

# Two Roads to Eternity

**WHICH ROAD ARE YOU ON?**



**C. Wayne Pratt**



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## The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

- Robert Frost



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# INTRODUCTION

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

—Matthew 7:13-14

**I**N THE CLOSING WORDS OF HIS SERMON ON THE MOUNT, Jesus shared a simple yet profound truth—there are TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY. That is the title of this book. There are not many roads, nor is there a middle or third road—there are just two roads.

In life, we often have two choices: right or wrong, good or evil, life or death, heaven or hell. The two roads Jesus spoke of represent life choices—two very different journeys with very different destinations. The Greek word Christ used for “road” is *hados* which can be translated “progress, (high-) way, route, journey or distance.” Each road represents a journey to a specific destination—one leads to destruction; one leads to life.

When God created man, He gave him a free will. We are not robots—God allows us to make choices in life. But here is the caveat: Every choice has a consequence. Consider what the Lord spoke to His people Israel in the Sinai desert:

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your

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children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him.

— Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Choose between life and death, blessing or cursing? That does not sound like a difficult choice! Why would anyone choose death or cursing? It sounds crazy, but as we will see in the following pages, many do!

### ***Two Roads, Two Gates***

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It is significant to note that Jesus said each road also has a gate—the narrow road has a narrow gate, and the broad road has a wide gate. A gate speaks of an entrance or starting point. Understanding the two gates will help us understand how people enter one road or the other.

The “wide” gate (from the Greek word *platus*) is “spread out ‘flat,’ broad, and wide.” It speaks of easy access for everyone. On the other hand, the “narrow” gate (from the Greek word *stenos*) is “narrow because of obstacles standing nearby.” Access is severely restricted. (We will talk more a little later about the obstacles that make entrance onto the narrow road difficult.)

Each gate represents a birth—the wide gate speaks of natural birth, the narrow gate a spiritual rebirth. Entrance onto the broad road is easy and automatic—*everyone* enters this road by birth: “These wicked people are born sinners; even from birth they have lied and gone their own way” (Psalm 58:3 – NLT).

The broad road is for sinners. It is a spacious yet crowded thoroughfare because every human being enters this world already a sinner. Theologians call it “original sin”—the innate sin nature inherited from Adam through the Fall:

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Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men, because *all sinned*.

— *Romans 5:12*

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” ...for *all have sinned* and fall short of the glory of God.

— *Romans 3:9-12, 23*

Note Paul’s repeated use of the word “all” in the passages above: *All* have sinned, *all* will die—in other words, *all* are on the broad road to destruction. Not a pretty picture!

Entrance onto the narrow road is so difficult it takes a supernatural miracle called the New Birth:

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is *born again* [lit. “from above”].” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely, he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot

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tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

— John 3:3-8

Remember, the narrow gate is surrounded by obstacles. There are numerous impediments that prevent sinners from leaving the broad road to enter the road to life—things like selfishness, pride, rebellion, love of pleasure, fear, and a host of other hindrances. The only way to overcome these obstacles and experience the New Birth is through what the Bible calls *repentance*. Repentance was the first thing Jesus ever preached, and it is something God commands all people everywhere to do:

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," He said. "The kingdom of God is near. *Repent* and believe the good news!"

— Mark 1:14-15

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to *repent*.

— Acts 17:30

Repentance literally means a "change of mind—to reconsider or think differently." It is an awareness of the ugliness and horror of sin which produces a heartfelt desire to change one's direction of life. Put simply, it means to STOP SINNING! True repentance is something that God in His grace and mercy grants to us:

When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles *repentance* unto life."

— Acts 11:18

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New Birth also requires faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are like two sides of the same coin: Repentance is movement *away from* sin and darkness, whereas faith is turning *toward* God and His love, light, and truth. They are essentially one motion and happen simultaneously in the New Birth. The first two foundational doctrines of the Christian life are “repentance from dead works” and “faith toward God” (Hebrews 5:12-6:1). Both aspects are plainly seen in Christ’s commission to the apostle Paul (note the expression “from... to” repeated twice):

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them *from* darkness *to* light, and *from* the power of Satan *to* God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

— *Acts 26:17-18*

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in *repentance* and have *faith* in our Lord Jesus.

— *Acts 20:21*

Faith, like repentance, is a gift from God—it is not something we can conjure up on our own:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the *gift of God*—not by works, so that no one can boast.

— *Ephesians 2:8-9*

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Paul told the Romans that real faith involves believing that Jesus died on the Cross and that God raised Him from the dead:

But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”

— *Romans 10:8-11*

In summary, New Birth involves repentance from sin (the old way) and faith in Jesus Christ (newness of life); through these two experiences, we actually become “new creations” in Christ:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*; the old has gone, the new has come!

— *2 Corinthians 5:17*

The term *new creation* suggests something miraculous, supernatural, and that is exactly what the New Birth is!

It cannot be overstated that entrance onto the narrow road is humanly impossible. Sinners who are dead in their trespasses and sins are incapable of doing anything to remedy their lost condition—they need God’s mercy and power to save them:

Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of

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a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is *impossible*, but not with God; all things are *possible* with God.”

— *Mark 10:23-27*

“Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle”? Wow! Entrance onto the narrow road is impossible, but not with God!

You see, the “quick-fix” style of evangelism prevalent in the modern church today (in which the sinner parrots a 30-second prayer to “accept Jesus” and is told by the pastor, “Hallelujah, you just got born again!”) is a far cry from the life-transforming conversions seen in the early apostolic Church that produced disciples who were ready and willing to die for their faith.

Peter realized that the New Birth was an amazing gift of God’s mercy and grace, and years after his conversion, the apostle was still praising God for this great miracle:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great *mercy* He has given us *new birth* into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

— *1 Peter 1:3-5*

### ***Many and Few***

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There are two words that jump off the page when you read about the two roads in Matthew 7:13-14—*many* and *few*. Many are on the

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

broad road to destruction, and only a few find the narrow way. Jesus shared this same truth in His parable about the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14). The story tells of a king who invited numerous guests to his son's wedding, but they all made excuses and refused to come. The king was furious, and sent his armies to kill them all and burn their city. Finally, a man came to the wedding without a proper wedding garment. The king ordered his servants: "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verse 13). Jesus concluded the parable with this: "For *many* are called, but *few* are chosen" (verse 14).

Only a few people ever truly find the narrow way to life. Dear reader, let that sink in—only a few! Sobering! On one occasion, someone asked Jesus point-blank if only a few people were going to heaven. (Perhaps the person had not understood Jesus' teachings, so this was an opportunity for Jesus to set the record straight.) Here is the full story:

Someone asked Him, "Lord, are only a *few* people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because *many*, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But He will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' " Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with You, and You taught in our streets.' "But He will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from Me, all you evildoers!' "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in

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the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed, there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

— Luke 13:23-30

“Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” What was Jesus’ answer? In short, His response was, “That’s correct... only a few will make it!” And because of that, we must “make every effort” [Greek *agōnizomai* which means “to struggle, compete for a prize, contend with an adversary; fight, labor fervently, strive”] to enter through the narrow door. What was Jesus saying? It is going to be so difficult to enter through the narrow door, and so few are going to make it, that we have to *agonize* to enter in. *Many* will try to enter and will fail. Frightening!

Compare this to a similar passage in Matthew, noting the word *many* once again:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. *Many* will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

— Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

The *many* here were deceived — they sincerely thought they were pleasing the Lord, but they were sincerely wrong. Obviously, they never made it onto the narrow road. Further along in the Gospel of

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Matthew, Jesus warned about powerful deceptions that would come in the last days whereby *many* would be deceived:

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive *many*... Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time *many* will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive *many* people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of *most* will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved... At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There He is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible."

— Matthew 24:4-5, 9-13, 23-24

Without a doubt, we all wish the many and few could be reversed—many on the narrow road to heaven, and only a few on the broad road to hell. Sadly, that will not happen.

# **PART ONE**

**THE BROAD ROAD TO DESTRUCTION**



## THE WAY OF THE WORLD

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

—*Ephesians 2:1-3*

**T**HE BROAD ROAD IS CROWDED—MANY GO THERE. It is popular—its travelers often applaud and celebrate one another for their actions and accomplishments. The Bible calls it the “way of the world.” Fame, riches, and pleasures of every kind can be found there. Trophies, medals, and awards are there for the taking. There is only one problem—this road ends in destruction.

We have all been on this road. As pointed out earlier, every human being begins life here—we are born in sin. The apostle Paul confirms this to the Ephesian believers when he reminds them of their past—they were all once dead in their trespasses and sins, following the “ways of the world” and the ruler of that kingdom, the devil.

When the Bible talks about the world, it is not referring to the physical planet Earth; rather, it is speaking about an entire philosophy and belief system which is under Satan’s control and is in direct opposition to God. Yes, there really is a devil! And when

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Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, his third and final enticement was the world:

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the *kingdoms of the world* and their splendor. “All this I will give You,” he said, “if You will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from Me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him.

— *Matthew 4:8-11*

The kingdoms of the world and their splendor are Satan’s to give; Jesus did not dispute that fact. Satan is the “god of this world”:

If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the *god of this world*, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

— *2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NLT)*

After Adam’s fall in the Garden of Eden, the serpent Satan usurped control over the world. As much as we love the old African-American spiritual, “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” (yes, God is the Ruler of the Universe and has all power and authority in heaven and earth), the world system is presently under the devil’s control. Consider the following:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in

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him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

— 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19

### ***Many Go There***

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As we have already seen, there are many people on the broad road—they far outnumber those on the narrow road. Sin loves company. As a rule, those who want to follow the crowd are headed in the wrong direction; those who go with the multitude are going to do evil.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Roman Christians, he explained in the opening lines that he was very eager to share the Good News of salvation with them (Romans 1:16). But for the next 65 verses of Romans, all he talks about is BAD NEWS—the sad, desperate state of fallen, sinful mankind. Here is just a sampling from the first chapter:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness... although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal

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man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore, *God gave them over* in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, *God gave them over* to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, *He gave them over* to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also *approve of those who practice them.*

– Romans 1:18-32

Wow! This describes those on the broad road to a tee! It almost sounds like they are on a descending path that keeps going from bad to worse. Note how the phrase “God gave them over” is

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repeated three times, suggesting a progression of ever-increasing wickedness and depravity.

This brings to mind an amazing story my close friend recently shared with me about his father's conversion. His dad had been an alcoholic for many years—everyone knew him as the town drunk. Finally, he ended up in jail for drunken disorderly conduct.

Shortly after his release, he had a dream one night. In the dream, he was on a road that came to a fork—he had to choose to go right or left. He chose the left fork, but the road quickly turned into a sliding board—it was so slippery he just kept going down, down, down. Suddenly, a strong hand from behind (whom he understood to be Jesus) grabbed him and pulled him up to safety. He realized he had chosen the wrong road. When he awoke from the dream, a great fear fell on him, and he surrendered his life to Christ—he never touched another drop of alcohol until the day he died some years later!

Coming back to Romans 1, the most frightening revelation comes in verse 32: “Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also *approve* of those who practice them.” The Message translation reads: “And it’s not as if they don’t know better. They know perfectly well they’re spitting in God’s face. And they don’t care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best!” On the broad road, depravity and sin are rewarded and applauded—evil is encouraged. Corrupt lawmakers even pass laws “legalizing” sin.

### ***Slaves of Sin***

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The broad road is the way of “freedom,” or so it seems. But a cruel trick has been played on these broad-road travelers—they

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unwittingly follow their ruler, the devil. They have been duped into believing they are in charge of their lives and free to follow their heart and “do their thing.” No lust is denied, no appetite or passion goes unfulfilled—all restraint is cast off. Freedom! But in reality, all on the broad way are slaves.

Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that they were “slaves to sin” and belonged to their father, the devil, wanting to carry out their father’s desire (John 8:34-44). The apostle Paul confirmed that the broad road is a way of slavery in his epistle to the Romans:

Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are *slaves to sin*, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in *slavery to impurity* and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

— *Romans 6:16-21*

Paul explained to Timothy that the unrepentant who are still on the broad road have fallen into “the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). Peter calls them “slaves of depravity” (2 Peter 2:19). The world is not all it seems!

## CURSED ROAD

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose...

— Deuteronomy 30:19

**W**HAT A CHOICE: CURSES OR BLESSINGS! Our first parents chose the cursed road. Well, they did not consciously *choose* to be cursed — they were tricked by the serpent to disobey God (2 Corinthians 11:3). But that one disobedience had horrific consequences:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it... But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard You in the garden, and I was

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afraid because I was naked; so, I hid.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” ...So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, *cursed* are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals...” To the woman He said, “I will *greatly increase your pains* in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” To Adam He said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ *Cursed* is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

— Genesis 3:1-19

This is the first mention in Scripture of things like *curse, pain, toil* or *sweat*—prior to this, everything was *blessed* and *good*. Adam and Eve’s disobedience brought death and a curse on the entire creation: “All creation was subjected to God’s curse” and ever since, it has been groaning for release from the bondage of “death and decay” (Romans 8:20-22 – NLT). Only in the eternal kingdom of God is it finally announced, “No longer will there be any curse” (Revelation 22:3).

Immediately after the Fall, Adam and Eve were expelled from the paradise of Eden. Before long, evil began to multiply in the earth. Adam’s first son Abel was murdered by his own brother, Cain, and by the time of Noah, man’s wickedness had become so

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great that “every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time,” and God was sorry He had ever made man (Genesis 6:5-6). The curse of sin had become so great that God “cursed the ground” and wiped out “every living thing on the face of the earth... men and animals... only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark” (Genesis 7:23; 8:21).

Years later, when God gave Israel the Ten Commandments and the Law through Moses, He declared that if they obeyed His commands, they would be choosing blessing; if they disobeyed, cursing:

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a *curse*—the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God... the *curse* if you disobey.

—Deuteronomy 11:26-28

In Deuteronomy 28:15-68, there are 54 verses that describe these terrible curses in great detail. Everything would be cursed—their business, farm, family, travel, physical and mental health; disease, hunger, famine, pestilence, poverty, and invasion of foreign enemies would overtake them and destroy them.

When we choose the way of sin, selfishness, and disobedience, we are unknowingly choosing the road of cursing. And the curse does not end when we die. Jesus described the final judgment of the nations in which two groups (sheep and goats) are separated—the righteous sheep who are blessed for all eternity, and the unrighteous goats who are cursed to eternal fire with the devil and his angels:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and

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He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the *sheep* from the *goats*. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are *blessed* by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world...” Then He will say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, you who are *cursed*, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...” Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

— *Matthew 25:31-46*

The broad road is a cursed road—it is a path devoid of God’s presence, favor, and blessing. There is no true peace there. Those who wander on this path discover the painful truth of the proverb: “The way of transgressors is hard” (Proverb 13:15 – KJV). Isaiah the prophet likened this life of torment and restlessness to the troubled sea whose churning waves never cease to stir up mud and filth:

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

— *Isaiah 57:20-21*

# 3

## A DARK DESTINATION

Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore, pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth. Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches. Surely, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence... When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their *end*. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

— *Psalm 73:1-18 (NKJV)*

**A**LL ROADS LEAD SOMEWHERE—they have an end, a destination. The psalmist was troubled and perplexed as he viewed the prosperity of the wicked. They seemed to be living on “easy street”—they were fat, and proud, and seemed to be free of any cares or troubles. He almost stumbled until

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

God showed him their *end*—the end of their easy life was destruction.

Jesus was very clear about the broad road—it leads to destruction. The Greek word translated “destruction” is *apoleia* which can also mean “ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal); damnation, death, perdition, perish.” It is translated “perish” in John 3:16 and “lost” in Luke 15:32 and Luke 19:10. In most instances, the word signifies an all-encompassing death, damnation, and destruction. It is a horrifying word, and it is what awaits all those on the broad road. The Bible calls it “hell”—a place of unimaginable and unending punishment, agony, fire, and torment.

Jesus often spoke about hell; in fact, He spoke about it more often than He did heaven. Here are just a few of the many references in the Bible to this horrendous place:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in *hell*.

—Matthew 10:28

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In *hell*, where he was in *torment*, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in *agony* in this fire.”

—Luke 16:22-24

## **A DARK DESTINATION**

And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

— *Mark 9:47-48*

They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

— *Matthew 13:42*

He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

— *Matthew 24:51*

And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

— *Matthew 25:30*

Paul explains that this destruction is not annihilation—it is *everlasting punishment*:

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be *punished with everlasting destruction* and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power.

— *2 Thessalonians 1:6-9*

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

### *A Matter of Choice*

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Everyone starts their life on the broad road—it is automatic. No one chooses to be there—they are born there. But no one needs to stay on the broad road. Anyone can leave the broad road and begin walking on the narrow road at any time—it is a matter of choice.

As we have already seen, this requires two simple steps: repentance and faith. Understanding the horrible consequences of a life of sin on the broad road, we forsake our sins and turn to the only One who can save us, Jesus Christ. Salvation is a free gift, and God offers it to anyone who is willing to repent—turn away from sin and selfishness—and put their faith in the work that Jesus already finished on the Cross of Calvary. God is not willing that anyone perish on the broad road of sin and perdition—He wants everyone to repent, believe the Gospel of Christ, and be saved. God is not a respecter of persons—the gift of eternal life is for “whoever”:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that *whoever believes* in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

—John 3:16-18

If you are still on the broad road of sin and death, you do not need to spend another day of your life there. Get off today! Run, do not walk, to escape the wrath and destruction to come! Call on the name of Jesus to save you: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). It is a matter of choice. Choose Christ and get on the narrow road today!

## **PART TWO**

**THE NARROW ROAD TO LIFE**



## INTRODUCTION

You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.

— *Psalm 16:11*

THE BIBLE OFTEN COMPARES OUR LIFE TO A PATH, a road, or a journey. When you are driving in your car to a particular destination, you need directions—perhaps a map or GPS to guide you. It is helpful to know if there are turnpikes, toll roads, bridges, or detours along the route. The more familiar you are with the itinerary, the more pleasant the trip will be.

A prayer frequently found in the Scriptures is a request for God to give directions; here are just a few: “Show me Your ways, O LORD, teach me Your paths; guide me in Your truth and teach me” (Psalm 25:4-5); “Teach me Your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors” (Psalm 27:11); “For the sake of Your name lead and guide me” (Psalm 31:3); “‘You know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where You are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the Way’” (John 14:4-6).

One of the great truths in the Bible is that we are like sheep in need of a shepherd. Sheep tend to wander, stray, and get lost—they are “directionally-challenged” to say the least! Here is a profound revelation (I hope you are sitting down when you read this!): Using our own superior intellect and profound understanding of life, YOU AND I DO NOT KNOW WHERE WE ARE GOING! That’s

## **TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY**

right, when left to our own devices, we will get lost every time. This is not my opinion – this came from the great prophet Jeremiah: “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23 – NKJV). Wise King Solomon says the same thing: “In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

If you are still reading this book, you have hopefully now exited the broad road and embarked on your new journey on the narrow road. That is my prayer. But please understand – the narrow road is not something you and I can navigate on our own. We will need a roadmap (the Scriptures), a GPS (the Holy Spirit), and a personal guide (Jesus said He would never leave us!) to teach us the way. There are many strange twists and turns in this road, so we will need to learn all we can about this new way.

In the following chapters, we will examine nine important characteristics of the narrow road that will help us reach our destination – eternal life in the Celestial City:

1. We are following a Person – Jesus Christ
2. We have a destination – the heavenly City of God
3. We must learn to walk by faith
4. We are on a path of mercy
5. The narrow road is the way of the Cross
6. We are now on a highway of holiness
7. We must learn to walk in the light
8. We walk in the Spirit
9. The narrow road is a pathway to blessing

## COME FOLLOW ME

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow Me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed Him.

— Matthew 4:18-20

**J**ESUS IS LOOKING FOR FOLLOWERS who love Him more than anything else; followers like Peter, Andrew, James, and John. The call is still the same today: “Come, follow Me.” The most important reason for leaving the broad road and entering the narrow road is not to join a new religion, become a better person, or adopt a new set of life principles—it is to follow a Person! This person is no ordinary person—His name is Jesus Christ—the great God and Savior of the world, Creator of the universe, Resurrection and the Life, Beginning and the End! And He calls us to follow Him.

The journey on the narrow road is not merely about following religious rules, methods, or traditions—it is all about following Jesus. Even after leaving their fishing boats and tax tables, the disciples had a difficult time understanding this:

“In My Father’s house are many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me... You know the way to the place where I am going.”

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we don’t know where You are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

— John 14:1-6

Thomas and the others seemed to be looking for a set of instructions or guidelines to help them on this new way, but Jesus surprised them with these words: “I AM THE WAY.” He did not say “I’ll show the way”—the way is a *Person*!

Several years ago, I was giving a weekend seminar on Christian discipleship in a church in South Florida that is pastored by a very dear friend of mine. We had just finished the morning session titled, “Follow Me,” and the pastor’s wife closed the meeting with a beautiful song in Spanish, “Sígueme,” which means “Follow Me.” A group of us decided to go out to a local restaurant during our lunch break, and I rode with the pastor in his van. As we were driving along, suddenly the pastor was holding his phone outside the window (thankfully one hand was still on the wheel!) to snap a photo of the car immediately in front of us. Its license plate had these words: “Follow Me!” *You can’t make this stuff up!* I love it when God shouts, “Amen,” from heaven!

### ***My Presence Will Go with You***

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The number one reason you and I are on the narrow road is because that is where Jesus is—He is there, His presence will always be with us! Moses understood the importance of God’s presence with him and the people of Israel:

Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but You have not let me know

## ***COME FOLLOW ME***

whom You will send with me..." The LORD replied, "*My Presence* will go with you, and I will give you rest." Then Moses said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that You are pleased with me and with Your people unless You go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

— Exodus 33:12-16

What a bold statement: "If Your Presence does not go with us, we are not going anywhere." And please do not miss God's response: "*My Presence* *will* go with you." God wants us close; He desires our company — He always has. Jesus called His disciples to follow Him because He wanted them to be "with Him":

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him. He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — *that they might be with Him* and that He might send them out to preach.

— Mark 3:13-14

Notice that the primary reason Jesus called these men was not to make them great preachers — it was "that they might be with Him." How amazing that Jesus of Nazareth simply wanted to spend time with these rough-and-tumble fishermen like Peter and the "thunder brothers" James and John! More amazing than that, He wants *you and me* to be with Him.

As we will see in coming chapters, life on the narrow road is not always easy; it can be extremely challenging, painful, and lonely. But we must never forget His promises: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20) and "Never will

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). He will be with us, and we will be with Him forever!

### ***Learn of Me***

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Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

— Matthew 11:28-29 (KJV)

The only way to know a person is to spend time with them. Through long hours of conversation, many days, months and years of interaction, we come to know a person more and more intimately. Jesus wants us to know Him. He invites us to sit down and learn of Him. Knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ is so important that Jesus used this to define “eternal life”:

Now this is *eternal life*: that they may *know You*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

— John 17:3

Remember, we are talking about the narrow road that “leads to life”—eternal life. One of God’s greatest purposes for our journey on this road is to know and experience Him—to taste and see, to hear and touch—to become intimately acquainted with our heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ (Psalm 34:8; 1 John 1:1). The apostle Paul counted all things as loss and rubbish in his life compared to the supreme excellency of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything

## ***COME FOLLOW ME***

a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of *knowing Christ* Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to *know Christ* and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.

— *Philippians 3:7-10*

As the disciples walked with Jesus, watching Him heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, calm the storms, and feed the multitudes, they were receiving valuable on-the-job training for their ministries. Experience is indeed the best teacher, and sometimes the worst experiences teach the best lessons. We follow Jesus to learn of Him.

### ***Do You Love Me?***

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Even after Christ's resurrection, as He was about to ascend back to heaven, He was still calling His disciples to follow Him. After Peter had denied Jesus three times, failing Him miserably in His most critical hour, the apostle had an astounding encounter with His risen Master by the Sea of Tiberias. There, Jesus had three questions for Simon: 1) Do you love Me? 2) Will you take care of My sheep? 3) Will you still follow Me? Let us read the story:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “You know that I love You.” Jesus said, “Feed My lambs.” Again, Jesus said, “Simon,

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

son of John, do you truly love Me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." Jesus said, "Take care of My sheep." The third time He said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love Me?" He said, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said, "Feed My sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, "Follow Me!" Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them... When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow Me."

– John 21:15-22

Jesus did not rebuke or condemn Peter for his failure—He did not even mention his three denials. The Master did not question him, "How could you do such a thing?" or "Why didn't you stand up for Me?" Rather, three times Jesus asked, "Do you love Me?" This is important to understand: If we are going to follow Jesus, it must be for the right reason—not to have a big ministry or church—we follow Him because we love Him. And the apostle John reminds us of this: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19 – NKJV). Oh, how He loves you and me—dying in our place on a cruel Cross for all our sins "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8).

"Do you love Me? Follow Me!"

## A CELESTIAL DESTINATION

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

— *Hebrews 12:22-24*

THE GPS SYSTEM FOUND ON OUR SMARTPHONES and in many of our cars is an incredible piece of technology; if you take a wrong turn or pass your exit, it automatically recalculates a new route for you. But GPS will not work unless you enter in your destination—it is completely useless.

On the narrow road, we need to know our destination—where are we going? (We have already seen that the broad road has a destination—destruction.) Jesus said the narrow road leads to life; but what does that mean? When Christ told His disciples that He would soon be going away, He told them not to worry, saying, “Where I go you know, and the way you know.” But Thomas responded, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” (John 14:4-5). You and I need to know where we are going!

In John Bunyan’s classic masterpiece, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (an allegory which he wrote during his 13-year imprisonment for

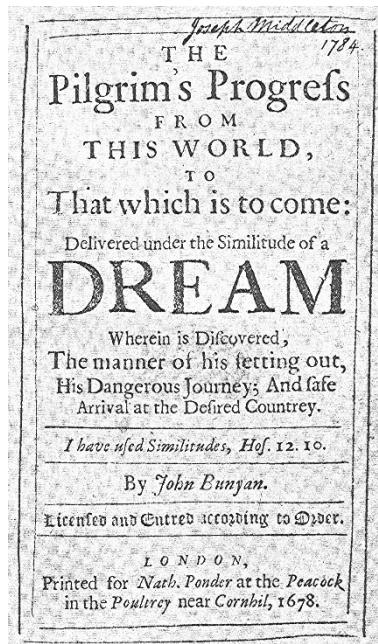
## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

preaching the Gospel in England), the story is told of a man named “Christian” and his journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City and the many trials and obstacles he had to overcome to reach his glorious destination. The original title of the book gives more insight into the story: *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come* (Figure 1 below). Christian knew where he was going—he was looking for the Celestial City.

Figure 1. First publication of The Pilgrim's Progress in 1678

There most certainly is a Celestial City, and the writer of Hebrews encouraged his readers that they had “come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.” Even Old Testament patriarchs like Abraham had been looking for this heavenly city:

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was *looking for the city* which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God... All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them



## **A CELESTIAL DESTINATION**

and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed, if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a *better country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

— Hebrews 11:8-16 (NAS)

Just as surely as there is a hell, there is a heaven. The bestselling book, *Heaven Is for Real*, gives the true account of a three-year-old boy named Colton Burpo who died on the operating table, left his body and went to heaven, and lived to talk about his amazing journey. God used a little boy to remind us, *Heaven Is for Real!*

No human who ever walked the earth was a greater authority on heaven than “the Man, Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus repeatedly declared how He had been in heaven, left heaven to come to earth, and would return to glory in heaven. Here are a few examples:

I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still, you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if *I speak of heavenly things*? No one has ever *gone into heaven* except the One who *came from heaven* — the Son of Man.

— John 3:11-13

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

For I have *come down from heaven* not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me... No one has seen the Father except the One who is from God; only He has seen the Father.

— *John 6:38, 46*

In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. *I am going there* to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.

— *John 14:2-3*

Father... I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the *glory I had with You before the world began*... I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name--the name You gave Me--so that they may be one as We are one.

— *John 17:4-5, 11*

Jesus knew where He was going, and He knows where He is taking us! He promised He would come back and take us there!

The writers of the New Testament often exhort us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, setting our affection on eternal things above, looking for that Celestial City whose builder and architect is God:

So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

— *2 Corinthians 4:18*

## **A CELESTIAL DESTINATION**

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on *things above*, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on *things above*, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

— *Colossians 3:1-4*

The apostle John outlived all of the other original apostles by more than 30 years. Without a doubt, John was the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20)! Jesus saved the best for last, showing John amazing things in heaven including the Holy City, new Jerusalem, the heavenly Tabernacle of God:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the *Holy City*, the *new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

— *Revelation 21:1-4*

In the remainder of Revelation Chapters 21 and 22, John described the unimaginable glory and beauty of the Celestial City, the Bride of Christ — its walls were of jasper; the streets of pure gold,

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

as clear as glass; the foundations were decorated with every kind of precious jewel; each gate was a pearl; there was no need for the sun or moon because the glory of God and the Lamb give it light. John saw the Tree of Life, the throne of God, and the River of Life! There is no more sin, death, crying, pain, or curse there—God Himself will dwell with them for all eternity!



Oh, I want to see Him, look upon His face,  
There to sing forever of His saving grace;  
On the streets of glory let me lift my voice,  
Cares all past, home at last, ever to rejoice.



## WALK BY FAITH

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

— 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV)

**L**IFE ON THE NARROW ROAD REQUIRES a different kind of walk—it is called *faith*. Faith is a word that is difficult to define—words like *believe* and *trust* are helpful, but the best definition is found in the Bible:

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

— Hebrews 11:1

“Sure of what we hope for (we have not yet obtained it) and certain of what we do not see”? This makes no sense to our natural thinking (1 Corinthians 2:14). Exactly! That is because faith is spiritual, it is not natural. It gives us the ability to trust with our heart without understanding in our mind and intellect:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding [“don’t try to figure out everything on your own” (MSG)].

— Proverbs 3:5

As we have already seen, entrance onto the narrow road requires faith—we are saved (born again) by faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. The narrow road is for *believers*—those who are still on the broad road are “unbelievers... who are perishing” whose minds have been “blinded by the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

### *Believing is Seeing*

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On the broad road, we were told that “seeing is believing”—we need to see something before we can accept that it really exists. “Doubting Thomas” is a good example:

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.” A week later His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed; *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*”

— John 20:24-29

Thomas needed to see and touch before he could believe—Jesus said we need to believe without seeing. Sounds mysterious, because it is! The Bible says faith is a mystery (1 Timothy 3:9). It is actually a spiritual gift that God gives to every believer. Consider the following:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that [the faith] not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

— Ephesians 2:8

## ***WALK BY FAITH***

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a *measure of faith*.

— Romans 12:3 (NKJV)

Behold the amazing grace of God... we need faith to be saved, but we do not even have faith within ourselves to believe; so, God gives each believer a “measure of faith!” And with this faith, we are able to believe in Christ, even though we have not seen Him like Peter, John, and the other apostles did:

Though you *have not seen Him*, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you *believe in Him* and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

— 1 Peter 1:8-9

### ***What Does Real Faith Look Like?***

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The best way to understand faith is to observe it in action. Although the first verse of Hebrews Chapter 11 defines faith, the remaining 39 verses are a continuation of that definition using real-life examples... “by faith Abel... by faith Enoch... by faith Noah... by faith Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... by faith Moses... by faith Rahab...” These men and women walked with God (Genesis 5:24; 6:9; 48:15)—they walked and lived by faith.

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

Notice some similarities in the miraculous feats of these heroes of faith:

1. Noah was “warned about things *not yet seen*” (it had never rained and yet he spent decades building a gigantic ark)  
—Hebrews 11:7
2. Abraham obeyed God’s call “even though he *did not know where he was going*”  
—Hebrews 11:8
3. Moses left Egypt “because he *saw Him who is invisible*”  
—Hebrews 11:27

They all seemed to have an uncanny ability to see God in the midst of difficult challenges; they trusted Him even though they could not see or understand. That is real faith.

### ***In Father Abraham's Footsteps***

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In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul gives a lengthy and masterful explanation of the great doctrine of *justification by faith* – how unrighteous sinners are justified (made righteous) by God, apart from works, through faith in Jesus Christ. One of the central characters Paul uses to demonstrate justification by faith is Abraham:

[Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the *father of all who believe* but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. He is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised

## ***WALK BY FAITH***

but who also *walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had* before he was circumcised. It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith... Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

— *Romans 4:11-22*

There is a lot in this passage, but let us summarize the key points concerning Abraham's faith:

1. Abraham was declared righteous because he believed
2. Abraham's true children are believers—he is the father of all who believe

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

3. Every believer is called to walk in the footsteps of Abraham's faith
4. Abraham's faith believed in a God who could raise the dead and call into being things that did not exist
5. Abraham and Sarah waited in faith 25 years for God's promise to be fulfilled, not wavering in unbelief, even though their bodies were physically incapable of bearing children
6. Abraham was fully convinced, persuaded, confident, and assured that God had the power to perform whatever He had promised and that He could be trusted to do it

Every believer on the narrow road of faith needs to study the life of Abraham very carefully; he is our father, and we are to follow in his footsteps. Like Abraham, we may find ourselves in situations where God's promise seems to be delayed or unfulfilled—in the natural, everything looks hopeless and bleak. But remember Abraham: Against all hope, he kept believing; even though his body was as good as dead, he knew the God of Abraham could raise the dead and even give Sarah and him new bodies! Without this kind of faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

### ***Life by Faith***

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As infants, learning how to walk was a challenge for each one of us. We tripped, stumbled and fell again and again, but we kept getting up until we finally mastered it! Now, walking is second nature for us—we do it automatically without thinking. Faith is the same—with practice, it becomes our way of life: from start to finish, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

## PATH OF MERCY

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth.

— Psalm 25:10 (NKJV)

**G**OD'S MERCY IS A RICH QUALITY that sets Him apart from the rest of creation. In the natural, neither humans nor beasts possess it—mercy is divine. The word translated “mercy” in Scripture is the Hebrew *chēṣed* which can also mean “kindness, pity, or lovingkindness.” You and I can be very thankful that this word appears 241 times in the Old Testament, and the word “mercy” another 55 times in the New Testament. God is a merciful God.

Mercy and grace are often used interchangeably, but they have slightly different meanings. Both refer to God’s love and kindness, but a simple definition I learned years ago has helped me understand the distinction: God’s mercy is not receiving what we deserve, and God’s grace is receiving what we do not deserve.

### ***What Do We Deserve?***

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We can better appreciate God’s mercy when we consider what we truly deserve. Jesus said that “A worker deserves his wages” (Luke 10:7); whenever a person works, he expects to be paid. But Paul taught us that “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)—every sinner deserves to be paid: DEATH! That is exactly what God told Adam when He warned him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: “When you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

There are many different terms used in the Bible that fall under the heading “sin”: trespasses, transgressions, unrighteousness, iniquity, disobedience, wrongdoing, ungodliness, evil, rebellion, and lawlessness, to list a few! But they all earn the same wages—death. To put it another way, all sin deserves the same penalty of death.

Paul told the Ephesian believers that before becoming believers, they were all “dead in transgressions and sins” and were “by nature objects of wrath” (Ephesians 2:1-3). The word “wrath” is found almost 200 times in the Bible, and in most cases, it refers to God’s wrath. This is a “violent, passionate anger, indignation, vengeance, or punishment,” and it is “revealed from heaven against all godlessness and wickedness” (Romans 1:18). Jesus said that God’s wrath already remains upon anyone who has rejected the Son of God (John 3:36).

### ***But God Who Is Rich in Mercy***

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You and I do not want what we deserve—wrath, punishment, and death—we need God’s mercy! We just read how Paul told the Ephesians they were once dead in sin, children of wrath. But look at the very next verses that follow:

[We] were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. *But God, who is rich in mercy*, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show

## ***PATH OF MERCY***

the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

— *Ephesians 2:3-7 (NKJV)*

But God! “But God who is rich in mercy...” Mercy does not give us what we deserve! It is only because of His mercies that we have not been consumed and destroyed; those mercies are new every morning and will endure forever (Lamentations 3:22-23). God actually takes pleasure in pardoning iniquity, forgiving sin, and passing over our transgressions, because He delights in showing mercy (Micah 7:18). Thank God for that!

Instead of giving us wrath, punishment, and the death penalty, the God of mercy loved us with a great love, saved us, made us alive, and seated us together with Christ in heavenly places to enjoy His lovingkindness and grace forever! And it is all FREE! Yes, “The wages of sin is death, but the GIFT of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). We cannot earn it with good works (Ephesians 2:8-9); we could never deserve it—salvation is free. Once we were slaves of sin, but “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Free at last!

### ***Blessed Are the Merciful***

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Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

— *Matthew 5:7*

For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

— *Matthew 7:2*

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

There is a law in the Kingdom of God and it applies to everyone on the narrow road: The way in which we treat other people is how we will be treated—we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-9). The Golden Rule emphasizes the same principle, but in the reverse: “So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

In light of our previous discussion about what we deserve, do you want God’s mercy and forgiveness? I sure do! Do you want others to treat you with mercy and forgiveness? Affirmative here! But God’s mercy and forgiveness are conditional. This might sound like heresy to some, but what do the Scriptures say?

*Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us... If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

— Matthew 6:12-15 (NLT)

Note the conditional word, “if” — “If you forgive... if you refuse to forgive...” We can pray, “Our Father, forgive us” all day, but God will not answer unless we pray the next part as well: “*as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*”

Jesus gave the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35) in response to Peter’s question, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” Jesus responded, saying, “No, not seven times but seventy times seven!” (For those of us who are mathematically challenged, that’s 490 times!) Jesus went on to tell the story of a king who had two servants. The first servant owed the king millions of dollars, and when called to account, he fell down and begged the king for mercy. The king felt pity for him and forgave all of the debt. That servant had a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars.

## **PATH OF MERCY**

The second servant fell down and begged the forgiven servant for mercy. But the first servant grabbed the other man by the throat and demanded him to pay off the entire debt, and ended up throwing him into prison. This was reported to the king, so he called in the servant whom he had forgiven and said:

"You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?" Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. "That's what My heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

— *Matthew 18:32-35 (NLT)*

Jesus brings home the moral of the story in the final sentence: "That's what My heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive..." Chilling! The apostle James confirms this in his epistle:

Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

— *James 2:13*

How often Jesus heard the humble cry from the blind, the sick, and the needy: "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Never once were they denied. Healing and deliverance are because of His mercy. God does not owe us these things, but we owe Him praise, thanks, and glory for all eternity!

There is only one way to enter the narrow road—mercy. All who go there are sinners saved by God's amazing grace and mercy. But if we are to continue our journey on that road successfully to the end, we must never forget how we got there—mercy. We remain before God's throne of grace, looking for mercy and grace:

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may *receive mercy* and find grace to help us *in our time of need*.

—Hebrews 4:14-16

When is our “time of need?” How often do we need mercy and grace? Every day, every hour, every minute—24/7!

Many have happily started off on the narrow road, but they were derailed because of unforgiveness, resentment, or bitterness against someone who hurt them. They lost sight of God’s mercy toward them. Friend, it is not worth it—when we withhold mercy and forgiveness from others, we are really hurting ourselves. We must strive to be rich in mercy and quick to forgive in our dealings with other people—they need it, and so do we!

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

—Ephesians 4:32

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

—Colossians 3:13-14

## THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Then Jesus said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.”

—Luke 9:23-24

PERHAPS YOU HAVE BEEN WONDERING WHY only a few people ever find the narrow road... these next two chapters should shed more light on the question. The narrow road can be very challenging, demanding deep sacrifice and surrender. It involves separation, suffering, and self-denial—it is the way of the Cross.

As Jesus travelled around Galilee, Jerusalem, and Judea, large crowds of people came to be healed, fed, and delivered (Matthew 4:25; 8:1; 9:36). Because of His great love and compassion, Christ ministered to everyone's needs—He healed them all, fed them all, freed them all. But Jesus was not interested in merely building a large following—He was looking for disciples. This is critical for us to understand.

### *The Cost of Discipleship*

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Luke describes one such occasion when throngs of people were following Jesus:

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said: “If anyone comes to Me and does not

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

hate [“by comparison” added in NLT] his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.”

— Luke 14:25-33

Jesus had freely given these multitudes healing, forgiveness, mercy, and material provision. But now He tells them there is a *cost* if they want to be His disciples. What does it mean to be His disciple? What is the cost?

The Greek word for “disciple” is *mathētēs* which simply means “learner, student, pupil.” It conveys the idea of a student who not only learns from his teacher, but also imitates him:

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.

— Matthew 10:24-25 (NKJV)

## ***THE WAY OF THE CROSS***

This can be seen also in John 8:31 where Jesus told the Jews who had believed Him, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples.” But it is obvious from the passages we read earlier in Luke 9 and 14 that a true disciple of Christ is much more than a student attending a school—there is a cost. Jesus stressed the importance of sitting down and counting that cost before deciding to follow Him as His disciple. What will it cost the disciple?

1. He must deny himself
2. He must take up his cross daily
3. He must follow Jesus
4. He must lose his own life
5. He must hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life
6. He must give up, forsake, say goodbye to everything

No wonder “Many said, ‘This is tough teaching, too tough to swallow...’ [and] turned back and no longer followed Him” (John 6:60, 66 – MSG). Tough teaching indeed!

Friend, if you are considering becoming one of Jesus’ disciples, you need to *sit down*—take your time, don’t be in a hurry, think long and hard—and calculate the cost of following Christ. What will it cost? Everything! It will demand your time, your talents, your treasure—everything. You may lose friends, family, and freedom. Why would anyone want to be Jesus’ disciple? Because they love Him more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, house, lands, possessions and, most importantly, their own life!

When Saul of Tarsus met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he distinctly understood how much he would have to suffer for His

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

name's sake (Acts 9:16). But Paul counted the cost and was willing to pay any price:

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. But none of these things move me; *nor do I count my life dear to myself*, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

— Acts 20:23-24

### ***Your Will Not Mine***

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True disciples following Jesus understand that the narrow road is the way of obedience. Like their Master, disciples have as their supreme goal one thing: to please their heavenly Father by doing His will. Jesus often spoke about His commitment to always do His Father's will:

For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me.

— John 6:38

I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me. The one who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for *I always do what pleases Him*.

— John 8:28-29

Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.

— Luke 22:42

## **THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

Most of us have a strong will of our own—we do not like to be told what to do—we want to be the boss! We want things our way. This all has to change on the narrow road. Our will, plans, ambitions, and desires have to be laid on the altar of sacrifice as we repeat our Master's words, "Here I am... I have come to do Your will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). We must deny ourselves, lose our own lives, and understand that God has better plans for us:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

— *Jeremiah 29:11*

Paul urged the Romans to consider God's great love and mercy, and, in view of all He had done for them, to offer their bodies as "living sacrifices" in order to "approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2).

The call to abandon our will and embrace the Father's will is not pleasing to our carnal nature, nor is it popular, even in religious circles:

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!" Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

— Matthew 7:21-27

These words of Jesus strike fear in my heart every time I read them, especially the word *many*. We have already talked about the many and the few — many on the road to destruction, few on the road to life. But the many in this passage were not pagans or atheists — they called Him “Lord,” and they had prophesied, cast out demons, and worked many miracles in His name. They sound like on-fire, Holy Ghost-filled Christians to me! But Jesus said He never knew them; He called them evildoers and commanded them to depart from Him. Why? Because they had not done the will of the Father. Jesus did not deny their claims to prophesying, casting out demons, and performing miracles — those are all biblical practices. But somehow, they were out of order and not following God’s prescribed plan.

Jesus gave the only solution to this frightening scenario in the verses that followed: Hear His words and put them into practice: obedience. Then you will build your life on the rock and have a stable foundation. (Note the similarities between the narrow/broad roads in Matthew 7:13-14 and the wise/foolish men in Matthew 7:24-27.)

### ***A Road of Trouble and Affliction***

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When Jesus spoke about the narrow gate and the narrow road in Matthew 7:13-14, He used two different words for “narrow” to describe them. We have already seen that the Greek word for the *narrow gate* is *stenos* which means “narrow because of obstacles standing nearby.” However, to describe the *narrow road*, Jesus used

## **THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

the Greek word *thlibo* which means “to crowd, afflict, suffer tribulation, trouble.” Pilgrims travelling on this road will feel pressed by troubles and afflictions—it is a road of testing and suffering.

Jesus never told His disciples that following Him would be a cakewalk. In fact, He warned them that they would be hated, persecuted, and even put to death for His sake. The apostles in the Early Church preached the same message. For instance, Paul and Barnabas encouraged the Christians in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to remain true to the faith because “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Paul told the Philippians, “It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him” (Philippians 1:29), and Peter rejoiced that many believers in the church were “participating in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 4:13).

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul often speaks about the hardships, troubles and sufferings he was experiencing in his service to Christ—great pressures far beyond his ability to endure, even despairing of life (2 Corinthians 1:4-10). But he did not lose heart, calling his sufferings “light and momentary troubles” compared to God’s surpassing “eternal glory” (2 Corinthians 4:16). However, in Chapter 11, the apostle gives a long list of these “light afflictions” (How do these compare to yours and mine?):

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger

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from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

– *2 Corinthians 11:23-28*

And we complain because we don't like the weather, or someone stole our parking place? Lord, have mercy! What great things this man suffered for Jesus! No wonder, he was on the narrow road.

### ***Go and Make Disciples***

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In His final words to His disciples in what is commonly known as the Great Commission, Jesus explained the ultimate goal of discipleship – multiplication:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

– *Matthew 28:19*

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

– *Mark 16:15-18*

So, let's get going!

## A HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.

— *Isaiah 35:8*

**H**OLINESS IS A MALIGNED AND MISUNDERSTOOD word often associated with stringent religious rules, long robes, and toxic legalistic traditions. But the Bible talks about the beauty, splendor, and majesty of God's holiness—it is something magnificent and glorious (Exodus 15:11; Psalm 29:2). The word "holy" in the Old Testament is taken from the Hebrew *qôdesh* signifying something "sacred, consecrated, set apart"; a related word *qa'dash* is usually translated "sanctify, set apart, make pure or holy."

The narrow road is a highway of holiness. The word "highway" in Isaiah's prophecy is taken from the Hebrew *maslul* which means "an elevated, exalted, raised up turnpike." It is elevated in a way that sets it apart from everything below—it is holy. Holiness on this highway simply refers to separation from anything unclean, impure, or defiling; the wicked cannot go on this road.

### ***Set Apart to God***

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Biblical sanctification or holiness entails two simultaneous actions—we are *separated from* that which is impure and also *set apart to* God (consecrated). This is obvious in the following

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

Scripture passage in which Paul exhorts the Corinthians to separate from unbelievers, wickedness, darkness, Satan, idols, and everything unclean or contaminating in order to purify themselves and be received by God as His sons and daughters:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

— *2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1*

The correct motivation for separation from all of the negative things is to draw near to God—to be received into intimate fellowship with Him like sons and daughters with their Father.

We see a dramatic separation from all uncleanness in the holy city, new Jerusalem—the walls of the city are over 200 feet thick!

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

— *Revelation 21:27*

## **A HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS**

### ***In the World Not of It***

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We saw in Chapter 1 (*The Way of the World*, p.13) that all those who are on the broad road follow the ways of the world—they are under the control of the god of this world, the devil. For that reason, life on the narrow road requires complete separation from the spirit, ways, and philosophies of the world:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

— James 4:4

The apostle John goes even further stating that anyone who loves the world cannot have the love of God in them:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the *cravings of sinful man*, the *lust of his eyes* and the *boasting of what he has and does*—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

— 1 John 2:15-17

John boldly states that everything in the world does not come from God! He identifies three specific realms of the world that negatively impact our journey on the narrow road and hinder us from doing the will of God:

1. Cravings of sinful man (lust of the flesh) – refers to selfish desires, carnal appetites of every kind, indulgence in pleasure, hedonism

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2. Lust of the eyes – coveting costly clothes, houses, etc. as well as impure sexual glances and pornography
3. Boasting of what we have and do – pride of possessions and accomplishments

Separation from the world does not mean going to live in a monastery on a remote mountain. Jesus made this plain in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17:

[Father], I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for they are *not of the world* any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are *not of the world*, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them *into the world*. For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

– John 17:14-19

Jesus prayed for our sanctification, but He did not pray for the Father to take us out of the world. He prayed that we would be protected from the evil one, the god of this world, as we are sent into the world. Separation from the world is not physical—it is internal, spiritual—we are *in* the world, but not *of* it. We do not embrace or participate in the corrupt, ungodly ways and philosophies of this world. We do not try to copy or conform to its fashions or behavior:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

– Romans 12:2

## **A HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS**

Paul likened this separation from the world to a kind of death – through the Cross, he died to the world and the world died to him:

May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

– *Galatians 6:14*

### ***Putting on and Putting off***

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In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul teaches about “true holiness” – a dual process of “putting off” the old self with all of its evil ways and “putting on” the new self which is created to be like God (much like our daily habit of removing dirty clothes and dressing ourselves with clean ones):

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to *put off your old self*, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to *put on the new self*, created to be like God in *true righteousness and holiness*. Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

– *Ephesians 4:22-25*

In verses 26 to 32 of the same chapter, Paul mentions many other “old clothes” that we need to put off: the devil, stealing, unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice; and “new clothes” that we need to put on: kindness, compassion, and forgiveness (see also Colossians 3:5-14).

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

### *Only the Lowly*

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The “high-way” of holiness is only for the lowly—the high and haughty, the arrogant and proud, the boastful and conceited—they cannot walk there:

For this is what the high and lofty One says—He who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

—*Isaiah 57:15*

What an amazing God we serve! He is high and lifted up, exalted King of the Universe, Omnipotent Lord, yet He is humble; and He will only allow the humble and lowly to live and walk with Him!

All those on the narrow road have to learn a different walk—they “walk humbly” with their God:

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to *walk humbly* with your God.

—*Micah 6:8*

This does not come easily to us—we are by nature proud, self-centered creatures. We have to fix our eyes on Jesus, learn of His meekness and humility, and contemplate deeply what He did for us:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in

## **A HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS**

appearance as a man, *He humbled Himself* and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

— *Philippians 2:5-11 (NKJV)*

As we walk on the narrow road, each step is a new opportunity to humble ourselves. “Nothing is done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind we esteem others better than ourselves” (*Philippians 2:3 – NKJV*). We constantly lower our opinion of ourselves, remembering that “if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (*Galatians 6:3 – NKJV*). If the Lord Jesus thought He was “a worm and not a man,” then who am I? (*Psalm 22:6*).

God opposes all the proud, and He will not dwell with them. Lucifer was cast out of heaven and became the devil because of his arrogance, self-will, and pride:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: “*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.*” Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

— *Isaiah 14:12-15 (NKJV)*

## **TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY**

We either humble ourselves, or God will humble us! King Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that God “knows how to humble all those who walk in pride” (Daniel 4:37). Heaven will be filled with the meek, the humble, and the lowly, and those who humble themselves will be exalted:

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.

*– 1 Peter 5:5-6*

I once heard a sermon titled, “The Seven Steps to Heaven.” I had my notebook ready to write down the seven-step formula to glory! Here it is – get your pen and paper ready...

Step 1: Humble yourself

Step 2: Humble yourself

Step 3: Humble yourself

Step 4: Humble yourself

Step 5: Humble yourself

Step 6: Humble yourself

Step 7: Humble yourself.

Amen!

# **11**

## **WALK IN THE LIGHT**

This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

— *1 John 1:5-7*

**L**IIGHT AND DARKNESS ARE THE FIRST TWO ENTITIES in creation (Genesis 1:2-3). Immediately after God spoke light into being, He separated light from darkness, even giving them different names—light He called “day,” and darkness “night” (Genesis 1:4-5, 14-18). Evidently, the Creator wanted to make a clear distinction between light and darkness lest they be mingled or confused one with the other.

Light and darkness can be physical or spiritual. Scientists define physical darkness simply as “the absence of light.” In Scripture, darkness is always used in a negative way. It often represents confusion; lack of vision, understanding or orientation; hidden things; distress, gloom, judgment or death—those who walk in darkness stumble and get lost because they have no light (John 11:10).

In the Bible, light is always a positive entity—God called it “good” (Genesis 1:4). It speaks of vision, revelation, illumination, guidance, and understanding; hope, glory and life; exposure of hidden things—light enables us to walk without stumbling. More

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

importantly, John the apostle informs us that “God is light; in Him there is no darkness.”

### ***Jesus Light of the World***

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After Christ’s baptism and 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, He began His public ministry in Galilee, fulfilling Isaiah’s ancient prophecy:

Leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have *seen a great light*; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

—Matthew 4:13-17

It was no coincidence that the people Jesus first went to had been living in spiritual darkness for hundreds of years. When Christ arrived there, what did the Galileans see? A *great light!* Jesus Himself declared that He was the light of the world:

When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, “*I am the light of the world.* Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

—John 8:12

## ***WALK IN THE LIGHT***

The call to follow Christ was a call to leave darkness and begin walking in the light of life. Years later, Peter would explain this in his first epistle:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who *called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*

— 1 Peter 2:9

Paul explained to the Colossian believers that in their salvation, the Father had “delivered them from the power (dominion) of darkness” and “translated them into the kingdom of the Son He loves,” qualifying them to be “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:12-13). There are two kingdoms—the kingdom (or dominion) of darkness—and the kingdom of light. Satan is the ruler (prince) of darkness (John 14:30; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 2:2), Christ is the ruler of God’s kingdom.

Because Christians are called to leave darkness and walk in the light, they are called “sons of light and sons of the day”:

But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all *sons of the light* and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

— 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

### ***Hiding in Darkness***

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Darkness is the hallmark of the broad road—it is the way of life there, and it is the final destination (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Those who remain on the broad road have chosen darkness because they love it. Why would so many choose darkness if they know it ends in weeping and gnashing of teeth? (see Romans 1:32). The answer to this question comes from the strangest place—John 3:16—a Bible verse almost everyone has heard. But few have read the verses that follow:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but *men loved darkness instead of light* because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

—John 3:16-21

Christ did not need to leave heaven and enter the world through a humble stable in Bethlehem to condemn the world—the world was already condemned! He was to be called “Jesus” because He would

## ***WALK IN THE LIGHT***

save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). He came to “save the world,” He is the “Savior of all men” (1 Timothy 4:10). So, is all the world saved? Sadly, no. Why?

Jesus explained why: Even though the Light of the world had come, men hated the light and loved darkness. (Note: For you Greek scholars, the word Jesus used for “loved” here is the word we often hear in Christian circles, *agape*... that’s right, agape love!) Why would anyone choose darkness over light? Because “their deeds were evil”; they hated the light because they knew their lies, adultery, drunkenness, gossip, etc. would be exposed.

That is exactly what light does—it exposes, uncovers, reveals, makes manifest. Coming out of darkness into light means we come clean, confessing and forsaking all of our shameful sins committed in secret, living open and transparent lives:

For you were *once darkness*, but *now you are light* in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But *everything exposed by the light becomes visible*, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,

— *Ephesians 5:8-15*

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we *confess our sins*, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.

– *1 John 1:8-10*

As we come out of the shadows of guilt, shame, and hidden sin, our conscience is made clear (1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; Hebrews 10:22). We begin to walk confidently in the light with our “heads held high” (Leviticus 26:13).

A number of expressions are found in the pages of Scripture that are essentially synonymous with *walking in the light*:

1. Walking before God in “integrity of heart and uprightness” (1 Kings 9:4)
2. Walking before God “faithfully and with wholehearted devotion” (2 Kings 20:3)
3. Walking blamelessly (Genesis 17:1; Psalm 15:2; 84:11; Philippians 2:15)
4. Walking in truth (3 John 3-4)

Much more could be written about walking in the light, but John seems to sum it up nicely:

Whoever claims to live in Him must *walk as Jesus did*.

– *1 John 2:6*

If we learn to walk with Him now on the narrow road, He promises we will walk with Him in the new Jerusalem for all eternity:

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and *they shall walk with Me in white*, for they are worthy.

– *Revelation 3:4 (NKJV)*

# 12

## LED BY THE SPIRIT

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

— *Romans 8:14*

**L**IFE ON THE NARROW ROAD IS A LIFE IN THE SPIRIT. As we have seen, this life begins when we are “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5-8) through an experience called the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” (Luke 3:16; Acts 11:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13). In the New Testament, this baptism is called both the “gift” and the “promise” of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). A variety of other expressions are used in Scripture to refer to this same glorious experience: “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4); “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38); “the Holy Spirit came on them” (Acts 10:44; 19:6); “God poured out His Spirit” (Acts 2:17-18); “streams of living water will flow from within” (John 7:37-39); “the Father will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

### ***Flesh Is the Enemy***

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The narrow road is for the spiritual, not the carnal — it is for those who are filled with, led by, and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Our carnal, selfish, sinful nature, also called the “flesh” in the Bible, wars against our spiritual life. It expresses itself in every kind of sin and uncleanness.

The believers in the Corinthian church had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, but they had not yet learned to *walk* in the Spirit. Paul

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

told them they were still carnal; they were behaving like normal men, not spiritual people:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to *spiritual* people but as to *carnal*, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

— 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NKJV)

The Galatian believers had received the promise of the Holy Spirit under Paul's ministry (Galatians 3:2-5, 14), but the apostle wanted them to learn how to *walk* and *live* in the Spirit, not after the flesh:

I say then: *Walk in the Spirit*, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are *led by the Spirit*, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

## ***LED BY THE SPIRIT***

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in ["keep in step with" (NIV)] the Spirit.

— *Galatians 5:16-25 (NKJV)*

Note the emphasis in Paul's words: "walk in the Spirit... be led by the Spirit... live in the Spirit... keep in step with the Spirit." The way to overcome the laundry list of sins in this passage (adultery, hatred, selfish ambition, etc.) is *not* to grit your teeth and try harder—it is to yield control to the Holy Spirit—to listen to Him, obey Him, and allow Him to direct and lead. Paul is very direct about this: If you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts and desires of the flesh.

In Galatians 6, note the parallel between the outcomes of the flesh vs. the Spirit and the destinations of the two roads—destruction and eternal life: "A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature [flesh], from that nature will reap *destruction*; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap *eternal life*" (Galatians 6:7-8).

God gives the Holy Spirit to "those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32). The secret to a successful, victorious spiritual life, then, is to listen to the Holy Spirit and do what He tells us to do. In Christ's messages to the seven churches in Asia, the same refrain is repeated seven times: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes..." (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In other words, "If you want to overcome, pay attention and heed what the Holy Spirit tells you!"

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

### *The Law of the Spirit*

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In Chapter 8 of Romans, the great chapter often titled, “Life in the Spirit,” Paul states that there are two laws: the “law of sin and death,” and the “law of the Spirit of life.” Death and life! The law of the Spirit sets us free from the sin, condemnation, and death produced by the carnal sin nature. One of these two laws will govern your life and mine at all times. That is a profound thought—let it sink in as you read:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the *law of the Spirit of life* set me free from the *law of sin and death*. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so, He condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the *mind controlled by the Spirit* is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ...

## ***LED BY THE SPIRIT***

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are *led by the Spirit* of God are sons of God.

—Romans 8:1-9, 12-14

There are a number of important points here, so let us summarize:

1. The law of the Spirit is more powerful than the law of sin and death—the former liberates us from the latter
2. When we live by the Spirit, all of the righteous requirements of the Law (Ten Commandments) are fully met in us
3. The carnal mind is hostile toward God—it cannot submit to God, so it produces spiritual death
4. Our minds must be controlled by the Holy Spirit—this brings life and peace, and enables us to please God
5. We have an obligation to live according to the Spirit—this enables us to put to death every misdeed of the flesh
6. Those who are led by the Spirit are the true sons of God

## ***No More Carnal Distinctions***

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We live in a very divided culture now, where politicians pit one ethnic group against another for their own political gain and advancement. But prejudice, xenophobia, ethnic and national pride, and racism have no place on the narrow road—all these distinctions need to be crucified by the Holy Spirit:

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

Therefore, from now on, we *regard no one according to the flesh*. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

— 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NKJV)

As we learn to walk in the Spirit, we no longer regard people according to their outward, carnal appearance. There are, of course, physical distinctions—men and women are different biologically, each ethnic group may have a different language, skin color, or customs. But those dissimilarities are no longer important; what matters most is that we are all one in Christ:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

— Galatians 3:28

We now realize that as believers in Christ, we are one body and one “holy nation,” and our “citizenship is in heaven” (1 Peter 2:9; Philippians 3:20).

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit... But now indeed there are many members, yet one body... there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

— 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 20, 25 (NKJV)

# 13

## THE PATHWAY OF BLESSING

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

— *Ephesians 1:3*

**G**OD IS A GOD OF BLESSING. Since the beginning of creation, God has been blessing—He blessed the animals and man (Genesis 1:22, 28); He blessed Noah, Abraham, and his descendants (Genesis 9:1; 12:2-3; 22:17); and He promised to bless all nations through Abraham (Galatians 3:8-9). The highest form of blessing is when God *makes us* a blessing!

The narrow road is a blessed road. As we have seen, that is not to say the narrow road is an easy road—it involves discipline, sacrifice, and suffering—but it is a pathway of blessing. And God chose for this blessing to come through His Son, Jesus Christ, the promised Seed of Abraham. The Father's will is to remove every curse brought on His creation by sin, and He did this in the strangest way—He made His Son a curse!

That's right! God carried out His great plan of redemption by sending His own Son to the Cross where He would bear every sin, curse, and even death on our behalf:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by *becoming a curse* for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” He redeemed us in order that the *blessing* given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

— *Galatians 3:13-14*

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

Cursed so we could be blessed—that is what Jesus did! All of the punishment our sins deserved and every cursed disease listed in Deuteronomy Chapter 28—Christ bore them all on Calvary:

Surely, He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

—Isaiah 53:4-6

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us!” (1 John 3:1 – NKJV). This is truly amazing grace! Good News! When we put our trust in Christ as Lord, Savior, and Redeemer, every blessing promised to Abraham becomes ours:

The Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when He said, “All nations will be blessed through you.” So, all who put their faith in Christ *share the same blessing Abraham received* because of his faith.

—Galatians 3:8-9 (NLT)

God has blessed us with *every blessing* in Christ. We simply do not have the space here to elaborate on each one of these blessings. They include provision, healing and health, love, joy, peace, God’s promises, and most of all—God’s presence with us forever!

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace.

—Numbers 6:24-26

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

—Matthew 7:13-14

**T**WO ROADS, TWO DESTINATIONS, TWO WAYS of life. This is not complicated—it is so simple a child can understand it. You do not need a PhD in theology to grasp what Jesus was saying. That is why the Scriptures say “the common people heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37 – NKJV); it was the religious elite who stumbled over His words.

We have learned that we all started out on the same road—the broad one. We were all born in sin and naturally followed the ways of the world and uncleanness. We did not need to go looking for the broad road—we were automatically on it from birth. But there is one key difference between the two roads we have not mentioned until now: When He referred to the narrow road, Jesus said “only a few *find* it.” Again, there is no need to *find* the broad road because everyone has been on it from infancy. But the narrow road must be *found*.

Why is this important? The narrow road is something we must seek for—earnestly, diligently, wholeheartedly, agonizingly! God told Jeremiah that he would find Him only when he searched for Him with all his heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Real faith believes that God “is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Entrance onto the narrow road requires deep, sincere repentance,

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

total surrender to God, and absolute faith and trust in Christ. Finding God and the narrow road must become our number one priority:

But *seek first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

— *Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)*

Jesus said we need to keep asking until we receive, keep seeking until we find, and keep knocking until doors open:

*Keep on asking*, and you will receive what you ask for. *Keep on seeking*, and you will find. *Keep on knocking*, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

— *Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)*

My friend, regardless of where you and I are today, we all need to seek (and keep seeking) for the narrow road with all of our heart. We need to search for God more than we would for silver, gold, rubies, or any hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:4; 3:13-15). And when we find the hidden riches of God's kingdom—the “pearl of great price”—we must be willing to give up everything else to buy it (Matthew 13:44-46 – NKJV).

The writer of Hebrews compares the Christian life to a race—not a sprint but a marathon race that requires great endurance:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,

## **Final Thoughts**

who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross,  
scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of  
the throne of God.

— Hebrews 12:1-2

Note six important things about this race:

1. There is a great cloud of witnesses—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses and all the prophets; Peter, James, John, Paul and all of the apostles—watching us and cheering us on
2. We need to cast off anything that would hinder us or weigh us down
3. This race has already been marked out for us—God has planned our course
4. We must run with perseverance—this race will require great stamina and determination
5. Jesus ran His race, enduring the Cross with all of its shame, and He finished in victory
6. We must keep our eyes fixed on the prize at the finish line—our Savior Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith

In closing, we turn our attention to the famous ultramarathon runner Dean Karnazes for some inspiration and encouragement. In 2005 (from October 12<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>), Karnazes ran 350 miles across Northern California without stopping. He did not sleep or eat—he ran for 80 hours, 44 minutes without a break! That is endurance! In 2006, Karnazes ran the 26-mile marathon in all 50 states in 50 consecutive days! He even ran a marathon to the South Pole in -13 °F (-25 °C) temperatures without snowshoes in 2002!

## TWO ROADS TO ETERNITY

The apostle Paul was also a marathon runner—he endured incredible hardships serving Christ, but he was determined to finish his race, and finish he did:

The Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may *finish my race with joy*, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

— Acts 20:23-24 (NKJV)



I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race,  
I have kept the faith.  
Finally, there is laid up for me  
the crown of righteousness,  
which the Lord, the righteous Judge,  
will give to me on that Day,  
and not to me only  
but also to all who have loved His appearing.

— 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NKJV)





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