.”

Frank then got a thought:

“Is there a way I can have the ability to hear Your voice of guidance more easily? The journey is sure a difficult one, sometimes even survival is a challenge at times.

“We have to give up lots, and have just a few things with us. There are also dangers that would hinder or stop us altogether if we aren’t really careful and guard each step with prayer.

“But if I knew that when we go out from here, that I would be able to hear Your voice speaking to me clearly, I think that would make a world of difference.

“I can’t trust my own thoughts or perspectives on the situation. Things aren’t always what they appear to be. Your guidance, Jesus, is our only hope for success and wellbeing.”

Jesus then took each of the men’s hands in each one of His large strong hands and said,

“I will be with you each step of the journey, no matter what hard times come to you. You are never alone. And now that you have stepped into the realm of Heaven, and you have discovered how easy it is to talk with Me here and now, I think you will find that it’s much easier to hear My voice as you carry on your journey.”

Jesus helped pull the travellers up, and with His arms over their shoulders they began to walk.

Chapter

XV

This is another chapter in the book,
This is another race that you have planned,
Don't give the vanished days a backward look,
Start where you stand.

—Berton Braley

Chapter 15

“Thank you Jesus for this very special time, a time away from the challenges of the journey. I know it’s not going to be easy, but we’re glad we know a bit more what we have to look forward to when our life journey is past,” Prince Wilbert expressed.

As Jesus embraced them, He said, “I’m not saying goodbye, as I’ll be with you always, but let us pray now before you go on your pathway once again. Ask Me what you’d wish for, and I will ask the Father.”

After presenting to Him the wishes and desires and needs of their hearts, Jesus prayed to His Father to grant the best things, the things that would truly bring great success. Jesus then led them, as a kind older brother would His younger brothers, by the hands over to where they would step out of this paradisiacal dimension, and continue on their earthly journey.

As soon as they reached a forest area, in an instant they were suddenly once again in the forest they had been travelling through.

“Wow!” is all both of them could think. And for some time they walked on in silence, reminiscing all that had just transpired. They wanted to enjoy and savour its precious memory for some moments more.

Finally Frank broke the silence, “I guess we are back...”

Prince Wilbert nodded, “And He is with us...”

They both smiled, for just thinking of the Saviour made their hearts warm and light and take courage.

They soon came to a well, complete with a bucket and all that was needed to draw water.

The travellers sat down near it, and drank what they had poured. It had seemed an angel had presided over this well, as a Heavenly glow was around it.

They then noticed on one side of the well there was a golden plaque, with these beautiful Scripture passages embossed on it:

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become by salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:2-3)

“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” (Psalm 116:13)

Was this well really here in this wilderness, or had it just been suddenly placed here for their encouragement? The water was sweet and refreshing, and seemed to be invigorating also.

After drinking from it, Frank said, "I feel I could run a hundred miles!"

"Me too!" added Prince Wilbert.

There was something real special about this water. "It tastes just like the brook we drank from, in that heavenly place with Jesus," Prince Wilbert realised.

"You're right," added Frank. "Rivers of living water," he quoted from scripture, where Jesus was describing what His spirit can be like.

They both felt renewed in spirit and body, mind and heart, and were ready to continue on.

"Obviously we aren't in the tunnel anymore. It looks like we have exited the tunnel, and are nearly at the edge of the forest," Prince Wilbert assessed the situation.

"Why don't we take some time to find out what our next step is going to be, shall we?" he suggested to Frank.

Frank was refilling all their drinking vessels with this fresh tasting, life- and energy-giving water he'd drawn from the well.

So when they were ready, the adventuresome travellers sat down to pray, and communicate with the One who was leading and guiding them, and would be with them every step of the way.

It wasn't too long before words formed simultaneously in their minds and a message was passed on to them.

“Turn to the left, keeping towards the edge of the forest, and soon you will come to a very large oak tree. Look for a door in its trunk. A treasure is hiding therein.”

Both men had expressed what they had heard in their heart and mind, and determined to follow through with it. After strapping on their back packs, they headed left, and before too long they spotted the oak tree they were looking for.

It was hard to miss, due to its size. Its large outstretched branches could house many a creature. The men circled around it, scanning the bark of its trunk for any signs that would indicate a door, probably resembling a small cabinet or dresser door.

Chapter

XVI

To keep my health!
To do my work!
To live!

To see to it I grow and gain and give!
Never to look behind me for an hour!
To wait in weakness, and to walk in power;
But always fronting onward to the light,
Always and always facing towards the right.

—Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Chapter 16

Frank spotted it at first—the door in the trunk of the tree they were looking for. “Aha! This must be it,” he pointed out to Prince Wilbert what he’d found, but kindly let the prince be the one to check it out.

“You’re right, this looks quite like what we are looking for,” Prince Wilbert examined and pried at a bark covered metal door.

There didn’t seem to be a way to get it open however, so Prince Wilbert sent up a prayer in His heart for assistance. “Push the button,” the words came to him.

“The button?” he thought aloud. “Where?”

But as he felt around, something that seemed to be a bump or knot in the tree reacted like a button on a machine to be pushed. It wasn’t hard as wood and sank down as he pressed it. And when he did, the little door in the trunk of the large oak tree sprang open.

“Oh, wow!” exclaimed Frank.

Inside was a metal box, the exterior of it decorated with gold and silver patterns, and inlaid with jewels of all sorts.

“And this is just the box!” said Prince Wilbert, “I wonder what is inside? Please you go ahead,” Prince Wilbert offered it to Frank to

have the chance to open the treasure box that had at last been found inside the large oak tree.

“No, really, you can,” Frank offered Prince Wilbert.

So they decided to lift the lid together.

It was a special moment they had been anticipating. As the lid was opened, lovely music was heard, followed by the flapping of dove’s wings as it seemed the pure white bird emerged and flew out and landed on the branch over head.

Several colourful butterflies also fluttered out of what seemed just a small box. Rather, it must have been a doorway. Perhaps a bit of Heaven was coming to grace the Earthly world around them through this jewelled door that looked just like a treasure box.

Light then streamed out of the treasure box and fairies started to flutter out. As they went around the area of the forest where these men were standing, they touched here and there, and everywhere they touched, bright coloured flowers would spring up and appear, making the rather brown forest floor look like a heavenly garden.

Prince Wilbert and Frank were busy looking this way and that to see all the beauty that the lovely little fairies were bringing.

They laughed and smiled. It was thrilling. Some of Heaven's love and beauty was springing up all around. Though they had to continue on their challenging Earth life path, it was uplifting to feel and see a bit of heaven all around.

They looked back to the treasure box to see what it was going to bring out next. Instead of something streaming, fluttering or flying out, they instead saw two golden rings, simple gold bands.

Then just for a moment they saw an apparition of Jesus standing, partly transparent, beside them. He imparted these words,

“I am with you always, and you belong to Me. Take and wear these rings, each one of you. And when you each put it on your finger say the words, ‘I belong to You, Jesus. Always and forever I am Yours.’

“These rings, dear ones, symbolise My great and eternal love for you. You are bound to My heart, you are a part of Me. Together we will be forever.

“Just as a couple is bound in a promise of love to care for each other through all the hard times, so do I, your Lord and Maker, your redeemer and Saviour, promise to each one

that gives Me their heart and their love and believes in Me, that I will care for them always.

“I love you more than any earthly couple ever loved. I will care for each one who believes in Me, better than any earthly husband ever cared for the one he loves.

“As you put these rings on, remember how eternal and complete is My love for you, for always. Just as the circle of a ring goes around and around and never ends, so is my love and care for you.”

When Jesus ended the message and had disappeared again, it seemed only a brief second had passed. He said all this to their hearts and minds in an instant.

Prince Wilbert and Frank felt a wave of astonishment, and knowing of the deep and eternal love of God and His Son for them moved them deep in their soul.

Chapter

XVII

A LITTLE PRAYER

That I may not in blindness grope,
But that I may with vision clear
Know when to speak a word of hope
Or add a little wholesome cheer.

—S.E. Kiser

Chapter 17

Prince Wilbert offered the treasure box with the golden rings for Frank to take one out first, and then he took the remaining ring too.

The golden bands fit perfectly on their finger, the finger that rings are worn in the world to show that someone belongs to another, and has promised their heart and life to them.

Closing their eyes, each of them whispered in prayer those words, "I belong to You, Jesus. Always and forever I am Yours."

Just as they spoke these words, it seemed the finest symphony rang out from the treasure box. Music of the richest quality played splendidly. For it was as if Heaven was rejoicing, that two of its citizens were devoted in heart and soul to the King of all, and thus the Kingdom of God would continue to take over and spread its love and joy, peace and prosperity. The men could almost feel the radiant smile of joy that was on their Saviour's face. He too was moved with their expression of love to Him, and their devotion for eternity.

As the music kept playing, Prince Wilbert and Frank stretched out on the soft ground to listen and enjoy its Heavenly refrains.

They looked up at the spreading oak tree, watched the butterflies, doves and fairies that seemed to enjoy the music greatly.

Night-time fell as the music played, and while it ended, Prince Wilbert and Frank, each using their backpacks for their pillows, drifted into a peaceful sleep on the soft ground under the oak.

The fairies then brought light-filled blankets of warmth and covered these travellers as they rested. And they would see to it that no harm would come as the men slept.

When morning came, and birds were singing, some rested and smiling travellers woke and gazed at the beauty around them.

They hadn't expected to fall asleep. In fact they wondered what they were going to do when night came, but it was taken care of for them. Now they were ready to face another day.

Frank moved his head suddenly to the side and back again. "Did you see that?"

"See what?" Prince Wilbert asked.

"Maybe just more fairy business, but I thought I saw something... oh, there it is again... Is someone behind those trees over there?" Frank wondered.

“Let’s just eat our breakfast and take some Bible reading time. We’re heading that way over there anyway. We’ll see what we see when we get there,” Prince Wilbert suggested.

Frank was happy to keep on munching from his snack pack, and leave exploring till a bit later.

Then it was Prince Wilbert’s turn to be taken by surprise. At first he thought it was a gentle breeze on his neck. Although he was about to read a Psalm for the day, this feeling made him look up. However, there was no other sign of the wind blowing in the least. “Hmm,” he thought, then got back to reading aloud from the scriptures.

After the heartfelt prayer for guidance and protection that followed their reading and meal, the men put on their backpacks and were ready to begin. Suddenly they drew in a breath of surprise, as standing in front of each of them was a lady of rarest beauty, dressed in flowing gowns, and looking into their eyes.

“Oh... where did you come from...” stammered Prince Wilbert.

The lady looking at him stepped closer and closer, until she put her arms around his neck and whispered, “I was sent to be a companion to you.”

Prince Wilbert was not sure how to respond, but he was sure this being, this angelic lady, was heaven-sent. He did as anyone gratefully receiving a gift would do, he reach out his arms to receive and hold the gift by placing his arms around her, holding her in an embrace and whispering, "Thank you".

Meanwhile, the lady who had been standing in front of Frank, had suddenly, with a playful smile, run off to hide behind a tree.

Frank wondered what he was to do.

Prince Wilbert looked up and said, "I think you are meant to find her... go have fun!"

And so, to make himself more agile, he placed his backpack on the ground and joined in the game. By the time he thought he found her behind one tree, she quickly lighted away to another, and another. Finally, after a fun and invigorating game of hide, chase, and find, she let him catch up with her.

Chapter

XVIII

It's today that I am livin',
Not a month ago,
Havin', losin', takin', givin',
As time wills it so.
Yesterday a cloud of sorrow
Fell across the way;
It may rain again tomorrow,
It may rain--but, say,
Ain't it fine today!

—Douglas Malloch

Chapter 18

“Hi... I just wanted to see if you actually wanted me. Now that I know you do, because you didn’t give up trying to get close to me, my name is Emily,” the cute lady said to Frank who had happily caught up with her in the forest.

“Nice to meet you,” Frank responded, and then asked. “Where did you come from, and where are you going? Are you travelling the way we are?”

“I am now. My sister and I,” she looked over to where Prince Wilbert was walking and talking with the other lady, “were sent on a mission by the King, and He said this was where we were to go. And now we found out just today, that part of our mission was to find you both, and to join you in your mission travels. Do you mind travelling together now?”

Frank blushed a bit. It wasn’t the first time he had thought of having a lovely female companion to travel with. He was glad she hadn’t been there through the rougher parts of the journey. But now it seemed right.

Although she seemed gentle and frail in some ways, she had an inner strength, for she too had been through her own set of tough travels, along with her sister.

Together they had also bravely fought and

won over the dangers that lurked and had tried to stop them on their mission. So, although she appeared blithe and graceful, there was a look in her eyes that said she was up to the task of going on the trip with these men. In fact, with more of them, they could be an even stronger team now. As long as they all had the same motives and focus and mission, it would be a benefit.

“Let me go talk to Prince Wilbert about it. It’s an interesting and pleasant idea, but we’ll have to talk things over. See we are on a mission and need to reach our goal....” Frank said to Emily, in response to her question of, “Do you mind travelling together now?” So he left to have a chat with Prince Wilbert.

Meanwhile, Prince Wilbert had been talking things over with Felinena, as he found her name to be. He was fascinated to hear all the rough things these two sisters had been through, yet they still looked so lovely and pretty.

Prince Wilbert was imagining what he could have done or would have done had he been with Felinena earlier when she had face some dangerous encounters on her journey. He didn’t want her to have to carry on any longer in her mission for the King now without some strong manly help.

His protective instinct had showed itself, and he too was wondering what to do.

The two sisters met to swap what the men had told them thus far, trying to get clues as to what the decision would be. Meanwhile the men sat on a fallen log to pray and talk things over.

This certainly was a huge change. Perhaps not a change of plans, as the mission of exploration would continue, but it would be quite an adjustment and bring a whole range of new factors. Things wouldn't be as simple. But maybe they would be better in other ways.

For example, instead of just two people praying and agreeing on what they believed God showed them to be the next path to take, there would be four people that needed to agree on it. But on the other hand, there were likewise four people who could pray and hear God's voice in their heart and mind, and this would double the amount of words from Heaven that their team could receive.

There were plenty of pros and cons on both sides, but in the end, it seemed it was the King's will and plan for them to unite and form a larger team. Their combined talents and skills would certainly benefit them as they went.

Just then a thought struck Prince Wilbert.

“Do you think they too have golden rings of devotion and union with Jesus? I didn’t notice, but I didn’t really look for one either. Without knowing that they are absolutely committed to Him first and foremost and forever, I don’t see how a teamwork with them would work.”

The men then beckoned for their newly found sweethearts to come over. Emily and Felinena held hands and walked over. They didn’t know what this next turn of their life and their journey would be. Somewhat nervously they approached the sitting men.

Chapter

XIX

Good-morning, Brother Gladness,
Good-morning, Sister Smile,
They told me you were coming,
So I waited on a while.
I'm lonesome here without you,
A weary while it's been,
My heart is standing open,
Won't you walk right in?

—James W. Foley

Chapter 19

Felinena and her sister Emily stood in front of Prince Wilbert and Frank. They silently waited to hear what these adventuresome travellers were going to say.

“Do you both pledge your utmost devotion to the King of all? Have you committed your heart, your soul and your all to Him?” Prince Wilbert asked soberly and sincerely.

The ladies nodded. “Then please kneel down, and extend your hands.” The ladies did as Prince Wilbert instructed. Each of the men took the ladies hands in theirs and looked for the ring as a sign of devotion. But there were no rings.

Prince Wilbert continued, “If you believe these words, then repeat them aloud from your heart:

‘I belong to You, Jesus. Always and forever I am Yours.’

In unison the two ladies repeated these words, and as they did, something curious appeared. Their eyes opened in wonder, as they pulled their hands back to look. They both saw that on their ring fingers appeared the most beautiful gold and diamond ring they could imagine.

“Oh! It’s so lovely!” the ladies exclaimed, and hugged each other in joy.

They hadn't expected this to be happening to them. It was certainly a pleasant experience, more than pleasant, it was a euphoric moment after all they had been through.

Just then the four travellers looked up to see Jesus standing there. He gave each one a warm embrace and thanked them for their devotion and love, and once again promised He would be with them forever.

Tears of joy were streaming down the ladies' faces and they didn't want to let Him go. Jesus was then standing in the middle, for all to be near to Him.

“Go ahead, my dear ones, on your mission for the Kingdom. Join in prayer. Join in united goals. Join in fervency of calling. Join to help each other fight the enemy. Join together to learn teamwork. Join to renew your love for others, for in learning to love one another you will learn how to help others in love. I will bless you and be with you always.”

As Jesus said this, He then vanished leaving the two couples looking at each other and joining in a silent, reverent embrace.

“Will you join with me?” Prince Wilbert asked, as he kissed the hand of Felinena.

“Yes, I will,” she responded. It was a big decision and would mean a huge change, but

she was sure it would make things better and her mission more successful.

“Will you join with me, Emily?” Frank asked, with arms around her.

“If you will with me,” she responded.

“I will,” committed Frank, and placed a kiss on her forehead.

And so it was that their team was doubled, and with greater inspiration and strength they began the next part of their journey.

Chapter

XX

For, we know, not every morrow
Can be sad;
So, forgetting all the sorrow
We have had,
Let us fold away our fears,
And put by our foolish tears,
And through all the coming years
Just be glad.

—James Whitcomb Riley

Chapter 20

By nightfall that evening, they weren't sure how, but so much ground was covered. It almost seemed like their feet took wings.

After moving swiftly over meadows, through bush areas, over rocky outcrops, crossing shallow streams, and climbing over hills and up steeper mountain passes they arrived at a good place to rest for the night.

Where they stood they could get a good look at the valley below. When they made it down there, this particular mission would be accomplished. They would have pioneered the land and made it through from where they had started from to the place they were to go.

There would be plenty of work to do, perhaps by others, to ensure a good and safe pathway was formed, through all the various types of terrain. And perhaps a fenced in pathway for those areas that held wild beasts.

As Prince Wilbert looked down from the mountain in the setting sun he whispered, "We're nearly there, praise God!"

Felinena joined him by his side and wrapped her arms around him.

Frank and Emily had been preparing the supper for all, but paused to take a look as well.

It was a moment of wonder, revelling in the victory and getting the vision of the next part of the journey. How long it would take, or what they would encounter next, they didn't know. But they were each determined to give their best and not quit until they'd come around the last bend, and hiked the last bit of the path.

Around a large and warm campfire the travellers sat snugly, and each of the men were holding their dear partners.

"I think I'm going to enjoy this part of the journey the best," Frank whispered into Emily's ear.

Emily giggled. "Together the hard parts of the way can be made easier."

Frank liked this fun lady. The trip the next day was bound to be the best day yet. They lay down to rest together, watching the stars and milky-way.

"Tell me about your mission, Prince, it's our mission now—together," Felinena spoke.

"Once upon a time in a far away country there lived a prince... but though he had riches untold from his Heavenly Father, the King of all Heaven and Earth, there was one jewel he had long wished for.

“The King told him that as he went out to work for Him, that ‘all these things would be added unto him’. And so the prince decided to make the best of his lot in life, and set out with vigour and bravery to travel and explore and see what the land was like.

“His mission was to see if a safe passage way from one place to another could be made. Whenever he was alone the prince would often wish he could have this jewel, for if he held it in his hands, it would surely lighten his heart and life.

“Then one day, after many adventuresome days, he looked up and saw the jewel he had longed for, right before his eyes. He held this jewel and wished to treasure it all his life. Of course he would need to carry on in his mission, but he would also ensure the safe keeping of this jewel. –And this was you, darling,” Prince Wilbert said, holding Felinena in a warm embrace.

“And they lived happily ever after....” she added with a smile to the Tale of the Prince.

With the fire crackling and stars shining and singing to them, into a precious sleep they went.

In the morning the two men took the time to read and pray and commune with their Heavenly Guide about the best way to descend from the mountain.

Meanwhile the ladies went off to find a source of water. Following the tweets and chirps of some assisting birds, they found a small waterfall pouring out from a rocky place. It was sweet and refreshing. The ladies washed up and then filled all water drinking vessels that both they and the men had brought. A couple of pots were also filled for their breakfast meal.

The ladies boiled some grains for cereal, while the men took their turn to wash up and then pack up their gear for the day. During their morning meal they all took turns to read a passage or psalm from the Bible, as well as offer heartfelt praises to the One who had kept them this far and would keep them yet another day.

Then as they prayed for safe keeping, it seemed, just for a moment, that they each were once again transported into the presence of Jesus.

He said,

“Go forth knowing that I will be with you. There are many in the valley in need of challenge and inspiration.

“This passage way that is to be opened up will bring so many more to know the way to the Kingdom. Be brave, and always speak works of faith, and of love, and of hope. These three elements within your heart and mind and on your lips will enable you to finish this mission.”

After what seemed like a blink, they were suddenly back again, around the breakfast fire.

But within moments the inspired team, walking two by two, headed off to complete what they were called to do.

As they at last reached the valley, days later and many adventuresome moments later, they heard a voice, a voice they knew and loved, calling out loud to them all,

“Well, done, good and faithful ones. Enter into the land. And I will bless your going out and your coming in—for you will continue to help these ones living here, while also travelling at times to help those who will build the pathway up through the mountains, that will lead them closer to the Kingdom of God. And I am with you always.”

Chapter

XXI

The highest peak hasn't been climbed yet,
The mightiest rivers aren't spanned,
Don't worry and fret, faint hearted,
The chances have just begun,
For the Best jobs haven't been started,
The Best work hasn't been done.

—Berton Braley

Chapter 21

Frank was handy at putting together quick dwelling places, and Emily was stronger than she looked. Together they hauled logs they found lying around, and stones, branches, leaves and moss. By the end of the first week of arriving in this new valley area, they had something to call home, at least for now. How long they would stay, wasn't known, but this would give them a place to rest while checking out the area and its people during the day.

Prince Wilbert and Felinena travelled to the other side of the valley to get a better idea of what things were like there. They talked to many people around, and found them to be friendly, yet aloof and uncaring about mountain travel. The valley sustained them.

However, Prince Wilbert had received a clear warning in a dream the night before, that this valley, this very one, was to be flooded one day, and all who knew the way out, would be saved. That is those who cared and wished to be saved, would make their way up to the mountain and be safe.

It was becoming clear what the next part of the mission was. Besides ensuring a safe passageway out for those wishing to flee the coming disaster, people needed to know what

was up ahead, and to be forewarned. Perhaps getting the valley folk to trust them was the first step. Showing them kindness and consideration and building a friendship would help them learn to trust the warnings that they would need to then give to these people.

When Prince Wilbert and Felinena reached the other side of the valley, the foot of the next tall mountain range, they knew this was where they were to stay for the next while. They sat together on a rock and watched the setting sun. They had camped along the way, and would do so again this night. It was a moment to remember, as it marked the true beginning of their next mission.

Just as the last rays of sun left, a “Hello” sounded at their side. It was Frank and Emily!

They had come for a visit and had brought with them a delicious supper to be cooked. Soon a fire was built, and the friends were talking and laughing and exchanging stories from the past week that had gone by.

Plans were suggested, and ideas shared. Prince Wilbert shared with all, in detail, the dream and calling he had received—the danger that was to come, and the mission to warn and prepare these folks for what was up ahead.

The evening ended with sober prayers and committed hearts, to do as the King had called them.

“Thank you all for assisting me in this mission thus far, and the next one we are embarking on,” Prince Wilbert said to his friendly team.

“I couldn’t do it without you. I’m very grateful and couldn’t ask for a better team. As we follow God—our King—and do His will alone, I know we are sure to achieve success in this endeavour.”

With that this adventurous team, slept under the stars and committed their safety and their mission to the one who had called them, who also would do it. The last words on their lips that evening was the Lord’s prayer.

And as they prayed it, they seemed to hear a fifth person leading the prayer. Jesus was with them, praying for them and with them, and would do all He had promised to do, to help them accomplish this next part of their mission.



MATTHEW 6:9-13

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be
done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we
forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the
power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

