

THE BASICS OF WHAT LIFE SHOULD BE

Matthew 7:13-14

Matthew 7:13-14 says, "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." We sometimes hear people say that life is complicated. I suppose in a sense that is true. But in another sense these brief words of Jesus summarize what the will of God is for your life and mine. They lay out the basics of what life is all about, of what life should be.

In these words of Jesus there are suggested at least five pairs of opposites, and in connection with each pair every accountable person must make a choice. Notice them:

DISCUSSION

I. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) BASIC INVITERS.

A. The first, of course, is Jesus.

1. Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. {29} Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
2. If you accept this invitation, there are certain obligations imposed upon you. That is, you must commit yourself to live according to the will of him who died for you.
 - a. Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - b. Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
3. But this is the best life one can live. God created us, he knows us, and he knows what we need to live full and happy lives. Furthermore he loves us, and wants us to be happy. We can rest assured, therefore, that the life of service to Christ is the richest, fullest, and happiest life one can live. Not only so, but when this life is over, those who have accepted this invitation will be given another. It is one that is worded as follows: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

B. The other inviter, of course, is Satan.

1. He is called: *the accuser of our brethren, the deceiver, the evil one, our enemy, father of lies, god of this world, a murderer, the prince of the powers of the air, the prince of this world, the tempter, and the serpent* (among other things).
2. It is he who is responsible for all the sickness, pain, death, sorrow, and heartache that is so much a part of every human life.
3. He is a real person, and he is dead serious about his efforts to destroy all he can. First Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."
4. Do not be deceived into thinking that the punishment for sin will not be as bad as it is pictured in the Bible.

C. Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Which invitation will you accept. You have it within your power to accept or reject either of them. But you must accept one or the other.

II. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) BASIC MESSAGES.

A. One is the message of the Bible, God's truth.

1. It can be known. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

- 2.It can be understood. Ephesians 3:2-5: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: {3} How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, {4} Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) {5} Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
 - 3.It must be obeyed. First Peter 1:22-23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: {23} Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
 - 4.We are taught to walk in it.
 - a.Philippians 3:16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."
 - b.Second John 6: "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."
 - 5.This message will be the standard by which we will be finally judged. John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
- B.The other message is false doctrine, or false teaching.
- 1.Many seem to think there is no such thing.
 - 2.Psalms 119:104: "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."
 - 3.Second Corinthians 11:13: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."
 - 4.Second Peter 2:1: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."
 - 5.Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."
 - 6.First John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - 7.What is false teaching? Every teaching that is contrary to the teaching of the word of God.
- C.Do not be deceived into thinking it does not make any difference what one believes.
- 1.Second Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. {11} And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: {12} That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - 2.Second John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. {10} If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: {11} For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

III.THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) GATES.

- A.One is the strait gate. (Not spelled *s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t*, though there is a sense in which we might say it is *s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t*.)
- 1.The Greek στενός is defined as meaning *narrow* or *strait*. The dictionary defines *strait* as meaning, "a narrow passage of water joining two larger bodies of water." It also means "narrow or constricted."
 - 2.Jesus did not use that word by accident. He used it to emphasize that one does not enter into the

way which leads to heaven in just any way he might choose. We have been accused of being narrow for teaching that there is one exclusive way to get on the road that leads to heaven. But Jesus is the one who said the gate is *strait*.

3. What does that strait gate involve?

a. Believing the gospel (Mark 16:15-16). Includes believing Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.")

b. Repenting. Greek: "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins" (Thayer). Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Cannot get through the gate that puts one on the way to heaven without repentance. The gate is too strait for it to be otherwise.

c. Confessing Christ.

(1) Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. {33} But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

(2) Mark 8:38: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

d. Being baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

(1) Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? {4} Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

(2) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

(3) First Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

(4) Galatians 3:26-27: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

(5) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. {16} He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

4. There is no other gate, and no other way to pass through this gate.

5. Note: By doing these things one is saved from all past sins, and is now a member of the church of Christ, God's family.

B. The other gate is described as being *wide*. It is so wide that we can accurately say it includes all except the strait gate.

IV. THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) WAYS.

A. One is the narrow way.

1. It is hemmed in on either side by the word of God.

a. Psalms 119:105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

b. Psalms 119:130: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the

simple."

c.Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: {19} And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

d.Hebrews 8:5: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

e.2 Timothy 4:1-4: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; {2} Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. {3} For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; {4} And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

2.It is too narrow for any kind of immorality.

a.Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, {20} Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, {21} Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

b.It is a way of moral uprightness and faithfulness to Christ and his church.

c.Those travelling therein are militant in their challenge to sin and error, to atheism, to abortion, to homosexuality, to denominationalism.

3.Our text says, "few there be that find it." Are you one of the few?

B.The other way is the broad way.

1.It includes every way other than the narrow way.

2.It may seem right. Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

V.THERE ARE TWO (AND ONLY TWO) DESTINIES.

A.One destiny is life.

1.Jesus is called the bread of life (John 6:35).

2.He offers to those who will come to him the "water of life" (Rev. 22:17), and the fruit of the "tree of life" (Rev. 22:14).

3.In John 5:40 he rebuked those who would not come to him that they might have life.

4.In John 6:68 Jesus is said to have the words of eternal life.

5.Revelation 2:10 promises a crown of life to those who are faithful.

6.Second Timothy 1:10 says Christ abolished death and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

7.Matthew 25:46 says the righteous shall go away into life eternal.

8.We understand this eternal life to be talking about heaven.

B.The other destiny is said to be destruction.

1.Second Thessalonians 1:9: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

2.Second Peter 2:1: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the

Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

3. Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
4. It is not annihilation, but it is destruction.

CONCLUSION

I would emphasize that there are two (and only two) inviters, two (and only two) messages, two (and only two) gates, two (and only two) ways, and two (and only two) destinies.

A choice you must make. To fail to choose is to choose failure. If you do not choose to hear the message of Christ, to enter through the strait gate, to walk the narrow way that leads to life, then you have chosen the broad way to destruction. The fact the vast majority of people who live on the earth will be travelling that way with you will be of no comfort to you when you have come to the end of the way, and you hear those words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."