

THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES

STUDY XI

THE THREE WAYS--THE BROAD WAY, THE NARROW WAY, THE HIGHWAY

The Broad Road to Destruction--The Narrow Way to Life--What is Life?--The Divine Nature--The Relationship of the Divine and Human Natures--The Reward at the End of the Narrow Way--The High Calling Limited to the Gospel Age--Difficulties and Dangers of the Narrow Way--The Highway of Holiness.

"WIDE is the gate of destruction, and broad that way leading thither; and many are they who enter through it. How narrow is the gate of life! how difficult that way leading thither! and how few are they who find it!" Matt. 7:13,14, *Diaglott translation*

"And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, nor be found there; but they that walk there shall be delivered." Isa. 35:8,9

Three ways, the "broad road," the "narrow way" and the "highway," are thus brought to our attention in the Scriptures.

The Broad Road to Destruction

This road is thus named because it is most easy to the degenerate human race. Six thousand years ago, as a sinner condemned to destruction, Adam (and the race represented in him) started upon this road, and after nine hundred and thirty years he reached its end--destruction. As years and centuries have rolled on, the downward path has become more and more smoothly worn, and the race has sped more and more rapidly to destruction, the way becoming daily more glazed and slimed and slippery with sin. And not only does the way grow more

slippery, but mankind daily loses the power of resistance, so that now the average length of human life is about thirty-five years. Men now reach the end of the road--destruction--nine hundred years quicker than did the first man.

For six thousand years the race has steadily pursued the broad, downward way. Only a few, comparatively, have tried to change their course and retrace their steps. In fact, to retrace all the steps, and reach the original perfection, has been impossible, though the effort of some to do so has been commendable, and not without beneficial results. For six thousand years sin and death have reigned relentlessly over mankind, and driven them upon this broad road to destruction. And not until the Gospel age was a *way* of escape brought to light. Though in previous ages rays of hope were dimly seen in types and shadows, which were joyfully hailed and acted upon by a few, yet life and immortality were not brought to light until the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the proclamation by the apostles of the good tidings of redemption and remission of sins and a consequent *resurrection from the destruction*. (2 Tim. 1:10) The teachings of Jesus and the apostles bring to light *life*--a restitution or restoration to life for all mankind, as based upon the merit and sacrifice of the Redeemer; and they show this to be the significance of many Old Testament types. They also bring to light

immortality, the prize of the high calling of the Gospel Church.

Although a way of escape from the broad road to destruction has been brought to light through the gospel, the great mass of mankind heeds not the good tidings, because depraved by sin and blinded by the Adversary. Those who now gratefully accept the promise of life, restoration to human existence, through Christ, have pointed out to them a new way which has been opened up, by which consecrated believers may go beyond the human nature and be changed to a higher nature--the spiritual. This new way "consecrated for *us*"--the royal priesthood (Heb. 10:20)-- our Lord called

"The Narrow Way to Life."

Our Master tells us that it is because of the narrowness of this way that the many prefer to remain on the broad road to destruction. "Strait [difficult] is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Before considering this way and its dangers and difficulties, let us notice the end to which it leads--life. As already seen, life may be enjoyed on various planes of being, higher as well as lower than human. Life is a broad and comprehensive term, but here our Lord uses it in reference to that highest form of life, pertaining to the divine nature --immortality--the prize for which he invited us to run. What is life? We not only realize it in ourselves, but we see its operation in lower animals, and even in vegetation, and we are told of its existence in higher forms, angelic and divine. How shall we define a term so comprehensive?

While we may not be able to discover the secret springs of life in all, we may safely assume that the Divine Being,

Jehovah, is the great fountain of all life, from which all these springs are supplied. All living things result from and depend on him for life. All life, whether in God or in his creatures, is the same: it is an energizing principle, not a substance. It is a principle which *inheres* in God, but which in his creatures *results* from certain causes which God has ordained, and of it he is therefore the cause, the author or fountain. Hence the creature is in no sense a part or an offspring of the Creator's essence or nature, as some imagine, but he is God's handiwork infused with life.

Recognizing the fact that only in the divine nature is life independent, unlimited, exhaustless, ever continuous and neither produced nor controlled by circumstances, we see that of necessity Jehovah is superior to those physical laws and supplies which he ordained for the sustenance of his creatures. It is this quality, which pertains only to the divine nature, that is described by the term *immortality*. As shown in the preceding chapter, *immortal* signifies death-proof, consequently disease and pain-proof. In fact, *immortality* may be used as a synonym for *divinity*. From the divine, immortal fountain proceed all life and blessing, every good and perfect gift, as from the sun the earth receives her light and vigor.

The sun is the great fountain of light to the earth, illuminating all things, producing many varieties of color and shades of light, according to the nature of the object upon which it shines. The same sunlight shining upon a diamond, upon a brick, and upon various kinds of glass, produces strikingly different effects. The light is the same, but the objects upon which it shines differ in their capacity to receive and to transmit it. So with life: it all flows from the one exhaustless fountain. The oyster has life, but its organism is such that it cannot make use

of much life, just as the brick cannot reflect much of the light of the sun. So with each of the higher manifestations of life, in beast, fish and fowl. Like the various kinds of glass under sunlight, so these various creatures show forth differently the various organic powers they possess, when life animates their organisms.

The polished diamond is so adapted to the light that it appears as though it possessed it within itself, and were itself a miniature sun. So with man, one of the masterpieces of God's creation, made only "a little lower than the angels." He was so grandly formed as to be able to receive and retain life by the use of the means which God supplied, and never grow dim. Thus was Adam before he fell grander than any other earthly creature, not by reason of any difference in the *life principle* implanted, but because of a grander *organism*. Yet, let us remember that as the diamond can reflect no light except when shone upon by the sun, so man can possess and enjoy life only as the supply of life is continued. Man has not inherent life: he is no more a fountain of life than a diamond is a fountain of light. And one of the very strongest evidences that we have not an exhaustless supply of life in ourselves, or, in other words, that we are not immortal, is that since sin entered, death has passed upon all our race.

God had arranged that man in Eden should have access to life-sustaining trees, and the paradise in which he was placed was abundantly supplied with numbers of "every [kind of] tree" good for food or for adornment. (Gen. 2:9,16,17) Among the trees of life good for food was one forbidden. While for a time forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge, he was permitted to eat freely of trees which sustained life perfectly; and he was separated from them only after transgression, that thereby the

death-penalty might go into effect. Gen. 3:22

Thus the glory and beauty of humanity are seen to be dependent on the continued supply of life, just as the beauty of the diamond is dependent on the continued supply of sunlight. When sin deprived humanity of the right to life, and the supply was withheld, immediately the jewel began to lose its brilliancy and beauty, and finally it is deprived of its last vestige in the tomb. His beauty consumes away like a moth. (Psa. 39:11) As the diamond loses its beauty and brilliancy when the light is withdrawn, so man loses life when God withholds the supplies from him. "Yea, man giveth up the ghost [life] and where is he?" (Job 14:10) "His sons come to honor, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." (Verse 21) "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." (Eccl. 9:10) But since a ransom has been found, since the death penalty has been provided by the Redeemer, the jewel is to have its beauty restored, and is again to reflect perfectly the Creator's image when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. (Mal. 4:2) It is because of the sin-offering, the sacrifice of Christ, that "All that are in their graves shall come forth." There shall be a restitution of all things; first an opportunity or offer of restitution to all, and ultimately the attainment of human perfection by all who will obey the Redeemer.

This, however, is not the reward to which Jesus refers as the end of the narrow way. From other scriptures we learn that the reward promised to those who walk the narrow way is the "divine nature"--life inherent, life in that superlative degree which only the divine nature can possess--immortality. What a hope! Dare we aspire to

such a height of glory? Surely not without positive and explicit invitation could any rightfully thus aspire.

From 1 Tim. 6:14-16 we learn that the immortal or divine nature was originally the possession of divinity only. We read: "He [Jesus] in his time [the Millennial age] will show who is the blessed and only potentate--the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." All other beings, angels, men, beasts, birds, fish, etc., are but vessels holding each its measure of life, and all differing in character, capacity, and quality according to the organism which it has pleased the Creator to provide for each.

Further, we learn that Jehovah, who alone possessed immortality originally, has highly exalted his Son, our Lord Jesus, to the same divine, immortal nature; hence he is now the express image of the Father's person. (Heb. 1:3) So we read, "As the Father hath LIFE IN HIMSELF [God's definition of "immortality"--*life in himself*--not drawn from other sources, nor dependent on circumstances, but independent, inherent life], *so* hath he given to the Son to have LIFE IN HIMSELF." (John 5:26) Since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, then, two beings are immortal; and, amazing grace! the same offer is made to the Bride of the Lamb, being selected during the Gospel age. Yet not all of the great company who are nominally of the Church will receive this great prize, but only that "little flock" of overcomers who so run as to obtain it; who follow closely in the Master's footsteps; who, like him, walk the narrow way of sacrifice, even unto death. These, when born from the dead in the resurrection, will have the divine nature and form. This immortality, the independent, self-existent,

divine nature, is the life to which the narrow way leads.

This class is not to be raised from the tomb human beings; for we are assured by the Apostle that, though sown in the tomb natural bodies, they will be raised spiritual bodies. These all shall be "changed," and even as they once bore the image of the earthly, human nature, they shall bear the image of the heavenly. But "it doth not yet appear what we shall be"--what a spiritual body is; but "we know that when he shall appear, we shall be *like him*," and share in "the glory to be revealed." 1 John 3:2; Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 4:17; John 17:22; 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Thess. 2:14

Not only is this high calling to a *change of nature* confined exclusively to the Gospel age, but it is the only offer of this age. Hence our Lord's words quoted at the beginning of this chapter include on the broad road to destruction all who are not on the way to the only prize *now offered*. All others are still on the broad road--these only have as yet escaped the condemnation that is on the world. This, the only way of life now open, because of its difficulty, finds few who care to walk in it. The masses of mankind in their weakness prefer the broad, easy way of self-gratification.

The narrow way, while it ends in life, in immortality, might be called a way of death, since its prize is gained through the sacrifice of the human nature even unto death. It is the narrow way *of death to life*. Being reckoned free from the Adamic guilt and the death penalty, the consecrated voluntarily surrender or *sacrifice* those human rights, reckoned theirs, which in due time they, with the world in general, would have actually received. As "the man Christ Jesus" laid down or sacrificed his life for the world, so these become joint-sacrificers with him.

Not that his sacrifice was insufficient and that others were *needed*; but while his is all-sufficient, these are permitted to serve and to suffer with him in order to become his bride and joint-heir. So, then, while the world is under condemnation to death, and is dying *with* Adam, this "little flock," through the process of faith reckonings and sacrifice, already described, are said to die *with* Christ. They sacrifice and die *with* him as human beings, in order to become partakers of the divine nature and glories *with* him; for we believe that if we be dead *with* him, we shall also live *with* him. If we suffer *with* him, we shall also be glorified *together*. Rom. 8:17 and 2 Tim. 2:11,12

In the beginning of the Millennial age, those who now walk the narrow way will have gained the great prize for which they ran, immortality; and being thus clothed with the divine nature and power, they will be prepared for the great work of restoring and blessing the world during that age. With the end of the Gospel age, the narrow way to immortality will close, because the select "little flock" that it was designed to test and prove will have been completed. "Now is the accepted [Greek, *dektos*, acceptable or receivable] time"--the time in which sacrificers, coming in the merit of Jesus and becoming dead with him, are *acceptable* to God--a sacrifice of sweet odor. Death, as the Adamic penalty, will not be permitted forever; it will be abolished during the Millennial age; as a *sacrifice* it will be acceptable and rewarded only during the Gospel age.

It is only as "*new creatures*" that the saints of this age are on the way to life; and only as human beings are we consecrated to destruction, as sacrifices. If, as human creatures, we be dead with Christ, as new, spiritual beings, we shall live with him. (Rom. 6:8) The mind of God in us, the

transformed mind, is the germ of the new nature.

The new life would be easily choked; and Paul assures us that when begotten of the spirit through the truth, if we live after the flesh, we shall die (lose our life), but if we, through the spirit, do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body (the disposition of the human nature), we (as new creatures) shall live; for the sons of God are those led by the spirit of God. (Rom. 8:13,14) This is a thought of utmost importance to all the consecrated; for if we have covenanted with God to sacrifice the human nature, and if that sacrifice was accepted by him, it is useless to attempt to take it back. The human is reckoned of God as dead now, and must actually die, never again to be restored. All that can be gained, then, by turning back to live after the flesh, is a little human gratification at the expense of the new spiritual nature.

There are, however, many consecrated ones desirous of the *prize*, and who have been begotten of the spirit, who are partially overcome by the allurements of the world, the desires of the flesh, or the arts of the devil. They partially lose sight of the prize set before us, and try to walk upon a middle road--to keep the favor of God and the favor of the world, forgetting that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4), and that the instructions to those running the race for the prize are, Love not the world, and, Seek not honor one of another, but that honor which cometh from God only. 1 John 2:15; John 5:44

These, who love the present world, but who have not wholly forsaken the Lord and despised their covenant, receive a scourging and purifying by the fire of affliction. As the Apostle expresses it, they are delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that

the spirit (the newly begotten nature) may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. 5:5) And if rightly exercised by the discipline, they will finally be received into the spiritual condition. They will have everlasting, spirit life as angels have it, but will lose the prize of immortality. They will serve God in his temple, and stand *before* the throne, having palms in their hands (Rev. 7:9-17); but though that will be glorious, it will not be so glorious as the position of the "little flock" of overcomers, who will be kings and priests unto God, seated with Jesus *in the throne* as his bride and joint-heir, and with him crowned with immortality.

Ours is a rugged, steep, narrow way, and were it not that strength is furnished for each successive step of the journey, we could never reach the goal. But our Captain's word is encouraging: Be of good cheer; I have overcome; my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. (John 16:33; 2 Cor. 12:9) The difficulties of this way are to act as a separating principle to sanctify and refine a "peculiar people" to be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." In view of these things, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, while we fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on "the crown of glory"-- immortality, the divine nature. 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4

The Highway of Holiness

While the special hope of the Gospel age is so surpassingly glorious, and the way to it is correspondingly difficult --narrow, hedged in by hardships and dangers at every step--so that few find it, and obtain the great prize at its end, the new order of things in the age to come is to be entirely different. As a different hope is held out, so also a

different *way* leads to it. The way to immortality has been a way which required the sacrifice of the otherwise lawful and proper hopes, ambitions and desires--the sacrifice forever of the human nature. But the way to human perfection, to restitution, the hope of the world, requires only the putting away of sin: not the sacrifice of human rights and privileges, but their proper enjoyment. It will lead to personal purification and restoration to the image of God as enjoyed by Adam before sin entered the world.

The way back to actual human perfection is to be made very plain and easy; so plain that none may mistake the way; so plain that "the wayfaring man, and those unacquainted therewith, shall not go astray" (Isa. 35:8--*Leeser*); so plain that none will need to teach his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest. (Jer. 31:34) Instead of being a narrow way that few can find, it is termed "a highway," a public roadway--not a narrow, steep, rugged, difficult, hedged byway, but a way specially prepared for *easy* travel--specially arranged for the convenience and comfort of the travelers. Verses 8 and 9 show that it is a public road, open to all the redeemed--every man. Every man for whom Christ died, who will recognize and avail himself of the opportunities and blessings purchased by the precious blood, may go up on this Highway of Holiness to the grand goal of perfect restitution to human perfection and everlasting life.

Nor will these be *reckoned* justified and granted a reckoned standing of holiness and perfection in the sight of God; when started upon this highway of holiness they may go up thereon to *actual* perfection, as a result of endeavor and obedience, to which all things will be made favorable by their Redeemer,

then reigning in power. Each individual will, according to his necessities, be aided by the wise and perfect administration of the new kingdom. This, as will occur to some, is the legitimate result of the ransom. Since our Lord, the man Christ Jesus, gave himself a ransom for all, and desires all to come to a knowledge of the truth, and thereby to actual perfection, why does he not at once make a good and broad highway for all? Why does he not remove the obstructions, the stumbling-stones, the pitfalls and snares? Why not help the sinner back to full harmony with God, instead of making the way narrow, rugged, thorny, hard to find, and still harder to walk in? A failure rightly to divide the Word of truth, and to see that the present narrow way leads to the special prize, and is for the trial and selection of a little flock of joint-heirs, the body of Christ, which, when selected and exalted with their Head, shall bless all nations, has led some to very confused ideas on the subject. Failing to see God's plan, many try to preach a highway of holiness, an easy way to life, in the present age, when no such way exists, and they confuse and compromise the matter to fit the facts and the Scriptures with their mistaken theories. On the highway soon to be opened, only sinful things will be prohibited, while those who travel the narrow way must deny themselves and sacrifice many things not sinful, as well as war continually against besetting sins. This is a pathway of sacrifice, as that of the coming age is to be a highway of righteousness.

Of that highway it is significantly stated in symbolic language that "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there." (Isa. 35:9) How many frightful lions are now in the way of those who would be glad to forsake sinful ways, and to pursue righteousness! There is the lion of a

degenerate public sentiment, which deters many from venturing to obey the dictates of conscience in matters of everyday life--dress, home, and business arrangements, etc. The lion of temptation to strong drink hinders thousands who would be glad to see it removed. Prohibitionists and temperance workers now find a herculean task on their hands, which only the authority and power of the next age can remove; and the same may be said of other worthy efforts at moral reform. "Nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." No giant corporations, organized to advance selfish, individual interests at the expense of the general good, will be tolerated. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (kingdom) saith the Lord. (Isa. 11:9) Though there will be difficulties to labor against in overcoming propensities to evil, etc., yet, in comparison with the narrow way of this age, that will be an easy way. The stones (stumbling-stones) shall all be gathered out, and the standard of truth shall be lifted up for the people. (Isa. 62:10) Ignorance and superstition will be things of the past, and righteousness will receive its due reward, while to evil will be meted out its just deserts. (Mal. 3:15,18) By wholesome chastisements, fitting encouragements and plain instructions, as returned prodigals, mankind will be trained and disciplined up to the grand perfection from which father Adam fell. Thus "the ransomed of the Lord *shall return* [from destruction, by the grand highway of holiness]...with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35:10) Our Lord referred to but two of these ways, because the third was not yet due to be opened up--just as when announcing the good tidings, he said, "This scripture is fulfilled in your ears," but omitted mentioning the "day of vengeance," because it was not then due. (Compare Luke 4:19 and Isa. 61:2.) Now, however, as the

narrow way draws to a close, the grand highway of righteousness begins to be seen more and more distinctly, in the light of the dawning day.

Thus we have found a "Broad Road," on which at present the masses of mankind travel, deluded by the "prince of this world," and led by perverted tastes. We have found that it was opened up and that our race was started in its headlong course upon it by "*one man's* disobedience." We have found that the "Highway of Holiness" is to be opened up by our Lord, who gave himself a ransom for all and redeems *all* from the destruction to which the "Broad Road"

leads, and that it will, in due time, be accessible and easy for all the redeemed ones whom he bought with his own precious blood. We have found, furthermore, that the present "Narrow Way," opened up by the merit of the same precious blood, is a special way leading to a special prize, and is made specially narrow and difficult as a *test* and discipline for those now being selected to be made partakers of the *divine* nature and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus in the Kingdom of glory soon to be revealed for the blessing of all. Such as have *this hope*--who see this prize--may count all other hopes as but loss and dross in comparison. Phil. 3:8-15