

narrow. There were 613 commandments that were very specific, and violation of any of them resulted in sometimes severe punishment. But Jesus set us free from the Law of sin and death. So how is the way narrow and how does this relate to the freedom we have in Christ as described by Paul in Galatians?

We can get a little better understanding of what Jesus meant by this statement by looking at His statements that follow it in Matt 7:15-29. He speaks of false prophets arising and knowing them by their fruits. Peter, in his 2nd epistle, warns against false prophets. Read 2 Peter 2:1-3. What are these false teachers teaching?

It sounds a lot like some of what passes for the gospel today. They follow their own greed and lusts and essentially teach people to do the same.

When Jesus finishes His statement about knowing the false teachers by their fruit, He generalizes His astonishing teaching with disturbing statements about those that think they are following Him by recognizing He is the Christ (they call Him Lord) not getting into heaven. What reason does He give in vs 21-23 of Matt 7?

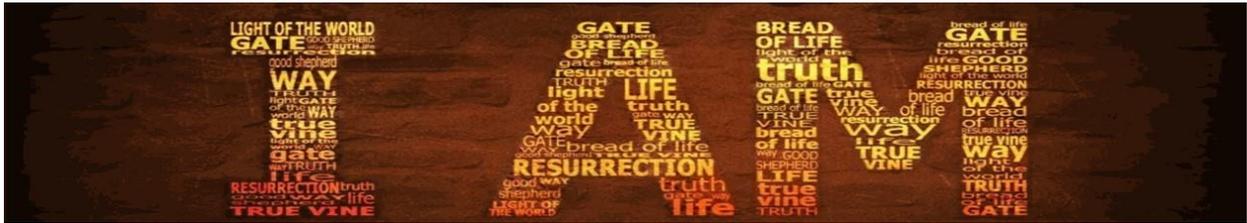
Now wait a minute. We know that we don't get into heaven by our works, but rather by believing in Jesus. How do you reconcile this statement of Jesus with the truth of salvation by grace through faith?

From vs 24-29, what would you say is the key to walking on the narrow path?

We focus so much on "believing" that I think we miss what that meant to a Jew of Jesus' day. To them, believing and obeying were synonymous or perhaps two sides to the same coin. In their view it was impossible to say you believe in someone if you weren't willing to obey. We can see that this is John the Baptist' view in John 3:36

Joh 3:36 NASB "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

So the "takeaway" for us in these passages is self-examination. Am I obeying Jesus commandments or do I view them as somewhat optional? If I am not taking the commandments of Jesus seriously, do I



The way we handle adversity that comes our way?

Keeping our minds on the words of God as we walk on our way is critical to leading lives full of faith and in obedience to Him. It puts us in a position for the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. Not just spiritual truth, but rather the truth of the word as it applies to our lives on the ground. When we do that, we will find that it is easy (easier?) to overcome the wicked one. We find the leading of the Spirit in our interactions with others, in the way we conduct our business, in being ready to give an answer to anyone about the hope that is in us, and in our ability to deal with adversity with faith in God rather than despair and exasperation.

Knowing Jesus Through Faith in Jesus

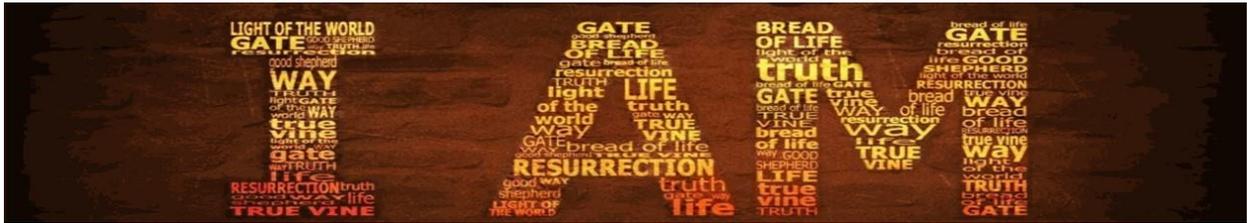
We briefly looked at the allusion to Jesus being the way that He made when He was first calling His disciples in John chapter 1 verse 51. In this passage Jesus alludes to the story of Jacob's ladder when He says that His disciples will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on Him. In Jacob's dream he saw the ladder reaching to God Himself and the angels of God ascending and descending (Gen 28:10-17). Read that passage quickly and note Jacob's reaction to the vision.

So what is Jesus saying to His disciples by comparing Himself to the ladder of Jacob?

Let's examine what it means for Jesus to be the ladder to God or the way to God. We've already said that this does not mean just that we cannot get to God without Jesus. That is the message of the Sheepgate. Beyond that it means that we have access to the Father via Jesus. This is not just heaven at the end, but continually. Read Hebrews 1:1-3. List the things this short passage tells us about Jesus.

Wow! There is a lot in these 3 short passages about Jesus, but hopefully among the things you listed, you included 1) that God is now speaking to us through Jesus, 2) that Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature, and 3) that Jesus now sits at the right hand of God (they are united as one).

So having access to the Father is the same as having access to Jesus. Further, access to Jesus includes access through His Word.



However, the word of God is neither magic nor mystical, and we cannot conclude that simply reading the word will necessarily bring us closer to Jesus. Take a look at what Jesus told the Jews that were trying to kill Him.

Joh 5:38-40 NASB "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. (39) "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; (40) and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

In the passage above, it would appear that Jesus says that His Jewish detractors are not only reading the word, but searching the scriptures. Nevertheless it is not enough. What does Jesus say is the problem?

So we get access to Jesus in part through the reading and study of the word, but to gain value and truth from the word we must do our reading through faith in Jesus. What does it mean to read the word through faith in Jesus?

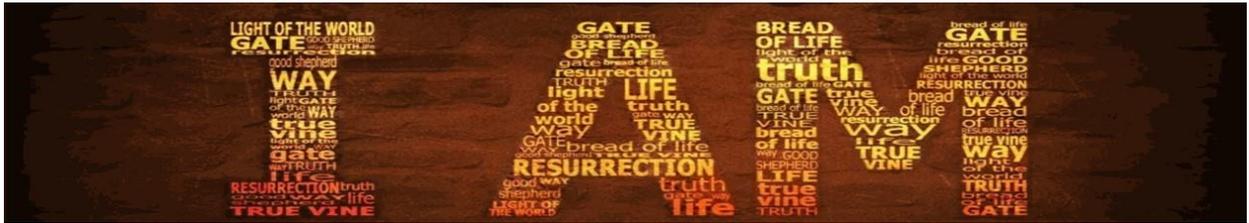
Do you believe in the inerrancy of scriptures? Inerrancy means that the scriptures are always correct for what they are intended for. Read 2 Tim 3:16-17. Believing that the scriptures are God's word and that they are correct is the beginning of reading the scriptures in faith.

Do you believe in the adequacy of scriptures? Adequacy means that the scriptures are adequate in and of themselves for the things that they address. This one is sometimes more difficult to answer because so often we read a single verse out of context and so we fail to see how they all work together. For example, we many times see passages like Col 3:8-9 as lists of things that we are not to do any longer.

Col 3:8-9 NASB But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. (9) Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

Perhaps you have had a problem with anger. This passage tells you that you should be putting this aside, but you have tried and failed many times. The fact that the scriptures tell you to quit this behavior does not seem **adequate** to helping you to overcome this problem. But a proper reading of the scriptures tells you that you are not to simply quit doing these things (put them off), but you overcome by putting on the proper replacements.

Col 3:12-13 NASB So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.



Trying not to get angry is not usually helpful. But doing positive things like purposely showing compassion, being kind to someone you might normally ignore, humbling ourselves, etc. are things that we can do. And when we do these things, we will find that the Spirit of God works in our hearts to heal them of anger.

Finally, do you in faith in the Lord, allow the scriptures to speak to your own life? Do you confess in faith that when God reveals things to you out of the scriptures, you are willing to apply the scriptures to your life? This is the essence of being willing to lose your life in order to gain it. The result is that the word changes you slightly more into the image of our Lord Jesus today than you were yesterday.

Jesus is The Truth

We noted that Jesus IS the truth. The concept of absolute truth has fallen out of favor in the last 100 years or so. People are willing to accept that your truth is not my truth and everyone has a truth that is right for them. What they are confusing with truth is their circumstances. Our circumstances color how we see truth, but they do not change the truth. I love J.R.R Tolkien's great work, *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien was a Christian and a friend of C.S. Lewis. While *The Lord of the Rings* is not an allegory in the way Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* are, nevertheless they are infused with biblical principles throughout. In one scene in particular, the men of Rohan are confused by all the circumstances that they have encountered during this particular day, and their leader expresses that he does not know how to judge right and wrong. When he asks the question of how he is to judge, one of the principle characters, a wise man who would ultimately be the king said,

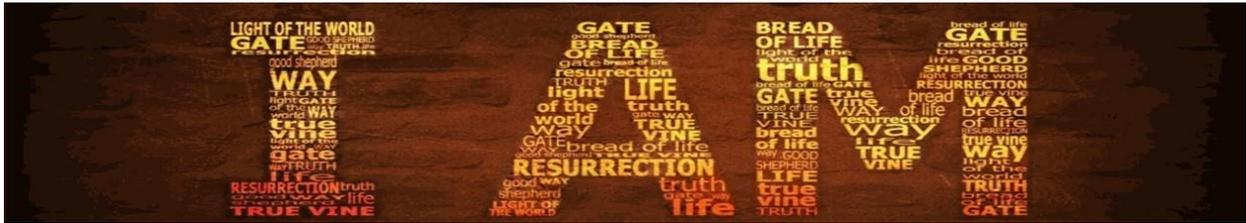
"As he ever has judged," said Aragorn. "Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house."

While this poetic passage is a work of fiction, the principle that Tolkien expresses here is straight from the Word of God. Let's examine the word for our instruction in some of the ramifications of Jesus being the Truth.

Seeing Truth Through Jesus' Eyes

One of the characteristics of Jesus' being the truth is that He is able to see things clearly and accurately. We, on the other hand, have differences of opinion and judgment which are not based on differing truths, but rather on different experiences. We can see this as evident even in our language. We no longer ask people "what do you think about" this or that, but rather we say "how do you feel about" this or that. We make an appeal to our feelings which are highly colored by our experiences. Our feelings are also highly colored by our motivations, by what we want or don't want. Look at what Jesus said to the Pharisees about this topic.

Joh 8:13-16 NASB So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." (14) Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. (15) "You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. (16) "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.



List two things that Jesus says about why He is able to see clearly to judge in truth.

Recognizing Truth Means First Knowing the Truth

To recognize the truth in any situation requires first knowing the truth. Jesus said in this passage that He recognizes the truth because He knew where He came from and where He was going. If we are to judge rightly either our situations, our desires, how we should react to others, or how we are to behave, we must first know the truth in order to see the situation through Jesus' eyes.

People have been seeking truth throughout the history of mankind. Science is dedicated to finding out more and more about the world in which we live in order to get closer and closer to the truth (Note: when scientists speak of truth, they mean something less stringent than the Bible refers to when speaking of truth). But we have truth revealed to us from God Himself. We have the Torah, the prophets, the wisdom writings, and most importantly we have the truth as revealed to us through Jesus who explains the truth to us (John 1:17-18). Do we understand all truth? No, for our created minds are not adequate to understand all truth. Moses wrote it this way in his final address to the Israelites before they entered the promised land.

Deu 29:29 NASB "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

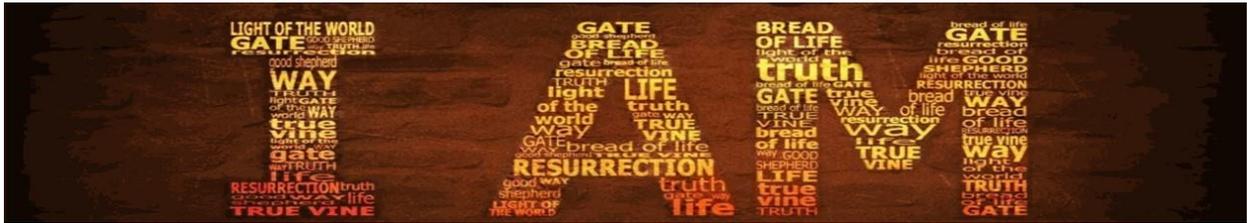
What Moses wrote here is profound. We cannot understand everything. God alone has that capacity, but God has revealed certain things to us and in fact He has given them to us for a possession so that we might be able to please Him. Peter writes essentially the same thing

2Pe 1:2-3 NASB Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; (3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

A huge part of this treasure is the written Word of God. Yet so often this magnificent, incomparable gift is left on the bedside table and not picked up until it is time to carry it to church. It becomes a symbol of our spirituality. Instead we should be hungrily devouring it, meditating on its mysteries, drawing closer and closer to our Lord through the knowledge of Him. As we pointed out in the previous section, this is not study in the way we might study a history book, but rather a study conducted in faith and submission to Jesus. And as we do that, we begin to slowly start seeing the world around us, and more importantly our own situations and interactions through the eyes of Jesus. When we do that, we see things in truth.

Recognizing Truth is Done in Fellowship with Jesus

The second thing Jesus says in John 8:13-16 about His judgment being true is that He and the Father are together in it. This goes back to the provision in the Law about the witnesses in a capital crime. Read Deut 17:6; 19:15 and explain the reasons that God gave this command.



Further Study: What does it mean to see things as Jesus saw them? Seeing sin as Jesus saw it. Seeing sinners as Jesus saw them. Seeing hypocrisy as Jesus saw it.

Being People of the Truth

What does it mean to see or hear the truth about ourselves?

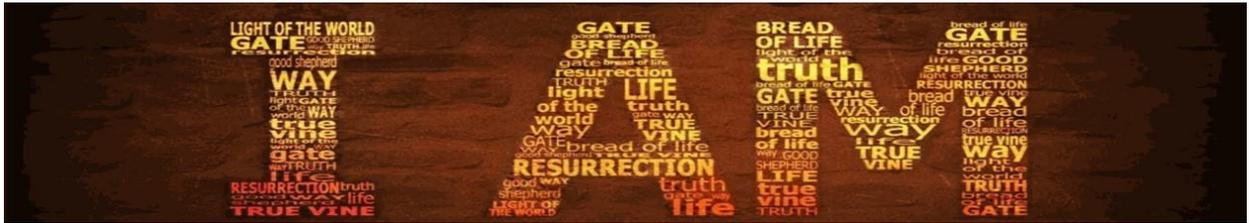
We are set apart (sanctified) by the truth. We are to be people of the truth. To be this, we must have the following characteristics

- We must be truthful with ourselves
- Truthful with the Lord
- Truthful with our fellow man.
- We do not use the truth as a tool to further our own agenda.

In what ways have you been untruthful with yourself? We can be untruthful with ourselves in two very different ways. The more common way is to lie to ourselves about the severity of sinful behavior. We harbor sinful attitudes or habits smugly assuming that God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins...” (1 John 1:9). When we do this repeatedly we are in effect expressing our unbelief in Jesus. How is this unbelief?

The other extreme of being untruthful with yourself is to continuously allow yourself to be condemning of yourself. If we have confessed our sins to God and truly repented of them, then the blood of Jesus has resulted in perfect forgiveness of my sin. Yet I still feel bad about the sin, particularly when it includes hurting someone else or has other consequences. But the fact that we are forgiven, even of horrible transgression, should rather drive us further into the arms of Jesus.

So we know that Satan accuses us day and night. We also know that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. How do I know the difference between the two? Read 2 Cor 7:10 and answer this question



Think about for a moment how knowing God and having God know us changes how we deal with life's struggles and challenges.

How does it change how we deal with life's successes and blessings?

We also spoke about Jesus being the Life impacting our lives qualitatively now. We noted that in the passage

Joh 10:10 ESV *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

the word abundantly in the Greek means *superabundant* (in quantity) or it can mean *superior* (in quality).

In thinking about how we Christians live our lives in comparison to those that don't know Christ, what differences should this abundant life now bring about?

1Pe 1:3 ESV *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*