

Expositions of Scripture from Bible Truth

**AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN
DISCIPLESHIP**

According to Jesus and His
Doctrines of Grace

IN THREE VOLUMES

ITS NARROWNESS, ITS SEVERITY, ITS REALITIES

The Teaching of Jesus Christ as Recorded in
The Gospels, concerning

One's Entrance into,

One's Subsequent Life of, &

One's Predestined Glorification with Regard to

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

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By Douglas Renne'

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Expositions of Scripture from Bible Truth

VOLUME I
AUTHENTIC
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
—ITS NARROWNESS—
According to Jesus and His
Doctrines of Grace

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The First Volume in a Series on
AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP,
showing its source to be
Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace.
Its Narrowness, Strictness, and Restrictive Life
is taught by Jesus Christ in

Matthew 7:13-27.

**Authentic Narrow Discipleship
Scripturally Stated:**

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the ends thereof are the ways of death. Therefore, 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. But thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. For many are called, but few are chosen.¹

¹ The truth of Authentic Narrow Discipleship as spoken by the Wisdom of God, and recorded in *Prov. 16:25; Mt. 7:13; Ex. 23:2; Mt.7:14; & 22:14*, respectively.

AUTHENTIC NARROW DISCIPLESHIP VOLUME I

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PREFACE TO VOLUME I

The culture of modern America is filled with a proclivity for wicked diversities and departures from its former moral and ethical values. While many factors have caused these changes, their wicked characteristics indicate the root of these changes is in the churches' departure from the truth of Scripture. The vileness of this departure is its repudiation of Christ's creed of spiritual salvation by the grace of God. Fundamentally involved in this creed, with its moral philosophy, are the teachings of Scripture as to just what the salvation of sinners is, and of just what that really comprises.

Accordingly, it is because of this failure to understand God's grace and its astonishing practical power in its recipients' lives, that even the readers of this Preface may not at once understand the connection between the doctrines of God's grace in salvation and the problems of our modern culture. That connection is essentially a failure of the present church to portray true Christianity, which failure is directly caused by its failing to understand, to declare, and to live the truth of God's grace in His Son, Jesus Christ. To America's modern culture, a follower of Jesus Christ may or may not be holy of life, may or may not be just like the rest of worldly society. In fact, if one is really different in a significant way, he is branded a radical, a weirdo, a crazy, a perverted freak who has really "lost it," who is just not all there. But according to Jesus, that kind of disciple occupies the only authentic discipleship position. Jesus' doctrine declares that a saved person is precisely that kind of radical, weirdo, crazy, who has absolutely "lost it" as far as this world is concerned. That is authentic discipleship, made possible only by Jesus' doctrines of grace.

Yet the modern church teaches nearly the same as what the world believes about Christ and His followers. The worldly church and the churchy world believe that God's children—Jesus' disciples—may live as the world lives just so long as they believe Who He is. That discrepancy, that hypocrisy, that failure, and that blindness to true

grace and its salvation in Jesus Christ, is precisely what has weakened Christendom as a whole. It is not a true Light, and has lost its saltiness. Professing Christianity and its modern brand of nominal religious dogma are virtually powerless to change today's wicked culture because it is unholy and unacquainted with Christ Jesus and His authentic discipleship and His doctrines of grace. The false has replaced the true even in seminaries and pulpits as they teach that rightness with God is not necessarily righteousness with God.

That dearth of insight into Jesus' authentic discipleship and His doctrines of grace has left America in a devastating downward moral spiral. As the churches' doctrinal integrity has gravitated to more and more devilish error, so have the culture's standards plunged. The remedy for this growing wickedness is a spiritual matter. Only a return to the true doctrine of holiness in spiritual salvation, and to the realities of God's requirements for righteousness in His Son's disciples, can effect any genuine egression from this era of apostasy. A return to holiness and decency begins with a scriptural understanding of Jesus' authentic discipleship and His doctrines of grace.

This series of expositions is an attempt to clarify just what are the teachings of Jesus Christ respecting His real disciples' propensities, which do positively affect their relative position in this life and their everyday practices. This series deals nearly exclusively with the direct teachings of Jesus concerning discipleship as recorded in the Gospel narratives, the one exception being simply a supplement from one of His holy Prophets. Since the series is a compilation of expositions of Holy Scripture, its authority and wisdom are solid.

After this Author is dead, perhaps someone would prefer to attach a similar Foreword to these expositions as was provided Mr. Authur W. Pink's An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. In his Foreword, the publisher took liberties for "the deletion of one or two expressions that were deemed invidious...." This Author, as Mr. Pink

would without doubt acquiesce, does not give anyone permission to remove any expression contained in these writings, whether “deemed invidious” or otherwise. As was true in Mr. Pink’s case, what today’s antinomian and Laodicean Christendom deems “invidious” is likely just what it needs. We should thank God that His Providence did not allow Mr. Pink’s publisher to remove all in Mr. Pink’s writings that culture considers offensive or is a cause of ill will among today’s worldly Christendom. The uncorrupted doctrine of Christ always will prove to be “invidious” to the worldly professors of religion—the contemporary church.

My prayer is that every reader of this first exposition would follow each successive exposition in the series, then spread them abroad. Then might God bring conviction and more offense in wicked hearts. That would then lead to repentance from the gross failure of the churches to declare the truth of Jesus’ authentic discipleship and His doctrines of grace, which pervade the Word of God. Amen!

INTRODUCTION TO AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP According to Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace

²²*And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.*

²³*Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,*

²⁴*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and will not be able. Luke 13:22-24*

The question and answer found in the above scripture occurred in Luke's arrangement of his Gospel to clarify the immediately preceding parables of Mustard Seed and Leaven,

¹⁸*Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?*

¹⁹*It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*

²⁰*And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?*

²¹*It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Luke 13:18-21

With these two parables, Jesus unerringly prophesied the apostasy of the church. The leaven emphasizes the inward growth of evil in the outward manifestation of the Kingdom, which is the local church. The local church and its institutions would eventually be permeated with evil in His absence. The mustard tree represents the growth of the kingdom outwardly into a kind of monstrous and even freakish mutant plant that is wholly inordinate and beyond what would be considered proper and natural for a small mustard tree. In the illustration of the leaven, Jesus, on the one hand, prophesied that the local church would be filled with sin, and on the other hand, in the mustard tree, that it would be irrationally large, with great numbers of members. Put together they predict that the church would become filled with false professors who would bring their adamic and carnal lifestyles into the outward manifestations of the kingdom.

Immediately after those parabolic illustrations of the leaven and the mustard tree, Luke recorded the question of an unidentified Jew concerning the number of men who would be saved. He asked in effect, How many will be delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin? Luke recorded that question and Jesus' answer in order to clarify why and how such sinful and aberrant growth should occur in Christ's Kingdom on earth, as just illustrated in the parables of The Mustard Seed and The Leaven. The answer given by Jesus primarily indicated that such sin and monstrous growth was a result of men gaining what they thought was an easy entrance into the kingdom, a sort of easy cure-all for guilt. Therefore, He introduced to him and to all seekers that real entrance into the kingdom is a strait gate. A *strait gate* understood will restrain the introduction of leaven into the true spiritual kingdom, and will also limit inordinate false growth of the outward kingdom.

Jesus' answer focused the attention of Luke's readers upon the necessity of "agonizing"² (*strive* KJV) oneself into the Kingdom's *strait* (or narrow, confining, and difficult to enter) gate. God would have every reader of Luke's Gospel to know that becoming a Christian necessitates a repentant and costly lifestyle change. Jesus provided another answer concerning who and how many will be saved in His Kingdom's Manifesto, wherein He specified just what is the design and intention of His Kingdom among men,

¹³*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:*

¹⁴*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*³

Matthew 7:13-14

² The Greek is αγωνιζομαι, "to contend, agonize, strive, struggle," a clear reference to the repentance just introduced by Luke in 13:1-5, which is entirely voided in today's "easy believism" kind of evangelism.

³ These two verses are the subject of this first volume in this series on Authentic Discipleship, and are indeed the essence of the series.

The working of the leaven in the earthly manifestation of His Kingdom during His physical absence is largely caused by the false gospel, which denies and denounces the real life-changing power of the resurrected Christ. The true gospel includes a change accomplished from heaven in the heart and life of the repentant sinner. The false gospel of today's evangel of "easy believism" has created a fashionable order of false disciples who maintain and support a salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin based upon nothing more than a believe-in-the-head response to the facts of the gospel. Their presumed salvation contains no immediate transformation of the sinner. From this cause has the church and Christendom—the outward semblance of His kingdom—grown into a monstrosity of a mustard tree, which houses demons of every variety and supports the most ungodly and unholy programs.

This quasi-discipleship flourishes in Christianity because of a misunderstanding of the criteria of salvation. A misreading of the experience of one's own conversion coupled with ignorance of the Scripture has led to these ruinous teachings even within the Body of Christ. This has influenced Christendom as a whole,, especially in American seminaries and in Christian church associations and conventions, to embrace beliefs and practices that are contrary to true biblical grace. There is presently a mindset against the true doctrines of grace, which peculiarly labels the truth as error, and attaches a dark stigma to those who have come to understand and embrace the truth concerning salvation by sovereign grace. A system of works and an emotion-oriented methodology have controlled theology until the grace of God has been confused with the works of man. This entire methodology, which is in vogue in all denominations, and to a large extent is caused by gross failure by theologians and professors in the seminaries, has brought this quasi or pseudo-discipleship to be considered as the norm for Christians.

This synthetic and imitation discipleship presumes for its devotees a security from condemnation that is wholly unfounded. Instead of delivering the lost and helpless sinner from sin and its inevitable outcomes, this system seals wicked men into a self-

assurance routine which will end in destruction. A failure to comprehend the grace of God by the many preachers of this quasi-discipleship has led to a perversion of God's sovereign and unconditional grace. The adherents of this "easy believism" have a false concept of the grace of God that has evolved into a horrid ignorance and absence of His holiness. They have corrupted His sovereign deliverance of helpless sinners into a simplistic scheme of naiveté that is altogether dependent upon the sinner to respond in and from himself to God's offer in the gospel. This man-devised "plan of salvation" has been substituted for the authentic God-originated, Spirit-supervised, and Christ-willed transformation of the entire sinner into a child of God. This man-made "plan" amounts to a fleshly procedure wherein certain things (works) must be performed by the "seeking sinner" if he or she is to be "saved." This "easy believism," being the inordinate error of modern theological thought, belief, and practice, produces an heretical neo-evangelism, and brings large numbers of unconverted disciples⁴ into the false security of a very large "mustard tree kingdom" filled with all the leaven of this world, while its members continue living a life on the world's *broad way* that leads only to *destruction*.leaven of this world, while its members continue living a life on the world's *broad way* that leads only to *destruction*.

This "way of salvation" is void of the transforming power of God, and denies the supernatural conversion of a selfish worldling into a loving saint. It is no wonder that its adherents champion this "easy believism" so energetically, because it enables its many devotees to live in the thralldom of corrupt leaven, guiltlessly.

⁴ "Disciple" is not always the equivalent to "Christian." One is a disciple simply by becoming a "follower" or "learner" of Jesus, whether or not salvation and new birth has been effected. However, true discipleship or scriptural discipleship certainly includes and is equivalent to salvation because of the dedication and sincerity of the serious follower or learner (John 8:30-33; 6:66). The distinction between these two kinds of disciples is precisely what fuels the theological Lordship Controversy, and what these teachings from Jesus in this series of expositions exhibit.

This false discipleship is properly named “easy believism”¹ from its claim of salvation simply by a fleshly, non-committal self-persuasion of Jesus’ credulous nature. This “easy believism”⁵ has replaced the magnificent doctrines of grace with its own “doctrines of devils.” It wholly ignores Jesus’ own teachings on discipleship and on the required commitment to and acceptance of the Lordship of Christ, as well as His Saviorhood. For many supposed disciples and preachers, salvation is simply possessing a head knowledge of certain truths about Jesus, following a prescribed ritual called “The Roman’s Road” or reciting the “sinner’s prayer,” and then living one’s own life in the way one chooses. There has been no grief or sorrow over sin and one’s dreadful destiny. There has been no submission to Christ. There has been no miraculous change in the heart, mind, and will, which alters the life and reverses the flow of providence. After that kind of supposed Christian experience, this contemporary disciple might never attend another church meeting, nor pray a real prayer, nor love a real love, yet in accord with modern theological thought and its functional evangelism, it pronounces: “You are now a born again disciple of Jesus Christ, because of what you have done.” That is nothing more or less than salvation by works. That is not God’s gospel of grace.

This kind of error has caused much confusion about what is true and what is false discipleship. What are missing in this entire scenario are the doctrines of grace. Because of ignorance of the true way of salvation, false prophets (preachers) have improvised a substitute humanistic “plan of salvation.” This plan provides a way for each man to “do” certain onetime, good, and God-pleasing things, which will oblige God (Jesus) to sanctify such a “good accommodation of Jesus,” and so, save from hell “in that day.” It is because of man’s blindness to grace that multitudes cannot comprehend that the Author and Finisher of salvation is the Lord. He provides everything for man’s salvation, from the first feelings of initial guilt all the way to final Christ-likeness and glorification, ...and the life in between. All is from the abounding grace that He provides the totally impaired sinner.

⁵ The term “easy believism” was perhaps first made known to a wide audience by John MacArthur’s use in The Gospel According To Jesus.

CHAPTER I

CHRIST'S DOCTRINES OF GRACE

This salvation which is wholly of the Lord consists of five fundamental truths, from which not one can be removed without a decidedly illogical and impaired result.

If the word 'GOSPEL,' an indispensable biblical word, is employed...one may be able to enumerate the several doctrines [of grace] in proper order somewhat as follows:

Grace abounding, as per:

Omnipotent grace (implying human impotence)

Sovereign grace (necessitating its unconditionality)

Particular grace (emphasizing its definiteness)

Effectual grace (requiring its invincibility)

Lasting grace (displaying its persevering certainty)

...When some degree of misunderstanding has arisen—as is true in our generation—then it sometimes becomes necessary to make fuller explanation [of the doctrines of grace].⁶

According to Kenneth H. Good in the above quotation, **GOSPEL** provides an acrostic of the grace of God in salvation. These doctrines of grace are essential to true discipleship. Neither can sinners enter *the strait gate* nor can they walk *the narrow way* except these truths of God's grace are operative. Following Mr. Good's acrostic, may we briefly suggest to you these doctrines of grace, which will be acknowledged in the course of this treatise, and in this series. True discipleship assimilates this abounding grace, because Grace is the true **GOSPEL**.

⁶ Kenneth H. Good, God's Gracious Purpose (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 11-12. A book heartily recommended by this Author, but at last count it was out of print.

Omnipotent Grace

First, **Grace** abounding is Omnipotent grace (implying human impotence). This cites the total inability of man to comprehend or do any good whatever. He can neither hear nor see the value of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He has not the capacity for any good or righteous deed, and holiness is entirely foreign to him, and he can perform no spiritual feat for himself, because he has total spiritual impotence. Whereas God, in all matters of salvation and grace, has total spiritual omnipotence. His grace provides power for man since none by themselves can respond to the gospel. Man's impotent condition requires **Omnipotent Grace**.

Sovereign Grace

Second, **Grace** abounding is Sovereign grace (necessitating its unconditionality). God, if He indeed is Sovereign and Almighty, does all His will. Since man is totally unable, and if any are to be saved by Jesus' work, God must will to save a man, any man. And since man can do nothing good, God chooses to save unconditionally without regard to any foreseen acts, else He would choose no man because only evil acts can be foreseen in man. Grace is unconditionally bestowed without regard to any deeds, either good or evil. His own sovereign will determines the bestowal of His grace; therefore it is **Sovereign Grace**.

Particular Grace

Third, **Grace** abounding is Particular grace (emphasizing its definiteness). God, knowing His own will and the efficacious power of Jesus' blood, provided a Savior for those whom He chose and willed to save from among powerless and helpless men. All for whom Christ appears in the heavenly tabernacle as the Great High Priest are indeed atoned for. Their guilt and penalty are removed by the powerful and efficacious offering of Jesus' blood in heaven's temple. No sinner for whom this Great High Priest died and for whom He ministers continually as intercessor fails to receive this **Particular Grace**.

Effectual Grace

Fourth, **Grace** abounding is Effectual grace (requiring its invincibility). God's grace will provide safety for His own for whom Jesus died. There is a certainty to their salvation, which certainty is assured through a special spiritual and inner calling from God's Holy Spirit which draws the chosen sinner to Jesus. This effectual call cannot be denied or thwarted by man or demon; it has a stalwart kind of hardiness that shall win its chosen object, for when "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is shined in the heart, there is no effective resistance to His beauty. That is His **Effectual Grace**.

Lasting Grace

Fifth, **Grace** abounding is Lasting grace (displaying its persevering certainty). Every recipient of this grace will persevere until the end of this life. Not one of Christ's sheep, who has no natural spiritual ability but has been chosen by God to be like Christ, who has been bought and paid for with Jesus' blood, who has been called with an invincible calling, will fail to reach the predestined goal. All will continue in the *narrow way* into which they were called; they are assured of glorification. Grace provides for all eventualities in this life. They all will be found in Christ at the very end, because they are kept by His **Lasting Grace**.

Discipleship cannot be rightly understood outside these parameters of grace. The very strict life demanded from His disciples is provided only for those chosen and empowered to reach Christ-likeness. It is that fact, namely, that God must and will provide the supernatural power to effect the required discipleship, which is not grasped by the false prophets of today. Consequently, since that life is impossible to the false preachers and to their many devotees, they reason that it must not be required at all. They rationalize that grace provides only opportunity for salvation today—right now, in this instant only. It can be momentary in experience, and only a tentative experience during this life, but sure in the hereafter. For them, salvation is that one emotional experience with nothing required or provided by grace until death.

The Master Teacher refutes that kind of presumed and imagined salvation absolutely in these verses concerning *the strait gate* and *the narrow way*. Furthermore, in all His Sermon on the Mount, as well as in His teaching in the Gospel narratives, and in His holy Apostles' epistles, Jesus warns us all that only the kind of faith that produces this kind of narrow discipleship is saving faith.

This series on Authentic Christian Discipleship will cover some of His teaching and some of His premonitory requirements for true discipleship. What Jesus Christ requires to be in the lives of all professors of Jesus Christ warns us all of what true salvation is about, Amen! as do these two verses, our attendant text,

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.

Matthew 7:13-14

CHAPTER II

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

According to Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace

Christ taught repeatedly in strikingly strong conviction that true spiritual salvation accompanies only an authentic discipleship to Him and to His Father. To Jesus, only a discipleship that was entirely dedicated to Him and to His gospel would conclude in the eternal life that His death procured.⁷ He taught systematically that a holy life, complete dedication, persevering faithfulness, and total love for Him only, were absolutes in all His authentic disciples. And He repeatedly made that kind of life a matter of choice for every person. He seemed to expect a near perfect consecration in His disciples, a consecration that not any could fulfill. But therein lay the key. It is just because the required discipleship is indeed more than any person can achieve that Christ's doctrines of grace are intertwined into the very fabric of its authenticity. Consequently, the choices required of, and the kind of life obligatory upon, every true follower of Jesus, are only possible for those who are especially empowered to overcome the resident depravity within all men.

Man's Enslaved Moral Agency

Many confuse man's freedom to choose with man's depraved and limited will. While man has opportunity to choose, by no means has he any freedom of will. A depraved and wicked heart and mind control his will. His desires are evil, as are his thoughts. Therefore, his choices are invariably evil also. He will never choose the good, the *life*, the *narrow way*, the light or the Christ, but will, because of his corrupt mind and heart, always choose the evil, the *destruction*, the *broad way*, the darkness or the Devil. Someone will say, "But I thought all men were given a free choice. Now you say he cannot make one. This is a contradiction." Truth responds,

⁷ E.g. *Mark 8:34-38*, which is the argument of AUTHENTIC LETHAL DISCIPLESHIP, another Exposition in this series on true discipleship.

“No! It is not!” Although God gives the opportunity and makes the choices clear in His Word, man’s sinful condition limits his own ability to make any other choices except the evil ones always. Every man has a sin-imposed restriction upon the “free” exercise of his moral choices. God cannot be held responsible for men’s wicked hearts. He does good in telling men of the choices, but God is not responsible for their evil disposition to choose always the evil and to reject the good.

Obeying the Law and the Gospel

The choices are nearly the same with the Gospel as was true with the law.⁸ The Gospel obligates all men to make a choice, just as the law obligated Israel, and all gentiles, to choose between the righteousness of the law or the unrighteousness of self,

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD [i.e. the law], and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

Exodus 24:3

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Romans 3:19

The people of Israel thought to obey the law, but never had the ability for it. Because the law is spiritual, a spiritual power is needed to effect obedience to it, For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin (*Romans 7:14*). No natural, unaided man has the spiritual power to obey the law’s requirements.

The law said very simply, *Do this and live* (See *Deut. 28:1-2, 9-14*). But the Scripture clearly teaches that no man can keep it; no man except Jesus ever kept the law (*Romans 3:19-20; Gal. 3:21-22*). Notwithstanding Israel’s absolute inability to obey the law, God gave them repeated opportunity after opportunity to choose to obey the law. No matter how they tried or how sincere they were, still they lacked the

⁸ See *II Thes. 1:8; Rom. 1:5; 2:8; 6:17; 10:16* with *Isa. 53:1; Rom. 15:18; Acts 5:32; 6:7; Heb. 5:9; I Peter 4:17*. A study of these references will aid in discerning the spiritual affinity between obedience to the law and obedience to the gospel.

spiritual power to do it. Their flesh “willed” to do it repeatedly, but their “wills” were not able to maintain their initial and artificial urge to obey God. They could never actually do the law. Their flesh-controlled wills half-heartedly attempted to do the impossible rather than confess to total inability and apply to God’s mercy to remedy their hopeless condition.

God’s Sincere Offers in the Law

God’s sincerity—the reality and authenticity of His offers to grant them life through the law— was not determined or limited by their inability to obey the law. It was only their depraved condition that kept them from obeying. God cannot, must not, be charged with evil because of men’s wicked souls. The offer was repeated throughout Israel’s history, and is duplicated through different means for each individual gentile and Jew even today, but with the same results always... failure! They are always sincere offers, and must be made to vindicate any charge against God’s judgments opposing man’s wickedness. Man’s continual rejection of these honest offers justifies God in all His dealings with the wickedness of men, while they stop every mouth and condemn all the world before His holy and spiritual law. The offers were made to Israel through the Law of Moses, but are made to all men in different ways (See *Romans 2:12-16*). They were and are sincere offers, but no man is ever able to gain life through these offers because of the wickedness of the human heart, the depravity in his desires, and the feebleness of his will.

The free offer to obey the Gospel is given to the same kinds of depraved and limited sinners as were those invitations given to Israel to obey the law. Gentiles and Jews are identical in the depth of their depravity.⁹ Furthermore, obedience to the law and obedience to the gospel is very much the same. Both require something of man that he does not have resident within. In both the law and the gospel, for both Jew and Gentile, the compliance demanded is beyond the ability of any man to “will” and so to “do” as God requires. Even the “simple” matter of just believing on Jesus is impossible for the naturally born man.¹⁰

⁹ Q.v. *Romans 3:9-10, 23; 1 Thes. 2:14-16; Eph. 4:17-19*

¹⁰ See *John 8:46-47; 10:25-26; 1:11-13*

This obedience to the gospel requires from depraved men precisely what the law requires: **Complete surrender of the selfish state of man's will to the pleasure of God.** This is a spiritual obedience and requires a spiritual power; therefore no unaided natural man can obey the gospel any more than he can obey the law.

The law offers life to every depraved man if he will only yield to the righteousness of its holy demands. The gospel similarly offers life to a depraved man if he will only yield to the demands of Christ's lordship and saviorhood. He can no more do the one than the other. The choices are clearly defined in the law and in the gospel. The offer is made because every man is a discretionary agent; that is, in the beginning of his life, every person is completely free from all outside influences for his right of choice. When very young and first confronted with right and wrong, every person is unfettered as regards any external powers which might hinder his decision.¹¹ No outward agents or forces hinder the earliest exercises of each person's will. But as time passes in this life, each person chooses to allow certain sins or some other of the Devil's blindfolds to shield him from the glorious light of the Gospel (*II Cor. 4:4-5*). This is caused by man's enslaved will. Man's will is never free from the inward influences of his own wickedness.

Man's Enslaved Will

¹⁷*Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

¹⁸*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

¹⁹*Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

Ephesians 4:17b-19a

¹¹ I.e. at birth each person starts off with God without any accumulated habits or devilish influences which would presuppose his choices. Nonetheless, he begins immediately to choose the evil and to allow the Devil's influences to darken and to complicate his decisions because of his innate depravity. Devilish influences then affect all his choices, as long as God leaves him to himself and to the Devil (*II Tim.2:25-26*).

Indwelling sin makes an enslaved and sin-captured person out of every otherwise discretionary agent (*Romans 7:13-20*). Man's will—that is, his powers to reason and his control of the emotions which determine his choices—is not free from the effects and influences of his own inclination toward sin. Therefore, while man is a free agent, he certainly is not a free moral agent. His moral choices are enslaved to indwelling sin. He is bound to and restricted by his own bent to choose always the evil and to reject the good, to choose his own way and to reject God's way, to choose his own destruction over the gospel of the grace of God.

This free agency and enslaved will thing works like this: Man is a walking corpse, that is, he is a spiritually dead being,

*You [Christians], too, were dead in your trespasses and sins.*¹²

[Added emph.] *Ephesians 2:1*

He is not alive to God, Who is all spirit. Everything about God and Christ and the Word of God and the Spirit of God and the law of God and the gospel of God is spiritual and is only spiritually discernable through the use of spiritual receptors (*I Cor. 2:10-16*). But man is a depraved being and possesses impaired spiritual receptors as related by Jesus,

²²*The eye is the body's lamp. If then, your eye is sound, your whole body is illumined,*

²³*But if your eye is defective, your whole body is in the dark. If then the light within you grows dark, how dense a darkness.*^{12a}

Matthew 6:22-23

Therefore, as regards spiritual things, man is like a corpse lying on a table. We give him his choices in the gospel. We read the gospel offer for him to believe on Jesus and follow after Him, and to receive *life* in place of the death-state in which he now exists. Just as the law announced through its required commandments, "Do this and you will live"; similarly, we also say through the gospel, "Do this and you will live," but the corpse just lies there on the table. We may pound the table, stomp the floor, yell loudly in its

¹² Gerrit Verkuyl, *The Modern Language Bible*, p. 206 ^{12a} Verkuyl op. cit. p. 6

ears, but the corpse just lies there. It cannot hear; it cannot get up. We say, “Reach out and touch Jesus and be saved; then begin to follow Him into life eternal.” But he just continues to lie there on the table. He can do nothing because he is dead. He cannot hear.

That is precisely the unchanging condition of all men without exception as regards spiritual culpability and responsibility. The legitimate doctrine of the free agency of all men forbids any inhibiting chains, ropes, or fetters of any kind to be placed upon any members of spiritually dead mankind. All men are like the dead man on the table who was not chained down. No outward agency kept him from hearing and from rising up and seeking Christ. But his own condition prevented his proper response to the free and real offer in the Gospel. He was free to get up at any time. No one—not even God—restrained him in any way, but his own inherent condition denied him the ability to hear and obey what was offered him. So it is with free agency and human will.

Man is an unfettered agent without a free will. He has no restraints placed upon him other than those placed through Adam’s transgression and his subsequent spiritually dead condition. This results always in his own wicked spiritual choices. Adam, as man’s representative in the garden and as our Federal Head, enslaved our wills, and created within us special powers to sin at every opportunity (*Romans 7:5, 7-11*). The choices are clearly given to men, but the right choice is not so easily made. It requires especial grace from God for spiritually dead men to be made alive and able to hear, and then to respond to the opportunities offered them in Christ. *Destruction* will never be shunned, nor will *life* ever be embraced, unless and until God provides both the corrected light receptors as well as the light to see. His life, granted by grace, provides the power to respond to His love. Our only hope as sinners is to seek God for all light and life through His love, because we are completely dependent upon His mercy.

The Complete Work of Grace

Consequently, because of the depraved and dead condition of all men, the initiative to begin and the strength to effect this true Christian life is not in man. It is only by the comprehensive work of God's Holy Spirit as He regenerates and renews the dead spirits of impotent men that any man can live this restrictive and confining life, which is required by Jesus for His disciples. No man has it within himself to walk *the narrow way*. Initial salvation is by grace, which also vitally empowers the saint to overcome the powers of *the broad way* in God's elect (See *Romans 5:20-21*). God assigns the resurrection life of His Son to certain of mankind, which enables them alone of all humanity to walk *the narrow way* into *life* eternal. Therefore, in one sense salvation is by works; that is, final salvation will be achieved through the works of God in His elect, Who empowers them realistically, and thereby facilitates their reaching their objective safely.¹⁴ It is God's work in His elect that is in view in *Matthew 7:13-14*, our study text.

All of Grace

It is not by any uncommon abilities or innate resources naturally possessed by a few men which somehow qualify them for walking in a restrictive and limited manner in this carnal existence called the "world." But it is by God's special gracious enabling through the new birth in His chosen children that some few of mankind are able to live within the narrow confines of authentic discipleship. If it were any other way men could then boast in His presence. By grace God's commandments in His Word, endowments from His Spirit, and management through His Providence set apart some from the general tenure and natural course of the world's *broad way that leadeth to destruc-*

¹⁴ See *Romans 2:6-11* for Paul's clear reference to the same truth as given in our text by Christ. The Book of Romans undeniably has as its primary message our justification by grace through faith alone, yet in *2:6-11* Paul prefaced his presentation of that great truth with a reference to good works as the determining evidence of one's salvation by grace through faith in the end. Q.v. *Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; Jms. 2:17-20.*

tion. Few there be that find that life eternal which lies just beyond the end of the narrow way which is the real Christian life. Few indeed are the numbers who receive grace to believe for initial salvation, and who by the same grace rely on and work out that salvation until final deliverance is apprehended in the next life in heaven. This authentic discipleship is altogether of and through and from the free and pure and sovereign and unconditional grace of God.

CHAPTER III

AUTHENTIC NARROW DISCIPLESHIP

According to Jesus and His Doctrines of Grace

¹³*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:*

¹⁴*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Matthew 7:13-14

Jesus' great Sermon in Matthew, Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, established authentic salvation as an entrance into a *strait gate* or restrictive initial experience, and authentic discipleship as a *narrow way*; that is, it is a life of restriction, commitment, difficulty, and trial. True discipleship necessarily generates a constant attempt to live the very truth of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The true Christian life, which is authentic discipleship, and finds eternal life instead of destruction at its culmination, is the life just portrayed and commanded in Christ's Sermon. Authentic discipleship is a life of narrowness and creedal living which threatens one's instinctive life of broad selfism. That is authentic discipleship according to Jesus and His doctrines of grace.

Decision Time

Our text, *Verses 13 and 14*, is the beginning of Christ's conclusion to His Sermon, which conclusion is actually His summons or to salvation. The high point of the Sermon—the culminating zenith of all His Kingdom's intentions and designs—was reached in *verse 12*, followed by His emphasis upon the entry requirements for His Kingdom in *verses 13 and 14*. Every expectation and demand of His Sermon is embraced in verse twelve, which makes it His Supreme or Golden Rule of Kingdom discipleship; it embraces the essence of authentic discipleship,

¹²*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.*

Matthew 7:12

After building to this highest requirement for Kingdom life, Christ then seeks to bring every hearer of His Sermon to a point of decision in *verses 13 through 27*. To do this He makes plain the contrasts between His Kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, and every hearer's unavoidable and necessary choice between the two. Christ's conclusion to his Sermon contrasts two gates, the strait and the wide; two ways or lifestyles, the broad and the narrow; two destinies, destruction and life; two groups, the many and the few; two kinds of trees, the corrupt and the good; two kinds of fruit, the evil and the good; two kinds of professors, those unknown and those known to Christ; two kinds of houses, one falling during storms, one withstanding storms; two kinds of builders, one foolish and one wise; two foundations, sand and rock; and finally, two kinds of hearers of His Sermon and teaching, those who only hear and those who hear and really do His Word. In every one of these contrasts, Christ Jesus is saying, "Make a choice about Me and My kind of life. *'Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death'*" (*Jeremiah 21:8*). In this invitation, of which *verses 13 and 14* are a part, Jesus makes clear the two ways that were inherent throughout His Sermon by defining, clarifying, delineating, and simplifying, His way as opposed to the way of the worldly masses. His way leads to life; all others lead to death.

These two verses are His invitation to enter into **Him** as the narrow gate and to begin the true Christian life on **His** narrow way. Two reliable quotes on the gate and way metaphor will give some insight into this truth.

"Gate—This is put before the way; the gate therefore in this verse is any kind of beginning which a man makes to seek the salvation of his soul [which would be Jesus for any evangelical or fundamentalist]: as in the next verse [*v.14*] the gate is that, by which true Christianity is received."¹⁵

"He Himself is the 'way'..., or He is the 'door,' or 'gate,' by which His sheep enter into the fold.... Only we must remember that His being thus the 'way' and the 'gate'

¹⁵ John Albert Bengel, *New Testament Word Studies, Volume I* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), p. 133.

does not mean that we can find, in union with Him, a substitute for holiness, but indicates simply how we are to attain to it. [Added emph.]”¹⁶

This latter comment means, in order to attain holiness, or walk the “narrow way,” as well as to enter into the Christian experience, or enter the “strait gate,” and thereby reach Life Eternal, one must enter and live in union with Christ Jesus always and uppermost. This applies both to the *gate* (the entrance one had into the Christian experience), and to the *way* (the life one lives after professing Jesus). In other words, the principal meaning in the *gate* metaphor is one’s choice in beginning the Christian life, which instinctively involves Jesus; while the principal meaning in the *way*, or road, metaphor is one’s manner of living, which inevitably involves one’s sanctification, also only and always in Christ for true disciples. As the *strait gate*, Jesus is the choice one makes to surrender to God for salvation by His Son’s work on the cross, through the profession of Whom, as the Savior, He will make possible one’s arrival into *life* when walking the confining and restrictive “path” (*the narrow way*) that He describes and prescribes in His Sermon.

Christ Jesus seeks to apply all His Sermon’s teaching in these concluding verses; therefore our text contains the Sermon’s most pointed relevancy to our eternal destinies, which was the dominate undertone of His entire Sermon.

Although the two gates serve as a remarkable decision metaphor, the emphasis upon a decision that will lead to a change for all persons is surprising because every man as he exists when naturally born into this world is already on a broad way that leads to destruction. He needs to do nothing more to end in that destiny (*John 3:18*). Yet Christ speaks of a *wide gate* which establishes one

¹⁶ E. H. Plumptre, Ellicott’s Commentary of the Whole Bible, Volume VI (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co.,1970), p. 41. These references could go on, but such additional authorities as Vincent, Meyer, Lange, Bonhoeffer, Grosheide, Hendriksen, and Gill also could be quoted as viewing Jesus Christ as the *strait gate*; and multiplied scores of other scholarly commentators view a holy life in communion with, in obedience to, and after the model of, Jesus as *the narrow way*.

in *the broad way*, while He also presents the prospect of a *strait gate* and a *narrow way*, which lead to *life*. Consequently, in following Jesus' logic, all those already on a broad way are not in any manner excluded from having to make a choice about the two gates and their subsequent ways. All men without exception will make such a decision about *the narrow and broad ways*, even though all are born sinners who do things their own broad, or indulgent and permissive, way already:

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every
one to his own way.* *Isaiah 53:6*

Therefore, no man needs to make any decision to get on the broad way that leads only to *destruction*—or does he?

Jesus is teaching this: Every man at some point in life makes a decision between eternal life or eternal death. However, not all persons get to choose between the gospel or sin; only those who hear the gospel have that unique opportunity. Nevertheless, all persons do choose between good or evil, because they possess the knowledge of God through the outward testimony of creation and the inner testimony in their consciences (*Romans 1:18-23; 2:12-16*). That makes them accountable before God for their wicked choices (*Romans 3:19*). Through that inevitable process they have chosen to remain on The Great Broad Way, a way entered by all men through the process of natural birth. The two gates emphasize this truth. But all are born sinners, sons of Adam, and chose a broad way when Adam chose it; we all made that choice in Adam.⁷

¹⁷ *Romans 5:12, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [Added emp.]. The underlined portion is a Gk. aorist tense which is a pinpointed action, lit. "for all sinned," i.e. at a point in past time (in the Garden of Eden) all mankind sinned in one all-comprehending sin with Adam, thus all men share in his guilt and condemnation. *I Cor. 15:22, For as in Adam all die* [i.e. every man without exception is *in Adam*; therefore because every man without exception dies, it logically follows that all were counted guilty with Adam.], *even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. Both Scriptures above include infants even though they have not acquired an intellect where they can be held accountable for personal sin *Rom. 4:15; 5:15*). [Cont' on next p.]*

However, at some point on that broad way begun at natural birth, God in Christ (as certainly in our text) places before every man an opportunity to make a choice regarding his eternal destiny. Since all men are already guilty sinners by Adam's choice, God gives each man opportunity of his own to choose between good or bad, light or darkness, *life* or *destruction*, *the narrow* or *broad ways*. This opportunity amounts to a choice to remain or not to remain on *the broad way* entered at birth, a choice given because man is a discretionary agent originally made in God's Own image.

This exposition will take note of two kinds of hearers of Christ's Sermon, and their choices as given by Christ in Matthew 7:13-14. We shall see first, **two gates**; second, **two ways**; third, **two destinies**; and fourth, **two groups**. These are meant by Jesus to define clearly the choices between which each person must decide. Men are easily deceived by the foolishness of their own wicked reasonings; nonetheless Christ makes plain the choices between life and death, and how most men are unable to respond correctly. However, some men will respond properly to these offers. They are the ones to whom Jesus would direct these words because they are the sinners who are given the grace to hear with discernment, and the power to obey the directives in His Sermon as well as to heed His Sermon's final application in our text. They choose to pass through the *strait gate* and walk the *narrow way* into *life*.

[Cont' fm. prev. fn.] But babies do, nevertheless, suffer death which is only from the commission of accountable sin (Q.v. *Romans 4:15; 5:13; 6:23; I Cor. 15:50; I Jn. 3:4*). Therefore, Paul's inspired conclusion from these facts is that all Adam's progeny, without regard to personal acts of sin, share the guilt of Adam's sin, because no other reason can be found for infants' subjection to death). Study *Romans 5:12-14* for this Spirit-stimulated logic.

THE TWO GATES

¹³*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.*
Matthew 7:13

Gates First

In this conclusion to His Sermon, which is His evangelistic appeal also, Christ exhorts all men to *enter the strait gate*. The verb in the original could be rendered, “Begin to *enter the strait gate*,” which would mean that one enters the gate before entering the *way*, or road that is beyond each gate. There is the *strait gate* and there is the *wide gate*; then both gates are followed by a *narrow way* and a *broad way*, respectively. The *strait gate* is not a straight gate, but means a narrow, slender, or tight gate. This *gate* is confining, restricting, and exacting, followed by a *narrow way* that is similarly confining, restricting, and exacting (v.14).¹⁸ This *narrow way* is fundamentally the way of life described and required in Christ’s Sermon. The *wide gate* is one that is easily entered, which is followed by an equally easy and pleasant *broad way*. On the one hand, there is the restricting *gate* followed by a similarly restricting *way*, and on the other hand, there is the unconfining and unqualifying *gate* followed by an equally unlimiting and unhindering *way*. The *narrow gate* and the *wide gate* are not entrances into heaven, but rather representatives of just the beginning of certain manners of life, which correspond with the kinds of initial responses with which those lifestyles began.

Choices

The choice is between a very confining induction into a confined manner of living, or a very unconfining induction into an unconfined manner of living. But in both cases the gates are first!

¹⁸ The Greek has different words for each. The *strait gate* is στενός, “narrow, limited.” The root is used for an adverb, “in difficulties.” The English word stenography is derived from it for its narrowness or limited form of writing. The *narrow way* is a participle of the verb θλιβο, “to squeeze, press; to press upon, encumber.” It is often used metaphorically, “to distress, afflict” (*II Cor, 1:6; I Thess. 3:4; I Tim. 5:10*), with the idea of pain, hurting, anguish.

Both gates represent an initiation into certain unmistakable modes of living, which without exception will follow the respective kinds of inception they had from the very first. The point of these gates is this: If one had an unqualified entrance into the Christian life, one will end in *destruction*. If, on the other hand, one had a qualified entrance into the Christian life, one will end in *life eternal*. Jesus is received either as a narrow or wide Savior, which reception decides how one will live the Christian life—either a life corresponding to or differing from that manner of living as detailed in Christ’s Sermon. Entrance into a wide-gate Jesus leads to *destruction*: entrance into a narrow-gate Jesus leads to *life eternal*. In whatever manner one receives Christ determines one’s destiny in the end.

Jesus makes it clear that every person who comes to this point of decision must understand that the choice between good or evil is one between a very restrictive entry or a very unrestrictive entry into one’s eternal destiny. One is *strait*; one is *wide*, and both promise Jesus as the Savior of all who come. But each is conceived as *narrow* or *wide before* entrance into either gate. This means that when one comes to a point of decision about Christ and His Kingdom claims, it must be clear that Christ’s way to *life eternal* is entered only through a confining Christ, a restricting Christ, a limiting Christ. Since Jesus Himself is that *gate* (*John 10:9*), we understand these gates in *verses 13 and 14* to be what one understands about Christ. That is, when one comes to a point of decision about Jesus, one must understand that when going through Christ into *life eternal*, he will be ushered into a life here on earth that is both restrictive and prohibitive in nature. Christ Himself, and salvation itself, is gained only by passing through a very restrictive and prohibitive experience with Christ into heaven.

One at a Time

This restrictive Christ is like a baseball park turnstile through which one must pass to enter the park. Only one person can pass through at a time, because it is so narrow as not to allow persons to pass through together. No crowds or friends can accompany one into Christ. He is Himself One Person Who takes each person aside by Himself to deal with each hindrance to entrance. Whenever young children, or any

group, approach Christ as a group, beware! The turnstile allows only one at a time. A decision will not be genuine if Christ is not entered by oneself. Numbers may influence some, even adults, to respond to the gospel, and it is conceivable that a great number could enter into Christ at one time and in one service. But the decision must be genuinely personal between Christ and oneself.

Nothing with You

Christ is so *narrow* and restrictive that a person passing through Him into *life* eternal must leave all else behind. Everything acquired of the world or of self must be forsaken. He is a *narrow gate* into heaven. True disciples relinquish in favor of Jesus their personal choices for sins, selfish life-styles, and former trophies of old carnal pride. He must be entered within complete solitude or no entrance will be allowed. If one would possess the Kingdom's privileges, if one would live within the Kingdom in which all values are finally to be perfected and realized, one is required to pass through Him as *the narrow gate*. He gained His redemptive authority—His rights to save sinners—by His submission to a confining gate of suffering (*Luke 12:50*). He lived a strict and narrow life by the Father's ordained plan in order to accomplish salvation for His own people. Therefore, whosoever will share in what Christ's God-imposed restrictions upon Himself bought, must come through the same type of stringent austerity as his Savior:

²²The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

²³And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

²⁴For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

[Added emph.] *Luke 9:22-24*

The Bible contains examples of men who approached the *strait gate* of Jesus Christ and turned away. Many today respond similarly to Jesus' invitation with the reply, "Too confining a lifestyle!" A rich young ruler turned away because he realized that Jesus was a *gate* into heaven Who was too confining, too *narrow*,

too restrictive for his riches to pass through with him (*Luke 18:18-27*). Again, Simon sought to pass through Jesus into the Kingdom's blessings, but sought also to keep his "gall of bitterness" and "bond of iniquity" (*Acts 8:11-22*). Both he and the ruler needed repentance, which is itself a stripping away of all impediments when coming to Christ. Repentance is the turning away from all else except Jesus, the Narrow Gate. During these last days of presumption before Christ's return, multitudes are coming to Christ as a *wide gate*, thinking that they have found an easy entrance into heaven. But Jesus says that He is a *strait gate* that is limited to those who pass through Him alone and empty-handed. All is left behind in just the same manner as He left all behind (*Philippians 2:6-8*).

Easy-Believism

What is a *wide gate*? It is the "easy-believism" which is so popular among evangelists today. There is no restriction placed upon anyone coming to Christ by these neo-gospelizers. They claim one can get through Christ into the Kingdom of God going by way of a *wide gate*. Their invitation is something like this; "Just come to Jesus and pray the sinner's prayer and be saved." Now, a person can be saved in that manner, provided he has already perceived the narrowness of the gate, and readily accepts Christ on those terms of a restricting and confining life with Him. Jesus says in our text that a *wide gate* is offered to multitudes of men which gives a false promise of salvation. These fooled multitudes begin a "new" life (really a "neo-life") on the same "old" *broad way* that really leads only to *destruction*. That sort of *wide gate* is full of every manner of lifestyle. There is allowance for every kind of conduct; there is broad latitude in every category of life. For instance, homosexual churches abound because a "wide gate Jesus" has been presented by mistaken preachers, whereas Jesus limited salvation to repentant sinners only (*Luke 13:3, 5; 5:32*). But there are no restrictions on their supposed "*wide gate-broad way*" salvation experience. Anyone, no matter how they plan to and do live, can come through this "wide gate Jesus" and be eternally saved according to this message from today's false prophets. "Just say His name and believe and you will be

everlastingly safe; don't even consider anything changing. Jesus will accept you just the way you are; no changes are necessary now or ever." That is their false so-called "plan of salvation." These pseudo-disciples then just forget about spiritual reality until they die...and then they fall into *destruction*.

But Jesus—the real “narrow gate Jesus”—warns against such claims in these verses and in the verses following (*vs.15-23*). A personal knowledge of Him is a requirement for salvation, but that knowledge must be accurate. He is only a “strait gate Savior.” He is a *narrow* and restraining, limiting and restricting, entrance into the Kingdom of God

Several years ago this writer took part as a counselor in a large citywide feigned evangelistic campaign for a well-known evangelistic association. While attending a session giving techniques for counseling respondents to the invitations, we were told never to mention any change in lifestyles, or any sins that had to be given up, or any requirement that God's Word would put upon them. “Else,” the session leaders said, “they will become discouraged or scared off and not ‘be saved.’” This writer did not agree to that and would not do it. God forbid, because Jesus abhors such wicked perversion of His Gospel. The reverse was plainly spoken by Jesus Himself in order to make it clear that the Jesus-gate requires a restricting of one's life. One passes through Jesus into the Kingdom with no prized sin, no possessions, no pride, but completely stripped to the bare flesh of one's carnal nature. No wide gate into the Kingdom exists, except in the wicked minds of wicked wolves in sheep's clothing.

THE TWO WAYS

Jesus' invitation to enter the Kingdom also includes a choice between two ways. A *way* is a path, road, or manner of life, as it often is used in Scripture. Jesus used it to denote one's habitual style of living. He said that every person must choose between either a *narrow way* or a *broad way*, which is entered either through a *strait gate* or a *wide gate*.

The Narrow Way

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
Matthew 7:14

This *narrow way* comes next after the believer enters the *strait gate*. The manner of life that immediately and invariably follows the *strait* entrance into the Kingdom, is also very limiting, confining, and restricting. Jesus says that the only way that leads to life is the narrow way. All other "ways" will, therefore, lead only to *destruction*. Jesus used a very restrictive word when describing the manner of life required of His disciples. The word is a present passive participle; its meaning is "to squeeze, press, encumber, distress, afflict." This meaning together with the verb form used would be rendered, "Being constantly confined and distressed is the way that leads into life." Christ's singular *way*, the only path, the one and only road that leads to *life* in the Kingdom, will be the life which constantly confines, limits, afflicts, restricts, and distresses. There is not another way to heaven, according to Jesus, other than the strenuous life of affliction and difficulty found in authentic discipleship,

²¹*And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,*

²²*Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

Acts 14:21-22

This tribulation is the *narrow way*, ever restrictive of movement and freedom to do as one pleases. The freedom of Christians is one of spiritual liberation from the power of sin, not freedom from affliction, restriction, or prohibition (*Phil. 1:29*). Jesus made it clear that the real Christian life is one of narrowness and pressures that limit movement and restrain actions, especially as regards sin. He would have all persons recognize this narrowness before they come to Him; therefore He makes the realities of the Christian life clear in His invitation in these two verses, and all preachers of the gospel must do likewise if they remain true to their calling. Those coming to Him must understand the requirements of their future lives as His disciples before they come, lest they be mistaken about their real crises, which are sin and its inevitable results.

On another occasion, as He walked toward Jerusalem with a crowd of applauding would-be disciples following Him, He turned around suddenly and said to them:

²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26-27

Jesus' teaching which followed the above words actually made it difficult for men in general to follow Him. "The Lord makes the narrow path as hard as He possibly can by demanding that those who really want to follow Him step out of the crowd and pick up a cross—an instrument of torture and death."¹⁹ Christ teaches in the Luke passage and in His Sermon that being in the Kingdom is an honor. His Kingdom is like a special guild that is entered only through a restrictive initiation, followed by a confining life. Christ requires His disciples to have been proved and hardened through inhibiting experiences in this life, and thus prepared for the marvelous freedoms of the future Kingdom.

¹⁹ MacAthur, op. cit., p. 181.

Imagine a young man who desires to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame. That is the great goal of his life. To him nothing is so important as achieving entrance into baseball's crowning consummation—the Baseball Hall of Fame. It will be a narrow way. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth into the Hall of Fame, and few there be that find it." He has to study baseball night and day. He has no time for himself. He is at it always, or getting ready for it, criticizing himself or being criticized, repeating the motions of baseball, rehearsing techniques, going over it again and again, seeking to be better and better. Only then may he become good enough to be an heir of baseball's highest honor, a member in the Hall of Fame. If that is the mandated course for man's little kingdom of baseball, why should not a similar sequence be one's mandated development and progression in the Kingdom of God? It is vastly greater and higher because it includes all true beauties, honors, and acclaim, and is in the higher realm of God's perfection.

Christ requires that every disciple of the Kingdom live the Kingdom night and day, just as is required in worldly attainment, fulfillment, and realization. What is required of men by men in worldly affairs will certainly be required of disciples by King Jesus in spiritual and eternal affairs! Every disciple will practice continually the Kingdom's narrow creed of living, and will rehearse and repeat His rules of precise conduct habitually, because the only way which leads to the Kingdom's Hall of Fame is a *narrow way*. All other ways are fake ways, promoted by wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus is saying in effect:

My Kingdom's Manifesto, as just given in My Sermon, is highlighted in the Golden Rule, which is a very narrow way. It is restrictive to love enemies. It is confining to be poor in spirit, to be meek, to be always a peacemaker, never to be angry. It is difficult never to lay up treasures on earth yet never to worry about one's needs on earth. It is unnaturally restrictive never to

judge others when they sin, and to love one's enemies so much that you do to them what you would have all men do to you. My Kingdom's way is demanding and strenuous for every disciple. Because that was My way on earth for the Kingdom's sake, it shall be yours if you are to enter the real Life
—Jesus Christ, 35 A.D.

All through His Sermon Christ taught the strictness of His way. Jesus claims that it only is the way that leads into *life*. The precepts of His Sermon are a way of *life* for all true followers. Everyone who has entered the *strait gate* will experience the *narrow way* as outlined in His Sermon. If one is not restricted as the King requires in His Sermon, then that one is on the Great Broad Way.

The Great Broad Way

Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Matthew 7:13

As living *the narrow way* is a verification of one's endorsement of the truth in Christ, so living *the broad way* is a confirmation of one's rejection of the truth in Christ. Those who continue on the Great Broad Way, having entered it through a "wide gate Jesus," are denying the basic truth of Jesus Christ. That truth is this:

The true and living God, Who is all holiness and righteousness, is in Jesus Christ; and all persons accepted by God through Christ will meet the standard of God and not the appraisal of man.

God's way of truth in His Son is restricted to the directives of God's narrow and creedal and righteous Word. But Jesus warned also of a *broad way* of untruth that is as broad as the evil human mind can wander into wickedness. This broad manner of living follows entrance into a *wide gate*, which the neo-evangelists of today offer as a non-creedal lifestyle for all their converts. They do not include in their message that King Jesus requires a change; and that He must be Lord as well as Savior. They deny the truth of God's holiness. Jesus named that kind of lifestyle *the broad way*, and named those

kinds of neo-evangelists *false prophets* in His warning in the verses immediately following our text,

¹⁵*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

¹⁶*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

¹⁷*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

¹⁸*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

¹⁹*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

²⁰*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

Matthew 7:15-20

Their *broad way* is quite opposite to the *narrow way* of truth. It is easy, non-confining and non-committal in experience. If one is able to say, "I live as I please. I make my own decisions about my life," then one is on the *broad way*. If the Word of Christ does not restrict one's priorities, then one is on the *broad way*. If one is a stranger to the afflictions of the *narrow way*, then one is on the *broad way*. If worldly entertainments and jobs and marriages and buying and selling and sporting events and all the other things which control the lives and captivate the thoughts of the multitudes control one's way of living, then one is on the *broad way*. One should become very fearful because one is headed for *destruction*. Our own instinctive way is the *broad way*. If our house, our fields, our hobby, our families, our friends, our jobs, our businesses, our recreation, or any other thing takes priority in our lives over the claims of Christ in His church, Word, and Spirit, then we are on the Great Broad Way.

³⁴*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

³⁵*For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*

³⁶ *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

³⁷ *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

³⁸ *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

³⁹ *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* *Matthew 10:34-39*

²⁷ *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.* [added emph.] *Matthew 16:27*

Matthew quotes Jesus that no one—not parents or children, the nearest loved ones—can take precedence over His Kingdom's program. This is a *narrow way* indeed, but a vital one; because, as Jesus said, *He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* That is precisely the same essential message as in our text verses. To *find* one's life is to *lose* it to self. To live a life of narrowness, confinement, and restriction, as far as the contemporary values of this world are concerned, is to *find* the true value of life. To *lose* one's life *for my sake* is to *find* its true value for eternity. And as Jesus alerts us above, there may be misunderstanding from relatives, even opposition at times, but His strict manner of life will be lived by true disciples whatever the cost. They are not on the Great Broad Way but in *the narrow way*. The predominate tendency that opposes losing one's life for self in this lifetime manifests life on the Great Broad Way. There is no in-between

The *broad way* has no limitations, no curbs, no parameters, no fences, no barriers to one's own desires. There are tolerances for unfaithfulness in small and large matters. The only restriction for those who have passed through a "wide gate Jesus" into the *broad way* is that Jesus' name is spoken often, but it will be spoken right into perdition:

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?
Luke 6:46

²¹Not 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.

²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matthew 7:21-23

There are not so many attendant worries on *the broad way* as on the *narrow way*. *The broad way* heartens its travelers to avoid facing realities concerning one's future accountability for sin. Even guilt for their unchanged lives fails to cause them to rethink their supposed past experience. Similarly, scriptural reproof has little affect on broad-wayers. It seems unable to alter their former thoughts, choices, and actions. After all, did not these travelers on *the broad way* enter first through a wide gate Jesus, thought to allow any kind of action along this *broad way*? That past experience with "Jesus, Savior only" gives assurance to *the broad way* travelers. They look back on that *wide gate* with delight in order to confirm their present broad-minded way of living and their disregard for the things of God. Therefore, all anxious thoughts about future destiny are easily avoided through what they regard as just broad areas of Christ-authenticated moral latitude in their lives, and not sin that will be judged.

TWO DESTINIES

*Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction...,
And narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life....*

Matthew 7:13b, 14b

The two gates and two ways lead to two destinies, *destruction* or *life*.

Piloted to Destruction

The broad-way travelers cannot comprehend the error of their former entrance into what they mistakenly thought to be the King's highway. But *destruction* will be their final end because of their manifest freedom from the restrictiveness of Christ's requirements in His Sermon.²⁰ They will meet with an eternal depletion of all worth. *Destruction* is the loss and waste of existence. It is not annihilation, but eternal ruin in perdition and in the lake of fire.

There is no injustice or harshness in this destiny. It is the properly affected and instinctively righteous, fair, and just end of such an undisciplined and unbridled life. Their lives were not necessarily filled with vileness and debauchery, but their lives were their own to the exclusion of the King's will and authority. Their rejection of God's restrictions on them in this life will place severe restrictions on them in the next; and the endowments put on them in the end will in fact contrast the wide gate taken and the broad life lived on earth. Actually, their final destiny will be an exact antithesis to the *wide gate* entered and to *the broad way* journeyed while on earth. The *wide gate* that opened into a broad and unrestricted manner of life on earth will ultimately end in a sudden confinement in perdition where movement is restricted by hell's limitations. Their existence will be pressed and squeezed by

²⁰ Thus Christ ended His Sermon on just such a note when referring to the two houses, one built upon a *rock* (His Sermon and all The Living and Written Word of God) and one built upon *sand* (man's word and will—*the broad way*). The one stood against the storms of eternal judgement, while the other fell to the winds, waves, and upheavals of God's righteous scrutiny and verdict, and so met with *destruction*. See Chapter VI, p. 95, esp. The Fearful Elements, pp. 106 ff.

the waves of the lake of fire. Fiery swells will flaunt their searing billows against burning yet never consumed flesh. The inundation of burning liquid sulfur will press scorching compresses of fire upon every traveler of *the broad way*. That inferno will be an everlasting and enveloping painful restriction upon them which is precisely the opposite of their former lives.

In *destruction* that former *broad way* will be forgotten, because perdition's then current restrictive encounter is their overwhelming care. What before in this life captivated their thoughts and desires will not be so meaningful. There, their every thought will be mastered by the exacting compulsion of the flames of fire, which restrict, confine, torment, torment, torment. The only broadness which they will then know is the expanses of a very large lake of fire, because *many there be which go in thereat. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure (Isa. 5:14)*.

Ushered into Life

The final destiny of the narrow-wayers is *life*. This is the outcome of a life of confinement. Whereas a life of broadness ends in narrowness, a life of narrowness ends in broadness. That broadness is *life* eternal; it is *life* free from pressures, restrictions, or confinements. This is broad, abundant, and happy *life* as a joint heir with Christ, as a joint-owner of all the broad expanse of the universal reign of God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God knows no narrowness. It is as limitless and broad as the expanse of God's domain. *The strait gate and the narrow life* on earth lead to freedom. For every "narrow-wayer," movement in glory will be limited only by each son's capacity to engage the spiritual reality of Christ. *For our light affliction²¹ which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (II Cor. 4:17)*. Then and there and forever, our emancipation will be as broad as God is limitless.

²¹ Restriction, confinement, limitation. Gk. lit. "squeezed, pressed, crowded."

TWO GROUPS

...destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

...life, and few there be that find it. Matthew 7:13, 14

For many are called, but few are chosen.

Matthew 22:14

The two dissimilar groups are the *few* and the *many*. These are the same *many* and *few* about whom Jesus said, *Many are called, but few are chosen*. Jesus said in effect, “For *many* persons are outwardly, superficially, verbally, ineffectually, called to salvation; but *few* are actually elected or divinely *chosen* to salvation, and as the elect, experience the inward, effectual, and spiritual calling of the Holy Spirit.” As a result, *few* find *the strait gate* and *many* go in at *the wide gate*.

The Many

The *many* are the broad-wayers. They are the lost who remain lost. Their *call* is an external call, physically heard.²² The *gate* and *way* are not wide in order to accommodate the *many*; but contrariwise, the number is *many* because the *gate* and *way* is wide. That is, their number is *many* because of the ease of entry and the free play or wide berth of lifestyle for its travelers. The *many called*

²² In Scripture there are two fundamental kinds of callings. They are: external and internal, or physical and spiritual, or unto opportunity only and unto salvation, or ineffectual and effectual. The physical calling is made by men when preaching the gospel, or when witnessing to its truth; while the spiritual calling is made by the Holy Spirit through that same witnessing or preaching (the human means). This effectual calling is unto salvation and is irresistible when issued by God (*John 10:3-5, 16, 26-27; 6:37; Romans 1:1; 8:30; 9:11, 15-19*[esp. v.19]; *Luke 14:23; II Cor. 4:6; II Tim. 1:9; II Thess. 2:13-14; Gal.1:15*). However, the physical calling by men when preaching the gospel can be and often is successfully resisted (*Acts 24:24-25; 26:28; Matt. 22:11-14*). The principle of both callings is revealed in the Word through Paul in *I Thess. 2:13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men [i.e. as a general, external, and ineffectual calling], but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe [i.e. as an effectual calling].*

are the majority who pass through a *wide gate* and travel *the broad way*. They are *called*, not through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit, but by the external, fleshly voiced call from *wolves in sheep's clothing*.

These *many* are presented with a false gospel of easy-believism which requires no real heart-rending change from *the broad way* onto *the narrow way*. They find comfort in their multitude who began as they began and live as they live. They reason that everyone could not be wrong. "Therefore, we 'many' are in the right way." To them, the *few* are the fanatics, those strict preacher-types and others, the freaks, religious zealots who think Christ is the most important thing in life, and that Christ ought to rule every aspect of one's life, and who believe that Christ's splendid Sermon is to be the *narrow way* of life here and now, today and forever. The majority—these *many*—think such narrowness absurd because of its stringent difficulty and because only a *few find it*.

The Few and Their "Find"

The *few* are the narrow-wayers, the *chosen* or elect who hear spiritual truth and believe unto the saving of the soul. Jesus acknowledged *few* would indeed *find it*. "We have no reason to be discouraged and cast down if the religion we profess is not popular and few agree with us."²³ The true flock of Christ has always been small, because one must *find it*.

Jesus does not refer to the broad-wayers as having "found" *the wide gate*. This is because it is a natural, easy, and popular decision that changes nothing and is not at all perplexing or profound. But the narrow-wayers *find* something; they *find the strait gate, the narrow way, the life, the Christ, the Savior, their Lord*. The word *find* literally means "to comprehend, recognize, to find mentally." The idea is that these narrow-wayers recognize Him as the source needed to carry one through the *way*, and that this *way—His way*—is the only workable solution to their own total inability to reach the *life* in the end. Of course, this *find* is the result

²³ John Charles Ryle, Expository Thoughts in the Gospels, St. Matthew (All Saints Passage Cambridge: James Clark & Co. Ltd., 1974) p. 67.

of God's Holy Spirit, Who reveals the wisdom of God to His elect so as to make an effectual call at the time of their salvation. No natural man can recognize, comprehend, or mentally *find* the spiritual things of God except God first give the spiritual discernment,

*But the unspiritual person does not accept the things of the divine Spirit; to him they are folly and he cannot understand them, because they are evaluated from a spiritual standpoint.*²⁴
I Corinthians 2:14

The unspiritual person is the natural, unsaved, and unregenerate man. *The things of the divine Spirit* most certainly are those truths concerning *the wisdom of the cross* (I Cor. 1:30, i.e. the gospel), which includes the promise, power, and persuasion of the Savior's work to provide all that is necessary to enable His own to reach heaven. Finding that truth is the result of God's extraordinary and very personal revelation of it. All who do not understand that Jesus will without fail provide all that is necessary to reach heaven in the end do not have saving faith. They are the *many on the broad way*. They do not trust Jesus to overcome the world when it introduces the most trying circumstances to authentic discipleship. They never did comprehend, recognize, or *find* the real Jesus. They will end in *destruction*.

Confirmed broad-wayers never are given such spiritual insight according to God's sovereign choice; it has left them on the Great Broad Way. But the narrow-wayers comprehend as feasible such a life of strictness now, since it alone leads to life instead of *destruction*, and since a restricted life has been required by the One Who has promised to save them in the end. That is the essence of true saving faith, possessed only by the narrow-wayers. The lost *many* never desire or even comprehend as attainable such a confining life. Rather, they seem not to realize that the end justifies the high degree of austerity since the Lord and Savior requires it. For the *few*, *the strait gate* and *the narrow way* are considered but small difficulties in view of the power and promise and persuasion of such a Savior as Jesus. The *few* know that such a

²⁴ Gerrit Verkuyl, op. cit. p. 180, q.v. entire passage, I Cor. 1:30-2:14.

Savior as Jesus would never demand of His own what He Himself would not make possible to complete, simply because He is their Savior; this is of what saving faith consists. He is the Savior Who provides His *few* with the necessary means through the power of the Holy Spirit to walk *the narrow way* into the *life* eternal. Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, they “found, comprehended, and recognized” Him as the Savior of helpless sinners who were before destined to *destruction*.

We should become exceedingly fearful if our life differs little from the rest of the world—the *many*. A broad-wayer, attempting to justify himself, says, “I attend church occasionally”; so does the multitude. Again, “I believe in Jesus”; so does the multitude. “I chose to be baptized”; so have a multitude of broad-wayers been obedient to religious rites and rituals. Yet they are headed for *destruction*. “If we can say no more than this, ‘We go where others go, and worship where others worship, and hope we shall do well as others at last,’ we are literally pronouncing our own condemnation. What is this but being on the broad way?”²⁵

Two Fatalisms

There are in these two groups, two contrasting fatalisms. One very large group, the *many*, journey *the broad way*, the easy way, wherever it may lead, because it offers no resistance; sort of a fatalistic, “What will be will be, but for now I must take the easy, broad, and populous road.” The other fatalism is a good one that says, “I will walk this *narrow* and confining way, because I must reach yonder celestial city and its eternal safety with Jesus.” Every *narrow* creedal detail is given close attention and obedience at whatever cost to self. This fatalism consists of: “Whatever the costs to me now, I will walk apart from personal regard, because I must be with Jesus.” For the *many*, ease and self-indulgence will be lived end where it might. For the *few*, who are persuaded of the eternal safety with Jesus above everything else, restrictiveness and self-denial will be lived at whatever cost. One is an evil and foolish fatalism, the other is a good and wise one.

²⁵ Ryle, loc. cit.

Two Labels

Everyone who passes through *the strait gate* travels *the narrow way*—no exceptions. *The strait gate* always leads to *the narrow way*. Over that *strait gate* is the name: **JESUS, LORD AND SAVIOR**. Similarly, everyone who passes through *the wide gate* will travel through life on *the broad way*. Over that gate is the name: **JESUS, SAVIOR ONLY**. Again, there are no exceptions, so that one's eternal destiny is determined, not just by Jesus' name being used, but by the essence and indication of His title, and also by the scope of the *way* that is beyond that initial experience. What was understood about Jesus when first entering what was thought to be the Christian life is essential. To pass through Jesus Christ into *life eternal* one must come through only *the strait*—confining, restrictive, and narrow—*gate* irrespective of Jesus' name being given. One's eternal destiny is determined, not by the label of "Jesus" along one's way or even that His lovely name was posted on the gate, but by the initial commitment to a life here on earth which is both restrictive and prohibitive in nature. The kind of life lived on earth is determined by what kind of gate was first entered—was it *narrow* or *wide*? Furthermore, all along that *broad* and easy *way*, His name is posted on every wayside tree and side street, but that *way* will end in *destruction*. *The wide gate* is not marked "This way to hell and destruction";²⁶ it is labeled: **HEAVEN—JESUS, SAVIOR ONLY**. It has Jesus' name on it, the same name, Jesus, as on *the strait* or narrow *gate*, but it will lead neither to Him nor into His Kingdom.

The *many* will not reach heaven since their false profession only served to secured them in *the broad way*. Their lives had always corresponded to *the wide gate* through which they began their supposed Christian experience. They are convinced that their way is the correct way because of the label that was affixed over their gate at the beginning.

Nevertheless, Christ's precepts are loved by the *few* who live lives in accord with His requirements. But that smallness of number

²⁶ MacArthur, op. cit., p. 181

does not lessen the surety of their destiny. We are not to feel disgraced because of the small numbers advancing in the right road to the Kingdom. His precepts are confining and hard to understand by the carnal mind; but the *few* who do understand and live them will in the end find *life* eternal. An infinite experience with the Eternal Christ Himself and paradise itself is gained only by passing through a very restrictive and prohibitive discipleship experience with Jesus into that *life*. Both experiences in this earthly life—with Him in the fellowship of His sufferings as well as the disciplines and rigors of authentic discipleship—will make the Infinite Christ even more cherished forever. Amen!