

The Sermon on the Mount: A Reformed Exposition

Chapter 34: The Narrow Way

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After giving a brief, yet strong, reason as to why the narrow gate must be entered, our Lord explains and amplifies this argument by returning to a description of the narrow gate and difficult way. “Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mt. 7:14). One reason the broad way is so popular is that the narrow gate is very small. In fact, there is a sense in which this tiny gate is hidden from the unregenerate masses and can only be found with the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the narrow gate gives entrance unto this “narrow way” which is a very difficult way. The unregenerate are repelled by the great sacrifices involved on this narrow, difficult, thorny path. The narrow, difficult path is completely contrary to the lovers of this world; to those who live life to fulfill fleshly lusts.

The narrow gate leads to the narrow road. Becoming a Christian is the beginning of discipleship; it is the starting point of a life-long struggle against the world, the sinful flesh and the devil. Interestingly, the word translated “narrow” (KJV) or “difficult” (NKJV) in verse 14 is not the same Greek word translated “narrow” in verse 13 (*stenos*). The adjective used to describe the way or road is *thethlimmene* (a perfect passive participle of *thlibo*) which means “press” or “compress.” The idea being conveyed is that the road of Christian discipleship is very restricted or confined. The imagery is a path between two rocky cliffs so close together that a man can barely squeeze between them. These rock walls almost meet and there are sections that bulge inward causing the person on this path at times even to turn sideways in order to squeeze through. There also may be rocks on the path to make the way most inconvenient. The man who makes his way down this path can only do so with constant attention and diligence. He must persevere to get through this road and he can only do so with cuts, scrapes and bruises. This is the picture of the Christian life that Jesus presents to us. Unlike the broad road, however, this narrow, difficult path leads to everlasting life with God. The scraped, battered and bruised bodies emerge into the home of peace and everlasting bliss.

Before we examine the narrow way in more detail, we need to note that the Redeemer tells us plainly that the Christian life is difficult. It requires effort, struggle and even pain. Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mt. 16:24-26; cf. 10:38). The disciples thought Jesus would conquer Rome and immediately set up a kingdom where they would receive worldly honors and temporal rewards. Therefore, our Lord made it crystal clear that true Christians are perfected through conflict and suffering. Following the Savior involves self-denial and many troubles. If we want the crown of glory, we must crucify our flesh daily, resist the devil often and overcome the world. When you come into Christ’s service you enter into spiritual warfare and must fight many battles. This constant struggle is the inseparable accompaniment of being a true Christian. No one enters the kingdom of heaven without it. Never forget the old saying “no cross, no crown!” If this has not been your experience as a professing Christian, then your soul is in extreme danger.

This very important element of biblical Christianity has largely been forgotten in our day. Jesus is presented as a resource to fulfill our needs and many churches do everything they can to downplay or suppress the great struggle in following Christ. If a person does not want to repent of their sins or mortify the flesh, he is welcomed into the church as a “carnal Christian.” If a married couple is obsessed with material things and the focus of their life is possessions, luxuries, entertainment and personal happiness, then they are told that Jesus came so they could have their best life now. If people do not like to come to church to pray, worship God as He has commanded and hear true, convicting, expositional preaching, then the church will be turned into an entertainment center where even the unregenerate can have fun and feel right at home. In America, success is usually equated with great numbers, large buildings and numerous programs. Consequently, let us carefully consider some noteworthy things regarding the narrow way.

First, the way is called narrow because of the Christian’s life-long struggle concerning sanctification. Once a person is converted to Christ and is justified before God, he must strive to be holy every day of his life. There are a number of things associated with discipleship and sanctification that make the path narrow or difficult.

The person who trusts in the Savior must conform his worldview and ethics to the Word of God. Before he was a Christian, he could do or say or think anything he wanted. But after conversion what he believes, says and does is limited by Scripture. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). Before conversion people happily followed the flesh or human nature which is corrupted, directed and controlled by sin. This as noted takes no effort. But after receiving Jesus, one’s thoughts, interests, affections and purposes are to be submitted to the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture. The narrow way has clearly marked boundaries. The Bible has ethical absolutes which are non-negotiable. When the teaching of Scripture contradicts what we would like to do or believe we have no choice; we must bow the knee to Christ. To walk the narrow path involves refusing to make excuses for sin. It involves a refusal to compromise with the world. To walk this narrow road we need to follow the example of the blessed man in Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2). *Sola Scriptura* is not just a slogan of the Protestant Reformation; it is also crucial for sanctification or walking according to the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). As Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17).

The road is difficult because we must wage warfare against sin in all its manifestations. First, there is a great struggle against the power of sin in us. Although every genuine believer is sanctified in principle by the redemptive work of Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 5:25-26; Heb. 10:10) and by virtue of our union with Christ the power of sin has been broken in our lives (i.e. the Savior has overthrown its rule, weakened its power and set us free from its dominion over our lives [see Rom. 6:4-13]), nevertheless indwelling sin will not be eradicated this side of heaven (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8). Paul warns believers in Romans 7 of the “sin that dwells in us” (v. 17), “the flesh” (v. 18), “lusts” (vs. 7-8) and “the law of sin in our members” (v. 23). The road of discipleship is difficult because our sinful inclinations draw us toward what is evil and “wars against the law of our minds” (v. 23). “The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the thing you wish” (Gal. 5:17). Paul spoke of the essence of this battle in Romans 7:21-23: “I find then a law that is evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see

another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing one into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

Every true Christian has experienced this struggle. We know what the right thing to do is and sincerely would like to do it. Yet time and again we find ourselves doing the precise thing that we hate (see Rom. 7:15). This is because of “the law of sin” (Rom. 7:23). Paul is using the term law here in the sense of a force or inclination (e.g., the law of gravity). As result of the fall, our natures are corrupt; and, although the power of sin is broken in us through our union with Christ, our sinful natures still wage war against our Spirit-directed mind. The unbeliever goes with the flow of this law and relishes sin, while the believer battles against it and uses all the means of grace to overpower it.

There are three things about the law of sin that make the narrow road difficult. (1) The law of sin is in us; it is part of the fabric of our being. In this life we can never escape it. We have a deadly enemy within that seeks to slay us, that is always working contrary to the Holy Spirit and our Spirit-informed mind. It is one thing to deal with external temptations and quite another to wage war against something that we always carry within our breasts. It is necessary to always be watching and praying, for we live with an inner corruption that is contrary to self-discipline and holiness. (2) The law of sin never subsides or rests. There is never a time that our inner corruption takes a vacation. Consequently, there are no times during the Christian life that we can relax in our striving for personal godliness. The road of discipleship is narrow and difficult at the beginning, the middle and end of the Christian life. The law of sin is there when we wake up in the morning and when we go to bed at night. It is with us at church, work, the park and the prayer meeting. Thus, we see why diligence in Bible reading, prayer, self-examination, Sabbath-keeping and the public ordinances is not simply a preference or duty, but a *necessity*. (3) The law of sin is with us even when we are at our spiritual best. Even when we want to serve God with our whole heart and are striving to please Him, this law is working against us. In fact, those who are the most diligent in their seeking of holiness are usually the most sensitive to this inner struggle. Because of God’s grace, like Paul, we want to do good works. We want to glorify God in our speech and our actions. But we sometimes find ourselves doing things we despise. Yet, the true disciple never gives up. If he trips and falls on the narrow path, he immediately gets up, confesses his sin and moves forward. He subordinates his own interests to the interests of Christ. His faith in Christ sustains him. He reckons himself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God (Rom. 6:11). Consequently, no matter how difficult and painful the narrow road, he perseveres in faith and obedience to Christ.

Second, there are the temptations of this world and the sinful habits from our unconverted past. We must live our lives of discipleship surrounded by a society that worships self and pleasures. If the law of sin is like a fire, the allurements of this world are like dry wood ready for the flame. Walking the narrow path involves a strenuous effort to avoid temptations that surround us. This requires a strong faith in Christ and a biblical perspective on life. It takes faith in the Word of God to sacrifice present pleasures and popularity for a distant, unseen reward. This point is emphasized by the author of Hebrews: “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:24-25). Moses turned his back on the great pleasures of wealth and power that this world has to offer and even cast aside the earthly security he had known in Egypt. This is what walking the narrow thorny path is about. It means saying no to sin and saying yes to obedience. It means putting “to death the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13) and “your members which are on the earth” (Col. 3:5).

The narrow road requires continuous mortification of sin. We must crucify “the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24). Plucking out the right eye and cutting off the right hand can be very painful, but taking up the cross and following Christ requires it. Do you have a ruthless rejection of this evil world and an uncompromising forsaking of sin? It is not by accident that Peter points out that we are sojourners in this evil world of men before he speaks of the mortification of sin. “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

God expects us to faithfully tread the narrow, thorny path because he has changed our hearts. He commands us to live consistently with who we are in Christ. We are a new creation, “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). We are dead to sin and alive to God. For us “all things have become new.” The old man—the unregenerate scoundrel that we once were—is dead. Therefore, everything we are by nature (fallen, corrupt, depraved and polluted, with a hatred of God and a bias toward evil) and all the sinful habits and desires we developed in our old life must be put to death. The narrow path is a new path. It requires a continually putting off of those things that are contrary to Scripture (ethically, doctrinally, philosophically, etc.) in order to replace them with what God approves. This involves taking up the cross and following Jesus every day. The terms that Paul uses to describe how we are to deal with sin and unlawful lusts (put to death, flee, abstain, crucify, etc.) indicate that we are to go about this task diligently, radically and continuously. The narrow road requires biblical change and progress in holiness over time. The road is difficult because we must constantly be fighting off the enemies of the flesh, temptations and sin.

The fact that the narrow way is a path means that we must never stand still in our walk with Christ. To *not* move forward leads to stagnation and lukewarmness. We must move forward in sanctification by abhorring what is evil and clinging to what is good (Rom. 12:9). It is a big mistake to view the narrow path simply in terms of negatives. Eliminating sinful habits is only half the equation. The life of discipleship involves replacing old, habitual sin patterns with new habits of righteousness. The scribes and Pharisees had a mechanical, negative ethic instead of the positive, outward, loving ethic that Christ demands. We must “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21) and not only “not be conformed to the world,” but also “be transformed by the renewing of our mind” (Rom. 12:2). While the outward man is perishing, the inward man is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:10). To walk the narrow path, we must actively put on the new man created in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). This new man exhibits the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22). This is progress on the narrow road. If this is not your experience and there is no mortification of sin in your life and growth in godliness, then you have not yet entered the narrow gate. Pink writes, “They who tread this narrow way heed not the counsel of the ungodly (Psalm i, 2), lean not unto their own understanding (Prov. iii, 5), and follow not ‘the customs of the people’ (Jer. x, 3). Rather are the believer’s thoughts formed by the Scriptures and his conduct directed by its statutes, so that God’s Word becomes to him in fact and experience ‘a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.’ The narrow way is strictly marked and exactly defined in the Divine Charter, and along it the Christian must go without turning to the right hand or the left (Prov. iv, 27). When he meets an enemy that enemy must be overcome, or he will be overcome by him.”¹

As we walk this narrow path of Christian discipleship, there are a number of things to keep in mind regarding progressive sanctification (read Jn. 17:19; Rom. 6:1-7:6; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30-31; 6:11; Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 13:12; Col. 3:1-5; 1 Pet. 1:2-4; 4:1-2).

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 334.

We only have victory over the flesh, the world and the devil because Jesus first trod the narrow, bloody, tear-stained path to the cross. There is a covenantal and vital union between Christ and His people. We must by faith look to the Savior's victory and draw upon His strength. Jesus' overcoming of temptation, His sacrificial death and His glorious resurrection provide us with the spiritual power to overcome. It was only after the resurrection and ascension that our Lord sent the Holy Spirit to empower the church. His Spirit raised our dead hearts and enables us to overcome and grow spiritually. Christ is the "captain," "author" or "pioneer" of salvation in the most comprehensive sense of the term (cf. Heb. 2:10; 12:2).

Consequently, from one perspective, the long, narrow, thorny path is very difficult and it takes great effort to move forward; but, from another perspective, the Redeemer's yoke is easy and His burden is light (Mt. 11:30). It is light in the sense that Jesus' Spirit causes us to obey and persevere. The Holy Spirit not only gives us divine revelation which sets the boundaries of the narrow path, but He also binds our stubborn wills, convicts our hearts, illuminates our minds and causes us to repent daily and lean upon Christ.

Also, there is a sense in which the broad path is both easy and hard. It is easy because it has no restraints; every man is his own god. It does not require any sacrifice. But, it is hard in the sense that everyone who follows the broad path is enslaved to sin and the devil. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (Jn. 8:34). "He is truly chained as is the prisoner with the iron band around his leg, the band that is fastened to a chain which is cemented into the wall of a dungeon. Every sin he commits draws tighter that chain, until at last it crushes him completely. Since the wicked have no inner peace (Isa. 48:22), how can they be truly happy?"² The broad road involves earthly pleasures, but these pleasures are fleeting and accompanied by many troubles. The "happiness" of those on the broad path is very shallow and superficial. Human autonomy and a life of sin carry its own negative sanctions from God: family disintegration, drug addiction, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases, poverty, depression, and so on. The broad path is wide and easy, but it is not a bowl of cherries. The inner peace and meaning that believers have is far more preferable than time wasted with drugs, alcohol, liars, whores and degenerates.

As we walk the narrow path, we must meditate upon our love and devotion toward Jesus. We love God only because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). One of the greatest motivations for carrying our cross daily and making the sacrifices of discipleship is the glorious fact that Christ endured humiliation, suffering and death for us. His great love caused Him to leave behind the glories of heaven to be born in a manger and be rejected by His own people. As we think about the road of suffering that He walked for us, we will want to show our love by faithfulness and concrete acts of loyalty. We want to suffer for Him because He suffered for us. We want to imitate Him in His perfect love, dedication, loyalty and service to the Father. We demonstrate our love to God by setting Christ before us as the perfect example of obedience. "To enter this way means to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an invitation to live as He lived; it is an invitation to become increasingly what He was. It is to be like Him, to live as He lived whose life we read of in these Gospels. That is what it means; and the more we think of it in that way the greater will the inducement be. Do not think of what you have to leave; there is nothing in that. Do not think of the losses; do not think of the sacrifices and sufferings. These terms should not be used; you lose nothing, but you gain everything. Look at Him, follow Him,

² William Hendricksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 370.

and realize that ultimately you are going to be with Him, and to look into His blessed face and enjoy Him to all eternity. He is on this way, and that is enough.”³

Because of the difficulty of the narrow path, we must pray often for God to sanctify us, for Christ to keep us from stumbling (Jude 24), and for the Father to lead us not into temptation (Mt. 6:13). We are told to pray throughout the New Testament (e.g., Mt. 6:9-13; Rom. 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:7). God expects us to ask for His special assistance and protection in resisting sin and temptation. In the previous chapter, our Lord told us to pray for this assistance every single day. Walking the narrow path takes humility. We recognize that we cannot walk this narrow, thorny path alone; we need the Holy Spirit daily to apply the efficacy of Jesus’ work to our hearts. We walk with the understanding that we are dependent on our union with Christ, His priestly intercession and the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to pray diligently, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:11). And when we do stumble and sin we must confess these sins to Christ, forsake them and keep moving forward (1 Jn. 1:9).

We must keep in mind that walking the narrow path requires perseverance in faith and obedience. It is a life-long duty. The narrow road encompasses the whole Christian life. Jesus warned us about those who receive the Word with gladness, but reject it when tribulation arises. They did not count the cost and did not think the path to heaven was narrow. They immediately fall away when the going gets rough (see Mk. 4:16-17). They give an intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel and profess faith for a while, but in time of temptation fall away (Lk. 8:13). They regard the narrow road as unacceptable. It is simply too narrow. Jesus warned about others who seem to be good professing Christians for a while, but “the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mk. 4:19). They were so preoccupied with the “pleasures of life” (Lk. 8:14) that following Christ held no interest with them. They had what the Puritans called a mere historical faith. They believed that certain redemptive facts were true, but did not really trust in the Lord or commit themselves to Him. The cares of this world dissolved their profession of Christ.

The narrow path tells us that our priorities in life must be those of the kingdom and not those of the world. Throughout our whole Christian life we must focus on Christ. If we place our priorities on the pursuit of riches, pleasures, fame or popularity, then the Word of God will be choked out. The narrow path will be abandoned. Interestingly, in this parable the choking of the plants is not sudden, but is a gradual process. Often the process of becoming worldly and falling away occurs almost imperceptibly. It is like a deadly cancer growing beneath the service that strangles the life out of a person progressively. If we are to bear fruit to eternal life we must persevere in godliness and always be on guard against a slow and steady drift back to the world. Of all the people who profess Christ at one time in their life and claim to be on the narrow path very few actually persevere to the end. Be diligent to make your calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10).

Third, the narrow road involves tribulations and persecutions. Jesus, on a number of occasions, warned his disciples that they would have to come to terms with hatred and persecution. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn. 15:18-19). The world hates Christians because they have forsaken this evil world system. They have abandoned the broad path. Their

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2:236.

heart follows Christ, who sits at the right hand of God, and their citizenship is in heaven. The world hates us, not because of our weaknesses and inconsistencies, but because we have experienced God's grace. We are a living testimony that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and will come to judge all men. The world also hates us because we tread the narrow path. We hold to a much higher standard than that of the world. Our existence as disciples angers everyone who loves darkness. Abortinists, sodomites, atheists and Mohammedans all want to strike at the Redeemer by striking His followers. We must never be surprised when the people of this world hate us and attack us, for such a reaction is inevitable. "You will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk. 13:13; cf. Lk 21:17; Mt. 24:9-10).

Paul also spoke of the inevitability of hatred and opposition when he wrote to the persecuted Thessalonian church. He said that he sent Timothy "to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know" (1 Tim. 3:2-4). Being a Christian is not a walk in the park. It is not for cowards and those seeking to avoid conflict. "It is not on flowery beds of ease that the pilgrim is conducted to the Father's house: rather does he have to force his way through briars and thorns which cut and tear the flesh. There is not one path for the Redeemer and another for the redeemed (John x, 4). His was a path of affliction and ours cannot be otherwise if we follow the example He has left us; and if we do not we shall not join Him on high."⁴

Every serious Christian knows the pain of being rejected by family and former friends because of the faith. Believers at school or work know the ostracism that occurs when we do not participate in their evil speech and deeds. As Peter said, "They think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you" (1 Pet. 4:4). The news media, Hollywood, colleges and universities, public schools and major corporations regard Bible-believing Christians as ignorant fools whose opinions must be suppressed for the advancement of science, situation ethics (e.g., sodomite rights) and statism.

The hypocritical professing Christian who has conformed himself to this world philosophically and ethically will not be ostracized or persecuted. The world's pleasures, principles and behaviors are his own, even though he calls himself a Christian and goes to church. The professing Christian who accepts theistic evolution, or denies biblical inerrancy, or accepts evolving ethics, or who simply refuses to repent and leads a carnal lifestyle will fit right in with unbelievers. The professing Christian woman who is a feminist, who rejects covenant headship, who refuses to be a "keeper at home" (Tit. 2:5), who only occasionally submits to her husband fits right in with the world. She is more interested in shopping than praying. She is a slave to fashion and worships material goods just like her pagan neighbor. She has conformed herself to this evil world system. The people of this world love their own; they can quickly tell when a person's profession is meaningless.

But true believers who walk the narrow path and separate themselves from this world will experience hatred and persecution. As Paul says, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Serving the Savior means that we are to enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). If we are not willing to suffer as He suffered, then we are not worthy to be called His disciples. The modern world boasts of its tolerance and liberal principles; but when believers live for Jesus as they ought and boldly set forth the whole counsel of God as it speaks to every area of life, the world's hatred of Christ will manifest itself. A

⁴ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, 334.

lukewarm, pluralistic Christianity that is happy to leave the robes of authority in society in the hands of the secular humanists will be tolerated. But those who live out the Lordship of Christ in all its implications will not. Part of being a Christian is testifying to the world that its deeds are evil and telling men to bow the knee to Christ as King. This kind of testimony-bearing will arouse those who reject our message. Yet, we must think it a great privilege to suffer on behalf of Jesus. As Peter notes, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified” (1 Pet. 4:14).

The Way to Life

Jesus ends this section with an appeal to look at the end of the narrow path. Yes, the narrow path is difficult and can only be traveled with much struggle and tribulation, but it is “the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mt. 7:14). The term “life” in this passage refers to eschatological life or the eternal life bestowed on the final day. Those who give up their old, unconverted life to follow Christ; who remain His faithful disciples their whole lives and do not apostatize or reject the faith will be glorified and will behold the face of God. They will experience perfect fellowship with God without any remaining inner pollution, sin or depravity. The sacrifices, sufferings and tribulations of this present life “are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Our present sufferings fade into insignificance when compared with the glory that we will experience before Jesus’ white, lustrous throne. Those who were dressed as beggars; who had to flee into the wilderness to escape persecution; who longed for a scrap of bread will sit and dine with Christ at the great wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

When we suffer for Christ and make painful sacrifices for the kingdom of God, we must do so with an eye of faith on the final resurrection and the glory to be revealed. If you are tempted, then you need to contemplate the great blessedness set before you. If you are depressed and discouraged, then you must set your eyes upon the heavenly reward. Paul speaks of this as one of our greatest encouragements: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:24-27). If unbelievers are willing to buffet their bodies and make such sacrifices for a wreath of olive branches, or a gold medal, should we not be willing to exercise self-denial and make painful sacrifices for rewards which will last throughout all eternity? Yes, the narrow path of discipleship is hard; but when the rewards are considered and the alternate ending of the broad path is contemplated, it is the only logical and biblical choice.

As we conclude, we must emphasize that teaching the necessity of holiness and the mortification of sin does not mean that we believe in salvation by works. As we noted earlier, a person is justified or redeemed the moment he truly believes in Christ. But, the moment he is regenerated and justified he begins a life-long process of sanctification. Salvation in the *broad sense* is not an instantaneous affair, but encompasses the whole of life on the narrow road. Sanctification is part of salvation in the wide sense of the term. Our obedience does not save us; but, no one can be saved without then following Christ. Jesus saves us from both the guilt and

pollution of sin. He removes the objective penalty and renews the Christian subjectively. Saving faith trusts in Christ and then follows Him. It not only relies on God's promises, but also obeys His laws. Genuine faith always leads to a life of obedience. Biblical faith never gives up or throws in the towel, no matter how difficult the circumstances of life. If a person does not continue on the narrow path, then he never had real faith to begin with (1 Jn. 2:19). True faith comes from God (Eph. 2:8) and always overcomes the world, endures trials, is victorious over temptations, resists the devil and seeks after vital godliness. Does this description fit with your life? Although we all fail in many things and are not as godly as we would like, we will never stop striving and moving forward on the narrow path to heaven.

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