

two ways in which the whole human family are walking, and two gates through which they are entering, either to a life of everlasting happiness or endless misery. These ways are said to be, the one a broad way, and the other a narrow way: the one is a wide gate, and the other a strait one. In the broad way and gate, many are said, nay, do prefer, to travel, because they find it comparatively easy, and without impediments. It is smooth and inviting. They are carried along like a vessel before the breeze. In this we have the character of the Godless and the formalist in religion. The one is "living without God and without hope in the world," carried through life amidst its business and cares regardless of the "one thing needful," or the salvation of his immortal soul; while the formalist is quite content with the form of godliness, which is all that he seeks to possess. His religion consists merely of easy and burdenless services, which do not cause him any great trouble to perform. The religion of such a professor has nothing with the pain of self-mortification, with "the plucking out of a right eye," or "the cutting off of a right hand." His is a most convenient religion, accommodating itself to the inclination and the varied circumstances of its possessor; and while it exempts from every severe restraint, it also soothes and supports with the apparent prospect of glory and blessedness through eternity. No wonder, then, that many prefer "the broad way and the wide gate" of a mere formal but Christless religion; but, alas! they will find, from bitter and dear-bought experience, that "the way of transgressors is hard," and will learn, also, at the last, that "the end of these things is death." But there is another way and another gate of a very different description, which our blessed Lord proceeds to describe in

Verse 14th. "*Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*"

In this case, the entrance is narrow and of difficult approach. The way is like the ascent up a steep and craggy mountainous pass, requiring constant and laborious exertion. Under the emblem of a strait gate and a narrow way, we have given us a representation of holy zeal and saving religion. It cannot be said of the religion of Jesus Christ, that there is in its principles anything unreasonable or impracticable. The difficulties which attend it arise not from the severity of its restraints, but solely from the weakness and wickedness of the depraved heart of man. Yet the religion of Christ may truly be said to be a "strait gate and narrow way," when we consider,

1st. *The doctrines which it presents as the object of our faith.*—The doctrine of the Cross is especially a hard doctrine to believe in, for those who would follow Christ as His disciples. It was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. The

great fact that He who was in the form of God, and equal with God, took upon Him the form of a servant, and submitted to crucifixion, that He might make atonement for sin, and work out a perfect righteousness, and become the author of eternal salvation to all who believe on His name;—such a doctrine as this presents to the eye of human reason a subject transcendently amazing, deeply mysterious, and difficult of credence. Also, the doctrine connected with that of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, by the imputed merits of Him "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." These and all other peculiar doctrines of the Gospel exhibit a system so humbling to the pride of man—so incomprehensive to carnal reason, that nothing less than the teaching of the great God Himself, in the work and influences of the Holy Spirit, can open a way for their reception, or produce a willingness to embrace them as true, or submit to them as the principles of their faith and obedience. That the religion of Jesus Christ presents its principles under the emblem of "a narrow way and a strait gate," will appear further when we consider, in the

2nd place, *The services which it requires, and more especially the restraints which it imposes.*—The gospel does not only prohibit all intemperance of actual and lawful enjoyments and pleasures, but all irregularity of the thoughts, and all impurity of desire and affection. It prohibits not only what is positively sinful in heart and conduct, but everything that is calculated to lead to the commission of sin; yea, the very appearance of sin. Here, then, the life of the real Christian is one continuous warfare—a struggling between nature and grace—the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit striving against the flesh: in short, his life is a course of constant watchfulness and of painful and laborious exertion. Our Lord evidently refers here to the commencement of the Christian's course of trust and self-denials: He enjoins us to "*enter in.*" In St. Luke's gospel, in the parallel passage to this, there is a much stronger term used than here, "to *enter in.*" There it is, "*Strive to enter,*" which in the original Greek, is far more expressive than the English translation. This "*striving to enter*" evidently has a reference to the national contests in the games of ancient Greece. We are commanded to "*agonize*"—for that is literally the expression made use of. In this spirit of agonizing, we are to strive, making all the exertion of which our nature sanctified and strengthened by divine grace is capable, by the maintenance of a resolution and unyielding resistance to sin, in every form, whether within or without us. The necessity of such a "*striving*" will clearly appear if we consider the difficulties to be surmounted, the temptations to be contended with, the enemies to be resisted, and the