

# THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

*“Keep your eyes fixed upon the light,  
and go directly to it...”*



FAITHFULLY RETOLD BY

*Cheryl V. Ford*

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*The Pilgrim's Progress*

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*The Pilgrim's Progress* is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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*I sent my prophets to  
warn you with many a  
vision and many  
a parable and dream.*

HOSEA 12:10  
THE LIVING BIBLE



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## PREFACE TO *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Of the nineteen babies born in 1628 in a little English village called Elstow, one, John Bunyan, was destined to become one of the leading preachers and writers of the century. His birth took place only a mile from the Bedford prison which would, in its turn, be the birthing place of one of England's greatest literary works. The son of a simple tinker, a traveling mender of broken pots and tools, he had a low social standing with only a limited education.

John Bunyan was sixteen years of age when his world turned upside down. In the span of three short months, the death of his mother was followed by his sister's death and his father's remarriage. This same year he joined the army, where he spent his next three years. Following this period of change and upheaval he became a wild profligate who, by his own admission, had no equal in lying and blaspheming.

Upon his return to civilian life, he too became a tinker. This would have been the end of the story but for the fact that God prefers to "shame the wise" by choosing "what is low and despised in the world."

When Bunyan was about nineteen, he married a poor orphan girl. He stated, "We came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household-stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both." She did have a dowry, but it consisted only of two Christian devotional books. These contributed to his becoming a deeply religious young man who went to church and read the Bible. His attempts at reformation, however, put him on an emotional roller coaster; visions of light and hope were followed by seizures of depression, doubt, fear, and guilt. Later he would

say, "For this reason I lay so long at Sinai, to see the fire and the cloud and the darkness, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life upon earth, and tell of his wondrous works to my children."

One day he was working at his trade when he overheard some women talking about the new birth and how God, through the love of Jesus, had changed their lives. He was acutely interested, so the women introduced him to their pastor, a Baptist minister, who provided him with instruction. He read Luther's "Commentary on Galatians," which had a profound effect upon him, and his mind stuck on one line of the Apostle Paul's, "He hath made peace by the blood of His cross." Christ had died for him! The new convert joined the little Baptist congregation and before long was a zealous member and deacon.

Eventually this fervent young man was ordained to preach. To him God was a God of wrath as well as of mercy. Sin, grace, and redemption were the consistent themes of his sermons. His own inner struggles and searchings of the Scriptures made him a compassionate and yet powerful guide. People risked arrest to hear him preach; crowds listened entranced. He is esteemed by historians as one of the great preachers of his time.

Shortly after he began his ministry, political change drastically altered the course of his life. Cromwell died, and Charles II came home to England. With the return of royal rule, the religious freedom of non-Anglicans was severely curtailed. "Dissenters" and "Irregulars" who refused to take part in state-sponsored religion were persecuted. Bunyan closed his chapel but went underground, continuing to preach. He was faced with a choice between obeying his conscience or the dictates of the Church of England.

One evening in November 1660 he was arrested after refusing to heed a warning to stop preaching. As he was led away, he said, "If I were out of prison today, I would preach the gospel again tomorrow by the help of God." His original sentence of three months in the Bedford jail extended to six years as he refused to repent of his "illegal" preaching. "I must venture all with God," he contended.

During this time in jail, concern for his family was a heavy burden. He saw himself as a man who was pulling down his house upon the heads of his wife and children, yet with no other choice. Upon his release, he was

once again charged not to preach—but preach he must. There were well-meaning friends who would advise him to compromise, but, remaining true to his convictions, he was imprisoned once again for another six years. He wrote, “I have determined, the Almighty God being my help and shield, yet to suffer . . . even till the moss shall grow on mine eyebrows rather than thus to violate my Father and principles.”

Why is it that God would allow such a dynamic young preacher to spend twelve of the best years of his life in a jail? How clear, over time, the sovereignty of God has become: what the magistrates meant for evil, God meant for good. There is a cost to wholehearted dedication, but God has used Bunyan’s experience for a clear testimony to the reliability of His promises. Most assuredly, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

First of all, God did not forget Bunyan’s impoverished family. His wife would go before the judges pleading for her husband’s release so that he could support their four children. He was allowed to handcraft and market lace to help support them. At one point he was given permission to leave jail at will, but only until his preaching resumed. Especially dear to his heart was his firstborn, a little blind daughter who was allowed to visit him often. She would run her hands over his face, and if there were tears, she would kiss them away.

Next, like Paul, turning bitterness into blessing, he carried on a prison ministry from within his cell. He ministered to other prisoners and virtually became a prison chaplain to other preachers and Christians who had been jailed. There, in prison, Bunyan developed an insatiable appetite for reading, repeatedly poring over the Bible and a copy of *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*. He wrote, “I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the Word of God as now. These Scriptures, that I saw nothing in before, are made in this place to shine upon me. Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now; here I have seen and felt him indeed.”

Like Luther a century before him, he began to write, turning out pamphlet after pamphlet which were in turn read by thousands. During this period he published five books. His ministry was enriched beyond measure as he willingly suffered for the cause of Christ.

In 1672 Charles II relaxed religious oppression, and Bunyan was released. Public worship outside the establishment was once again permitted. He was called to be pastor of the Bedford church, and throngs gathered to hear him preach. He poured his energies into strenuous preaching tours, and churches as far away as London eagerly welcomed “Bishop Bunya,” as he was called. John Owen, a religious writer and scholar, told king Charles II in a private conversation, “If I could possess that tinker’s abilities for preaching, I would most gladly relinquish all my learning.”

The political-religious climate of England briefly shifted again in 1675. Bunyan once more landed in prison for about six months, and again he turned to his pen. It was during this last confinement that he began to write a work of genius, simple yet profound, a breathtaking allegory that so riveted the interest, sparked the imagination, and energized the spirit that it became an instant best-seller. The book, originally entitled *The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*, was so popular that within the first year, three editions were issued. In no time one hundred thousand copies were sold—a tremendous accomplishment for a book in seventeenth-century England.

To Bunyan the Christian life was a pilgrimage. Of his own pilgrim’s heart he wrote, “I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of his shoes in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot, too.” Thus the book is set in the context of a pilgrimage.

The major theme of the book is seen in the Christian’s need for spiritual endurance along the path of life. From the moment of conception into the faith, we are homeward bound; every step we take along the road is a step toward life or toward death. As the reader journeys along with “Christian” and his other pilgrim friends, encountering a gallery of devils, heroes, saints, and pretenders, he will no doubt meet himself somewhere on the road. Through the pilgrims’ struggles for truth, the tribulations they meet with, and the victories granted them, the reader will gain focus on his own life’s pilgrimage.

Today’s Christian is increasingly being drawn towards a clash of cultures. He finds himself in growing opposition to the surrounding culture, not unlike the setting in which Bunyan found himself. Bunyan was

imprisoned not only for his faith but for his faithfulness to it. This same kind of resolve to follow Christ regardless of consequences permeates the entire message of the book. His message sounds a timely alarm for radical discipleship, for loyalty and for faithfulness to defend to the death the honor and the cause of our great King.

Those who relish the path of ease will not appreciate the path of the pilgrim; nevertheless, those who are weak will find comfort therein. While the magnificent grace of God ever manifests itself, also evident is the narrowness of the path. We stand beholding the glorious cross of Christ; yet we are also forced to embrace the cross that the Christian, too, must carry.

More than sixty books were eventually published by John Bunyan. Included in this number was a second part to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which depicts the story of Christian's wife, Christiana, and her companions. While the first story is primarily a drama of the individual soul, the second portrays the Christian life as a family experience, lived out together in true Christian fellowship. Today the two books are combined into one volume.

Evidently, some Christians of the time had counseled Bunyan against publishing the book because it was merely an allegory and not straightforward theology. The world has been grateful, however, that Bunyan chose to disregard his critics. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was destined to become one of England's greatest literary works. Proving its timeless appeal, it has been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible—nearly two hundred—and it is second only to the Bible in all-time circulation. A copy was present in almost every home in England and in early America. The simple tinker-preacher who refused to be silenced had now gained a universal audience. Maintaining popularity as a classic for over three hundred years, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has touched the hearts and minds of millions and has placed John Bunyan among the literary immortals.

It is astounding that a man who lived in a class system with rigid expectations could rise above them. Despite a background of poverty, toil, and a poor education, John Bunyan fought hard and prevailed. According to C. S. Lewis, "One of the reasons why it needs no special education to be a Christian is that Christianity is an education in itself.

That is why an uneducated believer like Bunyan was able to write a book that has astonished the whole world.”

In 1874 Bunyan’s hometown of Bedford honored their favorite son by erecting a ten-foot bronze statue weighing nearly three tons. Thousands of dignitaries from all over England gathered for the occasion. When the statue was unveiled, one could see a man, a minister of the gospel, standing straight and tall. He was holding open in his hands the book he loved best—the Bible. A broken chain lay at his feet, representing his long struggle to freely preach the gospel of Christ. The name engraved at its base is simply, John Bunyan. Perhaps ironically, the figure stands with his back to the elegant St. Peter’s Church which rises in the background as a symbol of the established church that had dogged him most of his life. Upon the huge pedestal were inscribed these words from his famous book:

*He had eyes uplifted to heaven;  
The best of books in his hand;  
The law of truth was written  
Upon his lips . . .  
He stood as if he pleaded  
With men.*

My first acquaintance with *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was through a children’s version which I read to my children when they were youngsters. I became more enthralled with the story than they and found myself making applications to my own life faster than I could read the lines. I never forgot the lessons that I learned from our nightly readings together from this simple adaptation. It was easy to see that this was, indeed, a story for all times and for all people.

A short time later, sensing that God wanted to allow John Bunyan to plead his case once again, I introduced *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to a high school Sunday school class. Ten years had passed since I had first read the story to my children, and now they were members of the class. I began to teach a series of lessons from the book. I soon became convinced that the truths Bunyan was attempting to communicate to his world had perhaps an even greater relevance today.

## *Preface*

After doing a comparative study of several versions of the book, however, I concluded that there was a real need for a modern version that would be complete and faithful to the original, without taking great liberties to embellish the story on the one hand and without subtracting from it on the other. It would also need to communicate with our generation while still sounding like John Bunyan. So began the process that led to this book.

Whenever we deal with truth, we are treading on holy ground. The publisher and I have taken our shoes off, so to speak, and trodden with reverence through the pages of this enduring classic of Christian literature. The end product is one that is easy to read yet true to the story—something with which I believe John Bunyan would be pleased.



## *The Author's Defense of His Book*

When at the first I took my pen in hand  
To write like this, I did not understand  
At all that it would become a little book  
In such a format; no, I had undertook  
To make another; but when almost done,  
Before I knew it, this I had begun.

And so it happened: I, writing of the way  
And the race of saints, in this our gospel day,  
Fell suddenly into an allegory  
About their journey and the way to glory,  
In more than twenty things which I set down:  
This done, I had twenty more in my crown;  
And they began again to multiply,  
Like sparks from coals of a fire do fly.  
“No,” I thought, “if you breed so fast  
I’ll put you by yourselves, lest you at last  
Should prove ad infinitum, and eat out  
The book that I am already about.”

So, that’s what I did, but I didn’t yet think  
To show to all the world my pen and ink  
In such a mode; I only thought to make  
I didn’t know what: nor did I undertake  
To please my neighbor by it: no, not I;  
I did it for my own self to gratify.

Only in vacant seasons did I spend  
Time scribbling these thoughts, nor did I intend  
But to divert myself in doing this  
From worse thoughts which would lead me amiss.

So I set pen to paper with delight,  
And quickly had my thoughts in black and white.  
For my method I had down by the end,  
But still thoughts came and so I penned  
It down: until it came at last to be,  
In length and breadth, the size you see.

Well, when I had thus put the ends together,  
 I showed them to others that I might see whether  
 They would either condemn or justify:  
 And some said, "Let them live"; others, "Let them die."  
 Some said, "John, print it"; others, "Don't do so."  
 Some said, "It might do good"; others, "No, no."

Now I was in a real fix, unable to see  
 Which was the best thing to be done by me:  
 At last I thought, "Since you are thus divided,  
 I will print it"; so the case was decided.

For I thought, some I see would have it done,  
 Though others in that channel do not run:  
 To prove, then, who advised for the best,  
 I thought it wise to put it to the test.

I further thought, if I now do deny  
 Those who want it, whom it would gratify,  
 I did not know if hinder them I might  
 Of that which would be to them a great delight.  
 I told those who were not for its coming forth,  
 "I want not to offend you with a thing of no worth;  
 Yet since your brothers pleased with it be,  
 Forbear to judge, till you do further see."

If you won't read it, then let it alone;  
 Some love the meat, some love picking the bone:  
 Yes, then that I might better them placate  
 With them I did thus expostulate:

May I not write in such a style as this?  
 In such a method too, and yet not miss  
 My end—your good? Why may it not be done?  
 Dark clouds bring waters, when the bright bring none.  
 Yet dark or bright, if they send silver drops  
 To fall on the earth, thereby yielding crops  
 Praise comes to both and no fault to either,  
 And treasures of fruit they do yield together.

You see the ways the fisherman takes  
To catch a fish; what gear he makes!  
Look how he engages all his wits  
Also snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets;  
Yet there are fish which neither hook nor line,  
Nor snare, nor net, nor any tool can make it thine:  
They must be groped for, and enticed too,  
Or they won't be caught, whatever you do.

“Well, yet I am not fully satisfied,  
That this your book will stand, when soundly tried.”

Why, what's the matter? “It's not clear.” So what?  
“But it's fiction.” What of that? I'll rebut  
Some by such tales, fictional as mine  
Cause truth to glitter, and its rays to shine.  
“But they lack solidness.” Go on, speak your mind.  
“This drowns the weak; metaphors make us blind.”

Solidity, indeed, becomes the pen  
Of one who writes divine things to men:  
But do I lack solidness, just because  
By metaphors I speak? Were not God's laws,  
His gospel, in old times set forth  
By types and shadows and metaphors?  
Far be it that a sober man will find fault  
With them, lest he be found waging assault  
On the highest wisdom! Instead he stoops,  
And seeks to find out how by pins and loops,  
By calves and sheep, by heifers and by rams,  
By birds and herbs, and by the blood of lambs,  
God speaks to him; and how happy is he  
That finds the light and grace that in them be.

Do not be too quick therefore to conclude  
That I lack solidness—that I am rude:  
All things that appear solid may not be  
All things in parable despise not we,  
Lest things most hurtful lightly we've received,

While our souls of the good are sadly bereaved.  
 My mysteries and shadows, indeed do hold  
 The truth, as cabinets enclose the gold.

The prophets used metaphors much to serve  
 To set forth truth: yes, any who observe  
 Christ, His apostles too, shall plainly see  
 That truths to this day in such cloaks will be.

And now, before I put away my pen,  
 I'll show the profit of my book; and then  
 Commit both you and it into the Hand  
 That pulls the strong down, and makes weak ones stand.

This book lays out before your very eyes  
 The man who seeks the everlasting prize:  
 Where he's from and where he's going are both shown  
 What he does and leaves undone are both made known:  
 It also shows you how he runs and runs  
 Until to the gate of glory he comes.

Also are the ones who in haste would life gain,  
 Seeming like the lasting crown they'd attain:  
 Here also you may see the reason why  
 They lose their labor, and like fools they die.

This book will make a traveler of you  
 If by its counsel you'll learn what to do;  
 It will direct you to the Holy Land,  
 If its directions you will understand:  
 It will cause the slothful to active be;  
 Also the blind will delightful things see.

Are you for something rare and profitable?  
 Would you like to see truth found in a fable?  
 Are you forgetful? Would you like to remember  
 From New Year's Day to the last of December?  
 Then read my thoughts, and they will stick like burrs,  
 And may be to the helpless, sure comforters.

This book is written in such dialect,  
As may the minds of listless men affect:  
It seems a novelty, and yet contains  
Nothing but sound and honest gospel strains.  
Would you divert yourself from melancholy?  
Would you be peaceful, yet be far from folly?  
Would you read riddles and their explanation?  
Or else be drowned in your contemplation?  
Do you love picking at meat? Or would you view  
A man in the clouds, and hear him speak to you?  
Would you be in a dream, and yet not sleep?  
Or would you in a moment laugh and weep?

Would you lose yourself and meet nothing tragic,  
And find yourself again without using magic?  
Would you read yourself, and read you know not what,  
And yet know whether you are blessed or not,  
By reading the same lines? Oh then come, draw near,  
Lay my book, your head, and heart together here.

J O H N   B U N Y A N



THE PILGRIM'S  
PROGRESS

*The First Part*



# Chapter 1

## Drawn to the Pilgrimage

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I came to a place where there was a den. Inside, I lay down to sleep, and as I slept, I had a dream. In my dream I looked up and saw a man clothed in rags standing in a certain place with his face turned away from his home. He carried a Book in his hand and a great Burden on his back. As I watched, I saw him open the Book and begin to read. And as he read, he wept and trembled. Then, not being able to contain himself any longer, he cried out in anguish, asking, “What shall I do?”

While still in this condition, he returned to his home. Not wanting his wife and children to perceive his distress, he restrained himself as long as he could. He couldn't hide it for long, however, because his anguish only increased. Finally, he bared his soul to his wife and children and began to talk to them.

“Oh, my dear wife, and my children, the fruit of my own body, I, your beloved friend, have lost all peace because of a great Burden weighing heavily upon me. What's more, I have been informed that our City is most certainly going to be burned with fire from Heaven. And unless some way of escape can be found by which we can be rescued, all of us—you, my wife and sweet children, as well as myself—will come to a dreadful end in this terrible destruction.”

At this his family was greatly perplexed—not that they believed there was any truth in what he was saying, but they feared he was losing his sanity. Since nightfall was

*The jail*

Isa. 64:6

Luke 14:33

Ps. 38:4

Hab. 2:2

Acts 16:30

2 Thess. 1:5-10;

Heb. 10:26-27;

2 Pet. 3:7

Exod. 7-10;  
 1 Sam. 6:6;  
 Ps. 95:8;  
 Heb. 3:15; 4:7

approaching, they quickly helped him to bed, hoping that some sleep might settle his troubled mind. But the night was as disturbing to him as the day, and instead of sleeping, he groaned and cried all night. When morning came, his family asked him how he felt. "Worse and worse," he answered. Once again he began to tell them about his fears, but they were not receptive, and their hearts began to harden. They also thought that perhaps they could drive the mental illness away by treating him harshly and rudely. Sometimes they ridiculed him, sometimes they rebuked him, and sometimes they totally ignored him. Consequently, he began staying in his own room, pitying and praying for his family and also grieving over his own misery. At times, however, he walked alone in the fields, sometimes reading and sometimes praying. He spent several days this way.

### **Evangelist Appears**

Luke 4:16  
 Acts 16:30

Now I saw that one day when he was walking in the fields, he was reading in his Book, as was his habit, and his mind was greatly distressed. As he read, he burst out as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

I also saw him looking this way and then that, as if he would run, yet he stood motionless. I perceived that he must not have known which way to go. Then I looked and saw a man named Evangelist coming toward him. Upon reaching him, he asked, "Why are you crying?" "Sir," he answered, "I can see by the Book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that I will be brought to judgment. I find that I am not willing to do the first, and not able to bear the latter."

Heb. 9:27

Then Evangelist asked, "Why aren't you willing to die, since this life is so filled with evil?"

The man answered, "Because I fear that this Burden

on my back will drive me lower than the grave and into Hell itself. And, sir, if I am not even able to face prison, then surely I cannot bear the judgment and its subsequent execution. Thinking about these things makes me cry.”

Evangelist then asked, “If this is your condition, why are you standing still?”

He answered, “Because I don’t know where to go.”

Then Evangelist gave him a Parchment Scroll inscribed with these words: “Flee from the wrath to come.”

The man read it and, looking at Evangelist very carefully, asked, “To where do I flee?”

Then, pointing his finger to a very wide field, Evangelist replied, “Can you see the Wicket-gate in the distance?”

“No,” the man answered.

Then the other asked, “Do you see that shining light?”

He said, “I think I do.”

Evangelist continued, “Keep your eyes fixed upon that light, and go directly to it; then you will see the Gate. When you knock on it, you will be told what to do.”

Ezek. 22:14

Isa. 30:33

Matt. 3:7

Matt. 7:13

*Christ and the way to Him can't be found without the preaching of the Word.*

Ps. 119:105

2 Pet. 1:19

### Pursued by Obstinate and Pliable

So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. He had not run far from his own house when his wife and children saw what was happening. They cried after him to return, but the man put his fingers in his ears and ran on, crying, “Life! Life! Eternal life!” He would not look behind him but fled toward the middle of the plain.

The neighbors also came out to see him run, and as he ran, some mocked and others threatened. Some, however, cried out for him to return. Among these neighbors, there were two who resolved to go after him and force him to come back. The name of one was Obstinate and the other, Pliable.

Luke 14:26

Gen. 19:17

*The world's response to those who flee from the wrath to come*

Jer. 20:10

By this time the man had traveled a good distance from them, but they still resolved to pursue him, and in a short time they were able to overtake him.

“Neighbors,” the man asked them, “why have you come after me?”

“To persuade you to come back with us.”

Rev. 19:20 “No way!” he replied. “You live in the City of Destruction where I also was born. If you stay there, however, sooner or later you will sink lower than the grave into a place that burns with fire and brimstone. Find peace, dear neighbors, and come along with me.”

“What!” Obstinate objected, “and leave our friends and our comforts behind?”

2 Cor. 4:18 “Yes,” said Christian (for that was his name), “because what you will leave is not worthy to be compared with even a little of what I am seeking to enjoy. If you will come along with me and not turn back, you will find blessing as I will, for where I am going there is enough for all and plenty to spare. Come away with me and see if I’m telling you the truth.”

Luke 15:17 “But what things are you seeking, for which you would leave all the world to find them?” Obstinate asked.

1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 11:16 “I am seeking an inheritance that is not subject to decay and that cannot be tarnished and that will never fade away. It is kept safely in Heaven to be given at the appointed time to all who diligently seek it. If you will, you can read about it right here in my Book.”

“Ridiculous! Get your Book out of here!” responded Obstinate. “Are you going to come back with us or not?”

Luke 9:62 “No, I’m not,” said Christian adamantly, “because I have already put my hand to the plow.”

Then Obstinate turned and addressed Pliable. “Come on then, neighbor Pliable; let’s turn back and go home without him. A lot of these crazy-headed fools get an

idea in their head and think themselves wiser than seven reasonable men.”

Prov. 26:16

“Don’t insult him,” Pliable answered. “If what Christian says is true, the things he is searching for are better than ours. I am inclined to go with him.”

Heb. 11:15-16

“What?” demanded Obstinate. “Another fool! Listen to me and go back. Who knows where this sick-headed man will lead you? Go back! Go back if you have any sense at all!”

“Come with me, neighbor Pliable,” Christian pleaded. “Besides the things I told you about, there are many other glorious things to be gained. If you don’t take my word for it, read it here in this Book. And if you want to be sure of the truth expressed within it, look closely, for all is confirmed by the blood of Him who wrote it.”

*Christian and Obstinate compete for Pliable’s soul.*

Heb. 13:20-21

At that Pliable said, “Well, Obstinate, my friend, I am making a decision. I intend to go along with this sincere man and to cast my lot in with him.” Then, turning to Christian, he asked, “But, Christian, my good companion, do you know the way to this desirable place?”

“I have been directed by a man named Evangelist to travel quickly to a little Gate up ahead where we will receive instructions about the way.”

“Then come on, neighbor, let’s go!” Pliable said excitedly. And they left together.

Obstinate called out after them, “And I will go back home. I refuse to be a companion to such crazed fanatics!”

*Obstinate goes back scoffing.*

### **Christian and Pliable Discuss Heavenly Things**

Now I saw in my dream, that when Obstinate had left them, Christian and Pliable went walking on over the plain, talking as they went.

“So, Pliable, my neighbor,” Christian said, “let me get to know you. I am glad you decided to come along with me. If Obstinate had been able to feel what I have felt of the powers and terrors of what is yet unseen, he wouldn’t have so easily rejected us.”

Pliable was brimming with questions. “Come on, Christian, since we’re the only people here, tell me more! What things are we seeking? How will we enjoy them? Where are we going?”

*God’s things  
are beyond  
description.*

“I can better imagine them with my mind than speak of them with my tongue,” said Christian, “but since you want to know, I will answer from my Book.”

“Do you believe the words in your Book are really true?”

Titus 1:2

“Absolutely. For it was written by Him who cannot lie.”

“This sounds good. What are the things we’re seeking?”

Isa. 45:17;  
John 10:27-29

“There is an endless kingdom to be inhabited and everlasting life to be given us so that we will live in that Kingdom forever.”

2 Tim. 4:8

“Wonderful! What else?”

“There are crowns of glory to be given us and garments that will make us shine like the sun in the heavens above.”

Rev. 3:4;  
Matt. 13:43

“Excellent! What else?”

“There will be no more sorrow and crying, for He who owns the place will wipe all tears from our eyes.”

“And who will be there with us?”

Isa. 25:8;  
Rev. 7:16-17; 21:4

Christian’s face shined as he went on. “There we will be with seraphim and cherubim—beings who will dazzle our eyes when we see them. We will also meet with the thousands and ten thousands who have gone on before us to that place. None of them will cause harm; all will be loving and holy. Everyone there will walk before God and stand approved in His grace and

Isa. 6:2; Rev. 5:11

Rev. 7:9

presence forever. Furthermore, we will see the elders with their golden crowns and the holy virgins with their golden harps; and we will see men who by the world were cut to pieces, burned in flames, eaten by beasts and drowned in seas, all because of the love they had for the Lord of the place. Everyone there will be completely well, made whole, and clothed with immortality as with a garment.”

Rev. 21:3

Rev. 4:4; 14:3-4

Heb. 11:37-39

2 Cor. 5:2-5

Pliable could hardly contain himself. “My heart is seized with ecstasy at hearing all this. But are these things really for us to enjoy? How can we come to share in them?”

“The Lord, the Ruler of that Country, has given the answer in this Book. It says that if we are truly willing to receive it, He will freely give it to us.”

Isa. 55:7;

John 7:37;

Eph. 1:6;

Rev. 21:6; 22:17

“Well, my good friend, I’m glad to hear all these things. Come on, let’s quicken our pace.”

Christian sighed. “I can’t go as fast as I would like to because of this Burden on my back.”

## **The Slough of Despond**

Now I saw in my dream that, just as they had ended their conversation, they approached a miry Slough (a muddy swamp) in the plain. Neither of them paid attention to it, and both suddenly fell into the bog. The Slough’s name was Despond. Covered with mud, they wallowed in it for some time. And Christian, because of the Burden on his back, began to sink in the mire.

Ps. 69:2

“Oh, Christian, my neighbor!” Pliable cried out. “Where are you now?”

“To tell you the truth, I don’t know,” Christian answered.

Hearing this, Pliable became offended and angrily scolded his companion. “Is this the happiness you have told me about all this time? If we have such terrible

*It is not enough to be pliable.* misfortune here at the beginning, what are we to expect between here and the end of our journey? If I can possibly get out of here with my life, you can possess that wonderful Country for you and me both!”

With that, Pliable gave a desperate struggle or two and was able to get out of the mire on the side of the Slough that faced his home. So away he went, and Christian never saw him again.

### **Help Comes to the Rescue**

Thus Christian was left to roll around in the Slough of Despond by himself. Even then, however, he tried to struggle to the side of the Slough that was farthest from his own home and closest to the Wicket-gate. He continued to struggle but couldn't get out because of the Burden that was on his back. Then I saw in my dream that a man named Help came to him, and he asked Christian what he was doing there.

“Sir,” explained Christian, “I was instructed to go this way by a man named Evangelist who gave me directions to that Gate up ahead where I might escape the coming wrath. As I was going toward the Gate, I fell in here.”

*The promises.* “But why didn't you look for the steps?” asked Help.

“Fear pursued me so hard that I fled this way and fell in.”

“Give me your hand.”

Ps. 40:2 So Christian reached out his hand, and Help pulled him out. He set him on solid ground and told him to continue on his way.

Then I stepped up to the one who had pulled Christian out and asked, “Sir, since this is the way from the City of Destruction to the Gate, why isn't this place fenced off so that poor travelers may go by more safely?”

And he answered me, "This miry Slough is the type that cannot be fenced. It is the lower ground where the scum and filth that accompany conviction of sin continually accumulate. Therefore it was named the Slough of Despond because, as the sinner is awakened to his lost condition, many fears, doubts, and discouraging anxieties arise in his soul. All of them come together and settle here in this place, and that is the reason this ground is no good.

"It is not the King's desire that this place should remain so bad. By the direction of His surveyors, His laborers have been working for almost two thousand years to fence off this patch of ground. Yes, and to my knowledge at least twenty thousand cartloads of profitable instructions—yes, millions of them—have been swallowed up here. In all seasons they have been brought from all places in the King's domain, and those who are knowledgeable say that these materials have the best potential for making the ground good. Nevertheless, it remains the Slough of Despond, and so will it be even when all has been tried and failed.

"It's true that some good and substantial steps have been placed evenly throughout this Slough by the command of the Lawgiver. Even then, however, this place spews out so much filth that when the weather gets bad the steps can hardly be seen. And even if people do see them, because of confusion they step the wrong way and fall into the slime. In any case, the steps are there, and the ground is good once they go through the Gate.

*The promises of forgiveness and acceptance to life by faith in Christ.*

1 Sam. 12:23

Now I saw in my dream that by this time Pliable had arrived back home, and his neighbors came to visit him. Some of them called him a wise man for coming back, and some called him a fool for endangering himself with Christian. Still others mocked his cowardice, saying,

“Surely, if I had begun such a venture I would not have been so cowardly as to have given up because of a few troubles.” So Pliable sat cowering among them until he finally gained enough confidence to raise an objection. At this, they immediately left him alone and began to insult poor Christian behind his back because of what had happened to Pliable.