
THE DUSTY PARLOR

The relationship between the Law and the gospel has been under much discussion throughout the centuries and, unfortunately, has generated schism throughout the life of the church, especially when the Law is applied as a rule of life to practical and obedient Christian living. In this next room, Bunyan leaves no question regarding the use of the Law as it applies to the conviction of sin unto salvation.

The Dusty Parlor is a lucid image of the heart of man. The dust is our original sin as we are born in Adam. It lies on the parlor floor of our heart, thick and undisturbed. The broom is the Law, the standard of God's holiness. Even as the broom begins to sweep, filling the room with choking dust, so also the Law begins to "sweep" the heart by the Spirit of God. Sin, once dormant, now becomes agitated, and that which was inactive is excited and stirred up. Listen to the language of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans (7:7, 9): "I had not known sin, but by the Law, for I had not known lust except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet ... for I was alive without the Law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died."

There is the old saying, "You can't get a man saved until you first get him lost." The Law is God's prosecutor, and conviction of

guilt is one of the means by which a contrite heart turns from a course of rebellion toward its Maker and bows the knee to all the mercies offered in the gospel by Jesus Christ.

Of course, Bunyan's answer to a dust-filled room is not more sweeping. In like fashion, the antidote to a sin-filled heart is not more application of the Law. The heart is cleansed as the water of the gospel is sprinkled liberally and its sweet influences subdue and vanquish the sin that once reigned.

There is an excellent example in Luke 18:18–25. A rich young man, influential and living a moral and principled life, asks Jesus what he must do to inherit Heaven. Notice the application of the Law and the way it is used by the Lawgiver. The young man may very well have kept the letter of the Law for much of his young life, but all the while the "dust" lay thick and dormant on the floor of his heart. Then suddenly the "divine sweeper" begins His work as Jesus applies the unattainable holiness of the commandment to the heart of this young enthusiast. The man's zeal turns to sadness as he realizes his guilt, that he loves his riches with all of his heart and mind and soul and strength more than he loves the Lord his God. We don't know the end of this story, other than he went away with a dust-filled heart.
