



There are a diversity of gates in life - many are pleasant and needful to enter; others are dangerous and detrimental to our well being. There are gates of stone, of wood, of marble, of bronze, of gold, and even silver. There are even gates in the sky which pilots, on an instrument approach, refer to as the "Approach Gate" for the destination airfield. The gate we enter determines what path we take in life, in death, in business, and in every other walk of life.

I'd like to relate a story that many of our more mature readers may remember from one of my youthful TV favorite programs - Twilight Zone! (Disclaimer - I offer no defense for any misguided theology that the story may contain.)

### **Dogs In Heaven?**

An old man and his dog were walking down this dirt road with fences on both sides, they came to a gate in the fence and looked in, it was nice grassy, woody areas, just what a 'huntin' dog and man would like, but, it had a sign saying 'no trespassing' so they walked on. They came to a beautiful gate with a person in white robes standing there. "Welcome to Heaven" he said. The old man was happy and started in with his dog following him. The gatekeeper stopped him. "Dogs aren't allowed, I'm sorry but he can't come with you."

"What kind of Heaven won't allow dogs? If he can't come in, then I will stay out with him. He's been my faithful companion all his life, I can't desert him now."

"Suit yourself, but I have to warn you, the Devil's on this road and he'll try to sweet talk you into his area, he'll promise you anything, but the dog can't go there either. If you won't leave the dog, you'll spend Eternity on this road."

So the old man and dog went on. They came to a rundown fence with a gap in it, no gate, just a hole. Another old man was inside. "S'cuse me Sir, my dog and I are getting mighty tired, mind if we come in and sit in the shade for awhile?"

"Of course, there's some cold water under that tree over there. Make yourselves comfortable"

"You're sure my dog can come in? The man down the road said dogs weren't allowed anywhere."

"Would you come in if you had to leave the dog?"

"No sir, that's why I didn't go to Heaven, he said the dog couldn't come in."

We'll be spending Eternity on this road, and a glass of cold water and some shade would be mighty fine right about now. But, I won't come in if my buddy here can't come too, and that's final."

The man smiled a big smile and said "Welcome to Heaven."

"You mean this is Heaven? Dogs ARE allowed? How come that fellow down the road said they weren't?"

"That was the Devil and he gets all the people who are willing to give up a life long companion for a comfortable place to stay. They soon find out their mistake, but then it's too late. The dogs come here, the fickle people stay there. GOD wouldn't allow dogs to be banned from Heaven. After all, HE created them to be man's companions in life, why would he separate them in death?"

- Based on the "*Twilight Zone*" episode "The Hunt" written by Earl Hamner Jr.

When we look at the most commonly traveled Road of Life, we see that it is a very broad avenue filled with celebrities, famous sportsmen and women, rulers of great governments of men, abortionists, abusers of themselves with mankind, sorcerers (drug dealers), men-stealers, liars, thieves, and, here and there, quite a few preachers who represented themselves as ministers of God. Looking down that Road (for it is declining in its grade), we see far at the bottom of the path a rather wide gate into which those who follow the Road disappear and never again emerge. The name of the gate only appears on the inside rather than openly displayed at the entrance. The name is embossed on the craggy inner wall in large and flaming letters - "HELL - *Abandon all hope, ye who enter here!*" (Dante's Inferno). (It was very thoughtful of the Devil to place this warning on the inner wall and not the outside.)

Fortunately for the discerning pilgrim, there is a Road Less Traveled whose attractions are not so glamorous with the world's fads and fashions. The grass on that path has not been worn down by many travelers. Moreover, its incline is upward and the path is narrow. It needs no great width since there are few who travel that upward path. It is not as full of visible and winding intrigues as the former road, but is straight and lined only with curtains of honeysuckle, grape, and wild flowers. It leads ever upward toward a Beautiful Gate that stands very Tall but not so Wide! The gates are flung open for all to see inside as they draw nearer their destination. It very much symbolizes the Christian pilgrim who embarks on his journey on that upward, narrow path leading to the Gate Beautiful. As he draws near the shores of Jordan Waters, he can see across to the fertile land of Promise that awaits just on the other side. He can also see the name of the gate posted over its entrance: GATE BEAUTIFUL! The great poet, Robert Frost, describes two different paths in a poem:

### **The Road Not Taken**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

There are many gates in Jerusalem - the Sheep Gate, the Fish Gate, the Fountain Gate, the East Gate, etc; but only one such gate has eternal implications for the pilgrim - it is the Beautiful Gate of Corinthian Bronze that stands tall and sublime at the entrance to the Temple Worship area. It is a gate of healing and salvation. Lazarus lay at the Rich Man's gate and was shunned until the angel escort came to receive his soul. Our Lord healed the body of a man at Bethesda Gate (Sheep Gate) who suffered from paralysis. It was an important gate for Christ came as a Shepherd to heal and to cure. But after He has blessed us with such compassion and salvation, we must enter in at the Beautiful Gate to praise Him and worship Him forever. (see John 5:1-16) It was at this Beautiful Gate that another paralytic was healed. Peter and John saw a man who had been paralyzed from birth being laid at this gate. The man was there to beg for morsels of bread or some small bit of silver or gold coinage. But God offers more than the glitter of the world: "*Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*" (Acts 3:6)

The man had not been able to go through that Gate on his own power previously, but now he could leap with joy. When our paralyzed spirits are awakened by God, we too can jump and run into that Gate Beautiful.

Have you done so, my friends? If not, be still and listen for that resounding Voice that called to life the dead body of Lazarus in the tomb of Bethany. He can call you to life as well!