

10 - The Interpreter

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?

Chr. Sir, here is a traveller, who was bidden by an acquaintance of the good man of the house to call here for my profit: I would therefore speak with the master of the house. So he called for the master of the house; who, after a little time, came to CHRISTIAN, and asked him what he would have?

Chr. "Sir," said CHRISTIAN, "I am a man that has come from the city of Destruction, and am going to the 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 helpful to me in my journey."

Interpreter. Then said the INTERPRETER, "Come in; I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee." So he commanded his man to light the candle, and bade CHRISTIAN follow him: so he led him into a private room, and bade his man open a door; the which when he had done, CHRISTIAN saw the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it: it had eyes lifted 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; he stood as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "What means this?"

Inter. The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand: he can beget children (#1Co 4:15); travail in birth with children (#Ga 4:19); and nurse them himself when they are born (#1Co 3:2). And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips; it is to show thee that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest 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 is to show thee, that, slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, 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 hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way: wherefore, take good heed to what I have showed thee; and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee aright, but their way goes down to death.

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 the water, and sprinkle the room;" the which, when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "What means this?"

Inter. 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 (#Ro 5:20 7:9 1Co 15:56).

"Again, as thou sawest the damsel sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure (ease)—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 (#Joh 15:3 Ac 15:9 Ro 16:25,26 Eph 5:26).

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 eldest was PASSION, and the name of the other PATIENCE. PASSION seemed to be much discontented; but PATIENCE was very quiet. Then CHRISTIAN asked, "What is the reason of the discontent of PASSION?" The INTERPRETER answered, "The governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now. But PATIENCE is willing to wait."

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 withal laughed PATIENCE to scorn. But I beheld but awhile, and he had lavished all away, and had nothing left him but rags.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN to the INTERPRETER, "Expound this matter more fully to me."

Inter. So he said, "These two lads are figures: PASSION, of the men of this world; and 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 stay till next year, that is, until the next world, for their portion of good. That proverb, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' is of more authority with them than are all the divine testimonies of the good of the world to come. But as thou sawest that he had quickly lavished all away, and had presently left him nothing but rags—so will it be with all such men at the end of this world."

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "Now I see that PATIENCE has the best wisdom, and that upon many accounts: 1. because he stays for the best things; 2. and also because he will have the glory of his, when the other hath nothing but rags."

Inter. Nay, you may add another, to wit, 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 his time to come: but last gives place to nothing, for there is not another to succeed. He, therefore, that hath his portion first must have a time to spend it: but he that has his portion last must have it lastingly. Therefore it is said of Dives, "In thy lifetime thou received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (#Lu 16:25).

Chr. Then I perceive 'tis not best to covet things that are now, but wait for things to come.

Inter. You say truth: "For the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal" (#2Co 4:18). But, though this be so, yet since things present and our fleshly appetite are such near neighbours one to another; and again, because things to come and carnal sense are such strangers one to another: therefore it is that the first of these so suddenly fall into amity, and that distance is so continually between the second.

Then I saw in my dream that the INTERPRETER took CHRISTIAN by the hand, and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it always casting much water upon it to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "What means this?"

Inter. The INTERPRETER answered, "This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it to extinguish and put it out, is the devil: but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shall also see the reason of that." So he had him about to the backside of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast, but secretly, into the fire.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "What means this?"

Inter. The INTERPRETER answered, "This is Christ, who continually with the oil of his grace maintains the work already begun in the heart: by the means of which, notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of his people prove gracious still (#2Co 12:9). And in that thou sawest that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire; this is to teach thee, that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul."

I saw also that the INTERPRETER took him again by the hand, and led him into a pleasant place, where was builded a stately palace, beautiful to behold; at the sight of which CHRISTIAN was greatly delighted: he saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "May we go in thither?"

Then the INTERPRETER took him and led him up toward the door of the palace; and behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table side, with a book and his ink horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein: he saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armour, to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was CHRISTIAN somewhat amazed: at last, when every man started back, for fear of the armed men, CHRISTIAN saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, "Set down my name, sir"; the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put a helmet upon his head, and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So, after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace (#Ac 14:22); at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying,

"Come in! Come in!
Eternal glory thou shalt win."

So he went in, and was clothed with such garments as they. Then CHRISTIAN smiled and said, "I think, verily, I know the meaning of this."

"Now," said CHRISTIAN, "let me go hence."

"Nay, stay," said the INTERPRETER, "till I have showed thee a little more; and after that thou shall go on thy way." So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where there sat a man in an iron cage.

Now, the man, to look on, seemed very sad. He sat with his eyes looking down to the ground; his hands folded together; and he sighed as if he would break his heart. Then said CHRISTIAN, "What means this?" At which the INTERPRETER bid him talk with the man.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN to the man, "What art thou?"

Backslider. The man answered, "I am what I was not once."

Chr. What wast thou once?

Back. The man said, "I was once a fair and flourishing professor, both in mine own eyes and also in the eyes of others: I once was, as I thought, fair for the Celestial City, and had then even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither." (#Lu 8:13).

Chr. Well, but what art thou now?

Back. I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it, as in this iron cage. I cannot get out; oh now, I cannot!

Chr. But how camest thou in this condition?

Back. I left off to watch and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the Light of the World, and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone. I tempted the devil, and he is come to me. I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me. I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent.

Then said CHRISTIAN to the INTERPRETER, "But is there no hope for such a man as this?" "Ask him," said the INTERPRETER.

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "Is there no hope, but you must be kept in the iron cage of despair?"

Back. No, none at all!

Chr. Why? The Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.

Back. I have crucified him to myself afresh (#Heb 6:6); I have despised his person (#Lu 19:14); I have despised his righteousness; I have counted his blood an unholy thing; I have done despite to the Spirit of grace (#Heb 10:26-29): therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings—dreadful threatenings—fearful threatenings, of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as an adversary.

Chr. For what did you bring yourself into this condition?

Back. For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight; but now everyone of those things also bite me and gnaw me like a burning worm.

Chr. But canst thou not now repent and turn?

Back. God hath denied me repentance. His Word gives me no encouragement to believe: yea, he himself hath shut me up in this iron cage; nor can all the men in the world let me out. Oh, eternity! eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity?

Inter. Then said the INTERPRETER to CHRISTIAN, "Let this man's misery be remembered by thee, and be an everlasting caution to thee."

Chr. "Well," said CHRISTIAN, "this is fearful! God help me to watch and be sober, and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man's misery. Sir, is it not time for me to go on my way now?"

Inter. Tarry till I shall show thee one thing more, and then thou shalt go on thy way.

So he took CHRISTIAN by the hand again, and led him into a chamber where there was one rising out of bed; and as he put on his raiment, he shook and trembled. Then said CHRISTIAN, "Why doth this man thus tremble?" The INTERPRETER then bade him tell to CHRISTIAN the reason of his so doing. So he began and said, "This night, as I was in my sleep, I dreamed: and behold, the heavens grew exceeding black; also it thundered and lightened in most fearful wise, that it put me into an agony. So I looked up in my dream, and saw the clouds rack at an unusual rate; upon which I heard a great sound of a trumpet, and saw also a Man sit upon a cloud, attended with the thousands of heaven; they were all in flaming fire, also the heavens were on a burning flame. I heard then a voice, saying, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to Judgment!' and with that the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the dead that were therein came forth (#Joh 5:28 1Co 15:12-19 1Th 1:8) (#Jude 15 Re 20:11-14): some of them were exceeding glad, and looked upward; and some sought to hide themselves under the mountains: then I saw the Man that sat upon the cloud open the book and bid the world draw near (#Ps 50:1-3 Isa 26:21 Mic 7:16,17). Yet there was by reason of a fierce flame that issued out and came before him, a convenient distance betwixt him and them, as betwixt the judge and the prisoners at the bar (#Da 7:9,10 Mal 3:2,3). I heard it also proclaimed to them that attended the Man that sat on the cloud, 'Gather together the tares, the chaff and stubble, and cast them into the burning lake (#Mt 3:12 13:30 Mal 4:1): and with that the bottomless pit opened just whereabouts I stood; out of the mouth of which there came, in an abundant manner, smoke, and coals of fire, with hideous noises. It was also said to the same persons, 'Gather my wheat into the garner' (#Lu 3:17). And with that I saw many caught up and carried away into the clouds (#1Th 4:16,17); but I was left behind. I also sought to hide myself, but I could not, for the Man that sat upon the cloud still kept his eye upon me: my sins also came into my mind, and my conscience did accuse me on every side (#Ro 2:14,15). Upon this I waked from my

sleep."

Chr. But what was it that made you so afraid of this sight?

Unready. Why, I thought that the Day of Judgment was come, and that I was not ready for it: but this frightened me most, that the angels gathered up several, and left me behind; also the pit of hell opened her mouth just where I stood. My conscience, too, afflicted me; and, as I thought, the Judge had always his eye upon me, showing indignation in his countenance.

Then said the INTERPRETER to CHRISTIAN, "Hast thou considered all these things?"

Chr. Yes: and they put me in hope and fear.

Inter. Well, keep all things so in thy mind that they may be as a goad in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go. Then CHRISTIAN began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his journey. Then said the INTERPRETER, "The Comforter be always with thee, good CHRISTIAN, to guide thee in the way that leads to the city."

So CHRISTIAN went on his way, saying:

"Here I have seen things rare and profitable: Things pleasant; dreadful things—to make me stable
In what I have begun to take in hand: Then let me think on them, and understand Wherefore they
showed me were; and let me be Thankful, O good INTERPRETER, to thee."

1Co 4:15, Ga 4:19, 1Co 3:2, Ro 5:20 7:9, 1Co 15:56, Joh 15:3 Ac 15:9 Ro 16:25,26 Eph 5:26, Lu 16:25, 2Co 4:18, 2Co 12:9, Ac 14:22, Lu 8:13, Heb 6:6, Lu 19:14, Heb 10:26-29, Joh 5:28 1Co 15:12-19 1Th 1:8, Jude 15 Re 20:11-14, Ps 50:1-3 Isa 26:21 Mic 7:16,17, Da 7:9,10 Mal 3:2,3, Mt 3:12 13:30 Mal 4:1, Lu 3:17, 1Th 4:16,17, Ro 2:14,15

“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” (1Co 4:15 NKJV)

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,” (Ga 4:19 NKJV)

“I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able;” (1Co 3:2 NKJV)

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,” (Ro 5:20 NKJV)

“I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” (Ro 7:9 NKJV)

“The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.” (1Co 15:56 NKJV)

““You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” (Joh 15:3 NKJV)

““and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” (Ac 15:9 NKJV)

“²⁵ ¶ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—” (Ro 16:25-26 NKJV)

“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,” (Eph 5:26 NKJV)

““But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.’” (Lu 16:25 NKJV)

“while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.” (2Co 4:18 NKJV)

“And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2Co 12:9 NKJV)

“strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”” (Ac 14:22 NKJV)

““But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.” (Lu 8:13 NKJV)

“if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.” (Heb 6:6 NKJV)

““But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this *man* to reign over us.’” (Lu 19:14 NKJV)

“²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:26-29 NKJV)

““Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice” (Joh 5:28 NKJV)

“¹² ¶ Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” (1Co 15:12-19 NKJV)

“For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” (1Th 1:8 NKJV)

““to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they

have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”” (Jude 1:15 NKJV)

“¹¹ ¶ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” (Re 20:11-14 NKJV)

“¹ ¶ A Psalm of Asaph. The Mighty One, God the LORD, Has spoken and called the earth From the rising of the sun to its going down. ² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. ³ Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.” (Ps 50:1-3 NKJV)

“For behold, the LORD comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; The earth will also disclose her blood, And will no more cover her slain.” (Isa 26:21 NKJV)

“¹⁶ The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; They shall put *their* hand over *their* mouth; Their ears shall be deaf. ¹⁷ They shall lick the dust like a serpent; They shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, And shall fear because of You.” (Mic 7:16-17 NKJV)

“⁹ ¶ “I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.” (Da 7:9-10 NKJV)

“² “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He *is* like a refiner’s fire And like launderer’s soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.” (Mal 3:2-3 NKJV)

““His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”” (Mt 3:12 NKJV)

““Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.””” (Mt 13:30 NKJV)

““For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch.” (Mal 4:1 NKJV)

““His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”” (Lu 3:17 NKJV)

“¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1Th 4:16-17 NKJV)

“¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*” (Ro 2:14-15 NKJV)