

HAVE YOU FOUND THE RIGHT WAY?

“From that time Jesus began to shew to his disciples that he must go away to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised.”—Matthew 16: 21.

“And as he went forth into the way, a person ran up to him, and kneeling to him asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”—Mark 10: 17.

“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways; to give knowledge of deliverance to his people by the remission of their sins on account of the bowels of mercy of our God; wherein the dayspring from on high has visited us, to shine upon them who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”—Luke 1: 76–79.

“Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end.”—John 13: 1.

I would like to refer to ‘the way’ in these four Scriptures. We can refer to the first, in Matthew, as the way of suffering; to the second, in Mark, as the servant’s way; to the third, in Luke, as the way of peace; and to the fourth, in John, as the way of love. These four gospels help us in all phases of the truth. We might consider ‘the way’ as presented by them.

In regard to the way of suffering, this gospel begins with suffering in children and in mothers. Herod ordered all the children under two years to be slain; so that suffering is in one way stamped upon this gospel. It shows that, as Christ is introduced as the King, the way to His kingship is through suffering; and the way to the assembly is through suffering. The King is presented to us as the Sufferer, and His assembly as the suffering vessel. We have the pattern set out in Christ in the way that He suffered. We are to take on the path of suffering, accepting it as in the ways of God. As we remarked, the little children suffered; they were slain. This brings out the dreadful conditions amongst men, in those who may be in authority. This is seen later in

the beheading of John the baptist, which was instigated by a woman. We find both man and woman bringing in suffering in regard to what God was doing; so we can never expect much from the government of men. There may be modifications, as in Egypt through Pharaoh's daughter; it was modified in some sense in Pilate's wife; but we cannot expect much from government in the hands of men, as relating to the testimony.

We have referred to suffering in children. Children have a great place in this gospel; first in the way the Lord Himself is referred to as "the little child"; then how little children suffered through being slain; and later as the Lord took little children into His arms, and again as He called a little child to Him; and, later again, when He refers to the little children as praising the Lord. This gospel should greatly help us as to our children, showing the divine interest in them; but that they must accept suffering, and the mothers, too. We can understand the feelings of the mothers in Israel whose children were slain. We are apt to forget this line of things, but this is what has happened; and, more recently, in what has happened in these wars, we see the cruelty of men, bringing out into the fullest relief what Satan has done in men in certain governments. We want to be with God about it in view of His government in Christ coming into display. The time is near for that; but Matthew would instruct that it is a way of suffering. It begins with the suffering of women and children; it has them especially in mind in regard to the households, in view of the children being brought up in the spirit of suffering, in view of their being a testimony here for God. The household, therefore, is of great importance in regard to the way of suffering. We have to deny our children the things of the world. While we deny them the things of the world, we are to instruct them in regard of the kingdom of the heavens. Perhaps there is nothing more attractive to children than the idea of the heavens. We are to instruct them in regard to the government of God that originates in the heavens; then that this government supersedes every other government, and that we are to wait in faith for its display.

In the meantime, the elements of this kingdom are to be put before children, involving all that God is in righteousness, in view of things being done rightly. Righteousness enters into our

histories, and, as we practise it, the children will come into suffering. They will be reproached, but the reproach will bring out in them the work of God; it will strengthen it in view of the assembly; for Matthew has the assembly in mind, and the women and the children have a great deal to do with it. We are to maintain rule in the household. Matthew would stress that, so that, when we come into the assembly, we are ready for it, as subject persons. The women are to learn subjection as being in relation to man, and thus to Christ, and thus to God, as is seen in 1 Corinthians 11. There is the place of man in the assembly, and there is the place of woman in the assembly. Man has a prominent place in the assembly; then woman is in her place, as answering in silence in regard of all that God is setting forth. So we can see how Matthew relates to the epistle to the Corinthians. We must have rule, but it is a rule of love, though Matthew is not stressing love; he is stressing rule.

Man is to have the prominent place. Therefore the Lord is instructing His disciples in these chapters in view of rule. Later on the apostles will be seen on the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and they are worthy of it. They have qualified for it, as the book of the Acts shows. So we are all to qualify for our place in the kingdom, for we shall all have a place in the kingdom, and it will be in accord with our place in the testimony now in faithfulness. The moral side is to be seen now in view of the kingdom to come, but the great thought of God is now that there is to be rule in the assembly. This is greater than the millennium, because it is rule in the midst of adversity. The millennium will not be adversity; all evil will have been put down. We are in the greatest time now, and it is for every one of us to be qualifying for the assembly.

We arrive in this chapter at what the Lord had wrought in His disciples. They were being qualified for the assembly. Peter represents all the disciples, and he shows that he is qualified by the revelation which he received; in a similar manner all of us qualify for the assembly. The work of God in us is what can be entrusted with rule. In other words, we can be entrusted with Christ; because God will not entrust Christ to disobedient people. To qualify to receive Christ as

testimony we must be obedient. Peter represents this, and while it is concrete in him, for he shines, so to speak, in what he says, we have to notice that the flesh is still the flesh. While Peter said the greatest things, he takes a wrong turn; that is, he lost his way; because the way is the way of suffering. The Lord is pointing that out to them. He shows His disciples that He must go away to Jerusalem; the way from this point was to Jerusalem, and the full idea of suffering would come out in Jerusalem. He is instructing His disciples that that is the case; that is what He is teaching us, and we want to get hold of the fact that the way is the way of suffering.

Now, are we going to miss the way? Peter missed it; he missed the way of suffering. He wanted to take the nice way, the easy way. That is the feeling of every natural heart; we want to take the easy way, we do not want to take the way of suffering. Now it is a question of decision—whether you are going to get on to the right road, or whether you are going to continue on the easy road. The flesh will keep on the easy road, and Satan would keep you there; for Satan has his part in all these things. The Lord identifies the matter, and we should. Who is it who has set you on this wrong road? Who has shown you the easy way? Satan. You must see the matter clearly. If you are on the easy way, if you are not on the path of separation, you are taking the easy way. Who has helped you there? Satan. So the Lord does not say, ‘Peter.’ He is not going to say your name; He is going to say “Satan” to you, if you are on the easy path.

You may have said many good things, as Peter did; you may have confessed Jesus as the Son of God, but you have taken the easy way. We can find out where we are now. There are those on the suffering way; they have heard what the Lord has said, and they have found it out themselves. There must be suffering. We want to get to the facts here, and get on the right way, because the way is to glory. The way of ease is to the world. Have you lust for the world? The world is under judgment. It looks very nice at a distance. You go into New York harbour, and see there the big city. It looks very nice: in one hour is her destruction, and so with every city. Let us face the facts. God’s city is the assembly. Outwardly it looks like the tabernacle in the

wilderness; it does not look glorious. You have to go inside to see the glory. You get your eyes opened inside: the glory shines inside, and everywhere you see the cherubim, that is people doing the will of God. That is where the glory shines.

So this gospel is to help us to maturity. Peter is going to get on the right road. He is going to get into the way of suffering, as we see in the Acts. Peter knew what it was to be scourged with thirty-nine stripes on his back. Paul was scourged later, but Peter was scourged; they all were scourged. The Lord Jesus was scourged. They came into the path of suffering in the Acts. These men were now qualified to render testimony, and they qualified for the kingdom; but that is not what they were looking for so much; it was that they might be with Jesus. That is the great end that suffering has in view, and He is the answer to all the suffering, because He makes sweet all the things that are bitter. As we see Christ coming into the matter, we find how it becomes sweet, as accepting the way of suffering.

Now we have read from Mark, which is the servant's way. In Mark's gospel you get the word "way" more than anywhere else, and the servant is to mark it out. The Lord marked out the way: He said, "I am the way," John 14: 6. So, in a similar sense, the servant marks out the way; he follows in the steps of Jesus. Peter tells us this: "Leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps," 1 Peter 2: 21. Whilst that is the servant's way, it is the way for all Christians.

This person who ran up to Jesus was a young man; he was a man who could be used in the service. The Lord is looking for young men and young women to use in the service. There is nothing more blessed than to be in this way of service. The little maid who gave the instruction about Naaman was in the way of service; there are many women in the gospels who are in the way of service, and their object is Christ. This is the substance of the servant: he has Christ before him. But this young man had a different idea. What was the bent of his mind? He wanted to live for ever just the way he was. Is that your idea, to live the way you are, having everything you want? How many young people are like that! They want to live for ever, and to enjoy the

world as it is. What did God do to Adam? He drove him out of Eden. He did not want Adam to live for ever the way he was. God would not have him, so He drove him out. This young man had to learn that, and every one of us has to learn that, that we are not to live for ever, enjoying this world. He missed his way, too; it does not seem that he was like Peter in finding the right road.

What about you? Are you going away sorrowful, or are you going to find the right way? That is the way of service. That means that you give your body over to Christ. If you study the epistle to the Romans, which every young person should do, you find the greatest thing you have to give is your body, and that is the way of service. You put your body on the altar, and you do not change your mind about it. People change their minds too much. It does not help you when you change your mind; when you go back into the world. What we want is a change of mind in the right direction. You find that this is a wonderful service, that you have committed your body to Christ. You use your hands and your feet in His service; you use your mind in His service. There is a great need for young people not to go away sorrowful, but to go away joyful as having surrendered to Christ, becoming a soldier in His army. That is really what Mark's gospel means. You know how a soldier has to suffer, how rigid are the requirements, how severe are the penalties when you do not do what you are told. The Lord is a wonderful Master, but He requires that we do what He tells us, and His commandments are not grievous. You soon find that you love to do them; you so love Him that you do anything He says. You soon find that you lay down your life for His brethren. This is the way of service, and you have all the faculties in full control by the Spirit to be used in the service of God; those faculties are not to be used to build up the world. You have to make a living, but can get through on very little. Our difficulty is that we want too much, and we get burdened down by what we have. You will find that it is a narrow way that leads to life. The point is to give your body to Christ; it is very simple. You can just find out in yourself if you are doing it.

Now we will speak about the way of peace. Luke is bringing us to a wonderful conclusion right at the beginning of his gospel: he says, “the way of peace.” You may say that it is all trouble: you may say, “I have one trouble after another.” If you learn Matthew’s gospel, you will learn that it is affliction’s way, and you will not be complaining about the discipline and about the suffering; you will find in the midst of it that there is a way of peace. No matter how much pressure is upon you, your soul is in peace. “Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on thee,” Isaiah 26: 3. You might say, ‘These things are contrary to one another: the way of suffering conflicts with the way of peace.’ But there is no conflict between the way of suffering and the way of peace, because it means that your soul is in the presence of God. As to actual work here, you are in the midst of suffering, but secretly you are with God. Have you found that this is so? It is for you. This gospel proceeds to show a woman who was told to go in peace; that is what she did, and that way is the same way now. It is a way that has been established, for the Lord Jesus established it.

I would like to be like John the baptist. It is said of him that he should “go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways.” That is the object of every prophet, to make ready ways for Christ; for, when Christ is in your soul, there is peace. Luke is showing us that in the midst of all the terrible conditions of humanity, amidst all the sorrows that face people because of sickness and death and the pressure of all the things in the world, Christ is the answer to it. So the thing is to follow what is being said, and to let our feet be guided into the way of peace. There are many in it. Those that are in the way of suffering are in the way of peace. This is true; there are those who can testify to this. They are persons who have to do with church sorrows, they are accepting suffering and in the sorrows they are at peace, because they know the Prince of Peace.

This gospel is the gospel which deals with the great needs of the race of man. God is showing in the gospel that there is a way of peace in the midst of all the ways of trouble in this world. There is not a nation that is not in trouble, there is not a ruler that is not in anxiety; but

our King is not in anxiety, He is restful on the Father's throne. There is the way of peace down here, and those in it are not overcome by the troubles of the world; their feet are guided into the way of peace. So you might write 'peace' across this gospel. People's sins no longer trouble them; death no longer troubles them; peace is written across their lives. As you speak to them, you find that they are walking in that way. They are always ready with a word for the weary; their feet are in the way of peace; they have a word for the weary, to give comfort to persons who need comfort. There is such a way here as the way of peace, and you can find relief through all your troubles by finding your feet in this way. Your feet never did anything better than to get into that way; you are using your feet all the time, and you are using this way. You will never forget the result, because it brings a lasting thing into your soul, the blessed thing about it is that you find there are many more in that way, and it leads to the way of worship.

That is what we find at the end of this gospel, and we are all going in that same way; we must be in peace before we can worship. The path of suffering is the church path; the way of peace runs with it. If we are going to worship tomorrow, we have to be in peace before we do it. What do you come for? Is there peace there? Is there worship there? Could you get to heaven from there? The way of peace is the way to heaven. Let us not be on the wrong way. The way of peace is for us. You just need to do a little weeping, come to the Lord and tell Him about it, and you will soon find that you are on this way. So do not miss this way. Let us go on as ready for the path of suffering, in the way of peace, and ready to serve as committing our bodies to Christ.

The last Scripture, of course, is in one sense the most exalted character of this way. It is the same way, but it is spoken about here as love. It says, "Jesus . . . having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end." Who are these persons? These are the persons who have been in the suffering way. These are the persons who have yielded their bodies to Christ. These are the persons who are in the way of peace. These are the ones whom the Lord loves. It is the way of love, showing what was in the divine mind. God is love, and the Lord has brought Him into full expression in the way in which He has come. So we might say that this way

alludes to life, and the life of the believer is love. You can find in yourself whether you love God. Are you in the way of love? Christ has marked out the way for you. It is not only that He began to love us, but He loved us to the end. That love may be pent up in regard to persons going on in self-will; we cannot regard them as in the active love of Christ. The Lord is seen in that way in the book of Revelation: His love is pent up because of the conditions amongst men. It is not that God does not still love, because He commends His love to the sinner, but, if you are going on in self-will, God does not love that. What God loves is obedience.

So we find it in these ways we have spoken about: it is the obedient person who accepts the suffering, who is yielding his body to God; his soul is in perfect peace and he begins to love as God does. He just adds to this way. Would you like to add to the way of love in that you are an expression of love yourself? This is the greatest idea; it is behind it all. Behind all that your heart is engaged with is that you are a lover of God, you are a lover of Christ, you love the Spirit, and you love Christ's brethren; in one way, you love all men in view of their salvation. You are wholly with God, and love never fails. This is one thing that never fails. Things will fail here materially; even what we are physically will fail, but love does not fail. Would we not all like to be in such a system—a wonderful order of things which God has marked out distinctly for us? There is no need for any of us to miss it. He would have us all fully in it, and amongst the worshippers; that is the great end in view, from one point of view, that we worship God. And then we begin to see all that God is towards us. How infinite it is, this wonderful way of love! May God encourage and strengthen us, for His name's sake!

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