

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAY

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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.

Matthew 7:13, 14

Human life is like a journey and every person like a traveller. Each journey has a beginning and an end. So it is with man's journey through life. We know that we have begun it, and that we are travelling. Do we also know where we are going, where our life's journey will end? There are only two possibilities: the end will be either heaven or hell. Where we will be when our journey ends depends on the way we travel. Christ speaks to us about this solemn truth in a very serious manner. The Saviour declares with a sacred and tender concern that those who travel on the broad way will certainly end up in eternal misery,

and those who travel on the narrow way will reach a destiny of eternal bliss.

The broad way is the way of sin. The majority of the travellers on this road may easily be recognised. They thoughtlessly journey without love for their great Maker and gracious Provider. These travellers are indifferent and careless about their precious souls. With their minds full of worldly thoughts, there is no room in their hearts for Christ; they do not appreciate and value God's redeeming love. Many of them have wilfully set aside the commandments of God. They are at home on the broad way and love the ease of its empty pleasures. They are of the world and care not for true religion.

Nevertheless, not all travellers on the broad way are without religion. Religion has its own place here, too, and even in numerous forms. On the broad way, where Satan has his sway, religion in various superficial forms often goes hand in hand with worldly wisdom and pleasures. However, true religion and the world do not belong together, they are mutually exclusive.

Surprisingly, not all religion on the broad way is entirely superficial in nature. Some

religious travellers are rather orthodox, and in their own way quite consistent, but they are still on the broad way. This was certainly so in the days when Jesus was here on earth. This is rather evident from the manner of the Saviour's teaching on the necessity of the New Birth. Just consider how the Lord dealt with Nicodemus and the Rich Young Ruler; and these two religious men were no exceptions, for the Lord declared, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Matthew 7:22, 23). Also in His parables the Lord Jesus frequently emphasised the danger of self-deception, as in the parables of the 'The Pharisee and the Publican' and of 'The Wise and Foolish Virgins'.

The road to eternal ruin is broad and easy because the devil does not disturb them that walk on it. Satan deceives and wants sinners to believe that all is well with them while they are travelling without concern to an eternity of woe. And man's deceitful heart is readily inclined to follow blindly. What an awful deception! How much better is it to be in earnest and to give heed to the faithful, loving warnings of Christ, than to give in to the deceptive ease of the father of lies! Christ plainly declares that those who are on this broad way go down into eternal destruction.

The blessed Saviour also marks out the right way. That way is narrow and the travellers on it are few. It is true, there are difficulties on this way; but it is nevertheless a blessed way. The pilgrims on the narrow way have learned to realise the great importance of travelling to an eternal destiny. Consequently, they have searched and continue to search the Scriptures for infallible direction and guidance. They dare not

be mistaken on such a weighty matter. Therefore the Bible is their favourite book. The travellers on the narrow way carefully survey the truths of God's Word for instruction regarding the way in which eternal life may be obtained. This exalted concept of everlasting life is of the utmost significance to them. The concern of these travellers is understandable and the neglect of such an important matter is most unreasonable. By the Word of God the pilgrims on the narrow way learned that all men by nature, without exception, have forfeited eternal life, and that this is so on account of sin. They saw how this truth affects them personally. From the Word of God they know that sin is not a trivial matter, for it estranges the sinner from God, and brings him under God's displeasure. So the question arises, how do we escape the wrath to come and how do we lay hold of eternal life?

The travellers on the narrow way learned to realise that they cannot settle this question satisfactorily by their own wisdom. They needed help, they needed grace from above. They discovered that despite all their concern they were totally helpless. They could not save themselves. Therefore they cried to the Lord for His grace and power. The realisation of their spiritual blindness caused them to pray with the psalmist, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law' (Psalm 119:18). This sense of one's dependency is not known on the broad way. The travellers on the narrow way did become acquainted with the plague of their heart. Christ is our great need. How do we find Him? How does He become ours? How do we lay hold of Him? How do we embrace Him?

Most travellers on the broad way never ask these questions, and those who do show some interest have often answered them before they are ever asked. But the pilgrims

on the narrow way could not deal with their spiritual needs in such a way. They knocked and they knocked until the door of grace was opened. However narrow the way was found to be, the narrowness of the way was and is not their complaint, as long as they might only find favour in the sight of God. On the narrow way we learn something, in our own spiritual experience, of the burden of our sin and guilt, of the depravity of our nature, and what it means that Christ saves and speaks of peace and pardon to our troubled hearts. Travelling on that way that leads to life, we also learn to know the power of the Lord's sanctifying grace by which we walk in ways of holiness and truth. At the beginning of this journey we were taught our dependency on the Holy Spirit's grace and we never outgrow our need of the Spirit's

guidance.

Each child of God reflects with gratitude and joy on the rich grace of God that made him see the danger of that broad way on which he once travelled, and that placed his feet on the narrow way to eternal bliss. Traveller on the broad way, remember Christ's urgent appeal: Strive—that is, agonise—to enter in at the strait gate. Delay not, let not a moment be lost. Consider the danger of remaining on that deceptive broad way with its eternally-fatal destiny. Escape for your lives. Wrestle earnestly with God in prayer, that He may give you His Holy Spirit, to guide you and to work in your heart repentance unto life, and faith in Christ, that by God's grace you may so travel on the narrow way to heaven. ■