

November 4, 2012

ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE
Luke 13: 23-30

Introduction. If I asked, HOW you got here today. It doesn't matter. But, (sometimes) HOW is important. HOW you got your math answer. HOW: Evidence in a murder trial.

**Look at Luke 13: 23-24 “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,
24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”**

Christ is not addressing the unconcerned here. **He is** not talking to the religiously indifferent. **He is** speaking to those that are CONCERNED about salvation. **They** are those who have an interest in heaven. And, Christ answers their question, (though probably not in the way they expected). **Christ's** FOCUS is not on who is seeking (or how many), but, rather, on HOW they seek.

HOW are sinners to seek to enter in? **I.e. Not:** are you fit for heaven? **But,** WHAT has made you fit for heaven? **How** did you become fit for heaven? **Not:** are you IN the kingdom of heaven? **But,** HOW did you get in? **HOW** did you become a member of God's household?

Look at Luke 13: 24a “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.”

This is not just a command to enter in. **Many** are seeking to enter in. **But,** this is a command to enter in a CERTAIN way. **The** emphasis is on the WAY to enter in. **This** is a command to enter into salvation, eternal life, (heaven itself), through Christ ALONE. **Why** seek to enter THIS way? **Because** THIS is the way, (the ONLY way) to life.

Look at Matthew 7:13 a, 14 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.”

The strait gate leads to life. **The** strait gate is the way to salvation and final glory. **The** strait gate is Christ crucified ALONE. **The** strait gate is Christ, the Surety of those He was given.

God, the Father made Christ responsible for the salvation of a multitude of sinners before the world began. **Christ** was delivered because of THEIR offenses. **And,** He was raised again because of THEIR justification.

I. E. The sins of those Christ was given were charged to Him. **He bore** THEIR sins away in His body on the Cross. **And,** the righteousness He established by His obedience unto death is charged to THEM. **God** declares THEM forever righteous based on Christ's imputed righteousness ALONE.

Christ IS the strait gate through which sinners find life. ALL (without exception) who seek to enter into life (salvation) THROUGH CHRIST (alone) WILL FIND the eternal life they seek.

In another context Christ identifies Himself as the door of the sheep.

Look at John 10: 7-9 “Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

Christ is the öDOOR of the sheepö. **The KEY** (little) phrase in this is “*by Me*”. **ALL** who enter in *thru Christ* will be saved. **ALL** who enter in *thru Him* will find safety. **ALL** who enter in *thru Him* will go in and out freely. **Christ** crucified and risen again is the EMPHASIS of the scriptures.

Look at Hebrews 7: 22-25 “**By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.**

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

You see that (little) phrase again, ö*by Him*ö. **Christ** is the Surety of öa betterö (an Everlasting) Covenant. **He is** the High Priest that needs no replacement (öHe continueth everö). **He is** the SURE Savior of **ALL** who come unto God ö*by Him*ö. **He is** the östrait gateö through which a sinner finds life.

Christ is the östrait gateö. **ALL** who enter *through Him* find life and eternal blessedness. **Thus**, Christ’s command to His hearers is öSTRIVE to enter in at the strait gate.ö

STRIVE! Work DILIGENTLY at it! **Make** a conscious effort. **Be DETERMINED** to enter **THIS** way. **Know ASSUREDLY** that this is the **ONLY** way to eternal life. **And**, know **ASSUREDLY** that **ALL** (w/o exception) who enter **THIS** öwayö find life.

Christ’s command here is **NOT** a onetime thing, but, rather, continuous. **The sense is, STRIVE! And**, keep on **STRIVING**. **Let THIS** be the focus of your spiritual life. **Let NOTHING** confuse you, side-track you, or deter you from striving to enter in by **Christ ALONE**.

How do we do this? **How** do we keep on striving to enter in through the östrait gateö? **We** do like Randy taught us a few weeks back on öStrongholds and Imaginationsö. **On** spiritual warfare, our öweapons are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholdsö.

Look At II Corinthians 10: 5 “**Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”**

Remember that the scripture here is emphasizing (ONE) obedience from sinners: **That** is that we (östriveö) to **REST** in **Christ ALONE**. **STRIVE** to bring öevery thought into captivityö to **CHRIST’S** obedience. **I.e. Be** (continually) convinced that Christ has done all that is required to bring every sinner He died for to final glory.

And, **WHY** are we to keep on **STRIVING** to (rest) in **Christ ALONE**?

Look at Romans 10:11 “**For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**”

No one believing in Christ; **no one** entering in by the ðstrait gateö; **no one** entering in by Christ ALONE will EVER be ðashamedö. **They** will never be ðput to the blushö. **No one** resting their WHOLE salvation IN HIM will EVER be ðput to flightö.

There are two VITAL reasons why sinners should (why we MUST) ðStrive to enter in at the strait gateö. **First**, because the ðstrait gateö is Christ and Him crucified and He is the ONLY way to eternal life. **Second**, because ALL (w/o exception) who enter *through Him* WILL FIND eternal life and blessedness.

Next, there are two obstacles that keep sinners from obeying this command (i.e. from coming to God through Christ ALONE and finding the eternal life that is in Him ALONE).

The first of those obstacles: **The** scriptures speak of ðanotherö WAY.

Look back at Matthew 7: 13-14 “**Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:**

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

There is ðanotherö WAY. **But**, as you can see, this ðotherö way is NOT a way to life. **Its** gate is wide. **Its** way is broad. **It is** popular (ðmanyö go in this way). **But**, its end is ðdestructionö. **The** ðstrait gateö ALONE is the ðwayö to life. **ANY** ðotherö way is the ðwayö to eternal death.

If there were just ONE ðgateö and ONE ðwayö, ðentering inö would be a SIMPLE problem with a SIMPLE (logical) solution. **But**, there is a ðwide gate and broad wayö which stands in CONTRAST to the ðstrait gate and narrow wayö. **There** is salvation by the doing and dying of Christ ALONE. **Then**, there is every OTHER ðwayö. **The** first obstacle to sinners *entering in at the strait gate*: the scriptures declare ðanotherö way.

The SECOND obstacle standing in the way of sinners ðentering in at the strait gateö and finding the eternal life that is in Christ ALONE: **By nature** NONE of us know which ðgateö we have entered or which ðwayö we are on. **By nature** (on this issue), we are our own WORST enemies.

We can see that there is a ðstraitö gate and a ðwideö gate. **We can** understand that there is a ðnarrowö way and a ðbroadö way. **We can** see that the scriptures declare more than ONE way. **We can** (even) understand that only ONE ðwayö leads to life.

The problem with ALL of us (by nature): **We don't** know which ðwayö is which. **We** cannot DISCERN the one from the other. **When** the Gospel comes to ALL of us, we THINK we are (already) on the ðnarrowö way. **But**, we are NOT. **The** Gospel finds us ALL (w/o exception) on the ðbroadö way.

Look back at our context, Luke 13: 24 ð**Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.**”

“**MANY will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.**”

Who are these **ōMANY** who will **ōseek** to enter in**ö** and **ōwill NOT** be able**ö**? **And**, **WHY** will they **ōnot** be able**ö**?

It is NOT that **ōmanyö** will seek to enter in *thru Christ* and shall **NOT** be able. **The** scriptures are clear. **Christ** is the **ōstrait gateö**. **He is THE** **ōnarrow wayö**. **He is** the way, the truth, and the life.

ALL who come thru Christ **WILL BE** **ōableö** to **ōenter inö**. **ALL** who come by Him **WILL BE** saved. **ALL** who believe **ōin Himö** **HAVE** eternal life. (Their believing **ōin Himö** is **EVIDENCE** of that life.)

The **ōMANY** who will seek to enter in, and shall not be able**ö** are those who seek to **ōenter inö** some **OTHER** way. **They** are those who seek to enter some way **OTHER THAN** the **ōstraitö** gate. **They** are those **NOT** seeking to enter by Christ **ALONE**.

THESE are the ones who **ōwill** seek to enter in, and will **NOT** be able**ö**. **THESE** are those who were never **DELIVERED** off the **ōbroad way** that leads to destruction**ö**.

Christ describes such sinners in our text.

Look at Luke 13: 25-27 “**When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:**

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” **CONTEXT!** Eastern culture. The **ōage of graceö** is over.

Their own testimony incriminates them. **We** were with you. **We** walked with you. **We** saw your miracles. **We** heard your claims. **We** were under your preaching. **But**, they did not embrace Him as the Messiah which His miracles and message declared Him to be.

Christ is describing the Cain**ø** that **TRY** to come to God by an offering of their hands. **He is** describing the Pharisee who comes by his obedience to the law (I fast, give tithes**í**). **He is** describing the zealous religionist who comes by what (he thinks) God has enabled him to do (Lord, Lord have we not prophesied**í**).

He is describing any sinner in **ANY** generation who comes to God seeking acceptance by **ANYTHING** but the shed blood, the imputed righteousness of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

He is describing **ANY** sinner in **ANY** generation who has not been delivered off the **ōbroadö** way that is leading to destruction**ö**. **The GREAT** deception in the minds of all of us by nature is that we **THINK** we are on the **ōnarrowö** way that leads to life, when in reality we are on the **ōbroadö** way that leads to destruction.

By nature **ALL** (w/o exception) are deceived on this issue.

Look at Jeremiah 17: 9 “**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”**

The ðheartö is the mind, the affections, and the will. **The** matter of HOW God saves sinners is unknown to the natural ðheartö. **HOW** God is just to show mercy to sinners who deserve nothing but His eternal wrath is not only, not known; it is not even considered.

Let me give you a summary of Romans 3: 10-18. ðThere is none righteous. **There** is none that is seeking after God. **There** is none that is doing good. **There** is no fear of God before their eyes.ö

It is this deceived and desperately wicked heart that chooses the ðwayö that SEEMS *right*.

Look at Proverbs 14: 12 (also 16: 25) “**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.**”

The ðwayö that SEEMS right to us all by nature is a POPULAR way. “**Many**” are on THIS ðwayö. **It’s** the ðwayö that SEEMS to give the MOST sinners a ðchanceö to be saved. **And**, if salvation were by ðchanceö, that might actually mean something. **But**, salvation is not by ðchanceö. **It** is by God’s sovereign PURPOSE (mercy/grace) thru Christ ALONE.

This ðwayö that seems right and the ðbroad wayö are one and the same. **How** can you tell? You can tell because of where they BOTH end up (eternal death). **And, yet**, this is the ðwayö we ALL choose, because this is the ðwayö that (naturally) SEEMS right to us all.

Christ declares the end of this way. **Look** at Luke 13: 28 “**There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.**”

The issue won’t be whether you heard the Gospel, (i.e. whether you were under the sound of the Gospel). **The** issue will be whether you believed it; whether you embraced it; whether you submitted to the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel as a sinner’s only hope of being declared righteousness in God’s sight.

Look at Luke 13: 29 “**And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.**”

God made a Covenant with National Israel through Moses. **This** Covenant did not include the Gentiles. **But**, this Covenant pictured and typified another Covenant, an Everlasting Covenant of Grace, made with Spiritual Israel through Christ in old eternity.

This Everlasting Covenant includes Jew and Gentile (those of every kindred, tribe and nation). **God** will call Spiritual Israel from the east, west, north and south into the kingdom in each generation by the Gospel.

Look at Luke 13: 30 “**And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.**”

National Israel was ðfirstö. **They** were given many advantages (the Patriarchs, the Promised Messiah, the Law, the Prophets). **But**, National Israel (as a whole) perverted the law they were given. **They** saw it as a ðmeansö to find and further righteousness in themselves. **They** did not follow the Patriarchs. **They** refused the teaching of Moses and the Prophets. **And**, they despised and rejected Christ when He came.

The Gentiles on the other hand had none of these advantages. (Leave Luke 13: 30 on screen.) Look at Ephesians 2: 12 **“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:”**

The Gentiles had no advantages. **And**, they were scorned and hated by the Jews. **But**, the Gentiles who believed the Gospel and sought Righteousness by Christ alone are the ðlastö that shall be ðfirstö. **The** Jews who had all the advantages, but rejected Christ, are the ðfirstö that shall be ðlastö.

Overall, the ðlast that shall be firstö are those who don't start out under the Gospel. **They** start out under a false ðgospelö, (one that tells sinners that God will save you if ____). **But**, these (____) are those who will be brought into the kingdom of God THROUGH the Gospel. **They** are those who will be DELIVERED off the ðbroadö way that is leading to destruction.

All start out on THIS way. THIS ðwayö SEEMS right to us all. All remain here UNTIL God delivers us from the ðwayö that SEEMS right to the ðwayö that IS RIGHT (according to His strict law and inflexible justice), the ðwayö of Christ crucified ALONE.

How does all this apply to you and me? **We live** in a world of BIG religion. **BIG** religion has the buildings. **They** have the audiences. **They** have the influence. **ðTheir”** way SEEMS right, so much so, that ALL by nature are caught up in THEIR ðwayö.

By nature we ALL think like those on the ðbroadö way. **We think** just like these that Christ is addressing. **Look** back at Luke 13: 23a **“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?”**

Now, that seems like a good question. **But**, the FOCUS of those asking is misdirected. **They** are concerned about numbers. **It could** have been baptism. Or, what day should we worship? **It could** have been countless ðthingsö spiritually minded sinners consider.

Christ directs their thinking to the crucial (the VITAL) issue. **He directs** them to HOW God can be just and STILL save sinners. **Why** does He do this? **He** does it because until THIS matter is settled, nothing else matters. **Numbers** don't matter. **Buildings** don't matter. **Election** does not matter. **Nothing** matters until the issue of HOW God saves a sinner is settled. **Nothing** matters until we see how God is Just to justify the ungodly by the charging of Christ's righteousness to their accounts (having charged their sins to Christ).

Until a sinner is resting in Christ ALONE, there is no basis to consider anything else ARIGHT. It matters NOT just that you have eternal life, but HOW you got it. **It** matters HOW you come to God. **We** think there are many ðwaysö. **But**, there is only ONE ðwayö. **That** ðwayö is Christ and Him crucified. **Only** the ðStrait Gateö leads to life.

If you have entered in through the ðstrait gateö onto the ðnarrow wayö that leads to life, then, you have been taught which ðwayö is which. **You** have been delivered off the ðbroad wayö that leads to destruction. **You** know that if God had not had mercy on you for Christ's sake ALONE, you would still be on the ðwayö that SEEMED right to you. **You** would still be headed for eternal misery. You have been DELIVERED.

This deliverance is one of the MAIN evidences that you are *in Christ*. **It is** one of the MAIN evidences that you have entered in by the ðstrait gateö. Outline.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: **Because** the ōstrait gateö is Christ and Him crucified and He is the ONLY way to eternal life; **and**, because ALL (w/o exception) who enter *through Him* WILL FIND eternal life and blessedness.

See (discern) the difference between the ōnarrowö way and the ōbroadö way. **Know** that the ōbroadö way is YOUR way of CHOICE. **And**, know that you are STILL on THAT way, expecting to be saved, if God has not shown you mercy and delivered you by the Gospel.

If you have been delivered off the ōbroadö way, be thankful you have been delivered. **If** you have not YET been delivered, keep listening to the Gospel. Keep considering that SALVATION (in its entirety) is by Christ ALONE.

Either way, donø ever stop ōstrivingö to ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

By Mark Pannell