

## GOING THROUGH THE GATE IN CHRIST

### Matthew 7:13-29

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"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."

### You Will Know Them by Their Fruits

"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 thornbushes 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."

### I Never Knew You

"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!'"

### Build on the Rock

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

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"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." This passage of Scripture in **Matthew 7:13-14** has been used in many a sermon or message and many times it has led persons to throw up their hands and say, "I've tried, I cant do it. I've tried being a good person, I've tried to live a righteous and holy life that is pleasing to God and I just keep failing." I came to that conclusion myself some time ago. "Love

my neighbor as myself? There's days that I don't even love myself, how can I love others then if I don't even like myself?" When Jesus says, "enter the narrow gate", what is He talking about? Remember how Jesus told His disciples that unless their righteousness exceeds the Pharisees, they also would not inherit eternal life? As the Apostle Paul quoted David from **Psalm 14:3**, There is none righteous (who does good), no not one." (**Romans 3:10**) Are we really all just doomed to failure? Is it possible for me, someone who has a rap sheet, or a list of sins, that could fill a whole book larger than the Bible? Is it possible to find God's grace to forgive me of my sins and to somehow accomplish His expectations of me?

The answer for us lies in the first phrase of our passage of Scripture, where Jesus says, "enter by the narrow gate." That has many, many, many times just been preached that it is just simply hard to enter heaven (I've preached it myself). After all, Jesus did say, difficult is the way. Some will take that a step further and say we have to be sure to follow every jot and tittle of the law or we may jeopardize our salvation. That would be a message on being saved by works, wouldn't it? Initially I was leaning towards **Romans 1:16-17** for our passage of Scripture for today. But hey, why not have our cake and eat it too! When God gives you eyes to see His redemptive plan for mankind, you begin to see it throughout the entire Bible, that is, the Word of God. Here we compare the teachings of Jesus and the good news or the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by Paul. Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who **believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. [Greek there is him saying the Gentiles or non-Jews] **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."** (**Romans 1:16-17**) The gospel of Christ, that is, the good news of Jesus Christ is that He has the power of our salvation. Paul mentions that same power again, of Christ's resurrection in relation to him and to us, in saying, "that I may know the power of His resurrection." (**Philippians 3:10**) Getting back then to what Jesus says in **John 10:7**, "I AM the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers but the sheep did not hear them."

Sound familiar? Enter the narrow gate, "I am the door of the sheep." There have been many false prophets and teachers that have come and gone from generation to generation. Any teaching that does not point us to God, as it has been revealed to us for almost 2000 years now, that it is in Christ Jesus to which we are justified by God for forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life, that is a false teaching. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) Grace for what? We all should know the answer to that. As Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should

not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17) Just prior to that, Jesus told Nicodemus that one must be born-again, that is, born of the Spirit to be saved and receive the promise of eternal life. When we truly believe on Christ what is the next thing that happens to one who is being called into God's kingdom, into salvation in Christ Jesus? To receive the Holy Spirit-to be born again or born of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us into repentance, to have a change of mind, to look to Him for our life and salvation. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13) We are led by the Spirit to love God as He first loved us, and to then obey Him according to His will and purpose. Later in the book of John, Jesus explained, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23)

That, my good friends, is the entering the narrow gate, that is in Christ Jesus! So, once we believe on Jesus we can then go about our merry way doing whatever seems good to us, fulfilling the desires of our heart according to whatever we want? Of course not. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who **believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**; as it is written, "**The just shall live by faith.**" His Righteousness is revealed to us and others when we are truly born again and He begins working in us HIS Righteousness. Is the righteousness of God being revealed in you, in us? That faith in Christ is that He is our Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and then Redemption. It is in the believing that "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." Yet that is taken out of context of what Paul was saying. The full context which supports that our faith in revealed as God is working in us, Paul says, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:3-6) Is Christ Jesus being revealed in you?

"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 thornbushes 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."

We can see many Scriptures that can be taken out of context to basically make anyone inherit the kingdom of heaven or at least those who choose to make it a game of just getting by enough to squeak through the pearly gates on a technicality (or at least they're hoping that is what will happen). One example is the believing on Jesus. One can quote **1 John 4:2** that says, "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God." How can that be? Muslims believe that Jesus came in the flesh but they deny his death on the cross as it says in the Koran. They also deny that He was the only begotten Son of God, that God begat no one. **Romans 10:9-10** says, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has **raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved." Now we have Scripture that speaks of believing on Christ as coming in the flesh and dying on the cross. We are not just believing on Jesus, the Son of God coming in the flesh and dying on a cross but that He also rose from the dead. The significance of that, Paul addresses in **Romans 6:4**, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Jesus didn't die on a cross just so that we would believe that He was serious about His love for us, although that is true. He died on the cross, because that was the only way that could satisfy the righteous requirement of the law which is based on God's perfectness in character. God Himself had to come down to pay that penalty for us. It is in **His Righteousness** that we are saved! Jesus was not just a great moral teacher. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." (**1 John 3:1**) Do you know Jesus?

When we believe on Christ dying on the cross for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself, the repentance that the Holy Spirit leads us in is to receive the Spirit of Christ and to then begin that new life IN CHRIST. Talk is cheap. Just as God said to and about the Israelites through the prophet Isaiah, and as Jesus quoted it in speaking of those who just want to play religion, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me." (**Matthew 15:8**) Jesus is telling us also, "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." The world has a million and one ways to possibly inherit eternal salvation and to enter His Paradise. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Not only is Jesus the gate, He tells us, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**) If you have Jesus you're going to make it, in this lifetime and into His eternal kingdom. Yet Jesus promises us that it will be difficult. As Jesus also tells us, "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons

of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:43-48)

It isn't always easy living a life in Christ. There is at times pain, despair, suffering, discouragement, trials, temptations, and even at times incredible grief or sadness. This world is not operating as Jesus being the Gate and the Way. The world also is leading us to seek out a life of pleasures and ease. When Paul said, "that I may know the power of His resurrection" he then continued by saying, "and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." (Philippians 3:10) The world is that huge path that most persons are on. Let me ask you this. The world teaches us that we should be tolerant and understanding towards people of other faiths. Yet, as Paul said, how will know if they have not heard? When I speak about other faiths that aren't teaching that Jesus is the only Way, Truth, and the Life, I am not speaking in terms of condemnation. I am pleading to anyone who will listen, to know that Jesus was sent by the Heavenly Father, the Creator of all things, to come to this earth to die on a cross for our sins and that it is in Christ alone that we can find forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God to where we can have a personal relationship with Him and then to be saved unto eternal life in His glorious kingdom. Just as I am also concerned for whom I hope are my brothers and sisters in Christ who are living a life in slavery to sin. Let Jesus pull you out of that darkness and into His marvelous light! But then, carrying and sharing that message won't always gain us a positive reaction from the world, will it?

Once again, as Paul spoke to the Romans, actually he was pleading with them, and God, through His Word is pleading with us, to put our hope and trust in Jesus, so that we can be who God purposed us to be in Christ Jesus. Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1-2) People keep saying how God is not the same God in the Old Testament as He is the the New Testament but you know what? God was pleading with His people, repeatedly to turn back to Him and stop following after false gods. Those false gods weren't just about articles made of wood or stone or metals. It was about the condition of their heart to where they didn't want God to be their God and Savior. Right after what Jesus said in John 3:16-17, Jesus continued, "He who believes in Him [that's Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the

light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." That was the same with the Israelites and it goes for most of the people that are on that wide path in this world.

To continue in what God is working in us, compared to those of the world, in **1 John 3:10** we have, "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother." John is not saying that if we practice righteousness and love others that we'll be saved. He is saying, those who are saved will be practicing righteousness and loving others. That, my friends can only be done IN Christ Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) We are living our lives in Christ Jesus, meaning He is working in us His wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) By grace we are saved through the faith that God gives, as He gives to each of us a measure of faith (**Romans 12:3**) Once we believe on Christ and receive Him then we begin to be used by God to bear fruit for His glory. God said through Isaiah the prophet, "Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." (**Isaiah 43:7**) We do not bear fruit for God so that He will be pleased and will grant us eternal salvation. Once again we are saved by the wondrous grace of God for His glory. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**) Jesus spells it out for us clearly, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (**John 15:8**)

"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!'" The message is the same here. We do not do good works so that we can be saved. There are many people who do not confess Jesus as Lord or live in His righteousness that are doing good works. When some Jewish exorcists tried to deliver demons from someone, and they said, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" (**Acts 19:13-15**) If even the demons know who are Christ's or not, most certainly Jesus knows who are His as He inhabits those who are His.

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that

house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Not only was Jesus profound in His teaching but He is that Rock on which we must have our foundation of faith. That foundation doesn't move. It is up to us to remain on that foundation.

In a book called Living and Leading Well, the author gives us this story. "I found myself in my office overwhelmed with a sense of hopelessness." You ever feel that way? "I had tried everything I knew about organizing people for success, most of which worked well in other settings, but it was not working here. While I sat in my office behind my desk I had an impression (a picture in my head) of me sitting in my office with a fancy toolbox on my desk and Jesus sitting on the other side of the desk." This is from a youth pastor from a church of around 5000 people. "In the impression, Jesus looked at me and asked if He could look at my toolbox. I said, "sure!" as I was apparently pretty proud of my toolbox and thought Jesus would be impressed." Think of how ridiculous that is, that we could possibly think that we could "impress" God. "Jesus took my toolbox off of my desk, put it on the floor, opened it and began to examine my tools. He took each tool out individually and threw it over His shoulder saying, "This will never do!" When He finished throwing away all of my tools He closed the toolbox and placed it on my desk saying, "now you're ready!"<sup>1</sup> That is not to say God doesn't use our gifts and talents that He has given us. But what it says is, just as with that pastor had to realize, we need Jesus. Jesus said as much in declaring, "'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Those around us need Jesus! The world needs Jesus, not some fancy preaching that makes people feel good about themselves or some glorious and beautiful music that takes us away from our problems. WE NEED JESUS! From the beginning of our faith in Him to the time He takes us into His eternal glory! What a day though that will be!

Jesus has overcome death and the grave so that we too will overcome IN HIM and as He told His disciples He was going to prepare a place for them and us. Our journey though doesn't begin for us on the other side of eternity it begins even now. May today be your day of salvation, may today be the day where you commit to having Jesus work in you to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13), to bear fruit for His glory, and in the end to where Jesus welcomes us

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Clinton and Paul Leavenworth, Living and Leading Well, pg. 24 (Unknown Publisher, 2012)

into His eternal kingdom of the other side of eternity to where Jesus says, "'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" (Matthew 25:21)

A prayer that God wanted Aaron to speak over the Israelites is one I'd like to pray over us. "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)