

A SHARED JOURNEY

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Romans 12:14-21

1. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of two ways that are open to us, the Broad Way and the Narrow Way. Matt 7:13-14

"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. 14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

2. Both promise Heaven, but only the Narrow Way actually leads there.

3. The word "narrow" in verse 13, and the word "small" in verse 14 are the same word in Greek.

NOTE: The Greek word speaks of a constricted opening due to the obstacles standing close about.

4. The word "narrow" in verse 14 is from a different Greek word and means to crowd or to press (as grapes are pressed in a wine press).

NOTE: The word speaks of pressure, trouble, affliction, and distress.

5. Paul used the word quite often.

a. 2 Cor 4:7-11

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 we are **afflicted in every way**, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, **so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body**. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

b. 2 Cor 7:5-8

For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were **afflicted on every side**: conflicts without, fears within. 6 But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7 and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

c. 2 Cor 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our **affliction** so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any **affliction** with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; 7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

6. Paul used the same word in Acts 14:22 when he stated, "Through many **tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God."

NOTE: The word translated tribulations is the exact same Greek word Jesus used in Matthew 7:14.

7. The Christian life is a challenging life and is meant to be a shared journey.

8. Our companions are first and foremost the Lord Jesus Christ, and secondly our brothers and sisters in Christ.

9. In Romans 12:10 Paul wrote, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love," and in Romans 12:15 he added, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

10. With these thoughts in mind let's look at the verses we are focusing on this morning.

As we walk the Narrow Way:

I. We are not to respond in kind. 14, 17a, 19-20

A. Note Jesus' words in Luke 6:27

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

B. So when Paul says, "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse," he means that we are to sacrificially love them, seek their welfare, and pray for them.

C. Verse 17 needs no interpretation, "Never pay back evil to anyone."

NOTE: This does not mean that we are not to hold people accountable, but it does mean that our actions are not to be punitive.

D. In verse 19 we have another absolute prohibition, "Never take your own revenge."

1. We are to leave wrath and retribution to God.

2. While we obey Psalm 140:10; a verse Paul quotes in verse 20.

II. We are to identify with our fellow believers. 15-16

A. These verses can apply to everyone we interact with, but have special meaning within the family of God.

B. A strict translation of verse 15 would read, according to one commentator, "Rejoice with rejoicing ones, and weep with weeping ones."

C. Christians should have a Christ-like affinity for all people, but a special love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Gal 6:9-10

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and **especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**

D. Regardless of our social standing, race, or any other attribute or defining characteristic we become one at the foot of the Cross.

E. That oneness should be manifested within every local body of believers, but sadly it often is not.

III. We are to be proactive related to all forms of evil. 21

A. Verse 21 could be translated, "Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good."

1. John 16:33

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

2. 1 John 4:4-5

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

B. Another way of thinking about this verse would be to see it as an admonition, "Stop doing wrong, and start doing right."

C. This verse applies whether we encounter evil in the culture or evil in ourselves.

APPLICATION

1. Verses 17b and 18 read, "Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

2. Both Jesus and Paul caused trouble constantly, but not on purpose.

3. Some folks enjoy creating conflict; even some who call themselves Christians.

a. Ps 120:6-7

Too long has my soul had its dwelling with those who hate peace. 7 I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

Prov 12:18

18 There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

4. May God enable us to fully identify with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to have a Christ-like concern for and response to all men.