

# 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 Donald Lamont

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Will you turn with me now for a little time as we meditate together in a portion we have read from God's Word, Matthew's Gospel in the 7th chapter, and in particular taking the words at the beginning of verse 13, Enter ye in at the straight gate. What we know, my friends, as the Sermon on the Mount, the discourse contained in the 5th, the 6th, and the 7th chapter of this Gospel, comes into a very distinct category of its own.

It is different from many of the Saviour's other discourses which were of a general nature and were addressed to a mixed audience of people.

This discourse which we have here, the Sermon on the Mount, like the one we have in John 14, 15, and 16, was addressed to a select company of his own immediate followers.

You will remember that at the beginning of chapter 5, we read that he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them.

So the Sermon on the Mount was delivered directly to the followers of Christ himself.

[ 1 : 3 7 ] And we cannot begin to understand the Sermon on the Mount until we realize that it is spoken to believing people.

The very first part of the 5th chapter would make this very clear indeed. These things that are referred to in the 5th chapter, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

These beatitudes, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. All these things refer to a people who have been changed by the grace of God and who know the grace of God in their hearts.

It is to them that he is speaking. It is them that he is addressing in the Sermon on the Mount in general. I think we have to keep this before our minds when we are seeking to meditate in it.

There is a sense then in which what our Lord is doing here is calling on his followers to exert themselves in a life of godliness and in a life of usefulness.

[ 2 : 5 3 ] They are to examine themselves and they are to scrutinize themselves lest unwittingly they be cumberers of the soil. There are gold trees as we know and there are corrupt trees in every orchard, fruit bearing ones and barn ones.

And it is the same among the professors of religion and so there arises a necessity of self-scrutiny from time to time by the professing people of God.

In the words of old text he exhorts his followers to strive in living a life that would be meaningful and that would be profitable. Strive to enter in at the straight gate.

And he distinguishes the direction in which this is to be done. They are to enter the narrow or the straight gate because if you do not there is real danger that you will be found in the broadway.

The Sermon Lord cautions against the broadway first of all. And generally speaking we know of course that the broadway may not necessarily be the unregenerate way.

[ 4 : 15 ] In a particular sense of course it is. What characterizes the broadway is rebellion in the life of any man.

Now rebellion is the order when a man's basic state remains unchanged. When he is unregenerate. That is of course very true. When he is still an alien to the things of God.

When he is a far off an enemy in his mind by wicked work. This lies at the very heart of man's fallen nature. He is far off from God.

He is an alien by wicked works. By nature he is empty the things that belong to God. His life is contrary to the ways of God.

Every conceivable problem in human life and living. It must be traced to this point. In man standing with regard to God. And so this rebelliousness has to be seen of course from this angle.

[ 5 : 21 ] From this particular point of view. This broadway. It is the way of rebelliousness. And rebelliousness is what characterizes the unregenerate man.

But I don't want to leave it there. Remember that rebellion also is the order when a man's profession is in word only.

And such people are just as surely on the broad way. As those who are the bitterest foes and the bitterest enemies of the gospel of God's grace.

You see what our Lord says in this very context itself. Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord. Shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Verse 21. And that there are tragically many who come into this category is evident from what our Lord says in verse 22.

Many will say to me in that day. Lord, Lord. Have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils. And in thy name have done many wonderful things.

[ 6 : 27 ] We profess thee. We follow thee openly. In a case of this nature, the profession is obviously void of any substance whatever.

That is, it is void of the grace of God. And while no man can infallibly know another man by observation. Or what is in the heart of another man.

Yet God knows and this should make every professing believer hypersensitive. With regard to what he himself is before God and before heaven.

He should at regular intervals set him on a course of closest self-examination. And cause him in the course of that self-examination to pray.

Search me, O Lord, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. That man who may well be professing.

[ 7 : 36 ] Is professing and professing in word only. Is as surely rebellious as the unregenerate man. And rebelliousness too.

Is the case. When a man's actions. Are self-orientated. And such a person is represented to us. I think in. The case of.

The foolish man. To whom our Lord makes reference. In this chapter. We have read together. The foolish man who. Erected his house. On the sand. Without a foundation. Notice what a particular sin of this man was.

In the building of his house. His particular sin. Was not. That he. Built a house. Or that he built it. On an unstable foundation. His particular sin was.

That he. Disobeyed. He disregarded. If you like. The architect. Who alone can. Tell us. How to build. A house.

[ 8 : 40 ] Every one. That heareth. These sayings of mine. And doeth them not. Shall be likened. Unto a foolish man. That built his house. Upon the sand.

Verse 26. You see. Our Lord. Supposed us that this imaginary man. Knew very well. What he was doing. He imagined that he knew very much better.

Than the architect. And who drew up the design. And who. In his old word. Set down that design. As to how every house should be built.

Who gave minute instructions. To the children of men. As to how they were. To build. And to erect. Their house. He could.

This foolish man felt. That he could. Build himself. Much more cheaply perhaps. Than the way. In which the architect. Had set forth.

[ 9 : 37 ] And there are such people. Surely within. And without the church. In this tragic. State of life. They are simply. They will simply. Not have.

This man. To reign over them. This word. To be their guide. They will not accept the fact. That the word of God. Which is contained. In the scriptures. Of the old and new testament. Is the only rule.

To direct us. Whereby. We may build. For eternity. Whereby we may. Glorify. And enjoy him. And so in a general sense.

There. Is a cause. Not only. For. This general.

this danger of being in the broad way unwittingly but then he makes reference to the straight way or the narrow way the straight gate or the narrow way and as a broad way is distinguished here in scripture by disobedience of heart and disobedience of life that went very clearly the narrow way is distinguished by the opposite by the opposite of this by obedience and such obedience finds expression as Jesus says in hearing and doing his things in those two different ways in hearing and in doing what he is saying therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them I will liken him to a wise man so he is the wise man who hears and who does of what Jesus says and I didn't emphasize that this is an ongoing activity in Christian experience it has to be this is not a one-off matter hearing and doing and being saved and that is the end of it hearing and doing the will of Christ is something in the nature of things that is ongoing in Christian experience and in the Christian life and I believe this is the emphasis that our Lord would have us understand in this sermon on the mount first there is hearing who's therefore whoever hears these things of mine what is it to hear the sayings of Jesus or if you like to hear the teachings of Jesus from his own word because if we are to hear what Jesus is saying there is no other place we can go to but the inscripturated word there is obviously a distinction between listening and hearing you remember that many of our Lord's contemporaries listen to him but that in that was good in so far as it went but yet did not regard they listen but did not hear hearing then supposes an unquestioned acceptance of the infallible record of Jesus in his word even when parts of that word are shrouded in darkness and certain aspects of it are hard to understand and harder to interpret when a man is in a mood to quarrel with what the Bible says and what the Bible teaches then he is clearly indicating that his quarrel is not with words as such but with the author of these words and with the wisdom that lies behind these words. For these people refer to in John 6 as they listened to Jesus preaching and teaching turned round and said this is a hard saying who can hear it they were indicating their attitude to himself and they at length gave a demonstration of that attitude when many of them went back and walked no more with them.

[ 14 : 06 ] It was against himself that they were rebelling it was he whom they were rejecting not just a written word but his own authority whereas the opposite attitude is expressed you remember in Peter's word in that chapter 6 Lord to whom shall we go but unto thee thou hast the words of eternal life what thou dost speak we accept because we accept thine own authority we hear what thou art saying and so hearing his word it supposes an unquestioned acceptance of his own authority and the infallible record he has said before us but hearing also it supposes a calm belief in the inerrancy of what he is saying the inerrancy of his word and this is not a some would suppose an irrational and anti-intellectual stance to adopt but stems from a man's attitude to God himself to

Christ himself and his standing to him. If we truly believe that he has the whole world in his hand that he is purposing whatsoever comes to pass that he has his finger on the pulse of men and on the pulse of nations then we shall have no difficulty at all in believing that he has given to men an inerrant transcript of his own mind which they can accept heartily and which they can follow. You see failure to accept this is failure to believe himself. He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. There is hearing he that heareth my words but there is also doing whosoever heareth these things of mine and doeth them I will liken him to a wise man. Now you ask what is it to do the sayings of Jesus or the teachings of the divine word for their one? It is obviously something more than activity.

Yes it is something more than activity for we find a certain form of activity denounced and condemned in this very context. So it must be more than activity this doing of the word of Christ. He says here in verse 15 beware of false prophets and the false prophets were very assiduous in what they were doing.

They blistered themselves on all counts in doing many things. Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Verse 21. Well I think the very first aspect of doing is this. It is believing. That is the very first aspect of doing the will of Christ. Believing.

If I can refer again to the sixth chapter of John's Gospel and at verse 28 after Jesus had been exhorting his healers to labor not for the meat which perisheth but for the meat which endureth and to life everlasting. You remember in that context they went on to ask him a question. What might we work?

[ 17 : 47 ] What work they might do that they might work the works of God? They were anxious to know what they could actually do so that they could work the works of God. That they could literally do something in order if you like to justify themselves and obtain the approbation of God. But so as to that in replying to them Jesus told them very clearly this is the work of God. What? That you believe on him whom he has sent.

This I say is the first aspect of doing the will of Christ. It is to believe on him whom he has sent.

And it doesn't matter what we have by way of works or activities. If we do not believe on him whom he has sent. If our trust is not upon Christ and him alone then it matters not one iota even if we give our bodies to be burnt.

Because we are not right with God we are not doing the will of God or the will of Christ. There can be no subsequent doing in any man's life unless that doing is grounded in a faith that is resting fully and completely upon the glorious person the savior of sinners.

That is the doing that has to be ongoing in the Christian life. Not only at his commencement but throughout the believing life. There is a doing whosoever heareth these things to man and doeth them. There is this aspect of doing believing.

[ 19 : 38 ] And the other aspect of doing the will of Christ is clearly submitting. That is submitting to the lordship and submitting to the kingship of the one whom we have received and on whom we have rested our souls for eternity.

Submitting to his will and to his pleasure. This of course implies and supposes that we are wedded to his saints just as we are wedded to himself. That we are cleavers to the teachings of his word.

So, Christ, you remember, Christ, you remember, says our catechism, Christ exercises the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

He exercises the office of his and our enemies. He exercises the office of our king. And we exercise ourselves as his subject in constantly submitting to the lordship and to the kingship of our saviour in everything.

It is our posture, in this respect, at least, to be passive at his footstool, recognizing his kingship over us in everything.

[ 21 : 03 ]    Saying, if you like, with Paul, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Because I recognize thee as my king and as my lord.

The narrow way. This is the narrow way that Jesus would point out to us and bring before us in this great sermon on the mount.

The third thing I want to underline and underscore is simply the exhortation. And here it is. Enter at the straight gate.

Enter at the straight gate. On another occasion and under different circumstances, in Luke chapter 13, he said, Strive to enter in at the straight gate or at the narrow gate.

Well, that is what the word straight, this old English word straight means. And this, of course, calls on the part of every believing soul. It calls for effort and it calls for determination and it calls for industry.

[ 22 : 09 ]    Passivity. Passivity there must be when we submit to the kingship of Jesus Christ and acknowledge him as Lord over our lives. But passivity is the total negation of the Christian way and of Christian living.

There can be no and there must be no passivity in so far as the Christian lives his life before God and before men in the world.

It is the contradiction of the teachings of the divine word and the teachings of our Lord himself to support, to imagine that there can be no and the same. It's the place in so far as the king. That there can be such passiveness in the way that we live our lives.

And so when Jesus exalts, enter. Enter the straight gate. He is calling upon the Christian believer to exercise himself.

He is truly saying this for one thing. Be an earnest and diligent seeker. if indeed a man is truly seeking to come to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ then this exhortation very truly comes to him and ought to come to him with authority and with power enter be in absolute earnest and be diligent in entering the narrow way for be an earnest and persevering seeker implies and supposes that a man has indeed come to himself but he has come to know his need but he has come to recognise that he is in a broad way and wants out of it into the straight way or the narrow way which Christ sets before him you remember the account we have of Philip in Acts chapter 8 in a desert drawing near to the Ethiopian eunuch who was going back to his own country reading the prophecies of Isaiah and indicating from his reading that he was a fervent seeker after God a man who was seeking to enter the straight gate and the eunuch's question and Philip's response is a clear indication of this of whom speaketh a prophet based of himself or of some other man and then Philip opened his mouth and began the same scripture and preached unto him

[ 24 : 40 ] Jesus and the subsequent happenings on that occasion would give us to believe that he truly entered the straight gate the narrow way that leads to life and so certainly the exhortation of our Lord here to enter the straight gate he is saying be in earnest and be a diligent seeker after the things of God but I believe he is saying more he is also saying be an intelligent and a discerning follower in all your ways in whatever you are doing be an intelligent and discerning Christian in relation to the things of God and the things of Christ in Acts chapter 17 we read these marvelous words with regard you remember to the Bereans that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so they weren't prepared to accept any man's word even the word of an apostle and so they diligently and intelligently subjected scrutinized these things which were spoken to them they brought what was spoken to them to the scrutiny of the divine oracles they brought the apostolic preaching to the touchstone of scripture itself and this shows a most marvelous attitude to the word of God and also a most wonderfully healthy approach to the things concerning their own eternal destiny every matter was being judged by the straight and narrow confines of which the divine word prescribed and of course this is in accordance with our Lord's own injunction in Matthew chapter 4 take heed how you hear the preacher is not your authority the word is no apostle if there were apostles living today would be your authority the word will have to be your authority and mine and so enter into the straight gate in this way by an intelligent and being a discerning follower of the things of God

I think he's also saying this and that is be a resolute and industrious believer immediately after this the Lord proceeds to remember to speak of truthfulness implying and supposing that this is what he is looking for and what in fact entering in at the straight gate will produce we already made reference to the fact that entering at a straight gate is distinguished by obedience and we saw some of the distinct ways in which such an obedience must necessarily express itself namely in hearing and in doing obedience embraces the mind it embraces the will it embraces the heart it embraces the whole life it leaves out no part of a man's personality this is a doing and an industry that is inseparable from the faith that saves for us

James the apostle says faith without works is dead it is alone it is fruitless and he concludes the whole matter by asserting for us the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also and thus Jesus in effect he says be resolute and be industrious as my follower as one who is following me one who is professing to love me and to serve me he is a resolute and industrious believer strive to enter in and I think too he is may well be saying this but he is strive to enter in and that is simply be a strong and firm disciplinarian of your own life bringing the whole of your life bringing the whole of it constantly into subjection to the obedience of the

Lord Jesus Christ we find this emphasis coming to the surface again and again I think in the course of the New Testament the undeniable necessity of exercising the strictest self discipline over our own life and over our own conduct the way we live those lives of ours the way we conduct ourselves before God and before men Paul in Philippians 3 you remember after having given vent to his own feelings in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ in these words yea doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count in the dung that I may win Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law he goes on immediately after this to say to speak these words brethren

I count not myself to have apprehended I do not consider that I have attained to the mark but he says this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus I haven't by any means attained to the fullness of the stature of the man in Christ I haven't reached that goal and so I have to keep under my body I have to bring it into subjection I have to discipline it I must every day crucify the old man with his affections and with his lust I must be strong a strong and firm disciplinarian over the kind of Christian life that I am living in this world and when we have said all that we have to add this it is by the grace of

[ 31 : 31 ] God and not by my sheer effort that this will be achieved I am always looking for the outworking of the grace of God in what I seek to do in this manner of disciplining my life and bringing it under the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ here then my friend is the call here is the exhortation that is directed to every one of us principally to God's professing people enter in at a straight gate exert yourself in a way of godliness exert yourself in a way of righteousness exert yourself in a way of holiness seek to be as holy as it is possible for a sinful being to be in this world of sin separate yourself increasingly and more diligently from the world of sin and from the sin so easily besetting you within and without and seek to perfect holiness in the fear of God turn away from all the must who are traversing the broad way and seek by the grace of Christ to be found with him in a straight way and seek by your example as well as by your words to bring others along with you into that way because after all it is the way that leads to life it is the way in which

Christ is walking with his church and with his people and it is a sad reflection on your part and mine if we are not willing to suffer reproach with them in this narrow way in this straight way that leads to the eternal home where he himself awaits his people strive my friend to enter the straight way exercise every ounce of spiritual energy you have and give it to you in order that you striving may increase more and more to enter and to be found in this straight this narrow way that leads to God and leads to heaven amen and may the Lord add his blessing in our meditation together shall we unite in prayer O Lord our God and our Father in heaven we acknowledge how frequently we disregard thy exhortations how little attention we give to thy word as it is spoken with such clarity to us and consequently that how deeply we ourselves suffer as a result of this do thou enable us by thy grace

O God we beseech thee to strive more and more after the perfection which thou dost look for the perfection of the man in Christ the holiness which will at length be given will be the portion of all who are thine for the souls of believers will at their death be made perfect in holiness and will immediately pass into glory do thou sanctify us by thy word and spirit as we go on in life and do thou give us a greater longing and a greater desire to be more conformed to Christ's own image as we strive after likeness to his character for his name's sake Amen