

# 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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DORMITORY, BEULAH CAMP GROUND

### HEART TROUBLE.

Rev. Joseph H. Smith.

Not only sinners; but even Christians, too, are in danger of a serious malady, which may very properly be called hardening of the heart. A friend of mine, who was one of the chief ministers in the Methodist church, told me privately one day that the doctors had just told him he had what was commonly known as "hardening of the arteries." And it was intimated that a sudden rupture was possible at almost any time. And sure enough, not long after, while that dear bishop was in the midst of a glorious sermon on Holiness, the rupture came. A stroke of apoplexy then and there ended his ministry, and in a few days more he had left earth for his heavenly rest. If the peril from hardening arteries be so great, how much greater from a hardening heart? And if so serious in the physical, how much more so in the spiritual! Lately, while afresh in our private devotion, the third chapter of Hebrews, we were deeply impressed with the fact of this peril, and with its nature, its cause, and its prevention or cure. And we resolved to share these reflections with our "Heart and Life" friends as being of mutual interest and of importance to us all.

Whatever else we may find, this is at once evident: We ourselves are responsible for letting our hearts become hardened, since we are enjoined to "Harden not our hearts." Possibly hardening of the arteries may be going on with some of us right now; and we be both ignorant of the laws of hygiene involved, and powerless to avert the danger. But it is not so with the heart. God seems to put an added premium upon the spiritual, by making soul hygiene a matter of revelation, while He leaves that of the body altogether to science. We may know how to prevent heart-hardening if we will.

Three other things that are predicted of the hardened heart will help to determine its vital character. These are (1) Error: "They do al-

ways err in their hearts. Hebrews III:10. (2) Evil: "Lest there be in any of you an evil heart." v. 12. (3) Unbelief "Of Unbelief." 1.12. And that reference is made to the possible heart-hardening of Christians, we note that it is added: In departing from the living God." Now then there are three propositions we may safely assume: First, Without the constant love tendering of the heart, it is impossible to retain correct conception of Truth in the head.

Second: Saving, sanctifying faith cannot flourish in a chilled or hardened heart.

Third: The hardened heart results in a rupture of lesion of conscience and there is sure to be, sooner or later, a break down into some form of evil.

So that a hardened heart is an erring heart. It is a heart of unbelief. And it is an evil heart.

We will try and note a few of its symptoms, and we do not here place first among them the shutting up of one's bowels of compassion to the needs and the sufferings of others. For while this is a most serious matter and is accounted by John a most sufficient disproof of our profession of the love of Christ, nevertheless we direct our attention to some other symptom for the reason that this is not conclusive, since there is a natural humaneness among men which is of itself no proof of the moral or spiritual state of the heart and there is often a show of philanthropy and charity that tells little or nothing of the Christian state or standing of the participators.

But the hardening heart is more certainly evidenced by such marks as these:

(1) A disposition to question God's goodness in some of the things which He permits.

(2) A drawing of unfavorable contrasts between the prosperity of the worldly and the adversities of the faithful.

(3) An envious tendency to throw off the yoke of submission to those who are over us in family, school, state or church.

(4) Love of pleasure in the company of the most devout, and an inclination to affiliate with those who are looking out for themselves and promise to do better for us.

(5) Readiness to listen to advocates of a more liberal religion.

(6) Some questionings about the Bible.

(7) A looser rein upon the appetites and pleasures.

(8) Assertions of rights to experiment for ourselves with things that are forbidden.

(9) Apologies for our former stand in religion, and a feeling of shame over such of our relatives as stand there still.

(10) Aversion to revivals.

(11) Hatred of tests.

(12) Less prayer.

Now before we consider the cause of this trouble, let us seek a little relief in observing a three-fold cure (or preventive rather) to be found in this Scripture. And, first, in the 6th verse. "If we hold the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Particularly that clause: "Rejoicing of the hope." It is only by keeping our eye upon the prize that we can expect to make success in running the race that is set before us. One whose heart is joyfully anticipating the coming of his Lord will be kept proof against many diverting and hardening influences that hover near earth's surface.

Second. Today if ye will hear his voice" (v. 7). An habitual attentiveness to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit requires tenderness of heart, and will counteract external hardening tendencies.

Third, "Exhort one another daily while it is called today: lest any of you be hardened" (v. 13). The social means of grace, and conversation over seasoned with grace will go a great way in keeping our hearts mellow and tender and impressionable to truth and susceptible to the Spirit's influence.

Thus the joy of hope, the Spirit's whispers and the fellowship of the holy brethren are di-