

Strait and Narrow Path

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Conference Report, April 1955, p.65-68

Bishop Buehner, commenting upon the limited time allotted us in life, and the fact that many detour and get lost and thus fail to find the narrow way that leads to life eternal, brings me to the theme that I should like to discuss with you this morning.

Among the many choice teachings given by the Savior in that inspiring Sermon on the Mount, is this important instruction:

*Enter ye in at the strait gate . . .
Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14.)*

You will observe that I have quoted only the positive elements of this scripture. To enter the straight gate implies obedience to gospel requirements, and the narrow way that leads to life connotes additional requirements, rites, and ordinances for all who desire salvation and exaltation. Like so many teachings of our Lord, the interpretation, explanation, and procedures were left for his chosen prophets by inspiration and revelation, when the time was ready, to unfold to man's knowledge. It is true of this scripture.

I should like to ask, "What is the straight gate spoken of by the Savior by which we should enter?" Nephi, in the closing days of his ministry, gave a great discourse to his people embodying much in the way of prophesying, and in it furnishes the most direct and comprehensive answer to this question by saying:

For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. (2 Nephi 31:17.)

Nephi also said to his people: "*Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter.*" (Idem.)

Nephi, in vision, almost six centuries before the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in the flesh, witnessed his baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, even as we have it recorded in the third chapter of Matthew, when our worthy Lord came to John and asked

to be baptized of him. But John, humble as he was, realizing that this was his Lord, objected by saying,

I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:14-17.)

In this scripture we see the plan and the way to enter this straight gate, even baptism by water and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost; the Savior saying to John by way of emphasis, "*for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*"

Now what did the Savior mean by making this statement? Again we turn to the writings of Nephi and read:

And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water

And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. (2 Nephi 31:5-10.)

Here we see the straightness of the gate by which the

Son of God entered our Heavenly Father's kingdom and the reason for his doing so, which sets the example and pattern for all mankind to follow, for said he, "*Follow thou me and do the things which ye have seen me do.*"

Now, my brothers and sisters, let us consider what the narrowness of the way signifies. After explaining what is required to enter the straight gate, Nephi continues by saying:

And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. (Ibid., 31:18-21.)

My brothers and sisters, we see from this that the function of the Holy Ghost to those who have received its bestowal is to guide in the narrow way to an understanding of what is required for eternal life and glory. Men, through faithfulness, must become worthy for ordination to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, that priesthood after the order of the Son of God, which ordination and priesthood makes possible receiving the spiritual blessings of God's kingdom, for it is in the gospel ordinances officiated in by the authority of the Holy Priesthood that the powers of godliness are manifest unto men in the flesh. In this dispensation God has restored the keys, powers, and authorities to officiate in all the sacred ordinances with the right to seal and bind for time and all eternity both the living and the dead.

For the sacred purpose of obtaining the higher gospel ordinances and blessings, God has commanded that

temples should be built wherein his people can receive their endowments and sealings, to prepare them for celestial glory. Worthy women, as worthy men, enjoy the privileges of temple ordinances and blessings, receiving them by the authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood. Both make covenants with God, and both accept obligations and responsibility; also pledge faithfulness and obedience to God.

When the cornerstone of the great Salt Lake Temple was laid, Brigham Young in a discourse to the people assembled for that important occasion, said that very few of the elders in Israel understood the endowment, and for them to understand they must experience, and for them to experience, a temple must be built. Then he summarized the endowment in these words:

Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord which are necessary for you after this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key word, the signs and the tokens pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain you eternal exaltation in spite of earth or hell.

How sublime, comprehensive, significant, and important the endowment becomes when we understand it. When one has been endowed according to the order of temple rights and ordinances, then he or she is prepared for eternal sealing of husband to wife, wife to husband, and children to both, by men authorized and possessing the keys of this sealing power. Families thus united may go on to perfection, exaltation, and eternal happiness together.

We learn this from the writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, found in both the 131st and 132nd sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord, speaking to the Prophet, said,

In the celestial glory there are three heavens, or degrees;

And in order to obtain the highest a man must enter into this order of the priesthood, [meaning the new and the everlasting covenant of marriage];

And if he does not he cannot obtain it.

He may enter into the others, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase. (D. & C. 131:1-4.)

Those who do not enter this order of the priesthood, that is, the eternal covenant of marriage, become angels of God in a separate and single state forever and ever, and thus are without increase of posterity in the eternal world; therefore without posterity they have no need of a

kingdom. That is verified in the writings of the Prophet Joseph in the 132nd section of the Doctrine and Covenants which I quote:

Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven; which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (Ibid., 132:15-17.)

Now, important as it might be to be appointed a ministering angel of God, certainly far more happiness would come to an individual to have at his side a loving companion, children, posterity -- throughout the eternity, and unless we enter into this holy covenant of marriage and have it sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, these blessings cannot be obtained by us.

Referring again to this same section, the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; [and then certain conditions are enumerated]; ... it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my

law ye cannot attain to this glory.

And now mark you,

For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

This is eternal lives -- to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. (Ibid., 132:19-24.)

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, these conditions then meet the requirements for the narrowness of the way. It involves receiving the temple ordinances and sealings, keeping all the commandments of God, remaining faithful and devoted to the end of mortal life, which then earns the great gift of eternal life.

Nephi, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, true servants and prophets of God, by inspiration and revelation have interpreted and explained the significance of this important statement of the Savior. All who have repented and then been baptized and received the Holy Ghost by authorized servants of I God have entered in by the straight gate. The narrow way can only be followed by obedience and faithfulness to all the sacred ordinances and requirements of the higher gospel plan, obtained in the holy temples of God.

This is the true doctrine of Christ. This is the order and law of the Holy Priesthood. There is no other plan nor way to obtain eternal lives, and a continuation of posterity. God again said to the Prophet:

For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world. (Ibid., 132:5.)

Let us understand these things, my brothers and sisters, and if we have not taken care of the conditions that lead into the narrow way and that take us to eternal life, let us submit to the requirements of these great principles and teach all others to do. likewise, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.