

Title: The Narrow Way

Text: Matthew 7:1-14

Would you open your Bibles, please, to the book of Matthew chapter 7. The Gospel of Matthew chapter 7 beginning with Vs 1 on the subject: THE NARROW WAY.

(Read Matthew 7:1-14)

(Prayer)

Our Father, we thank you for your Word. And we thank you for the clarity of the teaching of Jesus. We would pray that you would help all of us to understand what the narrow way is all about. We pray that we might understand what God's righteousness is. And how we might know that we have eternal life. And we ask this in Jesus name.....AMEN

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Many years ago the headlines of a local newspaper might read "THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HIT THE SAWDUST TRAIL". Or, maybe the headlines would read: "THE NARROW WAY BECOMES POPULAR."

America, in the early part of the 20th century was feeling the effects of preaching that indicated that there were few folks that were going God's way. And often they would present in headlines the fact that many were turning to Christ and following THE NARROW WAY.

Jesus of course, was the first to use that term.."the narrow way." Narrow, Meaning: that it was a hard place to go through." NARROW MEANING: that few are going this way in contrast to the wide, broad way where we find ^{The Majority of} many people going.

In this day and age, most folks believe that there are many ways to heaven. As long as you are sincere, you will make it to heaven. Sincerity is what really counts.

And yet, dear friends, the Bible teaches that there is only one way to heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

So, in a real sense, Jesus is saying that there is only one way to be acceptable to God. Only one...And that is, you must have the righteousness of God. If you do not have God's righteousness, you will not have eternal life. And this righteousness is ^{Not} external righteousness. It is righteousness that come through faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Please remember that our key verse is found in Chapter 5 verse 20. Jesus said, "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Also, in chapter 6 verse 1 we have a subpoint when Jesus said: "beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father."

You see, God's righteousness cannot be paraded before men. It is not something that is external. It is not the outward act at all. God's righteousness is an inward condition of the heart. *It* is something God puts there because of our faith in Him.

Also, let me say this because *I* hear *it* so often. Christianity doesn't mean that I become a christian by following the teachings of Christ. If I try to follow the teachings of Christ, I will end up in total frustration, discouragement, and realize that I can never make *it* heaven.

Christianity is accepting God's righteousness through simply believing in Jesus christ. That Jesus is the way the truth and the life.

That is a hard way to go dear friends. And most people don't want to go that way...WHY?... Because it completely contradicts and wipes-out all self-righteousness,

Now, let me illustrate how the NARROW WAY is seen in these few verses.

(1) First of all, in verses 1-6, you see the narrow way illustrated in the principle of

Judgement. If God's righteousness is working in your life, you will not be criticizing Christian. And one that tries to impose his way on other folkds. *is living by self-righteousness*

You see Now, a lot of Christian do this. They criticize and try to impose their way on others. And when we do this, it proves that God's righteousness is not working in our lives. But, what is working is self-righteousness.

The Christian Life Now, I want to show this to you. Chapter 7 verse 1, Jesus illustrates a basic principle. The principle is this: JUDGE NOT. Literally Jesus says, "STOP CONTINUING TO JUDGE ONE ANOTHER."

Now, what does the word "judge" mean? Well, dear friend, it doesn't mean to "evaluate." It doesn't mean to see someone who needs the Lord and to say to that person: YOU NEED THE LORD. And then the fellow would turn to you and say, "you are judging." That isn't what it means. It doesn't mean to "evaluate."

The word "judging" in this context means: "TO STOP CRITICIZING SOMEBODY." You know, to criticize meaning "to condemn them." Meaning "to look down on them" Saying: "You are not as good as I am. You are not as spiritual as I am." To look at some other Christian and say: "What you are doing is wrong. And God doesn't want you to do that."

OH, LISTEN, FOLKS, we cannot criticize other Christians in the realm of righteousness... WHY?...Because every single one of us has the righteousness of God. If you have received Christ as your saviour, you already have all the righteousness you will ever have. Whether you are 20 years old in Christ, or, you are just a new believer. Oh, listen, the moment you accept Christ you have all the righteousness you are every going to receive. God's righteousness is a gift. It comes by faith. You cannot earn it...

So, Jesus said..."Do not judge." And then He gives us three reasons.

(1)Reason number one...notice Vs 1 and 2: "Do not judge, least you be judged yourselves. For in the way you judge, you will be judged."

There it is! The first reason why I should not criticize or judge anyone is because I am going to be judged by the Lord.

Dear friends, it is the Lord who judges...not you and I. And the Lord often judges with discipline in our life, right now. But, the great judgement for Christians is at some point in the future. It is called the JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. At that time, everything we have done will be evaluated by the Lord.

So, dear friends, the basic reason why we shouldn't criticize or judge anyone as to their righteousness is † because we are going to be judged by the Lord some day.

(2)The second reason why I shouldn't criticize or judge someone is because "by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you."

Now, what is the point? We will be judged by our judgement of others. That is the point.

In other words, you are setting your own standards. So, the next time you get ready to criticize somebody, you had better stop and think! WHY? Because you are setting a standard by which God will judge you. "With what measure we measure, it shall be measured to you."

(3) Reason number three, notice in Vs 3 and 4 the emphases is upon the hypocrite.

A hypocrite is one who sees a speck in his brother's eye, and he says: "Hay, do you know that you have a speck in your eye." And all the time he is not seeing the log which is in his own eye.

What a tremendous illustration. Jesus makes it so simple and practical. In other words, we are totally incapable of judging,,,WHY?...Because when we judge we make ourselves.. hypocrites. ^{We} We see things in other folks, but we fail to see things in ourselves...And that is why we should not judge another....

And then our ^{Lord} Lord uses a ^{another} great illustration. In vs 6, he says, "Do not give what is hold to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

What does this mean? Jesus is warning us, here, against going overboard and not using any discernment. The word "peasls" is referring to "God's truth." Everything that I have in Jeus Christ, I am not to let ^{it} get trampled under ungoldly people's feet. I am to use spiritual discernment. Don't throw God's truth or "peals" before those who would trample them into the ground. And when we criticize or judge someone we are throwing God's truth before people and making ourselves to be hypocrites.

Now, dear friends, I know this is the narrow way. Critizing and judging one another is the way of the world. Jesus tells us to be different. He tells us to let our light = the truth of God's Word to shine before the world so that they may see the "perls" of God's truth and thus glorify the Father in heaven.

How do we stop criticizing and judging one another? By recognizing that God pronounces us righteous in Christ. We ae all righteous in Christ. It is a position we all enjoy because of our faith in Jesus christ.

And let me tell you, dear friends, if we could get awholed of this wonderful truth, it would do wonders for our whole outlook ^{and our relationship with other folks}

(2)Now, there is a second way inwhich this narrow way is seen. Not only in the principle of judgement, but in the principle of prayer. We see this in verses 7 thru 11. ^{The Principle of Prayer}

Oh, let me tell you, this is a hard way. It is a narrow way. And few are going this way. We often wonder why Christians are not moving the world for God. WHY? Because we will not do what Jesus said. We don't pray much ^{and our relationship with other people}

I would like to point out three things to you from these verses about the power of prayer, (1)Number one, Jesus is saying that in the power of prayer you must realize your own personal need. Jesus said ..."ASK....SEEK....KNOCK...."

And He is just trying to discribe to us that we have a need. And dear friends, if you don't see your need, you will never ask Him. You will never seek after Him. You will never knock. The question we should all ask is--Do we realize our need?

You know, it is an allfull thing that happens in the lives of some of God's people. We get to the point where we no longer have any needs. We don't see ourselves as God sees us. And we don't have any ^{spiritual} needs. So, we don't ask...we don't seek...and we don't knock..

^{Result} Thus, there is no power in prayer in our life. Dear friends, you can sit and use up a whole box of cleanx, you can stay the most beautiful prayers that God's world has ever heard, but if you don't realize your ^{spiritual} need it is to no avail. Oh, how we need to ask..to seek....to knock...

(2) Secondly, Jesus is saying to be earnest and consistent in prayer. In other words..do not give up. The Greek lanuage uses a tense meaning: "continuous action". And it is referring to a habit of life. As a habit of life continue to seek...continue to ask...continue to knock..

When these verses are used over in the book of Luke, Jesus uses an illustration of a man who comes to a friend's home at midnight and says, "I need three loaves of bread." And the friend says, "Are you crazy, it is midnight. Come back in the morning."

But, the man ^{pleads} please with him. "I have got to have the loaves of bread." He pleads and he pleads. And Jesus says "because of his consent pleading the man gives him as many loaves of bread as he needs.

And Jesus said, "Therefore continue to ask and it shall be given. Continue to seek and you shall find. Continue to knock and it shall be opened.

Oh, listen, God knows our hearts. He knows how much we want. He knows what we are asking Him for and how serious we are ^{about} ~~ab~~ out it. We are to seek..We are to ask..We are to knock.

And this is a narrow way, thogh, because there are few that are willing to go this way. But, those that do are the onces who are blessed ^{according to the Beatitudes}

(3) Third, I notice in the power of prayer that Jesus is telling us that God is our Father and He wants to give us good things.

Please notice verse 11: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask him."

You know, many chrisians have the idea that God is a slave master. He kind-off hits us over the head inorder to bring us into line. NO, WAY! That couldn't be further from the truth. God loves us and he is just waiting for a heart that will just continue to ask.

Christians often say, "I prayed about that and I am sure God gets tired of hearing me."

Oh, NO, He doesn't. He loves us. He knows our heart and He knows how much we want something, And he knows when it is a good time to give us something.

OH, listen, dear friends, ^{we} must get back to prayer. We must if we are going to see God's power. It is a narrow way, thought. And there are few who are willing to go that way. And I trust you are one of the few.

(3)And then, ^{Third} Vs 12, the narrow way is seen in our pattern of living. How many of us live like it says in Vs 12? "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the law and the prophets."

The whole O.T. is summarized in that one verse."Do unto your neighbor as you would have him do unto you..."

Some folks call this the golden rule. But, dear friends, what a pattern of life..

(4)Then in the fourth place, verses 13-14, Jesus really brings it all home. The narrow way is seen in the road to eternal life.

How can I have eternal life? Let me tell you, that is the greatest question that any person could ask. How can I live forever in a place called heaven?

Let me ask you.. If you should die or Christ should come, right now, ~~how~~ do you know that you will have eternal life? How do you know?

Vs 13.."enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction." And it seems to me that a lot of fine, self-righteous folks are going that way.

Dear friends, don't judge by the majority. Often times we say, "Well, everybody is doing it." If you take that viewpoint it will lead to destruction. There are many going the wide way. But, only a few going the narrow way. And the narrow way is the hard way. But, let me tell you, it leads to eternal life.

Why is it hard? Because every opinion you have on how God accepts you, other than a gift of God is wrong. And for me to come to the point where I ^{can} ~~can~~ honestly say, "Yes, Jesus, I am a sinner; and I know that I can't earn God's favor. And all my righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight. And this is the only way for me to come to God. To realize that I must come JUST AS I AM----with all my sin, all my doubts...JUST AS I AM. That is a hard way. and unfortunately many folks miss out at this point.

But, when we come ^{to} just as we are...and we admit what God say we are....and we admit that we cannot have eternal life on ^{our} own efforts. We cannot earn God's acceptance. And we come and say..Here am I, Lord, forgive me.come into my life. When we do that, we have eternal life.

Jesus said in I John 5; "He that hath the son, has eternal life." It is God's record that God has given us eternal life. And it is in his son, Jesus Christ. If you have the son of God, you have life. If you don't have the son of God, you don't have life.

The path to eternal life is a narrow path because you must go the way of the cross. WHY? Because it was at the cross of Jesus where all sins where paid for. And if we don't have our sins taken care of, we must suffer the consequences which is death: both physically, spiritually, and eternally.

But, thanks be unto God who took care of the sin problem through the death of Jesus on the cross. His bood was the final payment. It satisfied the just demands of God. And if you will simply come and believe Christ today...Accept Him as your saviour...invite Christ into your life....If you would do that, you will have eternal life. And you will know, beyond a shadow of doubt, that you are saved *and you have the righteousness of God*

He who has the son has life.....Dear friend, settle it today. Be on the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER.