

The Two Ways

Exodus

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Bible Text: Matthew 7:13-14
Preached on: Wednesday, February 13, 2019s

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Well, if you have your Bible, let's go ahead and let's turn over to chapter 7 of Matthew and we're gonna continue our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. As we stated, that we'll have this Wednesday, the next and the next, there will be three and then we'll fall into March which will be the first Wednesday night of the month when we will have prayer service and then we'll have one last session in the Sermon on the Mount. So we've got four times to go here in chapter 7 and we've reached a place in the Sermon on the Mount where we should pay even closer attention than we have already.

You know, chapter 7 would be considered a wrap up and from here on out there are some metaphors that should have our attention and I want to go ahead and mention them now and so you can be looking for these, and we've already seen hints of this already but it's gonna be more pronounced now in chapter 7, and that is external appearance versus internal reality. External appearance versus internal reality. That is going to be stressed again and again in different ways in chapter 7. For example, when we get down to verse 15, it speaks of beware of false prophets and it talks about tree, and fruit, and good fruit and bad fruit and that sort of thing, and what Jesus is drawing our attention to there is external appearance versus internal reality.

A second metaphor that we're going to see emerge in these following verses, especially tonight, is the two way option. You know, there's this and there's that. There's this and there's that. Tonight we'll see it's the broad road and the narrow road. Later when we get further along in verse 24, it will be, you know, the house built upon the rock, the house built upon the sand. So, you know, just be mindful of why Jesus is stating things in this way, again, bringing things to a head now, to a close, and we should really pay close attention because I promise you, this chapter is going to dig deep and it's not designed to trip you up, but it is designed to bring some clarity and get down to the reality of life.

Matthew 7. We're going to read verses 13 through 14, and these verses are buried pretty deep in our psyche. Let's read them.

13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Now if you've been in the church very long at all, you've probably heard these verses and perhaps, you know, we have a surface understanding of them but I hope by the time we leave tonight we'll have a much better, clearer understanding of it. I was officiating a funeral a couple of months ago and the deceased had asked in advance, of course, that particular songs be played at his service, and one of those songs was a song by George Jones entitled "Choices." And I was familiar with the song but at a moment like that, you know, you're sitting there and you have a chance, if you want, to listen and pay close attention. So I listened and I paid close attention and I thought I'd share the lyrics with you. George is not here tonight. He's not gonna be able to sing that for you, but a very good song. Let's look at the words.

"I've had choices
Since the day that I was born
There were voices
That told me right from wrong
If I had listened
No I wouldn't be here today
Living and dying
With the choices I made.

First verse,
"I was tempted
By an early age I found
I liked drinkin'
Oh, and I never turned it down
There were loved ones
But I turned them all away
Now I'm living and dying
With the choices I made.

Last verse,
"I guess I'm payin'
For the things that I have done
If I could go back
Oh, Lord knows I'd run
But I'm still losin'
This game of life I play
Living and dying
With the choices I made."

Now I know that's not a Gospel song, I know that, I understand but that is a good song. That's well written, well written and it's so right on.

We do, we do have choices. You know, sometimes people will argue over, "You know, well, are we really free or are we not free?" We really do have choices and Jesus makes

that clear here in verses 13 and 14. In life we have choices and I want you to notice something here, we are presented here with two choices of being in the world. Two choices. Our world would prefer many more options but Jesus only gives two. Two options and actually this is very consistent throughout the Bible. We lose track of this because we live in a world where, you know, one, that they don't like anything binary. You know, like don't lay down fences. Don't lay down rules. No, I can have it this way. I can have it this way. We can have multiple choices. We swim in those kind of waters in this world but when we get into the biblical waters, we find that it's consistent that there are two choices.

For example, you're gonna see on the overhead Psalm 1 and this is a great reminder of how the Bible lays this out.

1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Now do you see the two options here? There's the righteous and the wicked and so this is a theme that runs consistently throughout the Bible and, again, we have a hard time with this because we live in a world that certainly, certainly there has to be more than two choices. And you can ask my wife, I'm not a big fan of multiple choices, you know? When I go to the ice cream place, there's only one choice and that's chocolate. But I do, I get a little rattled when there's so many choices. You know, go look for wood floors or you go look for paint and you're just like there are so many choices, it's overwhelming. I kind of like two choices in a way.

So here's what we're gonna do. Let's go ahead and look at these verses and let's identify what is obvious. You know, say you're walking onto a crime scene, okay, and there's what's obvious and then there's what's less obvious, okay? We're gonna start with the obvious and what do we see first that's obvious? Well, there is a narrow gate and a wide gate, okay? Jesus identifies a narrow gate and a wide gate.

What else is obvious? One path leads to life, the other leads to destruction. Obvious, right? That's clear. It doesn't take a lot of digging to figure this out, okay? And I think we can all agree on this: nothing is more important than getting on the right road and staying on it, right? That's pretty obvious, right? It's obvious that there's a narrow and there's a wide, one leads to life, one leads to destruction and we all agree that it is vitally important that we get on the right path and stay on it.

But let's look at verse 13 first and let's go a little bit deeper than the obvious. Verse 13, "Enter," this is Jesus, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." So first the challenge in verse 13, the call is, choose the narrow gate. Go in that gate. Why? Because the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

So let's take this wide, broad path first. Let's look at it. The way to destruction, notice how it's described. You know, it's wide and it's easy. It's wide and it's easy. You know, you think, well, if it leads to destruction, you think, you know, you kind of picture maybe this dark, gloomy, you know, these shadows lurking and strange music and, you know, you expect that kind of a look to it and you'd go, "Oh no, I'm not going in there." But not the case here. It's wide. It's a wide entrance and it's easy. What might be implied here now is that this way imposes no boundaries and no restrictions. It's wide. It's easy. No boundaries. No restriction. And we notice also that it's a road that is heavily traveled. Jesus said in verse 13, "and those who enter by it are many." You might say, majority.

Now since this way is broad and easy, let's just say that we were gonna take a little drive down this road just to analyze and just to see what might we find on this broad easy road that leads to destruction. Well, you might find, one, no value judgments. No value judgments. You'll probably find plenty of perceived, at least perceived tolerance and permissiveness. Why? Because it's wide and it's easy. No boundaries. No restrictions. Nobody calling out, "Hey, don't do that, or that's wrong." None of that unless it's, you know... The only thing wrong today, the only thing wrong in our culture today are those who would say that there's something wrong. That's the only thing that's wrong, or climate change if you... You know, those are the sins, those are the big sins, you know, you see?

On this road, and this is really important, there will be, you will find no reliance upon or subjection to divine revelation. On this road that's wide and easy, the only truth and reality that we'll find will be in humanity. It will not be a transcendent truth that is above and beyond us. It is only what we can decide ourselves, you see?

On this road, it's wide and easy and there's plenty of room for a person's self-righteousness and rebellion against their Creator. There's plenty of room for all of that. One can actually travel this road while having an external righteousness. Now let me explain what I mean by that. People can get on this road and actually have an outward, external righteousness or what we would call a mere outward behavior. You know people, right, you do know people who are not followers of Christ in any sense of the word, but they do seem to have some moral compass. There's some things that they feel, you know, "I believe this is right and this is right. I believe drugs are wrong and I believe sex outside of marriage is wrong." In other words, they believe, they believe certain things, they have certain opinions and they believe that certain things are right and certain things are wrong, and they might say, "I don't ever do these things. I don't commit adultery. I don't do this. I don't do what these other people do." They've got some sort of external outward behavior, external righteousness and people like this can travel this road. You could compare them to the Pharisees that Jesus has just spoken about earlier in

the sermon, people who would say, "I haven't murdered anybody." And remember we went over this, and Jesus said, "You know, there's another way to murder people other than sticking a knife in them." Or the Pharisees would say, "I never committed adultery. I've never done that." But he did say, "Did you look at a woman with lust in your heart? If you did, you committed adultery." In other words, they had an external righteousness, they had an external behavior, people like this can get on the wide, broad, easy road so I hope, I hope before we get to the next one, I hope you're just getting a picture of this wide, broad road. Don't get the picture, do not get the picture that this is a road that is exclusive for pimps, prostitutes, drug addicts, rapists, it's just those kind of people on that road. Oh no, no, no, no, no. No, you can find, you can find people who have an external righteousness, they have rules and they have morals, and we'll get to more of that in just a minute.

Let's look at verse 14. We're just kind of looking at these roads and saying what Jesus said about them and trying to go down and take a look at each one of these roads and verse 14, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." The gate is narrow. That's what the English Standard version, that's the way it translates the Greek word, but in the King James versions it's translated "strait, strait is the gate," it's s-t-r-a-i-t, and it's a word that means this, now whether you translate it narrow or strait, irregardless it comes from the same Greek word that means this, "crushed; squeezed; or strangled." Now I want you to get the impact of what Jesus is saying here because his listeners would not have needed me to say "in the Greek it means," because that was the language of their time. When Jesus said the word that he used, they understood immediately and there's all kinds of picture going on here, you know? There's this wide, easy road and many people are just gobbing up the highway all headed to destruction and he said, "Don't, don't, don't do that. Enter. Enter this one. Enter the strait gate. Enter the gate that will crush you. Enter the gate that will strangle you." Think about that. Think about it. Enter the gate you've gotta squeeze in. You see, by using that word, Jesus was telling his listeners, he was describing an entrance which appears would crush you to death. You see, Jesus never, never, never does he say, "Hey, come on and follow me. Man, you're gonna have the time of your life. It's so easy. It is just, you're just gonna flip out of how fun it is." No, take up your cross, deny yourself, follow me, and here he says, "If you want to find the way to life, when you go through the entrance, when you look at the entrance you go through, it's gonna strangle you. It's gonna be like it's gonna strangle you to death."

So what do you suppose, what do you suppose this would look like? You see, we went down, we just took a little small tour down the broad road, okay, to get a picture of what it looks like, but what do you think it might look like on this narrow gate? D. A. Carson, I just want to read a little paragraph of what he said. "What legitimate deductions can be drawn from these two verses? I shall mention five things," he said. "First, God's way is not spacious but confining. Poverty of spirit is not easy. Prayer is not easy. Righteousness is not easy. Transformed, God-centered attitudes are not easily achieved, in fact, these things are impossible for us apart from God's grace. They are alien to much of what is in us and which cries out to be heard and, therefore, the realignment that is part and parcel of genuine conversion is a confining thing. There is no room for me to set my opinion

against the Lord's; no room to set goals in any way at cross purposes to his; no room to form attachments which vie for the central place the Lord Jesus must have." What does this road look like? It looks like this, "Give up your right to live the way you want," or as the way Paul put it in 2 Corinthians I guess, 2 Corinthians 15, that Jesus died "that we might no longer live for ourselves but for him who died and was raised for our sake."

Christian conversion, narrow gate, confining, no longer living for ourselves. That's what we used to do on the broad road. We give up the right to live the way we want. Secondly, it looks like this: radical repentance. It's radical repentance. It's none of this stuff, folks, it's none of this stuff and, my goodness, we've talked about it over and over, it's none of this stuff of, you know, "Hey, are you a Christian?" Yeah, yeah, I'm a Christian. "Really? Well, tell me about how you came to Jesus. Tell me how you came to Jesus. I'd love to hear the story." Oh well, you know, when I was 12, I got baptized at grandpa's church. "Okay, so you're part of Christ's church?" Oh no, I don't go to church anymore. I don't have nothing to do with that. I don't have anything to do with church. I don't have anything to do with serving and loving God's people. No, I got baptized in the creek and everything's good.

Look, look, that has nothing to do with Christianity. Nothing to do with Christianity. Aside from baptism, that's a good thing, church, good thing, but you understand what I'm saying. Radical repentance. You see, the person I just described is they'd like to have the benefit, they'd like to have the benefit of having this false sense of security, "When I die, I'm surely gonna go to heaven because I've kind of crossed the boxes off here." They'd like to have that, "But I'm still gonna live for myself in the meantime." Jesus is describing a way of life that includes radical repentance.

Another thing you'll find on this road is in the finding your identity and your righteousness. Now why do we know that? Because earlier Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the poor in spirit." And remember we went over this but it's been a year ago so you don't remember probably, but the best description I've heard of this is, you know, we all like to kind of lean on our own righteousness, our own goodness. When the heat gets on, you know, the heat gets on, we'll start dredging it up and we'll start building up our resume, but we'll always caveat it with this, we'll always caveat with, "Well, I'm not perfect and I know I'm not perfect. I know." And you're right and I'm not either, but that's to say that, you know, "Really if you'll look in my spiritual bank, I've got some money in there. I've got a little money in there because I've been pretty good. I haven't been terrible. I'm not perfect but I'm not terrible so I've got a little spiritual cash put away in hard times in case I die." And Jesus said, "Well, then I'm sorry. The salvation that I died for you to have, you can't have it because you're not poor, you're not spiritual poor, you're not spiritually bankrupt. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the bankrupt." They've got nothing to offer. Their only hope is the mercy and the grace of our Lord.

So when you go through that gate, unloading of all your self-righteousness, also on this road you will find Christ alone, people, okay? Christ alone. Christ alone, faith alone. It's not, you know, Christ plus this or Christ plus that. It is Christ alone. And already you do

realize that even as I state this there will be some, "Oh, that's too confining." It is rather confining, isn't it? It's not broad and easy, is it? Jesus has already said here, "It's narrow," what did he say in verse 14, "the way is hard that leads to life."

And also notice it's not heavily populated, "few there be that find it." Now don't misunderstand that word. Don't picture, "Well, you know, there's only gonna be a handful of us. Only gonna be a handful of us to get to the Promised Land." No, that's not at all it. No, no, because Jesus died to gather a new creation and it's not gonna be just a handful, it's not gonna be just American Republicans either. I know that's gonna blow people's mind, I know, but you know, we might find there's Independents in there and Democrats. I don't, you know, look, I don't know but I guarantee you this, it's not gonna be exclusively American Republicans, okay? I know I say this stuff all the time, so there's probably people sitting there going, "I wonder what he really is?" I'm a Christian. I'm a follower of Jesus. You just keep right on guessing. Oh, goodness gracious.

Revelation 7:9, let's flesh out this few, here's what it says. Have we got that? There we go. "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number," ah, Jesus said few? There will be few in comparison to the many, "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." I'll tell you what, if you're a racist, you're not gonna like this. If you're a racist, you're not gonna be there, okay? If you're a racist, you're just not gonna be there. But look, I mean, from all tribes and peoples and languages. Christianity is bigger than America. Thank God for America but it's bigger than America, it really is.

This road would appear to be a little lonelier, don't you think, than the broad road with many? I mean, you know, boy, isn't it nice when you find somebody, you know, let's say you're on the broad road and you're wondering, "Boy, I wonder if I'm right here, you know? I wonder if I'm right." And then there's many to come along and say, "Yeah, yeah, we're right." And you can have that affirmation and you're like, "Okay, I knew those Christian people were crazy. I knew it all along." You know? And you have people to come along and affirm that because hey, the narrow road and the hard road, it's gonna be a little lonelier.

The broad gate, I've gotta hurry, I've only got 15 minutes, but let's kind of narrow this down a little bit, okay, and get down to what this really means, okay? Broad road, much more inviting, right? We can see why there are many who would choose this road. We can understand that, right? No rules. No restrictions. Broad. You don't have to worry about getting up on Sunday morning. You keep all your money. You spend it all on you, you know? You get all those, man, that sounds great, doesn't it? Oh, but that's right, it leads to destruction. Sorry, forgot that part. Leads to destruction, not so fun. Narrow gate or the strait gate, much less inviting. It'll crush you. It'll strangle you. You'll feel like you're being strangled. Much less inviting. It appears that going through this gate will crush you. It's unlikely we would ever choose this route without divine assistance. But this road leads to life. "I've had choices."

I want you to see a picture. This picture, I think, helps. We've got the narrow gate, for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. You want a picture of it, okay? A person standing there looking and they're looking at Christianity, they're looking at Christianity and they go, "Oh, oh, oh," but, but, but look where it leads to. You go through the narrow and look where it leads out: to life. You could flex your arms, you've got plenty of space but then, but the gate that's wide, it looks standing there you go, "That looks like the best way to go and that's wide, you got plenty of room and everything's, nothing's crushing me." And you take off into that and it begins to taper down because it leads to destruction.

So let's ask what does all this mean? We think we've got this figured out, I'm sure. What are the two roads? Well, Jesus, the first thing we need to recognize is Jesus is saying that all he has taught in the sermon so far forms the narrow gate. Everything that he's taught so far forms the narrow gate, okay? Notice that first. We wonder what this narrow gate is, it is all of Jesus' teaching. Now we might assume, now here's where we might get tripped up if we're not careful, we might assume these two ways represent the good way versus the bad way, or let's put it this way, there's the moral way and there's the immoral way. That'd be a kind of a simplistic way of looking at it, "Here's the good way and there's the bad way, and there's the moral way and there's the immoral way." Or we can describe it this way, now listen very closely, okay? We might say, "Well, this narrow, there's the people who pray and there's people over here that don't pray. There's people over here who give, they give to help the poor and spread the Gospel, they do it, over here, they don't, don't, don't do it over here. On this road, the narrow road that leads to life, we've got people who go to church. They go to church, yes, praise God they go to church, and over here they don't go to church." Many people would sum it up that way. That's not it. That's not it.

How do we know? Because of what Jesus taught earlier in chapter 6. Let's not forget this. Remember in chapter 6 in verses 1 through 4, he talked about two different kinds of people and both were helping the poor. You go back and read it later, okay? Both were helping the poor. It wasn't that simple as Jesus saying, "Look here, one of them is helping the poor and the other one is not. I'll pick him." You know, both were helping the poor. Verses 5 through 8 in chapter 6, both were praying. Two different kinds, two different people, one was the Pharisees and the other were what Jesus was saying, "My disciples." They have an exceeding righteous, righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees. What I want you to see is this: it's not so simple to just say, "Well, there's the praying people and there's the non-praying people. And there's the giving people and the non-giving. There's the churchgoing people and the non-churchgoing people." You see, on the surface, on the surface in chapter 6, Jesus was wanting us to see on the surface they both seemed the same. Both displayed an external righteousness but remember, Jesus calls his disciples to operate from an inward reality, not just merely an outward appearance.

Jesus is gonna highlight this further in this chapter but for right now I want us to take two different people, okay? Just stay with me 10 minutes. Two different people. Both attend church. Both might even be a member of a church, which would in one case would be tragic. Both attend church, might even be members of a church. They both are actively

involved in the church, serving, giving sacrificially. On the surface both appear to be the same but inwardly they are operating from an entirely different motive, okay? We all agree outwardly things look the same, but inwardly where we can't see, inwardly both of these people are operating from a different motivation.

Let me explain. One person is attempting to build a good resume to give to God. They are doing good. They are doing good things, but inwardly their motivation for doing good is to put God in their debt. It's an attempt to control God. Now we talked about this before, but it doesn't hurt to bring it up again because unfortunately this is a real scenario I am presenting to you, and that's what Jesus is warning about here. Throughout this sermon, external, internal. Things that look the same, but we need to look internally. This one person, building a good resume to put God in their debt. It might go like this, "You know, I mean, I've been doing these good things," and then things get a bit difficult. Life has its trials and suddenly we begin to think, "Now wait a minute, Lord, wait just a minute here. Don't you remember what I've done for you? Don't you remember what I've done for your church? Don't you remember?" And it would be a great time then for God to say, "Wait a minute, were you doing those things, were you doing those things to bring me into your debt? Oh, were you doing those things so that you could control me? Because that's exactly what it sounds like." Surely God will do this for me, after all I've done for him.

You see, that's an entirely different motive than the other person who operates from an entirely different motivation. Inwardly this person understands that they are saved by grace through faith in Christ. That has gotten ever deeper into their heart, a deeper functioning reality in their heart. I'm just gonna tell you, now look, I don't think you need me to tell you this but this is a reality in churches across America. Everything seems the same on the surface but inwardly it can be so easy to operate from a different motivation. This person rather than trying to build a resume, they are relying totally upon Jesus' resume. They're trusting upon what he has done for them, what they could never do for themselves. They are persuaded that only Jesus can save them by grace through faith, and that is a picture here of the two roads. One group, one group is on the broad road, easy road leading to destruction, and they are attempting to save themselves. The others are on the narrow, hard road that leads to life and they believe that only Jesus can save them. That's really what these two roads boil down to. It's not as simple as saying, "Well, there's the people who pray and the people who don't. People who go to church, people that don't." No, that's far too simple.

So what makes the difference? Let's close this way, what makes the difference? Who would ever choose the narrow gate? I mean, really, left to ourselves? No, we've got choices to make. Hm, there's the narrow gate. Hm, here's the wide gate. That one looks like it's gonna strangle me to death. That one over there, got plenty of room on that one. Got a lot of people going down there, a lot of people are choosing that one. You know, why would we ever choose the narrow gate? We're reminded of a passage of Scripture in the book of Romans that says this, "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation." Now quickly what is that? The gospel is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ which simply we could flesh that out in a number of different ways but

that's just a simple way of stating it, it is what God has done for us in Christ freely, graciously, abundantly. The gospel is the power of God. You see, it's really gonna take something outside of ourselves that we would choose that narrow gate. We're gonna need divine assistance. We're gonna need the power of God to open our eyes to see to go through that gate. The power of the gospel.

You'll see a picture of, how many of you remember, can anybody tell me what that picture is a picture of? Can anybody tell me? Yep, Baby Jessica McClure. Back in 1987, she was 18 months old on her family's small farm, she fell into a well, and she was now just hold on. Okay, she fell into a well and that sounds like, "Okay, that's not all that bad." Well, she was 22 feet below the ground for 56 hours and she fell through an 8 inch hole. Now for those of us who can't remember, this is 8 inches. I want you to look at it real close, okay? This is 8 inch. This is 8 inch. She fell into a hole that was 8 inches, 22 feet under the ground, there for 56 hours. The workers worked and they sang songs, little nursery rhymes to her to keep her, you know, keep her spirits up and that sort of thing.

Why in the world do we look at that? Well, I think it is a very helpful picture. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, the gospel being what God has done for us in Christ. Here's what I want you to think with me: Jesus was big in glory. He was the Son of God, second person of the Trinity, enjoying the fellowship and the love of the Triune God, that God sent him and he willingly came and I want you to think of the narrowness that Jesus entered into. He left heaven, come down to this fallen world. This is the same world of injustice, hatred, racism, murder, lying, cheating, everything that you can think of, he came down into the narrowness of this sinful world. He willingly went into the pipe of humility. The Bible tells us he laid aside all of his glory, took on the form of a servant, took on the likeness of sinful man, laid it all aside, come into the narrowness, he went through the pipe of the cross, he went through the narrowness of the cross, the pipe of death for us. He was crushed that we might have life and, friends, here it is, it's only as we see Jesus doing this for us that we will enter the narrow gate. The gospel is the power of God. It is what God has done for us in Christ and seeing this, beholding this, cherishing this, loving this, well, only this will give us the ability to go through the narrow gate to find the life that Jesus wrought for us. So enter, enter the narrow gate.