

The Narrow Gate: Being Wise and Great in God's Eyes

I. ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14

Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Luke 13:24

Jesus defined two contrasting messages and lifestyles, which are today being proclaimed worldwide by millions of people who profess to be loyal to Jesus. The true message is the call to the narrow way. The distorted message is the call to the broad way.

The distorted message has disastrous consequences in giving people confidence to live a life of compromise, rather than feeling sorrow for their sin, hungering for righteousness, and going deeper in their relationship with God.

The broad way is popular because it has few restrictions, giving much room for compromise. Those on this road can follow their fleshly/worldly desires.

It is the road of tolerance and permissiveness. This message emphasizes Jesus' promises of blessing, His grace, patience and love but dismisses or omits His requirements (spiritual disciplines and denying the flesh) and warnings (rebukes and judgments).

The narrow way is difficult on our fleshly desires, which must be denied.

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Matthew 16:24

-This way has clear boundaries defined by God. To walk on this road we must leave behind many things that are not in God's will—lust (morality), pride, covetousness.

-The narrow way is unpopular and is opposed.

-Those who proclaim this message are seen as extremists or fanatical by people who want to live without feeling conviction for their sin. They want to feel good about their relationship with God without needing to deny their fleshly desires and plans.

having a form of godliness but denying its power (their lifestyle of justified compromise denies the power of grace to cleanse us from all unrighteousness). And from such people turn away! 2 Timothy 3:5

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age Titus 2:11-12

Jesus did say His yoke is easy. This context is a spiritual rest for our soul or heart (not a physical rest for our flesh). Taking Jesus' yoke is not about receiving forgiveness. We are to be yoked to Jesus and His lifestyle—it is difficult on fleshly desires, but easy on our heart, as it fills us with peace and contentment.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am...lowly in heart (meek, humble), and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:29-30

Jesus is saying learn from Me and live as I have lived. There's grace to be holy as He is/was holy.

II. FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus compared false teachers to wolves, who only come among sheep to take from them.

They bring harm to people's spiritual life by convincing them that the narrow way is much broader than Jesus taught.

They present the broad way as if it were the narrow way, thus contradicting Jesus' teaching on the necessity of self denial and bearing their cross.

Scripture requires God's people to take a stand against compromising trends or doctrines in the Church.

There are times to bring judgment to ministries that have destructive doctrines and behavior (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 21; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; Revelation 2:2). We must do this in the right way and with a right spirit.

In Revelation 2-3, Jesus identified compromise in five of the seven churches. We must take a stand against issues that Jesus took a stand against.

-Practical ways to avoid deception:

1. include regular, prayerful Bible reading
2. setting our hearts to obey the Lord (REPENTANCE: not making excuses for compromise) *Examples of many ministry friends who have walked away from Jesus.*
3. staying in close relationship with others (confessing sin, James 5:16)
4. regular involvement with a body of believers (Hebrews 10:25) that has leaders who uphold biblical doctrines and practices
5. maintain a teachable spirit that receives instruction and correction from others.

III. THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus went from teaching about false prophets to false believers. Many who profess Christ do not seek to consistently obey Him in their private lives.

Depart from Me: These will be the most shocking and terrifying words that they will ever hear. Their focus is mostly on their ministry for God and not on building a life of obedience and love to God.

Obedying and loving Jesus are synonymous. All of His commands are based in His love to enrich our lives. And our obedience to His commands is an expression of our love for Him.

If you love me, obey my commandments. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them. John 14:15, 21

Obedience to Jesus does not earn our salvation, but gives evidence that our faith is genuine.

someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can [that] faith save him?...Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:14, 17

Salvation by works and salvation without works both rob Jesus of His glory.

Many boldly profess allegiance to Jesus publicly by calling Him their Lord, but they lack the saving faith that must be expressed in the lives of all who genuinely love Jesus.

They assume their popular ministry will be sufficient proof of their genuine faith. They have many testimonies of their prophecies, exorcisms, and healing miracles. No one can camouflage their consistent disobedience behind the popularity of their ministry.

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11