

The narrow way

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[0 : 00] There is a criticism that is often levelled against our own denomination, against the free church. And it is this, that it is a very narrow church.

We are narrow, it is said, in what we believe. We are narrow in what we practice. We are narrow in our opinions. And we are narrow also in our preaching.

It is a criticism that we receive from some who are connected with the same said denomination. It is a criticism that we receive from those who are outside the denomination.

It is a criticism that is levelled against us both on the local level and even by the national press. And so that we are known nationally, if not internationally, as the narrow, we free church.

But let us say this, that it is a criticism which on the whole we are very happy to accept. Because we will not wish to deny it, the basic fact that we are narrow.

[1 : 23] And we are not only narrow, but we are proud of being narrow, if we are allowed of being proud at all. Now why are we narrow?

Or why are we proud of being narrow? It is simply for this reason, that we seek to follow Christ and his truth.

And any person across the face of this globe who will seek to be true to Christ and to his revealed word of truth as we have it in the scriptures, is a person who is bound to be narrow.

Because they are limited very much in their options. They are limited in their beliefs. They are limited in their practices. They are limited in what they will profess.

Now let us perhaps qualify our acceptance of this criticism. Let us qualify our narrowness to a certain extent. By saying this, and saying it to our shame.

[2 : 28] That sometimes we are far more narrow than we should be. Because we are narrow not only by limiting ourselves to truth, but we have limited ourselves even more by the traditions which we have heaped on top of ourselves.

We have restricted our liberty of both belief and practice by trying to follow the man-made regulations and rules of tradition. And therefore, we have no right to be narrow in this respect.

Indeed, may God have pity on us if we are more narrow than Christ ever meant us to be. But may God have more pity on us still if we are not as narrow as Christ meant us to be.

Now what I want us to do this morning is to look at the narrowness of the Christian religion.

Particularly as we have it here in the setting of Luke's Gospel in chapter 13 and the part that we read there from verse 22.

The picture that is drawn for us is this. Jesus, going on his way still earnestly with his face bent towards Jerusalem to accomplish the death that he promised his disciples that he would have to go through.

[3 : 56] But as he goes on his way towards Jerusalem, he takes time to teach the people. And as he teaches the people, there is one man who out of the crowd comes up to him with a question.

Quite an important question in a way, because it concerns salvation. But in another sense, quite an irrelevant question. Because it is one of these red herrings that people will draw in.

It's a very normal question. We have it there in verse 23 of Luke chapter 13. The man's question was this. Are there few that be saved?

How many are there in God's elect? It is a question that I don't know did it bother this man. I believe it probably did. It became not just as a red herring.

The man was quite sincere. But the way that Jesus handled the man and his question showed that it was also a very speculative question. Jesus, in fact, avoids answering the question straight off as such.

[5 : 05] But what Jesus does is to concentrate this man and indeed the whole crowd with him on something that is far more important, far more relevant.

On the narrowness of the way of salvation. How broad or how narrow is the way of salvation? Now this is what I want us to spend our time considering this morning.

The narrowness of salvation. And I want us to think first of all of the narrowness of our option. Now it's not very easy for us to hold our Bible open in two places at once.

But if you remember where we read from Matthew's Gospel in chapter 7. And taking that in comparison to what we have here, the words of Jesus recorded by Luke. Jesus explains, and it is laid down more clearly by Matthew there in chapter 7.

Jesus explains that there are two paths through life. There are two paths. He said there is a wide gate and a broad way that lead on in the end of the day to destruction.

[6 : 31] The other option is this. There is a straight gate or a narrow gate that leads on to a narrow way. But at the end of the road leads to life itself in all its fullness.

Now who is it that says this? Is this something that came out of the committees of the church or from the deliberations of the General Assembly of the Free Church?

Is this something that is tight and narrowed and restricted to any one denomination? Is this the word of any ordinary man? No, it's not the free church that said it. It wasn't any church that said it.

It was Jesus, the head of the church, who said it. Jesus says there is this wide gate and a broad way leading to destruction. And there is a straight gate and a narrow way that leads to life.

And Jesus lays before every man, every woman, every child this choice, this option. And it's a very narrow option.

[7 : 34] Either we go in one gate or in the other. Either we go along one road or along the other.

But there is no middle road. You see, I think there is something that we all innately would prefer and would perhaps pretend.

That there are many more roads in life and many more choices than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would allow us to take. But Jesus narrows down our options to one road or the other.

With no third alternative. There are two ways. Jesus says there is the broad way.

So broad that it's very easy to travel on. It's like going down one of these big wide motorways.

Three lanes each way, at least. There is plenty of room in the road.

We can, it's a sort of life that we can live where we can believe what we like. We can behave as we please. And it doesn't matter. That is a broad way.

[8 : 43] And then there is the narrow way. A narrow way which is much harder. It's a sort of twisty, tortuous road. It is a road on which there doesn't seem to be much room for scope.

A road that narrows us down to this. To believing in Christ. And to be believing in his truth. And to live in our lives for him. To obey in Christ.

Neither we are going through life as it were careless. We are living as we like. Nothing bothers us.

Nothing troubles us. Life comes easy. Easy come, easy go. Or we pick the hard road through life.

The road before we have to take up our cross day by day and follow Jesus. And it's not an easy road. But these are the options. There's two ways. And Jesus said there were two gates leading on to each of these roads.

The gate leading to the broad road. Like the road itself is wide. And anybody can go through it. You can go through it as you are.

[9 : 50] You can go through it crammed with luggage and baggage and everything else. You can go through it and you need to leave nothing behind you to be able to get through. There's plenty scope. Plenty width.

Plenty elbow room. We can go in that gate and we can take with us our selfishness. We can take with us our self-righteousness.

We can take with us all the sin that is in our hearts and in our lives. And nobody's going to stop us.

We can make our way along that road quite merrily. But then there is the other gate.

The gate that leads on to the narrow way. And the AV calls it a straight gate. It just means narrow. It is a narrow gate. And in order to get on to the narrow way we must leave our sin behind us.

There is no way that we can even get on to the narrow road. If we are going to live as we please. If we are going to suit ourselves. If we are going to believe what we like. If we are going to do without Jesus Christ.

[10:57] We have to get rid of our sin. We have to get rid of our selfishness. If necessary Jesus says we may even have to say bye bye to our family and to our friends.

If we are really going to take up our cross and be a disciple of his in earnest. What is the gate? That leads to this narrow road.

That leads ultimately to life. Well Jesus tells us somewhere else. In John's gospel. He puts it this way. I am the gate. Or he says I am the door.

It's the same thing. I am the door by me if any man shall enter it in. He shall be saved. And shall go in and out. And find pasture. The only way to get into the narrow road.

Is to go by Jesus. Is to give our lives to Jesus. It is to trust in Jesus Christ as our saviour. And it is to live for him. As our Lord. He is the door himself.

[11:58] And there is no other way. Two gates. One that asks no questions. One that takes all comers. And the other one. The one that asks that we go.

By Jesus. But then Jesus also explains that in our option. When we are making our choice. When we are trying to come to a decision.

We must remember that there are two destinations. And they are different. Depending on which road we have travelled. The broad way. See Jesus.

Very plainly. Leads to destruction. What this is. We cannot understand. At least we cannot explain it.

And we cannot grasp it completely. By our finite minds. But what does it mean. That we land up. As a destroyed individual. Jesus himself is the oneness.

[12:55] Gentle Jesus. Meek and mild. Who speaks very plainly. That there is a heaven. And that there is a hell. And that there is no middle ground. That there are these two great destinations. For all the world.

And the hell that Jesus speaks of. And he speaks of it. He calls here destruction. How can we imagine it? How can we picture such a dreadful.

Frightening scene. It is this. For all that is good. All that is lovely. All that is beautiful.

For all truth. And all joy. And all peace. And all hope. Is destroyed. And abolished forever. Total destruction. Right across the scene.

Of everything that we considered worthwhile. And pleasant. And pleasurable in life. Is gone and taken from us. That's what Jesus means. By destruction.

[13:56] And Jesus made it clear elsewhere. That in seeking to save our life. We may in fact. Squander it. And in the process. We will lose our own soul.

Because this. Wide gate. And this broad way. Is really the road to suicide. For when it's a process of self destruction. There is the other option.

The only other option. That Jesus gives. Is to go in the straight gate. To follow along the narrow road. That leads to life. You see how Jesus puts it.

Life. Life. The thing that everybody really wants. To grasp. And to possess. In its fullness. Can only be found. At the end of the narrow road.

It is. Life. As Jesus speaks of it. Life. In all its fullness. Life abundant. And also. He speaks very clearly of it. As life.

[14:54] That is everlasting. Life. That is eternal. Life. That shall never be taken away from us. Now this. Is the option. That Jesus gives.

What is this life? Where we are perfected. Rather than being deteriorated. And being destroyed. Eternally. Forever and ever. There is life.

Where we become perfected. Where individuals. Who have walked. The narrow road. Who have come. And lived their lives. With Jesus. Are those who are perfected.

Physically. And mentally. And morally. And spiritually. Where they inhabit. The perfection of glory. Forever and ever.

That is at the end. Of the narrow road. Two destinations. Destruction. Or life. And Jesus says also.

[15:52] There are two crowds. Walking along the road. Into the wide gate. And along the broad road. There go many. Many which be.

Many there be. Which go in there at. This road is packed. And thronged. And busy. And swarmed. And there are crowds. Multitudes. Flocking along the broad road.

There's plenty of room for them. And that's what makes it such an easy. And such an attractive option. When the majority are going that way. I'll take my chance.

And I'll go that way too. Surely the majority cannot be wrong. But Jesus shows here quite clearly. That the majority are wrong. Then there is the other road.
On the narrow way. We look. Perhaps I couldn't even call them a crowd. Because there seem to be very few going along that road. Only a few happy band.
[16:54] A small happy band of pilgrims. That make their way towards the celestial city. And here we see the. What Jesus narrows down.
The reality of those who are really seeking and finding life. Few there be which go in there at. Few there be that find it. But this shows us the narrowness of our option.
Two roads. Only two. There are two gates. There are two destinations. There are two crowds. Which part do we go in?
Which road do we walk on? This is the narrowness of our option. You see there is no middle way. There is no other gate. For us to look and to find.
And to see if it leads somewhere else. There is no neutral group. No other crowd that we can attach ourselves to. There is no third alternative. That we can all find a happy limbo.
[17:59] Where we will be at peace and at rest. Which way will we take? You see we must decide. There is an option. A very narrow option.
Which we are struck with. And for which we must make a conscious choice. Either the broad way. That leads to destruction. Or the narrow way.
That leads to life. And Jesus speaks here also. Of what we would call the narrowness of our opportunity.
You see. You see. The choice that Jesus lays before us. Is a very real. And a very fair one. But it is one that will not last forever.
That is his point. There comes a time. When the Lord will close. That narrow door. The door of opportunity.
[18:58] And then he says. There will be many. Then once the door is closed. There will be many who will come.
And they will seek to enter in. And they will not be able. Why will they not be able? Because the good man of the house. The Lord himself has got up. And has shut to the door. They will not be able to enter.
Not because they didn't want to. But because they wanted to. Far too late. Because the day of opportunity is limited.
And it is bound to pass. Now this is what Jesus is saying. Isn't it? As Luke records it. We do not know when.
We can ask the question. Well when is the day of opportunity over? And some would say quite categorically. Categorically that it is over. When we pass away from this world.
[19:55] There is certainly no opportunity after it. But I believe that Jesus. In the way that he deals with men. By his grace in the gospel. Has even narrowed our day of opportunity.
Less than that. That we do not even have to our deathbed. To make our peace with God. That we do not even have to the day. That we shuffle off from this mortal coil.
To come to terms with our maker. And find salvation in Jesus Christ. That the day of opportunity may be over for us. Long before we ever leave this world.
Because we have despised the day of grace. And we have said no. To the spirit of God. That spirit that shall not always strive with mine.
Now we do not know. But it is one of these things where we cannot take a chance. Where we cannot take a gamble. Because when the day of opportunity passes.
[20:53] Then. Jesus says. Many will come knocking and banging on that door. They will want to get in. They will want to be Christians. They will want to have life.
They will want to share in the glory that God has for those who love him. But they came too late. And this is what Jesus is speaking about. In the narrowness of the opportunity that we have. They come knocking and banging on the door. And what do they hear from inside? The only response is this. The Lord himself says. I never knew you.
Who are you? Where are you from? They will argue. But we. We were those who sat among you. We were those who were near to the means of grace.
We were those who were part of the Christian church. We were those who heard the gospel. We were those who knew the things of God. Jesus said. I never knew you. The day of opportunity has

come.

[21 : 56] And it is over. And you see this is what makes the gospel preaching. Such a serious matter. And not just gospel preaching. But gospel listening.

Such a serious matter. You see me. You may say there is a heavy responsibility. Hanging on the man who will stand up to preach the gospel.

There is a heavier responsibility still. On those who hear it. Because we cannot toy around. With the grace of God. We cannot play fast and loose.

With the offer of salvation. That is given to us in Jesus Christ. Simply for this very reason. That that same offer. However wide it may be. Will one day end.

And be over. What makes gospel listening such a serious thing as this. That so many who hear that gospel. Will postpone.

[22 : 56] And procrastinate. Their day of salvation. It is not that they don't want to be saved. It is not that they have no desire for Christ or for God.

It is not that they don't want to be part of God's people forever. It is just that they say later. Later. Some other time. The very young will say.

Well I am far too young. Even to understand. Or be bothered with these things. The slightly older younger ones will say. Well I am still young. And I want to enjoy life as best I can.

Before I get hooked on this religion stuff. Into your twenties. And your thirties. And you are involved studying. And you are involved in building our families. And making our career in the world.

We are too busy. For the things of God and of Christ. We can be in your middle age. And so absorbed in your work. And in your family. That you have no time.

[23 : 53] To decide these important matters. Of salvation. You can say. That when you are in your fifties. Oh well I will wait. Till I get my pension. I will have time then. On my hands to think about it.

But when you become a pensioner. You will say. Oh well. I have plenty of health and strength. You will get left in my body. I will wait till I am about to die. And I will make my peace with God. And day by day.

Week by week. And year by year. Goes past. That salvation. Is not found. And then comes the day. When that day of opportunity. Is over forever. Never to be retrieved. Jesus says. That there comes a time. When that door of salvation.

Becomes slammed shut in our face. We dare not postpone. Now. The gospel says quite clear. Now is the accepted time.

[24 : 54] Now. Is the day of salvation. It is a narrow way. There is a narrow option. And there is a narrowness. In the very opportunity. That is given to us.

Can we see thirdly. The narrowness. Of our own obligation. Now here what I want us to do. Is to investigate. What is our. What we are obliged to do.

If we are to be saved. See familiarity with Christ. Won't save us. That is the first point that Jesus makes here.

In verse 26. Then those. Those who are shut out. Will begin to say. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence. And thou hast taught in our streets. And many today.

Can claim a similar sort of familiarity. That Jesus was suggesting. Was in these. The minds of these Jews here. A familiarity with Christ. We have never met him in the flesh.

[25 : 55] He has never sat amongst us in the flesh. Oh but Jesus has been near to us. So many times. In so many ways.

And we are familiar with the things of Christ. We are part of the church. We have perhaps been baptized. Baptized as children into the church. We have heard the gospel.

We have heard the gospel. Perhaps it was very powerful preaching. We know our Bibles. We know. We know Jesus teaching. We know other Christians. We are friendly with them.

We have a connection with Christ. Right across the board. But that connection by itself. Will not help us. That familiarity with Christ.

And with the things of Christ. By itself will not save us. Then we can. There are others who will suggest. That if we have a human connection with Christ.

[26 : 58] That that would help us. You see the Jews here. They were claiming this very same thing. This was the problem. This was our great agony. As we recorded in verse 28.

That there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When? When they shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And all the prophets in the kingdom of God. But they themselves were missing.

You see they claim that they had a link. That they had a family tie. That they had a national tie. With Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And all the prophets.

And they thought because they were so well in. Because they were Jewish. Because of this attachment to God's people. They were connected by blood and flesh. By that reason they should get into the kingdom of God.

And it can be the same today. Folks can be trusting that well. Grandfather or granny. They were good staunch Christians. Or mother or father.

[28 : 02] They were good church members. Or perhaps brother or sister. Husband and wife. Son or daughter. Yes we want Christians in our family. That's bound to help me.

But Jesus is bound to accept me. He's accepted some of my family. And you know people trust in this. Because they have a family tie with Christ.

Imagine that they may be saved. But it's not enough. It's not enough to be familiar with Christ. Or to be connected with Christ.

But through somebody else. Our obligation is much more narrow than that. What is it? We must have a personal relationship with Christ himself.

Now that's what Jesus is saying here. Have you come to set your trust in Jesus Christ as your saviour?

[29 : 05] Have you given your life to Jesus Christ as your Lord? Because that is what Jesus is asking. Can you say. Can you say.

I know him. You know like when you have a personal relationship with somebody. You say of that person. Well I know so and so. I know them well. I know them deeply. I know them intimately.

Can you say. I know Christ in that way. Do you have a personal relationship with Christ. Because anything less than that will not do. And it will not save us. Can we say on the other hand.

Can Jesus say. That he knows you. You see those who are shut out from the kingdom of God. When the door of salvation. And the door of opportunity is closed.

Are those to whom the Lord says. I never knew you. I had no intimacy with you. I had no personal relationship with you. Oh you may have been around when the gospel was preached.

[30 : 07] You may have been around when the Bible was being read. You may have been around when prayers were being said. You may have known Christians. You may have lived amongst them. You may have been in your family. But you didn't know me.

And I didn't know you. For that reason. You're not saved. We have to have a personal relationship with Christ. And anything less than that will not count.

Toward salvation at all. And there is perhaps the other point that Jesus makes. Most forcefully. And it is this. That if we are going to have a personal relationship with Christ.

We must strive to do so. Strive. Jesus says. To enter in the discreet gate. Don't hang around half asleep. Waiting for someday when God shall come with a thunderbolt.

And waken you up. It may never happen. It will never happen. The responsibility is utterly 100% on ourselves. To strive. To enter in at the discreet gate.

[31 : 08] And the word that the Lord uses here. Is a word that means agonize. It means to struggle. It means to make every possible effort. To enter into the kingdom of God.

To go in through that straight gate. And on to that narrow way. And find that personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Why?

Why must we strive? Simply for this reason. Because being a Christian. Or becoming a Christian. Doesn't come naturally to any of us.

It's the hardest thing. That we'll ever have to do. Is to change our camp. From following the devil. To following the Lord. To being a son of the kingdom of darkness. To being a child of the kingdom of light.

It doesn't come natural. All our inclinations. And all our prejudices. And all our biases. Are weighed up. And arranged against such a decision. And such a step.

[32 : 09] And that is why we have to apply ourselves. If we are to be saved. That is why we have to strive. To enter into the straight gate. It's not enough. To have a feeling.

It's not enough even to say. That I have a desire occasionally. Oh I wish that I was a Christian. We may have that. But that desire of itself.

Will never carry us through. Unless we put elbow grease to it. And strive. To enter into the straight gate. If we really want. To have a personal relationship with Christ.

We must be in dead earnest. We must give it all our effort. And all our attention. And nothing in all the world. Becomes any more important to us.

Than this. What does the Lord say. Of those who find him. He says. Those who hang about and wait for him. No. Those who read their Bible.

[33 : 07] Just sometimes when they feel like it. Those who come to church. Sometimes when they feel like it. Those who fall asleep. Or eat pandemics during the service. No. It's this. If we are to find the Lord.

We must seek the Lord. And not only must we seek him. But we must seek him diligently. And we must seek him with all our heart. And only when we do that. Have we the guarantee.

That we will find him. You see. Jesus. For all that he was the first. And the best Calvinist. That was ever heard. He doesn't leave our responsibility down at nil.

It's up to us. If we want to become a Christian. If we want to find that life. That is the end of the journey. Then we must.

Have a personal relationship with him. But to do that. We must give it all our effort. And strive. To enter into the street gate. That's what the narrowness.

[34 : 06] Of our obligation. Anything less than this. And anything other than this. simply will never save us. And will never find Christ. And will never find life.

Can I look just in closing. At what I call the narrowness. Of the outsider. You see. Jesus gets round. Eventually.

To answering the question that the man puts. Jesus is diplomatic enough. Not to just fob him off altogether. He gets round to answering the question. That the man had asked.

Are there few that be saved? And so Jesus says later on. After he has given his discourse. In verse 29. He says yes. They shall come.

They shall come from all the corners of the globe. They shall come from the four points of the compass. They shall come from the east. And from the west. And from the north. And from the south. And they shall sit down.

[35 : 05] In the kingdom of God. Are there few that be saved? How big is God's elect? As big as you like. Start counting.

Keep counting. Don't stop. And you haven't reached the limit of God's elect. What does John the seer see? As he sits on Patmos. A vision is given to him of the elect of God.

He describes them first of all. As 144,000. But John doesn't mean to limit it. He goes on to describe the same multitude. As a multitude which no man can number.

From every tribe. And every nation. And every kindred. And every tongue under heaven. God's elect small? No. Are there few that be saved?

No. No. But this is the agonizing thing. That you yourself. May be thrust out.

[36 : 07] It's not that hardly anybody. Goes on the narrow road. It's not that hardly anybody gets to heaven. But is this. Are you on the narrow road?

Will you get to heaven? Will you get to heaven? Will you get to heaven? The agony. I think the greatest agony.

That's in hell. The agony that Jesus speaks of here. When there shall be the weeping. And the gnashing. Why? It is for this very reason.

When you see others. In the kingdom of God. And you yourself. Missed out. Others.

Perhaps. Other people in life. That you saw. Who claimed to be Christians. And you thought. Oh well they're a bit soft. Oh they're a bit funny.

[37 : 04] Oh they're a bit daft. Oh they're a bit fanatical. Oh they're a bit far too religious for your liking. Or they're far too narrow. But these people.

Because they went to Christ. And trusted Christ. And followed Christ. They have found life. But you yourself.

Have not. You see we are narrow. But then you see the road to life is narrow.

And what we ask you is this. Not are you following the narrowness of the free church. But are you following the narrowness that Jesus makes out. Our question really is this.

It's not that speculative. Red herring sort of question. How many are saved? Is that few that are saved? How big is God's elect? Does it matter?

[38 : 05] Does it matter to you? Does it matter to me? Oh I rejoice that there's a multitude that no man can number. But does it really matter? Is that the sort of question that we should be coming to

Christ with at all? No. What is this?

Are you saved? Am I saved? Have I entered in that straight gate? Am I walking on that narrow way? Am I going with Jesus? Am I on the way to life?

That is a question. But we must ask ourselves. Are you saved? If not. Strive to enter into the straight gate.

And come to know Christ. And come to know life. Through him. Now may God himself bless his word.

His infallible word. So fallibly preached. Shall we join together in prayer? Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Our gracious Lord and God.

[39 : 03] As we stand this day under the sound of the gospel. And at that crossroads which this day of grace opens up for us. Giving us that choice and decision and option.

In the ultimate path and destiny which we shall carve out for ourselves. We ask oh Lord our God that you would give us also with your gospel. That grace to understand it.

And that grace to obey it. That we would this day be those who have entered in through the narrow gate. And on to that narrow way. That leads to the fullness of the glory of life.

That God has for those who love and follow him. We pray Lord our God that you would be with us in this day. That you would seal to our own hearts and memories and spirits.

The word that we have heard from you this day. And grant oh Lord our God that that word should capture our thoughts and our hearts. And take us to Christ.

[40 : 05] And through him to that life that is with him. Now and forever. Amen.