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## The Den and the Dreamer



**A**s I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and 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. (Isaiah 64:6; Luke 14:33; Psalm 38:4). 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; 16:30; Habakkuk 1:2, 3).

In this plight, therefore, he went home, and restrained 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 certainly informed that this our city will be burnt 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 carriage 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.

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? (Acts 16:30, 31).

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 he asked, Wherefore dost thou cry?

He answered, Sir, I perceive, by the book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment, (Hebrews 9:27); and I find that I am not willing to do the first, (Job 10:21, 22), nor able to do the second. (Ezekiel 22:14).

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 that is upon my back will sink me lower than the

grave, and I shall fall into Tophet. (Isaiah 30:33). And Sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit to go to judgment, and from thence to execution; and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

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, Fly from the wrath to come. (Matthew 3:7).

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? (Matthew 7:13, 14). The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? (Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 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. 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, 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, (Genesis 19:17), but fled towards the middle of the plain.

The neighbors also came out to see him run, (Jeremiah 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 were 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, Neighbors, wherefore are you 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 neighbors, and go along with me.

**Obstinate:** What, said Obstinate, and leave our friends and our comforts behind us!

**Christian:** Yes, said Christian, (for that was his name,) because that all which you forsake is not worthy to be compared with a little of that I am seeking to enjoy, (2 Corinthians 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.

**Obstinate:** What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?

**Christian:** I seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, (1 Peter 1:4); and it is laid up in heaven, and safe there, (Hebrews 11:16), to be bestowed, at the time appointed, on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, in my book.

**Obstinate:** Tush, said Obstinate, away with your book; will you go back with us or no?

**Christian:** No, not I, said the other, because I have laid my hand to the plough. (Luke 9:62).

**Obstinate:** Come then, neighbor 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.

**Pliable:** 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 neighbor.

**Obstinate:** 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.

**Christian:** Nay, but do thou come with thy neighbor Pliable; there are such things to be had which I spoke of, and many more glories 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. (Hebrews 9:17-21).

**Pliable:** Well, neighbor 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?

**Christian:** 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.

**Pliable:** Come then, good neighbor, let us be going. Then they went both together.

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