

The Way to Heaven

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon delves into the journey on the 'highway of holiness' as depicted in Isaiah 35, drawing parallels to a dangerous highway through the mountains. It emphasizes the necessity of surrendering at the cross, facing trials and temptations, and finding joy and radiance in fellowship with God. The message highlights the narrow gate of the cross as the exclusive entry point to the journey of salvation and eternal destination.

Scripture: Isaiah 35:8, Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:19, Psalms 91:1, Proverbs 4:18, Psalms 34:3, Matthew 7:13

Topics: "Journey of Holiness", "Surrender at the Cross"

Description

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Transcript

Well, hello. My name is Fred Tomlinson, and I live in British Columbia, Canada. And welcome to this study.

You know, not that many miles away from where I live, there's a stretch of highway. It's 115 miles long, and it climbs away from this valley out over the mountains for virtually the entire 115 miles. And it has earned for itself the reputation of the highway through hell.

Actually, it's a spectacular highway, and it's broad, and it's well surfaced, and the scenery is spectacular for the entire journey. And when the weather's fine, the normal speed limit is 75 miles an hour. However, in the winter, that's a different story.

And of course, it was as a result of winter conditions on that highway that earned for it the reputation I've already mentioned. It's hard to do that drive without thinking to oneself about the men who were at the other end of the whole project when they were looking at the prospects of getting a highway through there. Surely, there must have been many of them who thought this is virtually impossible.

And that's to say nothing about the costs that would be involved in the project. Anyway, all that said, I'd like to read to you from the scriptures, and I want to read about a different kind of highway, an altogether different kind of highway. And I'll be reading from the book of Isaiah chapter 35.

If you'd like to follow, I'm reading from verse 8. A highway will be there, a roadway. It will be called the highway of holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it.

No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it. These will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion. With everlasting joy upon their heads, they will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Amen. You know, as we cast our minds back through the pages of scripture, all the way back to the beginning, we find there, as most of you will know very, very well, that in the context of that Eden, that paradise which God created in the beginning for Adam and for Eve, Adam, although it was actually Eve who started the ball rolling in response to the serpent, but of course Adam, based on the whole subject of authority so far as God's plan is concerned, Adam will always get the blame or take the responsibility for it throughout the pages of scripture. But the fact is that Adam, by his response to the seduction of the enemy, he gave permission, as he rebelled against God's word and against God's authority, that the very seed of Satan was secreted into his bloodstream, and as a result he reproduced after his kind according to the law which God had instituted.

So a real man opened the door up to Satan and to the darkness of his kingdom and to bondage, and as a result of that we know, and I'm taking a giant step forward through the story of scripture, God who was not surprised by what took place, because he knew exactly how it was all going to unfold, and it would all serve his own sovereign and divine purpose. But there's a scripture that comes in Romans, the book of Romans chapter 1 verse 17, which says that within the gospel, that's the gospel story, the message of salvation, within the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. And as we look back to that story back in the garden and what took place there, and God certainly didn't abandon everything, although there was dreadful consequences of what had taken place, but it didn't deter or detract God at all from his eternal purpose.

But within the context of his righteous justice, this would be a simple way of observing it. Since a real man had opened the door, it would need to be a real man that closed the door. And there's a song that many of us have learned over the years, very well known, which says, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only, he only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in. Only God could deal with what appeared to be an impossible situation that a righteous and holy God could be justified in saving mankind from his sin, from the consequences of that sin, and bringing him into an incredibly indescribable relationship with himself, with his holiness. And so, in order for this to take place, the Son of God came from heaven and became a real man, although he never ceased to be real God.

And that's the mystery of his incarnation. But he became a man in order to pay my debt, for God had said, the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The wages of sin is death.

And he needed to be a real man in order that he could die. And as the result of the whole process, shed his blood to pay man's debt to God. Amen.

The fact is that the Redeemer's blood must be perfect blood. It could not be tainted by sin. That's why the songwriter said, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

But the fact is, Jesus met the criteria on both of the counts that I just referred to when I was speaking about the highway. First, in terms of what seemed to be the impossibility of it, Jesus met that criteria. And in terms of the cost that would be incurred in order to make that redemption available, he met that criteria also.

The Apostle Peter, writing in his epistle, he said this, for you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but it was with the precious blood of Christ. The Apostle writing in the book of Hebrews chapter 10 verses 19 and 20 put it this way, having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated or made holy for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh. Amen.

What is the value of blood? Well, the best answer to that question would be, well, it depends entirely on whose blood we're talking about. You know, very many years ago, I used to go to Chicago, we lived in Ontario at this time, and I went to Chicago quite regularly to a group of young people there and we had some very, very wonderful meetings that I will never forget. But one of the major highways that you drove on, or I drove on going there, was called the Dan Ryan Expressway, a major expressway in Chicago.

And I will never forget on one occasion while I was there, I was being shown a newspaper page and a picture on the page. The picture had actually been taken from the air and it was a shot of a section of the Dan Ryan Expressway. It was a shot just simply of the asphalt in a certain location, but written in large letters right on the asphalt of that incredibly busy highway, were these words, my dad died here.

The blood that was on that highway was exceedingly precious. It was priceless to that young man, who somehow I mentioned during the night had gone out there and painted those words there. The sight was so meaningful because of the blood that was spilled there on that occasion.

And what we're talking about here today is the blood of God that was shed to pay a debt. And the debt was not God's, but the blood was most certainly his. The book of Isaiah, I read this statement, he poured out his life unto death.

The life that Jesus lived in the flesh and the spotless soul that he created by his sinlessness was poured out upon the cross. And the price for man's redemption was paid with that blood, with that life. And God made a way where there was no way.

That which appeared to be impossible was made possible and the road to heaven for sinful men and women who would come under the sound of the message of the gospel and respond to it deeply and sincerely would find that heaven itself was opened to them and is opened to them. Amen. You know, as we read through the Old Testament, time and time again we're finding references which present to us types of Christ, types of him who would come and be known as Jesus and who would pay this price that we're thinking about.

And just for example, to give a basis for what I'm about to say, we read about the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. We read about the ark. We read about the Passover lamb.

We read about the manna. We read about the tabernacle. We read about the land of Canaan.

We read about the rose of Sharon. We read about the lily of the valley and so on and so on and so on. All these particulars serving to be illustrations and representative of or types or shadows of in many cases

that which would yet come to pass in the person of the Lord Jesus.

So it's no surprise on that basis when I suggest to you that when I'm reading this little section of Scripture here and in the eighth verse I read about a highway which is called the highway of holiness, I want to say to you that I believe that it is a representation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. And those of old who wrote these things or received these prophecies in this case and penned them or had them recorded, they had no idea what these very things that they were saying or words they were using to describe or names being given would have the kind of significance that we living at this time of the New Testament are able to understand.

Now you'll remember that Jesus taught that the road that leads to life is narrow and few there be that find it. On another occasion he leaves us with a very clear statement and that is that those he labels his little flock, these will be the ones who will find it. Amen.

You know with regard to this way, this way of holiness, this way which represents to me and I trust to us the salvation that's available in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, it's a narrow road. It's found only by a small company relatively speaking. And it also carries with it a kind of paradox really because although there's a reference right here to the group of people who are walking although we walk in a company, we walk along this highway of holiness in a group with a company of others, yet there's another sense in which we travel alone.

It's a narrow path, we walk single file and the point that I'm wanting to emphasize just now is that for each and every one of us who will travel this way, we must be prepared to go through with God alone and that's a big thing because we're social people, we like togetherness, we like to be with others, we enjoy church fellowship times when we're together with other of the Lord's people and this is all wonderful and all part of God's plan. But in the final analysis, each one of us must go through with God alone. This comes right down to our own families, not everyone is blessed to be in a family, a marriage relationship where both spouses are the Lord's people.

But where they are and where we enjoy that and perhaps the children have grown and they've given their lives to Christ also and this is all very wonderful and something to be cherished and appreciated. But in the final analysis, I must go through with God apart from my wife and she must go through with God apart from her husband and so it is with each and every one of us. We have our close human relationships that are precious and important to us but there is one relationship that must be attended to and we must attend to it on our own and go through with God alone.

I'll tell you something else about every traveller on this highway because it's called the highway of holiness. Every person travelling on this highway is holy. Well, everyone will be holy first of all because God has imputed his holiness to us.

Paul explains this writing to the book, writing to the Romans in the book of Romans and his righteousness is calculated to belonging to those who are his people and that's the basis upon which we have salvation. But there's also holiness which is being wrought or worked out, worked in and worked out of us that is so much a part of the life and the experience of God's true little flock, his people, those who are walking and travelling along this way of holiness. Amen.

You know, thinking back to this 8th verse here and I've read it in all kinds of translations. I was raised for most of my life on the old King James translation and I don't regret that at all and it's the basis of so much

of my thinking and when I quote scripture almost always I'm quoting the old King James translation. Just recently I've been enjoying reading this New American Standard translation.

None of them are flawless it seems but in any event, let me just look again at this verse. There's a strange statement. It says a highway will be there, verse 8, a roadway.

It will be called the highway of holiness and then it goes on. The unclean will not travel on it but it will be for him who walks that way. And evidently, and I don't profess to be a Greek scholar, I've tried to look into it a bit but I'm not a Greek scholar by any stretch so I benefit from those who are.

I decided that a little bit of knowledge can be very dangerous and I thought I was getting a bit dangerous at one point many, many years ago. But those who do understand these things tell us that there's a difficulty here and some of you will have marginal alternatives to it or you can check it in different translations. One translation which is very, very interesting is Jung's literal translation where Jung is thought to, he's the one who put together the Jung's Concordance, put together as literal a translation as possible.

He takes verse 8 this way and listen carefully and if you've got your Bible open, watch the difference in the text that you have perhaps. And a highway hath been there and a way, and the way of holiness is called to it. Not pass over it doth the unclean and he himself is by them.

Whoso is going in the way even fools are not. So it's very awkward to read it that way but he's trying to do justice to the original. But he has chosen in this translation to introduce this line which he believes is a very viable alternative to the way we find it in other Bibles and this is the phrase and he himself is by them or he himself by them.

And without spending more than an extra moment here, the wonderful point that he is able to bring out of that text and say this is a legitimate meaning of the original words here is this, that traveling this road of holiness we are not traveling alone. And as I have suggested from the beginning of this talk or quite close to it, the very highway itself is symbolic of Christ himself. So we're in him and he is with us.

Whereas in the Old Testament everything was done by symbols and symbolic statements and pointers toward the New Testament. In the New Testament it's no longer Christ merely with us or by us or near to us in some way but he's actually in us. It's not by him, we are in him and Paul brings out this glorious flip side of that.

He said and he is in us. We are in him and he is in us. These words and this whole idea is speaking of an intimacy.

Another statement which is very challenging is he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. There's a joining together, a union of spirit, the divine with the redeemed of the human man or woman which is staggering as we attempt to think it through and cannot do an adequate job with it. Amen.

But what we're seeing here is on this highway we're traveling in him and with him and he is, certainly he's biased but he's in us. Amen. What a wonderful thing.

And so while we travel on this road and this road is this holy road, this holy highway which has been purchased with an enormous price, an incalculable price, there's something else that is picked up in this passage that's very important and it's this, that while the road is holy it's also a difficult road. It's even a dangerous road to travel on. Really? Yes.

In fact, take it a step further, it's humanly impossible to travel this road and of course it's humanly impossible without what we've just been observing a moment ago. If we are ever to travel this road, this holy highway to God's ultimate destination, it will be because of his grace, it will be because of his sacrifice and his life made available to us through the means of God the Holy Spirit. It will all be because of him.

Amen. Utterly and totally impossible to us left to our own resources. You know, these travellers that are travelling along this road mentioned here, they're not unspiritual people, can I suggest.

They're not carnal, they're not indisciplined professors of Christianity. I'm putting it in a New Testament context, you'll understand. Because they're facing daunting temptations and daunting pressures yet their passion for holiness is such that they will not respond to these pressures and to these temptations.

But the point is that this journey along this highway of holiness is not some kind of tea party, it's not just, you know, what do we say, it's not just a picnic. The fact is this little text is pointing out to us that the journey that we travel along in this world on this way of holiness heading toward our eternal destination is a highway that passes through a terrain which is nothing less than dangerous. It's far exceeding the terrain that I was referring to in the Canadian mountains.

This terrain goes, this holy path travels through a vile district, through an unclean and haunted territory as we pass through in this world. Our surrounding culture is hostile and is intent upon purging every thought and suggestion of God right out of it. We see that on every hand and we are sure that the enemy working through these things is seeking to snatch from us and seize from us our testimony.

You know, there was a period in my life when I was a police officer and we didn't have a badge in England but we had a warrant card. And I carried a warrant card which proved that I was an authenticated me as a police officer, whether I was on duty or off duty. And I can remember in the training college being told whatever you do this card must be with you at all times, you must never ever let it out of your hand, as it were, and your control.

And of course, you know that there are enemies on the streets who would be very pleased to get hold of it. And that's exactly the way it is for you and for me. If you are also someone traveling along this holy highway, it's a dangerous area, there are enemies.

In fact, the Apostle Paul put it this way. He said that we're dealing with master spirits who are the rulers of this present darkness. He calls them the spirit forces of wickedness.

It's not just you and me sort of paddling our own canoe attempting to live the Christian life. It's moving along a holy pathway, holy men, holy women, united with a holy God, moving along a holy journey to a holy destination. But where we are being constantly challenged by these unseen powers, we see physical people, we have physical things said to us, physical things imposed upon us because of our testimony.

But rest assured that behind all of that, there are these rulers of this present darkness, as one translation puts those words from Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12, I believe. And amen. You know, I don't know how many of you have read the book by John Bunyan called Pilgrim's Progress.

If you haven't, I'd certainly encourage you to read it. Let me just read a little section of it. I hope it makes sense because it's not in context, really, except to say that Christian is on a journey to the celestial city.

And that's where I see a very real parallel to what I'm talking about in this session. But at this one stage in the journey, I read these words, I spied two lions in the way. Now I thought, I see the dangers that, and everyone's got significant names in this book, as most of you who've read it will know, all of you who've read it will know.

He said, I see the dangers that mistrust and timeous were driven back by. He said, the lions were chained, but they didn't see the chains. And he didn't see the chains himself at this point in time.

Then he was afraid and thought also to himself to go back after them who'd gone away. For he thought nothing but death was before him. But the porter at the lodge, whose name is Watchful, perceiving the Christian made a halt as if he would go back, cried unto him saying, is thy strength so small? Fear the lions for they are chained.

Fear not the lions, forgive me, fear not the lions for they are chained and are placed there for trial of faith to show where it is and for the discovery of those who have none. Note this next statement. Keep in the midst of the path and no hurt shall come to thee.

Wonderful. Keep in the midst of the path and no hurt shall come to thee. This pathway is narrow, but it's not a razor edge.

It's a safe way. But it's surrounded by these wild beasts and evil men and evil philosophies and teachings and influences and so on. We know that they're being broadcast to us through technology in these days in some very powerful ways, but they're all surrounding us as we seek to walk on this stretch of land which is holy, that is a life in Christ.

And so it's not a razor edge. It's safe. But here's the wisdom of this word.

You're safe when you stick to the middle of the pathway. Don't wander to the edges. If you stay in the center, you will not become hurt.

And another great scripture from the Old Testament that means a lot to me is where we read, no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. No weapon while you're walking in the center of this road. I was once the victim of a stabbing incident.

And a very dear brother came to visit me the next morning and he said, I have this word from scripture for you. And it was this very one I've just quoted, which is no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. The Apostle Paul put it this way.

If you walk in the spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. He enables us to defy all of the odds. He enables us as we walk in the center of his life, in the center of his spirit, in the center of this holy pathway, we find immunity, we find safety and security.

And there we're safe from all failure and from all defeat. Let me read some more scripture to you. I hope you appreciate this.

I'm reading from chapter 91 of the book of Psalms, which seems so appropriate. And I'm reading from the Old King James. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust.

His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flyeth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side and 10,000 at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only in thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Amen. What a wonderful section of scripture.

Amen. Now the experience of these travelers, just a word here, and you know, they were together, as I've said, going through with God on their own, as must be the case for each and every one of us. But these powers and these influences that we face, each and every one of us, are seeking to rip us apart from our brethren, to break up the family of God, if by any means they would be able to do that.

Amen. And ironically, there are those who've yielded to this temptation right at the time in their life experience when they need the benefit and encouragement of the brethren most. But that's an observation that I've made over the years.

But these travelers who are moving along together along this road, they're filled with joy unspeakable. This is the great benefit that they're enjoying. And this joy is springing.

It's springing from him who accompanies them as they're traveling. And it springs also from the light of their destination. Also, this way of holiness is uniquely illuminated, not with street lamps, but with the glory of God.

It's illuminated with the crystal city, the new Jerusalem. You know, in the book of Proverbs, I read this 4 and 18, it says, the path of the just is like the shining sun that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. Amen.

As I'm reading that, you know, my mind's wandering. I'm thinking of my first motorcycle ride in Scotland many years ago now. I had never been to the Highlands.

And I remember on this evening time, the sun was setting ahead of me at this moment as I was traveling. And it had been raining. And I can still remember how the sun was illuminating the wet, the moisture on the road.

And it was just like a blaze of gold on the road that I was driving through. I think that's the kind of thing that was in the mind of Christian as he was heading in Pilgrim's Progress story toward the celestial city. And I think it's alluded to in that very verse of scripture, or at least my little illustration responds to that.

But in another psalm, Psalm 34, I read this verses 3 and 5, it says, Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all of my fears. They looked to him and were radiant.

Amen. This is a reference that I can link in with this passage here. And it speaks to me of this redeemed company, this holy company, who are in Christ, and the beneficiaries of his redeeming work.

They're enjoying fellowship with him as they travel. They're enjoying his strengthening and his empowering and encouragement as they walk. Their hearts are filled with joy.

Their fellowship with him and their faces shine. Their hearts are filled with gladness and joy, and sorrow and crying are fled away. And they looked to him and were radiant.

Radiant countenances cannot, these radiant countenances, I should say, cannot help but sing his praises. Amen. What could possibly be higher? Or what could possibly hinder men and women from coming into the benefit that God has made available for us? I'm coming toward the end of this talk.

But you know, I've deliberately left this point to the end just to leave you with this particular point. And it's this, the real stumbling block to people coming on this roadway and enjoying all of the benefits that are to be found here, that I've only alluded to quite briefly here in this session, is the stumbling block at the beginning of the journey. Because as Jesus taught us in Matthew chapter seven, this narrow holy pathway is entered exclusively and only by the narrow gate.

And the narrow gate, well, it reminds me of a line in a hymn. It's speaking about the love of God, actually. But this line goes, it demands my soul, my life, my all.

This narrow gate speaks to us of nothing other than the cross of our Lord Jesus. We meet him there. That's where this journey starts.

We come first to the cross. There is no alternative. And few there be that find it, said Jesus.

It seems to me that in these days, popular preaching has tended to airbrush this stark reality and the truth of the cross. And they've caused it to virtually disappear, eliminating the cost factor. Such love demands my soul, my life, my all.

And they've invented another gate, an alternative gate that suits our design, that's sort of more relative to us and relative to our culture in which we find ourselves today, in this consumer arrangement that's come creeping into our churches, where it's all about God just here to serve us. And if it's not working out the way we think it should, then people get offended and turn their backs and so on. But all this stems from a massive oversimplification and alteration of the very truth of scripture.

And it's innocuous and it's anemic. Amen. But this that we're faced with, this narrow gate is the cross.

It's the cross of the Lord Jesus. It's the only gate to heaven. And here at this gate, man must come and man must do.

Man must bow. Man must become emptied. That is, he gives up his everything, all that he is, in his total humility.

Another hymn puts it this way. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Someone else that we knew years ago in England wrote these words as part of a hymn.

And here, meaning at the cross, here where all earthly hopes do cease, the new creation springs. Amen. My dear friend, I don't know where you are as far as this journey is concerned.

Maybe you've never started on it. And I encourage you to come to the cross and yield and surrender your life, your soul, your life, your all, and accept the gift of salvation. And with all of the benefits and the entry

into this life of such blessing and purpose that we've been thinking about here today.

And this is to say nothing in this session of the celestial city and that which is shining ahead for each and every one of us. Amen. May the Lord open your heart, whoever you are.

Perhaps you've started, you need to be, come refreshed in the things of God. I encourage you strongly to get alone with God and do that and come again. There's a sense in which we pass the narrow gate, we're on the narrow path, we pass the cross and we're on the journey.

But there's another sense in which we're never away from the cross and the need to come again and to come again and to come again to the cross for his cleansing and to remind ourselves of the great challenge that God and the demands that God has put upon us to take up our cross and follow him, having paid the price involved. Amen. May the Lord open your heart, as I say, to the truth that results in true liberty.

May God bless you. If you feel to leave a comment or contact me, please feel free. God bless you.

Bye-bye.

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