

“Narrow Is the Way”

Romans 9:6, Matthew 7:13-14

REVIEW

An important theme in this section of Scripture is introduced in :6 – “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” It is the theme of subsets. Stated simply it is: Only part, indeed a *small* part, of the whole group gets right with God. Paul supports this assertion several ways:

1. See Abraham (:7-9). He had 8 sons, but God's line of blessing was by 1.
2. See Isaac (:10-13). He had 2 sons, but God's blessings fell only on 1.
3. See Isaiah (:27). Paul quotes Isa. 10:22 – “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.”
4. See Sodom & Gomorrha (:29). Thousands of people, but only 4, really 3, were saved.

So our theme today is: the many and the few. Jesus teaches this theme in Matthew 7:13-14. There we find four features: the gates, the ways, the travelers, and the ends.

I. THE TWO GATES

A. The Symbolism – The grave is called the gate of death. Satan’s domain is called the gates of hell. We read of the gates of heaven. We read of Christ being the gate. And we read here that there is a gate to *destruction* and a gate to *life*, and that every one here has entered one or both of them.

1. A gate represents the PLACE OF ENTRY or the MEANS OF ACCESS. Jewish literature might say a youth was at the gate of adulthood or a couple at the gates of marriage, etc.
2. Jesus says everyone has passed the place of entry or the means of access to *destruction* or *life*.

B. The Wide Gate – This one is spacious as could be. As the St. Louis arch (Gateway to the West).

1. There is no trouble entering it. There are no alarms or guards. There is no crossbar or rumble strips or speed bump. There’s no call for passport or ticket. No inspection. All you have to do is be a child of Adam, and you’re already passed through and on your way.

C. The Strait Gate – This, now, is a *very* different story.

1. Note that the word is “strait,” which means pent up, narrow, and difficult to enter.
2. Illustrations are found with Balaam (Num. 22:26) or Jonathan (I Sam. 14:4).
3. Note that this gate is hard to find. It’s like soldiers' dwellings in the crags of Afghanistan.
4. Once found, one must “strive” to enter it. (See Luke 13:24: *aganizo*. Cf. I Cor. 9:25.)
5. What’s so agonizing about it? It’s a tight squeeze. You can’t fit with your baggage. See Matt. 19:24 – camel/eye of a needle and Jesus' demand of any follower (Luke 9:23).
 - a. Self-confidence, reputation, righteousness have to be rubbed off. The gate is too narrow for any of one's dignities and honors. So also a person's plans, preconceptions, or possessions. All rights. Utterly everything . . . or a person doesn’t pass through.

- b. And listen, *FEW DO PASS THROUGH*. Salvation is shown here to be a rarity. To be saved is an exceptional thing – which is the point of Rom. 9:30-33.
- c. I must also speak, though, of the glory of this gate: its equality to all. It requires nothing which any person is unable to bring. It is accessible every man. There's no secret combination lock. It doesn't take muscle or height or beauty to open the door. . All you must bring is knowledge of sin and the Savior.

II. THE TWO WAYS

A. The Broad Way – This way has room for everyone. It's no alley. It's more like Kansas prairie where a land rush occurred. See the marching masses of humanity. Like a global trail of tears.

1. In fact, it's the nature of this way to *widen* the more they walk. Restraints are thrown off; appetites become insatiable.
2. There you will find space for the confusing anarchy of ideas. Some there would give money to be saved. Others would tear their bodies. Others call upon the gods of their imaginations. Another would see nothing to be needful. There is room for all and nothing and anything
3. The broad way is deceitful, unprofitable, restless, disappointing, arrogant, and lawless, and it is exceeding well-traveled. There goes almost everybody. Look! There is grandma. There are some co-workers. There, a congressman. There...isn't she in our church? There are the heathen. There are hordes of cults, catholics, and protestants. There are the MANY. Is that I?

B. The Narrow Way – A major theme here is Consistency! The idea is, if you have gotten on to the road of life, there was only one way to do so, and the rest of life is to be spent in keeping with the principles pledged to at the gate. Self-denial! Service to others! Everything driven by love!

1. The narrow gate wasn't an airport security check, where pride, plans, pleasant life, and prerequisites were placed on a conveyor belt to be picked up on the other side! Rather, all is left behind as Jews left all behind as they entered concentration camps.
2. Scripture: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." (Col. 2:6) "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8) "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;" (John 8:31)
3. Contrition must be deep, faith unfeigned, obedience unreserved, souls dedicated entirely, or we are deceived. We go in dependent upon and devoted to Christ, or we don't go in. And if we think we went in, how we then live will show if we did.

III. THE TWO TRAVELERS

A. On the Broad Way -- 2 quick comments:

1. It may seem temporarily pleasant. No road markers, no signs, indicating where the slightly descending road heads. Few checks. Lots of pleasures for the season. But life is not like in the movies, and it could be at hell's gates the sentinel will say to the shocked souls entering, Were there not foretastes of destruction in your health, marriage, conscience, sanity, etc.?
2. Also, earthly pleasures have their way of losing their charm and strangely at the same time increasing their grip. Titillation diminishes as tyranny grows.

B. On the Narrow Way – again, quick comments:

1. Even if there were no end of either destruction or life, it would still be right and noble and some would still choose to take the narrow way. The best would still take the lowly position which Christ requires. Choose self-abandoning faith without regard to final personal benefit.
2. The narrow way is good because of the concentration of power that occurs. Vagrant rays of light must be collected and focused before they can cut steel. Bring all your purposes to a point. This will lead to a selection of the best. Do it in God, for God, by God, and with God!
3. Narrowness is also good for protection. God's way is narrow because it is intolerant of evil.

IV. THE TWO ENDS

A. Of the Broad Way

1. People can reap damnation most easily. One has no more to do than to lie like a withered leaf upon a stream.
2. Will you go to hell with the crowd because they will not go to heaven with you?
"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." (Ex. 23:2)
3. Are you content to perish because you will have so many companions in misery?
Listen: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to DESTRUCTION!"
4. No man would choose to go to the gallows because the way to it is smooth and pleasant.
5. People imagine that though the bulk of mankind live in total neglect of God, they will find mercy in the end. But if there be any truth in the Scriptures, there are comparatively few who go to heaven.

B. Of the Narrow Way

1. The apparent solitude of the narrow road is only apparent. There has been Someone there before you, and that Someone likewise is with you now, and the life you know now in Him will find its fullest at the end of the road.

DISCUSSION

1. List major wrong ways of thinking that one might find among people who have entered the wide gate and are on the broad way. What, instead, should you find to be the thoughts of those who have entered the strait gate and are walking on the narrow way? Please use Scripture.