

## A Narrow Way and a Solid Foundation

Matthew 7:13-29

September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

### Intro

Reformation in Spain did not take off to the same degree as in Germany under the influence of Luther, Switzerland under the influence of Calvin, or England. But there were some who were captured by the same convictions as the Protestant reformers.

Juan Perez De Penida – translated the NT into Spanish from the Greek text, fled from the Spanish Inquisition to Geneva where Calvin was ministering, 1556 printed the Spanish NT after 5 hard years of work. In the preface he writes, “I feel very much obliged to do service to those of my nation according to the vocation that the Lord has called me to the annunciation of the gospel. It seems there is no other way to complete this task than to give the NT in my own language.”

Echoes one of the rallying cries of the reformation, “Sola Scriptura” – scripture alone as the source of authority.

That’s why Wycliffe wanted to translate the Bible in to the English language.

De Penida’s NT published with a large “Y” on the cover. One arm of the “Y” is wide because wide is the gate and wide is the way that leads to destruction. One arm of the “Y” is narrow because narrow is the gate that leads to salvation. He was indicating what the message of the book is. The message of the NT is that it leads to salvation. (Adapted from 5 Minutes in Church History by Stephen Nichols)

His image of the “Y” comes from the ending of the sermon on the Mount. After His masterful message of the kingdom Jesus brings it to a close with a series of contrasts and a series of choices. He doesn’t merely drop some ethical guidelines and recommendations for people to think about – golden rule, don’t judge, etc. He brings people to a point of decision, not just about the message but about Himself. He shows the entrance into the kingdom is based on a person’s response to Him.

We are confronted with a contentious topic, at least contentious in our day. The exclusivity of Christianity. Jesus will make a claim to be the only way to God.

Feels narrow minded in our day.

I want you to watch for the answer He gives to those who may object.

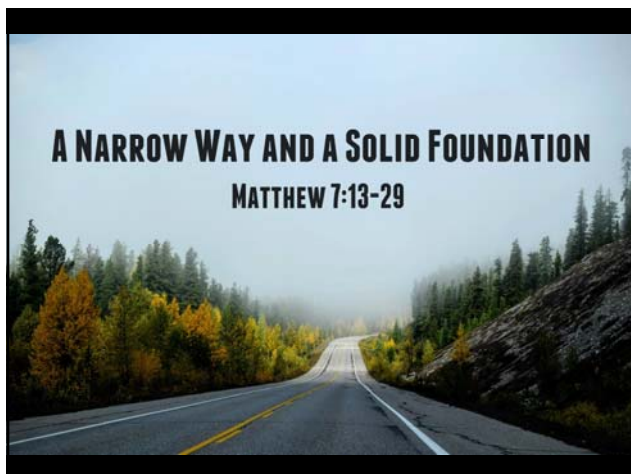
I’ve phrased each of these as 1<sup>st</sup> person questions because we should be confronted by them in the same way Jesus’ audience was.

1. Which **gate** have I entered and which **path** am I traveling? (7:13-14)
  - a. First contrast – two gates leading to two ways leading to two destinations
    - i. One gate is wide, way is broad, and many travel it, but the end is destruction.
      1. It is easy – Dever – “If there is anything we are addicted to today it is ease.”
    - ii. One gate is small, the way is narrow – literally restricting because of persecution and opposition, few find it, but the end is life.
  - b. It’s not narrow because God only allows a certain race or ethnicity to access.
    - i. **Luke 13:29** "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God.
    - ii. Matthew 28:19-20 – Go therefore and make disciples of all nations

- c. It's narrow because the only way is through Jesus Himself.
  - i. He is the one who people will stand before and He will say to some, I never knew you. (v. 23)
  - ii. He is the one whose words people must hear and act upon (v. 26)
  - iii. He is the one who is the way, the truth, and the life.
    - 1. **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
  - iv. He is the one who is the door.
    - 1. **John 10:7-9** So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup> "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
    - 2. Imagery they would be familiar with. Often sheep were penned in at night by a stone wall with only one entrance. The shepherd would sleep in this entrance at night to keep the sheep in and predators out. He was very literally the door. Now Jesus says this about Himself.
- d. Some are so quick to be offended that there is only one way to be saved that they fail to consider they should be grateful to God for providing A way.
  - i. Like the flood victim stranded on the roof of her house as the waters rise and rescuers come with a boat and extend their hands, and she says, "Is this the only way? Couldn't you send a helicopter? I've always wanted to ride in a helicopter. And this boat looks kind of dirty, not at all what I expected."
    - 1. "Lady, Get in the boat! Be grateful you are being rescued!"
- e. The gate represents the initial act of saving faith, with conversion and regeneration and all that happens when a person is forgiven and saved.
  - i. The narrow path represents the walk of discipleship that can be difficult.
  - ii. I was saved at 16. I entered through the narrow gate. For 21 years I've been walking the path of discipleship. Sometimes it's hard. Following Christ isn't always easy. In fact, He promises it will be hard at times.
    - 1. Matthew 5:10-12 – you will face opposition at times for following Jesus.
- f. The alternative is broad because it is every way but Jesus. Every religion but Jesus.
  - i. If Jesus' statement about us being evil in 7:11 would go off like a bomb in a college class, this statement would go off like a nuclear warhead.
  - ii. Christians are accused of arrogance, but how arrogant would I have to be to change the words of Christianity's founder? These are the words of Jesus, not some later addition by power hungry Christians.
  - iii. If there is something that Jesus says that seems strange to you, lean in closely and think and study. Don't recoil and certainly don't assume that it's just me distorting the words of Jesus.
- g. What keeps people from entering the narrow gate?

- i. Our nature – we are evil (7:11) and don't want to acknowledge our sin and turn to Christ.
  - ii. The broad way seems easier – the word for “narrow” in v. 14 is different than the earlier word. It has the idea of difficult, hard, restrictive.
  - iii. False teachers (7:15-21) who convince people that there really isn't a narrow way but any who are sincere can follow their own paths, etc.
    - 1. That's what we see next.
2. What does my **fruit** reveal about my **root**? (7:15-21)
- a. False prophets (7:15)
    - i. Danger is not from “new atheists” who bring clever arguments or obvious cult leaders.
    - ii. Danger is from men and women who look like Christians (come in sheep's clothing – they look like the other sheep!), talk like Christians (Lord, Lord!), and act like super-Christians (casting out demons and doing miracles) but have destructive motives (ravenous wolves). (Odonnell)
      - 1. The Good Shepherd is never more like a shepherd than when He is protecting His sheep. And Jesus is here being the good shepherd.
    - iii. How do we recognize the “false prophets” Jesus is referring to? He gives us a way. Look at the fruit in their lives. Don't merely listen to their words (although their words are one “fruit”), look at their lives.
      - 1. Being careful to follow His previous command to not judge (7:1)
    - iv. The fruit reveals the root.
    - v. **2 Timothy 3:13** But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
    - vi. **Jude 1:4** For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.
    - vii. **Titus 1:16** They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.
  - b. The non-Christian world is repulsed when they hear of a scandal regarding a public Christian figure like a megachurch pastor who is found to have been living a duplicitous life and engaging in sexual or financial sin.
    - i. As tragic as that is, what is almost more tragic is the way that some Christians are NOT repulsed by that. Jesus says this is one way we can watch for false teachers.
  - c. Analogy of trees and fruits (7:16-20)
    - i. Rather than merely looking for the fruit of false prophets, we should examine our own lives. That should always be first, as the statement about the log/speck from early in Mt 7 should tell us.
3. Will I do the **will** of the Father? (7:21-23)
- a. Sobering passage.
    - i. Some will stand before God self-deceived.

- ii. Some will say, “Lord, Lord, did I not do all these religious things? Did I not say a prayer at VBS?”
    - iii. And He will say, “I never knew you.”
      - 1. Not, “I saved you but then you messed up too big and I cut you loose.”
  - b. Who can enter the kingdom then?
    - i. Those who do the will of God the Father.
      - 1. Salvation by works?! No
    - ii. **John 6:40** "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."
    - iii. They recognize their spiritual poverty (5:3), their sin (7:11), and enter through the narrow gate (7:13-14). Their lives bear fruit that testifies to this new root (7:16-20) as they walk on the difficult path.
4. What is the **foundation** upon which my life is built? (7:24-29)
- a. His final contrast uses the analogy of two builders building on two different foundations who both experience the same storm.
    - i. One house stood in the midst of the storm, the other fell. The difference was in the foundation they were built upon.
    - ii. We see this anytime a massive storm or tornado hits, the trailer home parks are destroyed. Why? People joke (darkly) that the tornados always seem to target trailer homes but of course that’s not it. They just don’t have solid foundations and solid construction so while the storm hits the whole city they bear the brunt of the damage.
  - b. The first builder pictures the one who hears the words of Jesus and acts on them.
    - i. Refers to this whole Sermon on the Mount from chapters 5-7.
    - ii. They hear the entrance requirement of being poor in spirit, they recognize God’s desire for not just an outward appearance of religiosity but and inner transformation and obedience from the heart, they heed the command not to judge others hypocritically, they enter by the narrow gate.
      - 1. That life is secure.
      - 2. If 7:21-23 is sobering, this should be immensely comforting. If you stand on Christ, you stand on solid ground and no storm of life will shake you. You are secure.
  - c. The second builder pictures the one who hears the words of Jesus but either rejects or passively moves along without a decision.
    - i. That life will fall, and great will be its fall – either in this life or after death.
  - d. How can Jesus say such a thing?
    - i. The crowds recognize – He had authority.
    - ii. That’s the answer to the exclusivity question – How can Christians say their way is the only way?
      - 1. Jesus said it. Jesus speaks as one having authority because He is God.



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