

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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Eighth Sunday After Trinity.

Introduction.

Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it.

This admonition of our Lord Jesus embraces the chief thing a man should accomplish while here on earth. It also describes the two different ways men walk upon. One of these you are certainly going, O man! Note, then, their character, and hear how they terminate, that you may understand which way you are on, and that you may know beforehand where you will eventually stop. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate, etc." Mt. 7. 13, 14.

The Saviour uses the figure of a way to set forth the spiritual attitude of a man toward God, but the entering into this attitude He represents as a matter by itself, just as a gate is quite a different thing from the way to which it gives access. In like manner the beginning both of the way to life and of the way to destruction is something quite different from the continuous walking upon the way. To pass through a gate and to enter upon the way to which the gate gives access requires but little time. Similarly the

entrance through the narrow gate of repentance leading to faith is of comparatively brief duration; so likewise the lapsing away from faith into intentional sins, leading in upon the way to destruction, can be quickly accomplished. There is this difference, however, that just as it is easier to pass through a wide gate than a narrow one, so it is easier to fall away from God than to return to Him. There is this similarity, nevertheless, that as soon as one has passed through either gate, one is immediately upon the way, advancing nearer and nearer to the place whither that way leads. As soon as you have come to faith in Jesus, you are on the way to heaven, constantly approaching your full salvation; while, on the other hand, if you have turned away from God into intentional sins, you are already on the way to hell, approaching it nearer and nearer, day by day.

Our Saviour described the conditions appertaining to these ways, saying that many enter by the wide gate, while they are few that find the narrow gate and the way to life. There are many walking on the broad way to destruction. They enter, as it were by chance, without search or effort. On the contrary, it also happens that some who seek for the narrow way of life do not find it, for they do not seek it in the right manner. They use blind guides, follow false doctrines, depend on feelings, or strive after good deeds. There are not many who seek after the way of life at all, and only a few of these find what they seek. Jesus says concerning this way, "Few be they that find it."

It was by reason of these facts that Jesus gave His admonition unto repentance, "Enter ye in by the nar-

row gate." He thereupon immediately speaks about the wide gate and the broad way, wishing to show that, if you have not experienced a true conversion, you must certainly have entered by the wide gate, and you are now on the broad way. The Saviour nevertheless also represents your condition in such a way, as if there were frequent opportunities and occasions to repent, yes, as if you were often near the narrow gate of repentance. He does not wish to have you leave it thus, however. Jesus is not satisfied to have you near the narrow gate; He wishes you to enter thereby. He does not say, "Come near the gate," nor, "Stand in the narrow gate." No, He says, "Enter ye by the narrow gate." You are not on the way to life until you have passed through the narrow gate. If you have experienced emotions only, you have merely come to the gate, but you have not entered, you have not come to faith. If you have begun to realize that your condition is not right, you are, as it were, standing in the gate, you are in the process of repentance. But, dear friend, see to it that you enter and pass through this narrow gate, that by means of prayer and the Word you may come to an earnest seeking after grace in Christ. The wide gate is near at hand, and it may fare with you as with many others who have stood in the gate and looked in upon the way of life, but who thought that the gate was too narrow or the way too much straitened, or were frightened into retreat or were enticed to return. They have thus come out of the narrow gate and found the broad gate close at hand. Satan then induces them to enter in by this gate, and they pass through rapidly and advance at full speed on the broad way.

Proposition.

SOME REMARKABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WAY OF SALVATION AND THE WAY OF DESTRUCTION.

1. In their beginning.
2. In their continuation.
3. In their termination.

First Part.

The Difference Between the Way of Salvation and the Way of Destruction in Their Beginnings.

Paul described the way of destruction, saying that men there live according to the flesh, and he adds that such a life terminates with a condition which he calls death, "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die." When the word "flesh" is used in such a connection in the Scriptures that we can understand that it signifies something evil and harmful, then it signifies our sinful depravity, the original sin, the inherent evil, and the constant inclination to transgress the law. When a man begins to live in such a way that the law is being recklessly transgressed, when he pursues his evil desires, permitting evil to prevail in his life, then such an one begins "to live after the flesh," and he is at the beginning of the way to destruction.

The entrance to the way of destruction is wide and easy. It is not hard to find it, and it seems so easy for a person to begin such a life. He gets rid of the troublesome studying of the Word, and he chooses some other kind of literature to read or, at any rate, some other way of passing the time and spending his leisure

moments. To be alone seems depressive and horrible, but no recourse is taken to prayer. Then the fallen sinner puts no restraint upon his evil propensities, for the entrance upon the way of destruction takes place precisely when the passions are given freedom, when a person consents to sin.

The entrance to the way of destruction is dark. When a person neglects to "walk in the light and believe on the light," he gets into gloominess and darkness. He becomes blind and cannot see the light, nor receive enlightenment and come to certainty. Soon he cannot even endure the light, but "hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd." He "walketh in the darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." While in the state of slumber and sleeping he has slowly and imperceptibly come upon the way of destruction, and he even advances a long way thereon, before he becomes aware that he has gone astray.

Paul describes the way of life, saying, that when a person walks on it, there is in him something which the apostle calls "spirit," by which a person overcomes the deeds of the flesh. This way terminates with a condition which the apostle calls "to live." "If by the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." When the word "spirit" is used in the Scriptures, referring to something characteristic of those who are converted, something at war against our inherent evil, then this word signifies the new spiritual mind, which has been wrought by the Spirit of God in a regenerated heart, and the new spiritual powers granted by the same Spirit, enabling a person to "mortify the deeds

of the body." The beginning on the way of life, then, takes place when a person gets this spirit, as David expresses it, "O God, renew a right spirit within me."

The beginning on the way of life is narrow and difficult. It is hard to give up a false hope, to tear away the very foundation on which one has so long built, and to surrender the treacherous comfort to which one has so tenaciously clung. It is hard to feel the judgment with which one has been judged, "because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God," to see oneself lost and to perceive that one is entirely ruined. The entrance also becomes narrow, by virtue of the fact that, since a sinner cannot take any of his sins with him through the narrow gate, the evil desires of the flesh press on, endeavoring to prevent the creation of a new spirit in the heart. Satan and his people surround a person who is about to be converted, and crowd him, as it were, in the gate to life with insinuations and mockery, thus endeavoring to worry and hinder him.

The entrance to the way of life is, however, also light. Even if there is no comfort in the beginning of conversion, there is nevertheless enlightenment. If the awakened sinner cannot remember the Word as he would like, he can at any rate read and understand it. Where before there was ignorance there is now knowledge, and where there had been knowledge, or where knowledge has been acquired, there now arises enlightenment, for the light of the Word shines in the heart. It is becoming day, and the ruddy dawn of a larger measure of grace is already heralding the approach of "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings."

Second Part.

The Difference between the Way of Salvation and the Way of Perdition in Their Continuation.

The continuation on the way of salvation takes place when one converted is busy at mortifying the deeds of the flesh by the spirit. "Deeds of the flesh," these are the things wrought, or brought about, by the flesh, inwardly and outwardly. Though the spirit cannot put the flesh itself to death, but must leave it alive even in one rightly converted, it can at least "mortify the deeds of the flesh." As soon as the deeds of the flesh come forth, they are attacked in spirit by the believer and demolished quite as completely as the flesh itself will be destroyed in a blessed death. The passions are suppressed with prayer, faults are rectified with watching and self-denial, the will is broken during sore temptations, and the residue of bad habits is consumed in the fire of affliction.

Such progress cannot take place without difficulties, for the way of life is narrow. You cannot there go where you will, for there is not room for choice, on so narrow a way. It therefore seems difficult even to God's children. They do not always fare as they think and had supposed that they should. They are not left free to choose the conditions they are to pass through, nor to stake out the changes they are to experience. The way of life is narrow. You cannot travel with comfort on it, nor carry with you much baggage. A believing soul cannot follow his own willfulness, nor leave room for the persuasions of his temperament, but must remember, "That through many

tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." The narrow way leads to the end that we may be "glorified with Christ" but it also leads "through the great tribulation," where we must suffer with Christ. One must be careful when journeying along a narrow way, for there are many obstacles, not, indeed, right on the way, but beside it, always near at hand, for the way is narrow. True Christianity, indeed, offers no obstacles to our progress in grace, but we have many associations that offer conflicting duties, thus impeding our way.

It is true that progress on the way of salvation is made with difficulty, but progress is nevertheless made, for it is promoted by the Spirit of God. Upon this way the believers enjoy the companionship of the Holy Spirit. The apostle says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God," but we may also say that as many as are God's children are thus led by the Spirit. They are by Him urged to advance, lest slothfulness might deter them. They are led by the Holy Spirit, lest, when stumbling by reason of their infirmity, they might fall and destroy themselves. The Holy Spirit makes their steps more certain and their walk more secure the more He is permitted to remove the spirit of bondage and to discipline them in the right spirit of adoption, "Whereby we constantly cry, Abba, dear Father." When some great suffering or temptation impends and is near at hand, the children of God are strengthened by the Spirit of God, "who bears witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God."

Progress along the way to perdition is made, when

the unconverted "live after the flesh." The carnal mind becomes the chief originator and motive power impelling the sinner in all his actions. Original sin dominates his life. Indeed, he lives in sin and finds his life there.

Progress along this way takes place imperceptibly, for the way to perdition is broad. It resembles a large, broad field, where one cannot know with any real certitude how far one has advanced. Hence, secure sinners cannot notice any particular change in their life, whether for better or worse. This is especially the case with those who feel secure by reason of their honesty. Their inward evil increases. An unconverted man gains more and more stability in his carnal mind. He becomes stronger and stronger in his prejudices and erroneous principles. He becomes more and more unresponsive to the Word of God and, at the same time, all the more obstinate in his false hope. It is the inward carnal life which especially increases in these apparently honest sinners.

The progress on the way to perdition becomes even more imperceptible in those who have the appearance of actually walking on the way of salvation. They have the appearance of spirituality, while they live after the flesh. Their speech is spiritual, but their mind is carnal. They advance more and more in hypocrisy, and their false godliness makes them more and more like him who transforms himself to resemble an angel of light.

Progress on the way to perdition is associated with great freedom from care. Indeed, it is the increase of this freedom from care which shows that a person is on

the way to condemnation. Their way is so broad that there is little need of carefulness to remain thereon. The unconverted have the whole field of sins before them. They may choose whatever they best like, and all the by-ways lead to eternal destruction. Yea, on so broad a way there is ample room for all lusts, plenty of room for a careless life, and nothing to hinder a person from serving and enjoying the lusts. This freedom from care becomes especially great in the case of those who have been awakened and concerned for their salvation, but who have stifled the cry of conscience. When a person who has harbored one devil has swept his house clean and has thereupon received eight in his heart; when a person who has fallen into gross sins stops his remorse and feels satisfied with a decent life; when the quickenings of conscience are turned into false comfort and a specious spirituality, arising from false learning; and when one who has walked in his own self-righteousness ends with the abuse of evangelical grace, then progress along the way to perdition takes place with all the more freedom from care, inasmuch as these people advance along another side of the road than before, and hence suppose that they are walking on another road.

Third Part.

The Difference between the Way of Salvation and the Way of Destruction in Their Termination.

The end of this way is perdition, for the way ends at the place whither it leads. The apostle calls this termination "to die," which, he says, is the sequence of a life after the flesh. It is also clear that he does not

here mean bodily death, for the whole man never dies, the soul never in eternity loses its essential life, but lives on in death and after death. The apostle means eternal death, that is the eternal separation from God which takes place when the bodily death finds a man without union with Christ. After the struggles of bodily death are finished, the lost soul finds that, although it is parted from the body, the pangs of death still exist, yea, are every moment renewed and shall so continue forever. What a gnawing feeling of want must then fill the lost soul, when God has departed, with all his goodness, mercy, and comfort! What horror the unfortunate one must experience, when he perceives the presence of the evil spirit, and must forever remain under its control! What an affliction to hear the moaning of the condemned as well as one's own, to see their agony and to suffer inexpressible pain! Here the way of destruction terminates in torment never to be allayed, never to cease, in "the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth," in hell and the flames of fire, "the lake of fire, which is the second death."

The way of salvation, on the other hand, ends in eternal glory and joy. This the apostle calls "to live," saying, "If ye by the spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The life of a Christian, which is a constant warfare of the spirit to put the deeds of the flesh to death, terminates with death, and then life eternal begins. In death a man begins to live aright, never more to die. If his condition is then blessed, it may be called life indeed, as the Scriptures also call it. If the beginning of a Christian's journey along the way of

salvation has been difficult, the end nevertheless is full of joy. If, in the continuation, he has passed through much wretchedness, the end eventually attained is indescribably glorious. At the end of this race-course there is the eternal prize of grace, "the crown of glory that fadeth not away." The narrow way terminates "in the bosom of Abraham," where Lazarus enjoys comfort; in paradise, where the repentant thief even on the day of his death was with Christ; in the Father's house in the many mansions, where the Son has prepared a room for every disciple. After much tribulation the faithful soul finds rest from its labor, even "the sabbath rest, which remaineth for the people of God." He forgets the dangers he has passed through and finds "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore," in the presence of God, in the "kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world."

Application.

I have to-day set before you the way to life and the way to death. I have described the way of salvation and the way of destruction. See to it that you may ascertain what way you are on. May it be that you have never seen or understood this? Surely, you should not thus walk to eternity by chance; you should know whither you are going, lest you may land where you had not expected and find that you had gone astray, when you cannot return.

If you notice that you are on the "way of wickedness," then this is the beginning leading to the right way. Take the Word for your enlightenment, and pray the Holy Spirit to be your companion. You will then

certainly enter upon the right way, for you thus come to Christ, who is the right way of life. If you have advanced to the extent that you have a spirit which puts to death the deeds of the flesh, then take these words of the Lord for your guide, "This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Be concerned that, by a right use of the Word, of prayer, and of Holy Communion, you may advance more and more along the way of salvation to the mortification and laying off of the flesh and the deeds thereof, by the spirit which gathers strength unto assurance in faith through increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ, unto earnestness in love, and patience in hope, thus being assured that you are on the way of life, "for few are they that find it." Amen.