

The Narrow Gate

The Good News of Christ is God's power to save believers. Jesus the Christ has opened "a new and living way" in order that men may draw near "in full assurance of faith" to enter "the holy place" by His blood (cf. Hebrews 10:19-20, 22). In His love God Almighty has provided the means of atonement and propitiation so sinners may be justified by His redeeming grace through faith in Jesus (cf. Romans 3:22-25).

The way of the Lord is not always easy, nor is it the popular majority. Discipleship in Christ comes with hardships, challenges and costs. The Lord and Savior Jesus preached the kingdom of heaven. That's good news! But He urged hearers with these words: "*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it*" (Matthew 7:13-14).

The path that leads to life is described as **narrow** and **small** in contrast to the way that leads to destruction, which the majority chooses to go. The meanings of these two words in Greek are rooted in the concepts "*to groan*" and "*to press*." Much effort is required of the individual because this gate and way is "hemmed in" by divine conditions and requirements. Thus many people do not choose the narrow gate – to walk with Christ – because it is counter to the world and to their own desires and thoughts. Luke uses a more intensive command meaning "to agonize" in Jesus' admonition: "*Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able*" (13:24).

Why must believers groan, press and agonize to go the way that leads to eternal life? Consider briefly a few points Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount in this context of the heavenly kingdom's narrow gate. First, there are false teachers. "*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*" (Matthew 7:15). Error misleads; falsehood is contrary to the truth. Thus each person must examine the fruit of a tree to discern if it is good or bad, lest he go astray. Secondly, the one who DOES the will of the Father will enter heaven (7:21). Doing good deeds for the Lord while failing to uphold God's laws is vain and unacceptable to the Lord. How sad it will be when Jesus tells believers to depart from Him because they did want they wanted to do, not God's will (cf. 7:23). Examine your own actions in light of the word of the Lord. Thirdly, wisdom is not how much you know but what you do with the knowledge of the Lord: "*everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock*" (7:24). The one who is equipped to withstand the various storms of life is the one who is steadfastly listening to and doing what Jesus has revealed. "...the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Definitely, a narrow gate!