

Interpreter's House

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] The little brown books on the table, they're free for your taking, so if you don't have one of those commentaries on Pilgrim's Progress by Cheevers, you're free to pick one up.

Christians, through the gate, he's on the way. He's come to Christ, he's trust in him, and now he's on the journey homeward to the celestial city.

I pick up the reading then as he comes to Interpreter's House. Then Christian began to gird up his loins to address himself to his journey. So the other told him that by that he was gone some distance from the gate, that he would at the house of the Interpreter, at whose door he should knock, and he would show him excellent things.

Then Christian took his leave of his friend, that is goodwill, there at the gate, Christ himself, and he again bid him Godspeed. Then he went on till he came at the house of the Interpreter, where he knocked over and over.

At last, one came to the door and asked, who was there? Sir, here is a traveler who was bid by an acquaintance of the good man of this house to call here for my prophet.

[1:13] I would therefore speak with the master of the house. So he called for the master of the house, who after little time came to Christian and asked him what he would have. Sir, said Christian, I'm a man that I've come from the city of destruction and I'm going to Mount Zion.

And I was told by the man that stands at the gate, at the head of this way, that if I called here, you would show me excellent things such as would be a help to me in my journey.

Then said Interpreter, come in, I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee. So he commanded his man to light the candle and bid Christian follow him.

And we're about to read how Interpreter takes him then through his house, room by room, in which there are choice lessons for him for the journey. Who is the interpreter?

And what does this signify? Anyone like to take a stab? Who's interpreter? And what does it signify? Well, you're being shy.

[2:23] It's the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit who comes to open our eyes and show us wonderful things in his law, teaching the word of God to who?

To believers. He's the gift of Christ, the ascended Christ to his people. And I say that again is another proof that Bunyan means that Christian has been saved at the gate because as he comes immediately to Interpreter's house, he finds that the Holy Spirit is given to him.

That he doesn't read the Bible by himself anymore, but he now reads with Interpreter to interpret and to teach him his lessons. Well, here then he gains wisdom from the Holy Spirit.

We have not received the Spirit of this world, Paul says, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

1 Corinthians 10, 12. We've received an anointing, John tells us. It's been given to all believers that they might know the truth. And so he has his man light the candle that Christian might see as he reads the scriptures.

[3:34] They're the servants through whom the Holy Spirit ministers his word. This servant who came and lit the candle. And in the footnote, Bunyan just has this word, illumination.

Illumination. The Holy Spirit illumines the word to our hearts. He opens our eyes. He opens our minds so that we can see and gain wisdom.

Now, knowledge before was scanty compared to this. Bunyan understood some things from scripture. Even before he was converted, he understood some things.

But all of that was scanty compared to what he now sees in the Bible. And have you not experienced that the Bible became a new book at conversion? Perhaps some of you had been raised on it as with your mother's milk from infancy.

But it still became a new book to you. Well, we see more with our eyes open than we do with them shut. And that's what Bunyan is saying. Illumination. The Spirit's work to show us what's in the scriptures.

[4 : 39] And notice, so we depend upon the Spirit to truly understand the word so as to profit. But the Bible's not just to tickle our fancy, to add up points of knowledge in our minds.

But he says that he would give him such things as would help him in his journey. Things that will be profitable to him. Isn't that the same word that Paul uses to Timothy?

That all scripture is profitable. And if we read it aright, we will profit from it. It will help us on the journey. A proper understanding of scripture then is necessary for the journey of life.

It's not an extra, an option. But it's an absolute necessity as we journey through life, we need what the Word of God has to say to us. And that's why the Spirit of God is given to us.

So there are things here in the Bible to help us to live out there in the world. And so, one by one, he comes to these seven rooms.

[5 : 51] And at each room in the house, Christian sees things. But interpreter is silent until Christian asks for the meaning. We'll see that all along the way.

And Christian will say, what's the meaning of this? Well, I ask you, what's the meaning of that? The fact that Christian has to ask before he understands the lesson from scripture.

What is that teaching us? We need to ask for the Spirit's ministry. And Jesus would encourage us with that by saying, if you evil fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

And so we ask, Holy Spirit, come and teach me. Open my eyes that I might see wonderful things in your law. I realize that I can stand or sit before the Word of God and see as a blind man.

Come and open my eyes, my understanding, my mind. Sweep out the cobwebs of wrong thoughts and sin and give me to see clearly. Psalm 119 is full of such prayers.

[7 : 02] Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things in your law. Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees. Give me understanding that I will, then I will keep your law. So, we're meant to pray for the Spirit.

Well, lesson number one. He had him into a private room and bid his man open a door. The witch, when he'd done, Christians saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall.

And this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lift up to heaven. The best of books in his hand. The law of truth was written upon his lips. The world was behind his back.

It stood as if to plead. He stood as if to plead with men. And a crown of gold did hang over his head. Then said Christian, what means this?

Interpreter. The man whose picture this is is one of a thousand. He can beget children. Travel, travail in birth with children. And nurse them himself when they are born.

[8 : 03] And whereas thou seest him with eyes lift up to heaven. The best of books in his hands. And the law of truth written on his lips. It's to show you. That his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners.

Even as also you see him stand as if he pleaded with men. And whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him. And that a crown hangs over his head.

That's to show you. That slighting and despising the things that are present. For the love that he has to his master's servants. He is sure in the world that comes next.

To have glory for his reward. Now said the interpreter. I have showed thee this picture first.

Because the man whose picture this is. Is the only man whom the Lord of the place.

Whither thou art going. Has authorized to be thy guide. In all difficult places. Where you may meet with in the way. Therefore take good heed to what I have showed you.

[9 : 02] And bear well in your mind what you have seen. Lest in your journey you meet with some that pretend to lead thee right. But their way goes down to death. It's a picture of a true minister of the gospel.

And he says there's one. There are one in a thousand. Bunyan had John Gifford as his pastor. And he does him a service here of appreciation.

By painting the picture of the kind of man that he was. He was grave. That simply means he wasn't the town jokester. He was serious.

Life is serious. People are going to hell. And this man knows it. And so he speaks with seriousness. Doesn't mean he never laughs. But he's grave. He's serious.

He travails in birth pangs for children. Then nurses them. The footnote is Galatians 4.19. Where Paul says, My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth.

[10:02] Until Christ is formed in you. Paul says, I went through the pains of childbirth once in bringing you to birth. But now you've fallen back. And I'm in those birth pangs again.

Until Christ is formed in you. His eyes are lift up to heaven. He's a man of prayer. He pleads with God for men.

But he's also found pleading with men for God. And he has the best of books in his hands and truth on his lips. He's a man of the word. And the world is where?

It's behind him. He has burned the bridges to the world. He's not after the world's praises. He's not after the world's riches. He's after sinners.

He's after bringing praise to a Savior. And so the world is despised as the nothing that it is. For that which is eternal. And the crown of gold is over his head.

[11:01] 1 Peter 1.4 is the passage where a crown of glory is promised to the shepherds of Christ's flock who are faithful to their master.

Now why is this the picture that the new Christian is shown first? Why? What's Bunyan saying? That new believer, here you are.

You've just trusted in Christ. There's something very important for you on this long journey that you're on your whole lifetime. What is it? It's that you know how to identify a true minister of the gospel.

You see what he's saying? You need a pastor, is what Bunyan's saying. Don't go this journey alone. There are difficult places there. You will need a true guide.

And Christ has authorized true guides. But there's a whole lot other ones out there on the road that will offer you their advice. Had Christian met any yet?

[12:08] Who? Worldly wise men. There's a whole lot more of worldly wise men out there waiting for this baby Christian.

Come here and I'll show you the way to be a good Christian. And Bunyan says it is absolutely necessary that you be able to distinguish a faithful guide from a blind guide.

A true shepherd from a mere hireling. A faithful pastor from a pretender. We need the oversight of guides for the journey.

Who are commissioned by Christ to watch over our souls. Hebrews 13.7 And so he's warned against pretenders. Well, here it is.

This picture. I would invite any of you budding artists to paint such a one. I'd love to have this picture in my study. It's a beautiful reminder of what I ought to be about.

[13:08] It's a help to me. Say, John, okay. Do you have the world behind you? Do you have the word of God written on your lips? Are you found pleading with God for men?

Are you found pleading with men for God? It would be a helpful reminder for the minister to see what he ought to be and to spur him on. But it's also helpful for you that you learn to identify true ministers from the false.

Who you should be listening to and not listening to. But then also that you might pray for your ministers that they would increase and abound in this picture. So that's the first picture. Any questions before we go on to the second?

You see the importance? Why it's first? I believe Bunyan's making a point here. Now, everything in Scripture is important. But Bunyan found the value of a minister in his own life.

And he lets us know that that's the way God planned it to be. We need ministers. All right? Lesson two. I saw moreover in my dream that the interpreter took him by the hand and had him into a little room.

[14:17] Where sat... I'm sorry. I skipped room two. Then he took him by the hand. You get this picture, don't you? Of him taking him by the hand.

That's a beautiful picture of what the Holy Spirit does for us. Each time we come to the word of God. He takes us by the hand. Come on, John. Let me show you something else in the Scriptures.

As a child is led. And he leads him into a very large parlor that was full of dust because it had never been swept. The witch, after he had reviewed a little while, the interpreter called for a man to sweep.

Now, when he began to sweep, the dust began so abundantly to fly about that Christian had almost therewith been choked. Then said the interpreter to a damsel that stood by, Bring hither water and

sprinkle the room.

The witch, when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure. Then said Christian, What means this? The interpreter says, This parlor is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel.

[15 : 25] The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep at first is the law. But she that brought water and did sprinkle it is the gospel.

Now, whereas thou sawest that so soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about that the room by him could not be cleansed, but that what thou wast almost choked therewith.

This is to show thee that the law, instead of cleansing the heart by its working from sin, doth revive and put strength into and increase sin in the soul, even as it discovers and forbids it.

For it does not give power to subdue. Again, as thou sawest the damsel sprinkle the room with water upon which it was cleansed with pleasure, this is to show thee that when the gospel comes in, the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then I say, Even as thou sawest the damsel lay the dust by sprinkling the floor with water, so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean through the faith of it, and consequently is fit for the king of glory to inhabit.

Again, there's scripture references scattered in his footnotes along the way, perhaps here about ten of them. Beautiful picture from life.

[16 : 57] The woman sweeping, and it seems like the more she sweeps, the dustier the room becomes. The dust is sin, inward corruption, evil desires. And there are two attempts at cleansing the heart, and only one is effective.

The first sweeper is the law. Now, this is the unconverted person. Now, we're going to see this morning in James that James has high words for the law. And we need to remember that.

But we're talking now about a sinner who's lost, who doesn't have a new nature. All he has is his sin. How is he going to get rid of it? And so the sweeper of the law comes along and says, Here, let me clean you up.

That's as futile as trying to sweep a room full of dust on the floor. Because all the dust that was there all along is simply stirred up and shown to be there.

The more you sweep, the more it's everywhere seen. The law made sin evident where before it was somewhat hidden.

[18 : 08] Yes, we had an awareness of sin that drives us to want to do something to cleanse it. But rather than cleansing, it makes it evident, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

It fills every space in the room so that he was even breathing it. But it also aggravates it and stirs it up. It puts strength into sin. It increases it in the soul, even as it discovers and forbids it.

Cheever writes, The law is holy and just and good, but its very holiness and goodness laid alongside with our depravity makes the revelation within us appear like the uncovering of hell.

Suddenly we see what we are. Turn to Romans chapter 7. The Apostle Paul speaks about this use of the law in the unbeliever's life and in his own life what happened.

And this is one of the footnotes that Bunyan has in the margin, that he's thinking about this text. Romans 7 and verse 7. What shall we say then?

[19 : 13] Is the law sin? Certainly not. Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. There's the knowledge of sin that comes to us. We see all the dust when we have the law come to us.

For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet. But did it clean my heart from sin? No. But sin, verse 8, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.

So the law came to me saying, Thou shalt not covet. And my own evil desires took that opportunity of hearing the law to stir up in me all kinds, every kind of covetous desire.

For apart from law, sin was dead. It was lying dormant, as it were. But once I was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, when the law came sweeping in my life, sin sprang to life and I died.

I choked. And I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me.

[20 : 21] And through the commandment, put me to death. The very prohibition, do not, stirs up in the sinful heart the desire for it.

Do not touch. And the child immediately wants to touch. Stay off the grass. We want to walk on it. Do not dismantle the smoke detector in the bathroom of the airplane.

Well, who would have ever even thought about dismantling a smoke detector in a bathroom had it not told you not to? And there's that sense in which the law stirs up desires to do what it forbids. That's why the Proverbs talks about Lady Folly and she says, come on in here and eat. Stolen water is sweet.

Food eaten in secret is delicious. It's sweet because it is stolen. There's an attraction for the forbidden within our hearts. So the law coming to us by itself does not help us.

[21 : 31] It does not cleanse our hearts. It simply uncovers all the lust and sin that's in there and actually provokes it and stirs it up. Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15 56 that the power of sin is the law.

Have you thought about that? The power of sin is the law. The law empowers our sinful desires. It has no power to cleanse.

That's what Bunyan is saying but actually aggravates it. And so the maid is called with the water. And this is the gospel.

And Bunyan is teaching us we need the one-two punch. We need the law and the gospel. And if we try to deal with our sin simply with the law sinner if you try to cleanse your life simply with the law you're going to fail.

And I would say we have so we have this sweeper and she comes and sprinkles the water and then the sweeping continues and there is cleansing.

[22 : 44] Ezekiel 36 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities. So water is the purification a symbol for purification and that's what God says he'll do with his people.

He'll sprinkle them with clean water. What is it that cleanses us from sin? It's the blood of Christ. The sprinkled blood Hebrews 12 24 talks about all those who are in the new covenant they've been sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

And when the sweet and precious influences of the gospel come into the heart then is sin subdued then is it conquered then is the soul made clean a fit room for the king of glory to come and inhabit through faith as Bunyan says in the gospel faith in the blood of Christ applies that cleansing to our hearts.

Christ in him crucified his power to cleanse from sin Romans 8 3 for what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh that inward evil desire God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

The law was unable to purify us so Christ and his blood is sprinkled in our hearts and only then do we become fit dwelling places for the king.

[24 : 08] So here's an important lesson that we not use the law in a wrong way and especially for the sinner to understand that that we don't just give the law to people and expect the law to clean them up and Christian that you don't just take the law and expect the law to clean you up the law has no power to cleanse.

Now this lesson would have kept him from going down to one Mr. Legality's house to take care of the burden on his back. He's feeling guilty for sin and he said well you just go down to Mr. Legality's church go worship there because what you got there is morals.

Just be a good person keep the law and so Christian tried it. Oh how he would have profited from this lesson. He wouldn't have gone down by Mount Sinai and had it nearly crush him as he did seeking cleansing from his sin.

That fierce sweeper of the law nearly choked him with his own sins. So don't use the law by itself to cleanse you from sin.

There must be the water of the gospel and so that should help this new pilgrim as he makes his way homeward. He himself ever used law and gospel in his life if he would have his heart increasingly cleansed from sin.

[25 : 39] That's lesson two. The law and the gospel. Any questions comments on that lesson for Christian? We can see how it is meant to prepare him for the journey and already even in his short pilgrimage we see how many of his faults would have been corrected had he learned those lessons.

That's a haunting reality isn't it? Many of our slip ups would have been spared us if we'd have got it from the book.

If we'd have learned the lesson. Well he's got another one. So he had him into I saw moreover in my dream that the interpreter took him by the hand and had him into a little room where sat two little children each one in his chair.

The name of the oldest was passion the other patience. Passion seemed to be much discontented but patience was very quiet.

Then Christian asked what's the reason of the discontent of passion? The interpreter answered the governor of them would have them stay to wait for his best things till the beginning of the next year but he would have them all now but patience is willing to wait.

[26 : 56] Then I saw that one came to passion and brought him a bag of treasure and poured it down at his feet the which he took up and rejoiced therein and with all laughed patience to scorn but I beheld but a while and he had lavished all away and had nothing left him but rags and said Christian to the interpreter expound this matter more fully to me so he said these two lads are figures passion of the men of this world patience of the men of that which is to come for as here thou seest passion will have all now this year that is to say in this world so are the men of this world they must have all their good things now they cannot wait till next year that is until the next world for their portion of good that proverb a bird in the hand is worth testimonies of the good of the world to come but as you saw that he had quickly lavished all away and had presently nothing left him but rags so it will be with all men at the end of this world

Christian now I see that patience has the best wisdom and that upon many accounts because one he waits for the best things and two because he will have the glory of his when the other has nothing but rags nay you may add another says interpreter that the glory of the next world will never wear out but these are suddenly gone therefore passion had not so much reason to laugh at patience because he had his good things first as patience will have to laugh at passion because he had his best things last for first must give place to last because last must have its time to come but last gives place to nothing in other words there's nothing after the next world for there is none other to succeed it he therefore that hath his portion first must need to have a time to spend it but he that has his portion last must have it ever lastingly therefore it is said of

Dives he quotes Luke 16 in your lifetime you receive your good things and likewise Lazarus evil things but now he is comforted and you are tormented Christian well then I perceive it is not best to covet things that are now but to wait for things to come you speak truth says interpreter for the things that are seen are temporal but the things that are not seen are eternal but though this be so yet since things present and our fleshly appetite are such near neighbors to one another and again because things to come in carnal sense are such strangers one to another therefore it is that the first of these so suddenly falls into friendship and that distance is so continued between the second so the little room with the two boys in their seats don't think I really need to to comment more on that as

Christian had it put to him from interpreter again many scripture references brought to mind how Jesus talks about the one who laughs last the righteous isn't it a picture that the the Christian is often laughed at by the ones who have everything in this life and they have nothing and they're made fun of and yet Jesus says no they will be laughing when the world is crying so teaching us to wait for our best things our best things are yet to come and if we have our good in this life we've only got four score and ten to enjoy but if we have our best things in the life to come we have forever to enjoy them could be a commentary on Psalm 73 when the believer loses a sense of these things for a moment he's caught up with the present prosperity of the wicked and made to wish he were like them and remember how Asaph had to be corrected remember the end dear brothers and sisters remember the end that's what Bunyan is saying here in this room the rich man and Lazarus rich man so full of wealth and Lazarus has nothing but one has everlasting riches and one has everlasting nothing wrath remember the end so there's the challenge is is our lifestyle saying to our neighbors that our best things are yet to come and does our loss of present temporal riches give the impression that this life is all we've got and we've got to get it all here and now no we need to refocus on that which is true wealth and seek after that patient to go through this world with nothing as patience the boy in the chair was faith is what makes the difference faith sees those unseen realities as real as all the pleasures that our worldlings around us are seeking after so it's a lesson again for the young

Christian alright you used to live this way you were one of the world now this all has to be rearranged you must learn the lesson here about temporal versus eternal that you don't go off the

path and seek things that are temporal to the expense and the loss of the eternal so the lesson of the two children passion and patience any comments questions about this picture Jim that's it really stands up to him when he said my heart and my flesh may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever I think I've missed a few that's it there's my true treasure yeah you realize this have to come back to your senses that's right his heart and his flesh may fail God is the strength of his heart and his portion forever amen well we need that lesson often and that's why [33:44] Bunyan gives this lesson to Christian that along the way he may remember it and not grow envious of the wicked anything else pastor Aaron that's right that's what Asaph came to learn and that's what pastor Aaron's saying that we're better off than the world right now we have the indwelling spirit we have the forgiveness of sins we have all the promises and on and on we could go with our riches in Christ right now and yet the message of the Bible is that our best things are yet to come as good as it is to know the work of the spirit in our hearts now it's going to be a far lot better when we no longer have sin and that's what's being held out to us

Mickey did you have something or someone here Jason the two boys reminded me of Esau and Jacob he said no one is especially immoral or godless like Esau who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son afterward as we know when he wanted to inherit his blessing he was rejected he could think about no change in mind though he sought the blessing in tears in hebrews written to older christians and i think that is something that even as older christians we began to lose patience when we need to be warned that we can't be godless like he saw and just give up what we could have very good don't trade the eternal for the temporal i'm thinking about how each of the roots each of the lessons he took to learn correct something basic about the worldly view of mankind and what we were able to do what we expect it corrects the worldly view of the creatures you know the wealthy creatures who were in their thoughts and that why following them the caress the way you think about the material of things just the natural way to do things well that is precious thought isn't it that as you journey you're going to be immersed in this whole other world view and don't just take it on you're going to breathe it like air but you've got to exhale it you've got to have a different view and you're right because it's so prevalent we need these lessons lest we simply mimic culture around us anything else from any of these three rooms in interpreter's house rather than barge into the fourth

I think we'll save the last four for next time but we're going into one of these rooms this morning let's pray for the Holy Spirit what does this mean would you teach me wonderful things in your word today that will help me on the journey and be of profit to me and so may the Lord prepare us to take in his word we're dismissed