



THE WIDER LIFE (Part 2)

Some lives are narrow, by reason of the way their circumstances have dwarfed them. We may not say, however, that poverty necessarily has this effect, for many who are poor, who have to live in a little house, with few comforts and no luxuries—live a life that is large and free—as wide as the sky in its gladness. While on the other hand there are those who have everything of an earthly sort that heart could desire—yet whose lives are narrow.

There are some people to whom life has been so heavy a burden that they are ready to drop by the way. They pray for health, and instead illness comes with its suffering and its expense. Their work is hard. They have to live in continual discomfort. Their associations are uncongenial. There seems no hope of relief. When they awake in the morning, their first consciousness is of the load they must take up and begin again to carry. Their disheartenment has continued so long that it has grown into hopelessness. The message to such is, “ENLARGE the place of your tent.” No matter how many or how great are the reasons for discouragement, a Christian should not let bitterness enter his heart and blind his eyes—so that he cannot see the blue sky and the shining stars.

Looked at from an earthly viewpoint, could any life have been more narrow in its condition than Christ’s? Think who he was—the Messiah, sinless, holy, loving, infinitely gentle of heart. Then think of the life into which He came—the relentless hate that was about Him, the bitter enmity that pursued Him, the rejection of love that met Him at every step. Think of the failure of His mission, as it seemed, and His betrayal and death. Yet He was never discouraged. He never grew bitter.

How did He overcome the narrowness? The secret was love. The world hated Him—but He loved on. His own received Him not, rejected Him—but His heart changed not toward them. Love saved Him from being embittered by the narrowness. This is the one and the only secret that will save any life from the narrowing influence of the most distressing circumstances. Widen your tent! Make room in it for God and for your neighbor; and as you make place for enlargement, the enlargement will come.

There was a woman who had become embittered by a long experience of sickness and of injustice and wrong, until she was shut up in a prison of hopelessness. Then, by reason of the death of a relative, a little motherless child was brought to her door. The door was opened most reluctantly, at first; the child was not warmly welcomed. Yet when she was received, God entered with her, and at once the dreary home began to grow brighter. The narrowness began to be enlarged. Other human needs came and were not turned away. In blessing others, the woman was blessed herself. Today there is no happier home than hers. Try it if you are discouraged. Begin to serve those who need your love and ministry. Encourage some other disheartened one—and your own discouragement will pass away. Brighten another’s lonely lot—and your own will be brightened.

Some lives are made narrow by their limitations in opportunity. Some men seem not to have the same chance that others have. They may be physically incapacitated for holding their place in the march of life. Or they may have failed in business after many years of hard toil—and may lack the courage to begin again. They may have been hurt by folly or sin and do not seem able to take the upward flights they used to take. There are some people in every community who, for one cause or

another, do not seem to have a chance to make much of their life. But whatever it may be that shuts one in a narrow environment, as in a little tent, the Word of God brings a message of hope and cheer. Its call ever is, “ENLARGE the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes!” (Isaiah 54:2)

There is danger that some of us overdo our contentment. We regard as an impassable wall, certain obstacles and hindrances which God meant to be to us only inspirers of courage. Difficulties are not intended to stop our efforts but to arouse us to our best. We give up too easily. We conclude that we cannot do certain things, and think we are submitting to God’s will—in giving up without trying to overcome, when in fact we are only showing our indolence. We suppose that our limitations are part of God’s plan for us, and that we have only to accept them and make the best of them.

In some cases this is true—there are barriers that are impassable; but in many cases God wants us to gain the victory over the limitations. His call is, “Enlarge the place of your tent!” ...

Life should never cease to widen. A man ought to be at his best during the last years of his life. He ought always to be enlarging the place of his tent—until its curtains are finally pushed out into the limitless spaces of immortality!

The Wider Life, *Chapter 1, by J. R. Miller, 1908.*

