

The Pilgrims Progress
Chapters 3 & 4 Review

Obstinate has held true to his name, deriding Christian and Pliable in their endeavours to find eternal life. It's so sad to see people whose hearts are so hard and stubborn that they believe their life is good enough and don't need a Saviour or the hope of eternal life. Hebrews 11: 25-26 speaking of Moses says; "*choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*" Are there pleasures to sin, if you're in the world and the flesh yes there are, but it's clear that they are fleeting and passing. They don't last. Such is the life of an obstinate person. They turn their backs on all that is good, that has a hope and a future. John 12:25 says; "*The one who loves his life [eventually] loses it [through death], but the one who hates his life in this world [and is concerned with pleasing God] will keep it for life eternal.*"

Pliable continues with Christian, excited to hear of all the glory that is to come in the celestial city which they are heading towards. Through reading the book – the Bible, Christian describes the unfathomable glory, eternal life, never being snatched from the Father's hand, a crown of righteousness for all who believe, never to hunger or thirst again and that all death, sorrow, crying and pain will cease to exist. Who in their right mind wouldn't want this kind of life! Jesus says in John 6:37; "*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*" Romans 3:24 says; "*We are being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" Nothing in this world is free, except salvation! We read about this in the following verses; Titus 1:2, John 10:27-29, II Timothy 4:8, Revelations 7:16-17, Revelations 21:4, I Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelations 4:4 and Revelations 14:1-5.

So excited is Pliable about all he's hearing, that he's pushing Christian to move faster. We see something missing though with Pliable; he is not carrying a burden as Christian is which causes him to move slowly. He's pretty happy-go-lucky, thrilled about what he's heard. But coming to eternal life in Christ Jesus, we must have a conviction of sin in our heart. Pliable doesn't see himself as a sinner nor is he burdened by the life he's lived.

Highly anticipating their arrival to the wicket gate, they fall into the Slough of Despond having not paid attention to the path.

- **Slough** means a swamp with no exit of water or a situation characterized by lack of progress or activity.
- **Despond** means to become dejected and lose confidence, a state of unhappiness and low spirits.

This is satan's ploy to dissuade many from coming to the cross of Jesus; to get them off track by apparent loss of progress, depressions, unhappiness, dejection, FEAR, lies, false accusations about themselves, low spirits and the list goes on. But all along friends, there is a path, which if we look closely for and listen closely to, we'll see and hear it. Isaiah 30:21 says; "*Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'this is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left.*"

Pliable is only concerned about himself, he's offended and angry, he's only ruled by his emotions and feelings, he's easily swayed and has no stability in him, so he pushes 'backward' to get out of the slough to go back to his 'perceived' comfortable living in the world, the City of Destruction. It's like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand, or the little child who sticks his fingers in his ears when he doesn't want to hear the reproof his parents, or the person who just wants to go to their 'happy place' by internal meditations! They're someone who jumps ship at the first sign of difficulty. Christian is in the same quagmire, but, even with the burden of his unworthiness and sin, he knows there is hope and a light at the end, and he presses forward to have Help give him his hand to pull him out. The Holy Spirit is the Helper and in John 16:8 it says; "*And He, when He comes will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*" That's how the Holy Spirit, the Helper was able to stretch out his hand to Christian. He brings conviction of sin and helps you and draws you out to righteousness. Psalm 40:2 says; "*He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established by steps.*" Isaiah 35:3-4 also says; "*Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with recompense of God; He will come and save you.'*"

The King, King Jesus, has sent many to teach, train and equip the lost through His pastors, evangelists, apostles, prophets and teachers to shore up this place of despond where many fall into. They do what they can, but if pilgrims/sinners are distracted by FEAR, they will fall into a state despondency. I John 4:18 so beautifully says; "*There is no fear in love*

[dread does not exist]. But perfect (complete, full-grown) love drives out fear, because fear involves [the expectation of divine] punishment, so the one who is afraid [of God's judgment] is not perfected in love [has not grown into a sufficient understanding of God's love]." Satan is a liar and will always lie to you saying God does not love you. Resist that lie. God loves YOU! His plans for you are for a future, a hope and a calling!

In the end when Pliable returns to the City of Destruction; 1) some called him wise because he came home, 2) other called him a fool for being put in harm's way with Christian and 3) others mocked for his cowardice act of giving up too quickly. Press on as Christian did. For even as Pliable and the others returned to their normalcy; they persecuted Christian from afar, continuing to mock him in his pursuit of eternal life. There is a light at the end and that light is Jesus. Don't lose heart and fall into a slough of despond in searching for Jesus Christ. Call on His name and be saved!

