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The Ways of Man

Rex A. Turner

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THE WAYS OF MAN

A sermon delivered by Rex A. Turner on July 6, 1958 at the Hillsboro Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee and heard over radio station W L A C.

My subject this morning is "The Ways of Man." The subject "The Ways of Man" does no violence to the scriptures because the Bible speaks of "Ways". The Bible speaks of the evil way, and it speaks of the good way.

Solomon said in Proverbs 14:12 that "there is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Jeremiah exclaimed, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Jesus spoke of the "broad gate" and the "broad way" that leadeth to destruction. (Matt. 7:13).

When Jesus spoke of the "broad way", he was speaking of an evil or bad way. When Jeremiah spoke of the way of man, he was speaking of a bad way, and when Solomon spoke of the way that seemeth right unto man, he was speaking of a bad way.

On the other hand, the prophet Isaiah in chapter thirty-five, verse eight, said: "A mighty shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness." Here the prophet Isaiah was speaking of the good way. Concerning that way, Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, and no one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Thus, since the Bible speaks about "Ways" - a bad way and a good way - I do no violence to the scriptures when I announce my subject: "The Ways of Man." I mean by this subject, "The Ways of Man," the courses that men have pursued. In the Bible we have histories of many men. Some of them have followed ways or courses that are to be imitated. Others have followed courses that are to be shunned. As we look in on the lives of others, we find encouragement and chartered courses to greater ways of living.

The Damascus Way - A Way of Rebellion

The first way that I want to speak to you about this morning is the Damascus way, a way of rebellion. We read of the Damascus way in Acts 9. Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples. He was on his way to Damascus to bind, persecute, and throw in prison those who were calling on the name of the Lord. He had authority from the great Sanhedrin to commit Christians to prison. Saul was traveling the Damascus way.

In the Galatian letter, the first chapter, we learn that Saul was advanced in the Jews' religion beyond that of his own countrymen, of his own age. He knew the Old Testament. The end of the Old Testament is Christ; and yet Saul through his prejudice and rebellion had not properly appropriated the teaching of Old Testament scriptures. Instead of accepting Christ by faith, Saul persecuted the very way of Christ.

There are many people in our society today who are well informed in the scriptures. They study their Bibles regularly and daily, but they never come to a full knowledge of the truth because they have permitted themselves to become so steeped in prejudice so as to fail to properly appropriate and evaluate the instruction of the Holy Scriptures. Such circumstances or conditions on the part of mortal

men are very fortunate indeed, and yet many people today are traveling the Damascus way, a way of rebellion. I should like to have you inquire searchingly into your own hearts this morning: I should like to have you inquire, "Am I following the Damascus way, the way of rebellion? Are there instructions in the New Testament, or requirements in the New Testament pertaining to my life that I refuse to accept? As a Christian, is there malice or strife in my heart? Do I have obligations that I refuse to perform because of prejudice and rebellion?" We are no different from our religious neighbors who rebel at the truth on such subjects as baptism and the Lord's Supper when we rebel at plain positive requirements of New Testament living.

The Emmaus Way - A Way of Spiritual Blindness

Another way that I want to speak concerning is the Emmaus way, a way of spiritual blindness. We read of the Emmaus way in Luke 24. The burden of the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke is the resurrection of the Son of man. On the early morning of that first day of the week, Jesus Christ had come forth from the grave conquerer of death and of hell. Certain women had gone to the tomb and they found the body of Jesus missing. Word of the missing body spread like wild fire. In the meantime, two men were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were talking earnestly with each other concerning the things which had happened. A third party joined them. The third party inquired of their conversation, and they said, "Have you been here, and you do not know the things which come to pass in these days?" Then then related to him how that Jesus of Nazareth, a great man of God, had been put to death by the chief priest and the rulers. They declared that they had hoped that he would redeem Israel. They further commented to the third party that this was the third day since his death. They explained that certain women had reported that the man's body was missing from the tomb, but that no one had seen him. The third party began at that very point to comment concerning the scriptures. He related how that the scriptures taught certain things relative to Christ, and he consummated his talk with them by pointing to the very fact that these things would be in fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures.

As the three men walked along earnestly discussing these matters, they came to Emmaus, and the third party made as if he would go on his way, but the two constrained him saying, "Abide with us." The third party went to abide with them, and it came to pass when he sat down with them to eat that he took bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them. As he did so, the eyes of the other two men were opened and they recognized him to be Jesus. They said, as he disappeared out of their sight, "Did not our hearts burn within us?"

Those two men had companied with Jesus for the entire distance of the journey, but they did not recognize him. Their course was one of spiritual blindness. They failed to recognize the Son of man himself. People are traveling the Emmaus way today. I remember, for instance, having been in conversation with a number of men on one occasion and the subject of religion came into focus. Those men said, among other things, "We are tired of all the confusion that exists in Christendom today." They said, "Where did the many churches come from anyway?" "Why," they said, "No one would get an idea for all the different churches if he were to just simply read the New Testament." At that point I spoke out and said, "What you are saying is the very foundation of the Restoration Movement of which I am a part." Then I related how that Stone and Campbell and others had seen the error and the evil of division. I pointed out that they began to preach and to say, "Where the Bible speaks we will speak; and where the Bible is silent we will be silent;" that their effort was to restore the ancient order of things; that they sought to reinstitute upon this earth the church as it was in the first century; and that the movement had grown with wonderful rapidity even unto this day. Do you know, I made absolutely no impression upon those men. While they were clamoring for the one church of the New Testament, they refused to pause and consider for a single moment

that the churches of Christ in their own communities are standing for and promoting the very thing for which they were clamoring. They were traveling the Emmaus way, the way of spiritual blindness. Many people are traveling the road of spiritual blindness today. They fail to see and to recognize that which is obvious and apparent.

The Jericho Way - A Way of Philosophy of Life

The next way concerning which I want to speak is the Jericho way. The Jericho way is a way of philosophy of life. We read of the Jericho way in Luke 10:25-37. A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves. Those thieves clubbed him, robbed him, and left him to die. A priest came along and beheld the man who had been clubbed and robbed and left to die, but the priest passed on the other side. A Levite came along and he, too, beheld the man who had been clubbed and robbed and left to die; but he passed on the other side. Then a Samaritan came along, a half-breed, one of a mongrel race. The Samaritan beheld the man who had been clubbed and robbed and left to die, and instead of passing on the other side as the priest and the Levite had done, he administered first aid to the injured person. He placed the injured man upon his beast and carried him to an inn and looked after his welfare. When the time came for the Samaritan to leave, he left pay with the inn-keeper and he said, "Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee."

Jesus, of course, taught this lesson to set forth the principle and the point of who is thy neighbor. To say the least of it, in this story we have the three basic philosophies of life. The first philosophy of life is demonstrated by the thieves or robbers, and that philosophy of life can be stated specifically like this: What is thine is mine, and I will take it by force. The priest and the Levite demonstrate the second philosophy of life and it may be stated like this: What is thine is thine, and what is mine is mine. The third philosophy of life is demonstrated by the Samaritan. The Samaritan said specifically: What is mine is thine, and I will give it to thee.

Every responsible person is following one of these philosophies of life. No doubt there is no one present today who is following the philosophy of life as set forth by the robbers who said, in substance, What is thine is mine, and I will take it. There may be many of us, however, who are following the philosophy set by the priest and Levite who said, in substance: What is thine is thine, and what is mine is mine. I wonder if we maintain such an attitude toward our fellowmen. The only philosophy of life that is worthy of imitation is the philosophy of the good Samaritan. He said, in substance: What is mine is thine, and I will give it to thee.

The Damascus way is a way to be shunned. The Emmaus way is a way to be shunned. The Jericho way is a way in which every person is following, but let each one of us beware lest he be found following a way that is unacceptable in the sight of God. Permit me to re-emphasize that the only philosophy that is acceptable is the philosophy of the Samaritan who said, "What is mine is thine, and I will give it to thee."

The Jerusalem Way - A Way of Truth

Another way that I want to discuss with you is the Jerusalem way, the way of truth. In Luke 9:51 we read how that "Jesus steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Jerusalem is the city of the great King. In Jerusalem many wonderful things happened. The church of the living God began in the city of Jerusalem; the first gospel sermon was preached in the city of Jerusalem; the first converts under the great commission were made in the city of Jerusalem; the church just as it began

in the city of Jerusalem was just as God would have it be. Had he desired it otherwise, he would have ordered it otherwise.

If we would be what God would have us to be today, then, we must go to Jerusalem. We must be a part of that which constituted the church as it began on that memorable Pentecost when the apostle Peter with the keys of the kingdom of heaven bound on earth the things bound in heaven and loosed on earth the things loosed in heaven. The church as it began then was as it should be in doctrine, in organization, in worship and in work. We should by all means travel the Jerusalem way.

The Appian Way - A Way of Encouragement and Comfort

Another way that I want to point out to you is the Appian way - a way of encouragement and comfort. Paul was on that perilous voyage to Rome. He was traveling as a prisoner, and after having been shipwrecked on the Island of Melita, the spring came and he was dispatched from that island to Rome. The ship landed and the men made their way inland to the Three Taverns and the Market of Appius, and there certain Christians from Rome met the apostle Paul. Luke, writing of the event, said that Paul thanked God and took courage. Those men were a great source of encouragement to Paul, and we need to be a great source of encouragement to our fellowmen today. There may be those in this congregation this morning who have put forth a great deal of effort under adverse circumstances to be present at worship. Some brave little mother may need a steadying hand of encouragement. Some brother who is weak may be striving with a great deal of effort to overcome his weakness. We are to encourage each other. We are to edify and build up each other in the most holy faith. Let us do just that. I submit to you, my friends, that the Jerusalem way and the Appian way are ways to be imitated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Damascus way, a way of rebellion, is to be avoided. The Emmaus way, a way of spiritual blindness, is another way to be avoided. The Jericho way is a philosophy of life, and every person is traveling the Jericho way; but let every person beware, lest he fail to follow the way of the good Samaritan. The Jerusalem way is a way of truth and is to be imitated. The Appian way is a way of encouragement and comfort, and it, too, is to be imitated.
