Chapter One

Christian Begins His Journey

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I arrived at a certain place where there was a jail. I lay down in the cell to sleep and, while I was asleep, I had a dream. In the dream I saw a man who was clothed with rags standing in a certain place, looking away from his house. He had a book in his hand and a great burden on his back. I looked and saw him open the book. As he read from it, he began to weep and shake; and, not being able to hold his emotions any longer, he broke down and cried out, saying, “What shall I do?”

In this terrible condition, then, he went home and held his feelings inside as long as he could so that his wife and children could not see how troubled he was; but he could not keep it to himself very long because he felt increasingly distressed about it. After a while, he decided to share his thoughts with his wife and children: “O my dear wife,” he said, “and my precious children; I, your husband and father, am not doing well because I am carrying a great burden. In addition to that, I have been informed that our city will be burned with fire from heaven. All of us will be utterly destroyed unless some way of escape can be found (but I cannot see a way yet).”

His family was shocked, not because they believed what he said was true, but because they thought he was losing his mind. As night approached, they all hoped that a good night’s sleep would settle his mind. So they hurriedly put him to bed. But he was as troubled in the night as he had been in the day. Instead of sleeping, he was up all night, disturbed and crying.

When the morning came, they wondered how he was. He responded, “I’m getting worse.” He also tried to talk to them again, but their hearts were hardened. They tried to get rid of his distress by being harsh and rude with him. Sometimes they would ridicule him; sometimes they would reprimand him; and sometimes they would just leave him alone. So he would get alone in his bedroom to pray for his family, to feel pity for each of them, and to grieve over his spiritual condition. He would also walk alone in the fields, sometimes reading and sometimes praying. This is how he spent his time for several days.

1. “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (Is. 64:6).
2. “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33).
3. “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear” (Ps. 38:4).
4. “Then the LORD replied: ‘Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it’” (Hab. 2:2).
5. “They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household’” (Acts 16:31).
Now I saw, when he was walking in the fields, that he was reading his book (as was his habit) and was greatly distressed in his mind. As he read, once again he exploded with the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

I also saw that he was looking all around as if he were looking for someplace to run. But he stood still, because he was not sure which way to go. At least, that was my perception. Then I looked and saw a man named Evangelist coming toward him. He asked, “Why are you crying?” The man answered, “Sir, my understanding from this book is that I am condemned to die, and after that I will come to judgment. I know that I do not want to die, nor am I able to face the judgment.”

Evangelist. “Why do you not want to die, since this life is filled with so many evil things?”

The man answered, “Because I fear that this burden on my back will cause me to sink lower than the grave, and I will fall into Topheth.* And, sir, if I am not prepared to go to prison, I am certainly not prepared to go to the Judgment, and from there to execution. When I think about these things, they upset me.”

Then Evangelist said, “If this is your condition, why are you doing nothing about it?” He answered, “Because I do not know where to go.” Then he gave him a parchment roll. In it were written these words, “Flee from the wrath to come!” The man read it and, looking at Evangelist very carefully, said, “Where must I go?” Then Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, said, “Do you see the wicket-gate over there?” The man said, “No.” Then Evangelist asked him, “Do you see the shining light?” He said, “I think I do.” Then Evangelist said, “Don’t take your eye off that light, and go directly to it. Then you will see the gate. When you knock at the gate, you will be told what you need to do.”

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* Hezekiah 22:14

6. “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

7. “…on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend. Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return” (Jb. 16:21-22).

8. “Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it” (Ezk. 22:14).

9. “Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze” (Is. 30:33).

10. “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?’” (Mt. 3:7).

11. “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Mt. 7:13-14).

12. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Ps. 119:105).

“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (II Pet. 1:19).
So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door, when his wife and children noticed and pleaded with him to return. But the man put his fingers in his ears and continued running, crying out, “Life! Life! Eternal life!” Refusing to look back, he fled towards the middle of the plain.

The neighbors also came out to see him run. As he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some shouted out for him to return. Two men were resolved to bring him back by force. The name of one was Obstinate, and the other one was named Pliable.

Now by this time, the man had gone a good distance from them. However, they were resolved to pursue him, which they did. Before long, they overtook him. The man said, “Neighbors, why have you come?” They said, “To persuade you to go back with us.” But he said, “By no means. You live in the City of Destruction, the place where I was also born. That is what our city is and, sooner or later, when you die there, you will go to a place beyond the grave that burns with fire and brimstone. Good neighbors, come with me.”

**Obstinate.** “What!” said Obstinate, “and leave our friends and our comforts behind us?”

**Christian.** “Yes,” said Christian (for that was his name). “If you gave up everything you have, it would still not be worthy to be compared with the small amount of that which I am seeking to enjoy. If you will go with me, you will benefit like me. For where I am going, there is more than enough for us all. Come with me and let me prove to you that I am telling the truth.”

**Obst.** “What are you seeking that would cause you leave everything in the world to find them?”

**Chr.** “I seek an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and will not fade away. It is laid up in heaven where it is safe. It will be given, at the appointed time, to those who diligently seek it. Read it, if you will, in my book.”

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13. “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:26).

14. “As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, ‘Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!’” (Gen. 19:17).

15. “I hear many whispering, ‘Terror on every side! Report him! Let's report him!’ All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, ‘Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him’” (Jer. 20:10).

16. “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (II Cor. 4:18).

17. “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!’” (Lk. 15:17).

18. “…and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you” (I Pet. 1:4).

19. “Instead, they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (Heb. 11:16).
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Obst. “No way!” said Obstinate. “Away with your book! Will you go back with us or not?”

Chr. “No, not I. I have laid my hand to the plow.”

Obst. “Come on, neighbor Pliable. Let’s turn around and go home without him. There are a number of these crazy dreamers who, when they grab hold of an illusion, are wiser in their own eyes than seven men who can offer a reason.”

Pliable. “Don’t berate him. If what the good Christian says is true, then what he is looking for is better than what we are seeking. I am inclined to go with my neighbor.”

Obst. “What! Are you a fool too? Listen to me and go back. You don’t have any idea where this idiot will lead you. Go back, go back, and be wise.”

Chr. “No. Do come with me, Pliable. You can have what I have described to you, and many more blessings besides. If you don’t believe me, read this book. The truths expressed in it are confirmed by the blood of Him who wrote it.”

Pli. “Well, neighbor Obstinate, I have come to a decision. I intend to go along with this good man and take my chances with him. But, my good companion (speaking to Christian), do you know the way to this desirable place?”

Chr. “I have been given directions by a man whose name is Evangelist. We will be going to a little gate that is ahead of us where we will receive further instructions.”

Pli. “Come on, Christian; let’s go.” Then they both went together.

Obst. “And I will go back to my place. I will not accompany such misled dreamers.”

Now I saw in my dream, that when Obstinate had gone back, Christian and Pliable began talking as they went over the plain. This is the way they began their conversation:

Chr. “How are you, Pliable? I am glad you were persuaded to come along with me. If Obstinate could have felt what I have felt about the powers and terrors of what is to come, he would not have turned his back on us so easily.”

Pli. “Since there are only the two of us here, tell me about where we are going, and how I can enjoy the things there.”

20. “Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God’” (Lk. 9:62).

21. “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20-21).
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**Chr.** “It is easier to think about them in my mind than to talk about them. But since you are curious to know, I will read to you from my book.”

**Pli.** “And do you think that the words of your book are absolutely true?”

**Chr.** “Yes. It was given by Him who cannot lie.”

**Pli.** “Well said. What are some of the things that are mentioned in your book?”

**Chr.** “There is an endless kingdom that we will live in; everlasting life will be given to us that we may live in that kingdom forever.”

**Pli.** “Well said. And what else?”

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

**Pli.** “This is excellent. And what else?”

**Chr.** “There will be no more crying or sorrow. The Owner of the place will wipe all tears from our eyes.”

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22. “…a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time” (Tit. 1:2).

23. “But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting” (Is. 45:17).

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (Jn. 10:27-29).

24. “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (II Tim. 4:8).

“Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy” (Rev. 3:4).

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear” (Mt. 13:43).

25. “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken” (Is. 25:8).

“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:16-17).

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4).
Pli. “Who will be with us in heaven?”

Chr. “We will be with the seraphim and cherubim, creatures that will dazzle your eyes when you see them. You will also meet thousands - even tens of thousands - of people who have gone to heaven before us. None of them will hurt us; they are loving and holy. Everyone walks before the eyes of God and stands in His presence with full acceptance forever and ever. We will also see the elders with their golden crowns. We will see the holy virgins with their golden harps. We will see men who were cut in pieces, burned in flames, eaten by wild beasts, and drowned in the seas because of their love for the Lord of heaven. All of these people will be well and clothed with immortality.”

Pli. “Hearing about these things can almost overpower the heart. Are these things meant to be enjoyed? How can we experience all of these things?”

Chr. “The Lord, the governor of the country, has recorded the answers to your questions in this book. Here is the heart of the matter: If we are willing to have it, He will freely give it to us.”

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26. “Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying” (Is. 6:2).

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (I Thes. 4:16-17).

“Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders” (Rev. 5:11).

27. “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads” (Rev. 4:4).

28. “Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless” (Rev. 14:1-5).

29. “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (Jn. 12:25).

30. “Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (II Cor. 5:2,3,5).

31. “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands” (Is. 55:12).

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink” (Jn. 7:37).
Pli. “Well, my good companion, I am certainly glad to hear about these things. Come on. Let’s pick up our pace.”

Chr. “I cannot go as fast as I would like, because of this burden on my back.”

Now I saw in my dream that, just as they had finished speaking, they came to a very miry slough (a place of deep mud and mire) that was in the middle of the plain. Being careless, they both suddenly fell into the mire. The name of the slough was Despond. They wallowed in it for a while, and were grieving that they were smeared with dirt. Christian began to sink in the mire because of the burden that was on his back.

Pli. “Ah! Neighbor Christian, where are you now?”

Chr. “I truly do not know.”

Pli. At that, Pliable was offended and responded to Christian with anger. “Is this the happiness you have told me about for so long? If we go at such a slow pace at the beginning, what can we expect between now and the end of our journey? If I get out with my life, you will possess the brave country alone.” And with that he desperately struggled and got out of the mire on the side of the slough that was closest to his own house. So he went away, and Christian never saw him again.

Christian, however, was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone. But he still struggled to get to the side of the slough that was farthest from his own house, and closest to the wicket-gate. He succeeded, but could not get out, because of the burden on his back.

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“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (Jn. 6:37).

“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life’” (Rev. 21:6).

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev. 22:17).