

Bible Text: Matthew 7:13-14
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

It is said of Charles Spurgeon that as he ascended the steps into his pulpit, he routinely prayed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit," trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to give wings and weight and effectiveness to the words that he spoke, realizing his own weakness and inability in his own human flesh, and I was reminded of that as I stepped up this morning to open God's word for you today. This is a very important message and you could say that in one sense about every message but this one brings the issues, this text that we're going to look at this morning, better stated, so brings the eternal issues of Scripture and the Gospel into stunning clarity and brings the reality of the Gospel and the exclusive claims to Christ and the implications for humanity to such stunning clarity that it's beyond human ability, really, to be able to give proper weight to it and proper perspective to it and so we rely on our Lord as we turn to God's word today, looking to Matthew 7:13. I invite you to turn there with me. I'll read our text and have a few preliminary comments about it. Matthew 7:13, our Lord Jesus says,

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.
14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Now, everything about Scripture points us in the direction of the truth of what Jesus says here. In one of the more familiar verses that I allude to quite often in John 14:6, our Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." He makes an exclusive truth claim and says that the doors of heaven are bolted shut except for those who come through him. In Acts 4:12 it says, "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

So Scripture and our Lord Jesus Christ make an exclusive truth claim that says that only those who come through faith in Christ will have their sins forgiven and enter safely into heaven. Everybody else will be lost. That is quite a statement for our Lord to make and here in Matthew chapters 5 through 7, we've been studying the Sermon on the Mount for about a year and half now, I think. Jesus as we saw last time, has completed the substance of his sermon in Matthew 7:12, and as we now go into verse 13, he is going to apply and

bring out the implications of everything that he said to those who read this sermon today, for his audience who heard him preach it some 2,000 years ago. Having said everything that he had to say from Matthew 5:3 through chapter 7, verse 12, he says, "The application for my hearers is this: I commanded you, enter through the narrow gate."

Enter through the narrow gate it said in chapter 7, verse 13, and last time we looked at the nature of this command, enter, and what we said about it was this, we said that it was a command of love; it was a loving command from Christ, urgent in its nature that was made freely to everyone who hears without any conditions applied upon them. Jesus freely says, "I have summed up the nature of life in my kingdom and now I command you to enter in." What we said was is that it is the tendency, it is woven into the fabric of the human race to rebel against any command, let alone a command from God, because we are suspicious of the nature of authority, especially God's authority, and we think that God is trying to restrict us or spoil our lives or somehow exercise a hateful assertion over us, and that's certainly what Eve said when she believed Satan rather than God in the Garden of Eden, but our encouragement to you last week was to realize that when God commands us, when Christ commands us, he commands us in love. He commands us seeking our well-being. He commands you and Scripture speaks to you in the imperative mood. It does so for your protection, for your well-being, for your blessing. So rather than rebelling against a command, we should be grateful for the fact that the Lord has spoken into our spiritual darkness and shone light upon our path and said, "This is the way forward. This is the way to safety. Enter here." And I trust as we gather together this morning, you have a sympathetic receptivity to whatever Christ would say to you. It's a loving command, seeking your well-being, seeking your protection, seeking your eternal good in a way that no one else can do for you; that no one else does for you; and in a way that no one else can deliver upon. Only Christ can deliver on the promise to take you to heaven. Everyone else is an imposter with no power, a blind guide leading blind people into a most dreadful pit.

Now with that said, beloved, the loving nature of this command, the goodhearted intentions of our Lord as he gives it to us, should not make you careless or cynical in response. It should not cause you to take your soul for granted and say, "Well, if he's so loving toward me, then all must be well," and excuse and ignore and delay and put off the response of repentant faith in him that is necessary to actually enter into the kingdom. Don't take his love for granted in what he says because there are serious realities undergirding what he has said. Indeed, far to the contrary, far to the contrary, my beloved friends, Jesus' words here in this passage are words of warning as well as words of command. He says, command, "Enter," and we know that he's loving and why he says that. We have established that. That cannot be questioned. But he goes on and explains why he is commanding.

Look at verse 13 with me there. He says, "Enter through the narrow gate; for," for this reason, "Enter through the narrow gate because of this reality which I am about to unfold and explain to you." Why should you enter through the narrow gate, enter through Christ himself and Christ alone? Well, it's for this reason, "the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small

and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Friends, the solemnity of the moment that we have reached in this sermon is staggering. Jesus' words are difficult but they are clear and they are not susceptible to misunderstanding. What Jesus is saying here is this: many will be lost, few will be saved. There is a sense in which many people will go to heaven, there will be multitudes around the throne of grace in heaven, but comparatively speaking, that number around the throne in the end will be small compared to the vast numbers that will be lost. Many will be lost, few will be saved.

Now, the natural man in Adam, the unregenerate man, the unsaved man, the suave and debonair man of the world, revolts at the notion of what we just said. The cult of self-esteem has taught us all, and we've been influenced by it far more than we probably realize, that we are so naturally good and we think so well of ourselves that, "How could God not think well of me also? And wouldn't God be so blessed to have me beside him throughout all of eternity?" It's not true. That's not reality. That's not what is actually the nature of things. You see, you and I, my friends, we cannot think as unregenerate men do about these weighty eternal issues, we have to think rightly which means we have to think in accordance with Scripture. We have to see what the Bible says about this idea that many will be lost and only few will be saved. We have to think rightly about the fact that multitudes are heading to destruction and comparatively few are going to end up in glory.

I want to approach this from three different perspectives here this morning, just looking to bring us under the sense and the sense of urgency which prompts Jesus' urgent command that many will be lost and few will be saved, and then to take that to the next step requires a sense of self-reflection. In light of that great statement that the way is broad and many are headed toward destruction on the broad way, the way is narrow that leads to life, for us to be contemplating and asking ourselves the question: am I truly on that narrow way? Do I belong to Christ where alone safety can be found? And the sheer weight of perspective draws us to a realization that we have to take Jesus' words seriously. As I've said many times, Jesus is teaching for keeps. He means what he says. Put another way, Jesus is not bluffing here. Jesus isn't playing games and it's really not so serious. He is not bluffing. He is telling us the truth so that we might respond to it and urgently flee to him alone to save our souls.

Let's take, first of all, a look at the world, a look at the world to measure what Jesus says here. This is a little bit different than the way that we normally do things but I think that it will become clear what I'm doing and why I'm doing it in this perspective. Let's take a look at the world in light of what Jesus said, that the way is narrow that leads to life and there are few who find it. What I'm about to describe to you is readily available information. If we look at our modern world and the spiritual state of our modern world, would we come to the conclusion that Jesus' statement is true? That there are many who will be lost and few comparatively speaking who will be saved? If we look at our world, would we consider this to be true?

Well, follow along with me with what I'm about to say here. If you're a visitor with us, you wouldn't have any way to know this but I very rarely cite a lot of statistics or things like that in my messages. That's just not what we do here, but here is a place where statistics are helpful. The current world population is approximately 7.6 billion people. That's a lot of people. That's such a staggering number you really can't get your mind around it, can you? It's just too much. If we go into an arena or a stadium that's got 50,000 people in it jam packed, we say, "This is a lot of people." Well, that's infinitesimal compared to the overall world population and you lose sight of it. But 7.6 billion people is the current world population. So stay with me as I unpack this a little bit. What can we say about the state of the world in religion and how that compares with biblical Christianity? Well, the 2016 Pontifical Yearbook released by the Vatican said that there are 1.27 billion baptized Catholics in the world. Let's call it 1.3 for the sake of round numbers, 1.3 billion baptized Catholics in the world today. We dealt with Catholicism in a series that is available on our website, "The Bible and Catholicism." If you've missed that, I encourage you to listen to that. 1.3 billion baptized Catholics in the world. The Pew Research Center says that there were 1.8 billion Muslims in the world in 2015 as of the year 2010, so we are mixing years a little bit but the general thrust of all of this is very clear. As of 2010, the Pew Research Center estimated that there were 1 billion Hindus in the world, nearly 500 million Buddhists in the world, another 1.1 billion who claimed no religion at all. If you add together those who follow folk religions, Eastern Orthodox, Mormonism, Jews, other religions, you would add another 800 million people. If you do simple arithmetic 1+1+2, here's what you come up with with those numbers: generally speaking, roughly speaking, of those religions that I named there, we have just identified 6.5 billion people in the world out of 7.6 billion. 6.5 billion people who do not even identify with biblical Christianity. That is over 85% of the world population that's not even in the right ballpark to see the game, let alone to participate in it.

Those numbers are staggering. Over 85% of the world identifies itself by following a religion that is based on something other than the revelation found in the 66 books of the Bible alone, that is premised on salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Over 85% of the people, 6.5 billion. I ask you, what does that mean in light of what Jesus says? What else can it mean except that there is a broad way that leads to destruction and the way to heaven is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15%, I'm not saying the other 15% are saved. We'll cover that in a moment. We're just saying on the simplest roughest measure that we could give that people who gladly don't even identify with any sense of biblical Christianity are in this awful position, the broad way that leads to destruction. Simple statistics verify what Christ says. Many will be lost and there are comparatively few who will be saved.

Let's test this another way. Our second point for this morning, let's take a look at the Bible. Take a look at the Bible and let's just do a little survey, let's just allude to familiar narrative portions of Scripture. Let's survey biblical history and what do we find there when we look at some of the prominent narratives of the Bible? What do we find about this idea that many will be lost and few will be saved? Here's an idea, let's start with Noah. Let's start with Noah. He had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth, Genesis 5. When that familiar event to us of the worldwide flood of judgment came, they and their

wives were the only ones who fled into the ark. Eight people went into the ark for deliverance. Everyone else that existed at that time perished in the flood. Many were lost. Few were saved.

What about the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah to which Scripture frequently alludes in Genesis 19? Before the Lord rained down his judgment on those cities, those wicked cities, in the end only Lot and his two daughters escaped. Everyone else perished. Many were lost. Few were saved.

My friend, consider the wanderings of Israel after the exodus from Egypt. You remember how God led them out with power, delivering them from the dominating hand of Pharaoh, led them out with great signs and judgments, led them through the Red Sea, and they entered into the wilderness. But they rebelled against him and of that entire generation, 600,000 men, perhaps as many as 2 million people 20 years old and older, of that entire generation, only two entered the Promised Land: Joshua and Caleb, Numbers 14:30. Of that generation, many were lost. Few were saved.

Think of the days of Judges. It records a long cycle of Israel's sin, judgment and deliverance, only to sink down again. Again and again the same wearisome pattern being played out as men pursued that which was in accordance with their own desires. Friends, how could that cycle perpetuate so endlessly? How could it be that God would deliver them and then they would quickly fall right back into the darkness of sin? I'll tell you why: it's because many were lost and very few were saved.

You say, "Well, what about when the people were established under the kings of Israel? Did the situation improve then?" Well, let's look at what a couple of prophets said about the situation. Turn to Isaiah in your Old Testament, Isaiah 1. We'll read an extended passage here beginning in verse 4. Isaiah, preaching to the chosen nation said, Isaiah 1:4, "Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him. Where will you be stricken again, As you continue in your rebellion? The whole head is sick And the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, Only bruises, welts and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil. Your land is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire, Your fields--strangers are devouring them in your presence; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers. The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah." Painting this desolate picture of only a very small tiny remnant in the midst of a great and rebellious whole. Many were lost. Few were saved.

Turn to Jeremiah 5:1 says, "Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, And look now and take note. And seek in her open squares, If you can find a man, If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, Then I will pardon her." How desperate was the situation? The invitation goes out, "Look for one man and I'll pardon her," the implication being that man is nowhere to be found.

So we ask what was the experience of the prophets as represented in these passages? Many were lost, not of the prophets or the people to whom they ministered. Many were lost and few were saved.

Well, what about the New Testament, you might say? What about when Christ came and as he was ministering there, what could we say about this? What can we say when Jesus was teaching and exercising his influence on the earth? Jesus said in Matthew 22:14, he said, "many are called, but few are chosen." In other words, the free offer of the Gospel goes out to all but God's saving grace is extended to comparatively few.

In John 6 in the lifetime of Jesus, in John 6:1-14, he fed 5,000 men plus many more women and children with five barley loaves and two fish. What happened as he continued to teach them, as he got to doctrine, as he got down to his claims? Look at John 6 with me. Turn there, if you will. In John 6:58, he says, "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread," referring to himself, "will live forever." And verse 59, remembering that there were thousands that he fed at the immediately preceding miracle that leads into this teaching, verse 59, "These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum." Therefore in verse 60, "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?' But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.'" Look at the outcome in verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?'" And then that dialogue that follows takes place. Jesus went, here's what I want you to see, Jesus went from this massive crowd that would fill a modern arena and it whittled down until he's talking to the 12. He is left with that. What can we say about the perspective of the proportion of those who actually followed him all the way through to what he had to say when it got down to where eternal life was truly to be found? What can we say? Many were lost. Few were saved.

How can that be? How can it be that it's like that? Do you see, my friends, the repeated pattern of Scripture, of vast measures of judgment and a small group being saved out of that? Do you see the conundrum? Do you see the problem? Do you see again and again and again the pattern, many going into destruction, and comparatively few being saved? J. C. Ryle, who prompted much of my thinking in this biblical context, says this, and I quote, he says, "According to the Bible, few will be saved. According to men of the world, many. According to the men of the world, few are going to hell. According to the Bible, few are going to heaven. According to the men of the world, salvation is an easy business. According to the Bible, the way is narrow and the gate is small."

Do you see why the command to enter the kingdom is urgent? We have before us, speaking now today in the 21st century, we're able to quantify this statistically with a sense that before you even get to the professing church, you've already eliminated 85% of the world population. That's staggering. It's frightening. It's sobering to realize that this is the nature of reality as God sees it, as God defines it. Beloved, isn't it true that the general spirit of the world when they think about heaven and hell issues, you ask somebody, "Do you think you're going to go to heaven? Why do you think that?" "I'm a pretty good person, at least I'm not Hitler. I've never killed anybody." And the prevailing mindset is there is this narrow slot of hell that is reserved for just a few who have been extraordinarily egregiously wicked in their lifetimes and I'm not like them and therefore I'm going to heaven. That is a parachute that is riddled with holes and broken strings that cannot prevent a man from plummeting down. That mindset is false. That mindset is contrary to everything that Scripture would lead us to understand and believe about reality. It is the exact opposite of what is true, just as Satan's words to Eve in the Garden were the exact opposite of what was true. He portrayed God as someone harsh and restrictive when in reality he had been so expansively gracious to them. The whole Garden was available and he said, "Just this one tree," and Satan twists that and perverts the whole character of God and Eve preferred to believe Satan rather than what God had said.

Now beloved, as we have these things before us from God's word here this morning, you are left with a commitment of your mind and heart that you have to make. What are you going to believe, those of you on the live stream joining us? What are you going to believe about the nature of heaven and hell and just the general comparisons? I realize, I understand that there is that part of us that would prefer that it not be this way because the reality of it seems too awful to contemplate, doesn't it? To think 6.5 billion people plunging into destruction. That the way really is broad that leads to destruction. That there really are many who are going down that path. It seems too awful to contemplate but, beloved, there is something even more awful to contemplate, there is something even worse to think, and that is to say that I would accuse Jesus of falsehood; that I would not believe Jesus for what he said; that I would not implicitly believe the sinless eternal Son of God when he says that the way is broad that leads to destruction and many are going there, and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are entering. You can't embrace the mindset of the unregenerate man without pushing Christ away, without saying, in effect, "I'll believe the spirit of the world before I'll believe what Jesus Christ says about his kingdom." You can't go there, can you? Can you? You cannot go there and so we are left with coming to Christ being humbled by what he says and realizing that there is a sobriety that surrounds this entire discussion, that many will be lost, comparatively few will be saved.

Now, when you speak just in terms of raw numbers, you know, there is going to be millions at least around the throne of God in heaven. There will be a multitude praising the Lamb. But, you see, we don't just look at it from the perspective of raw numbers because Jesus here sets up a contrast that we are to think about: the broad way to destruction where many are, the narrow way where few are. You know, with what I'm about to say, the percentages are meaningless. Don't focus on the percentage, just watch

the general point that I'm making here. Let's say 8 billion people, just to make the numbers round and easy to follow. Let's say 10% of them were saved. That would be 800 million in heaven. That would be a lot, but compared to the 7.2 that are lost, it's few. If it's 1% and its 80 million of the existing world population, that would still seem like a lot. That would be the combined population of many metropolitan areas in the United States, but compared to those that were outside looking in, comparatively few. This is the way that we think about this.

So we realize as we take a look at the world and we immediately get a rough number that says the vast majority are lost, as we look at the Bible and we see the pattern of the Bible is relatively few being saved in times of judgment, it's unsettling, isn't it? Do you see why the command, "Enter in through the narrow gate," is urgent? Do you see why it is so crucial for you to take the words of Christ seriously? Do you see why it is so imperative for you to deal earnestly with his words, with his call when he says, "Believe in me and receive eternal life. Enter into my kingdom through me alone." This is why it's urgent.

We've looked at the world, we've looked at the history in the Bible, let's take a look at a third aspect here that will narrow the gate even further, we might say. Let's take a look at professing Christians and when I say look at professing Christians, simply in terms of what the Bible describes. We've gone from the world, we've kind of looked at it from inside a world perspective, we've stepped into the Bible and looked at it from a big Bible history perspective, and now here's what we're going to do, we're stepping into the realm of the professing church, of those who would actually name the name of Christ, and what do we find there? What can we find in that realm according to the trustworthy teaching of Scripture, sometimes on the lips of Jesus, sometimes on the lips of the apostle? Remember, we are saying that there are many who will be lost, there are comparatively few who will be saved. Here's what we find. Here's what we find when we do that. We find this principle being reinforced by biblical teaching – note, mark it – by biblical teaching, this is not my opinion, this is not me extrapolating on something, these are the plain words of God's inspired word. We find this principle being reinforced by biblical teaching even among those who name the name of Christ.

Look at Matthew 7. Go back to where we were, Matthew 7:21. Now remember what we said, we are within the realm now of those who would have the name of Christ on their lips. Chapter 7, verse 21, Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." Do you see it? There it is again, enter the kingdom. He says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,'" recognizing him, acknowledging him with their lips, "Lord," and not every one of those "will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." And look at what he says in verse 22, "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?'" It's as though he were throwing the net over the professing charismatic church with this statement. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy?'" He says many will say that and point to their supposed works. And in verse 23 he says, "then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, do you see it? Do you see the pattern repeated again here in the same context in which Jesus said? He said, "Many will say to me, they will call me Lord and I will say, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.'" And they will enter into destruction shocked. You know, as it has often been said, it's one thing to die and go to hell knowing that that's what you expect, it's one thing to die and go to hell when you thought you were going to heaven, and Jesus says many will be in that sad state.

Let's look at some other passages in the New Testament that would help us with this. Look at Philippians 3:17 where the Apostle Paul says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." He says there are many who once named the name of Christ and now they are enemies of the cross, and their end is going to be destruction, and it is shown by the fact that their loves and their affections and their priorities were entirely consumed with earthly things. They had no real love for Christ. They had no real love for the cross. They had no real love for the truth. Many. And Paul says, "This grieves me. Tears are running down my cheek as I write these words because of the weight of the reality of which I speak." You see, we've said Jesus isn't bluffing, Jesus is teaching for keeps. You see it with Paul too, don't you? If this were not true, Paul wouldn't be crying over it. There would be no cause for grief. If this was simply a ploy to try to get people to conform their external behavior a little bit better, then there wouldn't be such a weight that brings him to deep grief and profound weeping as he writes. No. The problem is it's true. The problem is it's real. The problem is these eternal souls really are lost and to the man with a tender heart for Christ, with a love for souls, you say the enormous implications of this are too great to bear, and his body revolts at the loss. His body revolts at the loss and tears come out as a result. Many outwardly claiming Christ but their lives deny him.

Look over at 1 Corinthians. Turn back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6, beginning in verse 9. He says, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Then he says, "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." And notice that embedded in that he says, "Don't be deceived. There will be those who proclaim their own Christianity in the midst of unrepentant patterns of these kinds of sin." He says, "Don't be deceived by that. They do not enter the kingdom of God." He says, "Don't be deceived in thinking that the way is broader than it really is; that people can carry unrepentantly their sins into the kingdom without eternal consequence. It's not true." And yet, the lie is so enticing, the poisonous fruit seems so outwardly appealing to believe that the way is not narrow, that people will take the words of Christ in the Bible and fling them behind their back rather than simply take Jesus at his word when he says many will be lost and few will be saved. So Paul says, "Don't be deceived." Why would he say, "Don't be deceived," except that the temptation to deception is great in precisely this area?

Turn to Galatians to the right, just after 2 Corinthians. Galatians 5:19, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these...as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Paul says, "I've warned you about this in the past. I am warning you now that the marks of people that live like this, they are not going into heaven no matter what they say to the contrary." You step into, you step out of the world and into the professing church and you find that there is this realm of deception of people thinking they are well with the Lord when they are not, and their lives tell the story. Their lips say one thing, their lives say something else. As I've told you many times, when you see that contradiction, you go with the testimony of the life, not with the testimony of the lips.

1 John 2:4 says. 1 John 2. I'll give you a moment. These are important passages. "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." So John says you have these people saying, "I know Christ. I'm a Christian. I have been born again. Praise God." He says that testimony is all well and good but if there is a life pattern of unrepentant sin, they are a liar. Perhaps they are self-deceived. Perhaps they are actively trying to deceive you. But whatever the case, there is deception at play. The point being here for what we are saying today, is that that mere verbal profession, not everyone with the verbal profession is even going to heaven because they have not truly been joined to Christ, having received him by faith alone. They are deceived. They are playing games. They are not earnest. There is still a veil over their heart. There are still blinders on their eyes.

So, friends, here's what I want you to see with what we're talking about today: again and again and again and again and again and again and again, I think that was about eight agains, Scripture describes judgment where few are saved. Again and again and again Scripture describes a realm where people believe that they know Christ when actually they don't and it is shown by their pattern of life.

We can take it one more step. Look at 1 John 2:19. You have people that were at one time in the realm of the professing church, here we are talking about not the local church but we are talking about this in the sense of identification with Christ in the visible church. 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us." Within the realm of the professing church for a time, making the profession themselves, but they go out, they depart and they never come back. John says they were never a part. They never were truly in Christ because if they had been in Christ, that outcome of their life would have never happened. So some are in the visible church but they leave. Tares among the wheat, right? These people are not Christians and you say, you ask, "How can this possibly be true? It seems so contrary to what I see with my eyes and what I hear with my ears. How can this possibly be?" Beloved, do you see where Jesus' words give you so much clarity and discernment for what you see going on around you? Many will be lost. Few will be saved.

What should we say to these things? Go back to Matthew 7 and we'll finish where we began. Matthew 7, and we'll look at this passage one more time probably next week as well. Having gone through what we've seen here this morning, we look at Jesus' command with fresh eyes. We looked at it last week and we saw it from the perspective of love, a command of love. You know, if I were symmetrical in my thinking all the time, we would see that it's also a command of warning. It's a command of warning and the warning comes to us as we contemplate our souls before a holy God. It comes to us in this way, "Enter through the narrow gate," and then he warns us, he says, "Take heed of the command. Pay attention. Obey this command. Come to me by faith because the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and there are many who enter through it." It's a warning saying that when you look at the world, when you look at biblical history, when you look at what Scripture says within the confines of the professing church, you find warning after warning after warning that many are going to be lost and comparatively few are going to be saved. So Jesus in love warns us to make sure that we are entering through the proper gate and not relying on our own self-judgment, not relying on our own perspectives on what God should or shouldn't do with his salvation, his heaven and his hell, to abandon our confidence in self and to trust what Christ says and to realize that this matter is urgent; that this is the matter of most supreme importance. It is an urgent command of love. It is an urgent command of warning saying many are going to miss it and Christ comes to you, as it were by name today, and says, "I don't want that to be your lot. I don't want that to be what happens to you."

So somehow in the good providence of God he has brought you to his word today and he extends this warning, he extends this command of love and says, "Enter through the narrow gate because as you see it expressed in that free offer of the Gospel, God would have you, Christ would have you in his kingdom. The invitation is free. It is immediate. You can enter right now." And the only reason that anyone would walk away from that command, the only reason that someone would say no, is in a coldhearted rebellion against one who loves them and warns them for their own good. There is nothing in that command that keeps you from coming. Everything about that command invites you in. Young people, if you walk away, what can I say? Would that I had the spirit of the Apostle Paul to weep at this moment in concern and love for your soul.

This is urgent. Christ on this side of the cross has done everything to open that door into the kingdom for you. His righteous life, his shed blood at Calvary, his death, his burial, his resurrection, satisfies all of the demands of God, and Christ invites you to come to him to receive him by faith and to enter into the kingdom. To leave the world behind. To say, "Lord, I will flee to you for the safety of my own soul. I will not trust my own judgment. I will not trust my own works. I will not trust my opinions. I take you at your word and I ask you to save me." And the one who comes to Christ like that, do you know what he finds? Christ saves him. Jesus Christ has never once turned away someone who approaches him in that kind of humble repentant faith and he never will. So he commands you, "Come! Don't go the way of destruction. Why would you do that? Come. Enter in."

So he calls you, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." Do you know what this means? This is really sweet, beloved. Let me say this, first of all, before I close. For those of us that

are truly in Christ, we look at these things and here's what fills my heart: I'm filled with gratitude. When so many, when billions upon billions are going to destruction and the Lord showed mercy to me and brought me into his kingdom, I'm grateful, aren't you? Aren't you grateful to be on the receiving end of grace that many do not receive? Praise be to God. And the one who bid me – watch this – the one who bid me into his kingdom will never let me escape from it. He will never let me be lost from it. He brings us into his kingdom with the purpose to keep us there; to perfect the work that he has begun so that being in this dimension in this life, free from the domain of Satan now in the kingdom of Christ, as Colossians 1 speaks, and kept for the eternal kingdom in the end, what joy, what blessing, what gratitude. I am so grateful to be a Christian.

How can this be? How can it be? I was born in a Podunk town in southern Indiana and I'm going to heaven? Are you kidding me? From that origin of nondescript obscurity to heaven with Christ? Oh, the grace. The wonder. The joy of that. That's what we all share in that know Christ. He plucked us from sinful obscurity and brought us into his kingdom and so we sing with joy, "How great thou art. And when Christ shall come, what joy shall fill my heart when my faith becomes sight." That's how a Christian responds to this.

But for those of you that are outside, here's what I would say to you. The warning has been given. This has all been explained to you from God's word and here's what I would have you walk away with. You walk away with two thoughts in your mind, just two thoughts, maybe three. First of all, you walk away saying, "Wow, the way is really narrow. It is a narrow gate." That's one thing so that you take this seriously. But secondly, what all of this means and what the command of Christ means to you is this: that gate may be narrow but do you know what, praise God, it is wide enough for you to enter in. You can come to Christ and whatever happens with the masses, whatever happens with the multitudes, you don't have to worry about that. You simply hear the call of Christ on your own soul, on your own heart. He says, "Enter in. Come to me." And you will be saved. So I ask you, my unsaved friend, will you enter in? He calls you. He commands you. He invites you. He pleads with you. Don't walk away. Don't be one of the many. Find yourself among the few redeemed by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, it's with a measure of fear and trembling that we close today, realizing the weighty issues that your word has brought us to. It's with fear and trembling that we realize that some hear these things outside of Christ and realize that it's beyond our power to, as it were, extend our arm and pull them in. They need to enter on their own. They need to exercise faith in Christ for themselves. Father, in our helpless human position, we ask you to do a work in their hearts that is beyond our power to accomplish. Open their blind eyes, unstop their deaf ears and work in their hearts that they might rise and enter in, enter into this blessed kingdom where alone eternal safety for their souls may be found. Father, for those of us that are in Christ, Father, I would not have one truly in Christ troubled in soul by the things that we've said today. Christ really does save us when we come to him in faith and so one by one, we can trust in him and know that it is well. As we look at the promise of Christ, we believe it, we receive him. Father,

we are indeed safe even if the many are not. We realize we don't deserve it. We realize that we did not choose you, you chose us, but we thank you for the security and safety that is ours in the ark which is Christ alone. So Father, deal with each heart as we close now. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

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