Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Which Way to Heaven?
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-43

Because of the special nature of this weekend with reference to our tent meeting and many of you bringing guests to the church and also because I've been so much aware of the visit of the Pope as you have in these days, I want to deviate a bit from the text of 2 Timothy in which we have been studying for so many weeks and I want to speak to you on the subject, "Which way to heaven?" What is happening with the Pope right now is a massive piece of Roman Catholic propaganda. When you stop and analyze who the Pope is, it's quite an amazing thing that the United States of America would spend 24 million dollars for him to visit us for a few days. Shut down entirely the Miami Airport. In some cases seal off the sewers in the cities with cement until he leaves and then break them up so that somebody doesn't crawl through the sewer and shoot him or hurt him, it would be a terrible thing, to be sure. It's incredible the attention the man has received. One of our local stations, channel 5, is going to do 48 hours of non-stop televising of the Pope. Now what is amazing about that is I frankly have never heard him say anything particularly unique or significant. To my knowledge he has built no significant organization, institution, school. He has written no particularly important or monumental book. I for the life of me cannot figure out what this man has ever done to qualify him for a 24 million dollar visit to the United States...except that he holds a position that for some reason the whole world acknowledges as the position of ultimate spiritual leadership. And if you want to know what I feel, I feel it is the perfect position for the Antichrist...Satan's false Christ of the last days. I am also quite appalled that there are many who would claim to be evangelical people who have identified with the visit of the Pope.

You say, "Well you seem pretty concerned about this." I do and I pray constantly that God will not allow people to be confused by the system known as Roman Catholicism. I want to be very open and honest with you this morning. I'm confident that there are many of you here this morning that grew up or in the past were involved in Roman Catholic religion one way or another. But you came to a personal knowledge of Christ. I'd be interested to know, how many of you were Catholic before you came to know Jesus Christ. Put your hands up. Isn't that mazing? All over this church.

I want you to understand something, all right? There may be some people who in the maze of Catholic tradition and theology come to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ. But Catholic theology provides a doctrinal base that is foreign to the Christian faith. It is another way to heaven other than that way which the Bible offers. But because it talks about God, Christ, His death, His resurrection,

because it has all of that terminology that is New Testament people are under the illusion that it's the same as the true faith. You must understand that there is only one way to heaven and Roman Catholic theology doesn't teach that.

Open your Bible to Matthew chapter 7, with that as an introduction, let's look together at verses 13 and 14. This is the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is preaching an evangelistic sermon. He comes now to the conclusion or the climax of it and calls for a decision. His decision really poses the question...which way are you going to go toward heaven? Which way? The Jews had their way. He had just attempted to tear their self-righteous system down to let them see the bankruptcy of a salvation by works...whether they be human philanthropic works or religious rites and ceremonies. And now He comes to the focal point, the time of choice. It has been said that ultimately all of life concentrates on man at the crossroads. Every action in life, everything you do, everything you say basically is the result of a choice. You can never stand still so you're always making choices, and so am I. And you have to choose one thing or another from the time you get up and decide what you will wear or what you will eat or where you will go to moral decisions that impact your eternity, you are faced with choices. The most important choices you'll make are spiritual ones. And the most important spiritual choice you will make is which way you will choose toward heaven. There are many options marked heaven, but only one gets there. It's incumbent on you to make the right choice. And it's always been the frustration and the function of God's anointed men to confront people with the choice.

Moses, for example, in Deuteronomy 30, said to the people, "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. Therefore choose life that you and your seed may live." Joshua presented the same choice in the twenty-fourth chapter at verse 15, "Choose you this day whom you will...what?...serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, but as for me and my house, we will...what?...serve the Lord." Jeremiah heard God say to him, Jeremiah 21:8, "Unto this people shall Thou say, Thus saith the Lord, behold I have set before you the way of life and the way of death." Elijah called for a decision in 1 Kings 18 when he said, "How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. If Baal be god, then follow him." Choices.

John Oxenhim(?) wrote, "To every man there openeth a way and ways and a way and the high souls tread the highway and the low souls grope the low. And in between on the misty flats the rest drift to and fro. But to every man there openeth a highway and a low, and every man decideth the way his soul should go." That's right.

And as we come to this text, the Lord Jesus confronts man with a choice. Let's look at verses 13 and 14. Jesus says, "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." Our Lord then here in consistency with others, as I have just quoted from the pages of Scripture, offers men and women a choice. It is, if you will, make up your mind time on the mountain. He brings the Sermon on the Mount to the climax of a choice. He doesn't want bouquets for His sermon. He isn't offering a once a week experience. He is calling for a life choice. He demanded that that choice be made and that it had permanent effect on each person.

Now the whole Sermon on the Mount leads to this choice. Jesus came to present a kingdom...a kingdom like no other kingdom in the world, a kingdom of God, a kingdom of light, a kingdom of heaven, a kingdom, as Paul called it, of His dear Son, a spiritual kingdom where Christ reigns and rules and God is sovereign. And He calls people to come in to His kingdom, to enter into a relationship with the living and true God through Him. And He wants action, He wants a response here. He doesn't want people commending Him for His ethics. Typically people read the Sermon on the Mount and they say they appreciate the ethics. That's not what Jesus was after. He wasn't after some kind of applause, some kind of condescending nodding of the head over the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. He wants action. John Stott said, "Jesus cuts across our easygoing syncretism. He will not allow us the comfortable solutions we propose. Instead He insists that ultimately there's only one choice because there are only two possibilities to choose from."

Now what you want to keep in mind is that the contrast here is between false religion and true religion, between true worship and hypocritical worship, between God's standards and man's standards, between self-righteousness and divine righteousness. You say, "Well what do you mean by that?" There are only two kinds of religion in the world, all right? There is the religion of human achievement and the religion of divine accomplishment. There is the religion of human achievement that says man can make his own relationship with God by his own effort. And on the other hand, there is the religion of divine accomplishment that says man can do nothing, therefore God alone has to provide that relationship. It says in Luke 18:9 that the Pharisees and the religious leaders of Israel trusted in themselves. That's man as the core of religion. So you make a choice. You either believe that man is good enough to reach God on his own, or you believe that man is so bad that God has to come down through Christ and reach man himself. That's the choice. Very simple.

And I boil it down again to say, there's only two religions in the world, that's all. Christianity is one and every other religion in the world fits in to the other category because they all are built on man's own effort. The religion of human achievement is the religion of works. It's the religion of self-righteousness. It's the religion of ceremonies and rituals and rites. On the other hand, the religion of divine accomplishment is the religion of faith, grace, mercy through the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ. And they never mix...they never mix. The lie of Catholicism is that they mix. They don't mix. If you put works in grace, Paul says grace is no more grace. The scribes and the Pharisees had their religion of works. They had the religion of the flesh. Their salvation and acceptance with God

depended on what they did, not just what they did in every day life like doing good to their neighbor or doing good to some children who were orphaned or doing good to widows or giving money to the temple. But what they did good in terms of doing their religious ceremonies, doing certain duties, having certain prayers, doing certain genuflections and going through ceremonies and rituals and customs and traditions of the religion they were involved in. They believed that the combination of their religious rites and ceremonies and their good deeds gained them acceptance with God. You see, they imagined God to be less than He was and they imagined themselves to be greater than they were. They pulled God down, Paul says in Romans, they did not understand the righteousness of God. They didn't understand how holy He was. They didn't understand how righteous He was. They made a God who was down here, they pushed themselves up there and said we can meet God on our own. They failed to understand how wretched they were and how holy He was and how big the gulf was.

And the same thing is true in the false religions of the world today. I don't care what name you give them, if there is in those religions any idea on the part of anyone that what they do contributes to their salvation, it's the religion of human achievement. If you believe that by going to the Mass and taking the communion and eating the wafer and drinking the cup and if you believe that lighting the candles and going through the beads and saying the Hail Mary's and engaging yourself in all of the endless ritual of the Roman Catholic system you are therefore gaining acceptance with God, then you have entered the religion of human achievement. And that is precisely what that system espouses. That is why there are so many, many people who are in the system who have no sense of the knowledge of God, no peace in their heart, no forgiveness from sin, no knowledge of Christ. That is the religion of human achievement. Salvation depends on what we do.

On the other hand, the religion of divine accomplishment says salvation depends upon what God did in Christ...not on what we do. Most of humanity vastly is involved in the religion of human achievement. You walk down the block this way, half a block, and you come to a Jewish synagogue. I think of it so often as I see those people going in there, precious souls for whom Christ died going into that place and endeavoring by their own human works to gain acceptance with God apart from the Messiah Christ and His work. Go a little further down the block and you see a Buddhist temple, lighting candles, making offerings, going through all kinds of religious activity to some god who does not exist named Buddha and through their own good works and their own religious ceremonies and rites and activities, they're trying to reach God. They believe that the gods who are will accept them if they do these works. Go down that way and you'll come to the large Roman Catholic Church, you will see the very same thing. It comes under different brands. It comes in different forms. But it is the religion of human achievement. And I might also say that scattered along Roscoe Boulevard is the religion of divine accomplishment. There are churches where Christ is exalted and His name is lifted up and salvation is by grace through faith.

There are only two choices, that's all...just two choices and you have to make the choice...you have to make the choice. Let's look at the choices as they're outlined in these two verses. It's a tremendous picture and yet it's a simple, simple picture. Throughout this whole sermon Jesus has really been presenting a series of vivid contrasts. Let me just kind of refresh your mind. And as He climaxes in verses 13 and 14, He says there are two gates...the wide and the straight. There are two ways, the broad and the narrow. There are two destinations, light and destruction. There are two groups of travelers, the many and the few. He has already said there are two kinds of trees, the good and the corrupt. There are two kinds of fruit, the good and the bad. He will just after this say there are two kinds of builders, the wise and the foolish, two kinds of fountain,...foundations rather, the rock and the sand, two kinds of houses, two results of the storm. He's continually contrasting those things. There's a choice. Jesus preached for a verdict. He was a master craftsman. He was a master of pinning people to a wall, as it were, with no where to go but to make a choice. And so we look at that choice together this morning. First of all, let's look at the fact that it tells us in these two verses there are two gates. "Enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, 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."

Now you see here two gates. There is a narrow gate and there is a wide gate. Now remember, this is a gate to what? To the kingdom. What is the kingdom? The sphere of salvation where God rules by grace. The gate is the gate into the kingdom, the gate into salvation, the gate into the dominion of God, the rule of God. It is the gate of salvation. It is the road to glory. It is the road to honor, the road to blessing, the road to salvation, the road to heaven. Now I want you to notice that both of the gates are marked "heaven" in this choice. I mean, nobody is selling tickets to hell. False religions aren't offering hell. The people down the block and up the street aren't saying, "We are inviting you to hell. The people of Grace Church are inviting you to heaven. Take your choice." Nobody is selling hell. Everybody is selling heaven. You understand that? Everybody. It's just that there's only one way to get there and somebody is lying...a lot of people, in fact. So both gates are marked heaven, it's just that both of them don't go there. You understand that? Certainly the religion of the scribes and Pharisees, their self-righteous religion was not a call for people to go to hell, it was a call for people to go to heaven and that's the deception of it. If the choice was as clear cut as heaven or hell, I don't think people would be confused, do you? But what is Satan disguised as? In 2 Corinthians Paul says he disguises himself as an angel of what? Of light. And he is telling people that this is the way to heaven and it isn't. It isn't. You see those poor benighted souls with their blackened minds and their weary hearts who are trying to gain heaven through a system that ends up in hell. The whole thing is going the wrong way. They don't know that. And they are achieving, achieving, achieving by their religious works and ritual and activity and by their supposed good deeds and all the combination of their good deeds and their ceremonies they think is moving them on the road to heaven but it's moving them on the road to hell. But that's not what they're told.

So the gates are gates marked heaven. There's only one gate you want to go through because it says here that the broad gate leads to destruction, it leads to hell so you want to stay away from that one, the wide gate. Let's look then at the narrow gate. This suggests several key thoughts in our Lord's thinking and I'm just going to run them by you. What is the Lord saying here, you must enter? Well He says first of all you must enter, He gives you an imperative, "Enter." That's a command. "Enter," immediate action is called for. This is an absolute command without an alternative. It is not enough to listen to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, it is not enough to listen to the teaching of the gospel, it's not enough to hear about Christ, to hear about salvation and then stand there just sort of laboring. He says, "Enter, come in the narrow gate." This is mandated. Don't just stand there and admire Christ, don't just stand there admire Christianity, don't stand outside and admire the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, hell will be literally filled with people who admired the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. Hell will be full of people who admired Jesus Christ as a great leader. He says you have to enter. A gate serves two purposes, it lets people in and it keeps people out. And those who don't enter are kept out, so you better enter. It's a command, come on in, it's an invitation to salvation, come through the narrow gate. So you must enter.

Secondly, you must enter this gate, you must enter this gate. This is a definite gate. It is the narrow gate and Christ alone is that gate, "There is no other name given among men under heaven whereby you must be saved," Acts 4:12 says, "then the name of Jesus Christ." There is no other way. I remember riding on horseback into the city of Petra down in Edom, the city of Petra was a massive city built by the Edomites in the rocks. It was a huge metropolis, all encased in cliffs and there was only one way into it and the way into it was no wider than one man riding on one horse could get in. That's the only way in. They thought the city was absolutely impregnable because there was only one way in. And here we were, a lot of people on horseback, some of you might have been with us, and we had to get in single file to go into this huge city because there was only one way. And as I rode through that I thought to myself, "What a graphic illustration of the fact that there's only one way into the Kingdom of God...one narrow gate...one narrow gate." And who is that narrow gate? Jesus Christ. Only by personal faith in Christ who died and rose again will you ever enter into God's Kingdom. Only when you recognize your own sin and the inability of your own power and strength to gain God's acceptance, only when you realize that your sin has separated you eternally from a holy God and all the religious activity in the world and all the human good works in the world will never expiate for your sin and will never appropriate the grace of God in Christ will you ever be saved. Christ and Christ alone, it's very narrow, there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, no other way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father...what?...but by Me." That's it. That's it. No other way. All other ways are false. It is a narrow gate, you must enter it.

Thirdly He says, "It is narrow," and that implies you have to come in alone. You must enter, you must enter this narrow gate, and you must come alone. There's a sense in which you leave the crowd behind. You remember in Matthew 10 He says, "If you're not willing to hate your mother and your father, if you're not willing to turn your back on your world you can't enter." Verse 35, "I came...of chapter 10 of Matthew...to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his household and he who loves father and 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 does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it. He who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." You come alone, folks. This is not a group enterprise. People aren't ushered in to the Kingdom in mass. It is exclusive, it is intensely personal, you break with the crowd, you break with the family sometimes, you break with friends, you are totally separate.

I was talking to a young man last night, he was telling me how he had come to embrace faith in Jesus Christ out of totally Catholic family. Everyone in his entire family is ensconced in the Roman Catholic Church. And he has come to faith in Christ all alone. You don't go through a turnstile in groups, you understand that? This is a narrow gate. Salvation is individual. You see, the scribes and the Pharisees sort of came in in mass, they believed in racial salvation through circumcision. That's what they believed. They believed that because they were the circumcised sons of Abraham, they all came into the Kingdom by virtue of that. And you remember Jesus said to them in John 8, "If God wanted to raise up sons through Abraham, He could do it out of these tones. You're not children of Abraham." He said, "You're children of the devil." Their heritage was enough, they thought. Their physical circumcision was enough. They were all sons of Abraham, so they just came in. There are people today who believe that because they are born Jewish or because they are born into a Roman Catholic family or because t hey were somehow initiated into the church that their parents are a part of, maybe a Lutheran church or a reformed church, or they were christened, or whatever, they sort of come in mass to the Kingdom. That's not how it is, it's a narrow gate, you come through alone. It's one by one by faith. One by one by faith.

And so, the Word of God is very clear. You must enter. You must enter this gate through faith in Christ. You must enter alone and fourthly, let me share this with you, you must enter with difficulty. This is really a death blow to cheap grace, folks. You must enter with difficulty. Would you please notice verse 14, "The way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it." What's that word "find" mean? What does that imply? That it demands a ...what?...a search. It is searched out. It is so often so over simplified today and people don't consider what the Scripture says about the difficulty. In Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter by the narrow door." Strive, agonize, "For many, I tell you,

will seek to enter and will not be able." What an incredible statement. What a statement! Agonize, work hard to enter because many will want to enter and won't be able. Wow! You mean it's not easy? No, it's not easy. That cheap grace as Bonhoffer label it, that easy believism that has people sign on the dotted line or stick their hand in the air is a far cry from what Scripture teaches. In Acts 14:22 you remember it says, "Through much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom of God." And in Matthew chapter 16, I believe it's verse 24, we find a similar thought. Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me," that's not easy, you're giving up your life, you're sacrificing your life, you're denying yourself, you're saying I'm willing to live for You even if it means I die for you. Carelessness and shoddiness and flippancy of so many people who profess Christ is unacceptable. The word "strive," as I said, *agonizomai*, it's an athlete striving to win. It is used in Colossians 4:12 of laboring fervently. It's used in 1 Timothy 6:12 of fighting. He says you have to fight in, fight your way in. It isn't simply signing a card or walking an aisle or raising a hand, it's a battle. You say, "What are you fighting?" You're fighting the resistance of Satan. You're fighting the resistance of sin and the fallenness of your flesh and all that says don't do it, no, don't give up your life, don't embrace Christ, don't follow Him, don't obey Him, don't let go. You see? It's a battle. It's a battle. That's why Matthew 11:12 says, "The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." In Luke 16:16 it says, "Every man presses his way into it." That's not easy believism. There's a warfare. And that's why the Old Testament says you'll find Me if you seek Me with...what?...all your heart. It demands all that we are...all that we are. You can't sleep your way into the Kingdom. You can't waltz your way into the Kingdom. It's a narrow gate and it's hard to find and you're going to find that as you move toward that gate Satan is going to try to stop you and confuse you. Why do you think all these religions are floating around? To obliterate the narrow gate. You can't find it. And your flesh says I don't want to give up my sin. And your mind says I don't want to give up my control. I don't want to abandon myself to Christ. I don't want to give my life and even die for heaven, I'm not ready for that. You've got to battle that kind of temptation and by the grace of God, the power of God He gives you the strength to do that. The Lord here is dealing with the danger of an easy salvation. You have to come in earnestly with an untiring commitment, with an utmost exertion because Satan is strong and Satan has a mighty army of helpers and the demons have learned to use crafty methods. And he receives aid and support from the fifth column, if you will, of man's own fallen heart and it takes vigorous men, it takes men and women who will fight and conquer and overcome Satan and possess the Kingdom by the power and the grace of Almighty God. The Kingdom is not for weaklings, it's not waverers, it's not for compromisers. That's why so many sort of tiptoe toward the gate and as soon as there's a price to pay, they're gone. People like Balaam, people like the rich young ruler, people like Pilate or Demas. No, you don't enter the Kingdom through deferred prayers or unfulfilled promises or broken resolutions, or hesitant stumbling testimonies, it's for strong and sturdy men. It's for the Josephs of the world, and the Nathans, and the Davids and the Elijahs and the Daniels and the Mordecais and the Peters and the Pauls. It's for those kinds of people. And it's for you too, if by God's grace you are given the victory over Satan. I'll tell you, sometimes the conflict is fierce, the victory is glorious. It's

difficult because you're fighting Satan, you're fighting self, and sin.

So, the Lord says you must enter. You must enter this gate. You must enter this gate alone. You must enter this gate with difficulty because you have to look and search to fight it and strive to enter. And may I add another? You must enter naked. I mean that in the sense that you don't bring anything in. You can't go through a turnstile with your luggage. Have you noticed that? You can't bring all your garbage in, you have to let go of self and sin and self-righteousness and self-will. You have to give away what the rich young ruler wouldn't let go of. You come in naked. Like in the beautiful, magnificent parables of Matthew 13 where the man found the treasure in the field and it says he sold everything to purchase the treasure. And the man who had the pearl of great price and it says he sold everything to purchase the pearl. It's a sell all, it's an exchange of all that I am for all that he is. You drop everything, you come through stripped. The rich young ruler said I will not give away my money. I will not give away my sin. And he went away without Christ. You can't come like the Pharisee of Luke 18 who said, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are but I tithe, and I fast, and I do all these religious works, aren't You thrilled with me?" And over in the corner was a tax collector, wouldn't lift his head toward heaven he was so humiliated in his sin, he pounded his chest and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The one man offered God all his stuff and God said you can't come through with your stuff. The other man was naked and destitute and barren and all he had was his sin and that's the one the Bible says that was justified rather than the other. It isn't just believing. Saving faith is not just an act of the mind, it involves counting the cost and being willing to give up everything for Christ. Remember the old hymn, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

So if you think you can bring your own self-will and your own sin and your own self-centeredness, and your own self-righteousness in, you can't get through the gate, it's too narrow. It will not allow you. It's not just come to Jesus. It involves a radical break with your past.

Fifthly, Jesus says you must enter, you must enter the narrow gate, you must enter it alone, you must enter it with difficulty, you must enter it naked and I have to add this, you must enter repentant, turning from sin. He preached repentance right from the start. Spurgeon said, "You and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together." Not one sin may you keep, he said, they must all be given up. They must be brought out like the Canaanitish kings from the cave and hanged up in the sun. You must forsake them, abhor them and ask the Lord to overcome them. That's repentance. We turn from sin, Paul said in Acts 20, to serve the living God. John the Baptist preached repentance. Jesus preached repentance.

And finally, when you come you must come through this gate, you must come alone, you must come with difficulty, you must come naked, you must come repentant, and you must come in submission to

Christ. You must come, giving your life to Christ. That's inherent in everything I've said. That's the narrow gate. That's the way to life eternal.

What about the other gate? What about the wide gate? Oh, you don't have to drop anything to come in that gate. Very wide, easy to find, everybody sees it, it's all over the place, all up and down Roscoe Boulevard. Sometimes it looks like a Buddhist temple, sometimes it looks like a synagogue, sometimes it looks like a Catholic Church, sometimes it looks like a Protestant church. Oh a lot of broad gates, you can see them everywhere. Pick up the L.A. Times, they're all over the page. They are the ones that advertise mostly in the newspaper...divine light, inner healing, science of mind, metaphysics. You see them on the church page of the Times, all kinds of ways into the broad, broad way. And by the way, you can come with a whole gang. Everybody can come. And it's easy to find and you're all welcomed so you don't have to drop anything. You can bring all your sin and all your selfishness and all the junk of your life. And you can bring your ego as big as ever cause after all, when you get on there you're going to have to earn your way to heaven by how good you are. No repentance is necessary, no surrender or submission to Christ is necessary. In fact, we could just label this gate "heaven" and underneath it says "the way of self-indulgence." The narrow gate says "heaven, the way of self-denial."

There's a large crowd coming in, by the way. A lot of religious systems. You'll see people in funny robes and cone hats and backward collars and you 'll see a lot of things. People probably lighting candles and bowing down to certain gods and all kinds of religious ceremonies. A West Indian who had chosen Islam over Christianity one time said to a missionary, "I chose Islam because it is a noble broad path. There is room for a man and his sins on it. The way of Christ is too narrow," he said. Two gates.

Secondly, two ways. Two ways....first would you notice there's a broad way. If you go on the broad way when you go through the broad gate. You want to know something about the broad way? Lots of room, folks, no restrictions, live anyway you want...anyway you want. You can be religious and just live any way you want. There's room for diverse theologies. There's tolerance of immorality. There are no particular boundaries, no curbs. It's a big, wide...it's the spiritual autobahn, you know, you can drive any speed and go anywhere you want...room for everybody, no need for the Beatitudes, no need for the Word of God, no need for any particular code of moral standards, it's just any way you want to live you can live, just believe that you're going to make it in the end cause you're doing good. You're doing what you ought to or you're doing your religious duty. It takes no character. It's full of self-will, self-gratification, self-righteousness. You can walk by lust, you can walk by pride, you can walk by covetousness and it all seems so right, it all seems so religious and it is the way which seems right unto a man but the end thereof is the way of death.

On the other hand, there's a narrow way. Literally that word in the Greek, verse 14, the way is narrow is hard, or compressed, it's a compressed way. You go through a narrow gate that's hard to find and you wind up on a narrow path that's hard to walk. The difficulty is because this one passes between two cliffs, you know, very narrow. The requirements are great. That's why Jesus said count the cost...count the cost. There's persecution, there's difficulty, there's trials. God's standards are tremendously high. It's...it's a hard, compressed, narrow way and yet paradoxically Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." You see, becoming a Christian demands counting the cost, counting the cost. And you have to, by the way, put your armor on because you're going to have to fight your way through. You can't go barefooted, you're not going to be wandering through a lush meadow. The road is hard, Christianity is not a soft option for the weak kneed and the weak hearted. In fact, you're going to war your way to heaven. The forces of hell are going to fight you all along and you'll have spiritual battle against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, Ephesians 6. You declare war on hell when you go through the narrow gate. You also declare that you're going to walk that narrow way that God has outlined for you to live your life. It's a blessed way. There's a sense in which it's a war and yet a victory. There's a sense in which it's a burden and yet the relief from a burden. It's a narrow way, it's not easy but it's right, it's rewarding, it's blessed, it's joyous. And you have the sense of obedience to God and the promise of His out poured blessing and in that is the greatest joy.

Thirdly, there are two destinations...two destinations. One leads to destruction, the other to life. There is then the way of life and the way of death. The narrow gate goes on to a narrow way that ends up in eternal life. And this life living in this world, our physical life is simply a blink between the cradle and the grave. It's a brief life but you'll live forever somewhere and that somewhere ought to be in the presence of God. There are two destinations, destruction, destruction, destruction. That's hell. Separation from God forever, eternal punishment forever, easy to go that way, just go with the crowd, no restrictions. The religion of human achievement, everything from humanism on the one hand, atheism to Judaism without Christ to Catholicism to any other kind of thing which pours human works into it. And John Bunyan once said, "The entrance of hell is from the portals of heaven." What did he mean? People are marching thinking they're going to heaven, and just before they think they get to heaven they're going to find themselves in hell. So as Jeremiah said, "I set before you the way of life and the way of death, make a choice." The word destruction refers to everlasting punishment.

On the other hand, He says there is a way that is narrow, verse 14, that leads to life. What does He mean by life? He doesn't mean biological life, but life eternal, life in its fullest, a quality of life now and forever and ever. I'll tell you, I wouldn't give up the life that I know in Christ, would you? It's a narrow way. It's a blessed way. It's a joyous way. It's a fulfilling way and it's going to get better in the day that we enter the presence of Christ. We have entered into life, a glorious state of unclouded

fellowship with God, eternal satisfaction, unspeakable joy. Take your choice. You want hell? You want death and punishment and pain forever? You want joy and God's presence. Two gates, two paths, two destinations.

Finally, two crowds...two crowds. It says, "Few...verse 14...find the narrow gate." Verse 13, "Many are on the broad gate." Few find the narrow gate. Oh it's sad to think about that. Just few, very provocative. For this time and this age Jesus says few people. I look forward to that tribulation in the future when it says in Revelation chapter 7 verse 9 that innumerable hosts of people from every tribe and tongue and nation of the globe will sing the praises of Christ. There's coming a future day in the Tribulation when there may be a greater revival and there may be more people coming on to that narrow way than ever before. But in this time in this age, few find it. On the other hand, the wide gate is loaded with people....loaded with people.

Listen, don't be fooled into the tragic deception that that which is most popular is right. And don't be fooled into believing that millions of people are flooding their way into the narrow way, they're not. Few are finding it. Oh there are a lot of people throwing the name of Jesus around, a lot of people with a lot of different religious titles. But there are few. In Luke 12:32 Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock." *Micron*He used, very small. They were small in esteem and power and importance and influence and number. That *micron*word is used of the minutest of seeds, it was used in planting and that was the mustard seed. Jesus is saying you're just a little group. And to the Corinthians Paul said, "Not many noble, not many mighty coming into the family." Matthew 22:14 Jesus said, "Many are called but...what?...few are chosen." It's so tragic, beloved, because people are believing the lie and few are entering the narrow way. Most are flooding the broad road that leads to hell.

Listen to this letter. This was in the Melbourne Daily Paper in Australia. "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 and everyone else's 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." It sounds good. "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." And he signed his name and he probably got his wish.

Sounds so good. I want a religion that is tolerant and gentle and has no barriers of color or creed and remembers the aged and teaches children and so forth. That all sounds good, and it is. But it's the broad road. It's the road that says heaven by human achievement but doesn't get there. That's the decision and you're at the crossroads, everyone is. We pray you'll make the right choice. Let's bow together.

Just for a moment in the silence of your heart we ask you to just be still where you are until we have this final closing moment. I don't know your relationship between yourself and the Lord, but you do. If there's any question in your mind at all about which road you're on, this is the time to cry out to God and say by faith in Jesus Christ the one who died for me and rose again, who paid the penalty for my sin, I give You my life, O God, I give up myself, I enter the narrow gate. Can you pray that prayer? Do it just now.

If that was the sincere prayer of your heart, let me tell you something, dear friend, you're on the other side of the gate, you're on the narrow way, you're headed for life and you're going to find that it's a joyous burden, it's a light burden, it's a narrow way, there's a warfare but God will give you joy and strength as you go along.

Father, I pray that Your Spirit by grace has taken some people, lifted them right off the broad road and put them through the narrow gate and now they're on their way to eternal life. I pray, O God, that You'll work that miracle in every needy heart, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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