

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Up to this statement in the sermon on the mount Jesus has been teaching how His disciples are to live in His kingdom, which He is inaugurating and which will soon, beginning on Pentecost, begin to spread to the uttermost parts of the world until it is one day consummated - completed..

He has clearly illustrated that the genuine disciple of Christ will be a rather different kind of person when compared to the world of the falsely religious and those whose piety is nothing but a bit of religious theater. His kingdom disciples will reason differently, act differently and react differently to people and the circumstances of life. Jesus has taught us that His disciples lives are directed by a heart that has been changed by God and that His disciples will have a righteousness that exceeds that in quality of the religious pietists of His day. His people will not be perfect in the present but will strive for that which pleases God.

He is able to say these things because He, in Himself, is the highest expression of God's moral character and will. His teaching is to be accepted as authoritative pertaining to all the matters of life because He has fulfilled all of the Law and the Prophets and He is to be heard and listened to above all others.

He has made it explicit and clear that to follow Him will be a demanding way of life and a misunderstood way of life to those who do not follow Him. He has made it clear that there will be those who will persecute and despise His disciples, throughout the ages, because their own wickedness and false ideas of religion have so entirely blinded them. There will be those who will violently and vehemently reject the truth of the gospel that His disciples will present to the world.

However, it will be a way of life that God enables His disciples to follow. The Father, as He is asked, will give and continue to give the good gifts that are from the Father in heaven that make living this life possible.

Jesus has laid out a foundation and the norms of what it will mean to be His disciples in a world that does not and cannot, of its own ability, know the true and the living God.

Jesus has prepared these hearers for a direct call to commitment and discipleship.

Jesus is now making the call to Christian discipleship a very real thing.

Entering the gate is not becoming saved. Entering the gate is beginning the life of a genuine disciple of Christ.

Jesus began the sermon with describing how the heart that is changed by God by understanding its spiritual bankruptcy mourns over its sin and begins to show signs of a new life.

Jesus is teaching that for any who hear what He says and whose hearts have been changed there will be a serious call to commitment to His new life and the demands of discipleship are real and they are to cause that new life to mature unto the glory of God.

We must honestly look at how we present the Gospel and being a disciple of Jesus to the world today. Too often it is nothing but an invitation to be spared the horrors of hell, if hell is even preached and when it is not preached to scare someone into heaven, then Jesus is often presented as the great cosmic problem solver who guarantees you happiness for now and forever, as long as you are doing all of the right things. All you have to do is ask Him into your heart and, presto-chango, you are saved.

How reckless and how careless are these approaches to proclaiming Christ. How these false ideas cheapen the great grace of God that saves people from their sins and eternal condemnation. How different is Jesus' approach. He says,

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Jesus laid out the way of the Christian disciple and having made it clear that it is a demanding and yet a God enabled thing that can be done, He now makes a call to commitment and discipleship. If you are going to follow Me, you know what to expect. No secrets, no hocus pocus get them out of focus. No! Jesus says this is the real deal.

This is where the sandal leather meets the road. This is the way to go when God has changed your heart and the way to a fulfilled life because you are made spiritually prosperous because you are the blessed of God.

What do we tell people to expect once they are saved?

I preached at the City Mission for 25 years and was on staff for twenty. It broke my heart to hear the atrocious ways in which the Gospel or lack of the Gospel was presented too many times.

What many presented as the Gospel was nothing more than man pleasing rather than God glorifying messages. Too often the message was addressed to meet the felt needs of the men and women and not the real need of their souls. Jesus was often presented as one to look to and hope in and trust in but it was often for the wrong reasons. The message was “Christ will meet your needs”, “He will save your marriage”, “He will get you off drugs”, “He will get you a job if you come to Him”. When hell was preached it was often used as a battering ram or a scare tactic and it was more important to escape hell than to look for and to see the beautiful Christ who forgives sin so we don’t go to hell. In the middle of a raging fire, everyone knows what is burning, but to yell fire with out a clear statement as to where the fire exits are is absurd and wicked.

Many were presenting the benefits of knowing Christ without mentioning the pre-requisites of a changed heart that brings about repentance and belief.

It is indeed true that the real Christ of the bible, who offers Himself to us as a Savior from sin and an Advocate with God, does in fact give peace, joy, and moral strength, and the privilege of His own friendship, to those who trust Him. But the Christ who is depicted and desired to merely make the lot of life’s casualties easier by supplying them with aids and comforts is not the real Christ, but a misrepresented and misconceived Christ- in effect, an imaginary Christ. And if we taught people to look to an imaginary Christ, we should have no grounds for expecting that they would find a real salvation. We must be on our guard, therefore, against equating a natural bad conscience and sense of wretchedness with spiritual conviction of sin, and so omitting in our evangelism to impress upon sinners the basic truth about their condition- namely that their sin has alienated them from God, and exposed them to His condemnation, and hostility, and wrath, so that their first need is for a restored relationship with Him. J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, p.61-62

This is one of the most horrible modern heresies that is preached in far too many pulpits. There is too much emphasis on “self-sesteem” and having felt needs met.

There is too much emphasis that Jesus is a sugar daddy who will get you what you want and need. God have mercy on us when even the Rolling Stones can sing” you cant’ always get what you want, but you can try sometimes to get what you need” and we hear preachers whose Gospel is worse than Mick Jagger’s lyrics which at least, in part, contain a measure of truth.

People are being asked to accept Christ, and to turn your life around and to give your heart to Jesus, none of which are Scriptural. And they are asked to do these things so that God can do all the things that He wants to do for them and that He will be disappointed if they do not respond. This is heresy and a very low and ignorant view of God.

In the Knowledge of The Holy, a. W. Tozer wrote, “ The low view of God entertained almost universally by Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basics error in our religious thinking.”

The love of God is preached as if it were separated from His holiness and His righteousness and His judiciousness and the rest of His attributes. In other words, there is no reason for God to demonstrate His love for us through Christ except for the reason that He loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives right now with the added benefit of eternal life.

Now, while on the one hand this is true in one very narrow sense for those who are the elect of God, in the broadest sense the way that this is taught by many preachers is completely erroneous. The Gospel is not God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. The Gospel is Christ died for sinners and rose again and sinners who believe are reconciled with God for eternity and spared from condemnation by the grace of God. And they may have a difficult life on earth because blessed are they who are persecuted and despised for My name’s sake but yet remain forever the blessed ones of God and nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ.

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One of the reasons why the gate which leads to life is narrow is because that way is paved by absolute truth that comes from a God of absolutes and it cannot be equivocated or debated successfully with a view to ultimately defeat and disprove Jesus. Our lives as believers demand an unwavering and absolute belief and trust that Christ is who He says He is because God has revealed it to us. The unbeliever cannot live with such a narrow frame of reference about what is the true purpose and meaning of life. The Reformers so succinctly put it this way. What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. That is a narrow gate brethren when compared to the broad gate that leads to destruction.

The broad gate could be considered as the idea of relativism which existed even before Jesus' came into the world.

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6, NAS95).

Relativism is the opposite of belief in absolute moral truth.

It is the broadest world view and way of interpreting that has ever existed. Many walk through this gate in life and will only know destruction. All of us, before we were called to our salvation by God's grace walked in the broad way and were held in its bondage.

Relativism has become the dominant view of "truth" in our age, even among evangelical Christians.

- Sixty-four percent of Americans believe, "Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims and all others pray to the same God, even though they use different names for that God." George Barna, *What Americans Believe* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991) pp. 210-212.
- Seventy-two percent of Americans agree, "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways, but both could still be correct. Seventy-one percent of Americans agree, "There are no absolute standards that apply to everybody in all situations." *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 230.

Relativism in the Church

- Fifty-three percent of those who claim there is no such thing as absolute truth identify themselves as born-again Christians. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- Forty-two percent of those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians agree, "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways but both could still be correct." *Ibid.*, p. 83. . "George Barna, *Virtual America* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), pp. 83, 283.

So we are in the narrow way and we must believe in the ultimate claims of Christ.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

If you had gone to Buddha and asked him, "Are you the son of Bramah?" he would have said, "My son, you are still in the vale of illusion." If you had gone to Socrates and asked, "Are you the son of Zeus?" he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, "Are you the son of Allah?" he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, "Are you Heaven?" I think he would have probably replied, "Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste." The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man." C.S. Lewis, "What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?" *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970). pp. 157-158.

So brethren, we are the blessed ones of God and we are challenged to walk in the narrow way by way of the narrow gate. It is truly the way of life. I find it no small thing that the early church was called The Way.

Acts 9:2* and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Ac 19:9* But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. Ac 19:23* About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. Ac 24:14* "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; Ac 24:22* But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case."

It is also significant that Jesus, later in His ministry said, John 14:6* Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. John 10:9* "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

In this verse the word for door is also used for gate in other passages and here refers to the sheep-gate.

The sheep that belong to the Great shepherd are few in number. We walk a narrow path. It is the path of truth and righteousness that is meant to exalt and glorify our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ligon Duncan says this about this passage,

"The hard way of the narrow gate in the end is easy in comparison with the broad way of the wide gate. The Lord Jesus has told us in Matthew 11, verse 30, that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. And we know what He means. If you have ever wrestled with sin, and been unrepentant of it, and laid your head on the pillow at night and your conscience wouldn't let you sleep, you know what Jesus means when He says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." If you have laid your head down on the pillow knowing that your sins had been confessed, that you have done what you could to restore relationship, you have confessed

yourself before almighty God and you are resting in the forgiveness that comes in Christ, you know the sweet sleep of a clean conscience before the Lord. The hardest thing in the world is to live looking in that mirror knowing that that conscience is not clean. It is an easy way but it is a hard way. And it eats away over the years. We must learn to embrace the gospel paradox. The hard way is the easy way. The cross is the way to glory. The narrow gate is the gate that frees you. It is the gate that gives you liberty. Christianity promises this new way of life, which brings blessing and causes us to experience the righteousness of God, in our lives. It may not look easy, and it isn't, but it is far more blessed than the way of destruction."

Brethren, the world will call you narrow minded and they will be right to do so if you are living as you should for the glory of God. The world will say you need to be broad minded and there they are wrong.

The spiritual Pathways Center says this on their website:

"To be broad-minded is to be tolerant, understanding of differences, liberal in accepting others who think, feel and act differently than ourselves, and is also a wise course of direction to follow. The planet upon which we all live has many proud nationalities, numerous religious persuasions and concerns that often are used by the rich and poor to judge each other. Becoming broad-minded, open, and appreciative of our differences is a solution toward there being world peace, and plenty for all.

It is good for us to practice discernment whenever we think better of either others or ourselves. We are all the children of the One great Mind. Becoming grateful for our differences and believing that all manners of spirituality are valuable for their practitioners is good for all of us. The Quality of Broad-mindedness is the greatest leveler of our differences."

They also say," We not only believe in God, we are convinced that God is all there is, and therefore there is no place that God is not. We live by principles that are readily proven. We appreciate most of all the principle that whatever we believe is the cause of our particular experiences, and that this is true for everyone. We practice this understanding daily. It includes that we work continuously to make ourselves allow the Higher Intelligence to think as us, feel as us, and act as us. Nevertheless, we are not against any other viewpoint. We include that every person is on the road toward the good life and that God disapproves of no one." We stand for our convictions. Yet, first and foremost is the interest to be for all. All are for the One whether they know it or not. We are not interested to have to believe the same as all the people mentioned (they talk of Jews, Muslims, Christians, Brahmins and so on) and intimidated as being great, but we love every one of them. We accept that they are all children of God, our very brothers and sisters."

How far they are from the truth, how deceived they are and full of their own vain imaginings that humanity can accomplish such spiritual unity. We are not all the children of God. But are we, as the children of God, demonstrating that the Way, the Truth and the Life is a singular person, who is Christ, and His way is a narrow way.

So I ask you, as those who have the truth, are we the most loving, the most compassionate, the most helpful, the most merciful, the most truthful, the most giving people that the world knows? Our narrow way leads to life. Their broad way leads to destruction.

The narrow way is the only way because it is Jesus' way and few are they that find it. We are a fellowship of the few and will continue to be so. There will be few of us compared to the world that will walk in the narrow way. There are others who God, by His grace and for His glory will yet lead to the narrow way until Jesus consummates His kingdom but they will be few compared to those in the broad way.

The challenge for us today is this - do we take seriously what it means to be one whom God has chosen and equipped to enter the narrow gate and walk the narrow way. The call to true Christian discipleship cannot be dismissed as some informality or something which we do not have to consider with much thought or purpose. Jesus deliberately presented this challenge after teaching what it will mean to be a disciple. It is a gross error to believe that you can be a Christian and not be committed to discipleship because it is the Christian life and it continues until we leave these bodies to be in the presence of our Christ..

I believe that in one sense the more we grow by the grace of God the narrower the road becomes. As we draw nearer to Christ, our purpose is clearer, our goals are more focused, the desires our heart are more in agreement with God's will for us as His children and in that sense we walk an even narrower path because more and more only one thing matters, and that is living for the glory of God and that is a narrow way.