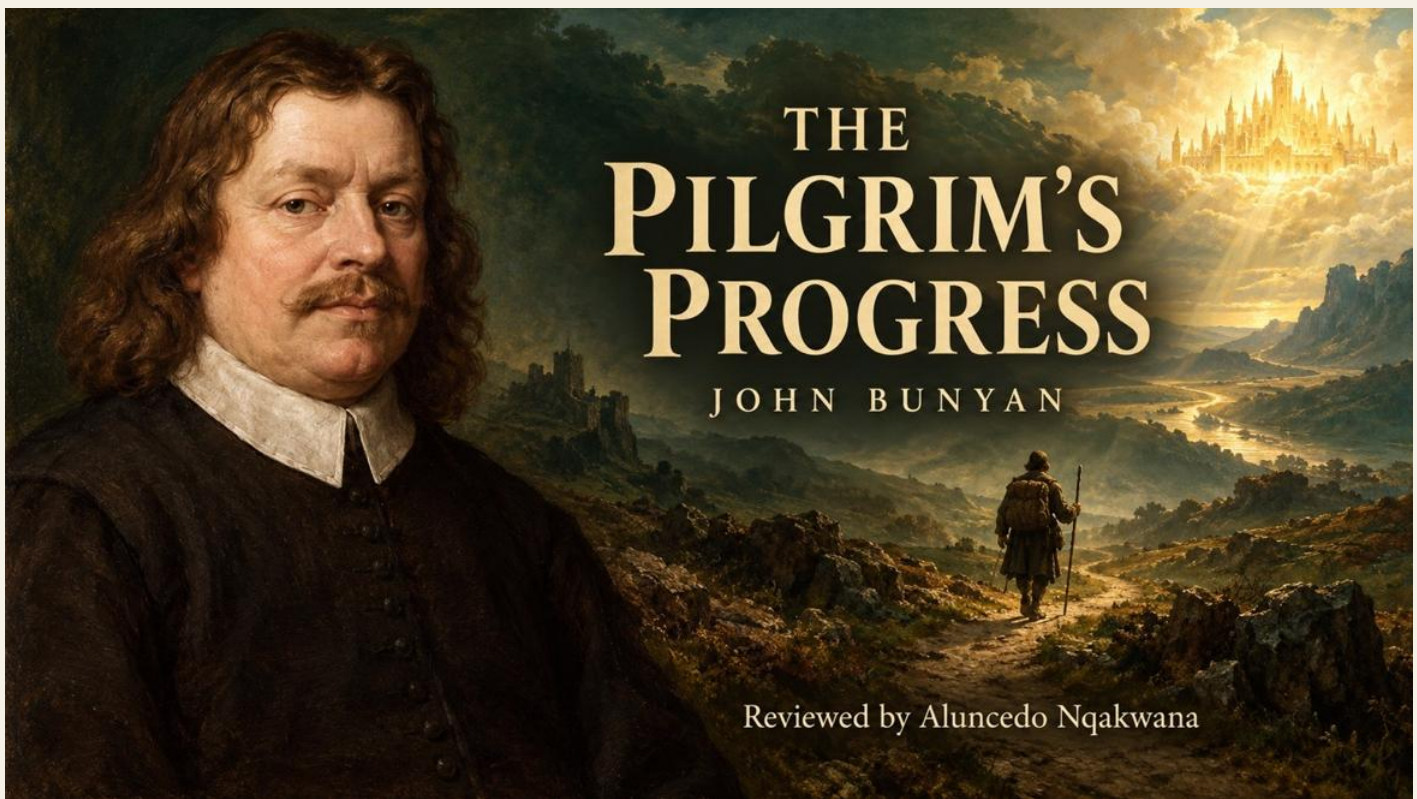




## Discovering Bunyan's story

01

When I started reading the book, it was not obvious to me what I had on my screen. The history of the book, the lives that were touched, changed and even encouraged, by those who were blessed to receive the narrative detailed in the book, especially for those who have come to realise that they are pilgrims who like 'Christian' are fleeing the city of destruction and headed to the Celestial city.

When I first heard of it, it was through the late Pastor John MacArthur, who had quoted Christian being trapped in Doubting-Castle, and realizing he had a key in his chest called a promise that he could use to unlock the door. That was all the convincing I needed to look up the book and read it for myself. Many times I've read books simply by the interesting recommendation of a preacher I would hear. I simply needed to drink from the well of John Bunyan's book myself.



**“I have a Key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any Lock in Doubting Castle.”**

JOHN BUNYAN · THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

When I read the book it was interesting to follow, I was a bit overwhelmed by the style of English used but having learned from the King James Version of the Bible, and Shakespeare in high school, I was able to comprehend much of what was being narrated, even if I had to read a section twice. John Bunyan's style of writing is good in that it leads you back to the Bible. He has a special way of quoting from the Scriptures as part of the dialogue being

narrated. When Evangelist meets Christian in his fearful condition and tells him of the journey he must take for refuge, that is a reminder of the hopelessness I was in before the Gospel of God was preached to me.

The copy I got off the internet was published by Desiring God ministries by John Piper who wrote 'To live upon God who is invisible: The life of John Bunyan' which was included in the introduction to the book, what a rich biography that was. I dug into the biography and marvelled at how God is faithful to His Word and to His people. The things Bunyan had accomplished by resolving to live upon God who is invisible would now have a lasting impact on me, a young woman from Kwabhaca who had suddenly been made aware of the flow of stream from which she drinks that has stood the test of time and finally made its way to me, the resource God has brought my way for the strengthening of my faith. I thought to myself, 'I really am a pilgrim' as I had been digging into the book.

## The hill of difficulty

02

I read about this interesting narrative of Bunyan having a dream about this fellow called 'Christian' who flees his home, leaving his family and resolving to go to the Celestial City to flee the damnation that is imminent after hearing from Evangelist about the Good news offered to him. As I read this book there was not much journalling on my part, I had just been taking it in as it came. Not long into it I met Christian on The Hill Of Difficulty, and I read that '...the narrow way lay right up the hill...' that struck a nerve I think, because looking back, I wrote part of that down.



**“The hill, though high, I covet to ascend.  
The difficulty will not me offend,  
For I perceive the way to life lies here.  
Come, pluck up heart, let's neither faint nor fear.  
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,  
Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe”**

JOHN BUNYAN · THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

I believe it was this part that stopped me in my stride, for I myself had been at a hill of difficulty, wondering how I would ascend this hill. That hill was the final year of my undergraduate studies. It appeared very steep before me and I had been clambering upon my hands and knees because of the steepness of the place. Reaching the end of something so pivotal in my life has led me to realise how often I need to be refreshed by the Lord in my weariness. Weariness of heart, I have realized, is not far for someone like me, all the more reason to cling to the Cross of Christ and not so slumber as to lose sight of the calling with which I have been called by God, to be a child of God and a disciple of Jesus Christ.



**“Reaching the end of something so pivotal in my life has led me to realise how often I need to be refreshed by the Lord in my weariness.”**

ALUNCEDO NQAKWANA

Reading this book, I came to consider the present moment as part of my pilgrimage, thanking the Lord for using it to refresh me and a fresh perspective of what I had been learning in my Bible about God’s redemptive work in the world and in me. As someone who enjoys reading books from preachers in previous generations, I had neglected that aspect of my life under the guise of being swamped with schoolwork (it does become a lot sometimes), but will I really ever find time? I simply had to try, I’m so glad I did, because I met Faithful, a companion of Christian in the book. What a character he was. Before I knew it, my academic year was almost over and the Lord had been faithful in keeping me.

## I am a pilgrim

03

Reading this book made the penny drop in my mind that I am a pilgrim. I remember pausing at that realization because it sounded too profound and significant, but also terrifying because what do you mean I might find myself going through similar encounters in my life as I watched Christian go through, am I even ready for that? However, it has very little to do with my readiness.

**“Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.”** 2 Corinthians 3:4-5 ESV. By the mercies of God I belong to the Lord of the Hill.

## Being formed on the journey

04

Kubunjwa uMntu apha, (a man is being formed here) was another observation I had made. Particularly realizing that about my own life and reading about the paths that Christian took, every blunder he made, every encounter he had, even being delivered unto the edge of death on his combat with Apollyon (I remember holding my breath reading that chapter). I know now not to despair, for he who called me is faithful. The question I consider is whether I, like Christian believe that I am in the King’s highway, in the way of holiness and that greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.

The pilgrimage of the Christian is long and not without trial and tribulations but the Hill I ascend belongs to the Lord for He is the Lord of the hill and what a comfort that is. I realise now that I am kept, **“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”** Job 23:10 ESV.



**“The pilgrimage of the Christian is long and not without trial and tribulations but the Hill I ascend belongs to the Lord for He is the Lord of the hill and what a comfort that is.”**

ALUNCEDO NQAKWANA

I recommend this book for the Christian who is struggling with studying the Scriptures, that in this book the Lord would use it to direct them back to His word, for the one who is uncertain of where they are in their walk with Christ, walk with Christian and the uncertainty will be cleared. For the sceptical or the unbeliever, consider the things narrated in this play, they may cause you to think deeply on what matters pertaining to this life and the life to come. Flee the city of destruction and find refuge in Jesus Christ alone, who is able to save us.

Peace to you all.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Aluncedo Nqakwana

Aluncedo Nqakwana is a medical graduate who studied at Walter Sisulu University. A Reformed Christian from KwaBhaca, she loves Scripture, the Puritans and the preaching of the Reformers, and fellowshiped at REACH East London during her final undergraduate year.