

Travelers to Eternity Graciously and Urgently

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Directed by Christ

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Bible Text: Matthew 7:13-14

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Please turn to the gospel of Matthew 7. We're going to start at verse 13,

“13 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. 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. 28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

Thus ends the reading of God's holy word.

Dear congregation, the words of our text tonight are not the words of a philosopher; they are not the words even of a godly theologian from the past; they are not even, tonight, the

words of an angel; they are the words of the one and only surety, the Mediator, Jesus Christ the Righteous. The Bible speaks about him as the wisdom of God; the one who is addressing each and every one of us tonight from out of his word, is called by the Scriptures “the wisdom of God.” He has come down from the throne room of heaven with a message to each and every one of us tonight. It’s a message that radiates the glories and the splendor of the place from which he comes and it’s a message that he came to this earth to give. He took to himself flesh and blood. He was born in weakness and he became poor and he lived among us in order that he might speak this message. Also, to you and to me tonight. It’s our prayer that the Lord would apply it sovereignly and savingly to our hearts and to our lives but whoever we are, God’s word is addressing us tonight. God’s word lives and abides forever. It’s not just a book from ancient time addressed to an ancient people no longer on the earth, something for people, perhaps far away or in a corner. No, the words of our text are words to every traveler to eternity whether young or old among us.

The vast majority of people, though they are traveling to a never-ending eternity, never take stock of the fact which road they are on and where they are going to. Most are content simply to look around them and if there are people around them whom they esteem and look up to or like, they are content with it. But tonight, the Lord speaks to each and every one of us as the perfect guide. The words of our text can be found in a passage read in your hearing, Matthew 7:13-14, these words,

“13 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.”

My theme, with God’s help this evening, is this: Travelers to Eternity Graciously and Urgently Directed by Christ. Travelers to Eternity Graciously and Urgently Directed by Christ. We see first of all, a stark division; secondly a serious danger; and thirdly, a solemn decree. A stark division; a serious danger; and a solemn decree.

Dear friends, the words of our text are a part of that famous Sermon on the Mount. We may say, the greatest sermon ever preached because it was preached by the Lord himself. He preached this sermon in order to set forth the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven of which he was the King. It was a manifesto, you could say, of what God’s saving reign is like in and through Jesus Christ.

The sermon begins in such a familiar way, doesn’t it? “Blessed are the poor.” The Lord there bypasses all the rich in this word, that is, those that have so much. Naturally and also spiritually, at least they think so, in their bank accounts the Lord passes them by and calls those blessed who have nothing, who are poor, who are bankrupt. He goes on to describe his people in terms like that, the one description after the other. They are people who mourn and hunger and thirst after righteousness and so on.

This is the beginning of the sermon, the introduction we might say. Then follows the middle part of the sermon which deals with the righteousness of the kingdom. Chapter 5:17-7:12 just before we started reading this evening. That could be called the main body of this sermon, the righteousness of the kingdom. That gospel way of righteousness whereby a man, a woman, a boy or girl, may be accepted in the sight of a holy and just God. That righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and of the Pharisees who prided themselves in their righteousness. It must have surprised the people when Jesus said, "Let your righteousness exceed," be greater than, be higher than, "the righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes."

People looked up to them; they were the righteous ones. They were the epitome in terms of man's thinking of what righteousness looked like and Jesus said it must be much higher. "Be ye therefore perfect," he said. And, oh how he applied the law to his hearers, the one commandment after the other, showing how the law is holy, spiritual and good and how it uncovers a sinner to his own unrighteousness and it makes clear that the self-righteousness that he counts on and builds upon is nothing in the sight of God. In fact, it is condemnable and it makes a man all the more damn-worthy in the sight of God.

The Pharisees cleaned the outside of the cup, something that we too, as Reformed Conservative people, are very adept at. We know how to dress; we know how to talk; we know how to act. And, again, many and most of these things are not necessarily wrong but if we are leaning on them in terms of acceptance with Almighty God, God sees through right through all of these things, his searching gaze. Young people, older ones, cuts through all of that. "Man looketh on the outward appearance but God looketh upon the heart." When Christ preached then no righteousness on the outside alone but a righteousness that comes from him, he has come to fulfill the law and the prophets.

Dear friend, do you want to know what gospel righteousness looks like? Look at the one uttering this Sermon on the Mount. The Lord Jesus Christ, he is the epitome of gospel righteousness not only in his active obedience, fulfilling every article of the law of God perfectly in thought, word and deed, from his conception through his infancy, all the way of his life and even in his dying on the cross. Not only his active righteousness but also his passive righteousness is so great, something of which heaven says, "This is my righteousness. This I can accept. This is how guilty sinners can find acceptance and covering with me."

This is what the Lord Jesus Christ unfolds in many different ways here in the middle section of the sermon, in many practical ways as well. How does this find expression in the life of faith? What does it look like for one of these poor in spirit people who will inherit the kingdom of God? Who has that gospel righteousness by true and saving faith? How is it that such a one will approach unto God. He will enter into his closet and shut the door behind him and he will beseech his Father in heaven and he will say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," and so on.

The Lord speaks about these things very practically and also family relationships and the way in which we ought to relate to one another. This part of the sermon is focused on the

way to heaven. The Beatitudes, you could say, were the gate. This is what it means to go through the gate into the kingdom of heaven and this middle section is the way of the kingdom, the way to heaven. But now we come to the third section of the Sermon on the Mount and that's what was read in your hearing earlier. It is the applicatory section of the sermon. This is where Christ applies all the truths that he has enunciated with force and he does so personally. The thing that stands out in this application, dear friends, is that it's marked by a basic division. A basic division. A division between a broad gate and a narrow gate; a broad way and a narrow way. And people who are through and on that broad way and people who go through that narrow gate and are on that narrow way, the Lord doesn't assume that everyone, pretty much, is in the right category. He doesn't simply enunciate the proper way and allow people to figure it out themselves. No, with great warnings, with great entreaties, with great beckonings and calls, he applies the truths that he has spoken and he doesn't speak with smooth words. He's not interested in complimenting people and making people look nice on the outside, but keeping them rotten on the inside, instead, he exposes man's condition for what it is. Here is a physician, a surgeon, dear friend, who doesn't cloak your problem but who gives it to you in a straight-forward and honest way: the Lord Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God.

Let us focus, then, on this division. In the first place, we need to see this broad gate and this broad way on the one hand because there is a wideness that characterizes both the gate and the way. It's a broad way; a broad gate. And, dear friends, we love this broad gate and way by nature. We love the breadth of having no restrictions, of not being hemmed in. We don't want anyone, especially the Lord, to hem us in. We like to have a room to maneuver, to go our own way.

But what is this broad gate and way? Well, it's man's condition by nature. He doesn't have to choose the broad way, he's already on the broad way. He's chosen for it, we might say, in Adam, in our federal head at the very beginning. When we turned our back on God what we did is we left that narrow fellowship with God and we turned, then and there, to go the broad way that leads to destruction. As God himself said, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." By the instigation of the devil, we went through that broad gate and we went on that broad way.

And there are all sorts of people on that broad way, not just people from one denomination or even from one religion. There are many religions represented on the broad way. Many different places of worship on that broad way including many churches. In fact, we could say that the broad way runs right through churches like this and all churches. There are many who come to places like this who live out their lives simply on the broad way that leads to destruction. It's simply a stop on the way. But each one of us, as the prophet said, are like sheep who have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.

So this on the one hand, this is the broad gate and the broad way but the Lord speaks here also of another gate and way and this is the narrow gate and way. This is the gate and way that the Lord, himself, has designed and procured in his Son and he's set forth in his holy word, is the way whereby a sinner might be accepted in the presence of God. It's the

way in which a fallen child, son and daughter of Adam, may be restored back into fellowship with God. This narrow gate and narrow way wasn't the narrow gate and way of Adam because none of us could ever go through that. No, this is the narrow gate and the narrow way in the second Adam, in Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. What the Lord Jesus Christ is doing here is he's setting himself forth before his hearers and he's saying to them, "There is only one way back to God. There is only one way back into a restored relationship with God, your Creator, and that is through me, the true and living way, opened up in me in my life, in my death, in my suffering, and in my resurrection."

So, really, this gate and way, dear congregation, we could simply give it the word and label "conversion" because how is it that a soul is brought back to God and restored into fellowship with God? Isn't it through converting grace whereby God from on high stops a sinner on his path to everlasting destruction? He hems him in. He makes him to sense and to know the strictness of the requirements of God. He makes him to feel the fact that he cannot, as he is born, have fellowship with his Creator in and of himself. He needs something different. He needs a righteousness that he does not have but a righteousness that is opened up in the Scriptures in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conversion. Conversion has a beginning point and it has also a way, a continuation, and that's why Christ brings the two together. It's not so that they are a narrow gate where in the beginning of the Christian life people have to go through a difficult time but from there on out, it's smooth sailing, it's easy-going. No, it's a narrow gate and a narrow way. That means the life of conversion is like the beginning of conversion in the sense that it is gracious, it is governed by God, it is something that man cannot remain himself on. Oh, I know, we have indwelling sin, we have our nature that we will contend with, dear believers, til our very dying breath but in the meantime, through the gracious work of conversion, God is doing something in our lives, something that Christ has purchased on the cross and he's bringing us to that place where fellowship with God is not only possible but where it is realized through Jesus Christ.

The word "narrow" in the original really means "constricted" or "compressed." Does this mean then that the Lord somehow is a narrow God in the sense that many people speak about it even today that he is somehow narrow-minded? Even to accuse the Lord of that is really blasphemy, isn't it? For man cannot judge God whatsoever. Man has really no true thoughts of God. None, at least, that are uncorrupted. No, God is not a narrow God in the sense that we men accuse God of being but, nevertheless, this narrow gate and this narrow way is narrow because it costs the sinner his or her sins. It's narrow in the sense that the sinner cannot ultimately remain him or herself. It's narrow in the sense that we need to give up the control of our own life. It's narrow in the sense that we cannot take all kinds of baggage through this narrow gate and on this narrow way. It's not so that we can take all kinds of crutches through the gate that we can lean on and hobble our way, as it were, on these crutches of legal righteousness, for example, or formalistic living and think that we can come to our end and still be accepted.

No, the Lord is indeed full of compassion. He has a heart that is full of mercy and yet in order to prepare a people for that fellowship with him in heaven, he teaches a people to bow low before him. He teaches them to lose their self-righteous garments which cannot fit through the narrow gate. The Lord says it later on in Matthew 18:8, he says, "Therefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee." Even those cannot come along. Spiritually speaking, he says "cut them off and cast them from thee." Of course, the Lord here is not speaking of literally physical abuse that we need to do to ourselves. Luther tried that and he failed miserably as you know. But it may cost us friends. It will cost us friends. It will cost us the favor of the world. It will cost us our bosom sins: the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, all of which the Lord says is the world. One man put it like this, he said: we need to lose our own wisdom, otherwise our head is too high to fit through the gate. We need to lose our own righteousness, otherwise our neck is too stiff to go through the gate. We need to lose our own power, otherwise our frame is too puffed up to fit through the gate.

Dear congregation, this is what the Lord has been aiming at through the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. This is what it means to be poor in spirit. People have lost everything. Their spiritual bank accounts have gone empty and they have nothing anymore to take with them save the call of God, the command of Christ and to go upon that, the promise of God's own word and to plead that with the Lord. To lose everything from our side: our own wisdom, our own righteousness, our own redemption, our own sanctification. All of those things needs to stay at the other side of the gate.

Well, my dear friend, have you entered in through the narrow gate? Have you sensed this narrowness? This brings us to our second point because there is a serious danger that the Lord continues to speak about. Notice how he issues a warning. He warns his hearers, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat." The Lord Jesus Christ is pointing out the danger. It's simply this: to fall short of the narrow gate. Not to go through the narrow gate and not to go on the narrow way. It happens to thousands, to millions, really, in our world and it can happen in so many different ways.

Let me just take one or two of them. Think for a moment about a young man who grows up in a conservative Reformed church much like this. He hears serious preaching; he hears a discriminating message; he realizes that things cannot continue as they are. He becomes serious. He tries to cut out certain things, habits and customs, out of his life. He tries to muster a concentration within and we might say in a certain sense, that to maybe even people around him, he becomes so serious that people have a measure of hope for him. He seems almost to be going through this narrow gate. Perhaps some of his older friends, however, find him or it may be a different way, and they see him there and he's kind of living a miserable life in their eyes and they remind him of the times that they had in the past, good times. "Why are you so different? Why are you so constricted, so changed?" And kind of relieved, especially considering the difficulty he's finding himself in, he thinks to himself, "Well, at least I tried in a measure. I was serious for a while and it was too difficult. It didn't work for me, at least not now. Perhaps at some later time. Perhaps there will be another opportunity and I'll try again. Maybe when I'm older things

will be easier.” And down the broad way he goes again. Dear friends, do you hear what Christ says? “Few there be that find it.”

Think of another person. Think of a middle-aged woman, for example. She, too, has a desire to be saved. Maybe she had a godly mother or a godly father. She’s been given serious books and she finds herself becoming agitated, morose even and she reads in these books and she thinks about her mother or father and just knows that things are not the same with her as were with her parents. Perhaps she goes and sees some or other minister or a counselor and tells this person her case. There are so many, dear friends, in our world, also in churches, who when you speak about the narrow way and you speak about the demands of God and what the Lord expects, who will tell you to take it a little easier, not get too morose, not get too preoccupied, not get too anxious about these things. It can breed a kind of mental disease that you need to be very careful of and hearing this advice, this woman heaves a sigh of relief and like that young man, continues happily down the broad way.

Dear friends, do you see how this plays itself out? “Few there be that find it.” Few. The Lord is not speaking simply in terms of this world, that there are few people that find it, but in the church, it’s different. “Few there be that find it.” He was speaking largely in the Sermon on the Mount to church people. “Few there be that find it.” There are dangers along life’s way that complicate this and Christ speaks of two of them in the verses that follow our text. I just want to life them up for you because they are very relevant today as well. Look at verse 15, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” You shouldn’t just be concerned about people who are wolves, who appear as wolves, there are many of those as well, they are easier to spot. But there are false prophets, many who go around and call themselves prophets and pretend that they teach the Bible and many of them even think that they teach the Bible, many of them are self-deceived. What they would have you believe is not in accordance with this narrow gate and this narrow way which leads to everlasting life.

Christ warns his hearers to examine these false prophets by their fruits. You’ve heard of Melancthon in church history. He was a follower and disciple of Luther and a colleague of him and there was a time in his life when he wrote Luther and he said, “There are many prophets who are coming to our city and who are teaching biblical things and they get quite a hearing but something doesn’t seem quite right. How do I know,” said Melancthon, “that what they are saying is in accordance with the word of God and his truth?” Luther told him to examine them by their fruits. What did their teaching breed? Did it send people into the grave, so to speak, of dying to self and rising again unto newness of life in Jesus Christ? Or was it simply something that, yes, helped you along life’s way that seemed religious, that used even much biblical language yet in the final analysis, it bypassed the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ? He said, “You should be able to go to those people and ask them about their own spiritual life.” And he says, “If the smell of death, the burial of Jesus Christ, is not over their life,” he says, “depart from them.” “Examine their fruits,” the Lord Jesus Christ says.

“Beware of false prophets.” That’s one great danger on life’s journey. The second great danger that Christ speaks to is related to the first, it’s the danger not of false prophets only but of false peace. Notice how the Lord goes on to speak about this. “Not every one who says unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” There will be many in that last day who will think themselves to be Christians. They have the name “Lord” on their lips. They are used to calling Christ “Lord” but they don’t have the reality of the Lordship of Christ in their hearts. It reaches only to their lips and tongues but not further into their hearts. Of them, the Lord says, “I never knew you. You might be able to call me ‘Lord,’ the question is, whom do I call you? Do I know you?” Is there this union and communion with Jesus Christ in truth? Yes or no?

Dear friends, do you sense the serious danger? I wish I could tell you that today things are better than in Christ’s day but I fear the opposite is the actual fact. We have so many today in our land and nation and throughout the world who claim to be Bible teachers but when you listen carefully, how much do you hear that abases man into the dust and lifts up Christ to the highest? Be on your guard against false prophets. Be on your guard against false peace. Narrow is the gate. Narrow is the way that lead to life. The opposite is destruction. It is serious. There be but few that find it.

Do you hear, dear friends traveling to eternity, what the guide is saying to you and to me tonight? He is the guide, the one and only true guide. Listen to him. He’s heaven’s one and only teacher. He is, himself, the gate. He is, himself, the way. Oh, may you learn and may you not rest content until it is your sincere prayer, “Lord, show me thy way. Teach me thy truth. Lead me in thy righteousness. Lord, help me not to deceive myself. Help me not to listen to whatever it is that detracts from thee no matter how orthodox it seems or conservative it sounds. Lord, teach me by thy word and Holy Spirit so that clearly, I thy paths may see.”

We have seen that the Lord sets before his hearers a stark division and a serious danger and we’ll see in our third and final point a solemn decree. Dear friends, our text does not simply give us a picture, a description of the two ways. It doesn’t simply picture for us what many of us have on even the walls of our houses, a picture of these two ways as Bunyan has pictured them in his Pilgrim’s Progress. What’s before us tonight is more than a picture, it is a call, it is an exhortation, it is an edict, it is a decree from the King himself. Listen to it: “Enter ye in at the strait gate.” Christ here is not contenting himself simply with information. To whatever extent anyone here does not comply with this command of Christ, you are disobedient, my friend, to the orders of the King.

Oh, I know that some of you will say, “But I don’t have the ability in and of myself.” Or, “What if I am not elect?” Well, my dear friend, the doctrine of election is a beautiful doctrine and, indeed, the doctrine of the inability of man and depravity of man is a precious and important doctrine but do you think the Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke these words, didn’t know, didn’t believe, didn’t hold forth, didn’t reckon with these glorious doctrines? No, in the gospel he speaks to each and every one of us and he leaves each and every one of us without excuse when he says no matter who you are, no matter how unable, indeed, you are in and of yourself, his word says, “Enter ye in at the strait gate.”

Have you ever taken God's word back to himself and said, "But Lord, has thou not said, is this not thy word and is this not thy decree? Indeed, I am so entirely unable. I will never comply with thy demand and, Lord, I am living in disobedience that terrorizes me to the core. But Lord, fulfill then thine own word. Make it real. Make it true." And, my dear friend, don't just say this once and then move on and live for this world and love this world. Elsewhere Christ says very similar words. Listen to how he says it in Luke 13. He says, "Strive ye to enter in at the strait gate." Literally that word "strive" there means "agonize," that's the actual Greek word *agonizomai*, agonize.

Of course, this is not a carnal, man-centered agony or striving that we somehow put forth on our own. You know far better than that. But, dear friends, the Lord speaks this way in order that you and I would hear the seriousness and the urgency of what the Lord is saying to you and to me tonight, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Don't just give it a little; don't just try once; don't just make some attempts and then go on and say, "Well, maybe at a later time. Maybe the Lord doesn't mean it for me." Dear friends, "it is the violent," the Lord says, "who take the kingdom of heaven by force." Oh, for that wholly spiritual violence that will not let the Lord go until and unless he bless from heaven with his Holy Spirit, with grace poured out in the soul.

Dear friends, that is the key. That is the key. Anyone whom the Lord is saving, it will become a matter of life and of death. It will become something in which the Holy Spirit brings you to give it your all by his strength and by his power. You don't just hear a message and then shrug it off. No, you lay it before the Lord and you agonize before him over it and you say, "Lord, I don't find this agony and this striving as I should and yet it's a fearful thing, Lord, to miss it. Oh Lord, give this to me. Lord, don't rest. Don't rest until thou wilt give also this portion to me."

My dear friend, has it ever become a matter of life and of death to you? Think here of who is speaking this: the King himself. Has he ever said to the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain? Does he simply dangle this in front of people? No. He speaks it with all sincerity and all severity as well as something that in the day of days, if you do not comply with his call, with his royal edict, my dear friend, your guilt will be all the greater. That is what the Scripture says, "To whom much is given, much will also be required."

Dear friends, in a certain sense you could say this is important to see that these words, though uttered before Christ's going to cross of Calvary, in a certain sense you could say they have already blood dripping from them. In this sense, that Christ gave his life to the death. He agonized. He strove against all the forces of death and of darkness and of hell in order to purchase a full ransom price and in order to call weary ones everywhere to come unto him. He can say, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life." He can say it because he went into the death. He took to himself the death of sinners in order that there might be life for them in and through his dying and rising. "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. He that cometh unto me, he that followeth me, he that believeth on me, shall not die but live forevermore."

Dear friend, which way are you traveling on? Have you come through the narrow gate and are you on the narrow way? That's a question you must answer tonight in all sincerity before the Lord. He's asking this question of you through the Scriptures. Which way is it? If it is the broad way, then speak it honestly before the Lord. Don't cover it up and don't hide it. Bring it before the Lord with lamentation and if you can't lament about it, lament that you can't lament about it. But don't rest, whoever you are, until you're through the narrow gate and on the narrow way.

Perhaps someone says here tonight, "But how do I know that I am on the right path? It is a point I long to know. Oft it causes anxious thought." Those who have gone through the narrow gate and are on the narrow way are people who realize that they are lost in and of themselves. They have lost the way and paradise and they would continue lost apart from the Triune God and would be lost forevermore apart from the Father, apart from the Son, apart from that Holy Spirit. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, they have learned to plug their ears to the so-called guides of this world. Everlasting life. Everlasting life is what they need. They don't find it in themselves but they need it. "One thing I do," Paul says, "forgetting those things which are behind, I press forward towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Eternal life. Eternal life.

The people who have gone through the narrow gate, who are going through it, are people who are distrustful of all worldly counsel regarding eternal life. They don't want to hear it from worldly-wise men. They don't want to hear it from formalists. They are suspicious of hypocrisy of those people who speaks of an easier way, of a quick fix, a quick way to the kingdom of heaven. People who have come through the narrow gate and are on the narrow way are people who distrust especially themselves. They distrust their own flesh. They grieve over their own slowness on the way to life, their tendency to err from the way. It causes great grief to them, that they haven't made more progress in the Christian life. But one thing: they wouldn't trade the narrowness of the way that leads to life with the broadness that the world has to offer. Oh yes, there is something in them still that hankers after that and it bothers them and it grieves them. "I find this law in me that when I would do good, evil is present with me."

But they pity the many who are still on the broad way that leads to destruction, especially in their families, among their friends. They pray for them. They try to find a way to speak to them. "Friend, don't you realize we have to meet in eternity? I'll have to give account of you, my son, my daughter, my father, my mother, my brother, my sister, of having been in the same house. But in the great day, our paths will separate, dear friend. Doesn't the agony and terror of hell ever bother you?"

You pity people who are still on the broad way even when you wonder about it yourself, whether you are on the narrow way. You do love the fellowship with those who are the people of God. You love to have your heart explained to you even if it hurts. You come to the house of God because you want to know what are the footsteps of the flock that will make its way to the sheepfold of Christ. "Lord, which way next? Where are thy footsteps, Lord, I can't see it? Show me thy way and teach me." So you come to this

house in order to have it all made plain to you, “when in thy house of prayer all was made plain,” that makes you happiest.

The Lord has to keep you on a short leash and though it's disagreeable at one level, you know it's good. There is a surrender and there is a contentment when you come under God. When you go astray, there is a restlessness. Yes, you can go on longer than you care to admit without the close communion with the Lord, without the kisses of his lips, without the sense of his nearness but something is not right. You know it. Like David you say, “My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. Moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” Things are just not right. There is nothing better than when the Lord convicts you of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. Oh, it hurts. God's word is “sharper than a two-edged sword” that cuts. It's not pleasant to the flesh but it's for your good. You don't want it differently, really, when you're honest.

These are just some of the marks of those who have come through the narrow gate and some of the marks of those who are on the narrow way, but if it's right, my dear friend, if this is you, you're not even content. Now listen to this: you're not content with the marks, are you? If you're here listening and you say, “Well, that's good because at least a few of those I can recognize in myself and so, that gives me comfort. I guess it's well with me.” If it is well with you, you're not content with the marks of grace, you need the God of grace, the Christ of grace, and anything short of that, you're afraid. “Oh Lord, give me Christ. Give me the surety for my sins. This Mediator, his blood, his righteousness. Without it, I am nothing. Make Christ my all in all.” My friend, is this your portrait? At least in a measure and principle?

The Bible has many things to say to you. It says to you, “Pass the days of your sojourning here in fear.” Peter says it that way. You're here but a pilgrim. “Pass your time here in fear.” Be afraid of this broad way. Be afraid of deceiving yourself. Be afraid of these false prophets. Be afraid, especially, of trusting your own heart. Stay close to this guide. Stay close to this Lamb. Follow this Lamb wherever he leads. If his way is difficult, don't shrink back. His way might be through the sea and his steps through dark waters but it's better to follow him and to have his presence with you. His merciful presence, even in strife and difficulty and agony, is better than to have that false peace of the world.

In the balance of our time, let me speak to you who are still at home in this world. Unless God changes it, tomorrow you'll wake up and you'll go about your life. Yes, you've heard some sermons and you've had another Lord's day but really it's like water off a duck's back, it's in one ear and out the other. Maybe an impression, maybe a conviction, maybe even a prayer sent up heavenward but you can live so easily. Tomorrow is there and the busyness of life is there and it calls. Yes, we have our duties, don't we? We have our tasks and life is busy, especially today.

Dear friend, let me speak to you and may the Spirit, especially, speak to you: Christ says here to you who are traveling to eternity, he says to you in his word, Enter ye in at the strait gate. Notice that he doesn't say simply take a good look at the strait gate. He doesn't say here familiarize yourself with the strait gate, read books about the strait gate,

good as that is, but the Lord isn't simply saying that. There are many who have spoken about the strait gate to other people, who can describe it all so well. Who've seen it from the outside and schooled themselves about it at length but have never gone through the strait gate. Oh listen to the Lord, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." There have been countless people who have been close to the strait gate, who have heard calls to enter into the strait gate. Orpah, she was so close, wasn't she, to the Promised Land? She had followed for a time but ultimately she turned back. It was too narrow. Too hard. Too difficult. It cost too much. Judas. Judas was so close to the strait gate. He lived next to the Lord Jesus Christ, the gate himself, but never went through the strait gate. Demas lived so close to Paul but Demas never went through, as far as we know, the strait gate. Felix, he trembled in front of the strait gate but never went through the strait gate. The strait gate, dear friends, became a savior unto death for them. They heard about it. It was there. They reacted to it in a measure but in the end, they never entered in through the strait gate. "Enter ye in at the strait gate." It's not enough to hear about it.

Secondly, few there be that find this gate. May the Holy Spirit etch those three words on your soul. "Few there be that find it." Few. There are countless on the broad way that leads to destruction. Few. Isn't this worth your time, your consideration, your concern, your striving, your agonizing? To know whether or not you are on it? Few there be that find it. Perhaps someone says, "Well, if it's but few, there's no hope for me. I think of myself and all of my sins and how long I've gone on the broad way. There is no hope for me. It's just few." My dear friend, if few there be that find it, Christ is saying that and this is what you should say to yourself, "It doesn't say no one. It says few. Lord, make me one of these few. Grant me to enter through that gate. Few there be that find it. May the Lord make me willing in the day of his power. Oh Lord, if it's few, may it be me." Oh dear friends, may the Lord etch that into your soul and make you restless until you know that you, too, are one of those who have entered.

Thirdly, yes this gate is narrow, yes this gate costs you your old life. It costs you everything from your side but listen, "Enter ye in through the strait gate." This gate is narrow but the gate is open. Notice that? The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Enter ye in through the strait gate." Yes, we have closed the door to God in paradise but through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord has opened a new and living way through his Son and it is a way of grace, it is a way of blood. The veil has been rent from the top to the bottom, from heaven down to earth. Poor and needy sinners may enter this gate. Many already have gone through this gate.

The fourth thing I want to leave with you: many sinners have entered through this gate and found God's word true. Saul of Tarsus, who lived many years on the broad way, yes he lived on the right side of the broad way, on the conservative side of the broad way but the day came when Saul of Tarsus entered the strait gate. The Philippian jailor entered through the strait gate. The rich man, he went through the eye of the needle and he was saved. Dear friend, if Manasseh was saved, "Enter ye in at the strait gate."

Dear friends, yes it's open now but the day is coming when the last sinner who will enter this gate will enter it. Could it be one of us perhaps? Even tonight? And then the Lord of

the banquet will rise from the table and he will go to the door and the door will be shut forever. It was open but then it will be shut. Oh, my friend, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Don't wait to eternity when it will be shut. You can be sure of that. Don't delay. True repentance before God. Beseech the Lord that he give you true repentance unto salvation. And don't stop short of the gospel or you will do it to your own ruin. May God apply his word. Amen.

Let us pray.

O Great Guide, on the way to eternity etch thy word, we pray thee, in our hearts. Be the great after preacher. Do not leave us to ourselves especially, Lord, those who are traveling on their own account, who are on that broad way for what will it be to have thy word testify against us in that great day. O Lord, grant that there would be those who make haste for their life's sake and don't look back. In all this we ask in Jesus' name and the pardon of every sin. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.