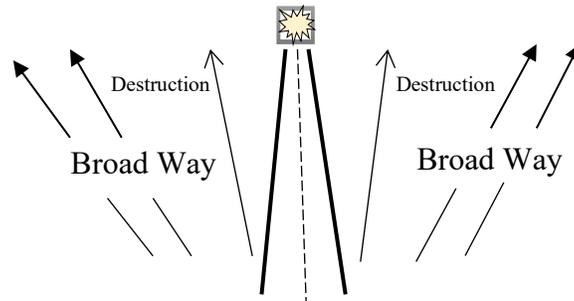


## ~Part Three~

### Side Roads that Miss the Mark

Jesus is the Narrow Gate



Jesus poignantly described the way to the Father, stating in John 14:6, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Later, Jesus illustrated His statement using a word picture in Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus is the narrow gate. *"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell<sup>1</sup> is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it."* (NLT)

According to these scriptures and others, Jesus *is* the narrow gate. Entering by the narrow gate represents the way to know God and to experience His infinite love. The invitation to enter by the narrow gate is extended to every person. *Every person is invited* to enter God's kingdom through the narrow gate; no one needs to miss heaven. God wants us to experience His love, so that is why He has given us a clear and precise way to know Him.

#### Side Road #3 Impersonal Faith

Impersonal faith is closely related to mental assent, which we covered in Part Two. However, impersonal faith originates from a different mindset. Mental assent is naive and most often engaged with the sincere intentions. Whereas, impersonal faith is a reaction to an understanding of culpability and, therefore, subconsciously centered on fear. Earlier, I suggested that a personal relationship with the CEO of my company would dictate a high level of answerability. Consider how much more responsibility and accountability a personal relationship with the Creator God would imply.

Being accountable to God, especially a God you don't know or understand, can be scary. Accountability always infers responsibility, which means that there may be a price to pay for the consequences of our actions. So, with our default mode set to natural reasoning, we avoid seeking a personal relationship with God because of the inferred accountability. Subconsciously we think, "I don't want to be accountable for my actions." In other words, it is possible for a person to have an appearance of godliness or practice a form of religious expression but still keep God at arms-length.

There are as many causes for impersonal faith as there are people. However, the most common reasons are fear-based because a person does not correctly understand who God is. It is very common to believe that God is angry and looking for an opportunity to punish. This is misguided thinking on many levels because God loves every person to the uttermost. Moreover, He desires that no person should perish without Him.

<sup>1</sup> The NKJ translation says, "...the way that leads to destruction."

It is true; however, the book of Proverbs tells us that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. But this type of fear is reverencing God in His sovereign power and holiness. It is also true that God will mete out His justice by ultimately judging the sin of those who have not received the atoning blood of Jesus. This is why the good news of the Gospel Message is so astounding—Jesus is the means that God implemented to divert His wrath. Because of Jesus, we encounter the polar opposite of wrath, and that is His unfathomable riches of love towards us.

*God is love, and having received Jesus, there is no longer a need to fear His wrath.*

God the Father gave His only Son so that none should perish but have everlasting life. Jesus implemented a New Covenant that averts God's wrath held against our sin debt—genuine believers in Jesus are in this New Covenant. This means that as Christians, we can step boldly into God's presence without undue fear, but rather experience the Father's love. However, a person who improperly fears God often cannot appreciate the extent of His love and His desire to rescue him or her.

Misguided fear will prevent a person from properly responding to God's love. Please know that *God came in-person to rescue you individually*. This means that God is *personally* invested in your *individual* redemption and restoration. However, the lingering fear of accountability often establishes a moat that, in turn, creates an impasse to knowing God personally.

The solution for operating in impersonal faith comes from discovering and then internalizing that God loves you without limits and that there is no need to fear His wrath. It is common knowledge that every person has the primary need to know that he or she is loved unconditionally. When a person, who has maintained impersonal faith, finally gets the revelation that God loves unconditionally, without regard to “how good or bad he or she has been,” the impasse is lifted—the moat of fear is overcome.

Impersonal faith is just what the term implies, trying to please God without a personal relationship with Him. A person is on this side road because he or she is trying to please God impersonally, and therefore improperly. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith—fear is the polar opposite of faith. Pleasing God means embracing Jesus, by faith, as God's way to know Him personally in relationship. —Ω

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|  Information and Revelation     |
|  Application and Transformation |

*Heavenly Father, thank You for personally investing in me so I can have eternal life with You. You sent Your son, Jesus, as the way the truth and the light, guiding me day-by-day to the narrow gate. Thank You for Your infinite love that rescues me from Your wrath—You knew I would need a savior. Thank You for the mindboggling truth that You, the creator of the universe, wants to have a personal relationship with me. You relentlessly draw me to know You and to be known by You. Thank You for the rest I have in You, for I don't have to practice a form of religious expression to please You. LORD, in times of my insecurity and weak faith, I ask You to remind me that I am in the New Covenant and therefore safe and secure in Your unfailing love. Help me know day-by-day how Your unconditional love sets me free to know You without fear. I proclaim Your love and make these proclamations in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Excerpted and adapted from, “*Having the Mind of Christ*”  
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