

## **Sermon 58: The Narrow Gate and the Difficult Way: Matthew 7:13-14**

**Text: Matthew 7:13-14** "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it..."

**Introduction: These verses are Christ's final thoughts in the sermon.**

- **Enter the narrow gate into the Kingdom: 7:13** "Enter ye in at the strait gate..."
- **Beware of false teachers who present a false message: 7:15** "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves..."
- **Be sobered by the fact that not everyone who says Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom: 7:21** "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven..."
- **Do not build your life on substitutes to God's word: 7:26** "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them no, I will liken him unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand..."

**Summary of Christ's teaching:** Every individual is called to make a decision that goes against their nature but will ultimately determine their eternal destination.

**Part 1: The background of Christ's statements:**

- **Everyone has a worldview:**
  - Some have thought carefully about it and strive to be consistent in it.
  - Others pragmatically live moment by moment doing what appears to work best.
  - Our worldview is constantly being shaped by the things around us, our experiences, and our internal reaction to truth.
  - We cannot trust our hearts, our culture, or our interpretation of experiences.
  - We need an objective, timeless standard that calls us to submit ourselves to God.
  - We need to submit ourselves to God's truth.
- **First Century Judaism:**
  - It emphasized externals, rituals, and traditions.
  - It took comfort in being ethnically connected to Abraham.
  - It was consumed with laboring to establish religious credentials.
  - It carefully followed Rabbinical teachings.
- **Christ's Teaching:** A sound Christological reading of the Old Testament

- The law condemns and points to the need for a Redeemer.
- The sacrificial system provided a continual reminder that the people needed a Redeemer.
- The nation's history provided a reminder that they needed a better Prophet, a better Priest, and a better Kings.
- Their history revealed that the Redeemer desired to save both Jews and Gentiles.
- The Old Testament pointed to the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.
- **The believing first century Jew:**
  - **Promise: Isaiah 40:1-3** "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God..."
  - **Faith in the Promise: Luke 1:68-78** "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us..."

## **Part 2: The content of Christ's teaching:**

- **Fact 1: Everyone is called to a point of decision:** "Enter ye in at the strait gate..."
  - **This decision is described as a "narrow gate:"**
  - **The word narrow describes "exclusivity:"**
    - **John 3:3** "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God..."
    - **John 14:6** "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me..."

- **John 11:25** "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live..."
- **Acts 4:12** "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved..."
- **Acts 17:30** "God...now commandeth all men every where to repent..."
- **The word gate describes a "passageway" between two positions:**
  - **John 3:18** "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God..."
  - **John 5:24** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life..."
  - **1 Corinthians 15:22** "In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive..."
  - **Ephesians 2:12-14** "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace..."
  - **Repentance: I must face the fact that I am spiritually bankrupt 5:3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..."
- **The content of Christ's sermon: Repent and believe**
  - **Repentance: I must face the fact that there is no way that I can ever be good enough to merit God's Kingdom 5:20** "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven..."
  - **Repentance: I must face the fact that I sin constantly, because the standard goes to the heart level 5:21-30** "You have heard it said...but I say unto you..."
  - **Repentance: I must face the fact, that I must be as righteous as God to enter the Kingdom 5:48** "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect..."
- **We cannot be passive about this command.**

- **Fact 2: This decision goes against the natural bent of human nature, and many will make the wrong choice:** "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat..."
  - **The words "wide" and "broad" emphasize how easy it is to go down the path of destruction.**
  - **We cannot give an opinion poll to determine what is right and wrong.**
  - **People are naturally moving in the wrong direction, because of the inherent sinfulness of the human heart.**
  - **We literally do not need to do anything to end up in eternal destruction.**
  - **This is the natural position and direction.**
    - **Romans 1:18** "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness..."
    - **Isaiah 64:6** "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags..."
    - **Ephesians 2:3** "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others..."
    - **John 3:19-20** "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved..."
- **Fact 3: The way that follows this decision will be difficult:** "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it..."
  - **The disciple's life is one of struggle and self-sacrifice:**
  - **Christ heavily emphasized this concept:**
    - **Disciples will feel the weight of their sin: Matthew 5:4** "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted..."
    - **They will feel an internal tension against God's perfect standard: Matthew 5:6** "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled..."
    - **They will face pressure from the world: Matthew 5:10** Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..."
    - **They will understand their calling to a higher standard or conduct: Matthew 5:44** "I say unto you,

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you..."

- **They will be called to a conscientious walk: Matthew 6:1** "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven..."
- **They will be called to a life of faith: Matthew 6:33-34** "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof..."
- **Christians are called to count the cost and live the Christian life with an anticipation of struggle:**
  - **Luke 14:33** "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple..."
  - **2 Timothy 3:12** Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
  - **Acts 14:22** "Exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God..."
  - **Ephesians 6:11-13** "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day..."

### **Part 3: Applying Christ's teaching:**

- **Preach the Gospel:**
  - **Preach a specific gospel:**
    - A real person: God in flesh
    - A literal penal substitutionary death on the cross.
    - A literal bodily resurrection.
    - Grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone.
  - **Preach an exclusive gospel:**
  - **Preach a pressing gospel**
- **Prepare Christians for the inevitability of suffering:**
  - The inevitability of struggles of conscience.
  - The inevitability of struggles with the flesh.
  - The inevitable struggles of growing pains.
  - The inevitable struggles of external pressures.