

THE NARROW GATE



- ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE



- THE WIDE GATE AND THE EASY WAY LEAD TO DESTRUCTION

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- (Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) **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.
 - (Luke 13:24 ESV) **Strive to enter through the narrow door.** For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

I. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST COMMANDS US TO ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE.

- (Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) 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.

We must understand that if we want to be on the road to heaven then there is only one choice, and that is to obey the Lord's command to enter by the narrow gate.

But what is the narrow gate? How does a person enter by the narrow gate? And where are we going when we enter?

II. TO ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE WE MUST CORRECTLY ANSWER THREE QUESTIONS.

QUESTION #1: WHAT IS THE NARROW GATE?

- A. In the parallel text in Luke 13 we find that the narrow gate is called the narrow door.
- (Luke 13:24 ESV) Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
- B. And in John 10 Jesus clearly identifies himself as the door through which we must enter to be saved.
- (John 10:7–9 ESV) So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”
- C. So the narrow gate is Jesus—the only way to the Father.
- (John 14:6 ESV) Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

QUESTION #2: HOW DO WE ENTER BY (THROUGH) THE NARROW GATE? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

- D. Entering through the narrow gate means we believe in Jesus Christ and are saved from our sins.
- (1 John 3:23a ESV) And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.
 - (Acts 16:31 ESV) And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

- (Romans 10:9 ESV) Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- (1 Corinthians 15:1–4 ESV) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

QUESTION #3: AND WHERE ARE WE GOING WHEN WE ENTER? WHERE DOES THE NARROW ROAD TAKE US?

When believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, we enter the kingdom of God. We step through the narrow gate onto the way that leads to life and ultimately leads to heaven.

- (Matthew 7:21 ESV) Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
- (2 Timothy 4:18 ESV) The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Excursus: What is saving faith? What happens when we truly believe?

- A. True belief means turning away from what we believe and turning to believe what God says is true.
- B. “Strive to enter through the narrow door” gives us insight into true belief—saving faith.
- (Luke 13:24 ESV) Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Strive ... ἀγωνίζομαι [agōnizomai] ... means to agonize; to compete, fight, struggle; to make effort, strive to do with intensity and effort.

- C. Striving here is not about working for our salvation but fighting off what our old self believes and receiving what is true according to Scripture.
- (Ephesians 4:21–24 NIV) When you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You

were taught, with regard to your former way of life, **to put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 **and to put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

- D. Our fight is dying to our old belief system and embracing a new belief system which is based on the word of God.
- E. We win this fight as we go through the narrow gate as we **repent** (*turn away from what we believe*) and **confess** (*turn to believe God's words*).

–END EXCURSUS–

III. WE MUST HEED THE WARNINGS OF THE GATES.

We must pay very close attention to the sharp contrast the parable presents between the two gates and the two ways.

A. **WARNING #1:** The way that leads to death is easy.

- (Matthew 7:13b ESV) For the gate is wide **and the way is easy** that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

Going through the wide gate and walking along the broad way is easy but leads to the destruction of life, not the finding of life.

- (Matthew 7:13 ESV) 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.
- (John 10:10 ESV) **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy**. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

B. **WARNING #2:** The way that leads to life is hard.

- (Matthew 7:14 ESV) For the gate is narrow **and the way is hard that leads to life**, and those who find it are few.

We have established that entering through the narrow gate that leads to life is agonizing, but our text also teaches us that the way is hard and few find it. The way is hard because the fight for truth does not end until heaven.

- (Matthew 16:24 ESV) Then Jesus told his disciples, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”**

When you enter by the narrow gate, you are changed into a different person—a new creation. You are now different from your unsaved family members and the unsaved in your church who

chose to remain on the wide, easy road.

- (2 Corinthians 5:16–17 NIV) **So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view**. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**

When you enter by the narrow gate, your new purpose in life on the way to heaven is to do the will of the Father. You realize that you need the word of God to know and do the will of God.

- (Joshua 1:8a ESV) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, **but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it**.
- (Psalm 119:11 ESV) **I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you**.
- (Psalm 119:105 ESV) **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path**.
- (John 17:17 NLT) **Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth**.
- (Romans 12:2 ESV) **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Many lose the “belief battle” and lapse into the old ways of thinking and acting because they have neglected reading, meditating, studying and obeying the word of God.

C. **WARNING #3:** Beware of the external influence of preachers and teachers who act the part but who covertly deceive those seeking the path of life.

- (Matthew 7:15–20 ESV) **Beware of false prophets**, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 **You will recognize them by their fruits**. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 **Thus you will recognize them by their fruits**.

There are **many false teachers** (*see below*) who will come *from without* and *from within* the church. So we cannot overemphasize the sacred duty of elders in the church **to guard** the flock of God, **to remain alert** to the warnings of Scripture and **to expose and rebuke** false teachers by revealing

their false teaching—their fruits.

- (Titus 1:9–11 ESV) **He [an elder] must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.** 10 **For there are many** who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 **They must be silenced,** since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.
- (2 John 9–11 ESV) **Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.** Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,** 11 **for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.**

Many false teachers approach us on the grounds of common agreement and thus a common mission while in fact they are deceitful workmen and disguised messengers of Satan.

- (2 Corinthians 11:12–14 ESV) And what I am doing I will continue to do, **in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.** 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

D. WARNING #4: Many people profess to know the Lord but are self-deceived as they have chosen religious works over the narrow gate.

- (Matthew 7:21–23 ESV) Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 **And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’**
- a. Not everyone who professes Jesus as Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven.
 - b. Only those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.

- c. These people chose their way to the kingdom of heaven rather than obeying the Lord and entering by the narrow gate.
- d. Christ thoroughly and completely rejects them.
- e. He declares: I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

The battle over the word of God is a battle over the will of God. These people have lost the battle for truth and have chosen their truth and their will over God’s truth and God’s will.

- (Isaiah 29:13 NIV) The Lord says: “These people **come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.**”

WE SEE THIS IN THREE PLACES IN OUR TEXT.

First, doing **the will of the Father** is obeying the word of God. Those who do not live by the words of God do their own will and do not submit to the will of the Father.

Second, the Lord calls them **workers of lawlessness**. This is speaking of the same thing. They reject the law of God for their own standards of good and evil.

And, **third**, they choose to **hear the words of Christ, not to obey, but to use his words for their own intent** (own will) to build their lives as they see fit. They make their own rules Isaiah tells us.

E. WARNING #5 & SUMMATION: Be wise and build your spiritual house on the rock so you will be ready for the day of judgment.

- (Matthew 7:24–27 ESV) Everyone then **who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it **did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.** 26 And **everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.** 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, **and it fell, and great was the fall of it.**