

# Are You On The Road To Heaven?

A survey was completed in September 2020 by LifeWay Research in which it reported that eighty-five percent of Americans believe there is something more to life than this present world.<sup>1</sup> That means only one out of every 170 people think that when they die, they will cease to exist. Our life experiences have taught us the principle of cause and effect. We understand that something causes something else to happen. Therefore, we understand that something does not come from nothing. So, when people think about the universe, they realize the universe did not just pop into existence from nothing. Those who want us to believe the universe exploded into existence from some subatomic particles cannot explain from where those particles came. The truth is intelligent people understand that there is something we do not understand. There is something beyond us. Most of us believe there is more to life than this present world. That is why the Life-

Way Research reported that eighty-five percent of Americans agree with that belief.

In another poll conducted by the Roper Center, it is reported that eighty percent of Americans believe in heaven and sixty-seven percent believe in hell. They also report that eighty-four percent of Americans believe they are going

to heaven when they die.<sup>2</sup> The survey reported that even a majority of atheists believe there is something beyond this life. They just do not know what it is. So, eighty-five percent of Americans believe there is something more to life than this present world and eighty percent believe in heaven.

**The Wide Gate and Narrow Gate.** Now I want to ask you a question, “Do you also think you are going to heaven?” Most people think they are going to heaven, including everyone who thinks they are a Christian! But the sad truth is that Jesus said that is not true. Do you remember Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about a wide road and a narrow road? His illustration can be found in Matthew 7:13-

14. There Jesus said,

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and

the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB)

In this illustration, the gates are adjusted to the size of the roads. The second gate is wide and so is the road. That road leads to destruction. The Greek word for “destruction” can also be translated as “ruin” or “wasted.” People on that road



1. Holly Meyer. “Will you go to heaven? Lifeway survey says more than on third of Americans never ponder the question” LifeWay Research. April 11, 2021.

2. Paradise Polled: Americans and the Afterlife.” Roper Center.

will be ruined. It refers to hell. The first gate is narrow or small. The NASB says the road is narrow. But the Greek word for narrow is different in verse 14. It is *thlibo*. It refers to a compressed way or a difficult path. It is like a road with high cliffs on each side. Jesus' message is that this road is difficult to travel. Yet, it is the only one that leads to life—eternal life. Now Jesus did not use this word just to make the illustration interesting. He wants us to know what life is like for anyone who travels this road. Then he added there are few who find it. So, may I ask, “Are you almost on the road to heaven? or Are you traveling this road?” There are several reasons why people think they are on the road to eternal life.

**Seeking Jesus With Wrong Motives.** The one reason some people think they are on the road to heaven is that they believed in Jesus, but they came to Jesus with wrong motives. For example, I have known at least three men who have said they became a Christian because then God would make them wealthy. Later, they were unhappy with God because money was not flowing into their bank account. Other people have claimed to become Christians believing that God would fix their marriage, finances, sickness, give them mental peace, or help them have a joyful life. Some people have been deceived into thinking that God would bless them in some other way if they just became a Christian. So, who would be so stupid as to reject that type of offer? Sadly, they missed John 6:26-27 which tells us,

Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” John 6:26-27 (NASB)

This passage tells us that Jesus was speaking to a group of people who had seen Jesus' miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. After the miracle, Jesus escaped from their presence and later these people found Him. In this passage we are told they were seeking Jesus in order to have their personal wants satisfied. Notice that Jesus rebuked them for only one

reason. They were seeking Him with the wrong motives. This is a biblical illustration that illustrates there are wrong reasons to seek Jesus. Now let me ask you, “What was your motivation for wanting to become a Christian?”

The reason such people are not on the road to heaven is that their faith in Jesus is not real. In 1 Corinthians 15:2, the apostle Paul warned the people attending the church in the ancient city of Corinth that they might have vain faith. Here is Paul's warning.

... by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:2 (NASB)

When Paul said they might have vain faith, he meant their faith did not save them. That is, you can have faith in Christ, but it may not save you. The verses that follow suggest that those with vain faith did not fully understand the facts of the gospel - why Christ died and was resurrected.

One example of vain faith is found in Acts 8. Acts 8:13 tells us about a man named Simon Magus. We are told he believed in Christ and was baptized. But in verse 20, Peter said Simon Magus was going to perish. Peter's comment reveals Simon Magus did not have saving faith. His faith was not real. He wanted to use the power of the Holy Spirit like some magic trick. He had the wrong motivation for professing faith in Christ. Sadly, many people profess to be a Christian for the wrong reason.

**Seeking Jesus With Correct Motives.** So what is the correct reason to become a Christian? The correct reason is to have one's sins forgiven. In the next two verses, Paul explained the essence of true faith. He said,

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NASB)

Paul's message is that true faith believes Christ died for our sins. True faith believes Christ was also resurrected and

responds by wanting one's sins to be forgiven. That is the correct motivation. These people are the ones who are on the narrow road to eternal life.

### **True Christians Regularly Confess Their Sins.**

So, how can you know if you are on the narrow road to eternal life? What is the evidence? Notice that in Matthew 7:17-20, Jesus said that we can know those who are on the road to eternal life by their fruits. Therefore, I want to talk about one fruit that will exist if you are on that road. 1 John 1:6-10 gives us a very important sign that will exist if you are a Christian. We will start with 1 John 1:6-7 which says,

*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:6-7 (NASB)*

Here the apostle John is referring to people who think they are a Christian, but they had deceived themselves. That is what he means by "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness." Then in verse 7, he compares walking in darkness to walking in the Light, just as Jesus walked in the Light. This helps us understand that the apostle is referring to people who think they are a Christian but are also constantly sinning. That is, they are indifferent to their sins. If they are indifferent to their sin, then they are liars. They are not Christians.

Such a person may know much about the Bible, be a great leader in the church, be involved in the ministry of the church, be warm and caring, or even appear to be a godly man or woman. But if they claim to be a Christian and are not "walking in righteousness and truth," then they are liars. He or she is not a Christian. This is the first person that is described in 1 John 1:6-10.

Verses 8 and 10 introduce us to the second type of person. This person is also not a Christian. These verses say,

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8 (NASB)*

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:10 (NASB)*

This person claims that they do not sin. Sadly, verse 8 says that these people have deceived themselves. Verse 10 says they have called God a liar. That is, why would anyone seek God's forgiveness if they believe they do not need to be forgiven. I feel sorry for them. Now I do not know if anyone here believes they are sinless, but these verses say that if you think you are sinless, then you have deceived yourself.

Verse 9 introduces the third type of person. The person in verses 6-7 was called a liar, and the persons in verses 8 and 10 are called liars. They were not Christians. Verse 9 is about the real Christian. The verse says,

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NASB)*

This verse reveals several important truths. First, it reveals that true Christians do sin. If Christians did not sin, there would not be any need to confess our sins. Second, true Christians habitually confess their sins. The word confession is translated from the Greek word *hololego* which means "to say the same thing." That is, true Christians confess their sins.

If we read Daniel 9:4-5, we would discover that Daniel's confession was an admission that he and Israel had committed iniquity, acted wickedly, rebelled, and ignored the commandments and ordinances of God. That describes what true Christians do. We admit our sins. This gives us the first principle.

## **Principle #1 True Christians do sin and regularly confess their sins.**

Why does this principle include regular confession of sins? The answer is that the Greek tense of *hololego* is a present active. That refers to an active condition. If you are a true Christian, you will want to regularly confess your sins when you realize you have sinned in order to have a right relation-

ship with God.

Then we are told that as Christians confess their sins, God will forgive us for two reasons. Both reasons are rooted in God's character. The first reason is that God is faithful and the second is that God is righteous. Now you may wonder why did we discuss this principle? The answer is that only true Christians are motivated to confess their sins. May I ask, "Have you been confessing your sins?" It is a sign that a person is on the narrow road to eternal life.

**True Christians Hate Their Sins!** Another sign that a person is on the narrow road to eternal life is found in Romans 7:14-8:1. In this passage the apostle Paul is grieving his sinful condition. In verse 15 Paul writes,

*For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. Romans 7:15 (NASB)*

This verse is very important because it reveals that Paul was waging war against sin. He said, "I am not practicing what I would like to do." That is, he was in battle. Then he said, "I am doing the very thing I hate." That is, he did not always win the battle against temptation. As a result, he would sin. Then in verses 18-19 he said,

*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. Romans 7:18-19 (NASB)*

When Paul said that nothing good was dwelling in his flesh, he was referring to his sinful condition. Then he said that he was not doing the good he desired, but he was doing the evil he did not want to do. That is, Paul was not always winning his battle with sin. What an admission from an apostle. He did not always win! But he was fighting hard. Then in verse 24 he exploded in grief,

*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Romans 7:24 (NASB)*

When Paul said, "Wretched man that I am," he revealed how much he hated sin, how much he grieved his sin. He wanted to be free from his physical body. The message for us is that every true Christian will hate their sin. They will grieve their sins. Is that true of you if you are one who claims to be a Christian?

Let us be honest. Sometimes people confess their sins not because they hate their sins, but because they hate the pain and suffering that results from their sins. They want their pain and suffering to stop. For example, when someone has committed adultery, committed a crime, or is about to lose their marriage, they often hate the consequences of their sin as opposed to hating their sin. Notice that Paul did not say,

*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the consequences of my sin?*

Instead, Paul revealed that he hated his sins. He said, "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" This passage and 1 John 1:9 give us the second principle.

## **Principle #2 True Christians hate their sins!**

So, the first principle is that true Christians sin but will regularly confess their sins. The second principle is that true Christians hate their sins!

**True Christians Increasingly Sin Less.** As a result, true Christians wage a relentless war against sin. If you are looking for another proof that you are a Christian, read Romans 8:13-14. It describes what happens to a true Christian. Verse 13 says,

*For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:13 (NASB)*

Here we are told that if someone is living according to the flesh, that is, they are living a life that is not waging war against sin, they will die. That refers to spiritual death. Then Paul said but if we are living according to the Holy Spirit, we

will be putting to death the deeds of the body. This is proof that a Christian has life—eternal life. Now Paul is not saying that we go to heaven by becoming perfect. We have already learned in 1 John 1:8 and 10 that no one can be sinless in this life. What Paul is describing is a Christian who is sinning less and less.

A Christian will not win every battle against sin, but he or she will be winning more and more as they become more spiritually mature. Then verse 14 adds,

**For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:13-14 (NASB)**

Now we are told that if a person is putting to death the deeds of the body, then they are led or indwelt by the Holy Spirit and they are a son of God. That is, they are a Christian. This is a sign that must be true of you if you are a Christian. Only those who have saving faith will be sinning less and less. I do not mean that you are becoming more and more numb to your sin. The message of Scripture is that the proof a person is a true Christian is that they will sin less and less. If this is not happening, then you have no assurance that you are a Christian.

Now it is important to know that Paul wrote the words in this chapter and the previous chapter in about A.D. 56. Paul had been a Christian for about 23 years. He was not a new Christian. Yet chapter seven reveals that he was in anguish over his sins. Then about six years later, he wrote 1 Timothy 1:15 where he exclaimed that he was the chief of sinners! The message for us is that after thirty to forty years as an apostle, Paul had been increasingly having victory over sin. Nevertheless, he did not feel any better about his sin. This gives us our third principle,

### **Principle #3**

#### **True Christians will sin less and less, but become more sensitive to sin.**

A true Christian will become more sensitive to his or her sin. So, the first principle is that true Christians will sin and regularly confess their sins. The second principle is that true

Christians hate their sins! The third principle is that true Christians will sin less and less but feel worse about their sins.

**True Christians Strive To Be Like Christ.** Matthew 5:6 is the next passage. It says,

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:6 (NASB)**

This verse is one of the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. It is important to know the beatitudes describe characteristics of true Christians. For example, verse 3 can only be true for Christians. It says that only the poor in spirit will enter the kingdom of heaven. Verse 8 is clearly only true of Christians. These examples help us understand that verse 6 also describes Christians. So, only Christians will hunger and thirst to be righteous. This is another proof someone is a Christian. They hunger and thirst—they long—to be righteous. Sounds like Paul, doesn't it? Paul wanted to stop sinning.

Now why will true Christians long to be righteous? The answer is that the Holy Spirit is working in true believers to make us become holy like Christ. Romans 8:29 reminds us that God is working in us to conform us to the image of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13 teaches that God has given the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers so that we will become like Jesus. Paul urged the believers in 1 Corinthians 11:1 to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Paul said,

**Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1 (NASB)**

That tells us that Paul wanted to be like Christ. It also tells us that is what a true Christian should strive to be. May I ask, are you striving against sin every day so that you can be like Christ? These verses give us our fourth principle,

### **Principle #4**

#### **True Christians long to be righteous in order to be like Christ.**

Because a true Christian will desire to be like Christ, he will long to be righteous. Because a true Christian longs to be righteous, he will sin less and less and become more sensitive to sin. Because a Christian strives to sin less and less, he will hate the smallest of sins. Because a Christian hates his sins, he confesses them every time he sins. Does that sound like you?

**Conclusion.** So, what is true about you? Have you walked through the narrow gate and are now walking along the difficult road to eternal life? In this study, we have discovered one of the reasons the road is difficult. True Christians regularly confess their sins because they hate their sins and seek to restore their day-to-day relationship with Christ. True Christians strive against sin with the help of the Holy Spirit and as a result are sinning less and less, but feel worse about their sins when they do sin. True Christians are like the apostle Paul who was grieved by his old sins when he thought about them because his hatred for sin had increased so much. So, have you walked through the narrow gate and are you walking along the difficult road to eternal life?

Or, are you “almost” on the road to heaven? You hear that God tells you to flee sexual sin, that He hates divorce, you are not to lie, to love others, to regard others better than yourself, to look out for the interests of others, to pray always, to give thanks, to share the gospel, to study the Bible, to love your husband, to love your wife, to spiritually lead your wife and your children, to give to the poor, and to strive to be as holy as God, but perhaps you live life as usual, except when you are around Christians. May I ask if you have just tried to add Jesus to your life? Are you only “almost” on the road to eternal life?

Please remember that James 2:19 teaches us that even the demons believe in God too! But they do not hate their sins, but true Christians do! Jesus told us that He did not come to save the righteous, but sinners. He came to save those who mourn their sins. He came to save those who wanted their sins to be forgiven and for God to transform their life. That is how we come to Christ, but it is not the end. Our struggle will continue on the road to eternal life. Step-by-step, God will transform a Christian. Step-by-step, we will become more and more righteous. I hope that is true of you. If so, then you are on the road leading to eternal life.

I want to close with a story. It says,

A preacher and a non-Christian named George, who manufactured soap products, met on the street one day. Sneering, George exclaimed, “The gospel you preach can’t be very good, for there are still a lot of wicked people.” The preacher was silent until they passed a child making mud pies. The little child was smeared from head to toe with dirt. Pointing to the youngster the preacher said, “George, your product can’t be very effective, for there is still a lot of filth in the world.” “Oh, but my soap cleans only those to whom it is applied,” replied the manufacturer. “Exactly!” exclaimed the preacher. George was caught in his own trap.<sup>3</sup>

The Holy Spirit is like the soap in this illustration. It is effective only to those people to whom it is truthfully “applied!” At the moment of saving faith, true Christians have been given new life. Each believer is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), a new creation (Galatians 6:15) or a new self (Ephesians 4:24). Therefore, just as 1 Peter 1:15-16 urges us to be holy, let us strive to be as holy as God.

**But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NASB)**

Are you on the road to heaven or are you only “almost” on the road to heaven?

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3. Roy Zuck. The Speaker’s Quote Book. Kregel Publications. 1997. p. 331.