

"The Narrow Way"

What direction is your soul traveling? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." The Lord speaks of a narrow and a broad way with different destinies. Stay tuned!

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The world is full of ideas, teaching, beliefs, and opinions. We hear every view imaginable today, and much of it has been spinned to make it sound true. But the Lord Jesus and the Scriptures give us a way to distinguish truth from error and right from wrong. The Lord Jesus promised in John 8:31-32, that "If we continue in His word, then we're truly disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Yes, the words of Jesus are always the Lord's way to know what is true and what is false. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The apostle Peter wrote, "And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3, verses 15 and 16). Sadly, some twist what God says to suit themselves and they leave the truth for a falsehood that cannot take them to eternal life.

The inspired apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6 and verse 16, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, that you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? My friend, who is your master? Are following sin or are you following the Lord? The road you choose will take you somewhere, and I pray that it will be where you want to go. The Lord leads to life, so follow the Lord!

Now we offer this study free on the narrow way of Christ. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website, www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 7:13 to 14, and we'll explore the fact that life in God's will matters.

Our reading today comes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. And this particular passage is one of the most surprising passage of the Bible. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." This passage kind of wakes us up, recognizing the direction that we're going, to choose the narrow path.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, help us to be good listeners, and searchers for the truth and what is right, and to follow You where You lead us. May we always look to You to find Your will, and follow what You have taught us. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus speaks of two gates: one is narrow, and the other is wide. He speaks of two distinct ways: the broad easy way and the narrow, or straight way. He speaks of two different groups: one is made up of a few people and the other contains many. He also speaks of two destinies: one leads to life and the other leads to destruction. The narrow way serves the Lord Jesus and leads to righteousness and life; few find that way. The pathway to life contains many difficulties and troubles. It

must be walked with care, watching out for the evil that can lead us astray. The way of life is a plain and simple way. And its simplicity often challenges man's desire to go his own way.

The road that leads away from God and downward to ruin is broad and easy, and many are led to choose it. One narrow gate with a hard way leads to life; and all other ways, all other paths, all other directions lead to death and ruin; the narrow way is difficult; the others are easy to follow.

Some people think that all gods are the same, but are they? Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8, verses 5 to 6, "For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him." Whether we believe in that one true God or not matters to our souls. The confused, ancient world believed in many gods; but Jesus points to the one and only God. The Bible prophecies, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the truths of Scripture point to the Lord God as the one and only true God. Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Now some people think of Jesus as just another religious teacher, but Jesus is unique. Jesus fulfilled prophecy, He worked miracles in the presence of multitudes, He arose from the dead, and He lived an exemplary life. And He expects people to believe in Him. The Lord Jesus said in John 3 and verse 18, that "He who believes in Him is not judged; but he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Now, He made it more clear in John 8:24, Jesus said "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he (that is the Christ, the Son of God) you will die in your sins." Now Jesus was clear about those who will not believe in Him. And Jesus has set a limit on who is free from sin and makes His way narrow. Yes, faith in Christ distinguishes those on the narrow road from those on the road to destruction.

Some people think they can please God and yet live in sin, but repentance from sin and changing one's life is necessary. Luke 13, verses 1 to 3 says: "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'" Repentance is not merely a suggestion that's good for us; it's necessary to be right with God. Acts 17, verses 30 and 31 says, that "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Now those who refuse to repent have no promise from God. Romans 2, verses 6 to 11 says, that "He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality." I tell you, we must take God's moral law seriously.

Some say faith and repentance are all that's necessary for salvation, but the Lord Jesus made it clear that being born again of water and the Spirit are also necessary to enter the kingdom of God. In John 3 and verse 5, the Lord Jesus told a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now this is a clear

reference to being baptized into Christ, and all the ancient writers knew this. Sadly, some have pointed to other things never suggested by this Scripture. If we want to walk the narrow road, we won't neglect this requirement.

The Lord wants people to be obedient to the gospel, and our baptism into Christ unites us with Him in his burial and resurrection, according to Romans 6, verses 3 to 7. Now this obedience is necessary to walk the narrow way. Someone says, is it really necessary? Yes! 2 Thessalonians 1, verses 7 to 9 says, "and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Now those who fail to obey the gospel will not have eternal life.

Now the way of Jesus is truly narrow; in fact, He doesn't present alternatives. Christianity is not a smorgasbord where we can pick what we like and ignore the rest. Often there is but one choice. Ephesians 4:4 to 6 says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all." There is but one body, and that body according to Ephesians 1:22 to 23 is the church. Does it surprise you that the Lord has but one church? I tell you the way is narrow; there was only one ark in Noah's day and only one Temple in Judaism. The Lord died for His church and no other. There is but one Holy Spirit, and He doesn't say one thing in Scripture and then say another thing to modern day false prophets. There is but one hope of your calling, and that hope is in the gospel.

There is only one Lord, and we cannot serve two masters. The Lord Jesus said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; and no one comes to the Father, but through Me." You can't go to the Father in heaven through some later prophet or some other religious person. We have no Lord but Jesus. There is one faith, and that faith was given by the Lord Jesus through His apostles and prophets in the first century. You see He promised the apostles that He would guide them into "all the truth" (John 16 and verse 13). Now we're to "contend for the faith that was once for all (that is all time) delivered to the saints" (Jude verse 3). Now once that faith was delivered in the first century, we must not move from it into other faiths or the teaching of men.

There is one baptism, and that baptism into Christ frees us from sin. The book of Acts declares how people were commanded to be baptized (that is, immersed) in water to wash away their sins (according to Acts 2:38 and 22:16). If baptism is a burial with Christ, it's not a sprinkling with Christ. If baptism is when God washes away your sins, we're not saved before baptism. If God requires faith and repentance before baptism, then the one baptism is not a baptism of infants or small children. The Scriptures are clear on these matters: that there is but one baptism.

And there is "one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." He describes Himself in the Bible as our Creator and the true and living God. He is the giver of every good thing and has sacrificed His Son Jesus for our sins. He hears our prayers and forgives our sins. I tell you, we have a Father who is near us and cares for us.

Now this is why we must take His teaching seriously. Just as there is one God, there's also one gospel that can save your soul. The apostle Paul addressed some Jewish Christians who were corrupting the truth in Galatians 1, verses 6 to 9: he said, "I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be

accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" We must stay with the true gospel found in scripture. A distorted gospel will not save anyone and will curse those who teach it.

People who walk the broad or easy way try to make God's word say what pleases them rather than what the Lord actually says. God has never allowed men to edit or to change what He teaches. God said in Deuteronomy 4 and verse 2, that "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." Again He said in Deuteronomy 5 and verse 32, "So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left." God's way indeed is narrow!

And the Lord Jesus understood this. You see, He had to obey His Father; by doing so, He set an example for us. The Lord Jesus said in John 12, verses 49 to 50, "For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me." Now Jesus never varied from God's message. In fact, He said in John 14, verse 31, "But so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me."

Let's follow the Lord's example. We must not add to His word or take away from it but do exactly as He commands us. Let's follow Paul's advice to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 and be diligent to be a "workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." True disciples stay within the written words of Jesus given in the first century. The Lord Jesus, remember, said in John 8:31 and 32, that "If you abide in my word, you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Let's abide in the words of Jesus so that we may be free!

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, we're thankful that through Your love You gave us what we need to know. As we love You Father, help us to be dedicated to Your word, so that we might know the truth, and the truth may set us free. May Your will be done. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus tells what the most important commandments are in Mark 12:29 to 31, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." God demands that you be fully devoted to Him: heart, soul, mind, and strength! And we show our love for God by keeping His commandments (John 14, verse 15). We must also love others as we love ourselves. Now these commandments are profound and require giving everything we are to God and to others.

The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9:23 to 25, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" Now you can have your broad way in this life and lose your soul in the life to come; or you can lose your life here and gain eternal life. Which way are you going?

Place your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus and turn from evil to the Lord. Confess Him before others and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. With the blood of Jesus and the grace of God cleansing you from sin, you can have salvation in this life and an inheritance in the life to come. Choose the narrow way; it's worth it! What will it profit, if you ignore the grace of God?

We hope today's study about the narrow way has stirred you to think about your soul. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the

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Now we ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.