

Lesson Eleven
THE INTERPRETER'S HOUSE #3 - The Parlor of Dust

We continue again in our study of *Pilgrim's Progress* which is revealing the nature of how a person is saved and taken into his eternal destiny of heaven which is called in the book, "The Celestial City." We have progressed to the point in the book where Pilgrim has now been truly converted. Up until this time, we have gone through several very trying experiences, testing his sincerity in desiring a right relationship with God, but finally he has entered into the gate of true conversion. Then we came further down the road, in the narrow way of obedience, and come to what Bunyan called the House of the Interpreter. The Interpreter's House stands for the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit of God in teaching the new convert the things of God. In the house Christian is being led from room to room, being taught by the Spirit of God the things which will be necessary to enable him to fight the battles that lie ahead, and to enter into the Celestial City.

Last week in our message, we went into the first room in this house where he was shown a picture on the wall. This picture set forth the nature of a true gospel minister who was to be the individual Christian was to look to for counsel, guidance and advice in the difficult hours that would lie ahead on his journey. He was described as an individual who had a very serious look on his face, showing that he was a sober person who took his calling seriously. He had the best of books in his hand, meaning that he believed the Bible to be the Word of God, and he preached from the Bible setting it forth in its clarity and simplicity. He had the world cast behind him, which indicated that he was not in the ministry for monetary and worldly gain, and his eyes were lifted up toward heaven, showing that he was interested in the spiritual souls of men, not just in the material prosperity of his calling to the ministry. He had a crown of gold over his head, which we found represented that he looked for his reward not in this life, but in the next. Therefore, this was the individual that Christian was told to look for, because there would be other false prophets that would be out claiming to represent Christ, and so this would be the way Christian could tell whether a minister was truly a prophet of God or whether he was merely a false prophet who was out to deceive.

Now, this evening we are going to go into the second room and see Bunyan's portrayal of what the Holy Spirit would have the new convert to learn regarding the law and the gospel. In entering into this second room, we read these words:

Then he took him by the hand, and led him into a very large parlour, that was full of dust, because never swept; the which 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 which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure.

Then said Christian, "What means this?"

The Interpreter answered, "This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel: 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 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, put strength into, and increase it in the soul, even as it doth discover and forbid it; for it doth 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 fit for the King of glory to inhabit."

This is the account of the second room, and to briefly give a summary, here is what has transpired in viewing the activities in this room. When Christian is introduced into the room, he sees that the room is covered with dust. Then he sees an individual begin to sweep in the room, and of course, the room becomes filled with dust as it begins to fly about. Then another individual comes along with water and sprinkles throughout the room which settles the dust, and the room is made pure and clean. The explanation that was given Christian was this: The parlour represented the heart of a person that had never been cleansed or sanctified by the pure grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The individual who came and began to sweep, represented the law of God, or when this individual found out what God expected of him in His law. As the law began to sweep, it aroused the conscience

of the sinner so that he saw that his heart was impure and unclean before God. Therefore, the law was unable to give him a peaceful conscience. So another individual had to come on the scene, and that was the gospel. When the gospel was applied, there was peace and joy that was given and a cleansing of that individual's room or his heart.

Now let us examine this in the light of the Bible to see what this room teaches us. Just as the first room taught the nature of a true gospel minister, the second teaching by the Holy Spirit would instruct the new convert in understanding the relationship between the law and the gospel. If this is not understood, then much confusion will result thereby. If the new convert does not understand the difference between the law and the gospel, then he is going to have many problems later on in his Christian life. So this is what this room represents - the law and the gospel. It is going to show us some differences between the law and the gospel, and also show us some harmony that exists between the law and the gospel.

Lets begin reading as the individual in the room begins to sweep, and the dust begins to come up.

Then said Christian, "What means this?"

The Interpreter says, "This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel: 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.

What has just transpired? Here is an individual that is defiled by his sin, but his sin is lying dormant. This means that he does not see what is really residing within his bosom or affections. When the law is revealed or comes upon the scene, and the man finds out what his duty is, then his conscience become awakened that he has sinned and come short of what God requires out of him. So the first thing we want to look at is the relationship of the law to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are two errors that Bunyan is exposing in the teaching of the law and the gospel. It is imperative that we understand what those erroneous teachings are. One of them is what is doctrinally termed as "legalism." The legalist is the person who believes

that a person is made righteous in the eyes of God by keeping the Ten Commandments of God, and thereby merits his own standing with God. He is strictly a moralist, and thereby he believes that salvation comes by the works of the law. This is an erroneous teaching, which both Bunyan and the Bible will bear out together, that the law or the works of the law can never justify or make a person right before God.

Then there is another error which has been prevalent throughout the gospel age, and that is the error which is doctrinally known as "antinomianism." Now the prefix "anti"

The Antinomian says that it doesn't make any difference how you live at all, because we no longer have any relationship to the law of God.

means against, and "nomia" means law. Antinomianism means that the law of God has absolutely no relationship at all to a Christian today. That is, since the gospel has come, it has absolutely done away with all law, and man's duty to keep it.

Therefore, this error claims that man no longer has any responsibility before God so long as he gives lip-service to the gospel. He says that it doesn't make any difference how you live at all, because we no longer have any relationship to the law of God. Both of these are harmful errors, and probably the same amount of souls have been damned by one error as by the other. It is important that we see that the law and the gospel are not enemies. That is, they have been joined together in the wisdom of God, and what God has joined together, then let not man put asunder.

Now we want to examine these two errors in light of what the Scriptures teach. Let's begin by doing a little review in our Bibles to find out from the Apostle Paul just what relationship the law has to the gospel. Jesus Christ, Himself, said **"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."** (Matthew 5:17). I think it is important that we first of all define what law we are talking about. When we speak of law, we are talking about the commandments of God, where man's duty is revealed as to how he is to conduct himself before his God and before his fellow man. This is primarily seen in what is known as the Ten Commandments. So let's begin in Romans chapter 3 and verse 19 and see why God gave the law. Why did God give a duty for man to perform? Was the law given so that by performing it man could be made righteous with God? This is the question, and we want to see how the Bible answers it.

Romans 3:19 - ***"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."***

Now look carefully what this verse is setting forth. One of the purposes of the law is so that man's boastful mouth may be stopped and he may become guilty before God. You see, that man by nature sees himself as

Paul said the law was not given for the righteous man, but it was given to show man that he was a lawbreaker and thereby in need of the mercy of God.

self-righteous. The Pharisees were like this. They felt that their righteousness was sufficient to make them have a right standing with God. But Paul said the law was not given for the righteous man, but it was given to show man that he was a lawbreaker and thereby in need of the mercy of God. Now look at verse 20:

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." In other words, the law awakens the sinner's conscience and enlightens him that he is a sinner. Until this takes place, his conscience is like the dust in the parlour. It is lying settled there in his being. But when the law of God, which is his duty before God and man, is set forth upon him, then the Holy Spirit begins to trouble his conscience, dust begins to arise, and he becomes guilty or awakened as to his sinful and lost estate.

Now, we go to verses 28-30 of Romans 3 - ***"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."*** Paul is showing that righteousness does not come through human merit in the keeping of the commandments, but comes through an acknowledgment of one's sin and one's faith in Jesus Christ and His work in the gospel. Then Paul asked the question, "If we believe that is the way man is saved, then have we destroyed the law?" In other words, has the law been done away with, and thereby we have absolutely no relation to it whatsoever? The Antinomian would say, "Yes, that is right. We no longer have any duty at all before the law of God." Notice, what Paul says in his answer to this question. Look at Romans 3:31 ***"Do we then make void the law through faith?"*** Because we believe that salvation is by

grace through faith, do we then make void the law? Then Paul says, **"God forbid: yea, we establish the law."** Therefore, this bears out the teaching of Christ when He said that He did not come to destroy man's duty, but He came to fulfill it on man's behalf, thereby establishing justice and righteousness. So the gospel is not an enemy to law, and the law is not an enemy to the gospel. But the problem arises when some would make the law as the means of salvation, and others would completely do away with the law whereby it has no bearing upon anyone's life.

Turn over to Romans chapter 4 starting in verse 13 - **"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void,"** that is, if salvation is by the keeping of the law, then there is no need for faith. So the person, who would make salvation through commandment keeping, nullifies the need for grace through faith. Paul goes on to say - **"and the promise is made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression."** That is, if there be no law, then there is no means of enforcement when a person breaks the law. For example, if there is a sign on Highway 13 that says 50 miles per hour, that establishes a speed by the law, and I am subject to that. If I break that law, I will suffer the penalty. But if I am driving down Highway 13 and there are no signs, then there are no speed laws. Thereby there is no breaking of the law, and I do not become a transgressor. So God has given the law, which is our duty, but it was not given in order that we might be made righteous, but in order that it might awaken our conscience so that we might see our sin and point us to the real Savior who is Jesus Christ.

Now lets go to the book of Galatians, chapter 3, beginning in verse 10: **"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."** In other words, if a person is going to obtain his righteousness before God by commandment keeping, he must do it perfectly. He cannot keep 9 of the commandments, break 1, and expect God to grade on the curve. If a person hopes to get to heaven by his own righteousness through commandment keeping, then he is going to have to present himself perfect before God in flawlessness having never violated any of the commands of the law. Look at verses 11-12 - **"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of**

God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." Someone asks the question, "if the law does not save us, then what function does the law play in the plan of God? If the law is not given to make a person righteous, then why does God have the law, and how does it function in His plan? Look in verse 21 where Paul says, **"Is the law then against the promises of God?"** Or, is the law an enemy to grace? Is the doctrine of salvation by grace inconsistent with the law of God?" Look at what Paul answered, **"God forbid:"** Here is another one of these statements. **"for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."** If there was a law given which gave man the ability to keep it before God, then salvation would have been by the law. But it was not given, the law cannot make one righteous. Now then, why was it given? Verse 22-23 - **"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came,"** (that is before we were converted and brought to a saving relationship to Christ) **"we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."** Now here are the key verses 24-25 - **"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."** Then if God did not give the law for the purpose of saving a person, why did He give it? He gave it for this reason, in order that it might expose the nature of sin. Man has a duty before God, and when that duty is set in the light of God's law, then that original sin which has been lying undisturbed there in his bosom, begins to fly and drift about in his being (like the dust in the room), his conscience becomes awakened to his lost condition, and he begins to think seriously, "Oh, my, I'm not such a good or righteous person after all." The more that God's law is set forth upon that man, the more he has to cry out, "I am unclean, I am undone!!" However, that law has no ability to change that man's heart. That must come from another source - the gospel. The law stirs up the conscience of man to his need of forgiveness, and then the gospel comes and offers forgiveness by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me illustrate the relationship between law and grace, like this. Let's suppose that I take out a mirror and look at myself in that mirror. What is the purpose of that mirror? Is

it not to reveal the condition of my face? Is it not to expose the needs that are there? Let's suppose I have some dirt or something that does not belong on my face, and by looking in that mirror, I see that my face is polluted. Now what do I need? Do I not need a washcloth or some means of cleansing my face? Through the mirror, I am made aware of my need. How many of you have ever used the mirror to take a bath? Do you take that mirror and rub it all over your face in trying to cleanse yourself? What do you do? You get a washcloth, and it removes what that mirror exposed. This is why we are not saved by the law of God. But let us be extra careful, because at the same time, no person is saved apart from the law. Do you understand what I mean by that? The law does not save anyone, but no one is saved apart from the law because it is the law which reveals the sinful nature of the heart and awakens the conscience whereby the sinner sees his need of cleansing. Then he is taught by the law of God as a schoolmaster and that schoolmaster points him to the gospel whereby he abandons his own righteousness, lays hold on Jesus Christ and says, "I

The law can never make a person righteous, but it can certainly point one to the gospel which can make a person righteous.

trust Your work, what You have done on my behalf." So the cleansing of our salvation and the forgiveness of our sins does not take place in the mirror, it takes place in the water, that is in the washcloth that is given. Likewise, our salvation does not come by the law, but our cleansing comes

through the blood of Jesus Christ. The law of God is that which shows us our need of the blood of Jesus Christ. That is why we must rise up and say to the legalist, "Hold it brother, you do not know what the gospel is if you say that a person can be made righteous by commandment keeping." The law can never make a person righteous, but it can certainly point one to the gospel which can make a person righteous.

Also, we would have to say to the Antinomian brethren that the law has not been annihilated. The law has not been done away with. The law is absolutely needful in the preaching in order that it might awaken the conscience of the sinner to his duty, and whereby he might have to cry out "Oh God have mercy upon me, a sinner." When the sinner cries that out, then the gospel is there ready to be offered to that individual.

Some time ago, somebody raised the following question about what I felt was one of

the greatest needs in the evangelical churches today in order to see a return to many conversions as God saves people. The question is, how does revival come about? Why aren't we seeing people awakened and crying out for their need of

The reason why people are not seeking the Lord in the gospel is because they see no need to seek Him in the gospel, and the gospel is nothing but foolishness to them.

mercy today? Have you ever wondered that? Some of you have been here in this church for years, and I am sure that if you would compare the number of people who were converted years ago, with the number of people being converted today, then you have to admit that a change has taken place. Why aren't people seeking the Lord today? If you will examine most of the modern preaching, it completely avoids or never mentions the law of God. People's consciences are not pricked and not aroused as to their need of the gospel. The reason why people are not seeking the Lord in the gospel is because they see no need to seek Him in the gospel, and the gospel is nothing but foolishness to them. If you read books on how evangelism is to be carried out today, they may start out with some of the "four spiritual laws" or the "Roman Road" of salvation, and they begin like this - "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Here is what He would have you to do." At the same time, there is no mention of God's law or man's duty in relation to God, and man is never confronted with the fact that he has violated and broken the law of God. He is offered mercy, but there is no basis for that mercy. That is, there is no reason or no need for that mercy. It is like the individual who goes into the room and finds the dust (sin) all settled, peaceful and quiet. Then the maiden with the gospel begins sprinkling the room, and nothing happens. Instead, before the gospel is to be set forth in the offer of mercy, an individual must come into that room sweeping up the dust and pointing out to that individual that he has broken the law of his God. When the conscience is awakened, and he is exposed to the gospel, he flees to that for his very salvation. I believe it was John Wesley, one of the great leaders of the Methodist Church, who made this statement in the revivals under George Whitfield and his brother Charles Wesley. He said that the way the law and the gospel should be preached is like this:

When you go into a community where the gospel has not been preached, and there is no seeking after the things of the Lord, the preacher ought to go into that community and preach 100% law and no gospel. Then if somebody begins to get a little edgy as to their duty, or what the law is setting forth,

then he should preach 90% law and 10% gospel. Then if that individual begins to have a few tears roll down his cheeks during the preaching, he ought to preach 50% law and 50% gospel. Then if that individual begins to cry out, "Oh, God have mercy upon me a sinner," then there should be no law and 100% gospel offered to that individual. I think that the words of Wesley should very well be heeded as a way the gospel should be preached in this generation.

If you go to a rebellious law breaker, a rebel, and offer him mercy when he has never been humbled by the judgment courts, then he will spurn that and have nothing to do with it. But my friend, when

The law awakens us to our need of salvation, but it never can give salvation.

that individual is brought face to face with the electric chair or gas chamber, and he sees that the law holds an absolute authority over him, a humbling may result. When individuals are brought face to face with the fact that they have sinned and come short of God's glory, then as the Holy Spirit takes that truth and awakens his conscience wherein he begins to cry out "what must I do to be saved," then it is time for the gospel answer to be given, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."** (Acts 16:31). Might God use this and cause us as ministers and laymen to see that there is a harmony between the law and the gospel. The law awakens us to our need of salvation, but it never can give salvation. However, it does play a part in making us aware of that need whereby we are brought to the gift of the Spirit of God to repentance. The Apostles went forth preaching repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. Those two go hand in hand, and that is something you never hear in the modern presentation of the gospel. You don't hear preachers calling upon people to repent. Do you know why that is? It is because there is no need to repent if man doesn't have any duty to the law of God. Man must repent because he has broken God's law, and then he has faith in the gospel. The law cannot save, but it is that which exposes our need of salvation, and then points us to the gospel, which when it is applied, it settles the dust, and the corruption of the heart and our conscience is cleared, and we are given a settled peace and joy in the things of Jesus Christ.

May God help us to see the relationship that is here between the law and the gospel. Listen

as I read to you again these words on the latter part of the statement by Bunyan:

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 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, put strength into, and increase it in the soul, even as it doth discover and forbid it; for it doth 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 fit for the King of glory to inhabit.

I think this is one of the most beautiful pictures you will find anywhere of the harmony between the law and the gospel. I have read books filled with 300 to 400 pages on the law and the gospel, and after I have finished reading them, I have to frankly acknowledge I didn't know what the writer meant by the law or what he meant by the gospel. Here in just one brief page, in his genius of his penmanship, Bunyan shows forth the relationship between the law of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Shall we see then that as that conscience is awakened, and as it is made to see its need of mercy, that before the Holy Spirit of God resides within that individual's bosom, then that individual is brought to see "I need a Savior." Then the gospel is offered to him on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. When that faith is applied to that individual's life, then it settles the corruption of sin. That individual is made to see that his only hope is in the gospel of Christ. *"Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling,"* and thereby he goes on in his life with this hope and assurance that if he is to enter into the Celestial City, it must be through the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His precious blood alone.

When I come to enter that City, and when they ask, "What right do you have to enter in," I will not say how good I have been, but rather tell them what Jesus Christ has done on my behalf. This is all my hope; this is all my righteousness, and there is no other hope I have other than the mercy which is in God's Son. When that is set forth, the ones who enter into the portals of glory may hear these words, ***"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many***

things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matthew 25:21).

What is your hope tonight? What is your hope to stand before God. Will you say something like this? "I have kept maybe eight of the commandments. I know I haven't been very good on that one about bearing false witness about my neighbor. I have listened to some lies about him or her, and I have told a few, but I haven't committed adultery." But now wait just a minute, Jesus said that adultery was more than just the physical act. He said ***"whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."*** You say, Pastor Gables, I have never killed anybody. Jesus said ***"whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."*** So when you begin to see the spiritual searching of the law of God as it exposes the internal motive of the heart, it is more than just external. It reveals the internal motive. If you had the opportunity and could get by with it, would you kill your brother? If you had the opportunity and could get by with it, would you commit adultery with your neighbor's wife? If you knew you would not get caught, would you do it? You see, it is the motive that is behind the action. It is what goes on in the heart, and when that heart begins to be exposed by the all-searching law of God, you will know that He knows every thought and desire of that heart. But if you are like the Christian who has been made to see that he cannot be made righteous by the law, and has fled to the safety that is in the gospel of Jesus Christ, then when God asks "what right do you have to enter into My heaven" may you and I be enabled to reply, "I come not in my own righteousness, O Father, for I am a sinner who is guilty and condemned before Your holy law, and I acknowledge that. But I come, O Holy Father, on the basis that Your Son died for sinners, and if there be any hope for me, I claim that mercy which is in Him, and thereby is my hope. May God give you that hope tonight. If you are here as a church member, and if your hope has been in anything other than this, my friend, you are building upon sinking sand. May God give you a solid foundation to build upon. May that law awaken your conscience to show you that your righteousness is not what you thought it was, but it is lacking and it must be covered by the blood of God's own dear Son.

Shall we bow our heads in prayer.

Our Father and our God, as we approach Thy throne, we are so thankful for Your

wonderful marvelous plan of redemption in Christ Jesus. And Father we are grateful for the working of the Holy Spirit that came and impressed upon us our duty to Your Holy Law. We remember also when that conscience was so stirred, and we saw that we had broken that law, and sinned, and come short of Your glory and your perfection. And Father, we are so grateful that you did not leave us there, but that the Holy Spirit continued to draw us on whereby we saw the beauty that was offered in the side of Jesus Christ, from out of that side flowed the blood which cleanses us from all sin. We stand before you tonight asking that we might be presented before you spotless and pure before the demands of your law because of the blood shed on our behalf. We recognize, O Holy Father, that this eliminates any boasting on our behalf. That we cannot say that we deserved the blood of Your Son or that we earned or merited it, but through Your unmerited favor, we found grace in Your sight. We thank You for this. We give You all the glory for it, and we pray that You might enable us to minister this good news unto others, and we would ask that the work of the Holy Spirit might again be poured out in this generation , that we might be enabled to be ministers in setting forth the relationship of your holy law to the precious gospel of Your Son. Enable us to meet these demands, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake, Amen.