

# The King's Highway

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## TEMPERED TRUTHS

### KEEPING OUR EMPHASIS RIGHT

Text: 1 Cor. 2:4: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power."

One wonders at the amount of work accomplished by Paul. Often his stay in certain communities was very brief, and yet, most always he succeeded in establishing a Christian church.

When we look for the secret of his success, his ability as a preacher and his unusual drive and personality is likely to influence our thinking. However, the Apostle makes no such claims.

We have a sample of his work at Corinth, and I think a fair sample of his work elsewhere. Paul speaks of his visit to Corinth in the first five verses of this chapter.

First, we have a report on his ministry. "And I brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Here, the apostle is making no effort to accomplish the work of God by any display of rare talent. He seemed anxious to follow a line that would discourage, on the part of his audience, any thought leading to his own exaltation. He would trim the Gospel down to its bare simplicity; he would focus their minds on the Cross.

Now, I am sure Paul had no desire to discredit talent or the use of it. I think he only meant to keep his emphasis right. Some of us need to be less slovenly than we are. There is doubtless as much leaning to laziness as to learning, even on the part of preachers. One preacher, intelligent enough to write a commentary, has this to say, "Intellect and oratorical gifts both may be used as consecrated means to a sacred end. But the human heart tends, in preacher and hearers, to rest in these. When once the idolatry of talent enters, then farewell to spirituality. "Here then is our danger—a wrong emphasis.

Secondly, we have the Man. "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

Our modern psychologists would pooh-pooh this confession. "Look them straight in the eye." "Be supreme." "Feel yourself master, and you will be." These are the modern steps to pulpit power. Not so Paul. "I was with you in weakness." This at least would help out in his prayer life. Some of us know how this half-gone feeling about the middle, produces an interest in prayer. It is about the only relief some of us have ever found, and this never removes it quite. It only reveals to us anew that the source of our supply isn't located

between our heads and our heels, but between our hearts and our God. Further, the apostle says, "And in fear." The man who knows nothing of fear in his pulpit ministries should enjoy preaching. Yet fear also has a salutary effect upon us in keeping us near the Lord. It was the Psalmist who said, "What time I am afraid I will trust in God."

And again: "In much trembling." Here then is the Man, and the Message. No great emphasis upon the man, little more upon the ministry.

But thirdly, The Means. "In demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." An independent, omnipotent, yet co-operative Holy Spirit, taking the simple message of the Cross and breaking men's hearts with it; taking an instrument, emptied of all feelings of self-sufficiency, and using the same to confound the "wisdom of the wise." Here, Paul made his boast. Here, he placed the emphasis. Not Paul, "demonstrating in the Spirit," but, the Spirit, "demonstrating" through Paul. There is a difference. Much of our so-called "demonstration in the Spirit" calls for no limit of argument on the part of the demonstrator to prove its genuineness and worth. The demonstration of the Spirit on the other hand never needs any such support. This comprehends the Divine side in all Christian enterprise and it is hardly necessary to say that where this is not evident the results must of necessity be limited and meagre. This is the Churches' Means. With this Divine Presence, nothing can stop the Church—without this Presence, nothing can save her.

And Fourthly, we have the Meaning. "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in God."

Is there no place then for learning, for men of the schools, for denominations grown great numerically and otherwise? Certainly. No one would be so foolish as to see else but advantage in these things if they are kept in their rightful place. This, however, is the crux of the whole matter. That which makes men more efficient tends to make men feel more self-sufficient. Great numbers, great wealth, great advantages, great records, bulk large in the minds of religious leaders today. When we hear them talk, in some instances at least, we might be excused for thinking of a statement made by One, expert in evaluating real worth. It went something like this: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." When we shift the emphasis from the Divine to the human the devil doesn't care one straw how BIG we grow after that.

No, it isn't numbers, it isn't lack of numbers. It isn't size, it isn't littleness. It is, KEEPING OUR EMPHASIS RIGHT. An apostle can be humble, an apostate can be proud. A denomination can count her members in the

higher bracket and keep where God can use her might. A denomination can keep so little, that her littleness is an occasion for shame, and still miss the mark.

One of the easy things for a preacher to do is stand up before his people, close his eyes and say, "Lord, I can't do anything unless you help me." One of the difficult things for a preacher to do is act so both God and the people will believe him when he says it. And what goes for the preacher goes for each and all, who, standing in the midst of things temporal, labors for the realization of that which can only be accomplished by Him who is Eternal. This, when accomplished, permits of men's faith "standing in the power of God and not of man."

### EARLY RISING

It is always so much easier to see the other man's duty than it is to do our own.

Abraham rose early to stand before the Lord (Gen. 19:27).

Jacob rose early to worship the Lord (Gen. 28:18).

Moses rose early to give God's message to Pharaoh (Ex. 8:20).

Moses rose early to build an altar to God (Ex. 24:4).

Moses rose early to meet God at Sinai (Ex. 34:4).

Joshua rose early to lead Israel over Jordan (Josh. 3:1).

Joshua rose early to capture Jericho (Josh. 6:12).

Joshua rose early to take Ai (Josh. 8:10).

Gideon rose early to examine the fleece (Judg. 6:38).

Hannah and Elkanah rose early to worship God (1 Sam. 1:9).

Samuel rose early to do as his father bade him (1 Sam. 17:20).

Israel rose early and found their enemies dead (2 Kings 19:35).

Job rose early to offer sacrifices for his children (Job 1:5).

The Son of God rose early to go to a solitary place to pray (Mark 1:35).

Jesus rose early to go to the temple to teach (John 8:2).

The people rose early to go to hear him (Luke 21:38).

The women rose early to go to the sepulchre (Mark 16:2).

As an old writer puts it:

The morning is the gate of the day and should be well guarded with prayer.

The morning is one of the threads on which the day's actions are strung, and should be well knotted with devotion.

If we felt more the majesty of life, we should be more careful of its mornings.

He who rushes from his bed to his business, and watcheth not to worship in prayer is as

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