



## The Narrow Door

**W**hen hunters first started to trap monkeys, they knew that their prey wouldn't fall for just any trick—one hunter came up with an ingenious plan.

The hunter hollowed out a coconut and filled it with rice and nuts, and then tied the coconut to a tree. A monkey would discover the coconut tied to the tree and see the food at the bottom of the coconut.

But, as the monkey inserted its hand in the carefully crafted opening hole in the coconut it discovered that hole was barely big enough for an empty, flexible hand to enter.

Still, monkeys fell for the trap, trying to take the bait. Try as it might, the monkey, once it had closed its fist around the prize of the food at the bottom of the coconut, could not remove its hand.

Time after time the monkey refused to let go of the food it had in its hand—even when the hunter came up and put a net over its head.

In Luke 13:22-30 Jesus encouraged those who wished to be saved to “make every effort to enter through the narrow door.”

A narrow opening or path as a way to life and as a way of life is a figurative image that Jesus also spoke of in Matthew 7, where he also speaks of a narrow and small gate and a narrow road or path.

At first glance Jesus seems to be saying that it is difficult to be saved. That's great news for Christ-less religion—as soon

as difficulty and effort is mentioned, religious legalism starts grinding its axe.

The typical explanation of Luke 13:22-30 is a hellfire and damnation sermon—it's one of those classic ways in which religion dangles the feet of the slackers over the flames of hell, trying to shame and guilt them into being better people so God will save them.

But wait just a minute: let's take another look. Is that what Jesus is saying?

**The narrow door is not at all about our effort, our performance or the religious prize Christless religion insists God owes us as a result of how hard we work.**

Jesus is saying that letting go of the prizes we feel we deserve is the narrow door of grace.

The narrow door is not at all about our effort, our performance or the religious prize that Christless religion insists God owes us as a result of how hard we work.

In terms of the kingdom of God, hard work on the part of humans is the easy way—it's the way as Jesus says in Matthew 7 that is a wide gate and a broad road that leads to destruction.

The narrow door is grace—grace is narrow because most people choose to impress God and work their way into the kingdom of God rather than surrender their cherished virtues

and good deeds.

Many people try to carry all their spiritual trophies and diplomas and certificates and commendations through the door of God's kingdom but the door to God's kingdom only allows entrance to those who surrender all, whose hands are empty, who have no suitcases filled with their religious deeds and commendations.

Like the monkey who was trapped by the seduction of food at the bottom of a hollowed out coconut (and refused to let go of all the prizes it had in its grasp, even when it could save itself by doing so) so too, many people refuse to humble themselves and realize that salvation is by *faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone*.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9 we are saved by grace, not by works so that no one can boast before God of their accomplishments.

Grace is the key that unlocks the doors of religious prisons and salt mines—grace rips off the blindfolds that deceive—grace is the cool drink of living water for the thirsty and parched soul of those who are blinded and deceived.

Monkeys (or humans) who are saved are those who are willing to let go of all the religious stuff they have crammed into their greedy little hands. □

—Greg Albrecht

*Join us for “The Narrow Door” at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of May 3, 2020.*