

The Incline

by Martin Knapp

The sermon uses the illustration of an incline to describe the experience of ascending to the heights of holiness and receiving perfect love.

Scripture: Matthew 5:8, Acts 1:8, Philippians 3:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Sanctification", "Perfect Love"

Description

Martin Knapp preaches about the spiritual ascent to the blessed Beulah Land experience, likening it to ascending an inclined plane to heights of perfect love, holiness, sanctification, and a pure heart. Believers are urged to make the ascent, leaving behind the fever and fog of spiritual sickness in the lowlands. The journey requires abandonment to God, faith in His unseen power, and adherence to His promises, leading to a second and definite experience of receiving perfect love after conversion.

Transcript

Among the numberless illustrations which we meet that are figures of the Double Cure, some of the most impressive is the inclined planes over which people ascend to some of the suburbs in our city. We recently made such an ascent over one which is said to carry to an elevation of two hundred and seventy-five feet above the Ohio river, leaving the fever and fog and bustle of the city far below.

The ascent is made by the street car from the city, being run into a case which is quickly drawn up the steep "incline" by a strong cable operated by an unseen power.

It beautifully illustrates some of the phases of entering the blessed Beulah Land experience mentioned in the Bible under the names of "Perfect Love," "Holiness," "Sanctified Wholly," and a "Pure Heart."

The ascent becomes a necessity. One reaches a point where he must make it or leave the car. The believer after conversion reaches a similar point. He must heed God's commands and embrace His promises and be holy or lose his title to heaven. He must ascend the Beulah heights of perfect love or abandon the car of salvation, and, like unbelieving Israel, perish in the wilderness.

The ascent is made desirable by the beauty of the suburb. There is life and activity in the city below, but on the heights the air is purer, the breezes bracing, and the landscapes lovely and inspiring. The fever and malaria of the lowlands is all left behind. So the beauty of holiness attracts the true believer. Perfect purity prevails. Breezes from heaven here are constantly felt. The landscapes are of surpassing beauty, and

some here, like Bunyan, have gained glimpses of the "land that is far off." The mist and fog which settle on the lowlands rise not to these sunny heights. Here the people sing and feel:

"I've reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its riches freely mine,
Here shines undimmed one blissful day,
For all my night has passed away.
Many in the city below hearing of its loveliness and catching glimpses of its beauty have felt:
Oh, that I might at once go up
No more on this side Jordan stop!
But now the land possess.
This moment end my legal years,
Sorrows and sins and doubts and fears,
A howling wilderness."

The heights are far more healthful than the valley. Spiritual sickness and this Double Cure are incompatible. All who have not ascended to its heights are troubled with the leprosy of inbred sin, with its manifold manifestations of pride, unbelief, fear, impatience and kindred movings of the carnal mind. Entire holiness extirpates these and makes every whit whole. It is true that physical disability with other infirmities may remain, but spiritual sickness is excluded. No spiritual rheumatism which makes duty a task here! No tongue-tied professors or still-born babes here! All its inhabitants love to sing and tell the praises of the land and of its beloved Lord.

Those who dwell on the heights are profuse with their praises of it. Many of them once resided below and are delighted with the change. So with all dwellers in Beulah Land. Like Caleb and Joshua, they give a glowing report of it. They want all to move up there. They often feel like Bishop Hamline who, when dwelling there, exclaimed: "I feel as though my soul had wings." And again: "My soul exults in the perfect love of God." They realize that it is, indeed,

"A land of corn and wine and oil,
Favored with God's peculiar smile
With every blessing blest
There dwells the Lord, our righteousness,
And keeps His own in perfect peace
And everlasting rest."

The management of the "incline" is no respecter of persons. All who meet the conditions irrespective of race, sex or rank are borne to the summit. Christ purchased salvation for all. He recognizes neither color, rank, sex or other accidents as barriers to salvation or advancement in His kingdom. All who will rightly "humble themselves" under "His mighty hand," He promises to "lift up;" and all who dwell in this land are recognized as brothers and sisters of each other, and of its King.

Abandonment and faith are essential to the ascent. If one has not faith enough to get into the car and stay there he will not be taken up. He abandons himself to the arrangement and trusts an unseen power to propel him. The same principles prevail in ascending to the heights of holiness. There must be utter abandonment to God and His plan of fully saving. All must be laid on the altar and kept there. Then faith trusts an unseen power to bear it up, and relying on the cable promises is quickly born to Beulah heights.

Many agencies combine to make the ascent possible. The car is propelled by the cable. The cable receives its power from the engine. Back of all is the sum paid for construction and maintenance of the plant, and back of that the company which controls it. So with the counterpart in the spiritual world. The consecration rests on the cable of the promises, the promises are made effective by the Holy Spirit; back of these is the purchase price, the "blood which cleanses," and over all the Father, Son and Holy Spirit whose is the whole plan of salvation.

Ascending the incline is a second and definite experience from getting on the car. One may take the car at Fountain Square, and from the time of taking it will be continually nearing the incline until it is reached and must be ascended or the trip abandoned. Receiving perfect love is a second work after conversion. Conversion is taking the car at the fountain filled with blood. Entire sanctification is reached by afterwards taking the incline. Passengers usually ride a long ways before they reach it, which is not needful. Some, because of prejudices, or fears, or false reports to which they have listened, get off at the incline and go no further. The apostles took the salvation car when they "forsook all," for He told them to "rejoice" because their names were "Written in heaven." They were borne to Beulah summits at Pentecost, for it is written that then their "hearts were purified by faith."

Ascending the incline does not depend on the strength of one's faith, but the fact of it and the strength of the cable. If a person has faith enough to get on and stay, he will be carried up. So with the seeker of full salvation. If he has faith enough to make a complete consecration and believe that God accepts it he will be rewarded. Howbeit strong faith enjoys the ride more than weak faith.

Progress does not end with reaching the summit. The car then moves on through a beautiful suburb! In a like manner growth does not cease with the full baptism of the Holy Ghost, but is greatly facilitated, and life becomes far more beautiful and useful than before.

One fare entitles its possessor to a through ride to the incline, over it and beyond. All of God's children, in like manner, are entitled not only to pardon and adoption, but to the "gift of the Holy Ghost." Beulah heights is a part of their blood-bought heritage. Happy are all who take possession and reside there.

No figure can be made to illustrate all sides of a truth, and there is none but that may be perverted.

Mechanical inclines are not always safe. Through imperfection and neglect accidents sometimes occur. The ascent to Beulah is free from danger. The safety of all who conform to its regulations is absolutely assured.

One might be forced against his will up an incline, but none except the willing are borne to Beulah heights.

The suburbs of the city can be reached by different routes. The heights of holiness only by the one "incline," of death to sin, self and the world, and complete consecration and appropriating faith.

Woe unto all who allow heart idols, or the follies of fanatics, or the frowns of formalists to frighten them from this goodly land. Infinitely better is it to heed the cravings of the hungry heart and the commands and promises of the Word, and ascend at once, take immediate possession and rejoicing sing:

"I rise to walk in heaven's own light

Above the world and sin,

With heart made pure and garments white,

And Jesus crowned within."

And test the blessedness of the promise which declares that:

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

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