

## THE TWO ROADS

by Ron Harvey

TEXT: MATTHEW 7:12-14

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

### INTRODUCTION

We have been studying in Romans some of the practical duties which are required of Christians. And it is apparent to me that when we commit to Christ, we not only accept the great benefits of being in Him, but also we accept the many responsibilities of being his servants.

Now there are many who, for one reason or another, suppose they will be partakers of the benefits of Christ. And they envision that when they stand in Judgment before Christ, they will be welcomed in and they will inherit the joys of heaven for all eternity.

And they wonder what mansion has been prepared for them. And they wonder what place of honor is reserved for them in heaven and what eternal joys will be theirs. And they are all too glad to claim the streets of gold as the sure promises of God. But,

What about the responsibilities of allegiance to Christ? What about our present duties toward God and toward our neighbors?

You see, everyone wants heaven. And, most will tell you that is where they are going. But, few there are that want to engage in the various duties that are associated with knowing Christ.

And I have to say, there are many duties. Now this flies in the face of a culture of religious teaching that misleads people into the doctrines of easy believism – a believism that requires very little other than a profession or an emotional experience or some outward act like baptism.

But the Bible everywhere asserts that our allegiance to Christ puts us in obligation to him. It is our duty to assemble together in worship. It is our duty to love one another. It is our duty to love our enemies. It is our duty to engage regularly in the church ordinances. It is our duty to lay aside our sinful practices and to live righteous lives. It is our duty to exercise our spiritual gifts for the benefit of others inside and outside the church. It is our duty to humble ourselves and to esteem others better than ourselves. Most of this we learned in our Bible study time in Romans.

And there are many other duties that are associated with our salvation in Christ. We are to take up our cross and follow him. We are to serve Him and none other. We are to pray and to seek his will in our lives. We are to observe all the moral law of God in our daily lives. We are to help one another whenever we have opportunity. And I could go on and on.

You see, not only is there great privilege to be in Christ, there is great responsibility. And one cannot partake of the privilege without sharing in the responsibility.

Now our text this morning focuses on one of the great responsibilities of all those who would call themselves Christian. And it has to do with how we treat others. And it is a principle that is famous in all the world but rarely practiced. And the principle is:

*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

Now this is known by most of the world as “The Golden Rule.” And with our words we teach it to our children. But often, we don’t teach it to them with our actions.

Now each of us takes care to provide for ourselves. And we love to provide for our own welfare and our own comfort. But our duty is to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

And this is a very high standard of conduct. It is not a standard of conduct that is practiced by the masses. In fact, the masses of humanity will steal from you and will betray you and will do harm to you and even murder you for a price. And they certainly are not concerned with treating you as they would like to be treated.

But this is because the masses don’t belong to Christ. They may think they belong to him. And they may think they are on their way to heaven, but when they hate and mistreat their neighbor they show that they really are not partakers of Christ at all.

You see, those that shirk the responsibilities of Christ’s kingdom are really not partakers of the kingdom. And those that do not make righteousness their daily practice are not attached to the Righteous One.

Now our text this morning says,

*Enter ye at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Now the context of this passage is that we must make our religion our business. This text is taken from the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus lays down many requirements of the kingdom. If you read Matthew 5 through 7 you will find many instructions in righteousness. But the key may be found in Matthew 5:20 where it says,

*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Now notice, it doesn't say, if you don't believe then you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. It doesn't say, if you are not baptized you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, "Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

But some preachers tell you that all you have to do is come down to the front of the church and recite a prayer and ask the Lord to save you and you can be assured of heaven.

But Jesus said, "*except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

*But* some say, "All you have to do is believe in Jesus, and you are assured of heaven."

And I can't argue with saying it that way, because the Bible says it that way too.

But, the fact is, you must **truly** believe in Him, such that you are bound by his precepts as a way of life and are empowered by his Spirit to perform them.

James said: *faith without works is dead.*

Now in our text, I want you to notice that there are only two ways in life. One is the way of sin and the other is the way of righteousness.

There is a broad way and there is a narrow way. And there is no other way.

Now, there are only two spiritual conditions and all men fall into one or the other. The one condition is spiritual death and the other is spiritual life. And these two conditions are totally different in nature.

One is called death, the other is called life. One is characterized by sin and the other by righteousness. One is called darkness and the other light. And the final destination of one is destruction and the final destination of the other is life. And we are all walking in one of these ways. And there is no middle ground and our walk will tell the world what our condition is.

Now I want to look first at the bad condition, that condition of sin and spiritual death. And I want you to see first that,

I. It is entered by a wide gate and it is a broad way.

Now that means that the multitudes enter at this gate and travel this road. And this is exactly what our text says,

*And many there be which go in thereat. (v.13)*

Now many travel this road because,

A. There is great liberty to indulge sin on this road.

This road says,

“Come one, come all.” Come all ye sinners and bring all your lusts and your evil desires with you and no one will ask you to give them up. All ye proud and all you boasters come on in. All you sluggards and all you who follow the desires of the flesh, travel with us.

All you false prophets and enemies of Christ; All you who love money and fame to your own destruction; all you liars and cheats and hypocrites – this road welcomes you.

You see, this broad road is traveled by many because you can bring your sin nature with you.

And furthermore, this road puts no burdens of righteousness on you. You will not be required to love your neighbor or your enemy. You will not be required to keep the Lord’s commands. And, in the immediate context, this broad road puts no burden on you to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

So you see, many travel this road because they can bring their sins with them. But also, many travel this road because,

B. There is much company on this road.

*Many there be which go in thereat.*

And we are inclined to take the road most traveled, aren’t we? There is comfort in the numbers. Surely, if everyone is taking this road, it must be the better road. And there is safety in the comparison. You look around at all the others on this road and it seems to you that you are at least as good as them and you think you are safe because you make a good comparison.

But there is something else I want you to notice about this road.

II. The road leads to destruction.

*Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction.*

**Example: If you were trying to go across the Mississippi River Bridge and you came to the entrance and you found that you had a choice: One choice was to enter where there were three lanes and everyone was taking that entrance. Or you could choose a very narrow lane that had toll booths and various other stops along the way. You might be inclined to take the three lane highway. But then, what if you noticed that at the end of the bridge, those on the three lane highway were driving right off into the river? And those on the one lane, were finally making it across the bridge. Why, you would never take the broad way.**

And this is the way this bad road is in our text. It is the broad way. It is much more traveled. But, the end is destruction.

The destruction that awaits sinners at the end of the broad road is utter destruction. It is not annihilation. But it is eternal torment. If you could see the reality of hell, you would stay off this road if at all possible.

But now, let's look at that other road in our text. And we see first that,

I. It is entered through a strait gate.

Now, strait means very narrow. And this road of spiritual life has a very narrow gate. It is hard to enter in.

Now most people think they can move from spiritual death to spiritual life whenever they want to by doing something.

1. Some think they can change their spiritual condition by joining a church.
2. Some think they can change their spiritual condition by doing good works.
3. Some think they can change their spiritual condition by reciting some prayer or reciting some words of a ritual.
4. Some think they can change their spiritual condition by denying themselves certain pleasures. Maybe they think fasting or being celibate will do it.

But I assure you, that nothing you can do will jump you from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Let me read you a story from Matthew 19:16-26

v.16 Isn't that exactly what men say? What must I do?

v. 26 With men this is impossible!

Now think about what Jesus said there. "With men it is impossible." That suggests that a man cannot do anything to save himself.

"With God, all things are possible." That suggests that God can save a man.

And this is exactly what is required to move a person from spiritual death to spiritual life – an act of God.

And the theological word for that act is **regeneration**.

Now I want to give you an example in the physical realm that will illustrate regeneration in the spiritual realm.

**Example:** When Jesus was on the earth, a man named Lazarus died. And the family called for Jesus because they knew that Jesus had performed great miracles. And when Jesus came into town he went to the place where the body of Lazarus lay. And Lazarus had been dead for several days and his body was beginning to stink. And Jesus shouted in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” And amazingly, Lazarus got up and hopped out of the grave still bound in grave clothes.

Now that demonstrated how Jesus could bring a dead man to life. And if we apply the analogy to the spiritual realm, it illustrates how a man is brought to life spiritually.

You see, there was no life in Lazarus. And Jesus simply gave him life. And he moved Lazarus from the condition of being dead to the condition of being alive. He didn’t tell Lazarus he would raise him if he believed. Lazarus was dead. Lazarus couldn’t believe. Jesus simply made him alive. And then, he told Lazarus to come forth. And Lazarus came forth alive.

Now, when we are born into this world, we are born spiritually dead. And we just lay there as a spiritual corpse. And we have no desire to obey God and we have no ability to do it. And we continue on in our sins day after day after day and there is no spiritual life in us.

And if we die in that condition, then the Bible says we shall be cast into the eternal lake of fire. And there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And there is only one gate whereby we enter the good road and that is by the gate of **regeneration**.

That is why Jesus said, “with men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Read Eph. 2:1-5

And so we see that true spiritual life comes only through the strait gate – the gate of regeneration.

And that is why a true Christian is not just a professing Christian, but he is also a living, worshiping, praying and doing Christian, because he has been made alive by the regenerating work of God.

But notice also, that,

II. The good road is a narrow road.

A. This suggests first that there are not many who travel it. And this is exactly what the text says,

“And few there be that find it.”

Now this is the testimony of history. It seems that the masses travel the broad road to destruction and only a relative few travel the narrow road.

And it is the clear testimony of Scripture.

*For many are called, but few are chosen.*

Matthew 22:14

But the fact that the road is narrow also suggests that,

B. The road is a more difficult and circumspect road.

1. It is a road whose way is marked by the law of God. And that is the law of righteousness. And all who are on the narrow road are hedged in by this law. And so, they do unto others as they would have others do unto them. And they strive to obey the laws of God.

2. All on this road are required to deny self and to deny temptations. And all of this is difficult because it is against our old inclinations.

## CONCLUSION

Our benefits in Christ are infinite and eternal. Jesus said,

*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.*

I Cor. 2:9

But until we get there, our responsibilities are great. We must carry out the duties of our faith. And if we find that we have no desire to carry them out or no ability to carry them out, then we should examine ourselves to see which road we are really on.

Jesus said,

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Matthew 7:21

I want us to be a believing church and a doing church. I want us to be a church that shows our faith by our works of righteousness. And if we are that kind of church, then we will prove that we are on the narrow road to life.