

The Broad and Narrow Ways

The call to discipleship in the Lord Jesus Christ is a call to believe certain principles – styled “the Gospel”, and to change our mode of conduct, or way of Life. As the prophet has it, “Thus saith Yahweh: Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death” (Jer. 21:8). The wise will traverse the Way of Life, and the wicked the Way that only leads to death and destruction.

In our New Testament reading for the day (Matthew 7), Messiah also sets before us two ways:

“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” (Mat. 7:13-14).

In these words, we have various couplets – 2 Gates, 2 Roads, 2 Crowds and 2 Destinations: we shall consider each in turn.

THE TWO GATES

The Gates are the means of access to the routes which lead to different destinations. The wide gate is easily visible, and its way is broad enough to accommodate the masses that walk down it, to their ultimate destruction. The Narrow gate, on the other hand, has to be sought after, and the majority walk past it without even realising it is there. There are “few” that find it, and even fewer that choose to walk along it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the entrance to the Narrow way: to lift a description from another parable, he is “the door” (Jno. 10:7, 9). He has the keys to the kingdom, and release from the grave: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have **the keys** of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). And again it is written: “Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in **through the gates** into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

This allusion to the Tree of Life is directing our attention back to Genesis chapter 3, where the first human pair were denied access to such a tree: “so he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned ever way, to keep **the way** of the Tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). By contrast to Adam and Eve, the faithful shall indeed have access to the antitypical Tree of Life, for they shall enter through the Gate of Yahweh’s providing, even Messiah himself. They have “right to the tree of life”, because they obey His Commandments. In other words, their way of life is towards spiritual things, and not the way of the world.

TWO ROADS

The 2 gates lead to 2 paths, which are very different in their form and nature. One is wide and all encompassing of the affairs of the world, whereas the other is narrow and difficult. One is free from all constraints, and will lead through many enticing fancies, whereas the other is traversed by those who desire to forsake sin, and look beyond the difficult nature of the Way. They set their faces towards the ultimate destination, even life in the coming kingdom. Those who are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4) are short-sighted, only looking for present gratification, but the faithful have their focus on the end of their journey, concerning which their forerunner, even Christ himself has gone before. Looking to him for inspiration and help, they “enter not into the path of the wicked” (Prov. 4:14), and continue their journey towards the desired end. In addition to being the Gate, Messiah is “the Way”, as well as the Truth and the Life (Jno. 14:6), for it is only through him that access to the final destination will be granted.

The broad way is more attractive to the natural man, as it is free from the constraints of the narrow way. Superficially, it is a way of liberty and freedom, as distinct to discipline and chastisement. But the liberty it offers is short lived, as it is testified of the leaders who traverse it: “while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2 Pet 2:19). The principle is expressed elsewhere by the Apostle:

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of Sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:16-18).

Here is the paradox: the way of apparent freedom will ultimately result in bondage and “corruption”, whereas the apparently restrictive way of Christ will make us “free from sin”. The Proverbs illustrates the point: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). We need to ensure that we are truly on the right path, not that which has a superficial attraction. And once we have begun our journey along the narrow path, we need to remain on it, wherever it may lead us, for again it is written: “the man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prov. 21:16).

TWO CROWDS

In the democratic society in which we live, it is assumed that the correct position is that which is taken by the majority vote. The entire political system revolves around the premise that the Majority is always right. Even in religious circles, the same values are seen: that which most men and women hold to be true is truth – hence the voting on women priests, homosexual ministers, and so on: The will of the people prevails, whereas the Will of Yahweh is disregarded. In this parable of Messiah, however, the situation is reversed. The majority rush blindly into the abyss, where death and destruction awaits them, but the few find life and embrace it. In Scripture, the majority are seldom in the right, as the voice of human reason is contradictory to the testimony of our Creator. Psalm 2 describes how the multitudes will set themselves “against Yahweh, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psa. 2:2-3). It was the majority in Israel who lacked faith and who were excluded from the land. It was the majority of mankind who were destroyed in the great Deluge, with only 8 souls being saved. Psalm 1 describes the situation thus: “Yahweh knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psa. 1:6) – even though the “ungodly” comprise most of humankind.

By contrast, the few recognise the need to seek in order to find. In each generation there has always been comparatively few who gain entrance through the Christ-Gate, for it is not in the psyche of the natural man to seek after Divine things. It is written of God that “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). Notice this, it is not enough simply to acknowledge the Creator’s existence – although that is an essential aspect. We must also believe that He rewards those who apply diligence in their search for Him. In other words, effort is required. Of wisdom, it is said “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Prov. 8:17). And the testimony of Messiah “Ask and it shall be given you; **seek and ye shall find**; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ...” (Lu. 11:9). Following the way of Christ is not a passive thing: much effort and “diligence” is required to find and follow Him and his Father. And these principles are not recognised by the majority: “Many

shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Dan. 12:10).

TWO DESTINATIONS

Each of the two paths come to an end in very different places. The Broad way to death and destruction, and the Narrow way to life and favour. In these things, we have both a warning, and a comfort. The warning is for us to constantly reassess which way we are walking along, but the comfort is the knowledge that there is only one destination we can reach if we are on the right path: it leads to no other place than the Kingdom. By Grace we are saved through faith, not of ourselves, in order that the certainty of the promise will be guaranteed to all those who believe. Whatever happens to us in this life - just so long as we do not stray from the Way of Life - we will reach our desired destination, that is a guarantee to us. The Apostle wrote to the Philippians of the two destinies that await these two classes of mankind:

“they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ***whose end is destruction, whose*** God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our way of life is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: ***who shall change our vile body,*** that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:218-21).

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

When we come to consider the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he has trodden the Way before us. Hence the often expressed exhortation to be followers of him:

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth ...” (1 Pet. 221-22).

Walking in the steps of Messiah, we will end up at the same destination as did he. Elsewhere, the believer’s life is likened to running a race – a race that Messiah has already won. He stands at the finishing line encouraging us along the way, that we might get there also:

“... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Let us therefore eschew the broad way, despite it’s natural attractiveness. Let us be brave enough not to follow the ways of the multitude, and stand out from the crowd of men and women walking through life. Let us walk the narrow pathway, for just so long as we remain in the Way of Life, we are guaranteed to reach the same destination as our Lord who has gone before, to secure life eternal for those who follow him.

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