

The strait gate

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Murdo Alex Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let us turn now to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7, reading at verse 13. Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that is to destruction.

And many there be which ruin there are, because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that findeth.

Amen. These verses begin our Lord's application of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

and as he applies his teaching we recognize from these words that he is emphasizing here the difficulty and the agony that is involved in what in the way he puts it entering in at the narrow or the straight gate it may be that there is a connection here and these words was the words that we come across in the passage read in Luke's gospel chapter 13 where in response to that man's question how many will be saved Jesus replies that the the question the problem is not how many will be saved the problem of the question we should address ourselves to is to make sure that we are amongst those who will be saved it isn't revealed to us or to anyone else how many come into this category what is revealed to us is that we are to strive to make sure that we belong to that number we learn then from these verses that there is difficulty associated with being saved and that it is our duty the duty of every single one of us to address ourselves at the task of obtaining this salvation with all the urgency and with all the diligence and with all the effort that it demands there is urgency required but we also learn something else from these words we learn the absolute nature of the choice that lies before us as individuals a recent writer on the seventh amount has said of these words no doubt he said we would all prefer to be given more choices than one thus eliminating the need for any choice but Jesus teaching cuts across that kind of thinking he will not allow us the comfortable solutions that we propose ourselves there is but one choice and that choice between two ways one narrow two way entrances to one narrow the other broad two ways one narrow one broad two destination one of destination one of destination one of destination one of destination one of life and the other of destruction and in that way Jesus pictures for us here very vividly the point that he is making he brings before us that were this kind of sin mankind and mankind faced with this choice and as mankind and as mankind stands at these two gates two doors there are very few who enter in through the straight one who walk along the narrow way that leads to eternal life there are a vast multitude who are standing and passing through the broad door living on the broad way and ending and ending in a life of destruction and it is that pic that I want to consider with you here tonight quite simply the picture brings before us here the straight gay the straight way that leads to life on the other

[5 : 08] the broad way the broad way that leads to destruction what then are the things that Jesus tells us first of all about this narrow gate and the entrance through it and the life that is lived as a result well in the first place he brings before us the fact that it is a narrow gate or as people tend to translate it nowadays a very narrow turnstile and it is through that turnstile that we are encouraged to go now with a bible in our hands it isn't difficult at all to understand what Jesus is bringing before us in these words he has referred to himself for example as the way the door I am the door by me of any man entering he shall go he shall be saved he shall go in and out and find pasture so we recognise immediately that he is speaking here of himself and that he is speaking of himself as a narrow way now we must start to ask ourselves in what way can you present

Jesus as being narrow well in this way but there is no other way as he tells himself there is no other way to laugh and there is no other way to God but himself I am the door I am the way I am the gate and in that way he is emphasising what you very often hear in the presentation of the gospel he is emphasising the exclusiveness of this way he himself is the one who makes that emphasis there is no other name given among men under heaven whereby we may be saved but the name of Jesus Christ there is no other way from death to life from nature to grace from sin to holiness from the brink of hell to heaven there is no other way but the Lord Jesus Christ it is narrowed because of the exclusiveness of this way and then secondly it is narrowed because entrance through this gate entrance through this door again is in only one way there are various ways in which people as it were enter in through Christ into the way of life the Bible makes that abundantly plain again it is by faith that we enter in remember the Jews at one time came to Jesus without great questions master they said what shall we do what shall we do that we may work the works of God well he says this is all that is required of you that you believe in him whom he has sent by me he said as I quoted earlier by me if any man enter in he shall be saved and again

I don't think it needs emphasis with your knowledge of the gospel that this way this entrance through this door is narrowed because it is only through faith but the point that Jesus particularly emphasizing here in connection with this thirdly is that this entrance through the narrow door is an entrance which involves real difficulty strive he says enter ye in at the straight gate and again we saw we read there in Luke 13 strive to enter in now the meaning of that word really is that we are to agonize to enter in through this straight gate and this is what introduces us to the difficulty that is involved in being saved now of course at once we have to make this point there is absolutely no difficulty from God's side all things are possible with him you remember that on one occasion he was making the same emphasis in the presence of the disciples in the connection with the rich young ruler who came with the question what good thing lack I yet what can I do to inherit eternal life and you remember that as a result of the conversation he had that young man went away very sorrowful very sad and Jesus turned to the disciples and said you know it is extremely difficult for a rich man to be saved and he began to fill in his teaching and the disciples turned to him with a sort of manner of incredulity and said who then can be saved well he said it may seem impossible with you but it is not impossible with God we know that God alone saves and he saves by the power of his grace he takes possession of a man's soul of an individual's life he lays his hand in saving grace upon that individual and there is an irresistible power in God's hand when he lays hold of an individual from

God's side there are no difficulties but from our side there are many difficulties and therefore we have to agonize to enter in through faith into eternal life where in them lies the difficulty and the problem well someone has said that it is impossible to attain eternal life without great and appalling difficulties and look at the picture that Jesus that Jesus here presents narrow turnstile a narrow way which leads to life in all its blessedness and he's making this point that it is difficult to enter in and it is difficult to keep going that we may enter into life at the end of the road where in there lies a difficulty well you think of a turnstile some of you know what a turnstile is some of you have passed through a turnstile and the thing about the turnstile is this that and this is the point that

Jesus here emphasising that you can only go through it yourself you're on your own as you go through it and whatever else you're carrying with you you can't pass through this kind of entrance with these things in other words he is emphasising this point that we pass through without any accompaniment whatsoever there are things in other words that we must leave behind us that's the point that Jesus is making here I must say that for myself that there are difficulties associated with this thought which one has to be very careful when presenting this view of salvation you see you are not to think that if for example you leave certain things behind you renounce certain things and you give up certain things that that is salvation of itself that's not the point that

[13 : 34] Jesus is making the point that he's making is this that you cannot be saved and carry with you into that life of the saved individual the things which you had with you in the other life that you lived I think that's a point that Jesus is here making and I accept full well that it isn't a point which appeals all that much to the vast majority of people today nor in any other age for that matter now this is where the problem arises that when you begin to apply this to yourself you have to recognise at once that there are many things that people have and many things that they do and many interests that they possess in a life which you would call unsaved which can be quite legitimately carried with them into the saved state many things which are quite legitimate in and of themselves but there are other things which are not there are other things which disqualify you and if you carry them on your back and you come to this turnstile and you try to squeeze through it with these things you discover that you can't do so you've got to give them up you've got to leave them behind you've got to throw off the load leave your cases there and pass through for example how many people here think that if they live a good life they will be saved salvation is not based upon your goodness not upon any works that you undertake it's not based on your prayer life it's not based on your religion it is not based on your denomination it is not based on your upbringing it is not based on your knowledge nor on your morality it isn't based on your orthodoxy or on any resolutions or decisions that you care to make yourself these things have to be laid aside and I suggest to you those of you who know anything of your own heart

I suggest to you that there is nothing in all the world more difficult than to deny yourself to renounce yourself and to renounce your standing to renounce your self centeredness and in all your naked inability and lostness to pass through this gate it is extremely difficult demands an awful lot of agony and another thing that makes it extremely difficult is this and I hinted at this already is that you have to pass through this point alone you have to pass the picture it gives us of the wide gate leading along the wide way that ends the induction is that you are not alone there are multitudes in in your company but in this instance you are alone think of the turnstile you can't go in two by two or threes or four you are going on your own alone you are going one by one and this is something else that is very difficult in salvation the thought of being isolated the thought of having to make this decision on your own to make this choice as an individual the thought that you have to leave everyone else and that you have to make this commitment a personal one you can't take your wife with you or your husband you can't take your sons or your daughters your brothers or your sisters your mother or your father you are here on this issue alone you face the fact that you yourself are a sinner that you're a healthy serving sinner that you're an unworthy sinner that you're accountable to God done before

God on your own you recognize that though with many in your family in your community in the world you have gone astray that you have led your own life that you sins are peculiar to yourself that your needs are peculiar to yourself you're alone you're going to agonize to as it were extricate yourself from the crowd make your choice and pass through and it's not easy far easier to be one of a crowd their strength in number far easier to live knowing that the people you live with are the same as yourself far easier to live not having to make this kind of choice but you can't and then your salvation it becomes extremely personal you are isolated out of the crowd and you know that has become very difficult lot of pain lot of agony in choosing to become a disciple of the

Lord Jesus Christ in renouncing yourself in parting with those with whom you must part that is with the life that they live and the associations that you have formed if you are to pass through this door well says Jesus agonize to pass through this door do you know anything of this agony in your own life do you know the problem of having to wrestle with this decision on your own you know what it is to spend days and nights perhaps months wrestling and wrestling and wrestling until at last the choice has to be made and you have to take the step but then secondly he tells us here about this narrow way some people may say well it's rather an unfortunate way of presenting the blessedness of the way of life isn't it by emphasizing time and time again its narrowness the narrowness of the entrance into it by faith in christ alone on your own but then what about the life that he offers to us in the gospel why present it as a narrow life how narrow is it well in one sense it is as narrow as the gate it isn't any broader than the gate and it isn't any narrower than the gate and if the gate is christ the way from the gate to heaven or to life everlasting is christ himself and if you want to put it that way it is as narrow as christ himself again there is no other way there is no other life but the one that he offers and the one that he is himself but if you look at it from another way can there be anything more satisfying than christ in all his blessedness and in all his glory as lord and saviour you think just now of the things that fill the life of the unbeliever the christless in the world tonight whether they know the gospel or not you think of the multitude of things that make up life for them and you compare these things with the lord jesus christ is it a comparison i suggest you it isn't it's a contrast nothing and no one is greater than the lord jesus christ but you see in this way there is no other person but himself there is no other life presented to you but the life that he offers himself and you know what makes it narrow secondly is this not only that he himself is the way but that you cannot bring your own ideas and your own thoughts and your own decisions and your own set of rules into this way it is he who provides the guidelines himself he tells us here in verse 21 not everyone 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 these are the boundaries as it were of this way the will of the father revealed to us in his own world

Jesus has just finished this tremendous sermon on the mount in which is pictured for us the character of the people who belong to this kingdom and who belong to this way the kind of life they live the things they do the things they avoid the people are with the kind of activity that they have the witness they bear and so on he has just finished picturing these people on this way and he says there is no other way and it is difficult to live the life of the believer extremely difficult because you are living it within the framework of law it is difficult to submit your own will to his it is easy it's easy in the world just to get up in the morning and to determine I'm going to do my own thing and I'm going to go my own way and I will do what I like that a lot of people think exactly the majority of people think

[24 : 33] I don't care what other people say I don't care what other people think I'll do what I think that's not the language of the disciple of Christ he submits himself to the will of his Lord the will is revealed in the word of God and what the word says that becomes his guideline and as I said that is difficult because very often God's will crosses our will God's path crosses our path and we have to agonize and strive as we bring ourselves by his grace into subjection to his will but the wonder of this way is this and the beauty of it is this that it is a new way it is a living way it is a way in which on which you have his own companionship his own friendship sustained along it by his grace upheld by his power fed by his word and know there is the agony of living this kind of life the agony of disciplining yourself to accept his claims upon you and his demands and his word nevertheless it is a life and a way that is filled with the greatest of blessings and none greater than this one that he is with you on the way himself and the third point he makes up is this there are few he said that find it few there be that find it you notice the emphasis on that word the activity that must be the life of this person he's looking for it he's looking for it you see the vast majority of people tonight don't care about the things of

God it might be true about many here tonight that you're not in the least bit concerned about finding this way perhaps when you came to church tonight you didn't come looking for this it's good that you're here and it's good that if it is your practice or your habit it is good that that is your practice that is your habit you could have far worse once because through hearing comes faith and you never know the day when it's a result of coming to God's house and hearing his word you never know the day when you yourself will see what Jesus here talking about and when you will find this way but what is the activity that is in your life concerning it is it true of you that you're looking for this is it true if you're searching for it in the secrecy of your own soul perhaps no one knows perhaps no one knows that you're praying on your own that you're going on your knees when you have the chance and asking

God for help and guidance and direction because there's something missing in your life and you're you're out of the way as it were you're lost and you maybe don't know what it is but you're looking for something and you're asking him to tell you to reveal it to you maybe you are but unfortunately there are many people who don't they don't read the Bible they don't search the scriptures as Jesus encouraged his own hearers to search the scriptures they don't look for meaning for fulfillment for lasting satisfaction in the life that they're living you see the people who enter in through this door and who are on this way are in the minority there are lots of people who think that come the day of judgment there'll be far more on Jesus side than there will be on the devil side well much as one we would like to think that there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that to us that's a matter which the

Lord hasn't revealed to any one of us but it seems by and large today if you look at it today next Sunday I believe is say this week rather is say this say census Sunday where lots of churches every church in the land is being asked to ask is being asked to answer some question how many come to church how many in the community come to church how many people who come to church that believe in Christ are professing members of the church and so on and if you look around the community which you have placed look at Stornoway tonight we speak about the attendance in the congregation in the congregation in the town ah my friend there are more people indoors than there are at church there are fewer people seeking the things of God than others what category do you belong to few there be that find finding as a result of looking looking for this way for this person and look as he as he ends this picture of the narrow road the narrow gate the narrow way that leads to life at the end of all this agony at the end of the life of faith that is lived the life of obedience to his revealed will at the end of it entrance into life in all its blessed fullness you see what makes it difficult for the

Christian here as he lives in this world as he lives a life of faith pardoned through faith in Christ with sins forgiven and sins cleansed and yet carrying with him a body of sin which pains him and annoys him he has with him every day something that wants to as I said earlier something that wants to to go his own remember what Jesus said to Peter when he revealed to Peter that when he revealed to what he said to John rather that he was going to that he was that he was going to glorify the Lord in the life of discipleship and apostleship and Peter overheard was speaking and he said to him he Jesus was saying to Peter rather that he was going to glorify his Lord in a particular way in which he was going to die he didn't indicate that way but what he said to him was this you know this Peter when you were a young man you did what you wanted yourself

[31 : 28] Peter was a very impetuous man you went your own way but the older you get another is going to direct you and he will lead you in a way that you knew not and as a matter of fact he said a flesh and blood at its own way you wouldn't go that way but this is the way he's going to lead you and this is the way it is with a Christian in the life of faith he carries with him this body of sin albeit a forgiven sinner but there comes the end of the way when sin will be left behind and sin shall be no more when he will enter into the presence of his Lord when he will serve him acceptably throughout the age of all eternity not a thing intervening or marring or interrupting his service will be one of fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore and it is the end of the way which makes very often the way itself bearable the fact as I've said of Jesus himself who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and there are many days in the life of a Christian like that when he's prepared to endure the cross put up with the shame accept all the difficulties and the agonies which are assorted with this way the best way because he knows at the end of it that he's going to receive the best of all that's a picture that Jesus paints and there are very few on that way but now finally there is another side to this page there is a broad gate and a broad way which leads to destruction and the point about the broad gate is this doesn't matter you can go in with what you like you can be what you like you can think what you like you can carry with you what you like if you want to if you want to live like that fine he said that's alright there are no restrictions there are no demands placed upon no one is disqualified from living that way if he wishes he doesn't need to leave anything behind he can be religious or religious he can believe or not believe he can choose what to believe and what not to believe it's as broad as that so is the way it is dead easy you can do what you like live as you like go for your life do what you like there's a vast company with you and as

I said earlier there is strength in number no cares what you have on your beliefs or your actions travelers along this road they follow their own inclination their love with themselves full of hypocrisy full of delusion full of false ambition most most intolerant you know the kind of language you know the approach you people in the free church and you people who belong to reformed evangelicalism you people believe the bible you people who are fundamentalists you people are so intolerant of others look at us look how tolerant we are you don't need to be a christian to go to heaven you don't need to worship Jesus you don't need to have a bible you can worship for your life because we're all going to the same place aren't we the one thing about that is this that whoever they can claim to substantiate their beliefs they can never claim that

Jesus ever said it was he who said there is no other way there is no other life there is no other salvation but these people think differently this life is not to be learned it is not to be cultivated you don't need to be disciplined to live it you don't need to resist evil you don't need to practice this or that you don't need to strive living this life comes naturally to every individual born and sin it is broad it is easy the sign puts are taken away the warning lights the bulbs are taken out the hazard signs are removed as well everything is altered because it doesn't matter who you're with or what you're doing or what you believe this road as someone has put it is geared for the traveller you people who drive cars wouldn't it be great to drive on a 6, 8, 10 lane motorway dead straight no signs no lights no hazards no roadworks no warnings just put your foot on the pedal and off you go it would appeal to you wouldn't it well that's the kind of life that you're living spiritually the destination is unimportant if someone whispers in your ear that the road you're leading that the way you're living leads to destruction you don't listen you're a spoilsport you can court you can pour scorn and many do on moral absolutes you don't need to bother about spiritual or rigid instruction either in home or in school or in church and Sunday school teaching heaven regarding heaven and hell and God and Christ well that's just what you think what about what other people think you don't need to bother about the Lord's day of

Sabbath of Sabbath that's just what you think other people don't think like that I know the vast majority don't and that's the point that Jesus here is making conversion sin deliverance from his guilt and from its power what does that matter you've got more to contend with than that you're not bothered about these things fine you're in the majority lots of people with you you're living on this broad road of which someone said deceived by the invisible Satan and dehumanized by our industrialized society man mortars on into the darkness and on to destruction there are many people on though there are times when you have to admit that you may feel quite alone all you have to do is turn to your mates to your friends and go with them tour around speak about anything and everything except

Christ and the God oh you may speak about religion yes it's possible you may even speak about the church and it's possible you may speak about some service but when it comes to the application of these things to yourselves ah you draw the line there the road becomes too narrow then you want to be with those who don't have these problems who don't have these cares who don't have these worries who are perplexed with that kind of life life is too good for you it's so broad so much to do and so many to be with yes my friend but listen to the warning of Jesus brought us the way that leads to destruction there are many with you tonight yes many with you on the road yes but bear in mind many with you going to the same place destruction destruction of what what does he mean does he mean annihilation we don't believe it does destruction of what well the destruction of everything that is good everything that is worthwhile the loss of all that is available to you tonight the loss of God and God's favour and God's fellowship and God's friendship the loss of Christ and his love and his companionship and his peace the loss of his beauty the beauty of his life and the beauty of his world the loss of the joys available to you through faith in Christ the peace that pervades the soul who trusts in him and who can say in the midst of the most trying of all circumstances

[40 : 58] God is our refuge and our strength in straits of present day the loss of all hope destruction nothing left at the end of that road but despair and self and sin the avenues through which sin is practiced tonight they've ceased they've been blocked up you can't take them with you you see the places you go to you can't take them with you leave them behind you don't you as you leave this world and enter into the next the things you do you've got to leave them behind the people you're with you can't take them with you into death maybe you see them in eternity but you won't enjoy their company because there you're nothing to speak about but the God whom you hate and the sin that pervades your life and the sin that annoys and the sin that destroys the God who is unwanted you're running away from him tonight on this broad way that you seem to be enjoying so much oh yes we know that that there is so much so called enjoyment in the life that you're living apart from Christ but at the end of it what then even as you would as I said earlier some of you perhaps prepare to talk about religion to talk about Christianity to talk about those who have been influenced savoringly by the gospel but then when it comes to yourself you draw the line there and you step back then my friend you won't be able to talk about that the opportunity to make your peace with God has gone and if being presented with the claims of Christ annoys you tonight what must be must be the despair of this life which ends in destruction life on the broad way is spent by and large in escaping from the things of God but at the end of that way and you're confronted only by God and by a God whom you hate you've reached the end of the road and the beginning of an existence which will be eternal destruction the end of this road opens out into eternal domination and eternal despair and once you reach that point there is no turning back but tonight as you drive along that road you have the opportunity to put your fruit on the bread to turn to him and to ask him to lead you in the way everlasting as you are confronted here tonight with the door again with the choice the choice that Jesus brings before you there it is the narrow door of the bread the narrow way of the bread life destruction quite simple isn't it and you're confronted with the choice the choice is you and no one else's and there has to be said to you what Joshua said of all choose ye this day whom ye will serve as for me he said in my house we will serve the Lord are you stepping in

through the narrow door or are you quite prepared to shrug the shoulders yet again and with that air of careless abandonment and indifference say to him no I won't I prefer the broad door and I prefer the broad way and I'm prepared to take the consequences of destruction at its end let us pray have mercy upon our souls and bless us with thy grace and thy peace O Lord our God that do thou lead do thou draw near to us and lay thy hand upon us in blessing and in good part of thy blessing this night and acceptable thanks for thy mercy toward us for Jesus sake Amen Amen