

# The King's Highway

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### YOU NEED NOT BE WEAK

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*For when I am weak, then am I strong* (II Cor. 12:10).

Webster defines a paradox as "an assertion seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense but that yet may be true in fact." Here is St. Paul's paradox of power in the Christian life: conscious human weakness discovering and utilizing divine strength!

The Apostle had been afflicted with something that he calls "a thorn in the flesh." He kept it to himself the secret of what it was. We do not know. We cannot know. We can only imagine.

Whatever form this handicap may have taken, it is a fair conclusion that it was something physical. What we do know is that it was something terrible.

On three different occasions, Paul tells us, he prayed to the Lord that he might be set free from this harsh, harassing handicap. Yet the piercing thorn remained.

Was this frustration? No, although it might have been. Was it unanswered prayer? No although it looked like it. Was it failure, despair? No, although it held that danger.

Actually, says Paul, I found through this experience a new release of God's power that set my soul to singing. The *outward pain* was allowed to remain but the *inward power* was stepped up! The Apostle got a fresh word from God, and it was this: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Such a manifestation and application of God's power came to Paul. It enabled him to say, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Now admittedly certain of the details of St. Paul's experience were peculiar. They were mysterious. The fact remains, however, the victory he won through what he calls "the power of Christ" was typical of those countless experiences we find recorded in the New Testament. It is this towering fact that places us well within our rights when we say to ourselves and others: "You need not be weak."

When we say it, we mean, of course, that through the conscious confession of our weakness we experience the release of Christ's power. So weakness is never the word we end on, but strength!

Let's realize, for example, that we need not be weak through inward *defeat*.

On Pentecost Sunday—when we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the early Christian Church in Jerusalem—we may profitably remind ourselves of the failures that had marred the lives of the disciples before they came under the full control of the Spirit of God. They had been defeated by pride. They had been defeated by jealousy. They had been defeated by bad temper. They had been defeated by pettiness and intolerance of spirit. They had been defeated by fear.

Disciples of Christ with such a record of defeats? Yes. In a case like Peter's it was even more flagrant: he had denied his Lord with a curse.

Yet it was these very persons who, forgiven and renewed in fellowship with Christ, experienced the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and went out to undefeatable living.

Let us grant that defeat is bad. Let us say that it is humiliating. Still, there is something worse than defeat, and that is to take a defeatist attitude toward it. That weakens the whole fibre of our living.

The message concerning the Holy Spirit means, on the other hand, that there is a chance for the defeated. It means that beaten souls may be linked up with omnipotent strength and thus pulled out of their failure.

Furthermore, let us realize that we need not be weak through inward *defilement*. Here, too, we must learn to say, "When I am consciously weak, then I am really strong."

How long is it going to take some of us Christians to get it through our heads, aye, and through our hearts, that self-centered desires and impure motives are barriers that hold back the flow of God's power through our lives? This *defilement*—called by the theologians "depravity"—is in the grain of our disposition. Yet it is not there so deeply but what the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of cleansing, can get at it if He can have our full consent.

In Acts 15:8, 9 the Apostle Peter tells us what happened to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. He says that God "cleansed their hearts by faith" (R.S.V.).

Again, let us say to ourselves: You need not be weak through inward *division*.

There was a time in the life of the Apostle Paul when he had to confess: "The good that would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:19)

Paul did not remain forever in that state of a divided mind. There came a day when he could say: "This *one* thing I do" (Phil. 3:13). He was no longer trying to move in two directions: that of the world and that of the kingdom of God. He was no longer giving his allegiance to two would-be masters: self and Christ. He was no longer seeking two glories: his own and that of Jesus Christ. No, the conflict had passed into total commitment and the total commitment had passed in to constant co-ordination.

Will you take this fullness of the "power of Christ," this gift of the Holy Spirit, into your own life?

How?

Ask! Yield! Take! Those are the key words. And mind you, the yielding must be complete! Too many of us, in the Christian life, are trying to win a total victory on a fractional surrender. The all of our confessed weakness is required. It will be met by all of Christ's power.

—Condensed from the "Preachers' Magazine"

### THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

Samuel Logan Brengle

*"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."*

God is love, and the Holy Spirit is ceaselessly striving to make this love known in our hearts, to work out God's purposes of love in our lives, and transform and transfigure our characters by love. And we are solemnly warned against resisting the Spirit, and almost tearfully and always tenderly exhorted to "quench not the Spirit," and to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby," says the Apostle, "ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

There is one great sin against which Jesus warned the Jews, as a sin never to be forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come. That was blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

That there is such a sin, Jesus teaches in Matthew 12:31, 32, Mark 3:28-30, and Luke 12:10. And it may be that this is the sin referred to in Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29.

Since many of God's dear children have fallen into dreadful distress through fear that they had committed this sin, it may be helpful for us to study carefully as to what constitutes it.

Jesus was casting out devils, and Mark tells us that "the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils." To this Jesus replied with gracious kindness and searching logic: "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, it cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."

In this quiet reply we see that Jesus does not rail against them, nor flatly deny their base assertion that He does His miracles by the power of the devil but shows how logically false must be their statement. And then, with grave authority, and, I think, with solemn tenderness in His voice and in His eyes, He adds, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation"; or, as the Revised Version puts it, "is guilty of an eternal sin"; and then Mark adds, because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:22-30).

Jesus came into the world to reveal God's truth and love to men, and to save them, and men are saved by believing in Him. But how could the men of His day, who saw Him working at the carpenter's bench, and living the life of an ordinary man of humble toil and daily temptation

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