

THEY'RE THERE EVERY SUNDAY,, DRESSED IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST,,, RESPECTFULLY MAKING THEIR WAY INTO THE CHURCH.

THEY FELLOWSHIP,,, THEY SING SONGS,,, THEY GREET ONE ANOTHER IN THE SERVICE AND THEY PUT THEIR LITTLE OFFERING,,, INTO THE TITHE BASKETS.

THEY LISTEN TO THE SERMON AND WHEN THE SERVICE IS OVER,,, THEY LEAVE THE CHURCH,,, TELLING THE PASTOR,,, HOW GREAT HIS SERMON WAS.

THEN,,, THEY RETURN HOME,,, THEY TAKE OFF THEIR SUNDAY *CHURCH CLOTHES* AND FORGET ABOUT GOD,,, FOR ANOTHER WEEK.

MEETING WITH GOD,,, *HAS BECOME,,, FOR SO MANY OF THEM,,, NOTHING MORE,,, THAN JUST LISTENING TO WEEKLY HOMILIES,,, SINGING HYMNS,,, PLACING THEIR TOKEN TITHE INTO THE OFFERING BASKETS AND MAYBE STAYING FOR FELLOWSHIP AFTER MASS.*

YET SOMEHOW,,, THIS *ROUTINE* SEEMS TO FILL THEIR NEED FOR EMOTIONAL REASSURANCE. BECAUSE THEY HAVE COME TO CHURCH! ON OCCASION, THEY FEEL THAT THEY'RE; *ALLRIGHT*,,, AND,,, THEY'VE SECURED A PLACE,,, IN *HEAVEN*.

WHAT A WARPED DISTORTION THEY HAVE,,, OF THE MESSAGE THAT JESUS DELIVERED!

YOU SEE,,, JESUS TOLD THE RELIGIOUS CROWD,,, THAT,,, *EVEN THOSE,,, WHO APPEARED TO BE THE MOST RELIGIOUS,,, WERE AT BEST,,, UNKNOWN TO HIM,,, AND WOULD NOT ENTER THE GATE AT ALL,,, BECAUSE,,, THEY HAD TOO MUCH RELIGION,,, AND NO PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP,,, WITH JESUS.*

THIS WEEK IN LUKE,,, WE SEE JESUS TRAVELING FROM TOWN TO TOWN,,, HEADING TOWARDS JERUSALEM AND AS HE PASSED THROUGH ONE TOWN,,, AN UNIDENTIFIED PERSON ASKED HIM;

“LORD,,, WILL ONLY A FEW PEOPLE BE SAVED?”

BUT IN ANSWERING,,, JESUS ACTUALLY TELLS US,,, *HOW TO GET THERE!*

HE TELLS US,,,

THAT; ***NO ONE GETS TO HEAVEN ACCIDENTALLY!***
ONLY A FEW WILL GET IN,,, WHILE MANY WILL STAND
OUTSIDE THE DOOR,,, SAYING: “***LORD,,, OPEN THE DOOR
FOR US***”,,, AND THEY’LL KEEP KNOCKING & PLEADING,,,
ATTEMPTING TO ENTER,,, BUT THEY WON’T BE STRONG
ENOUGH.

NOW,,, I’M NOT HERE TODAY,,, TO JUDGE ANYONE,,, BUT
BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, THERE ***IS A CHANCE***,,, THAT
NOT EVERYONE,,, WHO GOES TO CHURCH,,, ***OR SHOULD I
SAY,,, PLAYS CHURCH***,,, WILL ENTER THE NARROW GATE.

IS ANYBODY HERE TODAY,,, A COUNTRY WESTERN FAN?
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A COUNTRY SINGER BY THE
NAME OF ***KENNY CHESNEY***?

HE SINGS A SONG THAT GOES LIKE THIS:

***THE PREACHER TOLD ME LAST SUNDAY,,, TO START LIVING
RIGHT! EVERYBODY WANTS TO GO TO HEAVEN AND HAVE
A MANSION ABOVE THE CLOUDS,,, BUT NOBODY WANTS TO
GO NOW!***

NEAR THE END OF THE SONG,,, KENNY SAID:

“***THINK I SPEAK FOR THE CROWD***”.

ISN’T THAT TRUE,,, FOR MOST OF US,,,

***ALMOST EVERYBODY WANTS TO GO TO HEAVEN,,,
BUT,,, NOT RIGHT NOW!***

A MINISTER ONCE TOLD A STORY ABOUT SOMETHING
THAT HAPPENED TO HIM,,, AT ONE OF HIS SERVICES.

***HE HAD ASKED; FOR ALL THOSE,,, WHO WANTED TO GO TO
HEAVEN,,, TO RAISE THEIR HANDS. NEARLY EVERYBODY
RAISED THEIR HANDS,,, EXCEPT FOR ONE LADY.***

***HE ASSUMED THAT SHE DIDN’T HEAR HIM,,, SO,,, HE
CALMLY WALKED DOWN THE ISLE AND ASKED THE
QUESTION AGAIN.***

***AGAIN,,, SHE DIDN’T RAISE HER HAND! SO WITHOUT
TRYING TO EMBARRASS HER,,, AND IN A MOST LOVING
WAY,,, HE ASKED HER;***

***WHY SHE WASN’T SO ENTHUSIASTIC,,, ABOUT GOING TO
HEAVEN?***

HER RESPONSE HIT HIM,,, HARD!

“***PAUSE***”

SHE SAID:

***“I’M ALREADY THERE!
MANY YEARS AGO,,, I GAVE MY LIFE TO CHRIST AND WHAT
YOU SEE HERE,,, IS ONLY MY PHYSICAL BODY”.***

WHAT A TESTIMONY!

I ONLY WISH THAT ALL OF US COULD SAY THAT.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, KNOW THIS! GOD LOVES YOU!
AND,,, HE WANTS YOU TO SPEND ETERNITY WITH HIM.**

**IF YOU’VE BEEN ONE OF THOSE,,, WHO HAVE BEEN
COMING TO CHURCH,,, “*JUST TO FULFILL YOUR
OBLIGATION*”,,, OR,,, IF YOU’VE BEEN COMING TO
CHURCH FAITHFULLY,,, FOR MANY YEARS,,, BUT,,,
*YOU HAVE NOT YET COMMITTED YOUR LIFE,,, COMPLETELY
TO JESUS,,, AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR,,,*
THEN,,, THIS MESSAGE IS FOR YOU!**

WE CAN’T EARN OUR WAY INTO HEAVEN BY SAYING:

***“LORD,,, I’VE DONE THIS AND I’VE DONE THAT FOR YOU
AND FOR THE CHURCH,,, AND I’VE GIVEN TO THE
CHURCH”.***

**TODAYS SCRIPTURE READING IN LUKE,,, TELLS US WHAT
JESUS’ ANSWER WOULD BE. JESUS SAID:**

***“I DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE FROM,,, DEPART FROM
ME,,, ALL YOU EVIL DOERS”!***

**IT’S NOT MY INTENTION TO PREACH A “*FIRE AND
BRIMSTONE*” MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY,,, BUT RATHER,,, A
MESSAGE OF SALVATION!**

**SALVATION IS FREE,,, BUT IT’S NOT AUTOMATIC,,, AND
IT’S OUR RESPONSIBILITY,,, TO HELP EVERYONE,,, GET
THROUGH THE NARROW GATE,,, WHILE IT’S STILL OPEN.**

**YOU CAN’T EXPECT TO PASS THROUGH THAT NARROW
GATE,,, CARRYING “*ALL OF YOUR LIFE’S STUFF*” ALONG
WITH YOU. AND,,, YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN BY “*ALL OF
YOUR LIFE’S STUFF*” DON’T YOU?**

**I MEAN,,, YOUR PRIDE,,, YOUR ANGER,,, YOUR SELF-
RIGHTEOUSNESS,,, YOUR JEALOUSY,,, AND SO ON.**

**AND YOU,,, CAN’T EXPECT TO ENTER THROUGH THE
NARROW GATE,,, AS A CHURCH GROUP,,, BY SAYING:
*WE’RE ALL HERE, FROM ST. BARNABAS,, LORD,, LET US IN!***

IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY,, JESUS TOLD US:

TO; **STRIVE TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE.**

UNFORTUNATELY,, FINDING SALVATION,, REQUIRES A LITTLE MORE EFFORT THAN MOST PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO PUT FORTH. THE WORD **STRIVE** MEANS; TO **STRUGGLE**; **TO GO ALL OUT!**

STRIVING TO ENTER,, IS A JOURNEY OF FAITH,, THAT REQUIRES US TO UNDERSTAND THAT:

THE GATE; IS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!

AS IT SAYS IN THE WORDS OF JESUS,, IN **THE GOSPEL OF JOHN,, CHAPTER 10,, VERSE 9,,**

WHEN JESUS SAID:

I AM THE DOOR; BY ME,, IF ANY MAN ENTER IN,, HE SHALL BE SAVED”.

BEING SINCERE,, BEING A GOOD PERSON,, AND BEING RELIGIOUS,, SIMPLY IS NOT ENOUGH!

TOO MANY PEOPLE,, THINK THAT THEY'RE GOING TO HEAVEN,, WITHOUT REPENTING AND TRUSTING IN JESUS ALONE,, FOR THEIR SALVATION.

SOME WILL TRY TO ENTER,, BASED ON THIER “**GOOD WORKS**”,, OTHERS,, ON THE “**GOOD NATURE OF GOD**”! BELIEVING,, THAT “**GOD IS LOVE**”,, AND BECAUSE OF THAT,, “**EVERYONE WILL GET IN,, SOMEHOW**”!

IF THAT WERE THE CASE,, THERE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANY NEED OF JESUS' DEATH,, BECAUSE,, IT WOULD NOT HAVE SERVED **ANY GOOD PURPOSE!**

DID YOU KNOW,, THAT AN INDEPENDENT PEW POLL WAS TAKEN IN 1999,, AND AGAIN,, IN 2014,, AND **64%** OF CHRISTIANS,, BELIEVED THAT **ALL GOOD PEOPLE** WILL GO TO HEAVEN AND THAT IF A PERSON IS GENERALLY GOOD,, OR,, DOES ENOUGH GOOD THINGS FOR OTHERS DURING THEIR LIFE,, THEY'LL “**EARN**” A PLACE IN HEAVEN! THAT'S UP FROM **51%** IN 1999.

DID YOU KNOW,, THAT:

77% OF CHRISTIANS IN 2014,, BELIEVED,, THAT HEAVEN EXISTS? BUT,, THAT'S DOWN FROM **92%** IN 1999.

DID YOU KNOW,, THAT:

42% DON'T PRAY REGULARLY. AND SADLY,, THAT'S DOWN FROM **78%** IN 1999.

DID YOU KNOW,, THAT:

23% HAVE NO CHURCH AFFILIATION AT ALL. REGRETTABLY,, THAT'S UP FROM 16% IN 1999,

DID YOU KNOW,, THAT

74% BELIEVE IN AN AFTERLIFE. THAT'S UP FROM 50% FROM 1999. EVEN WITHIN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY,, ONLY 39% BELIEVE IN AN AFTERLIFE!

DID YOU KNOW,, THAT;

23% BELIEVE THAT WHEN THEY DIE,, THEY WILL NOT GO TO HEAVEN. BUT,, THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY WILL GO. AND THAT'S UP FROM 10% IN 1999.

SCRIPTURE TELLS US,, THAT THERE WILL BE WAILING AND GRINDING OF TEETH,, WHEN YOU SEE ABRAHAM,, ISAAC AND JACOB,, AND ALL THE PROPHETS,, IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD,, AND YOU YOURSELVES CAST OUT. AND PEOPLE WILL COME FROM THE EAST AND THE WEST AND FROM THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH AND WILL RECLINE AT TABLE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. FOR BEHOLD,, SOME ARE LAST,, WHO WILL BE FIRST AND SOME ARE FIRST,, WHO WILL BE LAST.

JESUS IS THE ONLY GATE,, TO OUR SALVATION!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, IF YOUR EYES ARE TRULY FOCUSED,, UPON THE SALVATION OF GOD,, YOU WILL KNOW AND LOVE JESUS,, AND WHEN YOU KNOCK ON THAT DOOR,, HE WILL KNOW WHO YOU ARE,, AND HE WILL OPEN IT FOR YOU.

THE WORLD BRAGS ABOUT ALL THE WAYS THAT ONE CAN REACH HEAVEN. BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE SURE WAY TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE INTO THE ETERNAL LIFE.

THAT GALLOP POLL IN 1991,, INDICATED THAT MOST AMERICANS EXPECT TO GO TO HEAVEN,, HOWEVER,, MANY OF THEM HARDLY EVER PRAY,, READ THE BIBLE,, OR ATTEND CHURCH. THEY ADMIT,, THAT THEY LIVE TO PLEASE THEMSELVES,, INSTEAD OF GOD.

IF YOU WERE TO ASK THESE PEOPLE,, WHY THEY BELIEVED THEY WERE GOING TO HEAVEN,, THEY'D SAY THAT THEY DON'T KNOW "HOW" THEY WERE GOING TO GET THERE.

JESUS IS THE WAY,, THE TRUTH & THE LIFE,, NO MAN COMES TO THE FATHER,, EXCEPT THROUGH HIM.

HE IS THE ONLY WAY,, AND HE IS THE DOORKEEPER,, WHO HAS THE KEYS,, TO OPEN AND SHUT THE DOOR. ONE DAY,, NOT FAR FROM NOW,, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, THAT DOOR WILL BE SHUT,, AND,, IT WILL SIMPLY BE TOO LATE!

THERE'S A TIME LIMIT ON THE OFFER OF SALVATION AND WHEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE SHUTS THE DOOR,, IT WILL BE OVER.

I HOPE AND PRAY,, THAT EACH ONE OF US,, HAS SURRENDERED OUR LIVES TOTALLY TO CHRIST THE LORD,, SO THAT OUR HEARTS DOOR,, MAY ALWAYS BE OPEN TO HIM,, AS WE ENTER INTO ETERNAL UNION WITH HIM.

MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY,, ON EACH ONE OF US,, AND MAY JESUS NOT SHUT THE DOOR,, BEFORE WE'VE ENTERED THROUGH IT.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT!

+++ AMEN+++

(1,543) WDS,, 6 PGS