

## Many...will seek to enter in, and shall not be able

*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able* (Luke 13:24).

These are some of the most stunning words Jesus ever spoke, especially since He said these words to people who had eaten and drunk in His presence, and in whose streets He had taught. They were a people who claimed to have known Jesus, but yet, they were rejected by Him (Luke 13:26-27). With all the religion they had, they were not able to enter in.

Since then, millions have come to the altar, confessed their sins, and asked Jesus to be their Savior. But they have failed to receive the assurance of their salvation through the Spirit Himself bearing witness with their spirit that they are children of God (Rom. 8:16). Unfortunately, many will act as if they have been saved by adopting certain aspects of the Christian life, joining numerous other believers *having a form of godliness but denying its power...* (2 Tim. 3:5), and of whom Jude says: *...they are clouds without water...* (Jude 12).

Sadly, such people constitute the majority of church members in the world: professing Christianity, yet being void of the Holy Spirit. Today, it is my intention to invite you to search with me for the reason why so many who are seeking salvation nonetheless fail to attain it. With this in mind, let us observe that there are only three parties involved in the salvation of a soul: God, the devil and man. Let us discover which one of these three should be faulted when salvation is sought for but not obtained.

1. **God.** Observe first of all that there is absolutely no absence of goodwill on God's side to get us saved as the Scriptures prove: *Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth!* (Is. 45:22); *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* (Rom. 8:32); *The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9); and *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:4). In every one of these verses we find the word "all." All means all. That includes you and me! In these verses, we find that God loves us, that He sacrificed His only Son to save us and then He wants those of us who are not saved to get saved. The failure of any man's salvation is not in God. It has to be somewhere else. Is it with the devil?

2. **The devil.** As much as God is for us getting saved, so much is the devil against us getting saved. He works day and night to prevent people from getting saved. As soon as we make the first step towards the gate of salvation, he will rally his forces to stop us making the second step—telling us lies, twisting Scriptures, putting doubts and fears in our minds, etc. Peter sums this all up by saying: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8).

This is war! Like it or not, the moment your mind turns towards following Jesus, you find yourself at war—the fiercest war you will ever fight, the only war that really matters for you to win. If you win this war, you will celebrate forever. Lose this war and you will be a loser forever. Hence, spiritual warfare does not begin at the gate of the sheepfold, but rather as soon as you set your sights on this gate. From that moment on, you must enter this fight for your soul with all your heart—and stick with it until you see your Savior's face. And you do not fight this battle for your soul with a cup of coffee in one hand and a toy gun in the other. You fight it with all the weapons that are at your disposal. That is, you must give yourself to spiritual violence to engage the enemy of your soul and to get to the strait gate. Jesus said: *...the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force* (Matt. 11:12).

Yes, Jesus calls you to violence! You take the kingdom by force and you keep it by force. Is it any wonder then that Paul frequently uses military metaphors in describing the Christian life? So likewise, the spirit of violence which Jesus displayed towards the money changers when He drove them out of the temple is that same spirit you need to gain victory over the devil, the flesh and the world to make it to the throne.

The bottom line is you cannot blame the devil that you have not gotten saved. Because it says: *...Resist the devil and he will flee from you* (James 4:7) and *...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds* (2 Cor. 10:4). Jesus being on your side, if you get violent with the devil, you will have the upper hand over him, every time.

3. **Man.** Therefore, since we cannot blame God nor the devil for us having not been saved, I believe that we have found the party that is to blame for our failure to be saved. It is man because God says: *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart* (Jer. 29:13). In these words, we find the fool-proof guarantee for us to receive and keep our salvation. We have to give ourselves to this battle over our soul with all of our heart. That means we will not accept defeat, just as these Bible characters would not accept defeat: Jacob at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-26), blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47-52), the Syrophenecian woman (Mark 7:27-29), and the woman with the unjust judge (Luke 18:6-7). If we press through every barrier, we shall drink of the cup of His salvation—guaranteed.

And that requires a death causing Dietrich Bonhoeffer to say: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” Yes, the old man in us must die to make room for the new man in Christ Jesus and this death must be continuous. That is why the message to every one of the seven churches in the Revelation is repetitive: Overcome! So then, since dying comes before living, the first thing that Jesus does when He encounters us is that He hands us our personal execution stake.

But if our decision to get saved comes out of a nonchalant, detached mindset, we will never experience the witness of the Spirit that our name is written on His hand. In other words, if we are “willing to give it a shot,” but decide ahead of time that if it does not work, we will give up pursuing it, we will join the multitude of those who will not be worthy to walk with Jesus in white (Rev. 3:4). I believe we are now well on the way to the answer why many who seek to enter in shall not be able. **People not seeking God with ALL THEIR HEART is proof that they are not willing to forsake all, and hence, they will lack the capacity to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength—which is at the very heart of Christianity.** And without that, they cannot truly be Christian.

Now look at the first part of our text a little closer. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate...* (Luke 13:24). Notice the word “strive.” It comes from the Greek word, agonizomai, meaning agonize. It is taken from the Olympic Games. Athletes agonize to get a gold medal. It cannot be gotten without agonizing. Can we get the picture that this is what we need to do to get our gold medal? It is the pearl of great price. It is treasure hidden in the field. It is our becoming the dwelling place of God. This is incredible!

This same concept is also expressed by Jesus elsewhere in other words such as: *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it* (Matt. 7:14). Yet, there are great rewards to those who press through the difficulties of knowing their God as Jesus said: *Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive...in the age to come eternal life* (Luke 18:25-30). Can we understand this: Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able? Many are willing to lose some, but few are willing to lose all. This will not work! Jesus is not looking for part-timers or for admirers, He is looking for followers.

To illustrate this, let us look at two men who were seeking to be saved: the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus, the tax collector. The rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-25) was a prisoner to the octopus of his possessions, his worldly connections and his lifestyle. He was seeking to enter in but was not able. He could not bring his heart along. He represents the multitude of those many who want to, but do not want it enough and therefore, they are not able.

But then there was Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9). Zacchaeus wanted to meet Jesus at any cost. He had his whole heart in it. He was willing to press through every obstacle, make a fool of himself, settle up and make restitution with everyone. He was willing to give his all to get God's all. No wonder Jesus already knew his name when He first saw him in the tree! No wonder Jesus invited Himself to his house. Lay your whole being on the altar of sacrifice and Jesus will also invite Himself into your heart. He, as with Zacchaeus, will call you a true son of Abraham. Indeed, of such is the kingdom of God.