

HOW NARROW THE WAY?

By

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If ever there was a time when a disciple of Christ should stand out in contrast to his contemporaries, it is in this generation when all the world agrees that man has reached a low point in morality. Perhaps that is exactly why people who take their faith seriously are in danger of being accused of belonging to a cult and marked as a threat to society and the establishment.

The world considers success as power, wealth and fame. All of this was brushed aside by Jesus, who taught us to put away the sword and to turn the other cheek. Treasures are to be laid up in heaven, not upon the earth which is passing away. Worldly fame, that which is exalted among men, “is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

The mainstream church of today honors the wealthy and sticks their names on its buildings, windows and effects. It glories in power and shows its strength by its real estate, the size of its crowds and the popularity of its leaders. It copies the glamour of the world’s entertainers, aping their music and style.

One who denies self and worldly values not only faces the world’s rejection, but too often he cannot fit into the mainstream church, which considers him a fanatic. However, my purpose here is not to criticize the modern church, but to challenge believers to a self-examination in answering the question: Am I in the way that Jesus called narrow, or am I walking the broad way?

THE WAY OPPOSED TO THE WORLD

Jesus said, “He that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:25). This indicates that the way of life approved by God is in opposition to the way of the world. To walk His way is to go against the flow, which immediately draws the world’s scorn. Such a way of life is foreign to the barbarian culture of our day. In Peter’s words, we are “sojourners and pilgrims” (2 Pet. 2:11). A pilgrim in a foreign land has no power, is seen as curiously different, and often unwelcome. This was the condition of the church in Peter’s day. Contrast this with the modern church which fears nothing so much as to be considered different from the community and without worldly recognition.

The Way is opposed to the world because of the direction it is leading – away from society’s norm to the holiness of God, away from the world’s values to spiritual values, away from the world’s temporal reassures – which will have no value in the end – to the eternal. It is other-worldly. The very expression prompts sneers from the sophisticated. Christ’s purpose is a life that transcends all earth-bound dreams. It is distasteful to the world because modern man is grounded in Humanism, with the idea that with enough cooperation and ardor we can bring about the perfect world where everyone is supplied with all the desires his sinful nature demands.

Such a way is broad, and popular all over the world. Revolutionaries and patriots alike have been willing to die for such Utopian dreams. Even a great number of Christians are more zealous for national reformation than spiritual regeneration, and more concerned for the constitution than for the commands of Christ.

The way of humanism is to have all men conform to the world, that there may be no conflict. The way of Christ is to have all men conform to the image of God, in conflict with the world. It requires a certain detachment from the world and takes issue with the world. The narrow way is opposed to the world.

THE WAY IS OPPOSED BY THE WORLD

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own,” Jesus said, “but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19). He explained that this was because “they know not him that sent me.” Nothing evokes the world’s anger like the claim Jesus made: “No man comes to the Father but by me” (John 14:7). Those who know not Yahweh God reject this claim to exclusiveness. They think that all religions are to be recognized as equal. When the president of the Southern Baptist Convention publicly stated that there was no salvation outside of Christ, the media over the whole nation arose in protest. Such exclusive claims by Jesus brands as false all the other gods and religions of the world. They either have to admit it is true or oppose it. Of course, they oppose it.

The builders of the New World Order realize that true disciples of Jesus will never give up their loyalty and obedience to Christ, nor willingly subject their families to the pagan powers, therefore; there is a great propaganda campaign to denigrate all Christians who refuse to abandon their convictions in order to fit into life on the broad way. The narrow way is bitterly opposed.

THE WAY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The broad way is the collective way, socially acceptable, and for the “good of society.” It is the way of the majority vote, denominational approval, and the popular format of public worship where people go to witness and applaud the performance of church leaders. In many circumstances one may attend “worship” and never lose step with the world by giving a solemn thought to his personal condition before God. He is one with the crowd.

Christ deals with individual. His commands must be obeyed by individual. He Himself prayed alone, obeyed alone, and stood alone against the enemy. No one could do His work for Him.

Faith cannot be delegated, divided up and assigned to a committee. We have Abraham for an example of faith. When he bound Isaac to the altar on Mt. Moriah, he stood alone, no one watching – only God. This was the narrow way.

The idea prevails that bigger is better. Make things easier by increasing the size of the crowd. Make the road broader. Things seem easier, and more successful, when done by a

multitude. So we have made the narrow way a broad way by eliminating the individual Abrahamic experience. Man dares not be alone, to make the inward examination, to ponder his own heart before God, and make the commitment for which there is no earthly reward in the form of approval, applause or acceptance. He makes his “decision” for Christ in the crowded auditorium, cheered on to the strains of an invitational hymn.

What will he do alone on the narrow way, where, like Abraham, he must work out his salvation with fear and trembling with only God to see? When, like Jesus, he must choose the will of God in private and be put to shame in public?

THE GLORY OF THE WAY

Men seek honor from the crowd, the multitude, from organizations and institutions. Jesus asked, “How can you believe, who receive glory one of another and the glory that comes from God you seek not” (John 5:44)? “If any man will serve me, him will the Father honor” (John 12:26).

This is the narrow way, to set out on the course that will be unsung by men, where your sacrifice will be unseen and your name forgotten, where you will receive nothing from man, and if he takes not of you at all it will be to persecute or to scorn you. Blessed are you! Such was the way of Christ.

Honor from God! This is the glory of the narrow way. Those who seek for such honor will receive it in glorious immortality for eternity, while the world which seeks lorry among men will get only that – and death (Rom. 2:7-8, 6:23).

Christ’s way is narrow, but it is the way of joy. It is sheer joy to be detached from the world’s false values, blind alleys, dead-end streets, sullied sensualism, vain knowledge, and arrogant sophistication. It is the way of peace, to be on the way with Him to whom all power is given.

“Enter in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few are they that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

May the King find us walking on the narrow way.

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