

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“There Are Few Who Find It”

By Bobby Witherington

“Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14; cf. Luke 13:23-24).

Jesus uttered those words as He neared the conclusion of that famous Sermon on the Mount. Herein he spoke of two gates, two ways, and two contrasting destinies. One gate is described as *“wide,”* which opens to the *“broad”* way that *“leads to destruction.”* The other gate is *“narrow,”* which opens to the *“difficult”* way *“which leads to life.”* The Lord thus contrasted two destinies (*“life”* and *“destruction”*), two gates (*“wide”* and *“difficult”*), and two ways (*“broad”* and *“difficult”*). The *“life”* referred to is *“eternal life,”* of which Jesus is the *“author”* (Heb. 5:9), which Jesus came to make possible, which is the *“hope”* of faithful Christians, (Titus 1:2), and which is *“reserved in heaven”* (1 Pet. 1:4), for faithful Christians. The *“destruction”* referred to is not the loss of being; rather it is the loss of well-being, in that it involves *“everlasting punishment”* (2 Thess. 1:7-9), in that place called *“hell”* (Mark 9:43), a place which was prepared *“for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41), and which will also be eternally inhabited by those who choose to serve Satan instead of Christ.

Regarding *“the way which leads to life,”* Jesus uttered these sobering words, *“there are few who find it.”* The contrast is stark! Those going to heaven are said to be *“few”* – those headed for *“destruction”* in hell are said to be *“many.”* This is in direct contrast to the prevailing beliefs of most religious people. Polls have been taken of those who believe in heaven, and it has been documented that **most** people believe they are going to heaven. Most people believe that others of different faiths are going to heaven. Yet concerning *“the way which leads to life,”* Jesus said, *“there are few who find it”* (Matt. 7:14). This certainly harmonizes with Romans 1:5, wherein with reference to the saved versus the lost, the apostle said, *“at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”* A *“remnant”* is something that is small when contrasted with the whole of that to which it may be compared. To illustrate this point we mention Isaiah chapter ten wherein the prophet let it be known that the house of Israel would be taken into Assyrian captivity; however, in verses 20-21 he declared that a *“remnant”* (meaning a few) would return to *“the mighty God.”*

The idea of there being *“few”* that will be saved in contrast to the *“many”* who will be lost is not peculiar to the New Testament. Think of the multitudes who were drowned in the great flood of Noah’s day; yet only *“eight souls”* were saved from the ravages of the flood (Gen. 7:11-23; 1 Pet. 3:20)! There were some 603,500 Jewish males (not counting women and children) who left Egypt in that great exodus (Num. 1:46). Yet of those who were numbered from *“twenty years old and above”* at the time of their departure from Egypt, only **two** people (Joshua and Caleb) were permitted to enter the promise land (Num. 14:29-38)! Because of their intense wickedness, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone; yet only **three** people (Lot and his two daughters) survived the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19)! Indeed, the idea of there being *“few”* who will be saved in contrast to the *“many”* who will be lost is not peculiar to the New Testament. However, God is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9), and He sent Jesus into the world and He (Jesus), *“by the grace of God”* tasted *“death for everyone”* (Heb. 2:9). So **why**, then, are there but *“few who find it”* (Matt. 7:14) – (*“the way which leads to life”*)?

“Few” will “Find it” Because:

1. Most are not seeking! Jesus said *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”* (Matt. 7:7). Prior to this, Jesus, in the same sermon, commanded those in His audience, saying, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matt. 6:33), but the sad fact remains that multitudes are neither asking, seeking, or knocking!

2. The way is “difficult” (Matt. 7:13-14), or hard, and most people are not willing to exert the effort required either to learn, or to do the will of the Lord.

3. Satan is busy! In the parable of the Sower, concerning the seed which fell by the wayside, Jesus in His explanation said, *“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart”* (Matt. 13:19). The *“wicked one”* is identified as *“the devil”* in a parallel passage (Luke 8:12), and He elsewhere is identified as our *“adversary”* who *“walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8).

4. Most people do not really love the truth! In 2 Thess. 2:10-12 the apostle Paul referred to those who *“did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved,”* and he stated that *“for this reason God will send them strong delusions, that they should believe the lie,”* and he further identified them not only as a people who *“did not believe the truth,”* but also as a people who *“had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* *“The truth”* and *“unrighteousness”* are polar opposites; people who find *“pleasure”* in the latter generally find *“the truth”* very distasteful, and they thus gravitate to false teachers who will tell them what they **want** to hear – not what they **need** to hear!

5. They love darkness! Jesus said, *“this is the condemnation that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). This point is very similar to the last one, but it further emphasizes the fact that one simply cannot love both *“darkness”* and *“light.”*

6. Many love the praise of men! Many Pharisees believed on Jesus; however, they refused to *“confess Him”* because they *“loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”* (John 12:42-43). If one desires the approval of men more than the approval of God, He will not likely *“confess”* Christ (and all that that expression implies).

7. They love family more than God! Jesus said that *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me”* (Matt. 10:37). Over the years countless souls have learned the truth of the gospel but refused to obey it because it would put them at odds with cherished family. Yes, we must love family, but our love for God must exceed our love for anything or anyone else! In fact, Jesus said *“the first commandment”* is this: *“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”* (Matt. 22:37-38). He also said, *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...”* (John 14:23).

8. They are not willing to bear the cross! Jesus said, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”* (Matt. 16:24). Taking up the cross is symbolic of the hardship, sacrifice, and dedication involved in serving the Lord. There have been times (and places) when if one openly confessed Christ before men, it almost certainly meant martyrdom. To really take up the cross means that one, if necessary, will sacrifice his life for the Lord. Sadly, too few are willing to do that.

9. Prejudice. Jesus described certain people, saying, *“the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing. And their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them”* (Matt. 13:15; cf. Isa. 6:9-10). Many people’s attitude toward the truth can be summed up in these words: “My mind is already made up; don’t bother me with facts.”

10. They are hard-hearted! Stephen described people of this mindset, when he addressed them, saying *“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did so do you”* (Acts 7:51). How did they react? They *“stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;”* and they *“cast him out of the city and stoned him”* to death (Acts 7:57-58). They murdered the man who was telling them what to do in order to be saved!

11. Neglect! The inspired writer in Heb. 2:3 asked this question: *“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard him”* (Heb. 2:3). Sadly, many are still guilty of such *“neglect,”* and will thus agonize eternally in hell – simply because they “never got around to obeying the gospel.”

12. Turning from the way of truth after having initially obeying it and thus becoming like the dog returning to *“his own vomit,”* or a sow having been washed, but returning to her *“wallowing in the mire”* (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Conclusion: Contained herein is a list of some of the reasons why, concerning *“the way which leads to life,”* there are but *“few who find it.”* Friend, are **you** in the way that *“leads to life?”* If not, **why** not? ■