

Consistency and the Bible

I love consistency. I understand that this is not important to everyone, and that's OK. But I really want my world to be rational and consistent. However a love of orderliness and consistency can drive you crazy when reading the Bible. For example, Jesus, as presented in the Gospels, was usually answering specific questions or talking to a variety of different people with a variety of different backgrounds in a variety of different situations. And what He said depended on who He was talking to. He was not concerned with making sure that everything He said was perfectly consistent. When answering someone's questions, He did not attempt to give universal truths. Rather He gave answers to specific people in specific situations. What mattered to him was proclaiming the kingdom of God in a manner that those to whom he was speaking could understand.

Now we come back to me and consistency and Luke 13:22-30. Jesus died for us and for our sins. Our salvation is assured. This is what Jesus did on the cross. We have not earned this salvation. God, in Christ, forgave us and guaranteed our salvation. He did this out of his love for us. This is God's grace. It is his free gift to us. If this is true, if our salvation is assured, how can Christ say "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able." "Where is the consistency?" I ask myself. The answer is that Christ was not speaking to the disciples, or even followers. He was speaking to a group of Jews, who believed that salvation was theirs as a birthright. Jesus was saying to them, the kingdom of God is not automatically theirs, and just theirs. It is not enough to just be Jewish. So for those Jews to whom Jesus was speaking, the door was a lot narrower than they thought. It was to those Jews that he said "many will try to enter and will not be able."

So the narrow door is not meant to terrify us, but it is the word of God and it is meant to speak to us. For me, the important word is "Strive." "Strive to enter through the narrow door." We have been guaranteed salvation. We should relax in that knowledge. But We should strive to live a Christ-like life. We should strive to make our lives a living sacrifice to God. We should strive to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind." And we should strive to love our neighbor as our self. We don't do this out of fear of God or our souls. We do this out of love of God and a desire to live the life God calls us to live.