

Who Are "the Few"?

(by Bob Pulliam)

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:13f)

Nearly everyone wants to believe they are numbered with the "few" in this passage. You would certainly have to be a fool, a Satanist, or a liar to want otherwise. But what is truly troubling is the vast number of people who want to count themselves in this number, but in reality do not qualify for it's ranks.

Who Aren't the Few?...

As we ask the question, "Who are the few?", it might be beneficial for us to ask, "Who do not qualify as the few?" Here are answers that can be given, of people who will not be saved:

Some Who Call Jesus "Lord"

Jesus said, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Lk 6:46) One who cries out to the Lord must certainly want to be in the "few". But is it possible that one be in the number of the saved, and not be following Jesus at the same time?

These are lovers of family more than Jesus (Mt 10:34-38). These are lovers of money and self more than Jesus (II Tim 3:2; Jn 14:15 & 21). These wish to appear loyal to Jesus, and seem to be on the narrow path to everlasting joy; but their heart is elsewhere. Their treasure is laid up on earth rather than in heaven (Mt 6:1 9ff). The path these follow is actually the broad path to destruction.

Some Who Are Thoroughly Sincere

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' " (Mt 7:21ff) These believe that they are serving the Lord. They actually believe that their works in His service are something to shout about. Indeed, they will seem to have put many of us to shame as we look upon our lives. Yet they will be rejected! Why will the Lord condemn these "diligent workers" in the end? The answer is simple. Jesus said, to enter you must do "the will of My Father in heaven." These were not doing the will of the Father. This is verified as Jesus calls them workers of "iniquity", or "lawlessness".

The picture of these people is clear. They had served the Lord their own way. They had fallen prey to the same trap that man has been falling into since the beginning of time. Cain; Nadab and Abihu; David and Uzzah; Naaman... All are a testimony to the tendency of man to serve God according to human wisdom and ulterior motives, rather than according to the law which God so clearly provides.

Jesus' statement to these individuals who think themselves to have been diligent is a very clear picture of the "narrow path" mentioned earlier. It is narrow because it includes only God's way. That way is one way. People want to believe that there are many ways to heaven "as long as they are sincere". Jesus plainly tells us that this is not true. God's way is the only way. It is a narrow way. It is a way traveled by only a few. The "few" are not the number who will fill it, and none other can enter for lack of space. The "few" are the only number willing to forfeit self to travel that way!

Any With a Sectarian Spirit

The sectarian spirit is the spirit of division. It was mentioned just above in those who want to believe that there are many ways to heaven. They tell us that all can do their own thing, as long as they are doing so with love, and a sincere desire to reach heaven.

Jesus prayed this prayer in the garden the night He was betrayed. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (in 17:20). Jesus' prayer was that all be one. Not united in their diversity; but united as one, just as He and the Father are one. The oneness of Jesus and the Father is not a unity in diversity. It is a singularity in purpose and doctrine. Do you ever remember reading where Jesus and the Father had a disagreement because Jesus wanted to teach it one way, but the Father wanted it differently? The religious world is full of doctrines that conflict and disagree, and that on very important topics! This "acceptable" division in the religious world is at variance to the one narrow path that Jesus pointed out as the way of salvation. Such was also condemned by His apostles after the church was established (I Cor 1:10; II Jn 9). Those who follow that path of "unity in diversity" are on the broad path that leads to destruction!

Those Who Seek Jesus Through Traditions

Jesus said, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?... These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Mt 15:3, 8f) Once traditions have been passed down over a long period of time, they take on an air of law. We see this in religions today, and such was manifest in the Judaism of the first century. It is particularly difficult to break those traditions when they are tied to father and mother, and perhaps even a long list of ancestors. It matters not how old or venerated the tradition may be, God's law must take precedence over all.

Many people today are members of their church solely because of tradition. They would not dream of breaking that tradition to follow God's law. In their minds, their traditions have become God's law! What a convenient ploy of Satan to keep people on the broad path to destruction! And oh how well it works!

Who Are the Few?...

So now we know who the few are not. But who are the few?

We noted earlier that the narrow path is narrow because it includes only the one way God has given to heaven. No, that one way is not to just believe on Jesus. The context tells us

what the one way actually is. After speaking of the narrow and broad way, Jesus warned of false prophets. He then spoke of those who alone will enter the kingdom of heaven. It is "he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Mt 7:21) Jesus went on to point out that the destruction of man (even the sincere) would be because of "iniquity" or "lawlessness".

Jesus is telling us that God gives mankind a law to be obeyed. Obedience to that law is the only way to please Him. The narrow way, then, is the law that God has given; and the few are those who are obedient to that law. Disobedience places one on the broad way to destruction. Such is the easiest course for man to follow, but brings everlasting condemnation.

Conclusion...

If you wish to partake of everlasting life, you will have to heed the "law of the Spirit" (Rom 8:1). The "law of liberty" (Jms 1:25) will set you free from the condemnation of sin. But it must be the law as God gave it; untainted by the poison of men's traditions and doctrines. You must remove the shackles of selfish desire that would keep you in the broad path, and obey the Master who gave His life that you might live. Only with this faithful obedience will you be numbered with the "few" on the narrow path to everlasting life. God's word alone is reliable in revealing the narrow path that leads to life everlasting.