**The Way of the Cross Leads Home**

**Introduction**

1. Our goal is to be able to confidently say what Paul said in **2 Timothy 4:8** – we want that crown of life.
2. We want to achieve the goal of heaven and remain with the Father forever in rest.
3. However, we need to understand that the way home is not an easy way – **2 Timothy 4:6-8** – Paul sacrificed, fought, and ran hard.
4. Some think they can take the easy way and still make it to the promised land. They take the path of least resistance.
   1. Path of least resistance – “The path of least resistance is the physical or metaphorical pathway that provides the least resistance to forward motion by a given object or entity, among a set of alternative paths. The concept is often used to describe why an object or entity takes a given path.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Path\_of\_least\_resistance)
   2. Example of water – when the flow of water reaches an object it does not go through the object, but if there is a way around the object if flows that direction. (Why rivers wind through the land.)
   3. Metaphorically applied to decision making – avoiding at all costs any conflict, opposition, friction, etc.
5. Jesus has told us where the path of least resistance will take us spiritually – **Matthew 7:13-14** (wide gate is the path of least resistance)
6. The call of discipleship is a call to bear a cross, which is difficult and trying – **Mark 8:34-35**
   1. Cross – symbol of burden, suffering, shame, but also duty.
   2. We cannot follow Christ into heaven without taking up our own cross.
7. When the Path of Least Resistance is Taken
8. The path of least resistance is appealing because it is naturally the easier path to take. However, while the journey may be less stressful, the destination is seldom desirable.
9. Israelites at Kadesh Barnea
   1. Arrived at Kadesh Barnea in the Wilderness of Paran and sent 12 men in to spy out the land and its inhabitants.
   2. What they say about the land – **Numbers 13:26-33** – all negative except Joshua and Caleb.
      1. Their words indicate an expectation of an easy conquest.
      2. This is not how their experience had been thus far, and it is not what God intended moving on – He wanted their faith in Him to deliver.
   3. What they want to do instead of face the Canaanites – **Numbers 14:1-4** – return to Egypt.
   4. The consequence of desiring the path of least resistance – sentenced to die in the wilderness. (**cf. Hebrews 3:16-19** – the Hebrew writer reflects.)
10. Rich Young Ruler
    1. Desiring eternal life, the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he needed to do – **Matthew 19:16-19**
    2. He was one who seemed to be a devoutly religious person – **Matthew 19:20**
    3. Jesus’ requirement for Him proved too much – **Matthew 19:21-22**
    4. Jesus knew his heart, and despite the diligence in keeping the commandments displayed by him, there was something holding him back from full devotion.
       1. At the surface, it seems that keeping the commandments was not a big deal for him.
       2. But when the degree of required devotion steepened, he took the path of least resistance.
       3. **Matthew 19:23-24** – it is hard for a rich man to enter heaven. (Hard, not easy, shows the path of least resistance to be wrong.)
11. The Way of the Cross
12. The way of the cross requires great resistance and meets great resistance along the way. It is inherently not easy but is necessary.
13. Resist Sin
    1. The flesh is referred to as “sinful flesh” – **Romans 8:3**
       1. It is not inherently sinful, but it does have natural passions that if unchecked by God’s word will lead to sin.
    2. **Galatians 5:16-17** – the Spirit’s teaching requires us to resist the pull of the flesh.
       1. It is easier to just let the flesh gain ascendency, but the Christian is called to self-control.
    3. Satan is to always be resisted – **1 Peter 5:8-9**
       1. **James 4:7-8** – it takes effort to resist Satan as well as draw near to God.
       2. We cannot decide through exhaustion or irritability to let Satan in without a fight.
       3. We cannot give into our desires – **James 1:14-15** – such a path without resistance leads to death.
14. Resist Error
    1. We must contend earnestly against false teaching for that which gives us hope – **Jude 3-4**
    2. When error creeps in there is a temptation to remain neutral – it’s easier not to take sides, although such a position is illogical.
       1. To remain neutral is actually to pit yourself against Christ – **Matthew 12:30**
    3. Some want to avoid any negativity – **Isaiah 30:8-11** (Like Israel of Old); **2 Timothy 4:3-4** (Like those in NT times.)
    4. God wants us to be prepared for error at all times, and always stand against it.
       1. This requires preaching/teaching the whole counsel of God – **Acts 20:26-27**
          1. This is not simply a path that may happen upon some resistance but is a constancy.
          2. When the truth is proclaimed it is always in the form of battle!
          3. We must not ignore the structures erected by our enemy, but tear them down with God’s word – **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**
       2. Ignoring error by taking the path of least resistance leads to corruption – **1 Corinthians 15:33**
15. Face the Ridicule of the World
    1. We are called to be different than the world – **Romans 12:1-2**
    2. The word of God is that which sets us apart – **John 17:14-17**
    3. The world does not just sit idly by and ignore our differences. Even though many claim to be indifferent concerning spiritual matters, they actively seek to disrupt our way of living.
       1. They hate us because the world hated Jesus, and we are His representatives – **John 15:18-19**
       2. We must not avoid conflict for the sake of peace, but continually live for Christ knowing that He has overcome the world – **John 16:33**
    4. Part of the cross we are to bear is being crucified to the world – **Galatians 6:14**
       1. Paul crucified the world to himself – put it to a shameful death – it is not alive in Paul’s life, nor does it appeal to him.
       2. World crucified Paul – He is disdained and mistreated due to his resolve to do God’s will. (**1 Corinthians 4:13 –** as filth and offscouring)
    5. The simple truth is if we’re living godly in Christ Jesus we will not be held in high regard by the world. We must not stop living for Jesus.
16. The Way of the Cross Leads Home
    1. We will gain our life if we ar1e willing to lose it now – **Mark 8:34-35**
    2. We will be greatly rewarded for taking the path of self-denial, sacrifice, and endurance of great evils – **Mark 10:29-30**

**Conclusion**

1. There will always be the temptation to take the easy way, the path of least resistance.
2. Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow Him.
3. The path to heaven is narrow and difficult, but it will be well worth it when it ends at home with our Lord.