

"The LORD make his face shine upon thee" (Numbers 6:25) as you seek and search for God as for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:3-5; Matthew 13:44); and just think, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3).

The Narrow Way

Arthur Pink, 1886-1952

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First, in that He has removed every legal obstacle, and thereby opened a way to heaven for His people.

Second, in that He has "left us an *example* that we should follow in HIS steps." The mere opening of a door does not give me entrance into a house—I must tread the path leading to it, and mount the steps. Christ has, by His life of unreserved obedience to God, shown us the Way which leads to Heaven: "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (John 10:4).

Third, in that He is willing and ready to bestow grace and strength to walk therein. Christ did not come here and die—in order to make it unnecessary for me to please and obey God. No indeed! "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them" (2 Corinthians 5:15). "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Christ came here to "save his people from their sins " (Matthew 1:21); and if you are not now delivered from the power of *sin*, from the deceptions of *Satan*, from the love of the *world*, and from the pleasing of *self*—then you are NOT saved.

May it please the God of all grace to add His blessing.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Matthew 7:13-14

The second half of Matthew 7 forms the applicatory part of that most important discourse of our Lord's, known as "the Sermon on the Mount." One leading design of the Sermon was to show the spiritual nature and wide extent of that *obedience* which characterizes the true subjects of Christ's kingdom, and which obedience is absolutely necessary for the enjoyment of that ultimate state of blessedness which Divine grace has provided for them. As *the* Prophet of God, Christ made known that the righteousness which obtains in His kingdom greatly exceeds the "righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees."

Now the Jews imagined that all of them were the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom; that by virtue of their *descent from Abraham*, they were the rightful heirs of it; that the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (that system of religious and moral duty taught by them) met all the requirements of God's law. But this was a delusion, and the Lord Jesus here exposed that *fleshly descent from Abraham* could not give title unto a *spiritual* kingdom. That which was merely

natural—was no qualification for the *supernatural* realm. Only they were accounted the true children of Abraham—who had his faith (Romans 4:16), who did his works (John 8:39), and who were united to Christ (Galatians 3:29).

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord delineated the *inward state* of those who belonged to His spiritual kingdom (Matthew 5:4-11); described the *outward conduct* by which they might be identified (Matthew 5:13-16); expounded the *personal righteousness* which God's justice demanded (Matthew 5:17-28); and defined that utter *repudiation of sin* which he required from His people (Matthew 5:29-30). So high are the demands of the thrice holy One, so uncompromising are the requirements of His ineffable character, that none can dwell with Him eternally—who do not in this world—loathe, resist, and turn from all that is repulsive to His pure eye. Nothing short of the complete denying of self, the abandoning of the dearest idol, the forsaking of the most cherished sinful course— figuratively represented under the cutting off of a right hand and the plucking out of a right eye—is what He claims from every one who would have communion with Himself.

Such plain and pointed declarations of Christ must have seemed "hard sayings" to the multitudes who listened to Him; such piercing and flesh-withering demands would probably cause many of his Jewish hearers to think within themselves, "Who then can be saved? This is indeed a strait gate and a narrow way."

Anticipating their secret objections, the Lord plainly declared that the GATE unto salvation is "strait" and

those who loudly insist that eternal life may be obtained on much easier terms. They come in "sheep's clothing"—they appear (to undiscerning souls) to exalt Christ, to emphasize His precious blood, to magnify God's grace. BUT they do not insist upon repentance; they fail to tell their hearers that nothing but a broken heart which hates sin, can truly believe in Christ. They do not teach that a *saving* faith is a living one which purifies the heart (Acts 15:9) and overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

These "false prophets" are known by their "fruits," the primary reference being to their "converts"—the fruits of their fleshly labors. Their "converts" are on the Broad Road, which is not the path of *open* wickedness and vice—but of a religion which pleases the flesh! It is that "way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Those who are on this Broad Road (this way which "seems right" to so many), have a *head-knowledge* of the Truth—but they *walk* not in it. The "Narrow Way" is bounded by the commandments and precepts of Scripture; the Broad Road is that path which has broken out beyond the bounds of Scripture. Titus 2:11-12 supplies the test as to which "way" we are in: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world".

Before closing, let us anticipate and seek to remove an objection. Probably many of you are saying, "I thought *Christ* was the Way to the Father" (John 14:6). So He is! But how?

get to heaven by an easier route than by denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following Christ!

There are multitudes of religionists who are attempting to combine the two "ways," making the best of both worlds and serving two masters. They wish to gratify *self* in time—and enjoy the happiness of Heaven in eternity. Crowds of nominal Christians are deluding themselves into believing that they can do so—but they are terribly deceived! A profession which is not verified by mortifying the deeds of the body in the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:13), is vain. A faith which is not evidenced by complete submission to Christ, is only the faith of demons. A love which does not keep Christ's commandments, is an imposition (John 14:23). A claim to being a Christian, where there is no real yieldedness to the will of God, is daring presumption. The reason why so few will enter Eternal Life—is because the multitudes are not seeking it in the way of God's appointing! None seek it aright—but those who pass through the Narrow Gate, and who, despite many discouragements and falls, continue to press forward along the Narrow Way.

Now notice, carefully, the very next thing which immediately followed our Lord's reference to the two ways in Matthew 7: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. " (Matthew 7:15). Why does this come in next? Who are the "false prophets" against which a serious soul needs to be on his guard?

They are those who teach that Heaven may be reached without treading the Narrow Way! They are

the WAY which leads unto life is "narrow." Yet, He went on to point out, that it is your wisdom, your interest, your duty to enter that "Gate" and walk that "Way." He acknowledged and faithfully *warned* them that there was a "Wide gate" soliciting their entrance, and a "Broad road" inviting them to walk therein; but that gate leads to perdition, that road ends in Hell. The "Strait Gate" is the only gate to "life," the "Narrow Way" is the only one which conducts to Heaven.

Few indeed *find* it, few have the least *inclination* for it; but that very fact ought only to provide an additional incentive to my giving all diligence to enter therein.

In the verses which are now to be before us, Christ defined and described the *Way of salvation*, though we sorrowfully admit that 'modern evangelists' rarely expound it. What we shall now endeavor to set forth is very different from what most have been taught—but you reject it at your eternal peril. We repeat, that in that passage we are about to consider, He who was *Truth incarnate* made known the only way of *escaping Perdition* and *securing Heaven*, namely, by entering the "Strait Gate" and treading the "Narrow Way."

The NARROW GATE

The Greek word for "strait" signifies *restrained* or "narrow". Now a "gate" serves two purposes: it lets in and it shuts out. All who enter this Narrow Gate gain admittance to that "Way" which "leads unto life;" but all who enter not by this Narrow Gate, are eternally barred from God's presence. The second use of this

Gate, is solemnly illustrated at the close of the parable of the ten virgins. There, our Lord pictures the foolish ones as being without the necessary "oil" (the work of the Spirit in the heart), and while they went to buy it, the Bridegroom came, and "the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10); and though they then besought Him to open it to them, He answered "I know you not."

1. What is denoted by this figure of the "narrow gate?" We believe the reference is to the searching and solemn teaching of Him who is *Truth incarnate*. It is only as the heart bows to the righteousness of God's claims and demands upon us, as set forth by His Son—that any soul can enter that path which alone leads to Him. While the heart is rebellious against Him—there can be no approach to Him, for, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

It is true, blessedly and gloriously true, that Christ Himself is "the Door" (John 10:9), and He is so in a threefold way, according to the three principal functions of His mediatorial office. He is "the Door" into God's presence as the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. Now it is only as Christ is truly received as God's authoritative *Prophet*, only as His holy teachings are really accepted by a contrite heart, that any one is prepared to savingly welcome Him as *Priest*. Christ is the "Way" and "the Truth" before he is the "Life" (John 14:6), as he is first "King of righteousness, and after that also... King of peace" (Hebrews 7:2). In other words, His cleansing blood is only available for those who are willing to throw down the weapons of their warfare against God, and surrender

walk along the "Narrow Way" means for the heart and life to be constantly regulated thereby. Walking along the Narrow Way denotes a steady perseverance in faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus; overcoming all opposition, rejecting every temptation to forsake the path of fidelity to Him. It is called the "Narrow Way" because all self-pleasing and self-seeking is shut out!

In Genesis 18:19 it is called "the Way of the Lord;" in Exodus 13:21, 32:8 "the Way"; in 1 Samuel 12:23 "the good and right Way"; in Psalm 25:9 "His Way"; in Proverbs 4:11 "the Way of wisdom"; in Proverbs 8:20 "the Way of righteousness"; in Proverbs 10:17 "the Way of life"; in Isaiah 35:8 "the Way of holiness"; in Jeremiah 6:16 "the good Way"; in 2 Peter 2:2 "the Way of truth"; in 2 Peter 2:15 "the right Way".

The Narrow Way must be followed—no matter how much it may militate against my worldly interests. It is right here that the testing point is reached. Unto the natural man, it is much easier and far more pleasant—to indulge the flesh and follow our worldly propensities. The Broad Road, where the flesh is allowed "liberty" —under the pretense of the Christian's not "being under the law" —is easy, smooth, and attractive; but it ends in "destruction"! Though the "Narrow Way" leads to life, only FEW tread it.

Multitudes make a profession and claim to be saved—but their lives give no evidence that they are "strangers and pilgrims" here on earth, or that their "treasure" is in heaven. They are afraid of being thought narrow and peculiar, strict and puritanical. Satan has deceived them—they imagine that they can

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Therefore must he be resisted "steadfast in the faith" (v. 9).

Second, because natural appetites of the FLESH are striving to destroy you: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;" (1 Peter 2:11).

Third, because the whole WORLD is arrayed against you, and if it cannot burn, it will seek to turn you by its alluring promises, Delilah-like deceits, and fatal enticements. Unless you overcome the world, the world will overcome you to the eternal destruction of your soul.

From what has been before us, we may plainly discover why it is that the vast majority of our fellowmen and women, yes, and of professing Christians also, will fail to reach Heaven: it is because they prefer sin to holiness, indulging the lusts of the flesh to walking according to the scriptures, self to Christ, the world to God. It is as the Lord Jesus declared, "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). Men refuse to deny self, abandon their idols, and submit to Christ as Lord—and without this, none can take the first step toward Heaven and enter through the 'narrow gate'!

The NARROW WAY

Just as entering the "Narrow Gate" signifies the heart's acceptance of Christ's holy teaching, so to

themselves to His holy rule. The wicked must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, if he is to be pardoned by God (Isaiah 55:7); and this is only another way of saying that Christ must be received as *Prophet*, before he is embraced as *Priest*.

2. Why is this gate a "narrow" one? For at least three reasons:

First, because of sin. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them." (Ephesians 5:5-7).

Second, because of the Law. There are two principal errors about the Law, and I know not which is the more dangerous and disastrous: that one can earn heaven by obeying it; that one may enter heaven without that personal and practical godliness which the Law requires. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Where there is not this personal conformity to the will of God—the strong hand of the Law will close the door of heaven.

Third, because none can take the world along with him: this Gate is far too "narrow" to admit those who love the world.

3. What is meant by "entering" this narrow gate? FIRST, the acceptance of those teachings of truth, of

duty, of happiness, which were unfolded by Christ—the honest and actual receiving into the heart of His holy, searching, flesh-withering instructions. This is like a person, with great difficulty, forcing his way through a very narrow entrance way. I say "with great difficulty," for Christ's precepts and commandments are, to the last degree, unpalatable to an unrenewed heart, and cannot be willingly and gladly received without a rigid denial of *self* and relinquishment of sinful pleasures, pursuits, and interests. Christ has plainly warned us that it is impossible for a man to serve *two masters*. *Self* must be repudiated, and *Christ* must be received as "the Lord" (Colossians 2:6), or He will not save us.

SECOND, a deliberate abandoning of the Broad Road, or the flesh-pleasing mode of life. Until this has been done, there is no salvation possible for any sinner. Christ Himself taught this plainly in Luke 15—the "prodigal" must *leave* the "far country" before he could journey to the Father's House! The same pointed truth is taught again in James 4:8-10, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

Ah, my friend, to really and actually enter this "Narrow Gate" is no easy matter! For that reason the Lord bade the people to "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27).

Those words do not picture salvation as a thing of *simple* and *easy* attainment. Ponder also Christ's emphatic exhortation in Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." That He should utter such a statement, clearly implies that there are formidable difficulties and obstacles to be overcome, and that slothful *nominal professors* will surely not enter in. Let it be carefully noted that the Greek word for "strive" (namely, "agonizomai") in Luke 13:24 is the same one that is used in 1 Corinthians 9:25, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things" and is also rendered "laboring fervently" in Colossians 4:12, and "fight" in 1 Timothy 6:12!

And how are we to "strive" so as to "enter" the Narrow Gate? The general answer is, "lawfully" (2 Timothy 2:5). But to particularize: We are to strive by prayer and supplication, diligently seeking deliverance from those things which would bar our entrance. We are to earnestly cry to Christ for help from those foes which are seeking to overcome us. We are to come constantly to the Throne of Grace, that we may there find grace to help us to repudiate and turn away with loathing from everything which is abhorred by God, even though it involves our cutting off of a right hand and plucking out of a right eye; and grace to help us do those things which He has commanded. We must be "temperate in all things," especially those things which the flesh craves and the world loves.

Why is such *striving* necessary to "enter" the *narrow gate*?

First, because SATAN is striving to destroy your soul.