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Only way to Heaven Matthew 7:13-14

Matthew 7:13-14, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

An average a person makes 2,000 decision makes and thus a normal human makes 35,000 decisions in a day.

Here in this sermon on the mountain Jesus asking them to make one of the most important decisions of their lifetime.

God earlier confronted the people of Israel through Moses to make the right choice.

Deuteronomy 30:19, *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;*

Joshua, the leader of Israel who followed the footsteps of Moses did the same.

Joshua 24:15, *And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

Elijah the great prophet confronted the people on the mount caramel.

1 Kings 18:21, *And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.*

Jeremiah the Prophet spoke about the same.

Jeremiah 21:8, *"Now you shall say to this people, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.*

Jesus also confronted the people in the Gospel of John chapter 6.

John 6:66-69, *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”⁶⁸ But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.⁶⁹ Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Here in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus drove the people to come to the point of desperation that they cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven through their own effort and asking them to make their choice.

There are two things you cannot do with the **Sermon on the Mount**.

a) You cannot stand back and admire it.

Jesus is not interested in bouquets for His ethics.

Jesus is not interested in people who want to just admire the virtues of the ethical statement of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus wants a decision about your destiny.

b) You cannot take the decision later.

You cannot push it into some prophetic tomorrow. I don't think Jesus is suggesting that this is for some far future era.

It is decision time.

Many people who admire the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount,

Many people who take the characteristics of the Sermon on the Mount and its demands.

That is not what Jesus wanted.

What Jesus demanded was a choice, an act, an ultimate decision, to be made at that time and that moment, based on what He had just said.

A deliberate choice must be made.

Christ came to bring a kingdom.

He was the King of kings.

He came with a kingdom that was unique and different from all the kingdoms of the world.

Christ has articulated the principles of living in His kingdom.

Now He gives us the choice to either enter it or stay out of it.

That's the choice He wants every man to consider.

Jesus Christ demands a response!

I believe verses 13 and 14 are the climax to which He has been moving throughout this entire sermon, to bring people to the point, to bring us to the point where we respond.

The choice is utterly clear-cut.

There are only two choices:

- The narrow gate and narrow way,
- The wide gate and wide way.

There are no other alternatives. None.

There are so many religions, but they all fall under only two categories.

- True and False.
- Right and Wrong.

We need to keep in mind that the contrast through this entire sermon is a contrast.

- Between religion that is false and true.
- Between True worship and false,
- Between divine religion and man-made.

The religion that exists among the Jews at the time is not true.

Matthew 5:20, *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

What kind of righteousness could surpass the scribes and the Pharisees?

- They were the most fastidious,
- The most self-righteous,

- The most superficially committed, and
- The most outwardly obedient.

Paul was one of them, and he said of his life as a Pharisee that according to the law he was found blameless.

They had been able to muster up enough self-discipline on the outside to conform with some level of public affirmation, achieving a kind of perfection when it came to righteousness.

Jesus says that's not enough.

So, it is not a contrast between righteousness and unrighteousness. But it is a **contrast between two kinds of righteousness:**

- A righteousness that does not satisfy God, and
- A righteousness that does satisfy God.

It's **NOT** a contrast between religion and paganism.

The religion of the Pharisees can be summed up in one verse.

Luke 18:9, *"The Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous."*

Either you trust in yourself that you are righteous, and you can earn heaven, or you do not.

You know that you cannot earn it because you are not righteous, and you cannot be righteous to the satisfaction of God.

Either you are good enough or not.

All religion fits into the category of you can be good enough, except true Christianity which says you can't.

Either you acknowledge that you cannot earn your way to heaven,

- you cannot be good enough,
- you cannot gain a righteousness that satisfies God,
- you cannot please God,
- you cannot satisfy His holy justice,
- you cannot earn forgiveness and heaven,
- or you can.

If you are working on the “can” side, pick whatever religion you want, it doesn't matter.

Reality tells us there are only two religions in the world. There is the religion of human achievement, the religion of works, the religion of the flesh.

There is the one other option that is the religion of

- divine accomplishment,
- the religion of faith,
- grace,
- mercy, and
- not of the flesh, but of the Spirit.

Both do not mix.

The scribes and the Pharisees were the architects and source of a religion of human achievement. Their salvation and acceptance with God, their hope of eternal life in heaven depended upon what they did morally, religiously, and ceremonially.

The Lord, however, offered a completely different religion, a religion of faith and grace, depending upon the Holy Spirit, a religion of divine accomplishment where salvation and acceptance and heaven depended on what God did, not what men do.

Certainly, most of humanity vastly is committed to the religion of human achievement.

There is a narrow way that leads to life, and then there is the broad way with all the other religions that leads to death.

In fact, the simplicity of this decision that our Lord lays before us is so clear in the obvious contrast in the two options.

- ✓ Two gates, the wide and the narrow.
- ✓ Two ways, the broad and the narrow.
- ✓ Two destinations, life, and destruction.
- ✓ Two groups of travellers, the many and the few.

When we draw down into **verses 15 and following**,

- Two trees, good and evil.
- Two kinds of fruit, good and bad.
- Two builders, one wise, one foolish.
- Two foundations, one rock, one sand.
- Two houses and two results from the storm.

You cannot be more clear than that.

Jesus is just comparing the two options that exist.
Either you can earn your salvation, or you can't.

As we look at these two verses we find four contrasts that appear in this conclusion to the great sermon.

- ✓ Two gates,
- ✓ Two ways,
- ✓ Two destinations, and
- ✓ Two crowds.

V 13, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

Both gates intend to introduce you to the path to heaven.
Both point to the kingdom of God, to salvation, to eternal joy and bliss in heaven.

Neither of these gates says hell.
But one of them goes there.

Nobody is selling hell.
No religion says, “Join our religion and go to hell with us.”

They all say heaven.
That’s the deception.

- ✓ One is the path of self-righteousness.
- ✓ One is the path of divine righteousness.

So, the gates come first is the narrow gate.

Verse 13 begins with a command.
“Enter by the narrow gate.”

a) You must enter.

This is not going to happen by accident.

This is not going to happen apart from a commitment and a decision on your part.

It is an absolute command given by Jesus Christ!

“Enter the narrow gate.”

The gospel itself is a command:

“Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The gospel always comes as a command to be obeyed or disobeyed.

- It is not enough to listen to preaching about the narrow gate.
- It is not enough to study the narrow gate,
- It is not enough to admire the structure of the narrow gate,
- It is not enough to admire the wisdom of gospel means,

But you must enter!

The world is full of people who admire the gospel and the narrow gate.

They admire the work of Christ on the cross, and even admire the work accomplished in His conquering death and His resurrection.

They admire the ethics of Jesus!

But hell is going to be literally filled with people who admired Jesus, who admired His teaching and His ethics, and who maybe particularly admired the Sermon on the Mount.

A gate serves two purposes:

- It lets in, and
- It shuts out.

Those who do not enter are then eternally barred from the kingdom of God.

The parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Matthew 25:10, *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*

Once the wedding feast begins, the door was shut.

- ✓ You must enter.
- ✓ You must go beyond the admiration of the gospel.
- ✓ You must go beyond being fascinated with the work of Jesus Christ and admiring Him.
- ✓ You must enter the gate of salvation through faith in Him.

b) You must enter through the narrow gate.

There is only one narrow gate.

Proverbs 14:12, *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*

John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

John 10:9, *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

John 10:1, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

Acts 4:12, *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

There's only one way to be saved.

There's only one person who is the Saviour, and faith in that person is required for salvation.

1 Timothy 2:5, *“There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*

No other mediator,
No other Saviour, and
No other way.

Faith, saving faith, demands faith the message of Christ.

Romans 10:17, *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Christ and Christ alone is the gate.

No Christ, no salvation.

No Christ, no heaven.

It is very narrow.

When people say, “You are very narrow-minded,”

I will often say, “You have no idea how narrow-minded I really am. I am lot narrower than you think I am.”

You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ savingly, and you enter.

You do not, and you will not enter.

There is no other way in.

All other ways, though marked heaven, end up in hell.

Any deviation from the person of Jesus Christ, the work of Jesus Christ, or the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith and grace alone will lead you to hell.

You must enter.

You must make a commitment to come to Christ.

This is the only way.

God has the right to do it the way He wants, and this is the way He chose to do it. Today how popular it is to assume that there are all kinds of different ways to heaven, even among evangelicals.

c) You must enter this gate alone!

There are some people who think that if you join a religion you will go to heaven with the crowd.

This is a very narrow gate. This is like a turnstile, admitting only one person at a time. It is exclusive from the start. It is intensely personal. It is not a group experience.

It doesn't happen to everybody who joins a church, or everybody who is baptized, or everybody who is in a family of "Christians."

It isn't something you inherit from your parents or your grandparents. It isn't something you sign up for along with another person. It is singular.

It is totally individual.
It is intensely personal.
It requires a break from the crowd.

Luke 14:26, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*

It may cost you every single relationship that you have.
You come absolutely alone with no one else.

Matthew 10:34-39, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ ³⁷He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

It will cost you potentially everybody and everything, even your own control over your own life.

Salvation is only for one at a time, one by one by faith in Christ.

- ✓ You must enter,
- ✓ You must enter this narrow gate,
- ✓ You must enter alone.

d) You must enter with difficulty.

This is a death blow to what is called a death blow to cheap grace. This is not easy.

V 14, *“Few are those who find it.”*

When you find it, it becomes hard to enter?

It must be searched out. It must be found. It is not in your intuition. It is not rummaging around in your higher self.

You won't find it in your supposed spirituality.

You will only find this in the word of God rightly interpreted and rightly understood.

You must sort through all the false gospels.

That's why our Lord immediately says in **V 15**, *“Beware of the false prophets.”*

They are selling tickets to the broad road.

They are the ravenous wolves who dress up as if they were shepherds or prophets who wore wool cloaks.

Beware of them. They are pushing multitudes of people onto the broad road.

It is hard.

It is hard to find a true preacher.

It is hard to find a true prophet.

It is hard to try to find the true gospel.

How many people in a church or a religion which was deceiving and damning for most of your life?

Few there be that find it.

When you find it, it's not easy?

It's not easy to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ.

Luke 9:23-25, *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?*

It's not easy to lose your life.

It's not easy to hate yourself, to say no to all your own desires, ambitions, hopes, dreams, self-control.

It's not easy to abandon everything,

it's hard to humble yourself,

it's hard to turn from your sin,

it's hard to repent, because sin, pride, and self-will is the truest expression of your fallen condition.

Luke 13:24, *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*

Amazing. You mean there are people who want to be saved and they can't be, who want to find the door and enter the door and they don't succeed?

That's exactly what Jesus said.

Luke 13:25-29, *When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’²⁶ then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’²⁷ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob*

and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.²⁹ They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.

The narrow door must be searched out and found.

When it is found, it's not easy.

What would you say to the crowd if you wanted to evangelize them?

What did Jesus do?

Luke 12:1, *In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

Luke 14:25, *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,*

Massive crowds.

What would the message of the modern evangelist be to the crowd?

Luke 14:25-33, *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and*

sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— ²⁹lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'? ³¹Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

That is not a very attractive message.

That is a good way to send the crowd home.

Can't you be a little more winsome than that?

Why not just pray this little prayer and you are in?

The popular way.

Are you willing to do that?

Have you really counted the cost of what's involved here?

Jesus said I am asking for your whole life.

I am asking you to become My slave.

I am asking you to live the rest of your life doing exactly what I tell you, no matter what it cost you, even if it cost you all your hopes and dreams, and your own life.

This is not easy.

Much easier to go the broad way.

The vendors of the broad way are telling you, "Come join our group. Don't worry about your sin and your theology."

There is a carelessness, and a poor quality exists within many people's understandings of the gospel.

Strive to enter in, ***agōnizomai***;

Used in **1 Corinthians 9:25** of an athlete struggling to win.

Colossians 4:12 of labouring fervently, even to the point of death.

1 Timothy 6:12 of fighting, combat.

Matthew 11:12, *"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."*

What amazing words.

There's a certain violence in coming to salvation. You are in the throes of a war and a battle with your own soul to release your love of sin and self and pride.

Luke 16:16, *“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”*

Becoming a Christian is not easy, it's hard.

Another way to say all that is that the kingdom opens to those who seek with all their hearts.

You are not going to sleep your way into the kingdom.

The kingdom requires earnest endeavour, untiring energy, utmost exertion, because Satan is mighty and has a vast array of helpers, because he has many false prophets and deceivers all over the world.

Satan actually receives support from the fifth column established in every man's heart – the love of sin. To let go of the love of sin, to desire to be forgiven of sin, delivered from sin, to let go of pride and self-will demands a vigour, an eagerness, a willingness to conquer, take possession of the kingdom with all its blessings of salvation.

- This is not for weaklings.
- This is not for waverers.
- This is not for compromisers.
- This is not for Balaams.
- This is not for the rich young ruler.
- This is not for Pilate.

- This is not for Demas.

This is not won by deferred prayers, by unfulfilled promises, broken resolutions, and hesitant commitments.

It's for the strong and the sturdy, like Joseph, Nathan, Elijah, Daniel, Mordecai, Peter, Stephen, Paul, Ruth, Deborah, Esther, and Lydia.

The conflict is often fierce.

Let go of self, and submit fully to Christ?

- ✓ You must enter.
- ✓ You must enter this narrow gate
- ✓ You must enter alone.
- ✓ You must enter with difficulty

e) You must enter naked.

You can't go through a gate with your baggage!
You must drop everything.

It's the gate of self-denial.

Strip off all the sin, self, and self-righteousness.

Dropping all the baggage isn't easy.

The rich young ruler wouldn't do it. He was very rich, and he wasn't about to let go of his money. He was very much in

control. He wasn't about to do what Jesus told him to do. He wasn't going to let somebody else be sovereign over his life. He hung onto his baggage.

When Jesus told the story about the soils in **Matthew 13**, the different soils, in some of the soils the weeds were never cultivated out.

In some of the soil, the stony ground was still remaining hard. Superficial response initially, but no real life, no real fruit.

If you are holding on to anything and not willing to let go of, you can't get through this gate.

In this narrow gate where you abandon yourself totally.

There are some people who espouse the idea that all you have to do to become a Christian is just know that Jesus can save you from hell and ask Him to do that. That's a far cry from what the New Testament teaches.

Even John the Baptist came preaching repentance, and repentance, and repentance, getting people to receive the Messiah, the King.

You must come to a Beatitude attitude.

How did the Lord begin this sermon?

Matthew 5, the sermon began with the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,

Blessed are those who mourn,

Blessed are the meek,

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

We understand what the attitude is.

Poor in spirit!

Morally, spiritually bankrupt. Those are the ones that are blessed. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It belongs to people who know they cannot earn their way in.

It belongs to those who have become like a little child, offering no achievement, no accomplishment, as in some way contributing to God’s acceptance of them.

They are bankrupt spiritually.

Consequently, they mourn. They come as mourners, not superficial.

They come meek, for they have nothing to offer.

They come hungering and thirsting for righteousness, which they want, but know they don’t have and can’t earn.

They are void of righteousness, and they know it.

They are morally, spiritually bankrupt.

They are heart-broken over this, and they are meek.

James 2:19, *“The devils believe and tremble.”*

It’s hating sin and loving righteousness, which the demons do not do.

Luke 18:13, *And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’*

Not coming like the Pharisee commending himself for his tithing and his fasting. The Lord here is dealing with the danger of an easy believes.

- ✓ You must enter,
- ✓ You must enter this gate,
- ✓ You must enter alone,
- ✓ You must enter with difficulty, and
- ✓ You must enter naked.

Conclusion:

Urgency and importance.

Jesus said, “Deny yourself,” that is repentance!

“Take up your cross, and follow Me.”

It’s about the lordship of Christ.

You became a slave when you came to Christ.
You are the *doulos*, He is the *kurios*.

There's no such thing as a *kurios* without *doulos*.
No such thing as *doulos* without a *kurios*.

If Jesus is the Lord, then you are the slave.
So, we come totally submissive to our Master, joyfully
submissive.

We don't see it as burdensome. We see it as a cherished
opportunity to give honour to the one who has given grace to
us.

The wide gate.

The door is wide.

The way is wide, or broad.

This gate can be entered with no difficulty.

This gate can be entered with a whole crowd.

- No self-denial, bring all your baggage.
- No repentance necessary,
- no surrender to Christ necessary.

This is the gate of self-indulgence.

Bring your pride, bring your self-righteousness, bring your sins
welcomed there.

There's a large crowd coming through this gate, because it's everybody else who is not coming through the narrow gate.

Two doors:

Narrow and the broad.

Two ways:

Broad and narrow.

The wide gate leads to a broad way. You don't have to leave anything behind; bring all your stuff, all your self-righteousness, all your baggage of all your sin.

The wide gate leads to a broad way plenty of room, no restriction. Room for diverse theology, room for diverse iniquity, room for tolerance, room for immorality.

No boundaries. All the desires of the fallen heart are acceptable on the broad road.

- No need for a Beatitude attitude, no need to be restricted by the word of God.
- No need to worry about internal issues in the conscience.
- No need to worry about anything.

We are all on the happy road to heaven, because we are religious, and we are basically good. Takes no character. Self-

will, self-gratification, self-righteousness. You come on with your lust and your pride and your covetousness.

Now the people who are on the broad way, by the way, are many.

Matthew 7:22-23, *Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

When they get to the end of the road, the news is not good.

Psalm 1:6, *For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

The cost is high, the demand is high. The Lord asks for everything. You may lose your family. You subject yourself to the will of God no matter what it is. It involves discipline and chastening when you disobey.

It is truly a kind of slavery. You confess with your lips Jesus as Lord, which is also a confession that you are a slave.

You are now subject to an alien will for the rest of your life. It's not a luxurious meadow that we wander in, it's a road that is hard, and it's a road that's narrow.

Christianity in its truthfulness is not a soft option for the weak-hearted and the weak-kneed.

When you enter into this narrow gate and start on the narrow way, you declare a war on all the forces of hell.

You declare war on all the forces of your own flesh.

But the two doors and the two ways lead to two destinations.

First, the wide gate, the broad way leads to destruction.

It is

- Easy,
- Crowded,
- Everybody is there.

It just doesn't end up in heaven but in destruction.

The religion of human achievement from humanism and atheism to Judaism and any other ism in any other religion without Christ and without a gospel of grace and faith alone, ends up in hell.

What does destruction mean?

Everlasting judgment!

V 14, *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Eternal life, the fullness of life, the life of God, the glorious state of unclouded fellowship with God, the eternal satisfaction, unspeakable joy.

Many enter the broad way, few enter the narrow way.
That's how it is in the world.

There's far more false religion than true.
Even within Christianity, there is far more in a false Christianity than in the true faith, far more, millions more.

The masses of the world are racing toward hell on the broad road thinking it's the path to heaven, never marked hell.

2 Corinthians 13:5, *"Examine yourselves whether you're in the faith."*

Examine yourselves to see whether you're in the faith. Which road are you on?