



Way of the Eagle

by Rhoda Collins

ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE

Enter through the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and spacious and broad is the way that leads away to destruction, and many are those who are entering through it. But the gate is narrow (contracted by pressure) and the way is straitened and compressed that leads away to life, and few are those who find it". Matthew 7:13-14

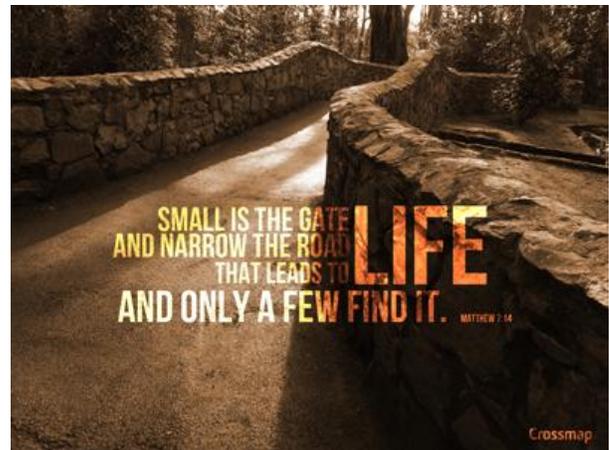
Most first-century Jewish people believed they were saved by virtue of descent from Abraham (3:9). Yet Jesus taught that the assumption of automatic salvation as a deception; most of his contemporaries were unsaved (7:13-14). Those who led them showed by their lives that they were not God's true representatives (v. 15-20); indeed, many professing servants of Jesus will themselves be banished from God's presence in the judgment (v. 21-23), for only those who truly obeyed his teaching will stand (v. 24-27). When one compares the great numbers of people today who boldly identify themselves as Christians yet never consider the claims of Christ, one shudders to realize how deadly such deception remains. May we present Christ's radical claims also boldly so that more professing Christians may realize that they are really on the wide and wrong road!

Jesus' image of the narrow way should have made sense to his hearers (v. 13). Greek, Roman and Jewish writers often employed the image of the two paths in life, and those particularly concerned with the future judgment especially employed the image of the two ways, the narrow one leading to life and the broad one to destruction.

Some people's assurance of salvation is a delusion (Mt 7:13-14). To enter the narrow gate of the kingdom we must deliberately knock, that is, request that God make us citizens of his kingdom (v. 7-8).

The difficulty of Jesus' way includes embracing by repentance both persecution (5:10-12) and the ethics of the kingdom taught in the Sermon on the Mount. (Study this Sermon.)

Most Jewish people in Jesus' day were religious; respecting God and keeping his commandments were an important part of their culture. These would be the many people of whom Jesus' hearers would think of when they heard Him. Jesus intends His words to jar us from complacency, to consider the genuineness of our commitment to Him.



One wonders how many members in our churches today assume that they are saved when in fact they treat Jesus' teachings lightly—people who give no thought to their temper, their mental chastity, their integrity and so forth during the week, then pretend to be religious or even spiritually gifted in church. Do we have the courage to communicate Jesus' message as clearly as He meant it to be conveyed, to warn ourselves and others that it is possible for people to assume they are saved and yet be damned? Some texts in the Bible provide assurance to suffering Christians that the kingdom is theirs; this text challenges "cultural Christians," those following only Christian tradition rather than Christ himself, to realize that they need conversion.

We must always be accountable, in all we do, say and think, which is here represented to us as entering in at a *strait gate*, and walking on in a *narrow way*, **Matthew 7:13,14**.

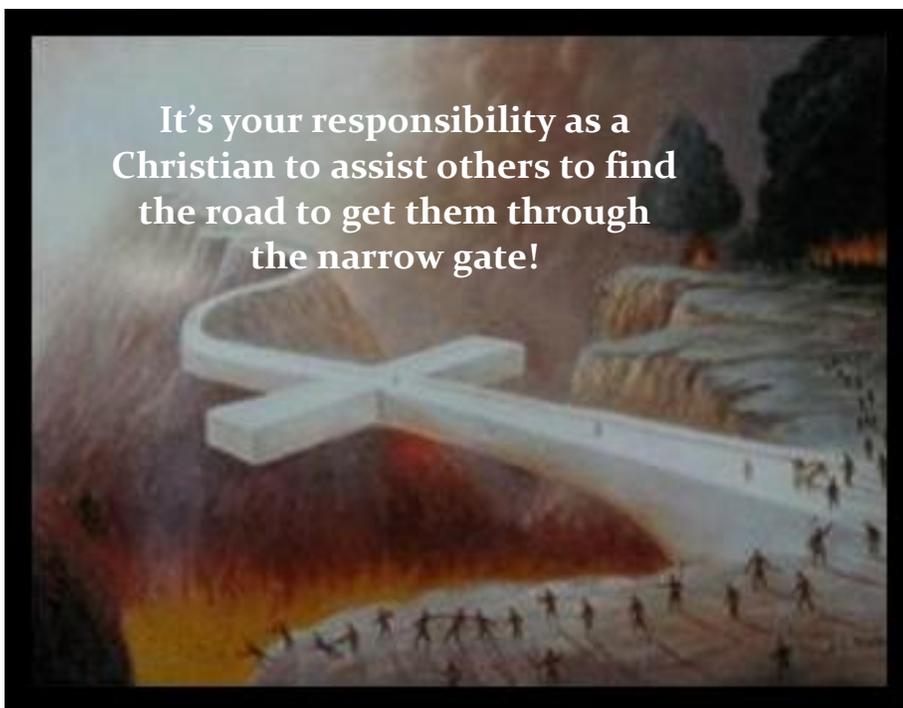
If we follow the multitude, it will be to do evil: if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream, as most people and Christians do, but radical eagle Christians will swim upstream against the worldly and religious current. Why should you be like the crowd? Why shouldn't you be different? You can choose the narrow path where there may be rejection and persecution but you are a winner with Christ because you know definitely where it leads.

Conversion and regeneration are *the gate*, by which we enter to begin a life of faith and serious godliness out of a state of sin into a state of grace into the new birth, **John 3:3-5**. This is a *strait gate*, hard to find, and hard to get through like a passage between two rocks, **1 Samuel 14:4**. There must be a *new heart, and a new spirit*, and *old things must pass away*. The soul must be changed; corrupt habits and customs broken off. To swim against the stream, much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It's easier to set a man against the entire world than against himself, and yet this must be done in conversion. We must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; we must deny ourselves; put off the world; put off religion; and put off the old man, we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ.

The way is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we get through the *strait gate*, nor in Canaan as soon as we get through the Red Sea. We must go through a wilderness; we must go through much tribulation.

The gate being 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. Others look upon it, but shun it. Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell. A remnant, a little flock, like the eight that were saved in the ark compared to all others is what can be expected, **1 Peter 3:20**.

No person would choose to go to the gallows, because it's a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it's a rough, dirty way to it, yet billions of people live exactly this way around the world, regarding their souls.



It's true, that we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be withheld from those that seek it, and submit to it.

I'll say it again, a key is to boldly approach and teach most confessed Christians that they're on the wide road to their destruction and to show them how to get on the narrow road that they have already chosen to be on... they just need to have their understanding altered, which has been twisted and bent through religion, man-made doctrines and self-serving, false leaders.

Their life can depend on you!