

The Narrow Door

by Tricia Berg

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is *wide* and the way is *easy* that leads to *destruction*, and those who enter by it are *many*. For the gate is *narrow* and the way is *hard* that leads to *life*, and those who find it are *few*."
Matthew 7:13-14

This is just TOO important to be "too busy" for. PLEASE don't be distracted by the world, enthralled by the same things as unsaved people are, fooling yourself into thinking that you're "good" with God--He CANNOT be fooled. Saving faith results in a changed life, otherwise it is not true faith and it cannot save. (Gal. 6:7-9, Jam. 1:21-27, Jam. 2:14-26) And Christians, STOP calling others who want to live to please God "self-righteous!" We are not meant to persecute *each other*--the persecution was *expected* to come from *UNbelievers*. It's really time for people who love practicing sin to stop calling themselves believers and criticizing true believers who love God and want to do His will instead of their own.

*You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.***
2 Timothy 3:10-13

*For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this **they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*** 1 Peter 4:3-5

The passage at the top continues on as follows (context is SO important!):

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **Every tree that**

does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' Everyone then who hears these words of mine **and does them** will be like a **wise** man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not do them** will be like a **foolish** man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:15-29

And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "**Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.** When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, '**I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!**'" Luke 13:23-27

Wow! Jesus connects entering the "narrow door" with obedience to His commands by those who claim to believe in Him. Does anyone want to accuse Him of preaching works by salvation? (I sure hope not!) It doesn't benefit us to claim to know Him and then not obey Him, and nor does it benefit us to obey His commands, but not actually believe in and know Him. We don't do these works to save ourselves. We do them because we are saved. He is our Lord, unlike those who knocked on the door after it closed and were told that He didn't know them. Works without faith AND faith without works are BOTH useless.

Jesus was not talking about keeping the Mosaic (i.e. given through Moses) Law. He's talking about the greatest two commands. These are the "laws" we are under and are also referred to as "the Royal Law" and the "Law of Liberty" in the epistles.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.**' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." **And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."** And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. Mark 12:28-34

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For **the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.** Romans 13:8-14

Notice how James' words below echo those of Jesus (his brother) in Matthew and Luke above:

But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. **But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.** James 1:22-25

If you really fulfill the **royal law** according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are

committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the **law of liberty**. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. **What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.** James 2:8-26**

James was not claiming that we can do anything to save ourselves. He was saying that empty words are useless! We certainly know that in our everyday lives. If someone claims to love us and yet never follows up their words with actions, we know they are not sincere (or at least we have trouble believing them, don't we?) If we MEAN what we say, it should SHOW. Jesus said the one who loves Him will OBEY Him.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.** And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and

manifest myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "**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. **Whoever does not love me does not keep my words**. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." John 14:15-27

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love**. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. **This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you**. John 15:9-14

In America, we have good reason to pay close attention when Jesus warns about how it is almost impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 19:23-26) The rich man loves his riches more than he has a desire to love and please God. He also has everything he needs--he trusts in his own strength and abilities. He doesn't want to give them up or admit that there is something he can't get for himself. Even the poorest person in our country has so much more than poor people in other countries. That is not to say we should try to bring down this country, as if it would be "more fair" if everyone were impoverished. We should all be very generous and help people in need as much as we can, but that is not the point. The POINT is that we are ALL wretched sinners and we ALL need Jesus. Let's not think we can save ourselves with our wealth or strength. Let's not think that we can trust the advice of people who are BLIND to the truth. (Matt. 15:13-14, 1Cor. 2:14)

*"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So **because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold***

*refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. **Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.** Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He **who overcomes**, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* Revelation 3:14-22

Let's also NOT PRETEND to believe in Jesus and yet live like unsaved heathens. God can see inside our hearts! (Matt. 15:18-19, Rom. 8:27, Rev. 2:23) We might be able to fool mere humans with our EMPTY confession of faith, but even most people can recognize a hypocrite when they see one. (1John 3:17-18) That makes it all the more unconscionable for supposed Christians to live like the world. Our behavior reflects on our Father in heaven! (Matt. 5:16, Phil. 2:12-16, Eph. 2:10) He has prepared wonderful things FOR THOSE WHO **LOVE HIM**. (1Cor. 2:9) We obey out of love, BECAUSE we know what our salvation cost our beautiful, victorious, faithful, worthy Savior, and out of RESPECT, because we know how mighty and utterly awesome He is.

How great are your works, O LORD! *Your thoughts are very deep! The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; but you, O LORD, are on high forever. For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered.* Psalm 92:5-9

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7 ***The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.*** Psalm 103:19

We will each be accountable for ourselves. (Rom. 14:12, Heb. 4:13) Saying we thought that "the gate is narrow" meant that looking around us and mistaking the broad path that the unsaved masses are on for the ONE NARROW WAY isn't going to cut it on judgment day. Now is the time to get serious about LOVING God, serving His Son and being READY for His return (or our own personal appointment with Him). (Heb. 9:27-28, Matt.25:10-13)

If the thought that someone would ask you to *examine yourself* (2Cor. 13:5) and make adjustments if you find your faith in and love for the Lord to be lacking *in light of the truth of the Bible* is OFFENSIVE to you, then there is most

certainly a problem. (Rev. 2:4-7, 3:2-5) This life is short. Anyone who cares enough about your soul to tell you the truth is your *real friend*. Those who tell you what you want to hear are NOT your friends. (2Pet. 2:18-22, Eph. 4:25, Col. 3:8-10) Let's each humble ourselves and accept correction from our Lord. (Jam. 1:21, Heb. 12:5-11, 1Cor. 11:31-32) There is no place in Christianity for pride, which God hates. What good is it to gain the whole world if you lose your soul? (Matt. 16:24-26)

Written by Tricia Berg, March 2017, 7 pp. If you have been blessed by this article, you are free to share but do not claim as your own or sell, and do not make modifications and attribute them to me. You can download as many free pdf devotional articles as you wish from my blog <http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com/> (The most recent articles are at the bottom of the page after you click on the "free pdf downloads" tab at the top of the page.) You can also read this article at <http://clotheyourselves.blogspot.com/>, where the Bible verses should pop up when you hover over the cites.