

THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND



*The Slough
of Despond.*

Now I saw in my dream, that just as they had ended his talk, they drew nigh to a very *miry slough* that was in the midst of the plain, and they being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog.¹ 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.

2. **Pli.** Then said *Pliable*, Ah! Neighbor *Christian*, where are you now?

3. **Chr.** Truly, said *Christian*, I do not know.

*It is not
enough to be
Pliable.*

4. **Pli.** At that *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,² what may we expect 'twixt

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.

5. Wherefore *Christian* was left to tumble in the Slough of *Despond* alone: but still he endeavored to struggle to that side of the slough that was still further from his own house, and next to the Wicket-gate;³ 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?

*Christian in
trouble seeks
still to get
further from
his own house.*

6. **Chr.** Sir, said *Christian*, I was directed this way by a man

unforeseen stop him in his course; the lion in the way terrifies him, and he endeavors to stifle convictions of sin by pursuing the pleasures and vanities of the world.

³ *Christian*, endeavoring to struggle to that side of the slough that was farthest from his own house, and next to the wicket gate, represents the convicted sinner fearing to have his convictions taken off any other way than by faith in the blood of Christ.

¹ The seeking soul soon meets with unforeseen difficulties; some new temptation or surprisal into sin puts it to a stand. But they that are earnest, however discouraged, cannot go back; for "*to whom should they go?*" *John* 7:68. Others find trouble, instead of the comforts they expect, grow weary, and will walk in the way no more.

² The hypocritical professor would have the crown without the cross. Difficulties

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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.

The Promises.

7. **Help.** But why did you not look for the steps?

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

*Help lifts him out.
Psa. 40. 2*

9. **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.

What makes the Slough of Despond.

10. 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 place is not mended, that poor travelers 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.

Isa. 35. 3, 4.

11. It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so

bad. His laborers also have, by the directions of his Majesty's surveyors, been for above this sixteen hundred years employed about this patch of ground, if perhaps it might have been mended: yea, and to my knowledge, said he, here hath 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.⁴

The promises of forgiveness and acceptance to life by faith in Christ.

12. True, there are, by the direction of the Lawgiver, certain good and substantial steps, placed even through the very midst of this *slough*; but at such time as this place doth much spew out its filth, as it doth against change of weather, these steps are hardly seen, or if they be, men through the dizziness of their heads, step besides; and then they are bemired to purpose, notwithstanding the steps be there; but

⁴ If there was no unbelief remaining in the heart, there would be no Slough of Despond. A true penitent has faith; but when faith is weak, unbelief and Satan put it to many a sharp trial. There is no doubt whether Jesus be the Savior, but whether he be MY Savior. *I read that many have deceived themselves, What if I should be deceived!*—These fears, doubtless, spring from a legal principle, yet few except the stony ground hearers, escape themselves.

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1 Sam. 12. 23.

the ground is good when they are once got in at the gate.

Pliable is got home, and is visited by his neighbors. His entertainment by them at his return.

13. Now I saw in my dream, that by this time *Pliable* was got home to his house again. So his neighbors came to visit him; and some of them called him wise man for coming back, and some called him fool for hazarding himself with *Christian*;

others again did mock at cowardliness; saying, 'Surely since you began to venture, I would not have been so base to have given out for a few difficulties.' So *Pliable* sat sneaking among them. But at last he got more confidence, and then they all turned tales, and began to deride poor *Christian* behind his back. And thus much concerning *Pliable*. †

NOTES:
