

# The King's Highway.

## An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness—Isa. 35-8.

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### FAITH'S IGNORANCE AND CERTAINTY.

Sermon, by Rev. W. E. Smith.

*Text, Hebrews xi, 8: And he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

Within Westminster Abbey there repose the ashes of many of England's illustrious dead. Tablets, too, have been erected bearing inscriptions of the sovereign's appreciation of men who nobly served their country in the realms of war, art, science, literature and religion. It is an inspiration to stand within the walls of that great building and hear silent voices speaking to your soul, bidding you be brave and true and strong. England does well to perpetuate the memory of her great men. Their noble deeds are a challenge to the present generation to take up the work he so heroically began.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has been called the Westminster Abbey of the New Testament. God has placed here tablets to the memory of those who honored him by their faith. Here is the record of faith's achievements. These men of faith were not merely star-gazers and day-dreamers; they were men of action. "Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." In this passage there is nothing said about big guns and mighty battleships. Faith is the power

that is magnified—a weapon "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

In the list of these illustrious names, that of Abraham stands fourth; but in the estimate of God he stands first. Faith with him was such a distinctive attribute he has been called the "Father of the faithful," and all who walk by faith today, though not of Hebrew blood, reckon Abraham as their father. Christ declared that "they who are of faith are children of Abraham."

I.—Our text introduces us to Abraham at the time he made a break in the ordinary course of his life, and courageously marched out to travel paths his father's never trod; to forsake the worship of God's visible but silent moral order; to follow the God whose form he could not see, but whose voice he could hear. Abraham was a pioneer of faith. God had made for him a new programme and he was called to travel on a new schedule. We are apt today to think lightly of the achievements of Columbus, Galileo, Copernicus and others, because what they knew and what they did are so common now. But they blazed the way for others to follow. They discovered what was once the unknown. They were pioneers. It is far easier to follow a road that has been built, or a pattern that has been given, than to build a new road and make your own pattern. The experimenter has to hear the prophecy of failure ringing in his ears. It was so with Abraham. Think what it meant for him to break

with his family religion, and renounce all right to the honors his tribe could give. Things visible appealed to him. The voice of carnal reason asked: "Why give up a certainty for an uncertainty?" We cannot think Abraham made his decision on a sudden impulse. The spirit of God was striving within. It was awakening within him a holy discontent. Gods of wood and stone could not satisfy. The legends taught him by his parents could not feed his soul. He felt within him the desire for a God great enough to satisfy and good enough to reflect the noblest aspirations of his heart.

No doubt when his decision became known to his fellow tribesmen it made a stir. Some shook their heads significantly and said, "We knew something was brewing. Abraham has not seemed himself for some time. He has been very moody and retiring. He has not joined as heartily in the sports or as enthusiastically in the chase as he once did. He has not been so eager for good bargains or so anxious for gain and we heard him say that the gods we carry about with us are no gods at all; but there is One Great God who hears and answers prayer and will lead those who trust him." No doubt the pressure came hard upon Abraham when the final break was made. Some appealed to him to remain; the tribe needed his counsel and leadership. He had everything to lose and there was no gain in sight. To go out alone would be foolhardiness. He would fall a prey to bitter enemies who were watching for a chance. Why give up the prospect of being a brave, reckless Bedouin sheik, leading his tribe on successful expeditions of plunder, and pasturing his flocks on the most fertile plains, to become a leader of a little wandering band following the fancy of his deluded brain!

The Arabs of Abraham's day had a keen appreciation of material values. This spirit no doubt was strong in Abraham too, till it was supplanted by a larger vision and nobler desire; and he had to muster strength to resist every appeal from carnality within and without. Long before Paul lived we see this Arab becoming the embodiment of the Pauline ideal expressed in Philippians, 3rd chapter, "The things that were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." People could not understand Abraham. They persuaded and then ridiculed. They laughed and said, "He is going out, but he will be glad to get back. He'll come back a sadder and a wiser man. He will soon get over his spell of superior piety and be glad to live like common folks." But he will have only himself to blame" said one. "I did all I could to advise him; he has gone and will have to take the consequences. He has forfeited forever the confidence of his people."

Probably this is the way people talked to