

“JEHOVAH’S WAY ALONE GIVETH LIFE”

(Discourse below by the Pastor from the 1916 Convention Report, Page 206.)

Mankind to Learn that the Way of the Transgressor is Hard. The World Going the Wrong Way—Most of them Unknowingly—Why they are So Deceived—The Broad Way to Destruction—Present Narrow Way to Life—Future Highway of Holiness—The Ransomed of the Lord to go up Thereon—Necessity for Vigilance to those now in the Narrow Way.

Norfolk, Va., July 30.—Pastor Russell is here in attendance upon the I.B.S.A Convention. Today he delivered a very impressive discourse from the text, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12.) The Pastor said in part:

This text is used particularly in respect to the world in general. It is not necessary for us to suppose that mankind are hypocritical and doing the wrong thing knowingly and intentionally; but rather, as the text implies, that the ways of the world are those which they think right. Their course seems to them to be the proper one. Yet they are in the wrong way. How does it come that the wrong way seems right to a people? How is it that they are deceived as to what is the right and proper course for them to take? What is the secret of their being in the wrong way and not being able to discern the right course?

The Scriptures answer these questions. When God created our race representatively in Father Adam, our great ancestor had no doubt about the right way. When he transgressed, he was not deceived into thinking that he was taking the proper course. (1 Tim. 2:14.) He knew that the way which he took would lead to death. Why, then, did he take it? Mother Eve had been disobedient to God, and had therefore come under the Divine condemnation to death, and Father Adam thought that it would be better for him to die with his wife than to live without her. Although he knew that in choosing the wrong way he was disobeying God, yet he did so under the delusion that it was preferable.

But with Adam’s children it is different. All of them have been born in sin, shapen in iniquity. (Gen. 3:20; Psa. 51:5.) Our minds and our judgments are imperfect. The Adversary who led astray our first parents is still deceiving and misleading the world, putting darkness for light and light for darkness. In their fallen condition mankind are poorly able to withstand him. The whole world is under the death sentence pronounced upon Adam in Eden. Satan does not wish any of them to see the goodness of God or the light of the blessed Gospel of Christ; for he well knows what the effect would be. There is something so wonderful about our God that whoever sees Him in all His glorious attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power is inspired to walk in the right way. But for

the moment, as it were, the great mass of mankind are blinded and deceived—2
Corinthians 4:4.

World Still Blind—Few Can See.

As we look over the world today, we see sixteen hundreds millions of people, nearly all of whom are blind. Very few see the real character of God. Very few understand the right way of the Lord. Their eyes are holden, their minds darkened. We feel great sympathy for them; and naturally the question arises, is there any hope for these people? Then we think of all the efforts put forth by the people of God to show them the goodness, the wisdom and the love of God, in order that the knowledge might change their course, that they might commit their way unto the Lord. But still the masses are not doing this. They are going their own way—the way that seems right to them. “What is the use in spending one’s time in other ways?” they ask. “We intend to enjoy ourselves. We wish to make a fortune. Everybody does that way.” They measure themselves by themselves instead of taking the Lord’s way.

People in general do not wish to do wrong. Often they start out in life with noble intentions. In early childhood, they were very innocent, candid and honest, as a rule. The child grows into an attitude of hypocrisy, deceit and evil-doing because he finds his elders frequently deceiving him and others. All mankind are born under more or less adverse conditions and unfavorable environments; and the majority follow on in the way in which they are born. This is the broad way that leads to destruction, of which our Lord Jesus tells us.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

Some of us have, by the grace of God, left this Broad Way, and have entered into the Narrow Way. We have learned something which has changed our course. One of the first lessons which we have learned is that we were not competent to guide ourselves. We came to feel the need of a mightier than human friend to lean upon, a wiser teacher than man to guide us. In our need we cried to the Lord for guidance; and He led us into the Way of life and salvation.

If all the world knew that they were not doing the best that could be done, we believe that the vast majority could be taught. Looking out into the world, we see many people who have noble minds and making noble efforts. They were born on this comparatively high plane. But sooner or later they find out that they are following merely their own wisdom, which is very defective. By the time that such reach maturity of life, they are conscious of an aching void; and they do not know what it means. Many say, “I thought that I was able to shape my course satisfactorily; and I did so. I have attained much thus-and-so, but I am not happy.”

How thankful we may be who have learned this needful lesson and have found the good way! “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear,” said the Master to this class. Others can not comprehend. Are we wiser than the rest of mankind? Only in the sense that we have learned that of ourselves we do not know much of anything. Realizing this, we have been wise enough to commit our ways unto the Lord, to come to Him for guidance, to come into His family on His terms. We are striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Fools For Christ’s Sake.

The world says that all this is foolishness. “You can not be happy that way,” they declare; “let us show you how to get the best out of life.” But we reply, “It is a question as to which is right. ‘There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.’ We prefer to take the way which the Lord has pointed out to us. We have found that Jesus is the Way, that he is the Door, and that no man can come to the Father except by him. We needed his redemption work first of all to make satisfaction before the Father for us, and then he became our head.”

My dear brethren, we have found that we do not know how to do our own thinking, that we did not know how to guide ourselves and to think right. We did not have sufficient knowledge to form a proper judgment upon a great many subjects. Others may guess for themselves. We will do what the Lord tells us to do through His word. He is guiding His people in the right way. We are being taught of the Lord. We are not boasting of what we know; for we do not know, except as we are taught of Him. Other people think that they know. We know that they do not know.

If others think us fools for getting our instructions from the Bible, we are willing to be called fools for Christ’s sake. (1 Corinthians 4:10.) We intend to get what satisfies us —”the wisdom from Above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17.) This we get from the Bible. If we receive the Word of God into good and honest hearts, we receive through that Word more of His spirit of meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly-kindness, love. This is our blessed privilege.

The Three Ways.

Very few who profess to be Christians have carefully studied their Bible or have any clear idea of its teachings. Not many of them know that the Lord tells us that eventually there will be three ways. The third way has not yet been opened, but it will be broad enough for whosoever will to enter upon it. The first way is the Broad Way, which our text declares will end in death. The second is the Narrow Way, the Way of Sacrifice, which

our Lord Jesus opened up. The third way will not be opened up until the Narrow Way shall have been closed.

For six thousand years mankind have steadily pursued the Broad Way, driven thereon by Sin and Death. Not until this Gospel Age was a way of escape brought to light. Had not God made this provision, eternal death would have been the fate of all the race of Adam. But Divine Love and Mercy came to their rescue. A Redeemer has died for the whole world—our Lord Jesus Christ. He has opened up a new way—a way of life. This new way has first been opened up for the Church class, those now being called out of the world. This is the Narrow Way. Its end has almost been reached. The called out class is nearly completed.

Soon the way of life will be opened up for the world of mankind—the dead as well as the living. This will be the great Highway of Holiness. (Isaiah 35:5-10.) Then whosoever will may walk up this grand Highway to human perfection and life everlasting. If any fail to attain life, the fault will be their own. Every obstruction will be removed from their path—every stone of stumbling, every lion of temptation or of rapacity; and every needful assistance will be granted to encourage them up the good Way, back to all that was lost for the race when Adam fell through disobedience in Eden.

No one has come up out of that Broad Way which leads to destruction until our Lord Jesus came and opened up the Narrow Way to his disciples. Even the Jews were in that Broad Way. Few of them were able to enter the Narrow Way when it was opened up to them. Throughout the entire Gospel Age some have been turning from the Broad Way into the Narrow Way. This is the good Way of the Lord. Are we seeking to walk in this Narrow Way that leadeth unto life? The way that seemeth right to the world will end in death.

Glorious Epoch Now at Hand.

When the great Highway of the Millennial Age shall have been opened up for the world, the way will be made so plain, the Prophet Isaiah explains, that the wayfaring man, though simple and unlearned, shall not err therein. “The redeemed of the Lord shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.” “The ransomed of the Lord,” are all mankind; for “Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man.” He “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (Hebrews 2 9; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6) All mankind will have the opportunity to go up on this Way; for Christ and the Church are to open it up for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Does it not seem that the majority of mankind, when they shall see the vast difference between the way of Jehovah and the way of Satan, will be glad to walk in the good way?

But none will be coerced. The way of life and the way of death will be before them. Each must make his own choice. Whoever refuses to go up thereon will go down into the Second Death, or destruction.

Some are now turning from the Broad Way into the Narrow Way, where they are receiving blessings. Others, on the contrary, do not see now. Millions of heathen do not see—even those living in Christendom itself. They must be permitted to follow their own judgment, however. We are not to find fault with them; but we are to rejoice that our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Lord Jesus have in mind the blessing of all the families of the earth, and will not permit any to go down without being informed as to the course they are taking and being given an opportunity of going up on the Highway of Holiness.

To those who now are God's dear children the very thought is precious that at the end of our present Narrow Way we shall enter upon the glorious privilege of uplifting and blessing the peoples of earth, helping them up out of their difficulties, their sorrows and their sins, rewarding them for their good deeds and punishing them for their wrong acts. What a blessing this will mean to us! What an incentive to be faithful unto death! Jehovah's plan is wonderful. There is nothing like it in all the Universe. No one could possibly duplicate God's great arrangement. No one else could ever have thought of anything like it. The Divine Plan manifests our Heavenly Father's Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power. We are coming to see this more and more as we learn to understand His Word, and therein behold the glorious character and purposes of our God.

Great Watchfulness Now Necessary.

For those of us who are in the strait and narrow way, there is a special lesson in our text. If at any time we begin to lean to our own understanding, to attempt to guide ourselves, we are in danger. Our wily Adversary is watching our steps, seeking to trip us. Our own flesh would entice us into thinking that we can manage our own affairs. We need to be constantly on the alert; for if we lean to our own understanding we shall surely go astray. The Lord assures us in His Word that we need to be guided by Him; and he gives us lessons to demonstrate to us how dependent we are upon Him. He watches every step of our journey.

“Do all to the glory of God,” should be our watchword. In every matter that concerns us we should consider what is to His glory. No Christian should think of buying clothing or of eating or drinking or of going here or there, etc., without considering whether or not our course will be in full harmony with our Covenant of Sacrifice, without asking what is God's will in the matter. For us to do otherwise would be to live after the flesh.

We should shape every act, every word and every thought so as to bring to our God and our well-being as New Creatures. If we become heady and wish to think of ourselves, outside of the limitations which God has placed in His Word, we are in great danger. We need constantly our Heavenly Shepherd's care. We are to look always for His leading.

The Voice of Our Shepherd.

The Bible uses the shepherds of Palestine as an illustration of the great care which our Heavenly Father and His Heavenly Son exercise over the people of God. There the shepherd goes before his flock, and the sheep follow him, ever listening to his voice. They will never follow the lead of strangers. So the Lord's flock listen to the voice of the Shepherd; and a stranger's voice they will not follow, if they are true sheep.

We hear the voice behind us, the words of Our Lord Jesus and of his apostles. This voice is still guiding the people of God. The world does not now hear that voice; they do not recognize it; they do not think that it is worth heeding. But by and by they will begin to hear. They will then have the ability to hear the voice that we now heed. "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." (Isaiah 30:21.) This voice is the Message contained in the Word of God. If we faithfully heed it, we shall never wander into the ways of death.