

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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THE MAN WHO WAS RASH

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"I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering." I. Sam. 13:12.

Sometimes the selfishness or saintliness of men is hidden in one unguarded expression. Little things not only make, but reveal character. A straw shows which way the wind is blowing more accurately than a telegraph pole.

As far as we can learn, this is the first thing, the first statement that reveals the weakness in the life of King Saul. Up to this time he was not only "head and shoulders" above the people, but his humility was very marked. Yet this one statement caused Samuel, the old eagle-eyed prophet to read in the young king a dangerous streak. So much so that he announces, "Thou hast done foolishly, thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." I. Sam. 13:14.

Get the picture! The children of Israel were in great "strait," for the Philistines with "30,000 chariots and people as the sand of the sea" had declared battle. The men of Israel lost their courage and some hid in "caves, thickets, rocks, high places and pits." Others deserted the army and crossed over Jordan. Any general like Saul could see at a glance that this meant defeat. He well knew that what he did he must do quickly, in order to hold his men. He was as yet very religious and waited patiently, then impatiently, for Samuel to come and offer a burnt offering, that they might expect the peculiar blessing of God upon them. After days of waiting for the prophet, the tension was so tense that the young general could wait no longer, and assuming the priestly office, we hear him say, "Bring hither a burnt offering to me." God in mercy did not strike him dead for this rash, (some might say commendable) act, because of his sincerity. But he took an awful risk.

At first thought it would seem unnecessarily severe that for this innocent offense, yea, an act that was religious more or less, that the old prophet should pronounce such a severe sentence. Especially so since there was such sweet fellowship between the young ruler and the "seer." Is not God merciful? Why then this judgment with one stroke? We answer, he who cannot hold still while under a great pressure is not safe to be at the head of a great cause or nation. He who will disregard the checks of the Spirit and "force himself" to do things on the spur of the moment has a rash streak in him that cannot be trusted.

But, friends, do not be too severe on King

Saul. Perhaps you have likewise and on less important occasions "forced" yourself. Do you remember "when against your better judgment you rushed into signing up for stock in a fake scheme? Did you ever, while under pressure, answer an unkind letter and say too much? Did you ever bring on a leanness of soul by disregarding former vows and yielding to the demands of the flesh? Did you ever make a rash vow that you would do so and so to carry your point? Were you ever guilty of over-eating or over-sleeping? Be careful then how you hastily pronounce judgment on others.

King Saul is continued on trial! How good God is to give us repeated opportunities to redeem ourselves. Had the king proven himself worthy, perhaps his reign might have continued, at least much longer than it did. But that dangerous tendency came to the surface again, for in the next chapter (1 Sam. 14:44) he rashly decrees, "thou shalt surely die, Jonathan." And why such an outburst of anger? Simply because his valiant son had tasted a little honey while routing the Philistines. He had been reconnoitering and had not heard his father's unreasonable decree: "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on my enemies." Hence it was with difficulty that Jonathan, the victor, was rescued out of the hands of his rash father.

But again, I say, do not be too severe on King Saul. Friend, have you ever spoken rashly? Have you ever threatened, or punished your child while impatient? Have you ever censured another before hearing both sides? Have you ever made a rash vow that you would not eat or sleep until certain things happened? Have you ever become impatient with a window, door or stove pipe because it did not open or fit readily?

Paul speaks of a high state of grace in I. Cor. 13, and among other things he declares that perfect love "vaunteth not itself," or "is not rash." Some of us would almost give our right arm if we could only recall a rash word or act, against a loved one years ago. See Moses, the wonderful law-giver, the statesman, the historian, the general, the deliverer! Yet forbidden to go across Jordan into the promised land—because on only one occasion he "spoke unadvisedly with his lips."

He who is given to rashness will do other strange things. Next we see Saul disobeying the Lord in failing to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites, but spared Agag and the best of the cattle. Agag was a type of carnality. It was his people (the Amalekites) who were the first to withstand the children of Israel in their march to Canaan at Rephidim. Ex. 17:8. And for this, God had sworn, not to suppress them, but "utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." This shows how God proposes to deal with the carnal nature—"utterly destroy it!" More than one man, like King Saul, has lost the kingdom

because he had the Agag of his soul. It is easy to condemn and destroy cheap things, but spare other things who does it brings the curse of God upon himself. "Cursed is he that doeth the work of God deceitfully. Cursed is he that keepeth back his sword from blood." Jer. 48:10.

Saul had come now to lightly esteem the favor of God or man. Now we see him getting farther from God and it is easy to give way to fits of anger and jealousy. Next, he deliberately plans the killing of David. "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David." I. Sam. 19:1. We can excuse the first offense in forcing himself to offer a burnt offering while under a great pressure. But not so now, when murder is deliberately premeditated. He is now no longer teachable, but case-hardened. Be careful how you allow your spirit to become severe and unfeeling!

The sad and closing scene! God forsaken! Slain by an Amalekite who according to the Divine command ought himself to have been slain. Saul had a glorious beginning but an inglorious end! "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me and God is departed from me and answereth me no more." What could be sadder than a God "departed," just when he was needed most. A silent God! A God refusing to give counsel when enemies were passing from every side. Why? Because counsel in the past was unheeded.

Reader, do not lightly esteem the commandments of the Lord! Do not pull off from those who would reprove you. Do not entertain for a moment a spirit of jealousy and bitterness. Make all haste to seek God's voice, lest he turn away from you in a most crucial moment.—Pentecostal Herald.

A HEALTHY REBUKE

A Chinaman applied for the position of cook in a family in one of the western cities. The lady of the house and most of the family were members of a fashionable church, and they were determined to look well after the character of their servants. So, when John Chinaman appeared at the door, he was asked:

"Do you drink whisky?"

"No," he said, "I Clistian man."

"Do you play cards?"

"No, I Clistian man."

He was employed, and gave great satisfaction. He did his work well, was honest, upright, correct, and respectful. After some weeks, the lady gave a "progressive euchre" party, and had wines at the table. John Chinaman was called upon to serve the party, and did so with grace and acceptability. But the next morning he waited on the lady and said he wished to quit work.

"Why, John, what is the matter?" she inquired. John answered:

"I Clistian man; I told you so before,—no heathen. I no workee for 'Melican heathen!'"—Christian Advocate.