

A Strait Is Seldom Straight!

Joe Slater

“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14, KJV).

The expression “strait and narrow” has become proverbial in reference to careful compliance with the rules given by parents or by God. However, most mistakenly understand it as “straight and narrow.” The spelling difference is subtle, but the change in meaning is radical!

A “strait” (without the g-h) is seldom straight. Look at the Strait of Magellan or the Strait of Hormuz on a map. They’re anything but straight! Guiding a ship through those straits takes plenty of zigzagging along a difficult and narrow route! They’re called “straits” because they’re difficult, not because they go from point “a” to point “b” without deviation.

Many other Scriptures teach us not to deviate from God’s word, but “strait” in Matthew 7:14 isn’t making that point. The path to eternal life is narrow and difficult! By contrast, the way to destruction is wide and easy (7:13). Most people find wide and easy to be appealing. Comparatively few put forth the effort to travel the narrow, difficult path.

But wait! Doesn’t the majority rule? That sounds very American! How can the majority of people be wrong? Isn’t it arrogant to say that?

Well, we didn’t say it – Jesus did. A majority of Jesus’ own people (the Jews) rejected Him. Despite the thousands who became Christians in Acts, vastly more rejected the gospel. This is nothing new; God has always operated with a remnant.

Are you on that narrow way? It’s difficult, but the destination makes it more than worth the effort!

The Good Confession

Usually when we hear the word “confession” something bad has happened. Someone did something wrong, had concealed it, and wanted to get the guilt off his chest.

But the Bible describes a confession that is good through and through. “Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing” (1 Timothy 6:12-14). In this way the older Paul urged the younger Timothy to keep having a faithful Christian life.

Timothy had entered the Christian life in preparation for eternal life. When he did so, he made “the good confession” in the presence of many witnesses. Timothy believed what Jesus said about Himself before the Roman governor Pilate, and he was not afraid to say so. Jesus is King (John 18:33-37).

In the New Testament, people who became disciples confessed their faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). They gladly acknowledged that He is Lord and God” (John 20:28). He is who He says He is, and deserves to rule in our lives. We will never be saved from sin without making a verbal confession of faith in Him (Acts 8:35-3

--Danny Boggs (Neosho, MO) via *Old Paths*.

Afraid To Admit It!

Faith goes far beyond mere belief. Biblical faith is actually trust – the willingness to expose one’s life to risk for the sake of the trusted person or idea. Faith is far more costly than belief because it may have painful results.

The people of Jesus’ day understood that. The religious leaders saw the miracles that He did. In fact, John said that Jesus “performed so many signs in their presence.” Yet these signs did not produce faith in their hearts. They knew the social cost of faith – loss of religious standing, loss of friends, giving up previously held beliefs. The cost was huge! Jesus warned on many occasions that following Him required giving up everything.

That faith goes beyond belief is evident in the response of the “many believers.” Some of the folks standing around the edges of the miraculous events thought quietly to themselves, “He has the power of God residing in Him,” and, “Look at the authority and miraculous ability He has.” But they never said it out loud.

The largest barrier to faith is personal ambition. Some of the religious leaders preferred human glory to the glory and approval that comes from God. This is still a threat.

--Bruce W. Logue (Merced, CA) via *Power For Today*

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Being taught to avoid talking about politics and religion has led to a lack of understanding of politics and religion. What we should have been taught is how to have a civil conversation about a difficult topic.