

The narrow way

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[0 : 00] Chapter 13, and we may read from verse 22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?

And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the straight gate. For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut through the door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us.

And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall you begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are. But depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?

Now this is a question which has been asked in every generation, in every age. I believe it is a question asked by many in our own days.

[1 : 19] The question is asked, of course, whether any at all will be saved. And of course there are others who suggest that all shall. But this man was a little bit wiser than that.

He understood that only some would be saved. And he wondered how many there would be. Now who this man was, and what his motive was, we do not know.

We can speculate. Was he a man who wasted his time on curious, speculative questions, as so many do? Did he ask out of idle curiosity?

Or was he seeking an excuse for not seeking salvation for himself? Because, you see, it may have been that, it might be that Christ gave him an answer that would suggest that very few indeed would enter in.

And so he might say, well, what's the use of my bothering? This is the spirit that so many in our day and in others day manifest when they suggest that because of the electing grace of God, they can do absolutely nothing about their own salvation.

[2 : 25] Now the sad fact is that in so saying, they indeed acknowledge a biblical truth. They acknowledge that they can do nothing to save their own souls.

Neither can we. But they don't really believe that. A person who uses the word of God in the sense that such people do, is a person who is not really convinced in his heart at all of the fact that he can do nothing to save himself.

Because when we're convinced of that, we would really cry out from the depths of our souls that God would do what we cannot do.

But whilst we remain in a state of complete unconcerned about our souls, we will use all sorts of arguments against seeking the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

Now you will notice that our Lord did not graphically. Now you will notice that our Lord did not graphify the curiosity of the questioner. But in answering the question he puts, he takes the opportunity of directing the minds of all persons to their duty.

[3 : 33] That is, the duty of striving to enter in by the straight gate. Now let us remember that this word of God to them gathered on that occasion is the same word which is addressed to us today.

No matter who we are, no matter who we are or what we are. This is what God has to say to you and to me. Strive to enter in at this great gate.

For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.

For many, we can blame. We can blame no one but ourselves. I want then to consider with you first of all today the exhortation that is given here.

Strive to enter in at this great gate. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks here, obviously, of salvation and how it is to be attained.

[5 : 12] Salvation. And how to attain salvation. And he tells us that you and I are to attain salvation by striving to enter in by this great gate.

The way of salvation is spoken of here by our Lord as a straight gate or a narrow door, which is as good a translation as any.

Strive to enter in by the narrow door. In that he uses this expression, our Lord here conceives of the kingdom of God as a great house.

entrance to which is a great house. The entrance to which is attained through a door. And he tells us this door is narrow. It is a narrow door.

And that is something we must keep in mind as we go on in life's way.

[6 : 27] The narrow entrance spoken of here by our Lord reminds us of Matthew chapter 7 verses 13 and 14, where our Lord again says, Enter by the straight gate, for wide is the gate and broad the gate that leads to destruction.

Narrow, wide is the gate and broad the gate that leads to destruction. Therefore, enter in by the narrow gate or the straight gate. Here he tells us, strive to enter in by the narrow door or the narrow gate or the straight gate.

This is the door to heaven, my friends. Heaven is there for us to receive, providing we enter in by the door.

By the door, by the proper door. What is the door that leads to heaven? Or who, rather, is the door that leads to heaven? Where our Lord says himself, I am the door.

The Lord Jesus Christ says, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. Would you be saved, my friend?

[7 : 58] How am I to be saved, you ask? By entering in by the door that is Christ. Because it is, by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.

He will lack nothing. He will lack no good things for time or eternity. Christ Jesus is the door.

There is no other way to heaven. He says, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the light. No man, no matter who he is or what he is, cometh unto the Father, but by me.

I am the door. You see, we by our sin closed up the way to fellowship with God.

When God created man, he created him in his own image, in fellowship with himself. He was perfectly happy. He lacked nothing. He knew nothing of pain.

[9 : 12] He knew nothing of sorrow. He knew nothing of these lusts and desires that are yours and mine on account of sin. He knew nothing of dissatisfaction. He knew nothing of striving and seeking this and that and the other thing.

He knew nothing of the disharmony that's in your life, in your heart, in your soul, the emptiness that is there. He knew nothing of the bitterness that is in your life.

And you blame everybody for it but yourself. He knew nothing of that. He was perfectly content, perfectly happy. In perfect fellowship with God.

But man lost that through sin. And we know that. We all know this. The Bible tells us so that even were we not to be told in Scripture that this is so, we know by our own lives that things are not right within ourselves and that things are not right between us and God.

We have no direct access to God as we are by nature. We find God a strange being to us. We can try to imagine what he's like and so on but we don't really know him.

[10 : 24] Must we remain that ignorant of God? Discontented, unhappy, know nothing of true joy? Of course not. Of course not. Why? Because the Lord Jesus Christ has opened up the way for us to God.

He, by his death on the cross, has given us open access into God's presence. I am the door, he says, into the presence of God, into the fellowship with God.

There is no other way. I am the way. There is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved but the Lord Jesus Christ.

He laid down his life for us on the cross and has opened the way to heaven for us. Remember how that was so brilliantly illustrated in the rending of the veil.

The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. Signified that the way into the holiest of all was now open. That the way into God's presence was now open.

[11 : 30] Why was it open? How had it been open? It was by the death of Christ on the cross. The way is now open for sinners such as you and me. Into heaven, into God's presence.

Now this way, in one sense, is very, very wide. It is as wide as God's love.

And who can measure that? Who can measure the height, the depth, the breadth, the length of the love of God?

No one can. Well, so wide is this way, in one sense. Oh, don't let us narrow down the love of God to sinners such as us.

No finite mind can ever understand the greatness, the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of this love of God.

[12 : 39] As it is manifested in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. But it is also a narrow way. Now it isn't man who says that.

It isn't me. It isn't any man. It is Christ himself who is the way. Who says this. That this is a narrow way. Our Lord tells us here that the way to heaven is a narrow way.

Now people will tell you otherwise. Don't listen to them. They're not wiser than the Lord. He says it is a narrow way. In what sense is this a narrow way?

Well, it is a narrow way to everyone who loves sin. And who goes on in sin. Who prepares sin to the Lord. It is a narrow way to anyone who prefers the world and the fellowship of the world to the Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a narrow way to people who trust in themselves and in their own righteousness. Their own good deeds. As a means whereby they will get to heaven.

[13 : 50] You know how it is. Some people believe that if they are good, that will make them heirs of heaven. Do good and you will get to heaven. The Bible doesn't teach that.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. He is the door to heaven. There's no other way. You can try as you may.

But he alone is the way to heaven. He alone is the door. And this is a narrow door. In the sense that if we love sin or the world or whatever, we cannot get in.

It is a narrow door to all who refuse to forsake all and follow Christ. Who refuse to forsake all the friendship of the world. The love of self.

The preferring of anything or anyone to Christ. The preferring of religious ceremony to Christ.

[14 : 52] We can do that. We can think provided we go through the motion of being religious. Of being this and being that. That that is good enough. It's not. We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll get to heaven only through Christ. We must trust. We might even trust in our prayers. In our uprightness. In our morality.

In our goodness. All these things are man made. They're man centred. It's got you and me at the centre of it. And wherever that is.

Well there's no easy way for us. It is a narrow way. Because all that what's happening is this. We're carrying all these things like a great big pack upon our backs.

And so we can't squeeze in as it were. Because of the burden we're carrying. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

[15 : 51] You see. Get rid of this burden. Get rid of this pack if you like. That is coming between you and heaven. Be rid of it. Once and for all. And enter into life.

Into newness of life. Into full life. As it is in Jesus Christ. He is the only door.

Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus. Now you will notice. That the exhortation here is to strive. To enter in. By this door.

By this gate. Now the word. Translated strive. Can be translated struggle. Perhaps it's nearer the original.

The word struggle. Strife. Struggle to enter in. Struggle to gain access. Through this narrow door. Now.

[16 : 54] You will notice that. This. Involves effort. And the effort. That we are to. That we are to.

To use. To engage in. Is not. To. In order to enable us. To push open the door.

Some people make that mistake. It isn't that by our effort. We are going to. Do something. That is going to gain heaven for us. As it were.

We are not asked to. Put much effort into. Opening the door for ourselves. Not at all. Because the door is already open. But we are to.

Put effort into this matter. In the sense that. We are not to allow anything. To deter us. From entering. The door. While it's open. Let nothing come between you.

[17 : 51] And entering into life. As it is in Jesus Christ. Whilst the door is open. Because it is to be shut. And locked. After a time. Now that is the message. Christ is teaching his own people. Two thousand years ago.

And it is the message he would have us learn today. That this door is open. And all we have to do is enter in. But we have to strive to enter in.

We have to put effort into this. We can't just sit back. And do nothing about it. I fear. I fear my friends. That so many of our own numbers. Know the truth.

Intellectually. Understand the gospel intellectually. And sit back and do nothing about it. And I fear that many of us will die in our sins.

Because of that. Strive to enter in. We must be diligent. If we are to be saved. We must repent. If we are to enter into the kingdom of God.

[18 : 48] And that involves labor and effort. We have this narrow door. And that stands low. Low and narrow.

And what must you and I do? You and I must bend low. We must be made utterly small. As someone has said. If we are to enter in.

This is what is keeping so many out of the kingdom of God. They are too proud. Self-centered. Self-righteous. Self-righteous. Is that why you are not a Christian?

Is it not because you are too proud to humble yourself? To acknowledge that you are nothing? I am convinced that many go to a lost eternity because of this.

They are too proud. They were not then low enough. To get into the kingdom of God. They were not as it were. Make themselves small enough. To enter in this narrow gate.

[19 : 51] We think far too much of ourselves. Far too much of ourselves. We must decrease.

Friend. Are you willing to deny yourself? To take up your cross? And follow Christ? Are you willing to acknowledge that you are nothing and no one?

Indeed that you are a sinner lost. Undone. And fit for the kingdom of God. And that your only hope is in the mercy of God. In this person who is the door into heaven.

Even Jesus Christ. Someone else has put it this way. We must be disrobed. Of all our own righteousness. If we are to enter in. This self-righteousness.

This robe of self-righteousness that we have. Even that is too much. That bit too much. Which is holding us back. From squeezing into the kingdom of God. Disrobe yourself of it.

[20 : 50] Get rid of it. Whatever it is. Strive to enter in. Struggle. Agonize. To get into the kingdom of God. We are to exert ourselves to the utmost.

How? By true repentance. That is how we enter into the kingdom of God. No one has ever entered otherwise. Repent and believe the gospel.

Turn from your sins. And believe the gospel. There is no such thing as a living faith without repentance. And there is no such thing as repentance through repentance without a living faith.

I am not talking of remorse just now. You and I can have remorse. We can feel so sorry for ourselves. Because of what we are. And what we have done. And what we have said. And what we have been. We can feel ashamed even as we meet people in public.

Because of what we are. Now that's a step in the right direction. But it's not salvation. It's not repentance.

[21 : 55] We should feel ashamed in the presence of God for what we are. We should see sin as that which is against God. And against ourselves secondly. And then against people.

If you and I are created by God for the glory of God. We are responsible to that God. And this is what we must do.

Turn from sin as that which is offensive to God. And that which closes heaven against us. Repent of it. Flee from it as the plague that it is. Oh you'll never be rid of it.

It'll be in your heart till the day you die. But flee from the very appearance of evil. Turn to God in prayer. In crying out to him for mercy. Turn to him in confession of your sin.

Repent of your sin. Exert yourself in this way. And someone argues. Doesn't this contradict the doctrine that man is spiritually dead.

[22 : 53] And cannot therefore struggle. No. No my friends. Man by nature will never struggle or strive to enter the kingdom of God. That's no.

No man by nature will ever do that. And it is foolish for people to believe otherwise. There are many in our day believe that man can of himself struggle to enter into the kingdom of God.

But scripture makes it very clear that he cannot. And if you have ever tried in your own strength to repent and to struggle. You have failed. And you know that. This struggling is the result of the law and the gospel's work as applied by God the Holy Spirit to the soul.

And the word of God applied by the Holy Spirit brings those who are called to struggle and to strive. Have you heard the call of God? Do you know yourself as a sinner today?

Do you know yourself as a sinner today? Do you know yourself as a sinner today? Ah yes you do. You feel yourself so undone. So unfit. You feel yourself so filthy within yourself. You feel yourself as one who is an outcast.

[24 : 02] Ah but blessed be God you are this kind of person God has mercy on. Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous. But sinners to repentance.

Isn't that wonderful? We've just been talking about repentance. Jesus Christ came to call sinners to repentance. He came to call you and me. To draw us to himself.

Man cannot move and save himself by his own powers. But the gospel can. And the gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. And of course this striving and struggling includes a proper use of means.

You know how it is a person who is struggling to enter a place. Will use means if they are at his disposal. The burglar for example will use his own tools. To break into your house if he possibly can.

He has means whereby he can get in. And if he doesn't have them of himself he will look around him to see if he can find something. That will enable him to get in. Now God has put means at your disposal and my disposal.

[25 : 07] They are there for us. Whereby we can enter into the kingdom of God. Use them my friend. Whilst the door of mercy is open. Whilst Christ is still saying I am the door.

By me if any man enter in. All that we would enter in. Whilst it is day. Whilst the door of mercy is open. And use the means he has given us to enter in.

Whereby we can enter in. The word of God. Read your Bible my friend. Pray over it. Pray for your own soul. Pray until God answers you.

There is the preaching of the word. Never deny yourself the privilege. Of hearing God's word preached. Providing it God's word that is being preached.

There is the fellowship of God's people. Oh they are not perfect. They have their faults. But they are the Lord's. The Lord is with them.

[26 : 06] The Lord is in them. And you will find good for your soul. Come thou with us and we will do you good. Said one of old. How can we do anyone good.

Not of ourselves. By the grace of God we can. And you can have fellowship with his people. And learn of God. But I want to consider with you.

Just a word or two secondly. On the warning that is given here. He says strive to enter in. Strive to enter in. Struggle to enter in.

For money he says. Many I say unto you will seek to enter in. And shall not be able. The whole idea is.

Of course. That unless we get into the kingdom of God. While we may. We shall be barred out forever. Do not wait until it is too late.

[27 : 11] That is what the Lord had to say in his own day. To those who were under his own ministry. Now you will notice that our Lord doesn't say here that many will be struggling and will fail to enter in.

Nor does he say. That many shall struggle in the wrong way and fail to enter in.

Oh no. He speaks of many here. But not one of the many is striving.

Not one of the many is struggling to enter into the kingdom of God. What he says is. That they will but seek to enter in. There's a difference between seeking and striving therefore.

I'm not saying that. The Lord says it. These people have never struggled. They have never striven.

[28 : 13] They don't do that. They turn a deaf ear indeed to Jesus. Why? Because they don't like the narrow door.

They don't like the idea of the narrow way. They don't like the idea of entrance into the kingdom of God by repentance and faith. So when it is too late they wake up.

And then they seek to enter in and they cannot. It's too late. Why? Because the door is shut. That's what our Lord teaches. The door is shut. They will not strive to enter in.

You see what happens is this. That even repentance itself will not be possible. Why? Because the work of the word will then be ceased for them.

It will be over and done with. There will be no more opportunity. The door will be closed. Once and for all.

[29 : 18] Now that will happen. We know. On the last day. When Christ shall gather his own into his kingdom. That day the door will be closed.

But it closes also when the patience and long suffering of God has come to an end. For any one individual. Now that can happen.

It can happen. This shutting of the door. This shutting of the door. That happens in the experience of individuals. Belongs to the secret counsel of God.

It belongs to his inscrutable judgment upon the unbelief. And the opposition of men to him. God justly closes the door.

My spirit will not always strive with man. And I believe in the light of God's word. That there comes a time. In the history of individual men and women.

[30 : 21] When that takes place. And that's a serious thought. When we think of the fact that in his infinite mercy and love.

Day after day. Year after year. Decade after decade. His mercy and love in the gospel has come to us.

But his patience and long suffering. Comes to an end. And he closes the door. You will notice here how Jesus in his usual masterly.

Turns from the third person to the second. He speaks of many. That shall seek to enter in. And then he says. And ye begin to stand without.

In verse 25. He's been speaking of many. He's talking in general. And then he turns the whole thing. And ye. He says.

[31 : 25] Begin to stand without. And knock at the door. Saying Lord, Lord. Open unto us. Lord open you shall see.

And he cannot. No matter how much they try. To enter in. And cry out. That the Lord will open. The Lord cannot open the door. Why?

Because the judgment has been executed. It cannot be reversed. The door is closed. Never to be opened. The opportunities are gone. Once and for all. Those.

Who scorned the open door. Narrow as it was. Cannot. Shall not enter the closed door. It cannot be. And notice the answer that the Lord gives to those who cry thus.

I know. Not whence you are. I don't know you. Where have you been all this time? He says. You never came to the door before.

[32 : 27] You never came to make yourselves known. Through the open door. You never came into the light. You know how it is. The light that is inside shines through the door.

On the person who is standing at the door. Oh no. Because you have loved darkness rather than light. You have never come to into the light. Never come to the door.

You wouldn't have it. Had you come I would have welcomed you. But you had better things to do you thought. There were other attractions. Which you preferred to me.

And you never came. How can I. The master of the house. Know you. When you never came to the open door. And how can I know you through a closed door anyway.

I believe that's in the message here. You can't see a person through a closed door. You can't know a person. I've never known you.

[33 : 27] Then shall you begin to say. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence. And I was taught in our streets. Now this applies to the Jews in particular. But it applies to us just as much as to the Jews. I'm not saying that Christ has passionately preached here.

But by his spirit through his servants over the decades. He has. And it may be that someone here at Three Dots.

Will one day. At the judgment seat of Christ. Argue. As those spoken of here. Our Lord tells us will do. Saying.

You. After all. Have been among us. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence. And thou hast taught in our streets.

Now you will notice. That it was in thy presence. That they argued. That he ate and drank.
[34 : 31] They ate and drank. It wasn't in fellowship with thee. And that is the difference between the Christian and the un-Christian. Ultimately. The Christian is one who has eaten and drunk. In fellowship with the Lord. Not just in his presence. But in fellowship with him. They knew nothing of that. They couldn't argue that way. And they have said also. That he taught in their streets. They didn't once they. Now they did teach us. Because they weren't ready to come to be taught by him. His answer to them was. I tell you. I know you not whence you are. Depart from me ye workers of iniquity. And you know that as they speak. They unwittingly come into condemnation themselves. What they are asking is. That the righteous God. Act unrighteously. Break his own word. By reopening the door. He said he would close forever.
[35 : 29] And that God cannot do. But this illustrates the state of mind. Of those people who thus came seeking at the end. And found no entrance. The Christian is so different to that. The believer. The one who has entered in by the door. Is one who would never question. The justice. The righteousness. The righteousness. Of Christ. They would never ask him to undo anything he ever did. Because they know. He is righteous. They know he is true. They know he is just. But above all they know he is merciful. Friend. The door is open. Strive to enter in. The time is short. Shorter than we know. Today is the day of salvation. Our Lord took the opportunity then to say. To those present. Strive to enter in by the straight gate. By the narrow door. The Lord in his infinite mercy today speaks to us.
[36 : 30] In the same voice. With the same words. Strive to enter in. Allow no one. Allow nothing. To come between you. And heaven. And the way is Christ. May he bless his word to us. Let us pray. We beseech thee to bless thy word to us this day. And our meeting together. And as we part one from another. We pray that thou will take care of us. Keep us. And watch over us. Above all give us the grace to strive to enter in. To strive to be found in Christ. Not having our own righteousness. That is of the law. All that we would use every moment. Every opportunity. Profitably. And that we would know the reality. Of entering into life. As it is in Jesus. Bless us as we part one from another now. For Jesus sake. Amen.