



FOUR ROADS EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST TRAVEL

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Good morning and welcome. It's a privilege to be with you and to talk to you about the word of God. I do a lot of travelling in my evangelistic work... usually driving tens of thousands of miles per year. Though the road is often long and tiring, there are some benefits along the way – such as driving down a road I have never been down before. I've seen many beautiful vistas and explored some of the lesser-known beauties of our country that I might have never seen had I not chosen to go down that road. There are roads I would yet like to see and travel. If the Lord is willing, I hope to one day drive the "Valley of Fire" road in Nevada; or the "Denali Highway" in Alaska; or the "North Coast 500" in Scotland, just to name a few. But there are at least four roads that I am even more concerned about travelling because the Spirit of God leads the traveler who wishes to arrive in heaven over these ancient roadways. I want to talk to you about some of them today.

As we travel the highway of life, we come to many crossroads. These roads meander through time, around bends and crooked places and over hills and through valleys. When we come to a crossroads, unless we have a map or have gone down that road before, we have no idea where they will lead or how they end. We need someone who has travelled that road to point us in the right direction or we need a map to show us that road's course. The roads of life are no different. Roads were important arteries connecting the world in bible days. There were fewer of them, and unless you were travelling by sea, these roads were necessary for travel. Some of them were well-worn paths; and some were treacherous and led through more danger than others. Some of those ancient pathways were quite famous and we read of great moments in history that took place on or alongside them. And in our lesson today, I want us to think about four of those roads that we should spiritually take when we come to them. These ancient roads

and the events that occurred along them teach us some important lessons that should guide us as we travel through life today.

First, every person is wise to travel the Damascus Road, and we'll call this "the road of change". The great apostle Paul famously went down this road. And the man who started down that road was not the same man when he came to the end of it. He started down that road, according to Acts 9, on a mission of hate and destruction. He was then known as Saul of Tarsus, and he like many people was living high and wide. He was confident in his religion and apparently confident in the life he was living. He was raised a devout Jew – and a notable Pharisee at that. As he started down the road to Damascus, he was filled with zealous indignation – on a mission which he believed was from God to stamp out this growing band of zealots who were promoting the blasphemous claim that Jesus was the Son of God. He, like many others, thought that the claims of Jesus' resurrection were preposterous and the movement that was quickly building around those claims threatened all that Saul believed and held dear. Armed with warrants from the High Priest, he left Jerusalem for a week-long journey to Damascus where he would search the synagogues for any of these heretical disciples and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains to face trial and likely death.

Somewhere outside Damascus, as he walked under the blazing noon-day sun, suddenly a blinding light from heaven sent Saul falling the ground and the voice of the resurrected and now ascended and enthroned Christ spoke from the glory and changed this arrogant and presumptuous man filled with hatred to a blind and humble beggar asking what Jesus wanted now wanted him to do. What a sudden realization came upon Saul when he encountered the Christ – not only that Jesus WAS indeed alive – but He is Lord and Christ – and He was helpless and lost without Him. He left Jerusalem breathing threats of where HE was going to do and what HE was going to do... but he entered Damascus asking "Lord, what do YOU want me to do and where do YOU want me to go." That's what happens when a person meets the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you gone down that road?

Now, I'm not talking about a literal Damascus Road, of course. In fact, the events that occurred on that actual road were unique to Saul because Christ was making more than a Christian out of Saul – He was making an apostle out of Him and an apostle (according to Acts 1:22 and 1 Corinthians 9:1) was one who had seen Christ after His resurrection, thus Christ miraculously appeared to Saul here. We should note that Saul was told to go into the city, and someone would come and tell him what he had to do to be saved. Ananias later came to Saul and restored his vision and told him to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16). That's when Saul was forgiven of his sins and called upon Christ to save him. But the events of the Damascus Road prepared Saul's heart to receive that which Ananias then came and preached.

Though there will be no miraculous experience like Saul experienced, one must be humbled and broken before the gospel will find entrance into his or her heart. There must be a change that takes place in the mind and heart of a person for conversion to occur. You may think your life is fine like it is and that you have no need for Christ. Like Saul, how sadly deceived you are. You

need to fall helplessly before the mercy of Christ and ask the question that Saul asked along the Damascus Road: "Lord, what will you have me to do?" And the Holy Spirit in His word will provide you the same answer He did Saul "Arise, and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." That's what awaits at the end of the Damascus Road. And if you haven't travel down that road of change and conversion, then your life is not what it ought to be and you are not the friend of Christ, you're His enemy.

And after you walk down the Damascus Road, you need to turn onto another pathway the bible describes as The Emmaus Road, which we'll call the road of fellowship. Every Christian should spend considerable time walking down this road, like some did so very long ago. And like Saul, they too experienced a life-changing encounter with Christ. Luke chapter 24 paints that beautiful scene. It was the Sunday after Jesus was crucified. Rumors were beginning to spread that the tomb was found empty, and that Jesus had risen from the dead. Most of the disciples were confused by everything that had happened over the past week and you can almost see them slowly walking along, maybe kicking a pebble or two, and quietly talking amongst themselves. It's such a beautiful story, I just want to read it to you.

Luke 24:13-27 says: "Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Can you just imagine that? HE expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning HIMSELF! What a bible study that must have been. They begged Him to abide with them as the shadows of the evening started to fall and he went into the town and broke bread with them "Then their eyes were opened and they KNEW Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

Some of us need to walk with Christ down the Emmaus Road – because our hearts are cold, and our faith is weak, and our future seems uncertain. That’s the reason so many who claim to be Christians lead such dull and hopeless and joyless lives. They’re missing what awaits on the Emmaus Road of fellowship. Any Christian who doesn’t habitually spend personal time in the Word of God and time in prayer to God; and every person who cannot regularly be found with other disciples gathered in the presence of the Lord don’t know the blessing that these disciples received that day on the Emmaus Road. Their hearts BURNED within them as they absorbed and pondered His Word. How much time do you spend with the Savior? Does your heart burn within you to hear His word and have fellowship with Him and with His people which is available to us in His church? That’s one of the reasons He established the church – not only to bring glory to Him and to accomplish His purposes in the word but to provide the means of communion and fellowship with His people. Every Christian needs to spend time walking down this road with Christ. Every Christian needs a dedicated program of Bible study – a consistent prayer life – regular time alone with the Lord – and fellowship with other believers on the Lord’s Day and whenever else the opportunity is afforded.

And then there is The Jericho Road: the road of service, and the Lord calls you to walk down this road as well. The Jericho Road was a famous road in Christ’s day and still is. It passes through mountainous solitude as it steeply winds the twenty miles down to Jericho. It drops more than 3,000 feet and is walled by cliffs, rock formations and caves. It was an inviting den for thugs and thieves who would hide and lie in wait for helpless travelers to pass where they could rob them and often injure or kill them. It came to be known as ‘The Bloody Way’ as many a sojourner met a violent end in the deserted stretches of this wilderness path. It was the backdrop of one of Christ’s most famous and riveting parables recounted in Luke, chapter 10.

Jesus said a certain man left Jerusalem and was making his way down to Jericho and he fell among thieves who beat him, stripped him, and left him for dead on the side of the road. That’s what life has done to many people today. The roadside of life is strewn with the beaten and mangled victims of selfish and sinful living, suffering because of our own sins and the sins of others. They are the casualties of a cruel, broken, and sin-cursed world. Some are there because of foolish decisions. Some are there because they were overtaken by the evil circumstances of life. Some are there because they were overcome with temptation and sin stripped them, robbed them, and left them with nothing. The Jericho Road is not a scenic byway. It’s not a pleasure trip. It’s a dangerous and difficult journey one takes out of necessity and when you go down that road, you’re going to at some point encounter its carnage. But I believe Christians are called to walk down that road because we have a duty to God and a service to render to our neighbor. Jesus said after this man was robbed and beaten, eventually, two religious men came by and showed little or no concern and went on their way. But then, a Samaritan came and took pity on the man, treated his injuries, bandaged up his wounds, and carried him down the road to an inn and secured him a place to rest and recover. The point of Jesus’ parable is simple, and it is convicting: those who are suffering whom I am able to help are my neighbor and I have a responsibility to God for them. They are my neighbor regardless of the color of their skin; regardless of their nationality; regardless of their socio-economic status or class; regardless of their religious background. The person who lives out the religion of Christ

is the person who is a force for love and for good in the lives of those he meets along the Jericho Road of life. The church is not a country club for the spiritual elite – it is a search and rescue operation for those lost and ruined in sin.

And finally, there is The Jerusalem Road that Jesus Himself walked. This is the road of suffering. The three-and-a-half-year ministry of Jesus was nearing its end. It will only be about six-months until He is crucified outside Jerusalem. His disciples now know who Jesus is and the Lord begins to prepare them for His death. After His great declaration in Caesarea that He would soon build His church, Matthew 16:21 tells us “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” How heavy the Lord’s heart must have been as every new day brought Calvary that much closer. The cross was looming on the horizon as He slowly made His way to that final week and that final journey to Jerusalem. Luke’s gospel makes such a haunting observation in Luke 9:51, that “...when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” Jesus knew that was a journey He had to make. It was a road He had to walk. It took every bit of strength within Him as a man to set His feet on that road and begin that trip because He knew what was waiting there. When Jesus told the disciples of what the future held for Him, Peter, the bible says, “took Him aside and began to rebuke Him saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’” Why did the Lord so stingingly rebuke Peter when Peter clearly didn’t understand? Because Peter was offering the Lord the same temptation Satan had offered Him three years earlier. The great temptation of our Lord after His baptism was designed for one thing – to try to persuade Jesus to refuse to go to the cross. To seek His crown by some other means than by way of Calvary. And friend, there are people in this religious world today who would have you to believe that there should be no suffering in the Christian life. They would have you believe that in you name it you can claim it and that faith will afford mansions, wealth, and pleasure. That’s a lie. It was Satan’s lie then and it’s still his lie today.

Jesus not only rebuked Peter for putting that temptation before Him, he went on to say something that Peter and the disciples must have found shocking. Verse 24: “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and TAKE UP HIS CROSS, and follow me.’” A cross? They knew what crosses were and what they were for. But so far as the bible record is concerned, this was the first time Jesus had ever spoken specifically of a cross. And not only had He implied that a cross was in His own future, He said one awaits every person who follows Him in faith. It may not be a literal cross, my friend, but there’s a cost to be borne; a decision to be made; a price to be paid to follow Jesus. If you follow Him, you’ll walk the Jerusalem Road too because it’s the only way to the eventual throne. Friend, will that road keep you from following Christ? You know, Paul who met Christ on that first road – the Damascus Road – walked this last road too for he said that for Christ “I have suffered the loss of all things...” Philippians 3:8. But he could do that because, as he told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:12 “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” Are you ready to go with Him all the way? Are you willing to deny yourself and turn your back on the

pleasures and profits of this life to claim that eternal and fadeless crown in the by and by? If so, you must be willing to travel these four roads of life that we've talked about today.

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