

# The King's Highway

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INFIRMITIES"—Romans 8:26

By Rev. C. W. Butler

The dividing line between depravity and our natural human selfhood is a very delicate one. The question of what is carnal versus that which is purely human and natural involves the metaphysics of full salvation. It is the clear standard of revealed truth that it is our privilege to be saved completely from the indwelling presence of depravity. At the same time the Scriptures clearly recognize the reality of our human capacities and susceptibilities, which render us liable to temptation, and the possibility of sin. It is easy to ask questions in this realm of experience which no one can possibly answer to the complete satisfaction of all who may question. I have grappled with these problems both for myself and for those whom I teach across the path of several decades. I have sought always to make it clear that the eradication of sin does not dehumanize our personalities. I have further been true to the Biblical teaching that after "the body of sin" has been destroyed, constant vigilance is required in "keeping under" our natural human selfhood.

God created man a moral being, with capacity for holiness and complete fellowship and union with Himself. In the very nature of the case such a personality must be capacitated for the moral opposite which is true in the case of man. We have capacity to sin and to rebel against God and not only become unholy but walk in rebellion and unholiness to a fatal destiny. Capacity in itself is unmoral. It is the choice of our own will which determines the moral quality of the decisions we make and of any course we pursue in life.

In meditating upon these problems I have been led to review fifty years of active Christian service. This review has resulted in the following observations which throw light upon the entire question involved. We recognize that holiness as an experience does not dehumanize us; indeed it is not desirable that it should do so. God is not angry with us for our being human. His controversy is purely with our sin and our sinning. He built us as humans with a purpose that we should be holy. Therefore Christ did not come to save us from being human but to save our humanity from being sinful, and to save us in our responsible activities from sinning. We recognize that there are infirmities present after sin has been removed. We are therefore not only human, but we are human with infirmities and limitations which follow naturally in the trail of the consequences of sin in our lives. Our sin is to be eradicated, but for our infirmities we are simply to have the help of the Holy Spirit.

Looking over my long experience in dealing with individuals and with institutions, I have been led to observe that no serious results have ever followed nor any harmful division has ever been precipitated upon individuals or institutions where I have labored by the route of the natural infirmities of men and women whose hearts have been cleansed from sin and indwelt by the Holy

Spirit in the grace of perfect love. Mistakes have been made, but where there is none of the old carnal self-element present, the mistakes which are made on the basis of human infirmities and limitations have always been corrected in such humility, and in manifestation of the Spirit's presence and purity that no permanent harm has ever come as a result of these facts.

On the other hand, I have been associated a number of times with individuals, with groups, and with institutions where for a long period of time every situation was met in the Spirit and every mistake made because of infirmities corrected, without permanent injury either to the work or to any individual.

I have experienced in the same institutions a definite change when there was born in the heart of one individual a selfish desire involving the ambition of an uncleansed heart. Confusion and division in the work, and immeasurable harm both to individuals and to the cause represented by them have followed. A large group may be working in perfect unity so long as there is none of self in anyone's breast. Just so long as each one seeks nothing for himself but seeks only the will of God and His glory, unity is preserved and all problems met in a way that proves that "the Spirit himself helpeth our infirmities."

Our infirmities do not need to be cured. Our sin only needs an absolute cure. Our infirmities can be dealt with successfully by the aid of the Spirit and our own souls and the whole work of God preserved. How tragic, however, is the result when even one individual, with carnal selfishness to gratify, begins to send currents flowing and to direct improvements in connection with any work. Such experiences truly verify the statement of Scripture that "one sinner destroyeth much good." Indeed, the one who becomes the source of faction, strife, and harm may not appear to be an open sinner, but if carnal at heart, such an one is easily betrayed into giving place to the devil and thus occasion the break of the spirit of unity and bring unmeasured harm to the work of God.

I could record a number of definite experiences which would illustrate the principle of truth I have observed in a very marked way. I have gone home from an official board meeting, when I was a Methodist pastor, rejoicing in God and thanking Him for the type of men with whom I was privileged to deal. Again and again I have witnessed splendid unity in official board meetings where I could call on any member to lead in prayer without embarrassment. These experiences date back more than three decades ago. I hope that many churches now have official members of the type to which I am referring.

Since leaving the regular work of the pastorate, I have been in charge of different units of work and out of my experience, including these institutions, grow the observations I have recorded in this article. While any conscientious soul may sometimes find it difficult to discriminate between the movements of carnality in them, and the natural movements of their purified selfhood, let me say if you have sought and obtained

the definite work of entire sanctification, cleansing your nature from sin and enthroning a glorified God within, be patient with yourself and seek to be taught of the Spirit, never casting away your confidence because of any doubtful experience, but rather bringing it openly and frankly to your Lord, seeking light and help. You will, as time goes on, not only become established as a witness to definite holiness, but will be able to discriminate clearly between that which is temptation involving appeals to the natural self and the presence of sin as a moral poison perverting your natural self and giving an unnatural response to the appeal of temptation. I would like to ask all Christian workers to review their own experience in this matter and see if they do not confirm my experience that all mistakes and errors arising from infirmities, such as infirm judgment, infirm memory, and any and all of the various failings which are incident to our humanity have never been the occasion of strife and division and permanent harm to the work. Have not these conditions where carnality was absent and where each individual involved was possessed with the spirit of true humility, been met in a way to defeat the enemy and honor Christ and promote His cause? On the other hand, have you not suffered keenly and seen the work of God bleed and suffer because at least in the beginning some one individual with the carnal self at the center precipitated conditions which result in harm immeasurable to souls and to the work of the Lord?

The whole issue centers around the self center poisoned by carnality. Holy people never precipitate carnal divisions, but one carnal person is capable of bringing division and great harm in a work that is truly a holiness work. The reactions of holy people in times of testing are always in humility, and in that spirit, infirmities will be helped and victory sustained. Amen. Glory to God.

Every preacher of the gospel should not only believe in revivals, but pray and preach, visit and exhort, and plan for revivals. The true man of God ought always to be longing for the deeper spirituality of the members of his church, and the winning of souls from the power of Satan and sin to our Lord and Saviour.—Herald of Holiness.

It is important to make plans. Nothing worth while can be accomplished without them, but nothing worth while can be accomplished with them if they turn into mere dreams. There is a chance for success for the man who starts right in without a plan, and makes his plan as he goes, but there is no chance for the man who plans and plans and plans, and continually postpones action. Many a great success has grown out of action that did not wait for plans. But the success of that sort a man must have something akin to genius.

"Doubt digs the grave of faith."

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