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## Obstinate & Pliable

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### Words to Know:

Obstinate – headstrong, willful, stubborn

Pliable – flexible, bending, easily influenced

Brimstone – burning stone

Incorruptible – pure, sound, untainted

Discourse – orderly conversation about a particular subject

Garment – clothing



### Memory verses: 1 Peter 1:3-5

# Obstinate & Pliable

**S**O 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! So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain.

Luke 14:26  
Genesis 19:17  
Jeremiah 20:10

The neighbors also came out to see him run; 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!

2 Corinthians 4:18  
Luke 15:17

**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; 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. Come away, and prove my words.

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

1 Peter 1:4  
Hebrews 11:16

**CHRISTIAN:** I seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and it is laid up in heaven, and safe there 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 Obstatine, 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.

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.

Luke 9:62



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Notes

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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.

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## Obstinate & Pliable

After Evangelist points Christian to the way that he must go in order to find eternal life, Christian encounters Obstinate and Pliable. It is as true in the allegory as it is in reality that the seeking soul cannot but discover that others are watching who are full of sympathies, concerns, comments and criticisms. It is often the case, as many can relate, when a local town scoundrel becomes converted, or a relative once given over to alcohol or another vice comes into the kingdom of Heaven, the general gossip is that "so-and-so has found religion." The world cannot understand "if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Bunyan shows us at least two kinds of reactions to true biblical conversion with Obstinate and Pliable, both of whom run after Christian and attempt to cause him to reconsider his actions.

Obstinate is a mulish, stiff-necked, highly opinionated individual who is an obstacle not only to his own salvation but also to others who would attain it. Nonetheless, we must all exercise caution here lest we think that an obstinate heart is only the possession of a certain segment of humanity. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminds us that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). Everyone possesses a significant measure of obstinacy within us by virtue of our relationship to our father, Adam. Obstinacy expresses it-

self in an ongoing act of rebellion against our Maker whereby an inherent hostility and animosity is generated toward a good and gracious God. Alexander Whyte tells us, "There is a sullenness in some men's minds, a gloom, and a bitter air that rises up from the unploughed, undrained, unweeded, uncultivated fens of their hearts that chills and blasts all the feeble beginnings of a better life." Only when the self-willed individual bows the knee to the will of Another does the obstinate one become submissive, humble and yielding. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

On the other hand, Pliable becomes temporarily persuaded by Christian's argument and decides to accompany him along the way. Pliable wants to talk about Heaven, an endless kingdom, crowns of glory, angelic hosts, a place where there is no more crying or sorrow, and then he also wants to hurry up to get there. The only things Pliable can think of are the benefits to be received and rewards to be collected. However, he totally misses the point. Christian reminds him, "Had 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." Christian can't hurry because he has a burden on his back. Pliable has no burden but owns a shallow heart. He precisely fits the words of Jesus in the parable of the soils, "He has no root in himself, but endures only for a while" (Matthew 13:21, NKJV).

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.

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.

CHRISTIAN: Come, neighbor 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.

PLIABLE: Come, neighbor Christian, since there are none but us two here, tell me now farther, what the things are, and how to be enjoyed, whither we are going.

CHRISTIAN: I can better conceive of them with my mind, than speak of them with my tongue: but yet, since you are desirous to know, I will read of them in my book.

PLIABLE: And do you think that the words of your book are certainly true?

CHRISTIAN: Yes, verily; for it was made by Him that cannot lie.

PLIABLE: Well said; what things are they?

CHRISTIAN: There is an endless kingdom to be inhabited, and everlasting life to be given us, that we may inhabit that kingdom for ever.

Isaiah 65:17  
John 10:27–29

PLIABLE: Well said; and what else?

2 Timothy 4:8  
Revelation 22:5  
Matthew 13:43

CHRISTIAN: There are crowns of glory to be given us; and garments that will make us shine like the sun in the firmament of heaven.

PLIABLE: This is very pleasant; and what else?

Isaiah 25:8  
Revelation 7:16-17; 21:4

CHRISTIAN: There shall be no more crying, nor sorrow; for he that is owner of the place will wipe all tears from our eyes.

## Summary

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