**Your Way or the Narrow Way?**

By Nathan Warner

*“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.”* (Matthew 7:13-14 NASB)

*“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”* (John 6:37)

Here Jesus describes a narrow way to Life, almost as if it cuts across a broad “plain,” which terminates in destruction – like cliff edges of the Grand Canyon in the dark. When Jesus is talking about the narrow way that leads through the narrow gate, He is describing Himself, for He said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6b). The broad way is every other “way” that people walk in this world.

When we think of what is meant by the “broad way,” most of us probably think of the sinful behaviors of lawless people, such as: *“immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these*” (Galatians 5:19-21a).

We don’t tend to think of the Buddhist monk, the moral Muslim, or the orthodox Jew walking on the same broad way as those lawless people. Yet, they too are headed for destruction. Why is that?

Let’s first look at the orthodox Jew, for he at least has the truth of God’s Law (unlike the other two examples). Why is he headed for destruction? Paul says, *“all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified”* (Romans 2:12-13).

If you live in lawlessness, you sin without the law, but you will perish because your sin cannot be accepted before God. If you live by the law, you will sin, and when you sin, you will have broken the law and will be judged by it and will perish. The Law does not help you to stop from sinning. Sin cannot be accepted in God’s presence. Paul says only the doers of the Law will be justified before God, but his point is that NO ONE can “do” the Law, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23), and they cannot be justified before God. *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all”* (James 2:10). *“You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?”* (Romans 2:23). So, regardless, if you try to live your life lawlessly sinning or sinning under the Law, you will perish.

No one can be justified by the Law, indeed the Law was not created to justify men. The purpose of the Law was to expose the lawless behavior of sin, reveal man is incapable of keeping himself from sinning, and drive home that man needs something outside himself to justify and save himself from the consequences of sin, which is destruction.

So we see that even the orthodox Jew who dedicates his life to trying to obey God’s Law cannot save himself. What about other moral codes and laws? The Buddhist monk, the Muslim, and the great philanthropist, for example, have created their own laws that they follow to make themselves “righteous” in their eyes and in the eyes of many others. But this is not the righteousness of God – it is self-righteousness. The self-righteous are fooling themselves, for they are not justified before God by their “moral” behavior, nor can they ever be. Just because they follow their own law, this does not make them righteous, for they are not even trying to keep God’s Law.

Neither the whoremonger nor the Buddhist monk is on the way of Life, even though one is living an immoral life and the other is living a “moral” life of SELF-justification. In the same way, the “moral” Pharisee was no better off than the immoral sinner. Both put their faith in the broad plain of destruction.

The only way to be justified before God is by being in the Narrow Way – by being in Christ. This justification cannot come by our own righteousness. God appointed only one way for man to escape the consequences of his sin – the forgiveness of sin and imputed righteousness His Son, Jesus Christ, *“and there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). It can only come by Believing in the name of Jesus Christ and accepting His imputed (or attributed) righteousness as a gift. He has the right to give salvation to anyone who accepts the work He did to purchase them from the consequences of their sins. Only in this way are we changed, born again, and indwelt by the Spirit. We become a new creation, are adopted as the very children of God the Father, and are betrothed to Jesus, the Son of God. At this moment, we are justified in Christ before God to be sanctified by the Spirit for the glory to be revealed in us.

God gives us two powerful realities in Scripture for us to understand Salvation: the Sons of God and the Bride of Christ. Let’s look at God’s plan of Salvation to see how the Biblical concepts of Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification fit seamlessly with these realities. *“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness* [or Justification] *and sanctification, and redemption* [physical redemption or glorification]” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

God’s Way of Jesus Christ

JUSTIFICATION – The Moment We Become God’s “Possession”

Before we were Justified, we had put our faith in the broad way—we were “lost” and slaves to sin and self-righteousness. Sin bears a penalty: separation from God for all eternity. But if we accept Christ’s substitution of Himself in our place of judgment to bear our penalty for our sins, we become justified before God – Jesus’ righteousness is imputed to us as a gift; thus, we are saved, but not by any work that we do. Justification is the moment of belief, when we are born again, changed, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit – we become a new creation in Christ Jesus. Justification means we are in Christ—the Way, the Truth and the Life.

*“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory”* (Ephesians 1:13-14). God *“made Him* [Jesus] *who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21), that I *“may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith”* (Philippians 3:9), *“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified”* (Galatians 2:16).

Yes, *“to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness”* (Romans 4:5). – *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1).

**Justification as a Child of God:** Justification is the Moment of Adoption into God the Father’s family as His sons (we are sons because only sons receive an inheritance, and all Believers receive an inheritance from God the Father). In this moment our position has changed. We are no longer children of the world. Through no work of our own, we now belong to God. We are no more slaves to sin nor are we under the world’s authority, *“for you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”* (Romans 8:15), *“belonging to the Way”* (Acts 9:2b).

We are now dependent children of the Father, under His complete authority, destined for an inheritance in the Kingdom of His Son at the time appointed by the Father for each of us (our “coming of age” when Christ returns) – *“In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will”* (Ephesians 1:11 ESV). We cannot receive our inheritance until Christ’s return (glorification).

**Justification as the Bride of Christ:** Justification is the Moment of Betrothal to Jesus Christ. In this moment, our position has changed. The moment of Betrothal was when a woman legally became the wife of her husband, but they were not yet united until the wedding ceremony. A betrothed woman was no longer under the authority of her father—she belonged to her husband. Believers in the Church are no longer under the authority of the world (our old father) but now belong to our legal husband, Jesus Christ, Who purchased us with the bride price—the price for our sin, which was His life in our place.

*“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:2-5).

SANCTIFICATION – Maturing in Christ

From the moment of Justification, our lives in Christ are being sanctified. *“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). Sanctification refers to the cleansing of vessels to be used in God’s temple – it means they are set apart to be cleansed for a special purpose. It also refers to that process of cleansing. Unlike Justification, which occurs in the moment we truly believe in Jesus, Sanctification is a maturing process preparing us for our responsibility in the Father’s House. *“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life”* (Romans 6:22), *“because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13b).

**Sanctification as a Child of God:** From the moment of adoption, God begins raising us up as His children. We are being matured, nourished, disciplined, and prepared for our inheritance in Christ’s Kingdom, under the guidance and management of God’s Holy Spirit, Whom He has given over us. The Spirit sanctifies us for the Father’s purpose for us in our inheritance. The habits and ways of our former “father” are being replaced with the works or ways of our new Heavenly Father, so that we would learn to emulate Him.

*“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline”* (2 Timothy 1:7), *“for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). *“Now as long as the heir is a child* [minor—person under the age of full legal responsibility], *he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father”* (Galatians 4:1-2). *“‘For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons...He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”* (Hebrews 12:6-8;10b-11).

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Peter 1:3-5).

**Sanctification as the Bride of Christ:** In the two-part Jewish marriage custom, the word for the Period of Betrothal was Kiddushin, which means “Sanctification.” This was when a betrothed woman was set apart for a period of time of preparation and expectation until her husband returned for her. During the betrothal period, the bridegroom leaves to make a home for them, and the bride could not see him. At an unexpected time, he would return for her and take her to the marriage feast, where their union would be completed.As a betrothed bride, the Church is being prepared for Christ’s return when we will be married and united to Jesus.

*“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Romans 12:1-2).

*“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

*“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV).

GLORIFICATION – Eternity

Glorification is the end result of a Believer’s life – it is the destination of our walk with the Lord, *“and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified”* (Romans 8:30).

**Glorification as a Child of God:** The child of God comes into their inheritance at the end of the Sanctification period. This is the time appointed by the father – the coming of age. This inheritance involves sharing in the honor and glory of Jesus and having responsibilities in administrating Christ’s Kingdom on Earth in the Millennium reign of Christ from Jerusalem after He returns.

*“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”* (1 John 3:2-3), *“knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve”* (Colossians 3:23-24).

**Glorification as the Bride of Christ:** The Bride of Christ will be united to Jesus in Holy matrimony, becoming one with Him and sharing in His glory and His reign on the Millennial earth and on the new Earth.

*“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4).

*“Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.’ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints”* (Revelation 19:6-8).

God gives us these realities to understand His beautiful plan of Salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Narrow Way to God and there is no other way for men to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Even so. Amen.