

"Enter Ye In By the Narrow Gate..."

"Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it" (Matt. 7:13f).

This passage is a reminder from Jesus that there are only two positions one may occupy concerning God: he is either for or against Him. There is no middle ground. Jesus said, "He that is not for me is against me. He that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Mt. 12:30). It has ever been so. Moses said, "I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live..." (Dt. 30:19). Jeremiah said, "Stand in the ways and see and ask for the old paths wherein is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest unto your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16)

Notice the contrast Jesus gave between two choices. One is a broad way which most travel, but which way leads to death. This is the path of the immoral, the dishonest, the selfish and uncaring. The other path is narrow; straitened (difficult); it leads to everlasting life, yet just a few find it. Why do just a few find the narrow way?

THE NARROW WAY REQUIRES CHOICES. One can walk the broad way and live life of indecisions, but walking in the narrow way demands that choices be made. He who chooses the narrow gate chooses that the Word will be the deciding standard in doctrine, practice and morals. The disciples recognized this when Jesus asked, "Will ye go away also?" Peter responded, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). When one chooses the Word as his standard, he rejects all else. "To the law and to the testimony..." (Isa. 8:20).

The NARROW WAY REQUIRES SACRIFICE OF SELF INTEREST. Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself" (Mt. 16:24). Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is not longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me.." (Gal. 2:20). How hard it is to crucify our self interest and purposes. How hard it is to say, "Not my will but thine be done!" How hard to fully say, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 22:10). We may feel our intent is to do just his will but when we face the crucial test, (such as with the rich young ruler), like him, we may sadly turn away.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO SEPARATE FROM FAMILY OR DEAREST OF FRIENDS. Many examples from the past illustrate how some are willing to make such sacrifice, while others refuse to do so. Jesus was informed his mother and brethren stood without. He said, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?...whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mt. 12:48, 50). Jesus tells us that those who lose family and for his sake will receive 100 fold more family now (Mk. 10:29). This is a gracious promise but that does not diminish the anguish and sorrow we must feel when we chose Christ or family or friend.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO WALK BY FAITH. Choosing the narrow gate requires a walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Great and bountiful are the promises of God but we will not experience many of his promises in this life. We will never, in this life, see Him resurrect the dead, see His face, nor share eternal youth and eternal life. We must accept all these promises upon our faith in Him and our trust in His word. What we see in our present world denies all these future promises.

The decision is ours. Two ways open to us and invite us to pursue them. What gate will we choose?

Jim McDonald