

The Way of Holiness

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Isaiah, chapter 35. I'm reading at verse 8. Isaiah 35, verse 8.

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way.

Even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. As we know, this is a beautiful chapter. Remember looking before at the last verse of this particular chapter.

This verse, verse 8, talks about a way. And people are traveling on this particular way. If we were to go through verses 8, 9, and 10, which I'm not particularly planning to do tonight, we would see the destination of those who are traveling along this particular way.

It's a destination of great joy. Destination of homecoming. It's a destination, ultimately, of heaven. And I would hope before we even begin tonight that everybody is on this way.

[1 : 2 0] And if you're not, I would ask you to ask yourself, why not? Why not? If you're not traveling on this particular way, this particular highway, I would like you to pose this question to yourself and ask, why not?

Because coming to church tonight has indicated a level of interest in this particular way.

And I hope, if you are not already traveling on this way, that you will give serious consideration to what this way is talking about. Now, we're all on a journey.

We're all on a journey in life, journey of life itself. And on that journey, there are lots of different stages and other little journeys. But at the end of the day, there is this one journey, this ultimate journey.

And will bring us all to a particular destination. And the Bible shows us that there are really only two roads on which people travel. There is either a broad road which leads to destruction, which leads to hell.

[2 : 3 6] That's what Jesus tells us. Or there is a narrow road that leads to eternal life. And we cannot make people change the road.

It is the Lord who will make people change that road. But we can set out before people the importance of journeying on that road. And ultimately, we are not in charge of people's destination.

And we are not to pass judgment upon people's destination. That is God's domain. That is God's authority. And we have to concern ourselves, first and foremost, as to whether we are on this way.

And we must also concern ourselves with other people in the sense that we wish and want for others. That they will travel along this particular way.

Now, Jesus, when he spoke, he spoke about these two roads. The broad road and the narrow road. And Jesus spoke about these two roads in two ways. Very clearly and simply, he said that if we do not listen to what he says, if we do not take on board and submit to his authority and to his rule, and if we do not travel on the particular way and road that he sets out for us, then that we will bring death upon ourselves.

[4 : 01] And so it is very, very important for us to listen to what God's word says. Because we live in a day where God's word, sadly, has very little impact upon our land.

And people don't pay much attention to what God's word says. Well, that is the greatest mistake that any person can make.

Because, you see, people can have brilliant minds. They can have the highest IQ going. They can have the greatest reasoning powers. They can have the most practical, logical minds.

And yet these brilliant minds and incredible logical minds can reason and argue a person into hell. You see, we have to submit under the word and the authority of God.

And irrespective of what man says and man thinks and what man reasons, at the end of the day, it's what God's word says. And we have to come back to this again and again and again.

[5 : 09] And it's very interesting that this chapter is one that Jesus, in fact, quoted from in his ministry here when he walked in this world. And Jesus lived by the word that we are preaching here tonight.

Jesus taught by this very word. Jesus used the very words from this chapter to prove who he was. There was an occasion when that's the very thing that Jesus did.

He took from this chapter to prove who he was. And what fools we would be if we were to turn our back upon what Jesus himself was saying.

You remember when John the Baptist, when he was in prison, he sent messengers to Jesus. And these messengers came with a question, asking Jesus if he was the Messiah.

And you remember what Jesus' answer was. Jesus said, go and show John these things. And then he referred to this chapter, to Isaiah chapter 35, about the blind seeing and the deaf hearing.

[6 : 17] You see, Jesus did something really, really important at that particular time. He used the word to answer the question. Jesus could have taken a blind man and healed him there and then in front of these messengers.

He could have taken a deaf man and healed him there and then. And he could have said to these messengers, right, you saw what I just did. You saw me opening the eyes of that blind man.

Well, go and tell that to John, what you saw. But that's not what Jesus did. Jesus went to the word. Jesus went back to the word and he said, go and show John these things.

And he quoted from the Old Testament, knowing that John was a student of the word and John would know what the word was saying. And Jesus was there highlighting the primacy of scripture over everything.

And that's why it is so important for us also to take on board what God's word is saying. We must learn to live upon God's word. We must learn not to go by what we feel necessarily or what we think, but upon what God's word says.

[7 : 32] You know, we often come back to that for our own life. And we often have to say, right, what does God's word say on this? It's not what do I feel?

What do I think? We're always thinking along these terms. What do I think? It should really be, what does God's word say about this? And that should be a rule and that should be our direction in life.

Because God tells us that the word of God is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy. Now, our verse here tells us, and a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness.

Now, I think we can safely say that a highway or a main road or a motorway or a dual carriageway or any of these kind of roads can only be built by authority.

Supposing I had loads of money, I couldn't one day decide and say to myself, well, you know, see that road going to Tarbert. See that stretch after Cameron Terrace where you go down the hill and then you just bend after bend after bend almost until you get to Cure's.

[8 : 46] I don't like that. I'm going to build a new road. I'm just going to do it. You couldn't very well do that. Roads are built by authority. You can build a path around your house, but you can't go out and say, right, I'm going to build a new main road.

End of story. You can only build by authority. And so this is our road. This is our way that is built by authority.

And God is the author. God is the planner. God is the founder of this road. This is our road, a way that is not built by human invention or intuition or anything like that.

This is our road that was planned by the wisdom of God. This is our way that was founded by the power of God. Let's remember that. This way was planned by the wisdom of God.

And it was built by the power of God. Not by man. Man had nothing to do with it. We didn't think it up. We didn't suggest it.

[9 : 52] It never once entered into a reasoning. It is by way of God's grace and revelation to us. It is all of God. So we've got to remember that about this particular way.

This and a highway shall be there and it shall be called the way of holiness. And this is the only way. God didn't build two ways. He didn't build several ways from ourselves to himself.

He built one way. That's what Peter said. There is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved. But this one name, the name of Jesus.

This is the only way. And the cost of this road or the cost of this way was beyond any price that any person in this world could ever pay.

Or any group of people or any one nation or any collection of all the nations of this world. This world does not and cannot have the wealth or the resources to pay for this particular way.

[11 : 04] It's an amazing thing. Because this way is so distant. It is so long. In fact, it is impossible.

There is no scale in this world. There is no particular measuring device that can measure the distance from where we are to where God is.

The only way that we can measure it is by his love. And that is past finding out. And the only way, of course, that we are able to see that love is in what God has done with his son for us.

And, of course, that is a price that was paid in order for this way to be established, for this way to be set up. God's son had to die. God's son is the foundation of this particular way.

The death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all that God asks us to do is that we walk this way.

[12 : 07] And the only way we can walk this way is to walk with a son who is the foundation of this way. And that's the question we come back.

We posted at the very beginning. And we're having to ask that question just now. Are you walking in this way? You're walking in either one of two ways tonight. You're either walking on this way or you're not.

You may want to be on it. And if you want to be on it, my dear friend, that's a great thing. But you need to do more than want to be on it. You need to be on it. There are loads of people who want to be on something that don't actually do something about it.

So you make sure that you go beyond simply wanting to being on this particular road. In order to be on this road, you must submit to the Lord.

To submit to his Lordship. In other words, the Lord has to become Lord of your life. In other words, he has to rule your life. He is the one who calls, as it were, if we can use that expression reverently, calls the shots in your life.

[13 : 17] You now live for him. You see, you love him. And the faith that now is in a patient's heart is a faith that operates by love.

Faith and love are inseparably bound. You follow the Lord. You believe in him. You accept him. You walk this way because you love him.

And love is at the very center. Our love for the Lord is born in your heart. That is at the very center of every person who walks this way.

And we see the highway's name. It's called, and a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness. Now, a road is often named after its owner.

Or after, I don't know if you can call it an owner, but after a person. And very often, it might be after the, for instance, Matheson Road to my, I might be, and I know there are people in here with a great knowledge of local history and of Stornway.

[14 : 21] And I might be wrong, but I'm led to believe that Matheson Road was built by Sir James Matheson for his wife in order that she wouldn't have to go through like the Bayhead way of town, but able to go to come round the back.

I might be wrong, but that's what I was led to believe. And that road gained its name, Matheson, from Sir James Matheson. Well, here is a road, or here is a way, that has taken its name from the founder and the builder of it.

And we find that its name is the way of holiness. And this is one of the great declarations that God has made concerning himself. He says, I am holy.

And in fact, God says to us, he requires of us that we also will be holy. And you know, one of the solemn things that the word of God tells us is that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

It's not maybe a particularly popular doctrine today, the holiness that God requires of man. But it is nonetheless a fact that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

[15 : 36] And so the Holy One of Israel has made this way, and it leads to the place of perfect holiness. God alone is perfectly holy.

But, you know, the moment that God's people, or the moment that you come into the kingdom, the moment you set foot upon this way, you also begin to become holy.

And sometimes we don't realize there is a separateness about holiness, anotherness about holiness, maybe that we haven't fully grasped.

But the holier a person becomes, the more they will begin to resemble the Lord. And we're told about this way that the unclean shall not pass over it.

Now, again, in the Bible, Galatians, for instance, shows us that there are two ways of walking along in this world. There is one way, we're told very clearly, that a person either walks after the spirit or after the flesh.

[16 : 42] That doesn't mean for the Christian that they're never troubled by the flesh. In fact, I would say the reverse is true. If a person says, you know, I'm a Christian, and I'm never bothered, never have any problems with myself, never have any problems with the flesh, I never feel any tug or pull or inclination to draw aside.

I'm never bothered with any of the lusts of the flesh or any pride of life. I'm never bothered with it. These things don't trouble me. I would say, you're a very funny Christian.

I would, in fact, say to that person, you better examine your standing. While the believer is taking that holiness from the Lord, and while the believer is walking after the spirit, the believer is also somebody who is only too conscious of all that the flesh is, of the struggle, of the torment, of the conflict, of the battle, a daily battle.

Where there is so often this inclination towards sin. And the Bible makes it very clear that the two, the flesh and the spirit, are at war one with another.

And if you're a believer tonight, you know all about that. You know only too well these things. Even the apostle Paul, great man, and although he was, he knew all about that inner conflict. We find Paul saying that the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that's what I do.

[18 : 15] But for the passion walking along this highway, the predominant way of walking is after the spirit.

That doesn't mean but that there are days when they may struggle, days when they're pulled aside. But the main thrust, the main way of their life is this way of holiness.

But you know the great thing and the wonderful thing that the verse shows us here also is this. That irrespective of how frail we may be, of how little understanding we may have, all those walking along this highway, they will not go astray.

Even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. You know, there are many people hold back from a full commitment to the faith for this very reason.

They're afraid that they may go astray. They're afraid that they may go back. And they say, you know, I'm afraid. I'm afraid if I begin to follow the Lord that I'll go for a few weeks and then I'll go back.

[19 : 33] Maybe there's some people like that in here tonight. And it's holding you back. And you're saying, you know, I would come out and make a clear declaration on the Lord's side, but I'm scared that I'll go back.

Well, we've got to trust what the Lord says. The Lord says, even if they are fools, even if they have limited understanding, even though they might be frail in their walk, they shall not go astray.

See, the Lord's going to keep them. Now, that doesn't mean that those who are walking along this way, some may walk very quickly. And we know that in the Christian faith.

There are some people that are converted and they make great strides. You know, we've used the illustration before. But you watch people walking along the road. And people walk in all different ways and manners.

Some people walk with a spring in their step. Other people, they slouch. Some people walk really briskly and they cover the ground so quickly. Other people, it's like they shuffle and they walk slowly.

[20 : 41] Some people, just they walk a little and then they stop. And then they walk a little more and then they stop. And, you know, in a sense, it's kind of like that in the Christian faith. There are some people that are converted and they just seem to make strides.

And they grow and they grow and they develop and they seem to be progressing all the time. And you're saying to yourself, they probably can't see it, but others are seeing it and they're saying, My word, that person is really making advances.

Great strides in the Christian faith. There are others who maybe begin well and then they slow down. There are others who maybe begin very slowly and then they begin to make greater strides.

There are some who do begin and then they stop. But the thing is, they're all kept. And even those who slow down and those who seem to stop, they will start up again because they're on this road.

Once you're on this road, you're on it. And you will be kept on that road. And you will be taken on that road. Because it's not you who keeps yourself.

[21 : 48] The Lord works in us in such a way that we appear to be keeping ourselves, but we're not. We're told that in Peter. We are kept by the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.

So the Lord is keeping. So I'm saying this to anybody tonight who's saying, I am scared of committing my all to the Lord in case I can't keep going.

You see, we're looking at it purely at a human level. It's the Lord. It's all of grace from start to finish. And the Lord who begins the world will perfect it.

So you've got to trust him. Sometimes parents are like that. Maybe when their children might start or they're young, they start following the Lord. And sometimes you'll hear parents say, oh, well, I hope.

It's now a new worry. Well, of course, there's a new worry and a new responsibility. But the fact is, the Lord who saves is a Lord who will keep all the way. The Lord doesn't begin us on a road, on a journey, and then say, that's you now.

[22 : 58] You're on your own. No. He's with us every step. He says, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. And that's the beauty because the Lord is in the business of taking his people home.

And this is the way he's taking them along this particular highway. It's not going to be an easy journey because the next verse talks about lions and ravenous beasts and so on.

But you know, along this way, they won't be found there. But the redeemed will walk there. You see, all the enemies which are out, sin and Satan and hell and all the destructive powers which are there in order to destroy, they will not be allowed.

The Lord will take all his people home. Every single one. I think verse 10 is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible.

And the ransom to the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy. And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

[24 : 03] Love that last, these last lines. Sorrow and sighing. Two of the things that have followed us all the way through this world. Sorrow and sighing.

How many times we have sighed because of sorrow. And it's gone. It's flee away. That word flee means to disappear as fast as you can.

It's just, it's gone. And that's at the end for those who walk this road. Well, may I say one thing here as we come to conclude.

There's many things that we could say. And as I come back to ask this question, are you walking along this particular way? The point is this. It's not an obscure way.

This is not a way that is hidden. Where it's really, really difficult to find. This is a way that is signposted. A way that has been made so clear.

[25 : 05] And this is what the Lord has done. You tonight are being invited by the Lord. To come and to walk this way.

You can almost see the hand of the Lord stretched out to you tonight. Inviting you to walk this way. Will you? If you're saying no.

Why? Why? Is that not folly and madness? The Lord will keep you. And he will give you, as you see in verse 10.

He will give you gladness and joy. Everlasting joy. I cannot think of any greater future than that. I think one of the saddest things to see is our old people who have never had any faith in the Lord.

Old people who have, as it were, used the expression, a foot in the grave. And you know, there is a fearful despondency about them.

[26 : 16] Because all they talk about is they're just looking back. They have nothing to look forward to. They don't talk about the future. Because there isn't anything exciting.

There's nothing. There's nothing that they can think of ahead of them. Except despondency. I've spoken to people like that. And it's one of the...

I find it one of the saddest things in this world. The believer is never like that. I've spoken to many a believer nearing the end.

And you know, although sometimes faith can take a little knock, there is a settled persuasion of where they're going.

And there is a joy. Even sometimes there's pain and difficulties. But there is a joy. And they know there is going to be an everlasting joy.

[27 : 19] That's what future... That's what a future. And I hope tonight that all of you are looking to the Lord of that future. That you will trust your life to the Lord of that future.

That he will be your future. And he will be your future if you begin to walk along this way. Let us pray. Lord our God, we pray to bless us and to help us to hear what God the Lord is saying.

We pray that we might all walk along this way. And that we may have the hope of heaven large in our heart. Our days in this world are short.

And it will soon be over. And we pray that we might not live out our life so that when we come to the end of our days, that we have nothing to look forward to.

We pray that our future, our hope might be in Jesus. We pray to bless us here tonight, every single one of us. Bless our homes, our families, and all whom we love.

[28 : 24] We pray, Lord, for those who are of heavy heart. We pray for those who have lost loved ones. And who know the pain that that brings. But we give thanks that even at this moment, we pray to the one who is able to help and to strengthen and to comfort those whose hearts are heavy.

Be with us, we pray. Forgive us all our sin. Take us all home safely. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.