

## WHO CAN BE SAVED?

July 12, 2015

The Bible says over and over that Jesus Christ died for everyone—everyone includes Adam and Eve all the way down to the last soul that shall be born on the earth! Jesus died for all! Why then will anyone be lost? Jesus Himself taught that a majority of people will be lost! How can this be? If Jesus paid the penalty for everyone's sin, how can anyone be lost?

Hello, I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

The Bible says that Jesus came to earth so that "by the grace of God, [Jesus] might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). You see, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and Jesus accepted the wages of everyone's sins. Jesus' apostle Paul put it this way, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men . . ." (Titus 2:11). Jesus taught that salvation is like walking through a gate and into a road. He advised us to **"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the [road] is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."** (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV) The reason we "enter" a gate and travel a road is to reach its destination. One road leads to destruction, the other road leads to life. The word "destruction" means "ruin." In other words, what is at the end of the broad road is a ruined existence. This is not what we were made for! Humans were created for "life", not "ruin." Human destiny should be heaven, not hell. Jesus said that eternal fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41) Heaven was prepared for those who will choose the narrow gate and the narrow road.

If Jesus then tasted death for everyone, and the grace of God has appeared to all, why will a majority of people choose to travel an easy road to ruin and be lost! The answer is in the word I just used, the word "choose." You see, accepting Jesus' gift of grace is a **choice!**

However, our choosing comes **after** our searching! Did you notice that Jesus said, "those who find [the road to heaven] are few"? The most natural thing for us is to enter the wide gate that leads into the broad road where the majority of people are traveling. But finding the narrow gate and the narrow road that leads to life is

a big challenge! We have to search for it in order to find it! Are you searching for the road to life? Is that the reason you are listening today? Or do you go from day to day never thinking about what will happen **when** you reach the end of the road?

When God sent Jesus it was God's choice. That choice was motivated by love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...." (John 3:16) Jesus' acceptance of His assignment was motivated by His love for His Father. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that said, "...I have come to do thy will, O God...." (Psalm 40:6-8) Jesus said on one occasion, "**My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.**" (John 4:34 ESV) The great motivator for the Grace of Salvation coming into the world was the powerful LOVE of the Father and the Son. So that was God's choice! But what about your choice? Will you choose to search for the narrow gate?

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6) Jesus is the narrow gate. And His teaching leads us along the narrow road that leads to life. Yes, Jesus Christ died for the sins of all mankind, but not everyone will choose to be saved! The writer of Hebrews wrote that Christ "became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrew 5:9). You see, people who hear the good news of Jesus Christ have a choice. The question becomes, "Who will believe and obey Jesus Christ?" Jesus said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36 ESV) To believe is to obey. And as the Hebrew writer said, Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

There are two classes of people who travel the broad road that leads to destruction. Jesus' apostle Paul identified them when he wrote that (1) those who do not know God and (2) those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ "will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). When will that happen? Jesus will return to earth to preside over God's great judgment day. Jesus will create a great division on that day. Jesus said, "**When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people**

one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left." (Matthew 25:31-33 ESV)

Those on the left (the goats) will go away into everlasting punishment, while those on the right (the sheep) will enter into eternal life (Matthew 25:46). Jesus described that eternal place of punishment as being "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched," (Mark 9:48)

Jesus predicted that relatively speaking only a "few" would enter into the destination called life. Who then are those few? Those who search for God and His Son can find the narrow gate and the road that leads to life. Those who hear the gospel, believe it, and obey from the heart that form of doctrine to which they were delivered (Romans 6:16-18) become children of God. After obeying the gospel, God's children are to remain faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

To be saved a person must first hear the good news. Before Jesus' ascension back to His Father he made arrangements for people hearing the good news that Jesus saves. By the authority that God gave Him, Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the good news. He told them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV) At the "end of the age" is when Jesus will return to judge the world. But now people have an opportunity to enter the narrow gate and travel down the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

In order to enter the narrow gate hearers must believe the gospel. Jesus explained the need for "faith" this way, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." (John 8:23-24 ESV) After Jesus ascended back to the One who sent Him, humans cannot see Jesus with our eyes nor hear Him with our ears. "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17 KJV) The Word of God, the message about Christ is written! It is written in that book we call the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, in order to enter the narrow gate, a believer must repent of his sins. Jesus said to people who thought they were better than others, "Unless you

repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3 ESV) Not all believers will repent. That's right! The apostle John tells us about a group of Jewish rulers who believed in Jesus, but would not confess Him because they were afraid of the Pharisees who could cast them out of the synagogue. John says they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. (John 12:42, 43) Confession of faith and repentance from sin is closely connected! Those high officials in the Jewish government refused to repent and change their lifestyle and so they would not confess faith in Christ. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33 KJV)

In order to enter the narrow gate a repentant believer must be immersed in the water of baptism into the remission of sins. The first sermon commissioned by Jesus Christ was the one Peter preached on the Jewish day of Pentecost. That day came just 10 days after Jesus ascended back to his heavenly Father. After receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the 12 apostles of Christ preached to a large multitude of people. The Holy Spirit enabled those apostles to the gospel in the native languages of those present from 17 different countries. We read of that occasion in Acts, chapter 2. At the conclusion of Peter's sermon he said this. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.' Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:36-38 ESV)

When a person complies with these conditions he or she is receiving or accepting the forgiveness that comes through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Those who fall short of "entering the narrow gate" will sadly discover that the death of Christ was of no avail to them!

Friends, it is not God's fault if you are lost. By His choice God sent a Savior. By your choice you can receive Him or reject Him. Are you searching for God and His Son? Visit a church of Christ near you or become a student in the World Bible School. (Visit our website for details) Friends, enter the narrow gate and begin walking in the narrow road toward eternal life.

Adapted from a June 16, 2015 blog by Hugh Fulford, gospel preacher.