

# The Pilgrim's Progress

*an allegory*



*one man's search  
for eternal life*

John Bunyan

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By John Bunyan

{1} When at the first I took my pen in hand Thus for to write, I did not understand That I at all should make a little book In such a mode; nay, I had undertook To make another; which, when almost done, Before I was aware, I this begun.

And thus it was: I, writing of the way And 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 twenty more had in my crown; And they again began to multiply, Like sparks that from the coals of fire do fly.

Nay, then, thought I, if that 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 already am about.

Well, so I did; but yet I did not think To shew to all the world my pen and ink In such a mode; I only thought to make I knew not what; nor did I undertake Thereby to please my neighbour: no, not I; I did it my own self to gratify.

{2} Neither did I but vacant seasons spend In this my scribble; nor did I intend But to divert myself in doing this From worser thoughts which make me do amiss.

Thus, I set pen to paper with delight, And quickly had my thoughts in black and white. For, having now my method by the end, Still as I pulled, it came; and so I penned It down: until it came at last to be, For length and breadth, the bigness which you see.

Well, when I had thus put mine ends together, I shewed them others, that I might see whether They would condemn them, or them justify: And some said, Let them live; some, Let them die; Some said, JOHN, print it; others said, Not so; Some said, It might do good; others said, No.

Now was I in a strait, and did not see Which was the best thing to be done by me: At last I thought, Since you are thus divided, I print it will, and so the case decided.

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

I further thought, if now I did deny Those that would have it, thus to gratify. I did not know but hinder them I might Of that which would to them be great delight.

For those which were not for its coming forth, I said to them, Offend you I am loth, Yet, since your brethren pleased with it be, Forbear to judge till you do further see.

If that thou wilt not read, let it alone; Some love the meat, some love to pick the bone. Yea, that I might them better palliate, I did too with them thus expostulate: --

{4} May I not write in such a style as this? In such a method, too, and yet not miss My end -- thy good? Why may it not be done? Dark clouds bring waters, when the bright bring none. Yea, dark or bright, if they their silver drops Cause to descend, the earth, by yielding crops, Gives praise to both, and carpeeth not at either, But treasures up the fruit they yield together; Yea, so commixes both, that in her fruit None can distinguish this from that: they suit Her well when hungry; but, if she be full, She spews out both, and makes their blessings null.

You see the ways the fisherman doth take To catch the fish; what engines doth he make? Behold how he engageth all his wits; Also his snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets; Yet fish there be, that neither hook, nor line, Nor snare, nor net, nor engine can make thine: They must be groped for, and be tickled too, Or they will not be catch'd, whate'er you do.

How does the fowler seek to catch his game By divers means! all which one cannot name: His guns, his nets, his lime-twigs, light, and bell: He creeps, he goes, he stands;

yea, who can tell Of all his postures? Yet there's none of these Will make him master of what fowls he please. Yea, he must pipe and whistle to catch this, Yet, if he does so, that bird he will miss.

If that a pearl may in a toad's head dwell, And may be found too in an oyster-shell; If things that promise nothing do contain What better is than gold; who will disdain, That have an inkling of it, there to look, That they may find it? Now, my little book, (Though void of all these paintings that may make It with this or the other man to take) Is not without those things that do excel What do in brave but empty notions dwell.

{5} `Well, yet I am not fully satisfied, That this your book will stand, when soundly tried.' Why, what's the matter? `It is dark.' What though? `But it is feigned.' What of that? I trow? Some men, by feigned words, as dark as mine, Make truth to spangle and its rays to shine.

`But they want solidness.' Speak, man, thy mind. `They drown the weak; metaphors make us blind.'

Solidity, indeed, becomes the pen Of him that writeth things divine to men; But must I needs want solidness, because By metaphors I speak? Were not God's laws, His gospel laws, in olden times held forth By types, shadows, and metaphors? Yet loth Will any sober man be to find fault With them, lest he be found for to assault The highest wisdom. No, he rather stoops, And seeks to find out what by pins and loops, By calves and sheep, by heifers and by rams, By birds and herbs, and by the blood of lambs, God speaketh to him; and happy is he That finds the light and grace that in them be.

{6} Be not too forward, therefore, to conclude That I want solidness -- that I am rude; All things solid in show not solid be; All things in parables despise not we; Lest things most hurtful lightly we receive, And things that good are, of our souls bereave.

My dark and cloudy words, they do but hold The truth, as  
cabinets enclose the gold.

The prophets used much by metaphors To set forth truth;  
yea, who so considers Christ, his apostles too, shall plainly  
see, That truths to this day in such mantles be.

Am I afraid to say, that holy writ, Which for its style and  
phrase puts down all wit, Is everywhere so full of all these  
things -- Dark figures, allegories? Yet there springs From that  
same book that lustre, and those rays Of light, that turn our  
darkest nights to days.

{7} Come, let my carper to his life now look, And find  
there darker lines than in my book He findeth any; yea, and  
let him know, That in his best things there are worse lines  
too.

May we but stand before impartial men, To his poor one I  
dare adventure ten, That they will take my meaning in these  
lines Far better than his lies in silver shrines. Come, truth,  
although in swaddling clouts, I find, Informs the judgement,  
rectifies the mind; Pleases the understanding, makes the  
will Submit; the memory too it doth fill With what doth our  
imaginations please; Likewise it tends our troubles to  
appease.

Sound words, I know, Timothy is to use, And old wives'  
fables he is to refuse; But yet grave Paul him nowhere did  
forbid The use of parables; in which lay hid That gold, those  
pearls, and precious stones that were Worth digging for, and  
that with greatest care.

Let me add one word more. O man of God, Art thou  
offended? Dost thou wish I had Put forth my matter in  
another dress? Or, that I had in things been more express?  
Three things let me propound; then I submit To those that  
are my betters, as is fit.

{8} 1. I find not that I am denied the use Of this my  
method, so I no abuse Put on the words, things, readers; or  
be rude In handling figure or similitude, In application; but,  
all that I may, Seek the advance of truth this or that way

Denied, did I say? Nay, I have leave (Example too, and that from them that have God better pleased, by their words or ways, Than any man that breatheth now-a-days) Thus to express my mind, thus to declare Things unto thee that excellentest are.

2. I find that men (as high as trees) will write Dialogue-wise; yet no man doth them slight For writing so: indeed, if they abuse Truth, cursed be they, and the craft they use To that intent; but yet let truth be free To make her sallies upon thee and me, Which way it pleases God; for who knows how, Better than he that taught us first to plough, To guide our mind and pens for his design? And he makes base things usher in divine.

3. I find that holy writ in many places Hath semblance with this method, where the cases Do call for one thing, to set forth another; Use it I may, then, and yet nothing smother Truth's golden beams: nay, by this method may Make it cast forth its rays as light as day. And now before I do put up my pen, I'll shew the profit of my book, and then Commit both thee and it unto that Hand That pulls the strong down, and makes weak ones stand.

This book it chalketh out before thine eyes The man that seeks the everlasting prize; It shews you whence he comes, whither he goes; What he leaves undone, also what he does; It also shows you how he runs and runs, Till he unto the gate of glory comes.

{9} It shows, too, who set out for life amain, As if the lasting crown they would obtain; Here also you may see the reason why They lose their labour, and like fools do die.

This book will make a traveller of thee, If by its counsel thou wilt ruled be; It will direct thee to the Holy Land, If thou wilt its directions understand: Yea, it will make the slothful active be; The blind also delightful things to see.

Art thou for something rare and profitable? Wouldest thou see a truth within a fable? Art thou forgetful? Wouldest thou remember From New-Year's day to the last of



December? Then read my fancies; they will stick like burs,  
And may be, to the helpless, comforters.

This book is writ in such a dialect As may the minds of  
listless men affect: It seems a novelty, and yet contains  
Nothing but sound and honest gospel strains. Wouldst thou  
divert thyself from melancholy? Wouldst thou be pleasant,  
yet be far from folly? Wouldst thou read riddles, and their  
explanation? Or else be drowned in thy contemplation? Dost  
thou love picking meat? Or wouldst thou see A man in the  
clouds, and hear him speak to thee? Wouldst thou be in a  
dream, and yet not sleep? Or wouldst thou in a moment  
laugh and weep? Wouldst thou lose thyself and catch no  
harm, And find thyself again without a charm? Wouldst read  
thyself, and read thou knowest not what, And yet know  
whether thou art blest or not,

By reading the same lines? Oh, then come hither, And lay  
my book, thy head, and heart together.

{10} As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I  
lighted on a certain place where was a Den , and I laid me  
down in that place to sleep: and, as I slept, I dreamed a  
dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with  
rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own  
house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his  
back. [Isa. 64:6; Luke 14:33; Ps. 38:4; Hab. 2:2; Acts  
16:30,31] I looked, and saw him open the book, and read  
therein; and, as he read, he wept, and trembled; and, not  
being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable  
cry, saying, "What shall I do?" [Acts 2:37]

{11} In this plight, therefore, he went home and  
refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife and  
children should not perceive his distress; but he could not  
be silent long, because that his trouble increased.  
Wherefore at length he brake his mind to his wife and  
children; and thus he began to talk to them: O my dear wife,  
said he, and you the children of my bowels, I, your dear  
friend, am in myself undone by reason of a burden that lieth

hard upon me; moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven; in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee my wife, and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered. At this his relations were sore amazed; not for that they believed that what he had said to them was true, but because they thought that some frenzy distemper had got into his head; therefore, it drawing towards night, and they hoping that sleep might settle his brains, with all haste they got him to bed. But the night was as troublesome to him as the day; wherefore, instead of sleeping, he spent it in sighs and tears. So, when the morning was come, they would know how he did. He told them, Worse and worse: he also set to talking to them again; but they began to be hardened. They also thought to drive away his distemper by harsh and surly carriages to him; sometimes they would deride, sometimes they would chide, and sometimes they would quite neglect him. Wherefore he began to retire himself to his chamber, to pray for and pity them, and also to condole his own misery; he would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying: and thus for some days he spent his time.

{12} Now, I saw, upon a time, when he was walking in the fields, that he was, as he was wont, reading in his book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and, as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

{13} I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go. I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him and asked, Wherefore dost thou cry? [Job 33:23]

{14} He answered, Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to

judgement [Heb. 9:27]; and I find that I am not willing to do the first [Job 16:21], nor able to do the second. [Ezek. 22:14]

CHRISTIAN no sooner leaves the World but meets EVANGELIST, who lovingly him greets With tidings of another: and doth show Him how to mount to that from this below.

{15} Then said Evangelist, Why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many evils? The man answered, Because I fear that this burden is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave, and I shall fall into Tophet. [Isa. 30:33] And, Sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit, I am sure, to go to judgement, and from thence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

{16} Then said Evangelist, If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? He answered, Because I know not whither to go. Then he gave him a parchment roll, and there was written within, Flee from the wrath to come. [Matt. 3:7]

{17} The man therefore read it, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicket-gate? [Matt. 7:13,14] The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? [Ps. 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19] He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto: so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

{18} So I saw in my dream that the man began to run.

Now, he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, Life! life! eternal life! [Luke 14:26] So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain. [Gen. 19:17]

{19} The neighbours also came out to see him run [Jer. 20:10]; and, as he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return; and, among those that did so, there were two that resolved to fetch him back by

force. The name of the one was Obstinate and the name of the other Pliable. Now, by this time, the man was got a good distance from them; but, however, they were resolved to pursue him, which they did, and in a little time they overtook him. Then said the man, Neighbours, wherefore are ye come? They said, To persuade you to go back with us. But he said, That can by no means be; you dwell, said he, in the City of Destruction, the place also where I was born: I see it to be so; and, dying there, sooner or later, you will sink lower than the grave, into a place that burns with fire and brimstone: be content, good neighbours, and go along with me.

{20} OBST. What! said Obstinate, and leave our friends and our comforts behind us?

CHR. Yes, said Christian, for that was his name, because that ALL which you shall forsake is not worthy to be compared with a little of that which I am seeking to enjoy [2 Cor. 4:18]; and, if you will go along with me, and hold it, you shall fare as I myself; for there, where I go, is enough and to spare. [Luke 15:17] Come away, and prove my words.

{21} OBST. What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?

CHR. I seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away [1 Pet. 1:4], and it is laid up in heaven, and safe there [Heb. 11:16], to be bestowed, at the time appointed, on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, in my book.

OBST. Tush! said Obstinate, away with your book; will you go back with us or no?

CHR. No, not I, said the other, because I have laid my hand to the plough. [Luke 9:62]

{22} OBST. Come, then, neighbour Pliable, let us turn again, and go home without him; there is a company of these crazy-headed coxcombs, that, when they take a fancy by the end, are wiser in their own eyes than seven men that can render a reason. [Prov. 26:16]

PLI. Then said Pliable, Don't revile; if what the good Christian says is true, the things he looks after are better than ours: my heart inclines to go with my neighbour.

OBST. What! more fools still! Be ruled by me, and go back; who knows whither such a brain-sick fellow will lead you? Go back, go back, and be wise.

{23} CHR. Nay, but do thou come with thy neighbour, Pliable; there are such things to be had which I spoke of, and many more glorious besides. If you believe not me, read here in this book; and for the truth of what is expressed therein, behold, all is confirmed by the blood of Him that made it. [Heb. 9:17-22; 13:20]

PLI. Well, neighbour Obstinate, said Pliable, I begin to come to a point; I intend to go along with this good man, and to cast in my lot with him: but, my good companion, do you know the way to this desired place?

{24} CHR. I am directed by a man, whose name is Evangelist, to speed me to a little gate that is before us, where we shall receive instructions about the way.

PLI. Come, then, good neighbour, let us be going. Then they went both together.

OBST. And I will go back to my place, said Obstinate; I will be no companion of such misled, fantastical fellows.

{25} Now, I saw in my dream, that when Obstinate was gone back, Christian and Pliable went talking over the plain; and thus they began their discourse.

{26} CHR. Come, neighbour Pliable, how do you do? I am glad you are persuaded to go along with me. Had even Obstinate himself but felt what I have felt of the powers and terrors of what is yet unseen, he would not thus lightly have given us the back.

PLI. Come, neighbour Christian, since there are none but us two here, tell me now further what the things are, and how to be enjoyed, whither we are going.

{27} CHR. I can better conceive of them with my mind, than speak of them with my tongue. God's things

unspeakable: but yet, since you are desirous to know, I will read of them in my book.

PLI. And do you think that the words of your book are certainly true?

CHR. Yes, verily; for it was made by Him that cannot lie. [Titus 1:2]

PLI. Well said; what things are they?

CHR. There is an endless kingdom to be inhabited, and everlasting life to be given us, that we may inhabit that kingdom for ever. [Isa. 45:17; John 10:28,29]

PLI. Well said; and what else?

CHR. There are crowns and glory to be given us, and garments that will make us shine like the sun in the firmament of heaven. [2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:4; Matt. 13:43]

PLI. This is very pleasant; and what else?

CHR. There shall be no more crying, nor Sorrow: for He that is owner of the place will wipe all tears from our eyes. [Isa. 25:6-8; Rev. 7:17, 21:4]

{28} PLI. And what company shall we have there?

CHR. There we shall be with seraphims and cherubims, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look on them. [Isa. 6:2] There also you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that place; none of them are hurtful, but loving and holy; every one walking in the sight of God, and standing in his presence with acceptance for ever. [1 Thess. 4:16,17; Rev. 5:11] In a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns [Rev. 4:4], there we shall see the holy virgins with their golden harps [Rev. 14:1-5], there we shall see men that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love that they bare to the Lord of the place, all well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment. [John 12:25; 2 Cor. 5:4]

PLI. The hearing of this is enough to ravish one's heart. But are these things to be enjoyed? How shall we get to be sharers thereof?

CHR. The Lord, the Governor of the country, hath recorded that in this book; the substance of which is, If we be truly willing to have it, he will bestow it upon us freely.

PLI. Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things: come on, let us mend our pace.

CHR. I cannot go so fast as I would, by reason of this burden that is on my back.

{29} Now I saw in my dream, that just as they had ended this talk they drew near to a very miry slough, that was in the midst of the plain; and they, being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the slough was Despond. Here, therefore, they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt; and Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire.

{30} PLI. Then said Pliable; Ah! neighbour Christian, where are you now?

CHR. Truly, said Christian, I do not know.

PLI. At this Pliable began to be offended, and angrily said to his fellow, Is this the happiness you have told me all this while of? If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect betwixt this and our journey's end? May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me. And, with that, he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house: so away he went, and Christian saw him no more.

{31} Wherefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone: but still he endeavoured to struggle to that side of the slough that was still further from his own house, and next to the wicket-gate; the which he did, but could not get out, because of the burden that was upon his back: but I beheld in my dream, that a man came to him, whose name was Help, and asked him, What he did there?

CHR. Sir, said Christian, I was bid go this way by a man called Evangelist, who directed me also to yonder gate, that

I might escape the wrath to come; and as I was going thither I fell in here.

{32} HELP. But why did not you look for the steps?

CHR. Fear followed me so hard, that I fled the next way, and fell in.

HELP. Then said he, Give me thy hand: so he gave him his hand, and he drew him out, and set him upon sound ground, and bid him go on his way. [Ps. 40:2]

{33} Then I stepped to him that plucked him out, and said, Sir, wherefore, since over this place is the way from the City of Destruction to yonder gate, is it that this plat is not mended, that poor travellers might go thither with more security? And he said unto me, This miry slough is such a place as cannot be mended; it is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run, and therefore it is called the Slough of Despond; for still, as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears, and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place. And this is the reason of the badness of this ground.

{34} It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so bad. [Isa. 35:3,4] His labourers also have, by the direction of His Majesty's surveyors, been for above these sixteen hundred years employed about this patch of ground, if perhaps it might have been mended: yea, and to my knowledge, said he, here have been swallowed up at least twenty thousand cart-loads, yea, millions of wholesome instructions, that have at all seasons been brought from all places of the King's dominions, and they that can tell, say they are the best materials to make good ground of the place; if so be, it might have been mended, but it is the Slough of Despond still, and so will be when they have done what they can.

{35} True, there are, by the direction of the Law-giver, certain good and substantial steps, placed even through the