

The Narrow Way



If you have ever seen someone potholing on television or in a film, you may have seen that it looks very difficult, squeezing through what appears to be a very tight entrance to get from one area of the cave to the next. If you weren't extremely motivated then you probably wouldn't even dare attempt it. Another illustration would be that of a victim of an earthquake, trapped in a basement, with the only means of rescue being to crawl through a very small opening that had been dug by rescuers. If the person who is trapped wants to live, they have no choice but to squeeze through the gap. If we want to find that way that leads to eternal life then we really have to be desperate, like the person trapped by the earthquake. God says that when we really seek out the Lord, we will find Him and we should call out on His name, while He is near. (The name Jesus means I AM Salvation in the original Hebrew, He was called this because He would save His people from their sins).

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

The Kingdom of God is a real place where the Father dwells. How do we get to live in that realm? There is a way.

The early followers of Jesus Christ were known as followers of the Way. The good news, was known as the way of salvation. While we may hope that the way that leads to eternal life may be easy to find and easy to get on, the Lord Jesus the Christ said;

Matthew 17:13 – 23 Enter in through the narrow gate (entrance or opening): for wide is the opening, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction and many there are who go into it. Because narrow is the entrance and difficult is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it. Beware of false prophets (preachers), who come to you in sheep's clothing but inside they are hungry wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree produces good fruit; but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone that says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of

heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, haven't we prophesied in your name? And in your name cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful deeds? And I will say to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that do iniquity.

Many on the broad way that leads to destruction are trusting in the fact that they are doing good things in Jesus' name. Many wonderful things, like building hospitals, schools, providing water and sanitation, telling others about God. But none of our good deeds can wash away our sin. Without repentance and having our sins washed away in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we will die in our sins. Without receiving the Holy Spirit we will not have a saving relationship with Christ. Without having our sins washed away then we will be judged in our sins, not for our good deeds.

No one can come to the Father except through Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God openly by miracles, wonders and signs. He was delivered up by the pre-determined will and foreknowledge of God to be crucified by wicked hands and put to death. He was crucified like a criminal to make atonement for our sins with his blood. God was in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to Himself through His blood which was shed on the cross. He was raised from the dead by God, having destroyed the power of death, since Jesus could not be held by death. Jesus was seen after His resurrection by the apostles and many others who had been following Him. In this God has declared Jesus to be both the Lord and the Christ (King).

Because Jesus is the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us, He has power to remit sins (discharge -pay the debt in full).

The way we move from this present world of sin, death and shame into the way that leads to the kingdom of God is through the narrow opening; This entrance is the message of repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Repentance: This simply means abandoning all our sinful ways in order to be enabled to walk in God's ways; surrendering our thoughts and wishes for God's counsel. This may be the tight squeeze for many of us. It involves becoming as little children, bending, removing those things we hold on to that would stop us getting through that narrow gap. What hinders us from squeezing through the narrow entrance to the way to eternal life may not always be obviously sinful.

Luke 18:18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, *that is*, God. You know the commandments: '*Do not commit adultery,*' '*Do not murder,*' '*Do not steal,*' '*Do not bear false witness,*' '*Honour your father and your mother.*'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You." So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

Remission of sins: Putting all our faith in the name of Jesus the Christ for the remission of (discharge from) our sins; Remission of sins may not be something we have a good grasp of. Remission is not the same as forgiveness. God was forgiving sins since the creation of mankind. He forgave His people Israel when they repented and returned to Him.

If I lend you £20,000 because you desperately need it, you might avoid me whenever you can. If I come to your door, you might hide behind the curtains. You might cross the street if you see me coming. You have a conscience about the debt you owe me.

If I forgive you, because I know you can never repay the debt, you would be very happy that you no longer owed me the money. But you may still feel guilty about the fact that I never got the money back. You might still continue avoiding me.

If however, my son, who loves you, sees your debt, and works and saves very hard so he has the £20,000; and he then gives me the £20,000 to pay your debt to me; you are free from the debt. I have my money owed to me. You owe me nothing. You no longer feel you need to avoid me. Your conscience is clear. And you love my son for what he has done for you!

Be immersed (baptized) in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (discharge from the debt) of sins. The word of God became flesh so that as the Lamb of God He would hang on the cross, be cursed for our sakes, and shed His blood in full payment for our sins. For this reason remission of sins is in the name of Jesus the Christ.

This is a core part of God's counsel. Jesus said that if we are not born of water and of the Spirit we cannot see, or experience, the Kingdom of God. **Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (payment in full) of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

If we will believe on the name of Jesus, repent, be baptized in His name for remission of sins, we are promised we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Once we are through the narrow gate of repentance and remission of sins we find ourselves on the way that leads to eternal life, which is knowing Jesus, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In the following extracts from his letters we have the Apostle Paul's account of the conversion experience as above that he and all the early disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ had experienced.

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, (baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission, blotting out, of sin) and renewing of the Holy Spirit (receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit); which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified (made to be righteous) by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1 Corinthians 6:9 Don't you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but you are washed (baptised) but you are sanctified (separated), but you are justified (made to be righteous) through the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.

This is where we come out of the darkness and into His glorious light!

When we receive the Holy Spirit, Who is also called the spirit of Christ, we have Jesus living, abiding in us.

We will then know Christ Jesus, and be known by Him, which is eternal life.

Where Jesus is, the kingdom of God is!

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