

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

IN MODERN ENGLISH



*Translated from the original seventeenth century text and
further edited and annotated by L. Edward Hazelbaker*

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The Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English

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CHAPTER 1

The Pilgrim Begins His Journey

As I was walking through the wilderness of this world, I came to a place where there was a cave. I laid down in that place to sleep,¹ and as I slept I had a dream in which I saw a man dressed in rags² standing in a certain place and facing away from his own house.³ He had a Book in his hand and a great burden on his back.⁴ As I looked, I saw him open the Book⁵ and read out of it, and as he read he wept and trembled. Unable to contain himself any longer, he broke out with a sorrowful cry, saying, “What shall I do?”⁶

He went home in this state of mind but restrained himself as long as he could so his wife and children would not notice his distress. Yet he could not be silent long, because his troubled feeling was getting worse. He finally revealed to his wife and children what was going on in his mind, saying, “Oh, my dear Wife and Children, I’m suffering from inner turmoil because of a burden that lays heavily upon me. And, what’s worse, I’ve been reliably informed that our city will be burned with fire from Heaven. In that fearful disaster, I with you, my Wife, and you, my sweet Children, will come to a miserable ruin unless some way of escape—which as yet I do not see—may be found by which we may be delivered.”

His family members were deeply troubled at this declaration, not because they believed what he told them but because they thought some form of insanity had gotten into his

head. Therefore, since it was nearing nightfall, and hoping that sleep would settle his brain, they quickly got him to bed. But the night was as troublesome to him as the day; and, for that reason, instead of sleeping he spent it sighing and weeping.

When morning came, they wanted to know how he was; and he told them, "Worse and worse." He started talking to them again, but they began to be hardened to his words. They thought they might be able to drive away his insanity by harsh and bad-tempered behavior toward him. Sometimes they would make fun of him, at other times they would criticize him, and sometimes they would simply ignore him. Because of this, he began to withdraw from them to his bedroom to pray for them, pity them, and comfort his own misery. He would also walk by himself in the fields, sometimes reading and sometimes praying. He spent his time doing these things for several days.

Now I saw once, when he was walking in the fields, that he was (as was often the case) reading in his Book. He was greatly distressed in his mind, and as he read he burst out as he had done before, crying, "What must I do to be saved?"⁷

I also saw that he looked this way and that as if he wanted to run. Yet he stood still because (as I perceived) he could not tell which way to go. Then I looked and saw coming toward him a man named Evangelist, who asked, "Why are you crying?"

He answered, "Sir, I realize by reading the Book in my hand that I am condemned to die and after that to come to judgment.⁸ I find I'm not wanting to do the first, nor am I prepared to do the second."

Then Evangelist said, "Why aren't you willing to die, since this life is accompanied by so many evil things?"

The man answered, "Because I fear this burden on my back will make me sink lower than the grave, and I'll fall into Hell.⁹ And, Sir, if I'm not fit to go to prison, then I'm not fit to go to

judgment and from there to execution. Thinking about these things makes me cry.”

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

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

Then Evangelist gave him a letter in which was written: “Flee from the coming wrath.”¹⁰

The man therefore read it and, looking very carefully upon Evangelist, asked, “Where must I flee?”

Then, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Evangelist said, “Do you see that Narrow Gate over there?”¹¹

“No,” replied the man.

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

“I think I do,” answered the man.

Then Evangelist said, “Keep that light in your eye and go up directly toward it. Then you will see the Gate.¹² When you knock on the Gate, you’ll be told what you must do.”¹³

So in my dream I saw the man begin to run. He had not run far from his own door before his wife and children, having seen it, began to cry after him to return. But the man put his fingers in his ears and ran on,¹⁴ crying, “Life! Life! Eternal Life!” So, not turning to look behind him, he fled toward the middle of the plain.¹⁵

His neighbors also came out to see him run, and as he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return.¹⁶

Now among those who did so, there were two who resolved to bring him back by force. The name of one was Obstinate, and the other was named Pliable. By this time the man was a good distance ahead of them, but they were resolved to pursue him, which they did; and in a short time they caught up with him.

Then the man asked, “Neighbors, why have you come?”

“To persuade you to go back with us,” they answered.

But he said, “That’s quite impossible. You live in the City of Destruction, the place where I also was born. I recognize it to be just that, and dying there you will sooner or later sink lower than the grave into a place burning with fire and brimstone. Be content, Good Neighbors, and go along with me.”

“What?” questioned Obstinate, “and leave our friends and our luxuries behind us?”

“Yes,” said Christian (for that was his name), “because everything you would forsake is not worthy to be compared with even a little of what I’m seeking to enjoy. If you’ll go along with me and obtain it also, you’ll do as well as I. There’s enough for everyone and more left over where I’m going.¹⁷ Come away with me and see that I’m telling you the truth.”¹⁸

“What are the things you seek,” asked Obstinate, “since you’re leaving all the world to find them?”

Christian answered, “I seek an ‘inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.’¹⁹ And it’s laid up safely in heaven to be given at the appropriate time to those who diligently seek it.²⁰ Read about it here in my Book, if you like.”

“Nonsense!” said Obstinate. “Away with your book! Will you go back with us or not?”

“Not I,” replied Christian, “because I’ve put my hand to the plow.”²¹

Obstinate said, “Come then, friend Pliable, let’s turn back and go home without him. There’s a group of these crazed-headed fools who—when they at last accept such a frivolous idea—are wiser in their own eyes than seven men who can think reasonably.”

Then Pliable said, “Don’t be so critical. If what the good Christian says is true, the things he follows after are better than ours. My heart is inclined to go with him.”

“What?” said Obstinate, “more fools still? Follow my advice and go back. Who knows where such a brainsick person will lead you? Go back, go back and be wise.”

“No,” said Christian, “but come with me, Pliable. Those things are there to be gained just as I said, and many more glorious things besides.²² If you don’t believe me, read here in this Book. Regarding the truth of what is expressed in it, all of it is confirmed by the Blood of Him who made it.”²³

“Well, Obstinate,” said Pliable, “I’ve arrived at a crossroads. I intend to go along with this good man and unite our fates and fortune. But,” he said as he turned to Christian, “do you know the way to this desired place?”

To which Christian replied, “I’ve been directed by a man named Evangelist to travel quickly to a small Gate in front of us. We’ll receive instructions there about the Way.”²⁴

Pliable responded, “Come, then, let’s be going.” And they both traveled on together.

“And I will go back to my place,” said Obstinate. “I’ll be no companion of such mislead dreamers.”²⁵

NOTES ON CHAPTER 1

- 1 This cave represents the cell in the Bedford Gaol (jail) where John Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.
- 2 Isaiah 64:6.
- 3 Luke 14:33.
- 4 Psalm 38:4.
- 5 Exodus 32:16, 34:27; Habakkuk 2:2; Jeremiah 30:2; 1 Corinthians 14:37.
- 6 Acts 2:37-38.
- 7 Acts 16:30-31.
- 8 Hebrews 9:27; Ezekiel 22:14; Job 16:22.
- 9 Isaiah 30:33.
- 10 Matthew 3:7. Pilgrim convicted of the necessity of fleeing.
- 11 Matthew 7:13.
- 12 Psalm 119:105 and 2 Peter 1:19. Christ and the way to Him, cannot be found without the Word. All travelers seeking to find

their way in this darkened world must have a light. God's Word, the Bible, is the light that leads people to the Gate.

- 13 Consider the importance of the Gate. Every ram, ewe, and lamb in a flock of sheep must pass through a gate to enter a sheepfold. In like manner, every man, woman, and child must enter into salvation by going through Christ, "the gate for the sheep." John 10:1-10.
- 14 Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37.
- 15 Genesis 19:17. They that flee from the wrath to come are a gazing stock to the world.
- 16 Jeremiah 20:10.
- 17 Luke 15:17.
- 18 2 Corinthians 4:18; Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; and Hebrews 11:6.
- 19 1 Peter 1:4. 1 Peter 1:3-5.
- 20 Hebrews 11:16.
- 21 Luke 9:62
- 22 Christian and Obstinate pull for Pliable's soul. Here are two voices pulling on the heart of one man. Each voice represents an opinion regarding which path should be taken in life. Joshua 24:15
- 23 Hebrews 9:15-28
- 24 Deuteronomy 1:32-33; Psalm 86:11, 139:24, 143:8; Proverbs 14:12; Isaiah 30:21; and John 14:6.
- 25 Obstinate goes railing back. Obstinate lived up to his name. His obstinacy caused him to reject the Truth. He tenaciously held to his worldly concepts of reality and could not be moved from them. Before we dismiss Obstinate, though, perhaps we should contemplate how obstinacy could be turned into a positive force in our lives as we tenaciously hold to and follow after the Truth.