

Pilgrim's Progress

The Slough of Despond

By [John Bunyan](#)

The Pilgrim's Progress from this world — to that which is to come, in the similitude of a dream

Retold for Children and Adapted to School Reading, by James Baldwin, 1913

Then I saw in my dream, that the man thanked Evangelist and began to run.

His wife and children, who were watching him, cried out to him to stop. "Come back, father!" they called. "Come back and stay with us!"

But he would not listen. He ran on, keeping his face towards the far-away hills and never losing sight of the shining light.

His neighbors saw him running, and they wondered what could ail him. Some pitied, and said, "He is mad!" Some laughed, and said, "He is a fool!" Others called out loudly, "Come back! Come back!"

Two of his friends, whose names were *OBSTINATE* and *PLIABLE*, ran after him. And, as they were light of foot, they soon overtook him.

"My friends," he said, "why do you run after me?"

"Oh," said the one whose name was *Obstinate*, "we are going to take you back home."

"No you will not," answered the runner. "I will not go back to that *City of Destruction*. I have started to a far better place, and I would like to persuade you to go with me."

"And leave all our friends and comforts behind us?" said *Obstinate*.

"Certainly," answered *GRACELESS* — for that was the man's name. "For my book tells me that in the glorious city which lies beyond those far-away mountains, I shall find treasures much richer than those I am leaving behind."

"Oh, nonsense!" said *Obstinate*. "Who has ever seen that city? Will you go back with us? Or will you still behave like a fool?"

"Have a care, neighbor," said the other man, whose name was *Pliable*. "Perhaps he is right; and if so, he is wiser than we. I have heard of that Celestial City, and I have half a mind to go with him."

"Then go, if you wish," answered Obstinate. "I shall return to my own place. I'll have nothing to do with such foolish fellows!"

So he turned and went back; and Graceless and Pliable ran on together across the plain.

"I am glad you are going with me," said Graceless.

"And I am glad to be your companion," said Pliable.

Then they talked as they ran; and Graceless told Pliable many wonderful things about the *Celestial City* towards which they were going. But the *burden* that was on his back bore heavily upon him, and he soon became weary. "Dear Pliable," he said, "I cannot go so fast. The way grows rougher, and this burden is hard to carry!"

So they went on more slowly — but they kept their faces turned always towards the shining light and the distant mountains.

Soon they came to a great *bog* that seemed to fill the whole plain before them. It was called the *Slough of Despond*, and it was so deep with *mire* that no one had ever been able to build a road across it. But it looked so much like the solid ground that Graceless and Pliable fell into it before they were aware, and were soon waist deep in the mud!

"Dear Pliable, I am sinking still deeper!" cried Graceless. "This burden is pressing me down!"

"That proves that all you have been telling me is a mistake," said Pliable. "If the road to the Celestial City is like this — I want no more of it!"

Then with a desperate struggle he managed to climb out of the bog at the place where he had fallen in. He was covered with mire, and very, very angry; and without trying to help his companion, or stopping to tell him good-by, he strode hastily back toward his home.

Graceless was left to struggle alone in the Slough of Despond. But he kept his face turned toward the distant hills, and even while floundering in the mire — he now and then caught glimpses of the shining light.

By and by, he reached the farther side; but there the mire was deep, and his

burden was so heavy that he could not climb out. For a long time he struggled there — but scarcely was he able to keep himself from sinking entirely in the dreadful mire.

At length, when his strength was almost gone, a man who heard his cries came down to the edge of the bog to look at him. This man's face was pleasant to see, and his arms were strong. His name was *HELP*.

"How did you get into this bog?" he asked.

"I was on my way to yonder wicket gate," answered Graceless; "and before I saw my danger, I fell in."

"Give me your hand," said Help.

Graceless did so, and Help lifted him out of the mire, and set his feet on solid ground.

"Now take courage," he said, "and go straight onward to the wicket gate."

"I thank you," said Graceless. "Now I feel stronger than before; and although this burden is still heavy, I will persevere."

And with that, he went on, keeping his face turned always toward the shining light.

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