

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part XLI

“The Narrow Way”

I. Introduction

A. Preaching to the Choir

1. We have been working our way through the famous Sermon on the Mount for 10 months.

a. I say “famous” because these 3 chapters contain well-known passages like the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer and the Golden Rule.

2. There are many who admire this sermon and can quote from it; but always remember our title of these studies: **“The Normal Christian Life”**.

3. This sermon is not primarily evangelistic; Jesus was not preaching to the world.

4. Jesus is “preaching to the choir”, so to speak; He is speaking to His *disciples*; He is not telling them “live like this”; He is telling them, “If you belong to Me, this is how you will live!”

- **He began with the Beatitudes**; blessed are the poor in spirit; the meek; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. These are not things we *do*, this is who we *are*.
- He taught us to pray, **“Our Father**, who art in heaven”; a prayer than can only be prayed by those who are born again.

- He gave **us the Golden Rule**, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”; a nice principle for *everyone* in the world; but only those who have the indwelling help of the Holy Spirit can consistently live this way

5. And now we are in the “home stretch” of the Sermon, the last chapter, which deals with the subject of judgement,

6. And here in these 2 verses, the Lord is teaching His disciples how to judge the true Christian life from the false; whether someone is preaching the real deal or offering us a counterfeit.

"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 NKJV

7. Again we see the genius of Jesus in how he can simplify what seems complicated; that there really only 2 possible choices in life...

B. Two “Gates” and Two “Ways”

1. Jesus speaks of two “gates” and two “ways”:

- There is a *wide gate that leads to a broad way* that ends in *death* and *many* are on that path
- There is a *narrow gate that leads to a narrow way* that ends in *life* and *few* are on that path

2. Jesus says many are on the “broad way” to death; in his commentary on this phrase, Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says:

The “broad way” (εὐρυχωρὸς [euruchōros]) is in every city, town, village, with the glaring white lights that lure to destruction.

Word Pictures in the New Testament

a. Whether it's New York or Nashville, if you want to find out what the devil is doing, head down to Broadway!

3. On the other hand, the Lord tells us that the gate to life and the pathway to heaven are “narrow”:

**“Narrow” is from the verb *thlibō*, meaning to experience trouble or difficulty.
Carl Blomberg in the New American Commentary**

4. The Lord Jesus is pulling no punches when He tells us what the “normal Christian life” will look like. So why should we?

**“If you find it easy to be a Christian, you probably aren't one.”
Matt Walsh, The Blaze**

5. Testimony: For me, the Christian life is the only life. There is so much joy and blessing in walking with the Lord. But it is not an easy life!

**“The gate is so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but few that find it, and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; many feel they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others shun it, for they do not like to be so limited and restrained.”
Matthew Henry**

6. So true! The worldly person wants lots of choices. His nature won't allow him to choose a life that puts limits on himself.

C. What Choice I Have?

1. Have you noticed how we Americans love choices; the more the merrier.

- **Choose your chip**: from over 1700 kinds of potato chips offered by 321 different companies!

- **Choose your channel**: there are now over 500 TV channels out there; the average American household now receives 189 different TV channels! Research shows that those with 189 channels really only watch 18 of them; but they are willing to pay for the other 171 anyway.

2. Human nature likes lots of choices in chips and channels; but when it comes to where we spend eternity, Jesus pushes us into a corner; He says there are only 2 choices and every person will go one way or the other. And the right choice will never be popular!

“The narrow path is not the way of the “many” but of the few. It is not, nor has it ever been ‘popular’.”
David Martyn Lloyd Jones

3. And this is a message American Christianity needs to hear because...

D. Popularity Can Be a Problem

1. Let me something knowing that I run the risk of being misunderstood: I tend to become skeptical at anything called “Christian”...whether it’s a Preacher, a church, or some new book that becomes “popular”; especially if the world seems to approve of it.

2. Why? Because I looked up the meaning of the word.

“Popular”=Pleasing to the majority
Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary

3. Jesus tells us up front that the right gate and the narrow path will never be popular; the life He offers won’t be pleasing to the majority.

4. Our challenge is that we live in a culture that worships celebrity and pursues popularity. But if that people-pleasing spirit gets into the church, preachers can turn themselves into celebrities trying to be popular.

a. If I want to be popular preacher, I have to make sure that my messages will be pleasing to the majority of the people.

b. If I want to have a popular church, I have to make sure that people feel entertained so they'll keep coming.

c. And if I really want to be popular, I have to make sure that I don't offend anyone.

Testimony: There is more of this than you think!

5. On the other hand, if we preach what Jesus preached, the world won't like it...

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

John 15:18

6. If the world comes to love the church, something's wrong!

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 15:19

7. The strait gate/narrow way message will never be popular.

8. But before we leave this passage I want to give you a quick...

D. A Theology Lesson

1. Some people think this message is evangelistic; that Jesus is presenting 2 doors to lost people and telling them that the only way to be saved is to choose the right gate. This would mean that you can save yourself if you make the right decision. But that is not what it means.

“I do not save myself by entering in at the strait gate, but by doing so I announce the fact that I am saved. The only man who enters in at the strait gate is the man who is saved; the only people on the narrow way are those who are saved; otherwise they would not be there.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

2. This sermon never tells lost people what they must do to be saved; it tells people who are saved who they are and how they will live because they are saved!

3. Lost people will never choose the narrow gate and the narrow path.

“The trouble ultimately with all who are not Christian is that they have never seen the glory and the magnificence of the Christian life. How noble and pure and upright it is! But they have never seen it. They are blind to it.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“As the apostle Paul says, ‘The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not’ (2 Corinthians 4:4).”

4. No one not a Christian will enter the narrow gate or walk the narrow path because it won’t make sense to them.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things...

1 Corinthians 2:14-15a NKJV

5. We enter the narrow gate and walk the narrow path because that choice is consistent with who we are!

“By being and doing these things we proclaim what we are...that we are His. It is only Christian people who are to be found along the narrow way, and you do not make yourself a Christian by entering in. You are entering in and walking upon it because you are saved.”

David Martyn Lloyd Jones

6. As we've shown from the beginning, the Sermon on the mount is not a list of what we are to do; it is a description of who we are.

III. Conclusion:

A. Introduction to the Next Lesson

1. I have spent 2 weeks on these 2 verses about the narrow gate and the narrow way because it sets up our next lesson:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Matthew 7:15 KJV

2. We are living in a day and age when there are many false prophets in the church; and they go undetected because many of God's people have a defective idea of what one is.

- a. Most think false prophets are easy to identify
- b. They give wrong predictions about the future
- c. They preach heretical doctrines, etc.

3. But how about this definition?

“The false prophet is a man who has no `strait gate' or `narrow way' in his gospel. He has nothing which is offensive to the natural man; he pleases all.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

B. Altar Call and Communion with The Apostle's Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.