

The Two Gates

"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."

Matthew 7:13

One of the biggest problems in the church today is a fundamental lack of understanding about what salvation really is. Many people, who attend church regularly and may even belong to a church, really don't understand what it means to be "born again." They think being born again, being saved, is just praying a prayer, filling out a card, walking an aisle, joining a church, and being baptized. They sincerely believe that those acts are indeed what have saved them and so they can then go back to living their lives of living for themselves, secure in the delusion that they are saved.

In this closing section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes it very clear that true salvation is so much more. Jesus begins verse 13 with the word **"enter"** and this word in the Greek is in the imperative tense which means that this is something that demands action. The command is not for people to admire or ponder the **"gate"** but rather we are commanded to **"enter the...gate."** You see a lot of people admire the principles that are espoused in the Sermon on the Mount or in the Bible but they never follow those principles. Many people will say they respect Jesus Christ they will praise His name but they never receive Him as Lord and Savior. And because they have never received the King and never therefore enter the kingdom, they are just as separated from God, the King and are as much outside His kingdom as is the atheist and the most depraved non-believer.

I want us to notice that the command that Jesus gives us here is not just too simply enter any **"gate."** The command is specific in that we are to **"enter ...the narrow gate."** You see every single person enters one **"gate"** or the other; that is unavoidable. Jesus pleads for men and women to enter the right **"gate,"** which is God's gate, and that is the only gate that leads to **"life"** and to an eternity in heaven.

Time and time again in the gospels Jesus shows us the narrowness of God's standard or righteousness, in contrast to the broad and external standards of Jewish tradition. It is much the same in the church today as the way is broad and the standards are external in the evangelical community. The path to the way of kingdom living is through **"the narrow gate"** of the King Himself. John 14:6 says:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

When we (the church) preach, and teach, and witness that Jesus Christ is the only way to God, we not simply proclaiming our own opinion or our own preference, but we are proclaiming God's revelation of truth. We don't proclaim the narrow way because we are already in it, or because it happens to suit our temperament, or because we are intolerant and bigoted. We proclaim the narrow way because it is God's way and God's only way for men and women to find salvation and eternal life. Jesus said in John 10:9:

"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved."

Acts 4:12 says, **"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."**

1 Timothy 2:5 says, **"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."**

We proclaim a narrow gospel because that is the only gospel that God has given us and so it is the only gospel there is.

The man or woman who enters the **"the narrow gate"** has to enter all by themselves. We cannot bring anyone else with us. People do not enter the kingdom of God in groups, but one at a time. The Jews made the mistake of believing that they were saved because they were Jews. They believed in racial salvation which was then marked by circumcision.

God's gate is so narrow that we must enter it completely naked. His gate is the gate of self-denial; one cannot enter carrying the baggage of sin and self-will. The way of Jesus Christ is the way of the cross, and the way of the cross is the way of self-denial. Matthew 16:24-25 says, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."**

So many of us though are like the rich young ruler in Luke 18. Jesus presents the young man with a test of his willingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ. Verse 22 says, **"One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."** Just like so many of us, and just like me until I was saved, his response proved that his desire was to rule his own life and to hold on to his wealth and this prevented him from entering the kingdom. Verse 23 says, **"But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich."** But it wasn't just his unwillingness to give up his riches it was his self-righteousness and his delusion in verse 21, **"All these things I have kept from my youth."** If he had really kept all of the commandments as he claimed he did, since he was child, then he would have kept the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:37:

"YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."

He would have then followed Christ with a total commitment. The issue that this young man had was an issue that I fear most "Christians" struggle with and that is the matter of the lordship of Jesus Christ. A person who comes to genuine salvation yields control to Christ whether that means they give up all they are and ever hope to be. Salvation you see turns sovereignty over to Christ.

To really love God, to really surrender to Him means that we throw aside self; self-confidence, self-achievement, and self-satisfaction. Matthew 18:3 says,

"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

What is the overarching characteristic of a child? They are dependent on their parents and others for everything. Saving faith isn't just an intellectual exercise; saving faith counts the cost. Luke 14:28 says,

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?"

It's also like the tax collector in the Temple in Luke 18:13 that cries out to God, **"God, be merciful on me, the sinner!"**

The scourge of the church is easy believe-ism and easy believe-ism is not Scriptural. The **"narrow gate"** means that those who enter do so completely stripped of all that they possess. So instead of adding Jesus to an already jam packed life, they are leaving all that stuff behind. Salvation is the exchange of all that we are for all that He is. Charles Spurgeon said, "You and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together. No one sin you may keep; they must all be given up, they must be brought out like Canaanite kings from the cave and be hanged up in the sun."

The life of a person who has truly and genuinely been saved is a repentant life. This means their life will be transformed. This is what the entire book of 1 John is all about. John says that the truly repentant life is one in which the confession of sin, obedience to God's will, love of other believers, and the practice of righteousness are normal and habitual, are all marks of that life. John 15:8 says,

"By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

Most people will spend their lives following the crowd. They will do what everyone else does, and they will believe what everyone else does. But when it comes to true salvation, Biblical salvation, there is zero security in numbers. If every single person in a group is saved it is because each one of them on their own came into the kingdom of God by their own decision, enabled by the Holy Spirit to be sure, to trust Christ.