

The Narrow, Uncomfortable Way

The man read it, and looking upon the Evangelist very carefully said, “Where must I go?” Then said the Evangelist, (pointing with his finger over a very wide field,) “Do you see yonder the very small gate?” The man said, “No.” Then said the other, “You see yonder shining light? Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly to it: you will see the gate and when you knock, you will be told what you will need to do.” So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he did not run far from his own door, but his wife and children, perceiving what he was doing, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, “Life! life! eternal life!” So he looked not behind but fled towards the middle of the plain. The neighbors also came out to see him run; and, as he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return . . . (excerpt from Pilgrims Progress). Pilgrim searched for the very small gate in order to find eternal life! This famous story is based on Jesus’ next words in the Sermon on the Mount,

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. (NASB) Matthew 7:13-14

NARROW OR WIDE GATE? Jesus is comparing two gates. His first gate is narrow and the other one is wide. Each gate appears to open to a road that is as narrow or as broad as the gate.

The Greek word Jesus uses to describe the width of the second gate is *platus*. This word has the idea of “wide, wide spread, diffuse, and being spread over a wide area.” The road or “way” is described as “broad.” This last word comes from the Greek word *eurychoros* which means “free, spacious, and roomy.” If we put it all together, Jesus’ second road is very wide and uncrowded. I used to live in Los Angeles, California, along with 6.5 million other people. The streets, stores and roads are crowded. The

highways are very wide, but most people do not enjoy traveling on them because they are so crowded. Traffic jams are normal and the flow of traffic can be very slow. It was not a joy to travel the highways and streets of the Los Angeles area. But Jesus’ wide gate and road are very wide with lots of room, and there are no traffic jams. In fact, on the wide road you can travel as fast as you want and go where you want.

It is fun!

THE NARROW GATE. But this is not true with Jesus’ narrow gate and road. Jesus describes the narrow gate using two Greek words *stevos* and *thlibo*. *Stevos* means “restricted, squeezed, pressed, confined, and narrow” and *thlibo* means “to press hard against, crush, rub, affliction and persecution.” This



sounds like a shopping experience during the holiday season in Los Angeles - an unpleasant experience. Jesus' narrow gate and road is small and loaded with affliction. The wide and roomy gate and road lead to destruction or hell. The constricted, affliction filled gate and road lead to eternal life.

PICK YOUR GOD. Recent surveys of Americans reveal that 84 percent call themselves Christians. This is no surprise. Listen to a recent article from Forbes ASAP magazine (October 2, 2000).

I believe that God remains conscious of his creation and interested in it. I believe that his interest may be described, intermittently at least, as love (and I say "his" with no strong suspicion that he shares qualities with the earthly male gender.

Whether he is attentive to every moment of every human's life, as some religions claim, I'm by no means sure. But I do believe that he has standards of action that he means us to observe. I believe that he had communicated those standards - and most of whatever else we know about his transcendent nature

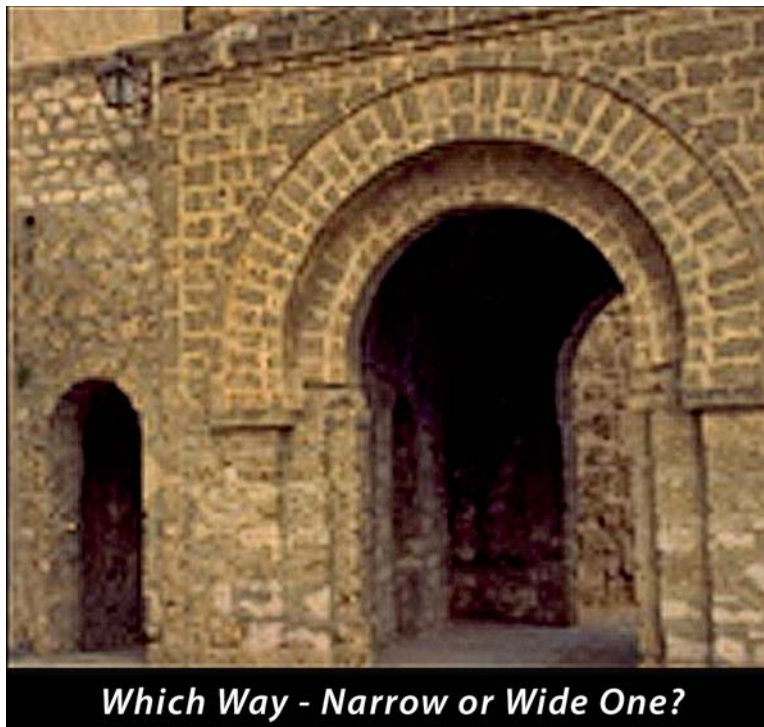
- through a few human messengers and through the mute spectacles of nature in all its manifestations, around and inside us . . .

God created those spectacles many billion years ago and began to send those messengers, to this planet at least, as long ago as 4,000 years, maybe earlier. Those messengers are parents and teachers, prophets and poets (sacred and secular), painters and musicians, healers and lovers, the generous saints of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and a few other faiths - all deep feeders of our minds and

bodies . . . Most of the long-enduring faiths say that we accumulate the weight of wrongs - our sins, our karma - and will ultimately be confronted with that weight. (Reynolds Price, "dear harper," Forbes ASAP).

Mr. Price is not alone. Most folks have chosen the wide gate and broad way. Jesus said He was the only gate. He was the only road. He is the only door.

I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved . . .
(NASB) John 10:9



He said He was the way and the life,

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (NASB) John 14:6

He also is the bread,

I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.
(NASB) John 6:35

He is the door - the very small one. He is the small door that leads to

the way - the road of suffering. He is the truth and the way to eternal life. He is the bread of life - satisfaction.

HOW TO OPEN THE GATE/DOOR. Many believe God will accept their good intentions and are trying to get to heaven by their goodness. Others want to hang on to their money. Some are too busy right now. Others believe God is a God of love and, "How could He reject me?" Jesus says these folks are trying to get there the wrong way.

Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek

to enter and will not be able. (NASB) Luke 13:24

There is only one way to enter a really small door - by ourselves. No baggage! No charts or bags of good deeds! No money. No bread for a snack. Nothing! Just believing He is the Truth. Just believing He is The Way. Just believing He is the Door. Just believing He is eternal life! All we have to do is give up on ourselves and trust Jesus and only Jesus - no one else - to forgive our sins. Simply come as a beggar.

Jesus promises to forgive a beggar's sins and take him or her to heaven when he/she dies. He does not promise us "a wonderful life." He does not promise to heal our marriages. He does not promise wealth or fame. Why do I say that? Jesus' illustration of the narrow gate leads to the way of

affliction (Matt. 5:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:12). Yes, He offers inner peace and joy, but He does not promise external comfort. He promises forgiveness. It is the wide gate that leads to comfort and hell!

CONCLUSION. Jesus offers the way to peace with God.

I must needs go home by the way of the Cross; There's no other way but this. I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light if the way of the Cross I miss. The way of the Cross leads home. The way of the Cross leads home. It is sweet to know, as I onward go, The way of the Cross leads home . . . Where He waits at the open door. (The Way of the Cross Leads Home by Jesse Grown Pounds).