

LESSON #24 **"FELLOWSHIP IN THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL"**

We left our Pilgrim last week having just made entrance into the House Beautiful representing the visible confession of his Christianity in the local church. This means that he has now joined a church. We found out that as he entered into this house, he met the porter whose name was Watchful who represented either the pastor or one of the ruling elders in the church. This was a fulfillment of the words of Hebrews 13:17, **"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls."** Rather than just being received into the church in a haphazard fashion, the Watchful Porter invited four young virgins representing the purity of the church to come and question Pilgrim as to the reality and sincerity of his Christian faith. The first young virgin was named Discretion. Before a person is to be received into the fellowship of an evangelical congregation, discretion should be used as to the genuineness of his Christian profession. In this message we will cover the other three virgins as they have fellowship with the Pilgrim. He has now given the proper answers as to his confession of faith in Christ. After these answers were given correctly, we left off last week where Discretion rejoiced in sincerity with tears in her eyes regarding Pilgrim's faith in Christ.

The other three young virgins that we have before you, are called Prudence, Piety and Charity. Each one of these represents an aspect of Christian fellowship within a local body of believers. Before we examine these, I want to read to you a verse of Scripture from I John 1:3 as we review the subject of "Fellowship in the House Beautiful" or in other words, fellowship in and with other Christians in the local church. John says, **"That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."** We want to deal with this question. What is the basis of Christian fellowship, and how does it differ from fellowship with each other socially as members of the human race? We ought to have good social fellowship, and be able to get together around an ice cream freezer and talk about the good old days, the things that are going on today, and have a good time as far as the social aspect is concerned. However, that is not "Christian fellowship." Christian fellowship goes beyond that which is in the natural realm. Christian fellowship is defined here as those things revealed by God in the Scriptures which set forth the Lord Jesus Christ. Our fellowship is with Him. We are going to watch as Bunyan gives us one of the most beautiful portrayals of what a Christian fellowship of believers should be, what they ought to

talk about, what they ought to sing about, and what really is the basis of their fellowship with Christ.

These three individuals come upon the scene, after Discretion interviews Christian, and the first young virgin is named Piety. Piety stands for Godly Christian experience. We talk about a person as being a pious person. That is a term that has come into ill-repute in modern times, but in Bunyan's day it did not have the same connotation. If you were a pious person, it meant that you were a very Godly person. There can be false piety, which is hypocritical, but true piety is the mark of a true Christian. Before supper, Piety sits down with Christian, and they have fellowship together regarding their common experiences in the Lord. We read,

So when he was come in and sat down, they gave him something to drink and consented together that until supper was ready, some of them should have some particular discourse with Christian.

This supper has reference to the Lord's supper in a local church. Before communion is partaken of in the local church setting, there should be an understanding of what Christian fellowship is, because our fellowship is with the Father. Before they are going to eat supper, they sit down to see if they have some things in common. So Piety begins to ask Christian these questions.

"Come good Christian, since we have been so loving to receive you into our house this night, let us if perhaps we may better ourselves thereby, talk with you of all things that have happened to you in your pilgrimage."

So Christian says, "With a very good will and I am glad you are so well disposed."

In this discourse, you see that these two individuals have something in common. The Christian wants to talk about the things that he has experienced in coming to the Lord. There ought to be some Christian experiences that you would be willing to joyfully share with other Christians about what has happened in your life with the Lord. So Piety says, ***"What moved you at first to betake yourself of a Christian's life?"*** In other words in modern English she asks, "what caused you to want to become a Christian?" This is a very basic question that every true Christian ought to be able to answer. If we cannot answer

this question, or if we answer it wrongly, it greatly reflects upon the reality of our Christian experience. I have asked people the question, "You say you are a Christian and going to heaven, well, when did you become a Christian?" Many times, I have received this answer, "Well, Mr. Gables, I have just sort of always been a Christian, and I grew up in the church." There is no real beginning point in their experience, but have just sort of grown into this thing. But notice Christian's answer.

"I was driven out of my native country by a dreadful sound that was in mine ears. To-wit that unavoidable destruction did attend me if I abode in that place where I was."

What a beautiful answer! When asked, "What caused you to want to be a Christian," he stated, "Well, I was driven out of my native country." In other words, he found out that what he used to like was under the wrath and judgment of God. He further said, "I became convicted about them, and therefore, could no longer live in that particular setting." If you were asked the question, "why did you become a Christian?" would your answer be, "Well, there was a time in which I was convicted of my sin, and because of my selfishness and my living for self rather than the glory of God, I came to see that God's judgment and wrath was upon that lifestyle, and because of the dreadful conviction and the sound of God's wrath in my ears, I could no longer abide in that place?" ***Piety says, "But how did it happen that you came out of your country this way?"*** In other words, "Why did you come by the way of the cross?"

So Christian says, "It was as God would have it, for when I was under the fears of destruction, I did not know whither to go, but by chance there came a man even to me as I was trembling and weeping whose name is Evangelist and he directed me to the Wicket Gate which else I should never have found and so set me into the way that led me directly to this house."

So here we have the simple statement that is set forth in Scripture, ***"It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."*** (I Corinthians 1:21). He said, I did not know the true way, except one day a man whose name was Evangelist came by, and he showed me the way to the Wicket Gate, and what true conversion really was. If he had not come by and showed me, I would not have known the way that has led me here to this assembly with you. ***But Piety said, "But did you not come by the House of the Interpreter?"*** This is important. Remember that the House of

the Interpreter represented the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Piety asked this question because she wanted to know whether this man had just memorized a few words or whether he had actually experienced a work of the Holy Spirit. Paul said, **"our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost."** (I Thessalonians 1:5). So just the preaching of the Bible alone and the memorizing of a few basic doctrines will not give a person a real experience with Christ. It is true that God uses the foolishness of preaching, but at the same time, the Holy Spirit must make that experience real. So this is why Piety asked, "But haven't you experienced a working of the Holy Spirit? Didn't you come by the House of the Interpreter?"

Christian said, "Yes, and I did see such things there the remembrance which will stick with me as long as I live. Especially three things. Number one, to witness how Christ in despite of Satan maintains His work of grace in the heart."

This is in reference to the fire on the wall in one room of the House of the Interpreter, how the Holy Spirit maintains His work of grace no matter how strong Satan would try to put out that work? Then Christian says, **"I also saw there how the man had sinned himself quite out of the hope of God's mercy."** That is, he had seen the misery of backsliding and also the dream of him that thought in his sleep the day of judgment was come. He remembered these things. Piety says,

"Well, why did you hear him tell his dream?" "Yes, and it was a dreadful one, it was I thought. It made my heart ache as he was telling of it, but I am glad I heard it."

What was it that the man dreamed? He dreamed of judgment. Notice that Christian said, **"Oh when I heard of judgment, how it did burden me, but yet I am glad I heard it."** After a preacher has preached on the subject of judgment, have you ever heard someone say, "Oh, Preacher, that really hit me where I live today, but I am glad you preached on that?" People who are not right with God will not say that. Christian said, "I heard of God's judgment and the things which are not right in my life, but I am glad that I heard of it." When God's word exposes and judges some area of your life, and it places a burden upon you, can you say, "I am glad that God has revealed that to me?" Then Piety says,

"Was this all that you saw in the House of the Interpreter?"

"No," replied Christian, "he took me and had me where he showed me

a stately palace and how the people were clad in gold that were in it, and how there came a venturous man and cut his way through the armed men that stood in the door to keep him out and how he was bid to come in and win eternal glory. Me thought these things did ravish my heart. I would have stayed at that good man's house for twelve months, or a whole year, but that I knew I had further to go."

Piety: "And what saw you else in the way?"

In other words, Piety is asking "Now that you have left the House of the Interpreter, (the ministry of the Holy Spirit), have you seen anything else in your Christian experience?" Christian said,

"I went a little further, and I saw one, as I thought in my mind, hang bleeding upon a tree." (Do you remember the cross?) "And the very sight of him made my burden fall off my back,

"I saw what Christ had done for me on the cross and how that relieved the burden of sin that was on my back,

for I groaned under a very heavy burden, but then it fell down from off me. It was a strange thing to me, for I never saw such a thing before, yea, and while I was looking up, (for then I could not forbear looking,) three shining ones came to me. One of them testified that my sins were forgiven me; another stripped me of my rags, and gave me the broidered coat which you see; and the third set the mark which you see in my forehead, and gave me this sealed roll."

(and with that he plucked it out of his bosom.)

Thus far, all of these things have been things that these two true Christians are discussing about how they came to the knowledge of eternal life which is in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. These have been good things that happened in the Christian experience which produced rejoicing. But now notice, Piety then asked, "***But you saw more than this, did you not?"*** Notice what Christian replies:

"The things that I have told you were the best; yet some other matters I saw, as namely, I saw three men, Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, lie asleep, a little out of the way as I came, with irons upon their heels; but do you think I could awake them? I also saw Formality and Hypocrisy come tumbling over the wall, to go, as they pretended, to Zion; but they were quickly lost, even as I myself did tell them, but

they would not believe."

What is he saying? This is also something that you ought to be saying if you are a Christian. If somebody asks you, "what is it like to be a Christian, and what have you experienced? What have you encountered since you have been a Christian?" Then you should be able to say that not only are there good things, but you should be able to say that you have run into religious indifference, (Simple, Sloth, and Presumption), and have encountered religious insincerity, (Formality and Hypocrisy). Today, some people have the idea that if you are going to try to spread Christianity, you should only share the good things about Christianity. But that is not Bunyan's view, and that is not the Biblical view. We live in a "real" world, and Bunyan would have us to know that Christianity is not just a positive psychological outlook. There are good things, but there are also some discouraging things. There are some joys in the cross, but there also exists some religious indifference and religious insincerity that we will encounter in our work for the Master.

However, that is not all he says, "***But, above all, I found it hard work to get up this hill,***" Isn't that good? I came up the Hill of Difficulty, and oh, how hard it was! That is the experience that we covered a few weeks ago. He was simply saying, "I find that Christianity is not a bed of roses. I find that there is a battle, a struggle, self denial and discipline to this thing of serving the Lord." Not only that, he says that he finds it hard work to go on in the way, and it was hard to come by the lions' mouths. Do you remember the two lions that were sitting on the Hill of Difficulty just before Christian went into the House Beautiful? The lions were there representing dangers in the way. The Hill represented religious difficulties, and the lions represented religious dangers to test our faith. So Christian said, "I have found religious insincerity, I have found religious indifference, I have found religious difficulties, and I have encountered religious dangers."

Oh, what a reality it is to find an honest person! I used to go to conferences, where several thousand in number were attending. There would be three or four speakers preach in a day's time. Maybe they would bring four messages on faith. They would describe how we are to live by faith, and that faith moves mountains. Then they would describe three or four of their experiences that gave you the impression they never had a difficulty. They would imply that if you had any problem, it was because you didn't have enough faith. I would come away more discouraged from those conferences than before I went. Why is that? It was because they only told one side of the Christian experience. The Christian experience is

one of joy and thrills and excitement in the things of the Lord, but there is also another side to it. There is religious indifference, insincerity, difficulties and dangers that the true Christian has to go through. But then Christian says,

and truly, if it had not been for the good man the Porter, that stands at the gate, I do not know but that after all, I might have gone back again: but I thank God I am here, and I thank you for receiving of me.

Can you say, "Pastor, I have gone through some difficulties, and through some dangers, I have been disappointed by others, such as Formalists and Hypocrites, who were insincere, and I have been discouraged by those who were just indifferent toward the things of God? But I will have to say this, I am thankful that I am here tonight. I am thankful that I am a Christian this evening. No matter what all the difficulties and the obstacles are, Paul said, ***"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes."*** (Romans 1:16)." I hope you can say that this evening.

Then Prudence thought good to ask him a few questions, and desired his answer to them. we are now going to meet another young lady. After Piety, representing the true Godly experience has finished her fellowship with Christian, we come to another young lady named Prudence. Prudence stands for sound judgment! She wants to know whether this individual not only has had an experience, but if that experience is based upon sound doctrine, and if it is based upon the things that have been revealed in the Bible. Prudence asks: ***"Do you not think sometimes of the country from whence you came?"*** Now listen carefully, this is very important. What does she mean when she says, "Don't you ever think of the country from where you came?" She is going to pin him down and to determine if he ever had a desire to go back to that country? She is going to deal with the question of the indwelling sin which is still within a Christian. Now we will find out Bunyan's view on perfection. Bunyan was not a perfectionist in the sense that he did not teach sinless perfection. What was Bunyan's view on the indwelling sin that remains in a Christian?

So Christian answers: ***"Yes, but with much shame and detestation."*** In other words, "I do think about sin, but it is with much shame, and I detest it." Now this is so important. What is the true Christian's attitude toward indwelling sin which is yet remaining? He says,

Truly, if I had been mindful of that country from whence I came out, I

might have had opportunity to have returned; but now I desire a better country, that is an heavenly.

Prudence asked, "Christian, do you ever desire to sin?" He says, "yes I do, but I detest myself when I do, and rather than going back to that old life, I look on to a better heavenly country." That is a quotation from the 11th chapter of Hebrews in the roll call of faith. But that doesn't suffice here. Prudence wants to ask a little bit more. "***Do you not yet bear away with you some of the things that then you were conversant withal?***" In other words, she asked, "aren't there some things in your life in which you go on in sin?" So he says,

"Yes, but greatly against my will; especially my inward and carnal cogitations, with which all my countrymen, as well as myself, were delighted; but now all those things are my grief; and might I but choose mine own things, I would choose never to think of those things more; but when I would be a doing of that which is best, that which is worst is with me.

Bunyan is quoting Paul from Romans 7:21, "***When I would do good, evil is present with me.***" Pilgrim says, "Yes, I think about those things, and I even find myself committing some of the same things I used to commit back when I was in the City of Destruction, but it grieves me when I do it." I think this is a beautiful picture of the balance of Bunyan's doctrine. That is, what is the Christian's attitude toward indwelling sin? Notice that he acknowledges that sin is there, but that he has now been changed, so that what he used to delight in, now it is a grief to him, because he knows that it grieves his Lord. Then Prudence asks: "***Do you not find sometimes as if those things were vanquished, which at other times are your perplexity?***" Putting this in modern English, "Are there not times in your experience in which you find victory over these sins which perplex you?" Christian says, "***Yes, but that is but seldom; but they are to me golden hours in which such things happen to me.***" If you are a Christian, you ought to be able to say that. Are there not some times in your life when you have some great experiences with the Lord and you gain victory over those sins which do so easily beset us, and are not those golden hours at best? Are not those close seasons of communion? But do you now also acknowledge with Bunyan as does Christian here, "Yes, they are not too frequent, it is usually that I have this struggle that goes on within, but when those times or periods come, oh, they are golden hours indeed." I hope you know that, and you can say with sound judgment "yes, there are times in my Christian experience when I really have victory over my sins, but yet it seems like it is

so seldom." This is a mark or a cry of a heart that wants to be set free from sin. Now listen carefully to Prudence, "**Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances at times as if they were**

Christian: "When I look and see that I know that I am justified and am right with God, oh what joy this gives me in victory over my sin."

vanquished?" What does this mean? You say that you have victory over your sin sometimes, so to what do you attribute that victory? Would you be able to give a sound reason or show sound judgment for it? Let's see what Christian says: "**Yes: when I think what I saw at the cross, that will do it.**" Isn't that beautiful? Prudence asked, "Do you ever have victory over your sins? What do you attribute it to?" Christian responded, "When I think of what Jesus did on the cross, oh what victory that gives me. That will do it." "**And when I look upon my brodered coat, that will do it.**" That brodered coat represented the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, our justification. Christian was saying, "when I think about what Christ has done for me and clothed me with His righteousness, oh what victory that gives me!" Do you see how he is able to answer that he does have victory and a Biblical basis for it. "When I think upon the cross, and when I think about the righteousness that I have in Christ, oh what victory that gives!" He went on to say, "**And when I look into the roll that I carry in my bosom, that will do it.**" Do you remember what the roll was? It was his assurance that he was a Christian and right with God. When I look and see that I know that I am justified and am right with God, oh what joy this gives me in victory over my sin."

Then he says, "**When my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it.**" "When I think about heaven, that will do it." I think one of the great tragedies of the modern day church is how our psychologists have taken away the Christian's joy of heaven by trying to ridicule us by saying that we believe in "some pie in the sky by and by." My friend, there is nothing more encouraging to a Christian than the views and joys of heaven. Don't ever let anyone rob you of that and say that is just a lazy cop-out for you to meditate on what it is going to be like in heaven. Christian says, "I have victory over my sin when I think about heaven." May God help us to do that and to meditate on those things.

Let us review these means of victory over sin. If you have trouble with daily sins, what means do we use to conquer those sins? We have instruments of warfare to use, so how do we use them? They are:

1. When we think about what Jesus did on the cross and we understand the gospel;
2. When we see the robe of His righteousness which He has given us;
3. When we see that we are assured of eternal life; and
4. When we think about heaven, that will give us victory over our sins.

Prudence asked another important question, and I hope you see how rich this is. She says, "**What is it that makes you so desirous to go to Mount Zion?**" Oh, how critical this is. Why? If I asked you the question tonight, "Why do you want to go to heaven?" What would you answer? I fear that many today have a short answer that will not be sufficient to permit them to enter the pearly gates. How does Christian answer the question, "why do you want to go to heaven?" Notice that he doesn't say, "I want to go to heaven because I want to escape hell." Today in the American evangelical scene, most professions of faith in Jesus Christ are made by believing in Jesus to keep out of hell. That is a good reason for believing, but that is not sufficient to get you into the presence of God. I talked to an evangelical pastor about the things of the Lord the other day, and I said, "Why did you believe in Christ?" He said, "because I was scared and I didn't want to go to hell." That may be a starting point, but that is not sufficient to get you converted. Look what Christian replies when he was asked this searching question of sound judgment, "Why do you want to go to heaven?" He says,

Why, there I hope to see him alive that did hang dead on the cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things that to this day are in me an annoyance to me.

He said, "I want to go to heaven to be with Jesus, to be with the one who died for sinners, who died for me, and secondly, I want to go to heaven because when I am there, I will be rid

Most people today love their sin, and they just use Jesus as a fire escape to get them out of hell, that is all they are interested in.

of this sin which is within me." I guarantee you without misrepresenting this, that if I went to a major city, and went down the street and knocked on the doors of the people who professed they were Christians, and I asked them why they wanted to go to

heaven, I would have to knock on 19 out of 20 doors before you would ever find anyone who would say "I want to go to heaven because there I will be rid of my sin." Most people today love their sin, they just use Jesus as a fire escape to get them out of hell, that is all they are

interested in. Christian says "I want to go to heaven because when I am there I won't sin anymore and I won't be annoyed with this sin that is within me." Furthermore, Christian said, "**There they say there is no death.**" That is a quotation from the 21st chapter of the Book of Revelation. "I will never die there." "**And there I shall dwell with such company as I like best.**" You talk about purity? We are seeing it right here. What is the basis of Christian fellowship? "I want to go to heaven because there we will be with the kind of people I like to be with." I talked with an individual today and he said, "You know it is just different when you come into a church and you have people you can fellowship with, than it is when you go out into the world and have to fellowship with those on the job." It is two different worlds beloved. I tell you, frankly it grieves me when I run across people who have no desire to fellowship with other Christian people. Now notice what Christian says, "I want to go to heaven because it is there I will find the kind of company that I like best." Do you like to be with Christians? Is that the kind of company you like, and do they talk about the same things you like to talk about? Or is there a group out in the world who you would rather be with? Do you see what he is saying?

"For to tell you the truth, I love Him, because I was by Him eased of my burden; and I am weary of my inward sickness. I would fain be where I shall die no more, and with the company that shall continually cry, Holy, holy, holy."

In other words, he said, "I want to be with that blood-bought redeemed crowd that cries out for holiness to be like God. That is why I want to go to heaven." Now do not misunderstand me. You were just like this individual when he was first dealt with by the Holy Spirit of God.

Conversion produces in the Christian a hunger and thirst to be with Christ and the people with whom he loves to fellowship.

At the beginning of his journey, he saw that he was under the wrath of God, and his main concern was to escape hell, or the judgment of God. But you see that he has been brought along and come through the Wicket Gate. He has truly seen the cross,

and what it means. He sees that conversion is far more than just being able to escape the judgment of God. Conversion produces in the Christian a hunger and thirst to be with Christ and the people with whom he loves to fellowship. Is that the basis of your Christian fellowship? Isn't it great to be able to sit down with Christian people, God's people, and talk about the things of the Bible. I enjoyed myself last Sunday evening with a young couple after you all were gone. I think we talked to almost midnight about the things of Zion. What

a thrill it is to discuss the things of God. Why is this so? Why does that move you? Because one day, that will be my whole life, as if it isn't now. One day I am going to be delivered from these indwelling corruptions so that I will be able to converse with Jesus Christ and the saints of God throughout the endless ages. I like to get off to a running start, that is, I like to converse with God's people here and now about the things of the Lord.

We have seen Piety, the fellowship around true Godly experience, and Prudence, who stands for sound judgment. Now Charity comes to converse with Christian. What does Charity stand for? Of course it is love. She is going to find out, "Do you have Christian love for others?" So she asks him a question: "**Are you a married man?**" Here is this individual who is coming into the church. He has become a church member but his family isn't there. They haven't joined the church. They haven't professed faith in Christ. So this concerns Charity because she wants to know if he was really a Christian, is he showing any compassion and Christian love in trying to get his wife and kids to come and embrace Christ also? Christian says, "**I have a wife and four small children.**" Charity asks: "**And why did you not bring them along with you?**"

Some people who have desired to ridicule this book have said that this is sure a poor Christian, or a poor human being, if he would forsake his wife and four little kids by leaving them at home in order to be a Christian. But remember that this is an allegory. In real life, every day Christian will go back home after he puts in a day's work, and eat supper with his wife and kids. This simply means that he has become a Christian first, and his wife and children have not yet become Christians. It doesn't mean he forsook them in the physical realm, but he slept and ate with them. He had fellowship with them there in the home as a good father would do. Then, after Charity asked, "**Why didn't you bring them along with you?**" Then Christian wept and said, "**Oh! How willingly would I have done it, but they were all of them utterly averse to my going on pilgrimage.**"

I ask you, beloved, have we lost our ability to weep over those who are not Christians? Have we lost our love for those who are the closest to us who are not yet brought into the kingdom of God? Do we weep when we think of someone who is close to us that has not yet embraced Jesus Christ? Charity said: "**But you should have talked to them, and have endeavored to show them the danger of staying behind.**" Christian said:

"So I did; and told them also what God had shown to me of the destruction of our city; but I seemed to them as one that mocked, and they believed me not."

In other words, she is saying, "Didn't you witness to them? Now don't get rough with Charity. She is laying open this fellow, and revealing whether he has truly been brought to Christ or not. One of the marks of a Christian is one who has Christian love for others. That is, when he comes to see the value of his own soul, then he sees the value of his neighbor's soul as well. When you really come to see in the Scriptures, ***"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"*** (Mark 8:36), you will also be increasingly burdened over the souls of your neighbors and those who are not yet brought into the kingdom of Christ. Charity says: ***"And did you pray to God that he would bless your counsel to them?"*** If you have talked with them, did you then pray to God that He would take those words you shared and that He would convict them? Christian replied: ***"Yes, and that with much affection; for you must think that my wife and poor children were very dear to me."*** Do you see what he is saying? "Oh, don't think that I haven't tried to get my wife and kids to embrace the Savior." Charity said: ***"But did you tell them of your own sorrow, and fear of destruction? For I suppose that destruction was visible enough to you."*** Didn't you tell them what you had gone through? Didn't you tell them how you saw your own lost condition? Christian answered:

"Yes, over, and over, and over. They might also see my fears in my countenance, in my tears, and also in my trembling under the apprehension of the judgment that did hang over our heads; but all was not sufficient to prevail with them to come with me."

Do you remember back in the early part of the book how he began to become concerned about his lost condition, and how his wife and kids were making fun of him when he would pray and read the Bible? They would say he was taking this thing too seriously. He is now relating that to some other Christian in the fellowship of the church. Charity says: ***"But what could they say for themselves why they came not?"*** In other words, "what excuse did they give for not becoming a Christian?" Christian replied: ***"Why, my wife was afraid of losing this world, and my children were given to the foolish delights of youth."*** "One of the reasons why my wife didn't come is she was afraid that if she became a Christian, she would have to give up her social standing in this world. Also, my children were given over to the foolish delights of youth of fun, games, and excitement. They were

not ready to take life seriously. Christian continued: "**So, what by one thing, and what by another, they left me to wander in this manner alone.**" Charity says:

But did you not, with your vain life, dampen all that you by words used by way of persuasion to bring them away with you?

Here is an important point. She is asking, "Might you not have not discouraged them from becoming a Christian because of the way you lived? Maybe there were some sins in your life that they saw were inconsistent, and that is what kept them from becoming a Christian." Notice how he replies: "**Indeed, I cannot commend my life, for I am conscious to myself of many failings therein.**" There is not a true Christian that can stand and say, "if anybody ought to be a Christian, they ought to look at me." Would anyone want to stand up and say "I am an example of a good Christian?" No, no, we all see that if we had to depend upon winning anybody else by the perfection of our life, we would never win anyone because of our many failings. He says,

"I know also, that a man by his conversation may soon overthrow what, by argument or persuasion, he doth labor to fasten upon others for their good."

He is simply saying, "I know that by the way a person lives, he can do away with everything he is saying that another person ought to do. But notice this,

Yet, this I can say, I was very wary of giving them occasion, by any unseemly action, to make them averse to going on pilgrimage. Yea, for this very thing, they would tell me I was too precise, and that I denied myself of things, for their sakes, in which they saw no evil.

What is he saying here? He said "I was so concerned that my wife and children would not see sin in me, so that I would become a stumbling block to them, that I deliberately did not do certain things that were lawful, lest they would say, 'Uh, huh, if that is a Christian, you are a hypocrite.'" Then he said, "you know what happened? Because I was so concerned about my testimony to those who were closest to me, they said I was too precise in my Christian life, and they used that, saying, 'Well, wait a minute, if that is what it means to be a Christian, I don't want anything to do with that.'" You see the unbeliever is going to get you one way or another. If you profess Christianity, and you live in a careless way, they are going to say, "Uh, huh, you are a hypocrite." But if you profess Christianity and you deliberately refrain from participating in certain things that are lawful to you because the

world could use them against you, they will say, "Oh, well you are too precise or straight-laced and too narrow. I don't want anything to do with Christianity." So the world has an excuse one way or another. Now notice, Christian says:

"Nay, I think I may say, that if what they saw in me did hinder them, it was my great tenderness in sinning against God, or of doing any wrong to my neighbor."

We will stop right here and continue next week with "Supper in the House Beautiful."