

The Only Road to Heaven

Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14

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The biggest question that will ever be answered is the question, "Which way to heaven?" The most important decision that anybody will ever make is the decision that they make regarding their eternal destiny. Life here, says the Bible, is a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. It is like steam off a cup of coffee, nothing more, compared to eternity. Everyone will live somewhere forever without end. Where you live forever is absolutely critical. There are two options: hell and eternal punishment, or heaven and eternal joy. The question then is...which way to heaven?

Open your Bible to Matthew chapter 7...Matthew chapter 7. The words of Jesus in two verses, verses 13 and 14, familiar words to any student of the Bible, or anyone who has read the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:13 and 14, here are the words of Jesus. "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and many are those who enter by it, for the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it."

In reality, life concentrates on every person standing at a crossroad. This should not surprise us because this is not only true of the most important decision, that eternal decision, but it's just a way of life lived out every day. We are confronted through all of our lives with decisions from the trivial ones about what we might wear today or what we might eat, to the more important ones about who we might marry or where we might live, or significant purchases we might make to the greatest of all decisions, the spiritual decisions that effect our eternity far beyond this life. It has always been the function of the servants of God, the ministers of God, the messengers of God to confront people with that most critical of all decisions.

It was Moses who said to the people, "See, I have set before you this day life and death, good and evil. Choose life that you and your seed may live," Deuteronomy chapter 30. It was Joshua, the leader who succeeded Moses, who said, "Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It was Jeremiah who heard God say to him in Jeremiah chapter 21, "Unto this people shall you say, 'Thus says the Lord, behold I have set before you the way of life and the way of death.'" It was Elijah, the great prophet, who called for a decision when he said, "How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. If Baal, then follow him," 1 Kings 18. From the lips of Jesus we hear many times the call to come to Him, to acknowledge Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life. On one occasion recorded in John 6:66 after He had spoken about spiritual life involving a full reception of Him, eating and drinking, as it were, His very person, the result was, "That many of His disciples

withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. And Jesus therefore said to the Twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' But Simon Peter answered, 'And, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.' And Jesus said, 'Did I Myself not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.'" Even in the proximity of Christ, one chose to reject. Inexplicable. Jesus always calls for a choice.

John Oxonum(???) wrote many years ago, "To every man there opens a way and ways and a way. And the high soul treads the highway and the low soul gropes the low. And in between on the misty flats, the rest drift to and fro. But to every man there opens a highway and a low, and every man decides the way his soul will go."

Here in the text I read you in Matthew chapter 7, the Lord gives an invitation, two doors, two ways, two destinations. As one writer put it, it is make up your mind time on the mountain. Jesus had just given what is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount which says nothing about its content but only about its location. It could be better named. It is a sermon about which way to heaven. Jesus doesn't want bouquets for the ethics of His sermon. He doesn't want kudos for the spiritual insights in His sermon. And He isn't offering a one-day-a-week experience for those who want to be spiritual. This sermon demands a choice, an absolute choice and a choice that renders finality, a choice that leads to a fixed forever in eternity.

And the whole sermon leads to this choice. The whole sermon which began in chapter 5 verse 1 finds its culmination here in chapter 7 verses 13 and 14. Prior to this He has been uncovering the religion of Judaism that is well-known to the people to whom He speaks. He has been demonstrating to them that it is not the true religion and does not lead to heaven. But no matter how they fast, or how they pray, or how they give alms, or how they on the surface obey the Law, they fall far short of what God requires. Their fasting is superficial, their prayer is superficial, their giving is superficial and their obedience is superficial. It is a religion by which they are attempting to earn heaven. So in the Sermon, He essentially points up the insufficiencies of this false religion and then confronts them with a choice. You want to come to heaven? There are two doors marked heaven...one goes there and one does not. And the choice is clearly an absolute choice. Jesus cuts across any easy-going syncretism. He will not allow us comfortable tolerances when it comes to the path to heaven. There's only one possibility and there are only two choices, not many, just two. Somebody might assume that with all the religions in the world and all the supposed insights into spirituality and all the ways that men and women have concocted their religious systems and their spiritual intuition, there would be literally millions or more ways that people have developed to heaven that you must choose from. But, in fact, there are only two. There is a narrow way with a narrow gate. And there is a broad way with a broad gate and those are the only possibilities.

You need to keep in mind that the contrast through this entire sermon is a contrast between religion that is false and religion that is true, between worship that is false and worship that is true, between

divine religion and man-made religion. And the religion that exists among the Jews at the time is not acceptable to God. In many ways, the pinnacle indictment comes in chapter 5 and verse 20, Jesus says, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven."

What kind of righteousness could surpass the scribes and the Pharisees? They were the most fastidious, the most self-righteous, the most superficially committed, the most outwardly obedient, Paul was one of them and he said of his life as a Pharisee that according to the Law he was found blameless. They had been able to muster up enough self-discipline on the outside to conform with some level of public affirmation, achieving a kind of perfection when it came to righteousness. And Jesus says that's not enough?

So it's not a contrast between righteousness and unrighteousness, it's a contrast between two kinds of righteousness...a righteousness that does not satisfy God, and a righteousness that does. A religion that does not satisfy God and a religion that does. It's not a contrast between religion and paganism, religion and no religion. And the religion of the Pharisees can be summed up in Luke 18:9, "The Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

That's the choice, it's that simple. Either you trust in yourself that you're righteous and you can earn heaven, or you do not. And you know that you cannot earn it because you are not righteous and you cannot be righteous to the satisfaction of God...that's the choice. Simple, it works like this, either you're good enough or you're not. Either you can be good enough or you can't. And all religion fits into the category of you can be good enough, except true Christianity which says you can't. That's the choice.

It really doesn't matter which of the false religious labels you pick. Either you acknowledge that you cannot earn your way to heaven, you cannot be good enough, you cannot gain a righteousness that satisfies God, you cannot please God, you cannot satisfy His holy justice, you cannot earn forgiveness and heaven, or you can. And if you're working on the can side, pick whatever religion you want, it doesn't matter. Reality tells us there are only two religions in the world. There is the religion of human achievement, the religion of works, the religion of the flesh, the religion that says you can be good enough, holy enough, religious enough, spiritual enough. And there is the one other option, the religion of divine accomplishment, the religion of faith, grace, mercy and not of the flesh but of the Spirit and they do not mix.

The scribes and the Pharisees were the architects of and the purveyors of and the exemplars of a religion of human achievement. Their salvation and acceptance with God, their hope of eternal life in heaven depended upon what they did, what they did morally and what they did religiously and ceremonially.

The Lord, however, offered a completely different religion, a religion of faith and grace, depending upon the Holy Spirit, a religion of divine accomplishment where salvation and acceptance and heaven depended on what God did...not what men do. Certainly most of humanity vastly is committed to the religion of human achievement, that men can be good enough, religious enough to gain heaven if they just have a measure of goodness, think good thoughts occasionally, do good deeds. Better yet, if they believe in God, attend some religious services, go through some religious acts or rites or ceremonies...this religion comes in many names and many forms but it is all the same. It is all the wrong choice. It is all Satan, just packaged differently.

That's what Jesus is talking about here. There is a narrow way that leads to life, and then there's the broad way with all the other religions that leads to death. In fact, the simplicity of this decision that our Lord lays before us is so clear in the obvious contrast in the two options. There are two gates, the wide and the narrow; two ways, the broad and the narrow; two destinations, life and destruction; two groups of travelers, the many and the few. And as you draw down into verses 15 and following, there are two trees, good and evil; two kinds of fruit, good and bad. As you draw further down into the text there are two builders, one wise, one foolish; two foundations, one rock, one sand; two houses and two results from the storm. You cannot be more clear than that. You cannot depict more clearly the choice than that. Jesus is just comparing the two options that exist. Either you can earn your salvation or you can't.

As we look then at these two verses, let's look at the first of the four contrasts that appear in this conclusion to the great sermon...two gates, two ways, two destinations and two crowds. There is in verse 13 the narrow gate, also called in verse 14 the small gate. There is in verse 13 the wide gate, both gates purport to introduce you to the path to heaven. Both point to the Kingdom of God, to salvation, to eternal joy and bliss in heaven. Neither of these gates says hell, but one of them goes there. Nobody is selling hell. No religion says, "Join our religion and go to hell with us." Nobody says that. They all say heaven. That's the deception. One is the path of self-righteousness, one is the path of divine righteousness. So the gates come first and they speak of entry. The narrow gate is the one that I want you to look at, and I want to draw a little bit deeper into its narrowness.

Verse 13 begins with a command, aorist imperative, a command. "Enter by the narrow gate." We can draw some conclusions out of this very simple statement. Number one, you must enter. This is an imperative. It's not going to happen by accident. It's not going to happen apart from a commitment and a decision on your part. It is an absolute command given by Jesus Christ, "Enter the narrow gate." The gospel itself is a command, repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel always comes as a command to be obeyed or disobeyed. It is not enough to listen to preaching about the narrow gate. It is not enough to study the narrow gate, to admire the structure of the narrow gate, to admire the wisdom of gospel means. It must be entered and the world is full of people who admire the gospel, they admire, if you will, the narrow gate, they admire the work of Christ on the cross and

even admire the work accomplished in His conquering death and His resurrection, and they admire the ethics of Jesus and they admire the virtues of Jesus and a lot of those things. But hell is going to be literally filled with people who admired Jesus, who admired His teaching and His ethics and who may be particularly admired the Sermon on the Mount.

But a gate serves two purposes. It lets in and it shuts out. Those who do not enter are then eternally barred from the Kingdom of God. Like in the parable of Jesus in Matthew 25 and verse 10, for once the wedding feast begins, the door was shut. You must enter. You must go beyond the admiration of the gospel. You must go beyond being fascinated with the work of Jesus Christ and admiring Him, you must enter the gate of salvation through faith in Him.

And let's take it a little further. You must enter this gate, there's only one narrow gate. You must enter this gate. It is a definite gate. It is the narrow gate. The Old Testament talks about ways that seem right to a man that are the ways of death. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by Me." Jesus says, "I am the Door, if any man tries to come in any other way, he is a thief and a robber." In Acts 4:12 it says, "There is no salvation in any other name, for there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." There's only one way to be saved, there's only one person who is the Savior and faith in that person is required for salvation.

Listen to 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." No other Mediator, no other Savior, no other Way. Faith, saving faith, demands...Romans 10:17 says...hearing with faith the message of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the message concerning Christ. Christ and Christ alone is the gate. No Christ, no salvation. No Christ, no heaven. In that sense it is very narrow.

When people say, "You're very narrow-minded," I will often say, "You have no idea how narrow minded I really am. And whatever you think I am, I'm a lot narrower than you think I am." I'm only narrow because it's the truth. I didn't invent this. Men didn't invent this. This is the Word of the living God. You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ savingly, and you enter. You do not, and you will not enter. There is no other way in. All other ways though marked heaven end up in hell. Any deviation from the person of Jesus Christ, the work of Jesus Christ, or the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith and grace alone will lead you to hell. You must enter. You must make a commitment to come to Christ and this is the only way. God has the right to do it the way He wants and this is the way He chose to do it. It's amazing to me today how popular it is to assume that there are all kinds of different ways to heaven..even among evangelicals. You must enter, you must enter this gate.

Thirdly, you must enter this gate alone...alone. There are some people who think that if you join a religion, you'll go to heaven with the crowd. This is a very narrow gate. This is like a turnstile, admitting only one person at a time. It is exclusive from the start. It is intensely personal. It is not a

group experience. It doesn't happen to everybody who joins a church, or everybody who is baptized, or everybody who is in a family of quote/unquote Christians. It isn't something you inherit from your parents or your grandparents. It isn't something you sign up for along with another person. It is absolutely singular. It is totally individual. It is exclusive in that sense, intensely personal. It requires a break from the crowd. Jesus said, in fact, if you're not willing to hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, your wife, you're not worthy to be My disciple. It may cost you every single relationship that you have. You come absolutely alone with no one else...it is that personal. You don't go through a turnstile in a group, you go through all alone. Jesus says in Matthew 10:34, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth, I didn't come to bring peace but a sword to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. And anyone who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who doesn't take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, it is he who has lost his life for My sake that shall find it."

It will cost you potentially everybody and everything. Even your own control over your own life. Salvation is only for one at a time, one by one by faith in Christ. You must enter, you must enter this narrow gate, you must enter alone. Fourthly, you must enter with difficulty...with difficulty.

This is a death blow to what is called easy believism, a death blow to cheap grace. This is not easy. That's why we read at the end of verse 14, "Few are those who find it." Few are those who find it. And when you find it, it becomes hard to enter. It must be searched out. It must be found. It is not in your intuition. It is not rummaging around in your higher self. You're not going to come up with this on your own. It's not intuitive. You won't find it in your supposed spirituality. You will only find this in the Word of God rightly interpreted and rightly understood. And you have to sort through all the false gospels. That's why our Lord immediately says in verse 15, "Beware of the false prophets." They're selling tickets to the broad road. They're the ravenous wolves who dress up as if they were shepherds or prophets who wore wool cloaks. Beware of them. They're pushing people enmasse onto the broad road.

It's hard. It's hard to find a true preacher. It's hard to find a true prophet. It's hard to try to find the true gospel. How many of you were in a church or a religion which was deceiving and damning for years, maybe for most of your life? Few there be that find it. And when you find it, it's not easy. It's not easy to deny your self, take up your cross and follow Christ, as it said in Matthew 10 and repeats in Luke 9:23 to 25. It's not easy to lose your life. It's not easy to hate yourself, to say no to all your own desires, ambitions, hopes, dreams, self-control. It's not easy to abandon everything. It's hard to humble yourself. It's hard to turn from your sin. It's hard to repent because sin and pride and self-will is the truest expression of your fallen condition. It's the most natural thing for you to do.

In Luke chapter 13 and verse 24 is a stunning statement. "Strive to enter by the narrow door, agonize, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." Amazing. You mean there are people who want to be saved and they can't be? Who want to find the door and enter the door and they don't succeed? That's exactly what Jesus said, "Strive, agonize to enter by the narrow door for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." And here's a warning. "Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, you're going to be left standing on the outside knocking and you're going to say, 'Lord, open to us,' and He'll answer and say to you, 'I don't know where you are from.' And later, 'Depart from Me, all you evil doers, I don't know you.'"

The narrow door must be searched out and found. And when it's found, it's not easy. That's why the Lord also said, "You have to count the cost." Look at Luke 14 verse 25, "Great multitudes were going along with Him and He turned and said to them..." Now let's pick the picture up here. Jesus is evangelizing the crowd. He has a great multitude. And some of these crowds were just massive crowds, huge crowds. In fact, back in chapter 12 verse 1, so many thousands of the multitudes had gathered together that they were stepping on one another. Massive crowds. What would you say to the crowd if you wanted to evangelize them? What would the message of the modern evangelist be to the crowd? I doubt that it would be this. Luke 14:25, "He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brother and sisters, and yes, even his own life, he can't be My disciple.'" That's not a very attractive message. That's a good way to send the crowd home. Can't you be a little more winsome than that? Why not just pray this little prayer and you're in? That's the popular way.

And He says, "Look, there's a lot to think about. This is a life commitment. This is an eternal decision." In verse 28 He says, "Which of you when he wants to build a tower doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?" Maybe you don't have what it takes to make this commitment. Otherwise, when he's laid a foundation and isn't able to finish, all who observe begin to ridicule him saying, "This man began to build and wasn't able to finish."

"Or what king when he sets out to meet another king in battle will not first sit down, take counsel whether he's strong enough with ten-thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace? So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who doesn't give up all his possessions." Are you willing to do that? Have you really counted the cost of what's involved here? I'm asking for your whole life. I'm asking you to become My slave. I'm asking you to live the rest of your life doing exactly what I tell you no matter what it cost you, even if it cost you all your hopes and dreams and your own life."

This is not easy. Much easier to go the broad way. The purveyors of the broad way are telling you, "Hey, come join our group, you can come in enmasse. Oh, don't worry about your sin. Don't worry about your theology."

There is a carelessness and a shoddiness and a flippancy that exists within many people's understanding of the gospel. Strive to enter in, agonizomai, used in 1 Corinthians 9:25 of an athlete struggling to win. Used in Colossians 4:12 of laboring fervently even to the point of death. Used in 1 Timothy 6:12 of fighting, combat.

So Jesus says in Matthew 11:12, "The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." What amazing words. There's a certain violence in coming to salvation. You're in the throes of a war and a battle with your own soul to release your love of sin and self and pride. It's a wrenching experience. Luke 16:16 says, "Every man presses into it."

Becoming a Christian is not easy. It's hard. Another way to say all that is that the Kingdom opens up to those who seek with all their hearts. You're not going to sleep your way into the Kingdom. The Kingdom requires earnest endeavor, untiring energy, utmost exertion because Satan is mighty and has a vast array of helpers, because he has many false prophets and deceivers all over the world, because he actually receives support from the fifth column established in every man's heart, the love of sin. To let go of the love of sin, to desire to be forgiven of sin, delivered from sin, to let go of pride and self-will demands a vigor, an eagerness, a willingness to conquer, take possession of the Kingdom with all its blessings of salvation. This is not for weaklings. This is not for waverers. This is not for compromisers. This is not for Baalams. This is not for the rich young ruler. This is not for Pilate. This is not for Demas. This is not won by deferred prayers, by unfulfilled promises, broken resolutions and hesitant commitments. It's for the strong and the sturdy, like Joseph and Nathan and Elijah and Daniel and Mordecai and Peter and Stephen and Paul and Ruth and Deborah and Esther and Lydia. The conflict is often fierce. Let go of self? And submit fully to Christ?

There's a battle there, but you must enter, you must enter this narrow gate, you must enter alone. You must enter with difficulty. And fifthly, you must enter naked. You can't go through a turnstile with your baggage. You drop everything. It's the gate of self-denial. It's the gate of self-denial. Strip off all the sin and self and self-righteousness. It's the way you unload yourself. It's where you say, "I no longer want to be the person I have been."

Dropping all the baggage isn't easy. The rich young ruler wouldn't do it. He was very rich. He wasn't about to let go of his money. He was very much in control, he wasn't about to do what Jesus told him to do. He wasn't going to let somebody else be sovereign over his life, hung on to his baggage. When Jesus told the story about the soils in Matthew 13, the different soils, in some of the soils the weeds were never cultivated out. Some of the soil, the stony ground, was still remaining hard. Superficial response initially, but no real life, no real fruit. If you're holding on to anything that you're not willing to let go of, you can't get through this. It's where you abandon yourself totally.

It was Spurgeon who said this, "You and your sins must separate, or you and your God cannot come together. No one sin...he said...may you keep, they must all be recognized for what they are. They must be brought out like the Canaanite(?) his(?) kings from the cave and hanged up in the sun. You must forsake them, abhor them and ask the Lord to overcome them." This is what the New Testament calls "turning from sin to serve the living God."

There are some people who espouse the idea that all you have to do to become a Christian is just know that Jesus can save you from hell and ask Him to do that. That's a far cry from what the New Testament teaches. Even John the Baptist came preaching repentance, repentance, repentance, repentance, readying a people to receive the Messiah, the King.

You have to come to a Beatitude attitude, and that's how the Lord begins the Sermon, do you remember that? Back in chapter 5 of Matthew, the sermon began with what we call the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit...blessed are those who mourn...blessed are the meek...blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..." We can stop right there and already we understand what the attitude is. Poor in spirit, what does that mean? Morally, spiritually bankrupt...morally, spiritually impoverished. Those are the ones that are blessed. Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. It belongs to those people who have jettisoned all confidence in their self-righteousness. It belongs to people who know they cannot earn their way in. It belongs to those who have become like a little child, offering no achievement, no accomplishment, as in some way contributing to God's acceptance of them. They are bankrupt spiritually.

Consequently they mourn. They come as mourners, not giddy and silly and superficial, they come mourning over their spiritual bankruptcy. They come meek for they have nothing to offer. They come hungering and thirsting for righteousness which they want but know they don't have and can't earn. They are void of righteousness. They know it. They're morally, spiritually bankrupt. They're heart-broken over this and they are meek. They bow to the sentence of Scripture on their heads, a sentence that says condemned to hell for sin. And they set their heart against that condemnation and against that sin and plead with God to forgive them and transform them. It isn't just believing, James 2:19, the devils believe and tremble, it's hating sin and loving righteousness which the demons do not do.

As the hymn writer put it, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." It's pounding your breast like the Publican in Luke 18, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." It's not coming like the Pharisee commending himself for his tithing and his fasting. The Lord here is dealing with the danger of an easy believism. You must enter. You must enter this gate. You must enter alone. You must enter with difficulty. You must enter naked, which means, having divested yourself of all sin and worldly desires.

And a final thought. You must enter this gate alone with difficulty and naked, in full surrender to Christ. And we've said this already, but let me just set it apart as a final point because of its urgency and importance. Jesus said, "Deny yourself," that's repentance, "take up your cross and follow Me." It's about the Lordship of Christ. You became a slave when you came to Christ. It's a kind of slavery. You are the doulos, He is the Kurios. There's no such thing as a kurios without doulos. No such thing as doulos without a kurios. If He's the Lord, then you're the slave.

So we come totally submissive to our Master, joyfully submissive. We don't see it as burdensome, we see it as a cherished opportunity to give honor to the One who has given grace to us.

In contrast to what we've just seen, back to our text, is the wide gate. The wide gate is just that...wide. And the door is wide. The way is wide, or broad. This gate can be entered with no difficulty. This gate can be entered with a whole crowd, no self-denial, bring all your baggage. No repentance necessary. No surrender to Christ necessary. This is the gate of self-indulgence. Bring your pride, bring your self-righteousness, bring your sins, sins of all sorts are very welcomed there. There's a large crowd coming through this gate because it's everybody else who's not coming through the narrow gate. There's a West Indian who had chosen Islam over Christianity. And when asked why, he said this, quote: "Islam is a noble broad path, there's room for a man and his sins on it. The way of Christ is far too narrow." He's right.

So, there are two doors, a narrow and the broad. Two ways, briefly, two ways...broad is the way and narrow is the way. Broad is the way, verse 13, narrow is the way is mentioned in verse 14. The wide gate leads to a broad way. You don't have to leave anything behind, bring all your stuff, all your self-righteousness, all your baggage, all your sin. The wide gate leads to a broad way, plenty of room, no restriction room for diverse theology, room for diverse iniquity, a room for tolerance, room for immorality, no curbs, no boundaries, all the desires of the fallen heart are acceptable on the broad road, no need for a Beatitude-Attitude, no need to be restricted by the Word of God. No need to worry about internal issues in the conscience. No need to worry about anything, we're all on the happy road to heaven because we're religious and we're basically good. Takes no character. Self-will, self-gratification, self-righteousness, you come on with your lust and your pride and your covetousness and it all seems okay because we're all like that...we're all like that.

Now the people who are on the broad way, by the way, are many. And if you drop down to verse 22 you will read that many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name cast out demons and in Your name perform many miracles? Then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you that practice lawlessness."

The many on the broad road are the many in verse 22. When they get to the end of the road, the news is not good. Psalm 1:6 says, "The way of the ungodly shall perish." In contrast to that is the narrow way in verse 14. Literally means a pressed way, constricted way, a confining way, a difficult

pass between two cliffs hemmed in on both sides, very rigid, very prescribed, very limited, a narrow hard way. Yet at the same time it is an easy yoke and a light burden, says our Lord. The cost is high, the demand is high. The Lord asks for everything. You may lose your family. You subject yourself to the will of God no matter what it is, it involves discipline and chastening when you disobey, when you step out of line you will be chastened by the Lord. Hebrews 12 promises that. You will suffer persecution, "All that will live godly suffer persecution," the New Testament says. "Don't be surprised if the world hates you," Jesus said, "they hated Me, they will hate you." It is truly a kind of slavery. You confess with your lips Jesus as Lord, which is also a confession that you're a slave. You are now subject to an alien will for the rest of your life. It's not a luxurious meadow that we wander in, it's a road that is hard and it's a road that's narrow. Christianity in its truthfulness is not a soft option for the weak-hearted and the weak-kneed. When you enter into this narrow gate and start on the narrow way, you declare a war on all the forces of hell. You declare war on all the forces of your own flesh. And living a Beatitude life, a brokenness in humility and holiness and righteousness is tough. And Jesus didn't say, "Love Me, like Me, consider Me, admire Me," He said, "Follow Me."

But, the two doors and the two ways lead to two destinations. First, the wide gate, the broad way leads to destruction. Oh yeah, the pleasures of sin for a season, Hebrews 11, it's easy, it's crowded, everybody's there, can't be the wrong road, look how many people are there. No restrictions, it just doesn't end up in heaven, it ends up in destruction. The religion of human achievement from humanism and atheism to Judaism and any other ism in any other religion without Christ and without a gospel of grace and faith alone, ends up in hell. And so the entrance to hell is from the portals of heaven, as it were.

What does destruction mean? Everlasting judgment, everlasting punishment. On the other hand, the narrow gate leads, verse 14, to life...life, eternal life, the fullness of life, the life of God, the glorious state of unclouded fellowship with God, the eternal satisfaction, unspeakable joy.

And that brings us to the end of this little discussion to the two crowds. Many enter the broad way, few enter the narrow way. That's how it is in the world. There's far more false religion than true, even within Christianity there's far more in a false Christianity than in the true faith...far more, millions more. The masses of the world are racing toward hell on the broad road thinking it's the path to heaven, never marked hell. Luke 12:32, Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock," mikron, very small, so few are willing to come on the terms that Christ establishes. So many profess, think they're on the way to heaven, they're not. Paul gives us a very important word in 2 Corinthians 13:5, he says, "Examine yourselves whether you're in the faith." Examine yourselves to see whether you're in the faith. Which road are you on?

There was a newspaper article many years ago in Melbourne, Australia from someone who had heard Billy Graham preach. This is what he wrote in to the newspaper. "After hearing Dr. Billy Graham on the air, viewing him on television, and reading reports and letters concerning him and his

mission, I am heartily sick of the type of religion that insists my soul needs saving...whatever that means. I have never felt that I was lost, nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin, although repetitive preaching insists that I do. Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance, that acknowledges no barriers of color or creed, that remembers the aged and teaches children of goodness and not sin. If in order to save my soul I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned, thank you.”

And that's every man's decision. You can choose to remain forever damned and have your happy religion of tolerance. Or you can come to the truth and be forever given life. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You again for the clarity of Your Word, how critical, how vital, how important it is. Nothing comes even close to the importance of this message. O Lord, I pray that those who have heard here and who will hear in the future as this message goes out on the airwaves will understand this clear decision, just two possibilities. And by the work and wonder of Your Holy Spirit, may You move on hearts to drive them in the direction of the narrow gate, knowing that at the end that narrowness explodes into the new heavens and the new earth with all its infinite breadth, height, depth and length of unending joys and blessing. Lord, by Your grace and power, move on hearts to come to the truth, to embrace the truth and enter Your Kingdom in repentance, putting all their trust in the wonderful work that Christ has done on the cross. This we ask in His name. Amen.

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