

The King's Highway.

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness: . . . The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. Isaiah 35:8

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THE TONGUE OF FIRE.

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Preached Sunday afternoon, July 18. Text, Acts ii. 3: "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."

You have read the account of the Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is a cloven tongue of fire. This is an emblem of what transpired within their hearts. The tongue is the greatest weapon with which the soul is endowed. It is the enshrinement of more good and more evil. The best things perverted become the worst things. The tongue is the door of the soul, and when your soul goes out on a visit, it goes out over the end of your tongue. The tongue is the doorstep. Jesus Christ is the Word of God,—the tongue of Deity. The Godhead utters itself through the tongue. Jesus Christ is the speech of God. Because Jesus utters everything in God, he is called the Word. Your tongue is essentially the same as your soul.

The tongue is the great factor in religion. There have been two great epochs in this world. (1) When the tongue was divided at Babel; (2) when it was combined and united at Pentecost. God did not confound the tongue of man till it neglected the Holy Ghost. As long as they claimed the Holy Ghost, there was one speech. On the day of Pentecost, there were seventeen languages spoken at Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost translated and purified language, when there was inward purity and oneness. The Holy Ghost went out into these languages, and united what was divided at the tower of Babel.

Pentecost was a prophecy. When people have one heart and one mind, there will be oneness of tongue. We need this ten thousand times more than we need colleges, or splendid music, or great polish, or anything else.

We have two sacraments,—the Lord's Supper and baptism. The first represents Calvary, and the second the Holy Ghost. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." Here we have victory through Calvary and the Holy Ghost. God sends the church out like a warrior with two weapons,—the blood and the Holy Ghost. The church has piled on this and that, money, culture, eloquence, and a thousand other things. In the beginning it was not so. Let us get back to these two simple things,—the blood of the Lamb, and the tongue of fire. Almost all else is dead lumber. We have power just in proportion as we understand these two things.

1. Let us look at this subject as related to God.

Jesus depends on us for the tongue of fire. He has furnished the blood. He wants us to furnish the tongues to advertise the blood. It represents all God expects to get out of us. We are not sent to discuss and split hairs, but to be witnesses for Jesus. We are not always to teach, but all,—old and young, teacher and taught,—are to testify for Jesus. It glorifies God and honors Jesus to witness to the blood. Nothing else does. Some talk a little, but it does not honor God much because it does not witness to the power of Jesus' blood.

People criticize holiness and high testimonies, but do you know it is the people who have not the tongue of fire that are everlastingly glorifying themselves. Those who have the ton-

gue of fire glorify God. Here are two men. One has the tongue of fire, the other has his old tongue. They begin to talk. The blood and Spirit are not mentioned once by the old tongue. It is all about "I" do, or mean to do; "I" mean to be faithful. The other brother is cleansed by the blood and baptized with the Holy Ghost. His is the tongue of fire. "The blood has washed out my inbred sin and my tempers; the Holy Ghost is my Comforter." Every bit of his testimony is about the blood and the Holy Ghost. "Glory be to God!" he cries. He magnifies Jesus. In one case it is "Big I"; in the other it is "Big Jesus." Those men who have the tongue of fire give all glory to Jesus, and take none to themselves. On the other hand, those half-saved, or backslidden church members, are always talking about "I," and "my."

The tongue of fire magnifies the best works of God.

Some preachers are forever talking about the sea and the mountains, about thunder-storms and earthquakes and tornadoes. Let nature take care of herself. She can. Men think they honor God when they talk about such things. So the church kneels down to colleges and science, but remember that when you talk Christian experience, you are talking right things. Nature is the outside bark on God's tree. Brains and learning and schools and civil government are the inside bark. The highest work is to change a man to a saint. To change a drunkard or an adulterer to a saint is a higher work than to make stars or to raise the dead. To wash a man in the blood of Jesus is the highest work. Washing away guilt is bigger than the judgment day. Fetch on Moses and his miracles. Bless you, Moses! I can beat you with the blood of the Lamb, and the tongue of fire. The sweet wonders of grace are beyond mountains, and beyond Moses. Jesus' blood is beyond Gabriel. What God does in nature is nothing to what He does in grace. The tongue of fire pleases God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Every time you testify, God smiles, Jesus loves you, and the Holy Ghost baptizes you. It honors the blood. Many get their cleansing in connection with a strong testimony. The Holy Ghost falls just while they are honoring the blood. The Holy Ghost honors you, as you honor the blood. When you honor Jesus, the Holy Ghost honors you.

2. This subject, as related to your fellow-beings.

We are neither in hell nor heaven, but on a middle ground. We are to wage war for Jesus whether we feel like it or not. People are to be convinced by our testimony. The devil can argue, and use logic and rhetoric. He can debate and argue and discuss. But when you tell your experience, he is nowhere. Tell how God sanctifies and cleanses. Then you are on the hill, while the enemy is in the valley. Our testimony convinces. It is not sermons, but testimony. A judge listened to eloquent preaching for more than twelve years, but one day an old black woman, half idiot, testified to the cleansing blood, and the judge was converted. You cannot buy testimony in a book-store where some men buy their sermons. You can't manufacture a clean heart. It is divinely wrought. It is superhuman. When you have it and tell it, it convinces. It penetrates and breaks

down stubborn hearts. The "Dairyman's Daughter" has converted more souls than "Butler's Analogy." The thunders of artillery are nothing to the pen-knife of testimony.

A man is never better than his tongue. There are men here whose hearts are full of wheat and corn and beans and radishes. They are all around here talking about those things. Here are girls whose hearts are full of ice-cream and candy. There are heaps of people full of culture, but no blood.

If you stop talking sanctification, you will lose it. Infidels can live as well as Christians. Some moralists can live better without religion than some Christians can with it. If a man offend not with his tongue, he is a perfect man. It is the index of the soul. You say, "My mother's life convinced me." Was she dumb? Which side did she take in the ten thousand questions that were daily discussed in the city? It was the voice, the accent, the pleading of love, that convinced me. Nine-tenths of every man's life is on his tongue. There never was a clear talker but what lived right. A fanatic can't talk right. The heart and tongue are Siamese twins. What God hath joined together let not man put asunder. A pure life has a consistent testimony.

People can resist everything but a pure testimony. That is why the devil hates it. If Christian testimony was not so hated by the devil, it would not be worth so much. Of all things he hates testimony. The devil can get along with fairs and ring-cakes, but testimony that the blood cleanses sets all hell to howling.

It was the tongue of fire that brought multitudes to Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Here was Wesley's success. This is the secret of martyrs and worthies. There never was a martyr without a tongue of fire. If Jesus, and Abel, and Stephen, had kept still, they would not have been killed. How Jesus appeals for witnesses!

3. How it helps.

It is essential to our Christian life and experience. There are one hundred sinners here who, if they would rise up and say, "I'm a poor sinner," and look to Jesus, they would get saved in an hour. We cannot get people to open their lips. If people at the altar would confess, and cry to God they would soon get through. We must confess sin and then confess faith and then confess Jesus. It puts backbone into you. If you run up your flag, you feel constrained to stand by it. But if you do not make a record, you can tone down. When I ran my flag up, I dared not take it down. It is a constant inspiration. Jesus witnessed a good profession. Some people live so near the dirt it don't hurt them to fall, and they are all the time cautioning us about high professions. Testimony is the flue of the heart. You may put fire and powder together, and they won't explode if there is no air. If you get angry, a little talk will kindle it amazingly. Begin talking salvation, and it will spread. Love dies in our homes when love is not told. Talk the devil's grammar and you will lose your faith. We need tongues of fire.

To him who is good, goodness has ceased to be either object or abstraction; it is in him—a thirst to give, a solemn quiet, a passion to bless, a delight in beholding well-being.—Christian Standard.

RELIGIOUS PROFANITY.

One of the Ten Commandments is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The violation of this law is called profanity. The general opinion is that it is only broken by unregenerated people. But a better understanding of the commandment reveals the fact that there are more profane people than one would at first imagine, and that many of the avowed friends and followers of Christ are transgressors here.

We are not alluding here to what is called wooden profanity, as plainly exhibited in the slamming of doors and knocking over of chairs. We have all heard the unmistakable oath in a violently shut door. It came not through the lips, but found egress and a strange, horrible relief in the bang of an inanimate portal or window.

Nor do we refer to that painful series of expressions of Pshaw! Bosh! Tut! Pooh! Bah! which are but outcroppings of an impatient, irritable spirit, and closely related by blood and marriage to the family of oaths.

Neither do we speak of utterances of a still grosser and more reprehensible nature, like My goodness! Goodness gracious! Lordy! Lord-a-mercy! etc. This is the beginning of evil, the pitching of the tent towards Sodom, the light artillery compared with the heavy ordnance of profanity. It is all wrong, adds nothing to the grace, beauty and proper force of language, is offensive to the spiritually minded, blunts the finer nature of the soul, grieves the Holy Spirit and prepares the way with many to still more objectionable expressions, if not finally to downright swearing.

But we have in mind still another class of the profane, who, being deeply spiritual and altogether given up to God, would be the last to believe and admit that they transgress in this manner. We refer here to those who use the name of the Lord in prayer and testimony with a frequency that is as needless as it is distressing to many Christians, and, we believe, is grievous to God Himself.

The Jews, filled with reverence for the Divine Being, exhibited it peculiarly in regard to one of His names, which they rarely, if ever, uttered. The Saviour plainly warns against what He terms "vain repetitions," and in His gift to the church of what is called the Lord's Prayer, He brings in the name of God but once, and this in the opening sentence. We know, however, some religious people, who, according to the manner in which they pray and testify would have had the name of the Lord to appear in ejaculatory form one dozen times in that brief petition.

At a camp-meeting a lady used the Lord's name twenty-seven times in a prayer of as many sentences. We have known several young preachers and laymen to outstrip this record by calling on the Lord twice in a single sentence; as for instance, "O Lord, we come into Thy presence, O God."

Recently in a large holiness gathering we heard a sanctified brother deliver a twenty minutes' exhortation; and we solemnly affirm without any exaggeration that over one-third of what he said was made up of ejaculations of the Lord's name. With pain we give a specimen of his talk:

"I was an awful sinner, hallelujah to God! But Christ saved me, glory to God! He did a thorough work,

bless the Lord! I stood alone, hallelujah to God! The devil was after me, praise the Lord! But I stood like an oak tree, hallelujah!" etc., etc.

For nearly a half hour this kind of testimony was poured into the suffering ears of the people. To describe the sensation of pain to mind and heart at hearing the name of the Divine Being thus heedlessly and needlessly pulled and hauled about would be indeed impossible. It was a taking of the name of the Lord in vain. It was religious profanity. The man was a good man, but had insensibly gotten into the habit of filling up his sentences with the names of Divinity, until they had become spiritual expletives and bywords.

Sometimes people are led into this habit from really not knowing what else to say. And sometimes the sweet joy that comes from this praising the Lord causes us to multiply these expressions on all occasions, until they become habits of speech, with no moral root in them, and no indication whatever of spiritual excellence and obtainment.

Who has not heard ejaculations of the kind we have mentioned coming from the congregation at the most inappropriate time? The preacher has just spoken of the backsliding of the soul, or of one who is on his way to hell, when here comes a volley of "Glory's to God" from the class of people we are writing about. The tender holy utterance has become a set speech, and now means nothing, just as the profane sinner says in his excuse for taking God's name in vain, that, "he did it thoughtlessly and meant nothing by it."

When the writer received the blessing of sanctification, he found himself, on account of the upwelling tenderness in his heart, continually disposed to say "God bless you" to everybody. He never dreamed that this speech could finally be learned by the lower part of the brain, which presides over the involuntary motion of the body, and that the utterance would eventually be repeated unconsciously. But to his surprise, on reviewing a stenographic report of one of his sermons, he found this "God bless you" appearing many times in the discourse, and saw that in most of the instances it had become a kind of crystallized form of speech, a repetition that was not needed, and added no force whatever to the truth which was being spoken.

The discovery opened his eyes and determined him to be more watchful; just as he trusts that this chapter will have the same happy effect on others, who with pure hearts and godly lives have allowed themselves to make an ejaculation or byword out of the holy name of the Creator.

There is nothing in this chapter that is intended to check praises to God. It is well known that the writer firmly believes in audible praises in the great congregation. He is simply uttering a word of warning to those who are in danger of making an expletive out of the name of the Lord, and of using repetitions in prayer and testimony that the Holy One Himself calls vain.—In Golden Sheaves by B. Carradine, D. D.

If some of the preachers who are comforting sinners with the thought that there is no hell, could hear one groan of agony from the place into which they are sending deluded sinners, they would begin with tears to warn men to flee from the wrath to come.