

# The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

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## FACING THE SUNRISE

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### I.

"They journeyed in the wilderness toward the sun-rising." Num. 21:11.

This is the beauty of poetry rising out of the blankness of prose. It is a passage that may well haunt our memories like a strain of some sweet, half-forgotten song of the years that are no more.

Suppose we take these suggestive words out of their historic setting in the record of Israel's march from Egypt to Canaan, and take the liberty of reading their message for ourselves. We shall find that they are accurately descriptive of life as we now know it, if we are brothers in the faith and children of the Heavenly Father.

Is it not true that life is packed full of contrasts—just such contrasts as we have in the text? "The wilderness!" "The sunrise!" The desert and the dawn! The battle and the victory! The darkness and the day-break! Toil and triumph! Trial and reward! Life's hardness and harshness on the one hand, and life's hope on the other!

Consider, first, the Present Life Under the Figure of a Wilderness.

The associations of the figure are obvious: wildness, waste, disorder, ugliness, confusion, impediments, unrealized possibilities. And is it not a fact that all of these things are features of human life and society today? So it comes to pass that even the righteous, even those who have surrendered themselves to the will of God, are compelled to say, "We are journeying . . . in the wilderness."

Take the wilderness of iniquity. We travel through that. It is so glaringly visible, so thrustingly ugly, so tragically everywhere, that we mention it first. To be sure, sin itself is never seen by these naked eyes of ours. In essence sin is simply the collision of man's will with the will of God. But when you have a collision, you usually have some wreckage. It is the wreckage that we see. In this visible sense sin is open and horrid, pushing its devilishness at our very eyeballs. Sin is the broken homes of selfishness. Sin is the violated bodies of lust. Sin is the reeling-vomiting forms of drunkenness. Sin is the overcrowded prison of dishonesty, revenge and violence. Sin is the squalid slum of shiftlessness and filthiness. Sin is the marble palace of greed and human exploitation and profligate sensuality. Sin is war losing its barganic flood of cruelty, hypocrisy, obscenity and unspeakable devilry upon huddled, anxious, cursing, praying millions of humanity.

A hundred years ago Horace Mann, of Boston, worked night and day to develop a system of free public schools in this nation. Why was he so zealous? He had several rea-

sons, and among them this: that an adequate tax-supported school system would practically wipe out crime. A century has passed. Beyond anything that Horace Mann ever dared to hope, the United States has advanced in the building and the equipping of its schools. Has crime been eliminated? The question mocks us.

And the ironic fact is that the very education we give makes its perverted contribution to our crime situation. Pick any large state penitentiary in the nation, and on its rolls you will find men who are intellectually qualified to staff a university faculty. Education doesn't improve sin, it only implements it! So the wilderness of iniquity is still about us.

But one thinks of another wilderness through which we journey. Its name is difficulty. The Hebrews experienced it long ago. The prophets faced it. Jesus realized it. The pilgrims and saints of the Christian centuries have all recognized it.

One day, in the shadow of his Cross, the Master was talking to his disciples. He looked into their future, and he dared to ask them to do the same thing. Was it through rose-colored glasses that he tasked them to look? Not for a moment. He was fearlessly honest with them, as he said quietly, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." That is the wilderness. But Jesus did not leave them there. He showed them the sunrise: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Difficulties! Of course there are difficulties. Jacob had them, and in a moment when faith was none too strong he cried, "All these things are against me." David had them, and soberly admitted, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Paul had them, and he specified that they took the form of "infirmities," "reproaches," "necessities," "persecutions," "distresses for Christ's sake." The righteous souls of all generations would have to echo the words of the New Testament: "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

There is, moreover, the wilderness of perplexity. If one lives thoughtfully at all, he is more and more struck with the mysteries of our earthly existence. It is a big mistake to imagine that because we are Christians we have been given neat, ready-made answers to all of the puzzling, tantalizing questions that are thrust at us. In point of fact, Christianity dares to raise questions and then leave them for the present without any final, easily understood answer. Thus we have the Christ crying out, amid the pain and pressure of Calvary, "My God, my God, why . . . ? Why hast thou forsaken me?" And thus too, as a symbol of life's unsolved riddles, we have the women of the first Easter saying sadly one to another, as they made their way to the tomb: "Who shall roll us away the stone?"

The solutions to so many of our intellectual problems are imprisoned within the cold walls

of unyielding tombs, compelling us to ask, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" And today, with peculiar urgency and insistence, men are asking the bitter questions and demanding answers that none of us is able to give with complete satisfaction. Why should the innocent suffer? Why in the name of all that is reasonable and beautiful and just, should this fair earth be blasted and blackened, seared and scarred by the demonic fury of the present war?

So we might go on at wearying length. Why? Why? Why? Life fairly bulges with unanswered questions. Even though we have some light on the answers, we are forced to confess with St. Paul that "now we see through a glass darkly." We know only "in part." We are, indeed, journeying through the wilderness. Iniquities run riot all about us. Difficulties abound on every hand. Perplexities point their querying fingers at us from all directions. The wilderness! The wilderness! The wilderness! Shall we stop here? The text does not, so we should not.

(Continued)

## THERE IS A MYSTERY IN HUMAN HEARTS

There is a mystery in human hearts,  
And though we be encircled by a host  
Of those who love us well and are beloved,  
To every one of us, from time to time,  
There comes a sense of utter loneliness.  
Our dearest friend is "stranger" to our joy,  
And cannot realize our bitterness.  
"There is no one who really understands,  
No one to enter into all I feel;"  
Such is the cry of each of us in turn,  
We wander in "a solitary way."  
No matter what or where our lot may be,  
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,  
Must live its inner life in solitude.  
And would you know the reason why this is?  
It is because the Lord desires our love  
In every heart he wishes to be first,  
He therefore keeps the secret key himself,  
To open all its chambers and to bless  
With perfect sympathy and holy peace,  
Each solitary soul which comes to him.  
And when beneath some heavy cross you faint,  
And say I cannot bear this "load alone," you  
say the truth.  
God made it purposely  
So heavy that you must return to Him.  
The bitter grief, which "no one understands,"  
Conveys a secret message from the king,  
Entreating you to come to him again.  
You cannot come too often or too near.  
The God of Mercy is infinite in grace,  
His presence satisfies the longing soul  
And those who walk with Him from day to  
day  
Can never have "a solitary way."

—Author Unknown

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