Chapter Four

Interpreter’s House

Christian traveled on until he came to Interpreter’s house, where he knocked again and again. Finally, someone came to the door and asked who was there.

Chr. “Sir, I am a traveler who was encouraged by a mutual acquaintance to call on you so I can be helped. I would like to speak to the Master of the House.”

So the man called for the Master of the House, who momentarily came to Christian and asked him what he wanted.

Chr. “Sir, I am a man who has come from the City of Destruction and am going to Mount Zion. I was told by the man who stands at the gate at the beginning of this way, that if I called here, you would show me excellent things that would be helpful on my journey.”

Interpreter. “Come in. I will show you those things that will be profitable to you.” So he commanded the porter to light the candle and encouraged Christian to follow him. They went into a private room and the porter opened another door. When he had done this, Christian saw a picture of a very serious person hanging on the wall. The man’s eyes were looking up to heaven; he had the best book in the world in his hands; the law of truth was written on his lips; the world was behind him; he stood as if he were pleading with men, and a crown of gold hung over his head.

Chr. “What does this mean?”

Interpreter. “This man in the picture is one in a thousand. He can bear children, labor in childbirth, and nurse them himself when they are born. See how he looks with his eyes up to heaven, has the best book in his hands, and the law of truth written on his lips? It is to show you that his work is to know and reveal secret things to sinners. Notice that as he stands pleading with men, the world is behind him and a crown hangs over his head. That is to show you that he disregards and despises the things that are in the here and now because of the love that he has for serving his Master. He is sure to have glory for his reward in the world to come.” Now, said the Interpreter, “I have shown you this picture first, because this man is the only one whom the Lord of the place

1. “Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel” (I Cor. 4:15).
2. “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19).
3. “As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children” (I Thess. 2:7).
where you are going has given the authority to be your guide through all the difficult situations you may experience on the way. Therefore, take to heart what I have just shown you. And be careful to retain what you have seen, so that when you meet those who pretend to lead you in the right way, you may understand that their way leads to death.”

Then Interpreter took him by the hand and led him into a very large parlor that was full of dust, because it had never been swept. After he had looked over the room a little while, Interpreter called for a man to sweep the floor. But when he began to sweep, the dust flew everywhere, and Christian was choking. Then Interpreter spoke to a young lady who was standing nearby, “Bring in some water and sprinkle the room.” When she did that, it was easily swept and cleaned.

Chr. “What does this mean?”

Inter. “This parlor is the heart of a man who was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the Gospel. The dust is his original sin and all the inner corruptions of the heart that have defiled the whole man. The first one who began to sweep is the law. But the one who brought water and sprinkled it on the floor is the gospel. You saw that when the first one began to sweep, the dust flew everywhere, and the room could not be cleaned. You were choking with the dust. This was to show you that the law, instead of cleansing the heart from sin, invigorates the sin, \(^4\) puts strength into it, \(^5\) and makes it grow in the soul, \(^6\) even as it reveals sin and condemns it. But the law can never cleanse the heart, for it has no power to subdue the sin.

“You then saw the young lady sprinkle the room with water, after which it was cleansed with ease. This is to show you that when the gospel comes to the heart with its sweet and precious influence, sin is conquered and subdued. And the soul is made clean by faith, making it fit for the King of Glory to inhabit.”\(^7\)

In addition to these things, I saw in my dream that Interpreter took him by the hand and led him

4. “For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (Rom. 7:5-6).

5. “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (I Cor. 15:56).

6. “The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Rom. 5:20).

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

 “…to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Eph. 5:26).

“He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9).

“Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him” (Rom. 16:25-26).

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13).
into a little room, where two children were sitting in chairs. The name of the older one was Passion, and the other one was called Patience. Passion seemed to be very discontented, but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, “What is the reason Passion is so discontented?” The Interpreter answered, “His guardian wants him to wait for the best things until the beginning of next year; but he wants it all now. Patience, on the other hand, is willing to wait.”

Then I saw that someone came to Passion and brought him a bag of treasure and poured it out at his feet. He picked it up and was filled with joy. He also mocked and laughed at Patience. I watched for a while, and saw him squander it all. He had nothing left but rags.

Chr. “Please tell me more about this.”

Inter. “These two children are figures: Passion, representing the people of this world; and Patience, representing the people of the world which is to come. As you have noticed, Passion wants everything this year. In other words, he wants everything in this world. And people of the world are just like that: they must have every good thing now; they cannot wait until next year, that is, until the next world, for their portion of good things. The proverb - ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush’ - has more authority with them than all of God’s truths about the good things that will be given in the world to come. You saw that he quickly wasted everything and had nothing left but rags. It will be that way for all people like him when the world comes to an end.”

Chr. “Now I see that Patience has the best wisdom, and for two reasons: first, because he waits for the best things; and second, because he will receive his glory when Passion has nothing but rags.”

Inter. “You may even add a third reason. The glory of the next world will never wear out. But the glories of this world suddenly disappear. Therefore, Passion did not have good reason to laugh at Patience just because he had his good things first. Patience will be able to laugh at Passion because he had his best things last. First must yield to last. Last will have his time in the future and nothing will come along to take his place. There is nothing else that can succeed last place. He, therefore, who has his portion first has a brief time in which to spend it; but he who has his portion last will have it forever and ever. Therefore it is said of Dives, ‘In your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things; but now he is comforted and you are in agony.’”

Chr. “Now I understand that it is not best to covet the things that are in the present, but to wait for the things to come.”

Inter. “You are speaking the truth. ‘For the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal.’ But even though this is true, the present and our fleshly desires are

8. “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony’” (Lk. 16:25).

9. “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (II Cor.4:18).
such near neighbors that they become friends; and since the things to come and these fleshly desires are such strangers to one another, there is only continual distance between them.”

Then I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a place where there was a fire burning against a wall. There was one standing by it who was always throwing water on it to put it out. Even so, the fire burned higher and hotter.

**Chr.** “What does this mean?”

**Inter.** “This fire is the work of grace that is done in the heart. The one who throws water on it to extinguish it is the devil. But you will also see the reason the fire continues to burn higher and hotter.” So he took him around to the back of the wall, where he saw a man with a bottle of oil in his hand. He was secretly and continuously throwing this oil into the fire.

**Chr.** “What does this mean?”

**Inter.** “This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of His grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart. So even though the devil does what he can, the souls of God’s children continue to receive his grace. And when you saw the man standing behind the wall to maintain the fire, it was to teach you that it is hard for those who are tempted to understand how this work of grace is maintained in the soul.”

I saw also that the Interpreter took him by the hand again, and led him to a pleasant place, where there was a beautiful, stately palace - beautiful to behold. When Christian saw it, he was delighted. He saw certain people walking on top of it who were clothed in gold.

**Chr.** “May we go in?”

Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace. At the door stood a large crowd of people who wanted to go in, but they wouldn’t even try. A little distance from the door, a man sat at a table with a book and pen, taking the name of anyone who wanted to enter. In the doorway, he saw many men with armor on. They were guarding the doorway and were determined to inflict pain and harm on any who tried to enter. Now Christian was somewhat puzzled by this. After a while, when all the people started leaving the door for fear of the guards, Christian saw a man with a stern face come up to the man at the table, saying, “Write my name down, sir.” When he had done this, the man drew his sword, put a helmet on his head, and hurried to the door and the armed guards. The guards came at him with a deadly force. But the man was not discouraged at all, and continued his fierce cutting and hacking. After he had received and given many wounds to the guards who tried to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace. When he was entering the palace, he heard

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10. “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me” (II Cor. 12:9).

11. “…strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,’ they said” (Acts 14:22).
friendly voices from within, even those of Enoch, Moses, and Elijah who were walking on top of the palace. They were saying,

*Come in! Come in!*  
*Eternal glory you will win.*

So he went in and was clothed in the same kind of garments as they had. Then Christian smiled and said, “I think I know the meaning of this. Now let me go from here.” “No, stay,” said the Interpreter, “until I have showed you a little more. Then you may go on your way.” So he took him by the hand again and led him into a very dark room where a man sat in an iron cage.

Now the man seemed very sad. He sat with his eyes looking down to the ground and with his hands folded together. He sighed as if his heart were breaking. Christian said, “What does this mean?” Then Interpreter encouraged him to talk with the man.

**Chr.** “Who are you?”

**Backslider.** “I am not what I used to be.”

**Chr.** “What did you used to be?”

**Back.** “I was once a respectable person who professed Christ and was flourishing. I saw myself this way and so did other people. I was once, so I thought, headed for the Celestial City and had, at that time, joy at the thought of getting there.”

**Chr.** “I understand; but who are you now?”

**Back.** “I am now a man locked in despair, just like I am locked up in this cage. I cannot get out! I cannot get out!”

**Chr.** “How did you get in this condition?”

**Back.** “I failed to watch and be sober. I gave way to my own lusts. I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. I tempted the devil and he has come to me. I have provoked God to anger and He has left me. I have hardened my heart to the point where I cannot repent.”

Then Christian said to Interpreter, “Is there no hope for a man like this?” “Ask him,” said the Interpreter.

**Chr.** “Is there no hope? Do you have to be kept in this iron cage of despair?”

**Back.** “There is no hope at all!”

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12. “Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away” (Lk. 8:13).
Chr. “Why not? The Son of the Blessed is very merciful.”

Back. “I have crucified the Son all over again. I have despised him. I have despised His righteousness; I have counted His blood as an unholy thing; I have insulted the Spirit of grace. Therefore, I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there is nothing left for me but threats - dreadful threats - fearful threats, of certain judgment and fiery wrath, which will devour me as an adversary.”

Chr. “What did you do to get yourself into this condition?”

Back. “I went after the lusts, pleasures, and benefits that this world offered. I enjoyed them so much and promised myself much happiness. Now, however, every one of those things bites me and gnaws me like a burning worm.”

Chr. “But can’t you repent and turn from your sin now?”

Back. “God has denied me repentance. His Word gives me no encouragement to believe. God himself has shut me up in this iron cage. All the men in the world could not let me out. Oh, eternity! Eternity! How will I handle the misery that I must experience in eternity?”

Inter. Then Interpreter said to Christian, “Always remember this man’s misery, and let it be a caution to you forever.”

Chr. “This is frightening! God help me to watch and be sober; and to pray, that I may avoid the things that caused this man’s misery. Sir, isn’t it time for me to go on my way now?”

Inter. “Stay here until I show you one more thing, and then you may go on your way.”

So he took Christian by the hand again, and led him into a room where a person was getting out of bed. As he put on his clothes, he shook and trembled. Then Christian said, “Why does this man tremble?” The Interpreter then encouraged him to tell Christian the reason for his shaking. So he began and said, “Last night, as I was sleeping, I had a dream. The heavens became

13. “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don't want this man to be our king’” (Lk. 19:14).

14. “Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:28-29).

15. I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4.

“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him’” (Jude 14-15).

“He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (II Thess. 1:8).
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extremely black. It also thundered, and lightening was flashing all around. I was terrified. In my
dream, I looked up and saw the clouds being blown by the wind at an unusual speed. I heard a
loud sound from a trumpet and saw a Man sitting on a cloud. Thousands from heaven were with
him. They appeared in flaming fire. Even the heavens appeared to be on fire. Then I heard a
voice saying, ‘Arise, you dead, and come to Judgment!’ With that the rocks split in two, the
graves opened, and the dead came forth. Some of them were extremely joyful and looked
upward. Others were seeking to hide under the mountains. Then I saw the Man who sat on the
cloud open the book and call the world to draw near. Yet there was a significant distance
between him and those who gathered around because of a fierce flame that came forth from him
(as between a judge and the prisoners at the bar). The Man sitting on the cloud also proclaimed
to those who attended him, ‘Gather together the tares, the chaff, and stubble, and cast them into
the burning lake.’16 With that, the bottomless pit opened just about where I stood. Out of the

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -
those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (Jn. 5:28-29).

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was
no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another
book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in
the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and
each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The
lake of fire is the second death” (Rev. 20:11-14).

“See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose
the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer” (Is. 26:21).

“Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their power. They will lay their hands on their mouths and their
ears will become deaf. They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground. They will come
trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the LORD our God and will be afraid of you” (Mi. 7:16-17).

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my
transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is
always before me” (Ps. 51:1-3).

“As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of
fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten
thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (Dan. 7:9-10).

“But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a
launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold
and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness” (Mal. 3:2-3).

16. “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and
burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Mt. 3:12).

“Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them
in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn” (Mt. 13:30).

“‘Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that
day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘Not a root or a branch will be left to them’”
(Mal. 4:1).
mouth of the pit there came an abundance of smoke, coals of fire, along with hideous noises. The Man also said to the same attendants, ‘Gather my wheat into the barn.’ And with that, I saw many taken up and carried away into the clouds. But I was left behind. I also tried to hide myself, but I could not, because the Man who sat on the cloud still kept His eye on me. My sins also came into my mind and my conscience accused me on every side. After this, I awoke from my sleep.”

**Chr.** “What was it that made you so afraid of this sight?”

**Unready.** “I thought the Day of Judgment had already come, and I was not ready for it. But this frightened me the most: that the angels gathered up several others and left me behind. Also, the pit of hell opened her mouth right where I stood. My conscience, too, caused me a lot of pain. And the Judge always kept His eye on me, showing indignation in his countenance.”

Then the Interpreter said to Christian, “Have you given consideration to all of these things?”

**Chr.** “Yes. And they give me both hope and fear.”

**Inter.** “Well, keep all these things in your mind so that they may act as a goad in your side, to prick you on in the way you should go.” Then Christian began to prepare for his journey. Then the Interpreter said, “May the Comforter always be with you, good Christian, to guide you in the way that leads to the City.” So Christian went on his way, saying,

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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 was; and let me be
Thankful, O good Interpreter, to thee.
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17. “His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Lk. 3:17).

18. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (I Thess. 4:16-17).

19. “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them” (Rom. 2:14-15).
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For further information, please contact:

The Jackson Institute
P.O. Box 500071
Atlanta, Georgia 31150-0071
Tel: 770-518-7994
jacksoninstitute@mindspring.com
www.tji.org