

Matthew 7:13-14

The narrow gate and path

Introduction

Why do so many people fail to believe the Gospel?

- “They have not heard a clear presentation of the Gospel and have rejected a false stereotype.” *Bill Bright*
- “They are not among God’s elect and have not been predestined to believe.” *R.C. Sproul*
- “Religion is silly and unreasonable. Smart rational people do not fall for it.” *Richard Dawkins*
- “They don’t want to give up some favored sin.” *Dinesh D’Souza*
- “There is not enough evidence.” *Bertrand Russell*

Context

- Jesus was expected to be part of the religious establishment as a prophet of Israel’s God.
- Jesus and his message were at odds with the establishment.
- The people listening to Jesus were confused. Who has the truth?
- This is the issue that Jesus addresses in the next few verses.

Text

Matthew 7

“¹³ Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.”

The options

1. Two gates – small and wide
2. Two paths – narrow and broad
3. Two groups – few and many
4. Two destinations – life and death

Reasons to not follow Christ and believe the Gospel.

1. (the narrow gate). It is unfair, exclusive, and imperialistic. Jesus cannot be the only way.
2. (the narrow path). It is unreasonable, irrational, and without compelling, credible evidential support.
3. (small group). It is unpopular. Most people agree that Christianity is not believable.
4. (life destination). It is unhealthy in that it does not lead to a happier more humane existence but rather is the source of a lot of abusive behavior, guilt, shame, and anti-intellectual, socially regressive thinking.

5. The parable of the soils (Mark 4:10-20)

- a. Some seed fell “beside the road” and was snatched away by the birds (Satan).
- b. Some seed fell “in rocky places” and had no firm root so that it withered for lack of rain (afflictions and persecution).
- c. Some seed fell “among the thorns” and was crowded out by the weeds (cares of the world).
- d. Some seed fell “in good soil” and was fruitful.

Are the narrow gate and path difficult or unpopular?

1. The issue can be understood in the context of the hard demands that Jesus makes on entrance into the Kingdom.
2. The issue can also be understood in terms of the foolishness and stumbling block that the Gospel of grace represents.
 - a. I Cor.1 “²² For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
 - b. Matt.11 “²⁹ Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is **easy**, and My load is **light**.”
 - c. The imputed moral merit of Christ by grace through faith is seen as both foolish and a stumbling block. For more information see apptoteach.org theology file #706
 - **Rom.1:16-17** “¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it {the} **righteousness of God** is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “*But the righteous {man} shall live by faith.*”
 - The quote from Habakkuk 2:4 suggests that the imputation of moral merit is in view.
 - **Rom.4:3-8** “³ For what does the Scripture say? “*And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as **righteousness**.*” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as **righteousness**, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons **righteousness** apart from works: ⁷ “*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered.*” ⁸ “*Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.*”
 - **Rom.10:1-5** “¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for {their} salvation. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about **God’s righteousness**, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the **righteousness of God**. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for **righteousness** to everyone who believes. ⁵ For Moses writes

that the man who practices the **righteousness** which is based on law shall live by that **righteousness**.”

- **I Cor.1:30** “³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and **righteousness** and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹that, just as it is written, "*Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.*"”
- **II Cor.5:21** “He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, that we might become the **righteousness of God** in Him.”
- **Gal.3:6** “⁶ Even so Abraham *believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness*. ⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, {saying}, "*All the nations shall be blessed in you.*" ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.*" ¹¹ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "*The righteous man shall live by faith.*"”
- **Gal.3:21-22** “²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then **righteousness** would indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”
- **Phil.3:9** “and may be found in Him, not having a **righteousness** of my own derived from {the} Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the **righteousness** which {comes} from God on the basis of faith,”

3. Both views reflect valid Biblical themes.

The great temptation

1. The church can sometimes want to make the Gospel attractive by making the gate large and the path wide.
 - We can sometimes down play the cost of discipleship when presenting the Gospel story.
 - We can sometimes exaggerate or even misrepresent the cost of discipleship or the reality of following Christ as a pilgrim in the world.
 - We can exaggerate or misrepresent the benefits of the Gospel so as to suggest that we will be blessed materially in this life if we follow Christ.
2. Christians can sometimes forget that the call to discipleship is a serious challenge to a disciplined life that is separate from the world’s values.
 - We can sometimes emphasize grace to such an extent that we suggest that obedience and moral discipline are optional to the Christian’s walk.
 - The call to Christian faith must also include a call to follow Christ as a serious disciple.
3. Christians can sometimes make the path narrow and the gate small in the wrong way.

- Christians have often put up cultural and ethnic boundaries to the Gospel.
- Christians have sometimes put legalistic moral requirements on the faith in such a way that grace is of little significance.
- Many Christian sects have made their distinctive teachings a requirement for full fellowship in the church.
- We must never confuse the small gate with a small mind, or the narrow path with a narrow (legalistic) perspective. Let the gate and the path be defined by Scripture rightly interpreted not by the dogma of human culture, fad, or personal preference.

Conclusion

1. Christians will be but a remnant in the earth. Rom.9:27, 11:5
2. Christianity will not be a faith of the cultural elite.
3. People reject the Gospel for many reasons.
4. We must not down play the small gate and narrow path of Christianity.
5. We must not confuse the small gate with a small mind, or the narrow path with a narrow (legalistic) perspective.