

Articles and Sermons :: The Narrow Gate (part 5) Martin J Collison

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THE CROSS IS AN OFFENCE

The Cross and any of the deeper teachings of Christ are cleverly by-passed these days. Moreover, the "leaders" of the modern-day corporate empires often claim to be in the position of Moses, but in this era. They are charged, in their minds, by God himself with the task of "leading" their flock into the Promised Land of blessing and wholeness. They tell the "flock" that they have communed with the Almighty. He is leading them in the way they should go. Conveniently, however, the route actually seems to by-pass anything of the wilderness and offers the quick route to yet more blessing. A more likely explanation is that their own hearts and the power of the flesh has deceived them. It is they themselves who have decided the way that they will travel. I am grieved at how often Gods name is used to rubber stamp the pre-determined plans of men.

As the Cross has been excluded from most churches these days, the "leaders" within these institutions have little revelation of how God actually builds the "new man" which He is so earnestly seeking intensifying urgency. The Bride which He is becoming impatient for. The chances are, if you have hungered and persisted in seeking after God as He is Himself, not the manipulated version presented in the present church culture, then you will know something of the narrow path. If not, then what I speak is an alien language to you. I have sat in numerous churches where men and women have been given the power of the platform and who seem to speak with little or no depth whatsoever about the Cross. It has consistently astonished me. Indeed, it is sadly the worship of the platform in these institutions which stands as another of the "broad path" distractions that have ensnared many in current times.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SOUGHT THE CLOSER WALK

Those who have glimpsed a deeper reality, and indeed who hunger for it, will by now have been through many extreme and severe refining processes at the hands of God. They will have experienced walking their own "narrow path". This will have been allowed by God with the very purpose of achieving an in-working of a truer version of humility than that which is often presented at mere surface level within the current pseudo-church construct. Such depths are not attained by simply raising our arms and lightly singing words associated with submission and surrender. It is likely that adverse and uncomfortable life events and circumstances are key in bringing the likeness of Jesus into the hearts of His people. Brokenness and wilderness processes, where no one but God Himself exists to sustain your very life, serve to bring us somewhere closer to even approaching Gods view on humility. As Jesus said, for those few who are seeking the true way, this way will be contracted by pressure. It will involve compressions of all sorts to our own selfish motives and desires.

TRUE HUMILITY AND THE REPROOFS OF LIFE

In reality, the in-working of true humility in our lives is placed at the very highest level on Gods agenda and it is through the reproofs of life that He accomplishes this. Suffering is the staple for the disciple. It is by way of those "thorns in the flesh" within our own lives that the Lord brings this humility. It is via the long dark night of the soul. The intense crushing. The wilderness. Those family and personal situations which all the power of the flesh is incapable of rectifying or resolving. Illnesses. Set-backs. Loss of possessions, jobs, loved ones. Rejection by family, "friends" and work colleagues. Whole man-made systems will spew out the seekers of the narrow path. They are not wanted. They will find no rest in this world. Seeking acceptance is pointless and meaningless. Gods opinion is all that counts come Judgement Day.

Humility actually says "I cannot do it without the grace of God". Humility is an utter emptying of "self". It only comes through being utterly broken. Only then can the new man of the Spirit even begin to arise. It is where the "flesh-man" is placed on the altar and dies. Where we truly realise that the flesh achieves nothing. Even in their approach to this critical matter, I see churches and leaders yet again falling for the deceptions of the enemy by burying themselves in a wrong notion of humility. They borrow their teachings from others who also have entirely inaccurate concepts of who God actually is and what His deeper ways entail. In His sovereignty He has allowed these life adverse life circumstances. And, for those with a true heart for the genuine and not the counterfeit reality of the Kingdom, the refining has been most intense. It is the outward evidence and manifestation of the narrow path. It is the Lord saying: "Do you really want to follow Me?...Are you really willing to go the distance with all that this will entail in respect of your life?...Will you love

Are not your life even unto death? ¶

God is seeking. This is the greatest revelation of all. He is the God who Himself is on the look out. Looking down and constantly seeking for those who will not just take from His hands but will love Him with all their hearts and lives. He hears the words and witnesses the emotional outpourings of the masses but He is wiser than that. He knows that only a small portion of the true seed is going to fall on good soil. He will not be tricked. Sacrifice all. His heart cries out for these ones. The ones who will reciprocate. Those who seek with all their strength to love Him as much as He loves us. Those who will utterly die to themselves. This is our cause. This is our calling. Choose your friends carefully in these days. Choose your ¶church¶ wisely. Anything that offends in the pursuit of this cause, cut it out. If you want to seek the narrow path then do whatever you need to, as guided by the Spirit. Follow Jesus and His will. Know the voice of the Good Shepherd for yourself.

I have seen those in ¶leadership¶ within these church systems time after time demonstrate an entirely immature understanding of the deeper processes of God. Unaware of their relevance. In turn, they pass this on to their congregations. This is why a vicarious Christianity will not do. Many have substituted the rigours of finding God for themselves for a ¶church experience¶. There is no quick route for those who truly want to enter the Promised Land. I have sat in congregations where men and women cheat their ¶flock¶ with a false Gospel. The church system has enveloped them. They have assimilated into it. Quite often, it is a tepid environment where the heart of Christ is not present. In others there is a false anointing. Emotion and music stirs feelings. Doing good works appeases the flesh. This is not anywhere near the same as following Christ. We have to find the truth for ourselves. We are all accountable for ourselves. We have the Bible. We have the Holy Spirit. We have our own capacity to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

A false safety is found in the current created ¶church worlds¶. A hiding place within the system is on offer. Be careful what it will mould you into. It is an institutionalised version of Christianity and a pseudo-Christianity at that. Not all bad, but by no means intent on building disciples. I hesitate in saying these things. It gives me no joy to do so. But I am aware, like the Apostle Paul, that the church we have at present is falling short of its calling. I am also not naïve. I know that many will continue to choose comfort and stay on the broad path. Jesus said it. I believe it. Jesus loves His church, but He is being sold short. It is this shortfall between the current church and the pure and spotless Bride that is central. He seeks a church utterly purged of the world and its own desires.