

## The Higher Path

An Address to a Young Convert

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Permit an old soldier to offer a few words of advice to a new recruit in the army of the Lord. An ancient writer has wisely said that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lives a harmless life, doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God, but waging no downright earnest warfare against the world, nor making strenuous efforts for the promotion of Christ's Kingdom, nor aiming at special spiritual excellence, but at the average attainments of their neighbors.

The other class of Christians not only abstain from every form of vice, but they are zealous of every kind of good works. They attend all the ordinances of God. They use all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ, and to walk in the very footsteps of their blessed Master. They unhesitatingly trample on every pleasure which disqualifies for the highest usefulness. They deny themselves, not only of indulgences expressly forbidden, but of those which by experience they have found to diminish their enjoyment of God. They take up their cross daily. At the morning dawn they cry, "Glorify Thyself in me this day, O blessed Jesus!" It is more than their meat and drink to do their Father's will. They are not quietists, ever lingering in secret places, delighting in the ecstasies of enraptured devotion; they go forth from the closet, as Moses came from the Mount of God, with faces radiant with the Divine glory; and, visiting the groveling and sensual they prove by lip and life the Divineness of the Gospel.

Next to the power of Jesus, the living Head, these earnest believers preserve and perpetuate the Church from age to age. The secret of their strength is, that they, by the guidance of the Spirit, found the King's highway up the summit of Christian holiness.

They strove, they agonized to plant their feet on the sunlight height. They have left the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and have gone on to perfection.

They have accompanied the Apostle Paul in his wonderful prayer in the third chapter of Ephesians until they "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" and are "filled with all the fulness of God."

Mr. Wesley says, "From long experience and observation, I am inclined to think that whoever finds redemption in the Blood of Jesus—whoever is justified—has the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the excellent way and incites him to walk therein—to choose the narrowest way—to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness—after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly reclines into the lowest order of Christians; he still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the Covenant." This is on the condition that he is a persevering believer. But this lower path lies so near to the broad way, that many are almost insensibly lured into it.

Would you place the best possible safeguard against such a spiritual catastrophe? Take the higher path; consecrate all to Christ; seek full salvation through His Blood, which cleanseth from all sin. This is the Divinely-invented safeguard of the Christian life:

"Jesus, Thine all-victorious love  
Shed in my heart abroad;  
Then shall my feet no longer rove,  
Rooted and fixed in God."

These two paths lie before your feet. Choose you that in which you will walk—the higher or the lower, the safer or the more perilous. Let one who has tried both give you the benefit of his experience.

The lower path seems easier, but in reality it is far more difficult. The sultry heat produces languor, and the noxious vapors induce stupor, making it exceedingly difficult to keep walking, although the road is comparatively level. The beautiful bowers of ease tempt the drowsy traveler to lie down and sleep.

Let their whitened bones, scattered along this path, be a warning to you to seek the upper path.

It appears to be steep and rough; but the few who have tried it agree in testifying that the atmosphere is so bracing and exhilarating that they seem to be lifted up the mountain by an invisible hand. Such a flood of life courses through their veins, such electric vigor shoots through their limbs, that they are not inclined to turn aside to the pleasure arbors which Satan has unwisely located here and there near this way. The way itself is the highest pleasure on earth. The pilgrims run and are not weary. The Hebrew Psalmist explains this paradox: "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Having chosen the higher path, do not be discouraged by the obstacles in the way of your entering and walking therein. You are not to remove them by your own strength. You have an almighty and complete Saviour, "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." With a submissive will and believing soul "pray that you may know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."

The full measure of Christ's love, shed abroad by the Holy Spirit, makes free indeed. Service is no longer a drudgery, but a delight.

Let me illustrate the difference between law-service and love-service by the conscript and the volunteer soldier. The impulse which thrusts the former into the field is fear of the law, reinforcing his feeble patriotism. Nevertheless he puts on military uniform, and shoulders his knapsack though it seems to weigh a ton. He murmurs at the hardness of his rations, discomforts of the camp, and the severity of the discipline. Yet he bravely does his duty. The law, like the bayonet behind him, drives him into the battle, where he fights like a hero. But he does not enjoy the privations and perils of the service.

He sees the volunteer enduring weary marches singing patriotic songs and with cheerful smiles rushing into battle as to a banquet. He sees him brought back mortally wounded, blessing the old flag of his regiment, and thanking God for a country worth bleeding and dying for.

Do you see the point of this illustration?

Which kind of a Christian do you choose to be? You may serve all your life under constraint of law, or you may serve with gladness in the way of God's commandments, under the mighty impulse of love, perfect love, which casteth out all fear.

—The Way of Faith

## Sinning Against the Holy Ghost

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God"  
(Eph. 4:30)

Perhaps it is because the Holy Spirit is the gentlest of beings that the Lord Jesus has pronounced such awful penalties against those who sin against the Holy Ghost. Everything that grieves the Holy Spirit is not necessarily to be construed as that one dreadful thing which the Scriptures call "the sin against the Holy Ghost," which never hath forgiveness. But when we once begin to descend the awful incline of evil, we never know where we are going to end. Therefore let us guard against the very beginning of all that might lead to that dreadful attitude which the apostle describes when he speaks of those who have "done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

We may quench the Spirit. This perhaps has reference rather to His public work in the Church of God and the hearts of others than to His particular dealing with our own soul. We may discourage the work of the Spirit and the liberty of worship and testimony by our harshness and criticism. We may ourselves, through timidity or disobedience, fail to obey His impulses in our own hearts to testify for Him or to speak to others about their souls. The minister of Christ may quench the Spirit by worldly sensational themes and by discouraging the spirit of prayer, separation, and revival in the church. The spirit is quenched by worldliness, fashion, and sinful pleasure. The spirit is quenched by error, fanaticism, and ecclesiastical pride.

Nothing quenches His reviving power more than strife, controversy, evil speaking, and division among the people of God. Frivolous conversation in connection with the house of God and sacred things often drives away the convincing influence of the Holy Ghost from other hearts. We may quench the Spirit in our church; we may quench the Spirit in our children and have the blood of souls on our hands for ever.

Again, the Scriptures speak of grieving the Holy Spirit. How gently this figure represents Him, not angry but pained. We may grieve Him by our doubts and fears. We may grieve Him by holding back some reserve in our consecration. We may grieve Him by disobedience and wilfulness. We may grieve Him by coming short of the fullness of His blessing. We may grieve Him by a divided heart and the idolatry of earthly pleasures and affections. We may grieve Him by the neglect of His Word. We may grieve Him by our lack of love to Jesus, whom He always seeks supremely to honour and for whose rights He is jealous. We may grieve Him when we cherish bitterness, and it is of this especially that the apostle says: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice," and "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And we may grieve Him by our spiritual selfishness, by praying only for our own needs and by letting the world perish in its ignorance and sin while we hear the Gospel and neglect the cry of our brother.

But there is something worse than this. To some persons God had to say in days of old,

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