

What Life Do You Want? — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 7:13–14 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, July 12, 2026 • Two Ways

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Coming to the Conclusion

If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 7. We've been in the Sermon on the Mount for several, several months now. We're coming to a conclusion. You talk about hard goodbyes — I'm going to have a pretty hard goodbye when we have to end the Sermon on the Mount. It's been such a rewarding and rich study for my life personally. I hope it's been a blessing to you.

Any good sermon has a conclusion. That's some of our favorite part, right? Some of you, your favorite part of the sermon is the last part, because it's finally over.

Jesus is a good preacher. He has great sermons. The Sermon on the Mount is probably the greatest sermon that he ever preached, and we're coming to the conclusion — or the invitation, the congregational response part — of that sermon.

The Road the Traffic Was On

And as we examine it, I want you to think about this idea of roads. That's the driving image that Jesus is going to present to us in our passage today. You spend a lot of your life going on roads, one way or the other way.

One of the things I most appreciate about being a citizen of Abilene is that you can get anywhere you want to go basically in 15 minutes. Anyone else love that? It's a weird town. It's got its problems, but that is awesome. You can go anywhere you want to go in fifteen minutes, and it's not like that in other parts of Texas.

I did my schooling in Fort Worth, and so I would drive to the Dallas area every single week, and I learned what it meant to deal with traffic and how to plan out your day so that you could avoid the traffic. And Dallas traffic isn't even that bad. There's stuff that's way worse in

other parts of the world. But I can remember learning the back roads and different ways to go about things to escape traffic. The roads that get the traffic are typically the best roads, and they're the best roads to take if you want to get somewhere quickly.

I remember one day being very pressed for time and thinking to myself, "I think I could possibly catch some traffic, but I'm in such a rush, I don't really have time to take the back roads, and so I'm just going to chance it." And I remember that being one of the worst mistakes I had made that day, because we did hit traffic. I don't even know what caused the traffic buildup, because I didn't wait long enough to figure it out. But I was so frustrated with myself, because I thought — my gut instinct was to take the different road, but I didn't take that road. I took this one.

And there's a lot of times in life where you don't necessarily choose the traffic jam that you land in. But if you're honest with yourself, the reality is you took the road that took you to that traffic jam. Even though you didn't choose the traffic, you chose the road that the traffic was on.

Every Life Is a Road

And life is like that. If everybody in life is on some kind of a road, your road that you're on has some kind of a destination.

Nobody wakes up in the morning, pours their coffee, and says, "I hope I have a terrible bout of suffering today." No one ever does that. But it can happen in your life because of a road that you chose maybe weeks, maybe months, maybe years prior to that day.

Nobody decides to drift from their spouse, but there's a lot of roads that people take that bring them to that destination. Nobody says, "I hope that I have a terrible relationship with my kids when we get older." But there's a lot of roads that you can take that will take you to that destination. Nobody says they want to be in a job that you hate for 30 years, but some of you are on a road that are taking you to that very destination. Or even in the Christian life — nobody says, "I hope I can be an immature Christian until I die." I've never heard anyone say that. But you can take a road that will land you in that destination.

Everybody has a life. Every life is a road. And your road that you're on has certain implications — meaning there are implications you cannot avoid. They are inherent. They are intrinsically linked to the road that you have chosen.

And so it's not a question whether your life is a road. The question is what road are you on, and does that road lead somewhere good, or does it lead somewhere bad?

And that's where Jesus, I think, is going to take us in this conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. He doesn't just do it with roads. He does it with other images, like trees and builders.

And he basically says you need to make a decision of what kind of life you want to live. And if you want to live that kind of life, then you need to choose the road that will take you there.

Setting the Table

And so with that in mind, let's read, starting in Matthew 7:13.

Remember, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount has been casting this vision for a flourishing life. He's given us a window into how to obtain that life. It's been counterintuitive. It's been a little bit awkward in certain places. Jesus has said, "Your righteousness has to exceed that of the most religious people that you know." And what he meant was, you need a righteousness that is rooted in the heart of hearts. It's not just about your behavior, but about the affections in your heart.

And having challenged them toward sincerity and love for God, and having rebuked them for hypocrisy and going through the motions, he ends in verse 13 of chapter 7 with a command:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. But how narrow is the gate and how difficult is the road that leads to life, and few find it." — Matthew 7:13–14

If you keep reading, you'll see Jesus talk about two trees, two different confessions, two different houses, two different builders. Three different episodes. Two different choices. One fundamental question. And the question that he raises again and again is, "Will you do what I'm asking you to do?"

The fundamental question that we're going to look at for the next three weeks is whether or not you will do what Jesus commands.

A Flourishing Life Is a Choice

And it's really important to recognize that Jesus, even in his conclusion, does not begin by waxing eloquent about the nature of the different roads that you can take. He doesn't get philosophical or theoretical or academic and things like that. He gets down to brass tacks and presses for a decision.

A flourishing life is something you must choose, and the thing that you must choose is an action. You must choose to decide whether or not you're going to do what I'm asking you to do.

Are you going to do what Jesus commands?

And I think the temptation — even for me — is to read the Sermon on the Mount and to see just how profound Jesus is, and how sophisticated his thinking is on life, how he's such a gifted psychologist and a deep, deep philosopher, and to be kind of amazed at how deep down he's able to go about all of these big questions in life.

And you could sit and talk theology probably with Jesus for hours and hours. But at the end of the day, he wouldn't say, "Wow, isn't that such an impressive idea?" At the end of the day, he would say, "Truth is leading to a response. You're either going to live this way or you're not going to live this way. And the thing that changes your life is your decisions. It's not your thinking, necessarily. It doesn't stop and end in the mind. It stops and ends with what you do with your body and what you do with your life. Will you do what I command?"

Now, if it all boils down to a choice, and the choice is will you do what Jesus commands — to help us make the right choice and avoid the wrong choice, Jesus is going to paint a very compelling contrast. He's going to say there are two different roads, and these two roads could not be more different.

And I'm going to show you three different contrasts: the road conditions, where they conclude, and who sits upon them. And as we look at these different contrasts, my hope is that you will be persuaded to do what Jesus is saying, in that you enter the narrow gate. You take the narrow road, even though it's less frequented, even though it's much more challenging. You choose that road because it leads to life.

There's this idea — I don't know specifically where it comes from — of the illusion of choice, where no matter which thing you choose, you end up getting the same thing either way. I feel like that every time we have an election. You know, it doesn't matter who you vote for, you end up getting the same thing. There's an illusion of choice.

That is not this. What Jesus is presenting is not an illusion of choice. You will choose one of these two things, and what you choose will have huge implications, and there could not be a bigger difference between how they end, what they're like, and who sits on them.

Contrast One: Different Road Conditions

And so let's begin with the road conditions. This is pretty easy just to see from the surface.

Jesus says in verse 13 that there is, number one, a broad road. The broad road is wide, it is broad, it leads to destruction. On the broad road, there's a lot of people who go through it. Unlike the narrow road — the narrow road is a difficult road. It is a narrow gate, but that road and gate leads to life, and there's only a few that find it.

And so I just wrote down some differences here between these two different roads.

First, the wide road is **obvious**. That's probably why so many people take it. You can't miss this road. This road is where everybody takes, because how could you not take it? It's almost inevitable. It's kind of like the George Bush Turnpike. You just end up there, not even thinking. "Here I am on the George Bush Turnpike, giving all of my money to the state. How did I get here? I don't know. It's just what happens." It's obvious.

It's also a road that is **easy**. And what I mean by that — the Greek word that Jesus uses, the idea is that it doesn't cost you anything. You don't have to check anything at the door. You don't have to put down any baggage. You can carry in your resentment, your idolatry, your self-righteousness. You can carry in all of the things that you think you need to obtain a life of flourishing.

Whereas the narrow road is so narrow, you literally can't get through the gate with anything other than yourself. It is *nothing in my hands I cling* — me and me alone, humbling myself, getting as low and small as I can get. That's the only way that you can fit in. It is hard. It requires sacrifice. It requires giving away things that are precious to you.

That's the difference between the wide road and the narrow road. One is easy, and one is difficult. It's difficult because even when you're on the road, it produces all kinds of tribulation. It's the word that Jesus uses to talk about the great tribulation that happens at the end of days. It's this idea of persecution, hardship, resistance, opposition. That is the condition of the narrow road.

The wide road is **roomy**. Room enough for everybody. Room for you to bring all of your things. And it doesn't matter how many people are on the broad road — there's always room for one more. It's not an exclusive club. Anybody can join. There are no criteria that you must meet. All you got to do is want to be on that road, and you are welcomed right in.

Which is why it is such a **popular** road. It costs you nothing to enter. Promises you everything, costs you nothing. Who wouldn't want to be on this road?

Whereas the narrow road is a **forsaken** road. Few are willing to enter, because those who choose to enter this road have to give up everything that they have. They have to put aside everything precious in order to enter through the gate. And when they're through the gate, the road is very difficult. It's full of persecution, opposition, and resistance.

And so it's not surprising, I think, to realize that the broad road is more popular. The vast majority of the crowd chooses the broad road. But Jesus is saying, "Before you do too, stop and think where these roads are headed, because they are headed to two different destinations."

Contrast Two: Different Road Conclusions

The broad road concludes in a life of destruction — a life that is wasted and spent. The narrow road leads to eternal life. Not just life in heaven that is forever and ever, but a qualitatively flourishing life in the here and the now.

And most people, when they make decisions in life, they don't make decisions based on the conclusions. Most people, when they make decisions, make decisions on the immediate conditions.

I know this was true of me early on when I first started getting into girls. The best girlfriend I could get was the prettiest one. I realized real fast that wasn't going to happen, so had to move on down the road. But it was a very surface-level, "What are the immediate conditions? That's going to be what's best for me."

And it's not just true of shallow men. It's also true of people choosing their college. Which college is going to be best for me? It's probably the one that's going to have the best sorority, or the best X, Y, or Z thing that is immediately grabbing my attention. We think that way about our jobs. What job's going to give me the most amount of money, quickest route of ascension, things of that nature? How should you build your financial life? Immediate focus on the conditions.

And what Jesus, I think, is trying to get us to do is to look a little further down the road. Instead of determining what's wise and foolish based on the immediate conditions, begin to ask ourself, "Where does this lead? Where does this path of life actually terminate?"

And Jesus is saying, when it comes to these two roads, the conclusions could not be more different.

One will lead to a destination where you look at your life and think, "I've wasted it." He uses the word *destruction*. It's translated destruction, but it literally means to be wasted. It's the word that gets used when Mary breaks the perfume bottle onto the feet of Jesus before he goes to the cross, and the disciples look at her and go, "You fool, you've wasted this incredibly expensive perfume. It's worth a year's wages. You've just wasted it on Jesus."¹ And of course, Jesus pushes back.

But the idea behind the word is that it's spent, it's gone, it's unable to be repaired. You can't put the perfume back in the bottle. It's just ruined.

And that's how Jesus describes the life that is committed to the broad road. You get to the end of your life on that road, and you look at it and go, "It's been a waste. I've wasted my opportunities. I've wasted my talents. I've wasted my money. I've wasted everything." And

maybe you don't even say that, looking at that road, but the reality is that's what you've done.

Whereas the other road, Jesus says, is characterized by life. And he doesn't use the Greek word *bios*, which is where we get biology, life. He's not talking about like you're going to live a long time. He's saying it's *zoe*. It's a word that means qualitatively rich, abundant — a life of flourishing.

And so the narrow road, even though it's really, really narrow, and even though it's really, really hard as you walk upon it — the final destination on that road is this life you look at and go, "This is awesome. This is living. This is what I was made to do. This is flourishing. This is the good life."

Broad road leads to a life of destruction. Narrow road leads to a life of flourishing — and not just here and now, but in the sweet by and by.

And so what road are you on? Where does it lead? That's the question you need to answer.

The Crowd Is Not a Compass

And the reality is, a lot of people look at the broad road and think to themselves, "It can't be bad. Surely that many people can't be wrong at the same time."

But if you think that, you're a fool. Majorities have been wrong a lot. In fact, human history is replete with the majority position being wrong. Just because everybody's going down that road doesn't mean it's the right road to travel.

I think in your notes there's a line that says, "The crowd is not a compass for the truth." And I know it sounds like something your mom would say, but it's exactly what Jesus is saying. Just because everyone is on that road does not mean that the road is leading somewhere good.

The book of Proverbs chapter fourteen says, "There's a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to destruction."²

And so don't be deceived by the fact that so many people travel on it. It's leading somewhere you don't want to go.

Contrast Three: Different Crowds

So there's different road conditions and there's different road conclusions. The final thing is there's different kinds of crowds.

The word that Jesus uses to describe the narrow road is a crowd that is very few in number. The word that Jesus uses to describe the broad road is that many go through it.

Now, this is a little unsettling, if you're honest. You probably ask yourself, "Am I the many or the few?" You cannot help but ask that question, because by default, most of us would be the majority. And so you begin to wonder — how do I know if I'm in the few or if I'm in the many?

And I think one way to answer that question is to look at the verbs that Jesus uses.

He says of the people who are on the broad road that they **go through** it. Think of it like you're on a conveyor belt, and it's just the natural course of things. Most of mankind is born into this world on the wide road, drifting along the way. It's the natural course of things to stay on that road and to end up saying, "My life has been wasted." You go through it.

Whereas the verb that Jesus uses to describe the narrow gate is that there are few that — what? There are few that **find** it.

In other words, the thing that characterizes the few is that at some point along the way they stopped and they thought to themselves, "I don't think this is good." They turned away from that road and they looked for something else. So whoever these people are, these few — there are people who were on the road that leads to destruction, but something happened. They came to their senses and they thought, "Maybe I'm wrong about my decisions. Maybe there's a different way to the life that I want. Maybe there's something I can find." So they begin to search and look, and find the narrow gate, and enter into it.

Churches and Bars

The other thing that's interesting about these two words: the impulse, I think, for a lot of people is to think, "Well, the many must be the irreligious people, the pagan people, the people who are bad. And the few must be the good people in life, the religious people, the people who try hard to live right."

And I know that there's kind of an immediate assumption that way. But if you've been reading the context, you'll realize that is not at all what Jesus is saying distinguishes these two people. The many are not the irreligious pagans, and the few are not the religious righteous. Because the whole basis of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus saying, "You've got to be more righteous than the righteous people. You've got to be more righteous than the most religious people you know. Your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees."

Do you guys remember this, in Matthew 5:17–20?

And the Pharisees and the scribes — they were the most religious people. They crossed their moral T's, dotted their moral I's. They did nothing wrong. They were fastidiously committed to doing everything the Bible said and more. And Jesus looks at them and pokes them in the chest and says, "You are far from the kingdom of God. You are just as far from the kingdom of God as the prostitutes and the tax collectors."

The broad road goes through churches and bars. It does not matter. It is no respecter of persons.

A Question of Spiritual Confidence

The thing that determines whether you're on the broad road or the narrow road isn't that you are moral and religious. The distinguishing factor between those who are on the broad road and the narrow road is a question of spiritual confidence. The roads represent in whom you've put your trust — in whom you are depending for life.

And in that way, the narrow road represents people who are no longer trusting in themselves.

The thing that the broad-road people have in common, whether they are irreligious or religious, is that their default assumption is that salvation depends on me, and I'm going to get it one way or the other.

Irreligious people get it through pleasure. There is no God, therefore I'm going to live like I want. I'm going to amass all the money. I'm going to exert my will on people. You know, there's different levels of pagan atheism.

Whereas the religious people look at the broad road and say, "I'm going to earn my way to heaven. I'm going to be so good that God has to let me in, because I've been so impressive and so much better than everyone else."

But the common denominator with both mindsets — even though there's a huge gap in morality — is that both of them live as if a life of flourishing begins and ends in them. That's why they're on the broad road. They've brought in their self-righteousness. They've brought in their idols. They've brought in their baggage and resentment, and they're using that to nurse themselves and justify themselves and make themselves feel like, "I deserve a life of flourishing."

And Jesus is essentially saying in the Sermon on the Mount, "That will not give you the kingdom." The kingdom of heaven is not for the scribes and Pharisees, because their righteousness begins and ends in them. They are not trusting in God's mercy. They have no category for grace. They are very moral, but externally only. It's almost as if they use their morality as a license for self-righteousness.

Whereas those who inherit the kingdom, Jesus says, are those who are poor in spirit — those who realize, "I am dependent on God for any kind of hope of flourishing." Those who mourn the state of this world and realize this world is not what it's supposed to be, and so I cannot find pleasure in the world — whether it's through substances or a perfect record at the church house. It's those who are meek, in that they've surrendered to God. They've said, "God, you have the reins of my life," instead of saying, "I get to run my life. God, you owe me. God, I'm in charge."

It's the Beatitudes. It's the kingdom culture that we talked about at the very beginning of this sermon. The sermon ends like the sermon begins. It's saying there's two ways to live.

You can choose to live trusting in yourself, whether you're a religious or irreligious person. But you got to know that even though it's what everyone's doing, it's leading to absolute destruction. And the devil doesn't care whether you go to hell going to church or whether you go to hell addicted to alcohol and substance abuse. He's happy either way, because he gets what he wants — which is for you to waste your life. For you to waste your life thinking, "This is going to give me what I want," only to realize at the end of your life you made a huge and terrible mistake.

And there will be a lot of very moral people who spend eternity separated from God.

Jesus Is the Narrow Gate

The other type of person realizes, "There's only one place I can put my hope, and it isn't in myself. It isn't my moral performance. It isn't in seeking pleasure of this world. It's not in satisfying my sensual appetites. My hope is found in this person, this teacher, this Jesus who's preaching the sermon."

And I've said again and again as we've gone through the Sermon on the Mount how really every Sermon on the Mount passage is pointing to Jesus. He is the point of the Beatitudes. He's the poor in spirit. He's the man of sorrows. He's the man of meekness who surrendered himself to the Lord. He's the one hungering and thirsting for righteousness. He's the peacemaker. He's the pure in heart. He's the persecuted. He's the Son of God. He's the salt. He's the light. He's the greater righteousness. He's the one both modeling in his life, and through his death and resurrection enabling that same in us. He's the new covenant.

That's the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount. "I am the new way to God. It's not through adherence to the law that you'll be saved, but through repentance and faith in me."

And so he's the narrow gate. That's what you need to understand. The narrow gate is not "be a good person." The narrow gate is *be in Christ* — enter into him. 'Because you could never be good enough to merit a flourishing life.

His Life Was Being Spent

There was only one man who merited a flourishing life, and he sacrificed that life for you and for me.

Which is what's so crazy about the gospel. As Jesus is hanging on that cross, and he is being tortured and mocked, and even his disciples are cowering in fear and thinking, "What a waste. We had such an opportunity. We were so close to bringing in the kingdom" — and then they look at him bleeding and dying and suffering and think, "Man, what a waste."

What they didn't see, what was really happening, is his life was not being wasted. His life was being spent. His blood was being poured out so that it could become a fountain of eternal life — true life, life abundant, the abundant life that is available to any who would receive it. But that life was only unlocked and made available because Jesus made it available through his death.

Jesus was squeezed. He went through the narrow gate. He literally had to lose everything, and he surrendered his life in meekness to the Father, and he paid the penalty for your sin and for mine. But in entering in through that narrow hole and being crushed and oppressed and persecuted, he's now able to make an open invitation to anyone — whosoever will.

Whosoever will get off of the broad road, come to their senses and realize, "This is not taking me where I want to go. This is not going to end up well. Maybe Jesus was not so crazy. Maybe there's something to this Christian message. Maybe there's something to this Sermon on the Mount, that there is a way of flourishing here. And yes, it's hard, and yes, I have to sacrifice. I have to humble myself. I've got to set aside my resentment, and I've got to set aside my anger, and I've got to set aside my attempts of saving myself. I can't really care about what people think about me, and I can't give and pray and do religion to look good. I've got to give up on all of that and care really only about what my Father in heaven sees and thinks. But I can draw near to my Father in heaven with confidence and not fear, because Jesus has absorbed the penalty that my sins justly deserve."

And so you enter into Christ. He is the narrow gate, and you find life abundant.

And that's what Jesus talks about in the Gospel of John. He says, "I am the gate." If you want to find abundant life — the sheep come and enter and go in and out through me. "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." "The thief comes to kill and steal and destroy. I've come that you may have life, and have it abundant."

Invitation

So it's not a question whether Jesus desires you to experience this life. The question is, in whom have you put your hope? Where is your spiritual confidence? Is it in Christ, and Christ alone?

If it isn't, what Jesus is saying today and in the next couple of weeks is, "Choose to enter the narrow gate. Choose to enter into me."

And it's a wonderful but very challenging decision that every person will have to make. It's not a decision of trying harder and doing better. It's a decision of where will I put my trust. Where will I find my hope and confidence?

When God says, "Why should I let you into heaven?" is my answer going to be, "Because you made my life hard, and I had to go to drugs and sex to be happy"? Or, "I tried my hardest. I was better than everyone else, so therefore you should let me in"? Or is my answer going to be, *"Nothing in my hand I bring, only to the cross I cling. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness"*?

And then he'll allow you entrance into that life — that life of abundance and joy — because you've humbled yourself to enter into Christ, in whom the promises of God are all yes and amen.

And so if you've never made a decision like that in your life, this morning is an invitation for you to do so.

And it's really not rocket science. I know it seems simple. How can you just be saved because you call on the name of the Lord? Surely it's got to be more than that. And the reality is, it is. It is so much more than that. But Jesus did that for you, because Jesus knew you could not do that for yourself. So he did for you what you could not do. And all that he asks from you is for you to surrender your life to him — for you to set aside your resentment and baggage, your sin, your idols and demands, and say, "I will make you Savior and Lord, and bow my knee and follow you from here on out."

And so as we enter into this time of response, if you've never made that decision, there would be an opportunity for you to do so a couple of different ways. There's a connection card on the chair in the seat in front of you that you can put your name and information on. Check that box that says, "I want to begin a relationship with Jesus." Or you can come down here to the front, and you can kind of make this a road of sorts, where you get off of the broad road and you come to the narrow road, and you say, "I'm going to enter into Jesus today, because he is the path to life."

And if the Lord is calling you to do that, I would encourage you not to wait — because you don't know what tomorrow holds, but you do know where the road you're on will end. And so today's the day of salvation, if the Lord is calling you to that.

Closing Prayer

And so let's bow our heads together and respond in this time.

Jesus, we thank you for this opportunity — that at the end of your sermon, you gave a response. You gave an invitation for people to do or not do.

And so for the person this morning who finds themselves in a place where they've been doing it all wrong, they thought that entrance into the kingdom of God was based on being better than the guy to his right or left, and the reality was it's always ever only been about your grace being given through faith. Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone — that is where our hope ultimately lies.

And so would you this morning draw near those you're calling. Draw them near to the Lord Jesus Christ, and help them to find in the Lord Jesus the life that you've designed them to live: a life of abundance, a life that is eternal, a life that is maybe still hard here and now, but a life that will terminate in communion and eternal fellowship with the maker of their soul.

For the Christians in the room who find themselves having made a detour, slipped back onto the broad road that leads to destruction — would you this morning help them come to their senses, to take the exit, to get back on the road where they belong.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that that invitation is always open. We cannot sin ourselves out of your grace. Wherever sin is great, your grace is greater. And so would you give us faith and conviction in that great mercy, and help us to respond such that we are on the road to life.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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1. **As spoken.** Wes harmonizes two accounts. The word behind "destruction" in Matthew 7:13 is *apōleia*, and it is indeed the disciples' word in Matthew 26:8 / Mark 14:4 — "Why this waste?" — where an unnamed woman breaks an alabaster jar over Jesus's **head**. The woman named **Mary** who anoints Jesus's **feet** is in John 12:3, where the objector is **Judas** and the value is put at three hundred denarii (about a year's wages). Everything Wes says is true of one account or the other; it is one account in the telling. [↩](#)

2. **As spoken.** Proverbs 14:12 CSB reads, "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death." Wes quotes it from memory and lands on "destruction," which pulls it toward the Matthew 7 word. The sense is the same; the wording is his own. [↩](#)