

On To The Interpreters House

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could just read a couple of verses from Philippians chapter 3.

Philippians chapter 3, I just want to read the first two verses where Paul writes, Finally my brother rejoice in the Lord, to write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil doers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh for we are the circumcision who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

This evening as you know we're continuing our study in part two of the pilgrims progress. Part one was the pilgrims progress of Christian, but part two is the pilgrims progress of Christians wife, Christiana and their four children.

You remember the four children they were called Matthew, Joseph, Samuel and James. This is the sequel and the sequel was published six years after the original book and it was published in 1684 and in comparison to part one where Christian is a man and in many ways he's portrayed to us as a hero.

[1 : 24] What we see in part two is that it's from the perspective of a woman who now after Christians death is a widow. She's a widow and a mother of four children.

And as we saw last week, Christiana was a broken woman. She was broken because of her sorrow and she was broken because of her sin.

But it was in her brokenness that she was brought to the end of herself where Christiana was crying out with the publican saying Lord be merciful to me a sinner.

Lord be merciful to me a sinner. And you remember there was then that Christiana was visited by a man named secret and he came with a letter from the merciful one.

He came from the king of the celestial city with this letter and the letter you'll remember it's smelt like perfume and it was written with letters of gold and the letter read it said the king would have you do as Christian your husband for that was the way to come to the celestial city and to dwell in the king's presence with joy forever.

[2 : 33] And with that like evangelist did with Christian the man called secret he directed Christiana to the wicked gate and he said go to the wicked gate over the plane and put this letter in your bosom that you may read it to yourself and to your children until you know it off by heart for it is one of the songs that you must sing while you're in the house of your pilgrimage.

Also you must deliver this letter at the further gate and then we read that Christiana the four boys and this young woman called mercy they all left the city of destruction and they began their pilgrims progress towards the celestial city.

And this evening we're catching up with them as they journey from the city of destruction all the way to the interpreter's house. And I'd like us to consider this section under just two headings this evening.

Mercy at the gate and messages in the house. Mercy at the gate and messages in the house.

So first of all mercy at the gate. Mercy at the gate. You remember this morning we were considering the events of John chapter nine and the healing of the man who was born blind where this man he encountered and he experienced the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ and he was brought to echo the words of John Newton where he could say amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me I once was lost but now I'm found was blind but now I see.

[4 : 17] But you know what we're reminded this evening is that grace and mercy are like twins grace and mercy are like twins because we always find them together and we find them together even today.

Grace and mercy are together and grace and mercy they are gifts because grace is receiving what you do not deserve but mercy is not receiving what you do deserve grace is receiving what you do not deserve but mercy is not receiving what you do deserve grace is all about receiving the benefits and blessings of salvation freely given to you through Christ but mercy mercy is not receiving the wrath and judgment of God in hell which you do deserve that we all deserve because of our sin. So grace and mercy they're like twins they're always found together and you don't receive one without the other and you know that's what we see this evening as mercy comes to receive grace at the wicked gate mercy comes to receive grace at the wicked gate and you remember mercy she was this young woman who had arrived at Christiana's house with Mrs. Timorous but when Mrs. Timorous failed to persuade Christiana or not to go on the pilgrims progress she tried to persuade her not to go but she failed to do it and then it was Christiana who actually persuaded mercy to go with her on the pilgrims progress and so mercy she left Mrs. Timorous behind in the city of destruction and she began the journey all the way to the celestial city and we read that Bunyan writes he says by this time Christiana was got on her way and mercy went along with her so as they went Christiana's children being there also Christiana said to mercy she said cast in thy lot with me I will know what will be the end of our pilgrimage thou shalt not be turned away though thou goest but upon my invitation the king who has sent for me and my children is one who delights in mercy but asks mercy how shall I be sure that I also shall be welcomed and Christiana she responds by saying she says well loving mercy I will tell thee what thou shalt do go with me to the wicked gate and there I will further inquire for thee so they went on together but as the city of destruction was now behind them and going into the distance we're told that mercy began to weep she began to weep and Christiana said to her she said why weep with so my sister and through her tears mercy explains to Christiana she says what a state and condition my poor relations are in that yet remain in our sinful town and that which makes my grief the more heavy is because they have no one to teach them nor to tell them what is to come you know the burden which mercy had for her family she had this great burden for those who remained in the city of destruction but you know it was actually an evidence that grace was working in mercy's heart the fact that she had a burden for her family in the city of destruction was evidence that grace was working in mercy's heart and you know we actually saw that with Christian we saw that when he left the city of destruction he lost his burden of sin and he gained a burden of sorrow he had this Christian had a burden for his wife and for his children whom he left behind and you know maybe for you my friend maybe you like mercy maybe you like mercy in the quiet of your own home and you weep over your family you weep over your friends you weep over your children because when you began the pilgrims progress you know you would have done anything to take your spouse and your children with you but you had to leave them you had to leave them behind in the city of destruction and to this day it still breaks your heart and it burdens your soul that they're still not saved and maybe after all these years of praying for them and pleading that the Lord will wake them up and that they'll be enabled to take up their cross and follow Jesus you still look at them and you see that there's nothing as far as you can see in the outside there's nothing going on but my friend I want to say to you tonight as I've said to you before don't give up don't stop praying don't stop pleading and praying for your spouse or your siblings or your sons and daughters don't stop pleading and praying for their souls because you know Christiana she actually gives mercy and us such encouragement to keep pleading and to keep praying she says to Christiana says to mercy she says tenderness become a pilgrims and thou dost for thy friends as my good Christian did for me when he left me he mourned but I would not heed nor regard him yet his Lord and ours did gather up his tears and put them into his bottle and now both I and thou and these my sweet babes they are reaping the fruit and the benefit of them I hope says Christiana I hope mercy that these tears of thine will not be lost for the Lord hath said and she quotes Sam 126 they that sow in tears shall reap in joy and he that goes forth weeping and bearing precious seed shall doubtless doubtless come again rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him that's a wonderful word of encouragement isn't it for us to keep sowing in tears in order that one day we hope and pray we will reap in joy to keep pleading and to keep praying for those in our family but as they continued on their journey they came to a familiar place the slaw of despond and you will you'll remember there was into the slaw of despond that Christian and pliable both fell and it was the slaw of despond which actually caused pliable you remember to turn back he turned back and gave up on the pilgrim's progress and he went back to the city of destruction but as Christian as he was sinking in the slaw of despond you remember how he cried out for help and with that Christian he

enjoyed and experienced the words of Sam 40 that he took me from a fearful pit and from the myri clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way that was Christians experience in the slaw of despond but we're told that even though the king had commanded the slaw of despond to be fixed it was actually much worse now than it was when Christian had passed through it and yet it seems that when Christiana and mercy and the boys when they encountered the slaw of despond they passed through it without a problem in fact we read that Christiana

[12:02] had to pass through the slaw of despond more than once probably to help the boys get across but you know the reason Christiana could pass through the slaw of despond was because she had assurance of her salvation she had assurance early on in her Christian pilgrimage you'll remember that Christian didn't in order to mercy Christian didn't have assurance of salvation until he came to the cross and he received that message of assurance from from the shining ones but Christiana she had assurance of salvation even in her own house in the city of destruction and she had assurance that when she would arrive at the wicked gate she would receive a loving reception but we read that mercy she wasn't so sure because she said to Christiana had I as good a ground to hope for a loving reception at the wicked gate as you I think no slaw of despond would discourage me and you know it's a reminder to us that everyone's experience in the pilgrims progress is different some people have assurance right at the beginning of the Christian pilgrimage like Christiana some people don't have assurance till later on like Christian and mercy everybody's experience in the pilgrims progress is different but we all have to pass the same way to the celestial city and so when they arrived at the wicked gate you remember that there was written over the wicked gate the words knock and it shall be opened unto you of course that was the promise of Jesus in the sermon on the mount where Jesus said ask and it shall be given to you seek and you shall find knock and it shall be opened to you for everyone who asks receives the one who seeks knocks and the one the one who seeks finds and the one who knocks it shall be opened to you it's the free offer of the gospel where Jesus says that whosoever knocks on the gate the gate will open and Bunyan tells us that Christiana began to knock and just like her poor husband did she knocked and knocked and knocked again she persistently pounded the wicked gate and you know my unconverted friend if you're watching this evening that's what you need to do that's what you need to do because if you're knocking at the wicked gate I want to say to you tonight keep knocking keep asking keep seeking keep knocking keep persistently pounding the door until at last it opens but you know what I actually told her instead of anyone answering the door of the wicked gate a dog started barking at them a dog started barking at them making them afraid and not want to knock anymore because the more they knocked the more the dog was barking at them and when you read through the narrative it's explained to us later on that the dog belonged to Beelzebub who lived in the castle next to the wicked gate you remember that Christian discovered what Beelzebub was like because he fired darts at Christian as he was trying to knock at the wicked gate but also Beelzebub sets his dogs on pilgrims to frighten pilgrims away and to stop them from knocking at the wicked gate and you know when you read these words and when you read the passage that Bunyan is describing describing about the dogs barking as pilgrims are knocking at the wicked gate are you not immediately reminded of Paul's words to the

Philippians that we read earlier in Philippians chapter 3 where Paul said beware of the dogs beware of the dogs now Paul was referring to the false teachers in Philippi they were the dogs because they were teaching that the gospel is a message of Jesus plus they were teaching that it was Jesus plus knowledge the gospel was Jesus plus good works Jesus plus law keeping Jesus plus circumcision but the thing is we can also fall into that same trap of thinking that our salvation is Jesus plus because we can think that our salvation is Jesus plus my baptism Jesus plus my Bible reading Jesus plus my prayers Jesus plus my church attendance or my church watching Jesus plus our church membership Jesus plus our active Christian life Jesus plus our office as an elder or a deacon or a minister Jesus plus Jesus plus but you know Paul says beware of the dogs because our salvation it's not Jesus plus it's Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone there's no one else you must look to and lean upon for salvation except Jesus Christ but the dogs at Philippi and the dog at the wicked gate they seek to make pilgrims feel so inferior and so inadequate that the pilgrims somehow feel that they lack something in their Christianity to the point that they doubt their salvation they lack confidence in the gospel and they question whether or not they are genuinely saved and in Christ and you know that's what we actually see with mercy at the gate the dogs really got to to mercy when she was at the gate because you know when Christiana

when she knocked again she knocked even more loudly than she did before and the gatekeeper he finally opened the door and as soon as he opened the door the dog stopped barking and the gatekeeper he took Christiana and the four boys inside and then he shut the door again and mercy was left outside mercy was outside the gate she was left outside we're told trembling and crying thinking that she had been rejected thinking that she wasn't allowed to come in and mercy she began knocking earnestly at the door but because there was no one answering her and because this dog was barking she thought that she had been left behind she thought that she had been left to the dogs and she fainted with fear she fainted with fear but then we're told that when mercy finally came round from her faint the gatekeeper sent to her or she sent to the gatekeeper if there is any grace and forgiveness of sins to spare I beseech that I thy poor hand maiden may be partaker thereof if there is any grace and forgiveness of sins to spare you know what a plea and you know in this scene that Bunyan is describing he's actually been very very pastoral because mercy she was a young woman and mercy came to knock at the wicked gate but she was a woman who felt so unsure that she would be welcome because mercy was someone who was conscious she was conscious of her feelings of unworthiness and her lack of faith she thought that she could never be a Christian she thought that she would never be welcome she thought that she could never be a Christian like Christiana was but you know that's where everyone goes wrong isn't it they go wrong when they start comparing themselves to other people but you know you can actually see that Bunyan is writing part 2 as an active pastor who was ministering to all kinds of people because Bunyan now that he's out of prison he would have ministered to families and to friends and to children and to wives and to women and to widows and he would have ministered to people just like mercy he would have ministered to people just like mercy people whose faith was fragile and weak people who felt unsure and unworthy to be saved people who thought that they they weren't fit enough or faithful enough or good enough to enter the kingdom of god and Bunyan he's describing and demonstrating to us that salvation is on offer to those who are of weak faith salvation is on offer to those who even doubt their faith because as we've been reminded in this in this in part 2 everyone is different and everyone's experience of the pilgrims progress is different not everyone in the congregation is like faithful the martyr not everyone is like hopeful the persevering saint not everyone is like christian and christiana the hero and heroine of the story no some people are just like mercy some people are just like mercy who need grace to help in time of need some are just like mercy who see themselves as so irrelevant and so insignificant because they're not especially talented or gifted but you know my friend the wonderful truth of the gospel is that there's room for everyone in the kingdom of god there's room for every mercy everyone who's like mercy there's room for you in the kingdom of god because as we we read the lord of the way is happy to receive them we're told that the lord of the way who is of course jesus he's the way the truth and the life he receives them all he received christiana and the boys and mercy he receives them all by faith and he grants them pardon pardon by word and by deed the lord of the way says i grant by pardon i grant pardon by word and deed by word in the promise of forgiveness and by deed in the way i obtained it i grant pardon by word and deed by word in the promise of forgiveness and by deed in the way i obtained it you know the apostle john he encapsulated this word and deed this pardon when he wrote in his first letter he said if we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness all because the blood of jesus christ my son cleanses us from all sin and with that we're told that the lord of the way he fed the pilgrims he washed their feet just like jesus washed the disciples feet and he set them in the way so that they would walk in his steps and bunion writes so i saw in my dream that they walked on in their way and they drew on towards the house of the interpreter and this is what we see secondly messages in the house so there was mercy at the gate and there was messages in the house messages in the house when christiana and mercy and the four boys when they arrived at the interpreter's house they knocked at the door and they were welcomed in immediately now if you remember the interpreter in the interpreter's house he's a description and a depiction of the holy spirit the holy spirit who is our counsellor he's our teacher he teaches us as christians and the interpreter's house is an image and illustration of what happens when the holy spirit is working in the heart and life of a christian he's teaching them you know we saw that when christian was at the interpreter's house he was taken on a tour of the house and he was shown seven rooms in the interpreter's house and each room made christian think about what it means to follow jesus but when christiana and mercy and the boys when they arrive at the interpreter's house it's interesting that the interpreter shows them what he showed

christian he showed them the seven rooms which christian saw including the man in the iron cage he gets a special mention but then they were also shown another seven rooms or another seven places in the interpreter's house and each place it had a meaning and a message to teach these pilgrims the first room that they entered was a room where there was a man there and the man had a muck rake in his hand and he was raking up leaves and twigs but all the while that he's raking the muck below his feet were told that the man is oblivious to the fact that above his head is someone holding a crown of gold and as bunion explains he says this man is a man who is so focused upon the world in the here and now that he forgets the world that is to come he's always looking down and as he looks down all he can see is the muck but if he would only stop and look up he would see a crown of gold and you know it's a wonderful illustration that as christian pilgrims we need to repeatedly remind ourselves of who we are in christ we need to repeatedly remind ourselves of who we are in christ because you know my friend we can so easily and so often get caught up in the muck and lose sight of the mission and forget about the mansion you know my friend we can so easily and so often get caught up in the muck and lose sight of the mission and we can forget that there is a mansion to come but you know my friend we are repeatedly reminded in in paul's letters of who we are in christ we mentioned this last week when we were being encouraged to to read [27 : 18] Ephesians chapters one and two because it's when we read through Ephesians chapters one and two we discover that our identity in christ is a wonderful thing and when we discover that our identity is in christ you know my friend you'll forget about the muck and you'll focus on the mission and you'll fix your eyes on the mansion because you know in Ephesians one and two paul reminds us and we assure us that in christ in christ we have a wonderful identity so much so that if anyone ever asks you who are you if anyone ever says to you who are you you can say to them from Ephesians chapters one and two you can say as a christian i'm blessed i'm chosen i'm holy i'm blameless i'm loved i'm adopted i'm redeemed i'm cleansed i'm forgiven i'm enlightened i'm a beneficiary of god's riches i'm sealed by the holy spirit i'm alive in christ i'm saved by grace i live by faith i'm god's workmanship and i'm a citizen of heaven my friend as a christian that's who you are in christ so stop looking at the muck and start focusing on the mission and keep your eyes fixed upon the mansion stop looking down and start looking up stop looking down and start looking up and you know we need to respond to to this imagery like christiana responded we need to respond by saying deliver me from this muck rake deliver me from this muck rake my friend stop looking down start looking up start looking up so then the second room that the pilgrims entered was this large well furnished room with nothing really startling in it except an ugly spider on the wall that was the second room they entered now with this spider on the wall i don't want to stereotype women but bunion actually does because he implies that when a woman sees a spider they're immediately going to freeze with fear when we lived in edinburgh when i was studying in the free church college we used to have huge garden spiders and i shouldn't say huge they were about the size maybe not the size of your hand but when i would see them i would freeze with fear the size of these spiders but it's only then that the interpreter asks he says about this spider in the room he says is there only one spider in this spacious room is there only one spider in this spacious room and you know what the pilgrims discover is that this large room it is an illustration of the christian character conduct and conversation because for the most part our christian life our christian life it might look upright to others it might look like a large furnished room with nothing startling in it but these bunion we all have spiders we all have spiders we all have those little sins that trouble us and cause us fear and alarm we all have little spiders because we're not perfect and let's not pretend to be perfect we all have the spider venom of sin in our heart that's what bunion is telling us and because we have the spider venom of sin in our heart we need to keep confessing our sin and we need to keep committing our life to the saviour then the pilgrims they enter the third room and when they enter this third room they see a chicken there with her brood and the

interpreter encourages them to observe the chicken and how she goes to call her young because we're told that the chicken has four calls four calls the first we're told is a common call the second call is a special call the third call is like a brooding voice and the fourth call is an outcry now said the interpreter compare this hen to your king and these chickens to his people and you know what bunion is getting across is that the king's common call is the outward call of the gospel it's the regular preaching of the gospel this this evening is the outward call of the gospel then secondly the king's special call is that inward effectual call of salvation by the holy spirit it's a special call then there's the king's brooding call it's that gracious and gentle call to those who are sheltering under

the shadow of his wings and then there's the fourth call the outcry of the king where the king warns his his children where the king sees the enemy and he warns them that they're in danger in danger of their life and you know when you consider these four calls of the king it's no wonder that Jesus said in the gospel he who has ears to hear let him hear we're to listen to the call of the king and you know my friend a good question to ask ourselves this evening is what call is the king issuing to you tonight what call is the king issuing to you tonight is it a common call or is it the effectual call to salvation is it a brooding voice where the king is is gently and graciously encouraging you or is it even an outcry warning you that you're in danger and that you need to return to the king which what call is the king issuing to you tonight in the fourth room that the pilgrims were brought into was a slaughterhouse where there was a butcher killing a sheep not something you really wanted to see but what we're told was noticeable in the slaughterhouse was that the sheep was silent as it was being slaughtered which as you know it's a reference to the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 where he were told that he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth but you know the interpreter then says you must learn from this sheep and you must learn to suffer and to put up with wrongs without murmurings and complaints you must learn from this sheep and you know it's the lesson of first Peter when Peter wrote to the church and he said to this you have been called because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps he committed no sin neither was deceit found in his mouth when he was reviled he did not revile in return when he suffered he says he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly you know the message in the house of the interpreter is when people speak ill of you or when people say things to you that they probably shouldn't say just let it go just let it go he says don't retaliate don't seek revenge but try to gently and graciously respond in the example of Jesus after this the interpreter led the pilgrims into a garden and he showed them his fifth message and the fifth message was a garden full of flowers that were all diverse they were all diverse were told in stature in quality the the flowers were all different colors they were all different different smells but we're told that the gardener planted them all among each other they were all planted together so that they would grow together and not quarrel with one another the interpreter is teaching us as pilgrims that the church is like a garden a garden full of flowers consisting of all kinds of Christians and we should all grow together and we should all get on with each other we should get on as a garden in full bloom then the sixth message which was taught to the pilgrims was when the when the interpreter took them out into a field and it was a field which were told he had sown wheat and corn but the tops had been cut off there was no fruit on them and the interpreter he warned the pilgrims he said fruit is the thing you look for but if it's lacking you send it to the fire fruit is the thing you look for but if it's lacking you send it to the fire you know he's echoing the words of

Jesus in John 15 where Jesus said I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing but says Jesus if anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned the interpreter says fruit is the thing you look for but if it's lacking you send it to the fire and the message to us the message in the house is we are to be fruit bearing disciples we are to be fruit bearing disciples how do we bear fruit we abide in the vine but just then as the pilgrims were coming out from the field they saw a pretty little robin we're told we saw they saw a pretty little robin with a spider in its mouth this was the seventh lesson as the interpreter explained that the robin can pretend to be pretty the robin can pretend to be pretty in public but in private it can catch spiders change their diet and swallow down sin like water and the warning there in this last message in the house was what we are in public must be what we are in private what we are in public must be what we are in private you know my friend we're not only to possess and practice a Christian character conduct and conversation in public but we're also to possess and practice a Christian character conduct and conversation in private what we are in public must be what we are in private and you know it was these seven messages in the house they were given to help these pilgrims in order to prepare them for the next stage of their journey because they had experienced mercy at the gate and messages in the house they had experienced mercy at the gate and messages in the house but after supper the interpreter were told that he fetched out white clothing and he commanded the pilgrims to put it on then as those who were clothed in white robes they were all clothed in white robes were told that the interpreter he called for one of his servants he was called great heart and great heart was instructed to take his sword his helmet and his shield and with that the interpreter he commanded great heart he said take these my daughter and

conduct them to the house called beautiful at which place they will rest next at which place they will rest next and that's where we will rest god willing next lord's day because we're told that great heart he took his weapons and he went out before them along the way and so god willing next week we'll find out what happens to christiana mercy and the four boys in the pilgrims progress well may the lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray it again oh lord our gracious god may give thanks to thee this evening that as thy people we receive mercy at the gate that when we knock the promise is through that it will be opened unto us and lord for those who have not begun knocking that they would knock this evening and if there are those who are knocking we plead lord that thou wouldest open the door to them that they would be able to say with a psalmist oh set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into them

and I the lord will bless lord bless us we pray bless thy truth to our souls that even these messages in the house that they would encourage us challenge us and even convict us and remind us that we are to be christians that we bear the name of christ and that we are to have a character a conduct and a conversation that imitates and emulates the savior who loved us and gave himself for us all go before us lord we pray keep the evil one from us help us to be aware of the dogs and that thou wouldest go before us for jesus sake amen but we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening we're going to sing the words of sam 118 sam 118 we're singing from verse 17 down to the verse mark 21 it's sam 118 in the scottish salta from verse 17 i shall not die but live and shall the works of god discover the lord of me just i soar but not to death given over oh set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness then will i enter into them and i the lord will bless this is the gate of god by it that just shall enter in thee will i praise for thou may hurt and haste my safety been well sing these verses of sam 118 to god's praise i shall die but live and shall the works of god discover the 3 noble oh you in

[43 : 20] O say, he opened unto me the gates of righteousness.

Then will I enter into him, and I, the Lord, will bless.

This is the gate of God, I in, which all us shall enter in.

He will I praise for the behead, and ask my safety be.