

The Highway of Holiness

The prophet Isaiah says the kingdom to come on the earth will have a holy road on which we shall travel. It is described in Isaiah 35:8, *“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein”* (Isaiah 35:8). The word “highway” gives us insight to the type road God’s holy people will be traveling. In ancient days the highway was a road elevated to make for safe and uninterrupted travel. We really have not progressed too far from this modus operandi today. As I write these words my wife and her parents are traveling to New Jersey to see our latest grandchild named Asher. If you have been keeping up with the news, you know the Mississippi River may be over its banks. So one of the first things my wife researched was if Interstate 10 is high enough above the water deluge to sustain traffic. Everything appears to be fine and this is a benefit of a “way” built “high.”

One of my daily prayers is taken from our Lord’s model prayer, *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). So whether it is the kingdom of God in the sweet by and by or the kingdom of God practiced in the nasty now and now, we need to be traveling the highway of holiness. This road can be compared to the road in Robert Frost’s poem that says, *“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”* Let’s make a difference! The highway of holiness is:

(1) A High Way

Harold Bell Wright was a gifted writer. His greatest attribute was his Christianity. His Christian worldview permeated his writings. His book, *“That Printer of Udell’s”* was the book that led President Ronald Reagan to saving grace when he was a young man. Although I enjoyed reading it, my favorite book that he wrote has to be *“The Shepherd of the Hills.”* It was first published in 1907. Please notice the way Wright begins: *“This, my story, is a very old story. In the hills of life there are two trails. One lies along the higher sunlit fields where those who journey see afar, and the light lingers even when the sun is down; and one leads to the lower ground, where those who travel, as they go, look over their shoulders with eyes of dread, and gloomy shadows gather long before the day is done. This, my story, is the story of a man who took the trail to the lower ground, and of a woman, and how she found her way to the higher sunlit fields. In the story, it all happened in the Ozark Mountains, many miles from what we of the city call civilization. In life, it has all happened many, many times before, in many, many places. The two trails lead afar. The story, so very old, is still in the telling.”* I could not agree more with this famous American author. The choice is ours. Which road will you take? Deuteronomy 28: 13 says, *“And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them”* (Deuteronomy 28:13). The low life is a way of danger. It is where the workers of iniquity gather to take advantage of those foolish enough to trod that wicked way. We need to flee the call from below and take heed to the call from above: *“Doth*

not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?” She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths” (Proverbs 8:1,2). The highway of holiness is:

(2) An Ancient Way

One of the most fascinating geological discoveries came just a few years ago in London, England. The King’s Highway, the oldest road in Britain was originally built by the Romans around 60 AD. Through the years as the decades and centuries rolled by, the old road would deteriorate and ruin and then a new road would be paved over top. This had worked fine for 1900 years, but now there were so many layers that an even, smooth road was not possible to be attained unless they removed the multiple layers of all kinds of substances from the road. Through much labor and expense they finally reached the dirt. So much expense had been entailed that there was going to have to be a respite until more money could be added to the national treasury to finance a new, fresh paving of this ancient way. While England waited, spring came and all over the exposed road were the most beautiful flowers of rare species, hitherto unknown to this area of the world. Expert horticulturists were called in and here was the discovery: these were Mediterranean flowers! In the first Century of Christianity, the Romans occupied Britain. They brought their flowers with them and planted them around the countryside. Some of the flowers, which had seeded, were paved over to make the early Roman road. The excavation 1900 years later exposed the soil and the soil received the rains and sun; it did not take long in the spring of England to harvest a beautiful road full of flowers.

Here’s my application: the highway of holiness is an ancient way. Some have allowed the earth and her temptations to take them away from simplicity in Christ. Paul said, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (II Corinthians 11:3). When we turn to Christ and begin to grow in grace, like the ancient Roman flowers we have spiritual foliage from Heaven that begins to grow in our life. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”* (Galatians 5:22, 23). The highway of holiness is:

(3) A Happy Way

There are only two places in Scripture where the phrase *“this is the will of God”* occurs and they are both found in Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians. The first occurrence is I Thessalonians 4:3, *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”* This speaks of the holiness required in being in the will of God. The second place the phrase is used is in I Thessalonians 5:18, *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* This speaks to us of the happiness that accompanies the thankful spirit, which is also required in obedient Christians. It is important to notice that holiness comes before happiness. If I set out to be happy in life but ignore the path of living a practically righteous life, I have missed the mark, which is the definition of sin. Happy people are holy people!

Under great duress Leah named the child of Zilpah her handmaid. She saw light at the end of her dark tunnel. The Bible says, *“And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher”* (Genesis 30:13). The name Asher means “happy.” A happy person is a blessed person. In the New Testament the word “happy” is synonymous with “blessed.” For instance, Jesus said, *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8). If a person is not pure in heart they will not be happy. Pureness in heart comes from accepting and allowing Jesus to be Lord of your life.

Jesus said, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matthew 7:13,14). The highway of holiness is the narrow way. It is a road less traveled by, but it is the high way, the ancient way and it is the happy way.

-Pastor Pope-