

TWO GATES AND TWO WAYS

Matthew 7:13-14

Intro: The first two verses of Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, make it clear that our Lord was speaking to His disciples. As we come, to these two verses today, why would the Lord speak to a group like that about TWO GATES AND TWO WAYS. There is no doubt but that our Lord was speaking of salvation. Why would He speak to disciples about salvation, and begin by saying, “Enter ye in at the strait gate.” Isn’t it true that if a person were a disciple, he or she would definitely be saved?

Well, in answering that question, let us turn to John 6, a passage to which I have referred many times before.

You will see by looking at verses 32 and following that the Lord was claiming that He was the Bread of Life, and as you go on down through the chapter to verse 53 He spoke to them about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And then He said in verse 56 that the person who ate His flesh and drank His blood would dwell in Him, and He would dwell in them. Clearly this is profound teaching. But the Lord made it clear in His message that eating His flesh and drinking His blood meant believing in Him. He was not teaching the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, that the elements of the Lord’s Supper are actually changed into the body and blood of our Lord. *There is no such doctrine in Scripture.*

But what I want you to see here in John 6 what the Apostle John recorded about the reaction our Lord received from “many...of His disciples. Look at verse 60. (Read.)

Now look at verse 66. (Read.) The Apostle John did not say that they were offended at the Lord’s teaching, but they soon got over it, and came back to learn more. No, John tells us

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him (John 6:66).

Note the word “many” in John 6:60, and then again in verse 66.

How can we explain this? Some would say that this means they had been saved, but then they turned away from the Lord, so they lost their salvation.

But the Bible teaches that we can’t lose our salvation. Note our Lord’s words in John 10:27-29

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow

me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

We have to remember that salvation is a work of God, and that is brought out in Phil. 1:6 where the Apostle Paul wrote,

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

And so, if it not true that they were saved, but lost their salvation, how do we explain what took place in John 6, that “from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him”?

The answer is this: They had been attracted to the Lord possibly by His previous teachings, or perhaps by His miracles, or because they hoped that He was the Messiah and had come to set them free from Rome! They were disciples in name only. They had followed the Lord Jesus up to a point, but then they departed from Him, and never came back. And remember that the Apostle John was writing some sixty years after the Lord had gone back to heaven, and so he had had the opportunity to see that what he said here was true. None of them did come back!

We have the same situation in the church and in the world today. Would you say that every person who says that he, or she, is a Christian, really is a Christian? Absolutely not! Some of these people who claim to be Christians, don't believe in the virgin birth of Christ. This means that they don't believe in our Lord's Deity. And so they don't believe the Bible is the revealed Word of God. Many who call themselves Christians believe that other religions are just as legitimate as the Christian faith, that there is more than one way to get to heaven (or whatever they might call life after death). Some Christians, even a lot of preachers, will deny that we are cleansed from our sins by the blood of Christ, and they will go on to deny the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Such people may call themselves Christians, but by their denials and by other teachings which they accept which are not in the Bible, they show that they are not true Christians.

If you have been reading through the Sermon on the Mount, you have read verses 21 through 23 here in chapter 7. Let me read these words for you. (Read Matt. 7:21-23.) Notice the word “many” appearing again. Here were people who had been preachers, and miracle workers, and that is what they were depending upon for their salvation. Judas Iscariot would have been included in that number. He preached the Gospel. He per-

formed miracles, *but he was never saved! Are you beginning to see why the Lord would speak to His disciples about salvation, and tell them, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Our Lord wanted every disciple there to make sure that he was on the right road which leads to life, eternal life!*

The Apostle Paul emphasized this same need in 2 Cor.13:5 where he wrote these words to those who were in the Corinthian church:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Cor. 13:5).

"Except ye be reprobates" is rendered in some other translations, "Unless indeed you fail the test," or some very similar translation. The expression means, *to be disqualified*. You test yourself, and discover that you are not a true child of God after all.

How do you test yourself? You test yourself by the Word of God. Our Lord said in the words we have just read that the test is whether of not a person "doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Doeth" is in the present tense in the Greek text which means *to do something continuously, day after day, and year after year*. A true Christian makes the Bible his sole guide as to what he is to believe, what he is to be, what he is to do, and what he is *not* to do. A true Christian doesn't just accept the parts of the Bible as God's Word, and forgets about the rest; he believes that all of the Bible is God's Word, and therefore our sole authority, as is often said, "for faith and practice."

Even back in Isaiah's day, the Lord said to him about the nation Israel,
13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid (Isa. 29:13-14).

And on one occasion when the Lord was speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, he referred to that passage in Isaiah, and said,

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:7-9).

So you see, the Lord was never swayed by the crowds who followed Him,

but was always aware that there were people, many of whom were honestly deceived, thinking that they were true disciples, but who had never been born again. I can't think of a greater tragedy than for a person to die thinking that he is a true Christian, but will discover when he (or she) stands before the Lord, that he wasn't a Christian at all. It is good to be a church member, providing you go to a church where the Word of God is preached and Christ alone is exalted. But being a church member does not save anyone. It is good to be baptized, but baptism doesn't save anyone! It is good to have high moral standards, but we are not saved "by works of righteousness which we have done" (Tit. 3:5). A Christian is a person who is trusting in Christ as his Savior from sin, believing that Christ offered a sacrifice on the Cross that is sufficient for the salvation of everyone who will ever believe in Christ.

Now give yourself the test today, but make sure that you are testing yourself *by the Word of God. No other test will do!*

But now let us look at our text. (Read Matt. 7:13-14.)

Here our Lord made it perfectly clear that:

I. THERE ARE JUST TWO GATES, AND TWO WAYS.

The two gates are just two gates, not three or any other number that we might want to choose. There are only two: a narrow gate, and a broad gate.

A lot of people take comfort in what others have told them, that we are all going to the same place after death, but we are taking different paths to get there. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There are just two gates. One is narrow, and the other is wide. And each gate leads to a path which is just like the gates through which people enter. The wide gate leads to a wide way, and the narrow gate leads to a narrow way. But there is a great difference in what you find at the end of the paths. The wide gate leads to "destruction"; the narrow gate leads to "life." Then the Lord said that "many" choose to go through the wide gate, but only a "few" find the narrow gate that leads to life.

In addition to the fact that there are only two gates, it needs to be said that you can't go from one to the other. There is no middle ground. You and I are either on our way to heaven, or we are on our way to hell. Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary,

There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell (Vol. V, p. 92).

If you are on your way to hell, you are not going to heaven, but if you are going to heaven, you will not be in hell. But everybody is going to one of these two places. And our Lord did not want any of His disciples think that they were going to heaven, when in reality they were going to hell.

Let us think a little more about the two gates. First,

II. THE BROAD GATE AND THE BROAD WAY.

This is a gate which lets people come any way they want to come. It is a gate which leads to whatever kind of a life you want. You don't have to turn from sin to go through the broad gate. People who choose the broad gate either don't know or don't care where it is going. Their philosophy is that they are going to have all of the pleasure they can get, regardless of what it is. This is where you live for yourself, and you find yourself in the company of other people who want to do the same. People who go through this broad gate may talk about God once in a while, but you will probably here His Name mentioned mostly as an oath that comes out of someone's mouth. But mainly people are not interested in God, or Jesus Christ, or the Bible, or in going to church where they can be with Christians. People are so enthralled with the liberty that they think that have that they see now need for God if they are in the broad way.

People who choose the broad gate and the broad way, live as though they would be here forever, or at least, as though there were no eternity for which to prepare.

One thing that makes the broad gate and way so attractive to people is that "many...go in thereat. It is always easier to follow the crowd. And somehow our hearts deceive us into thinking that if more choose the broad gate in preference to the narrow gate, then the broad gate must be better. But at the end of the way for the "many" is "destruction." Then people will realize when it is too late that they have made the wrong choice which can never be reverses.

But let us go on to a happier subject and think about:

III. THE NARROW GATE.

When the Lord spoke about the narrow gate, He was speaking about Himself. And He is also the way. And this is what people in general despise about the truth of God's Word. And yet our Lord Jesus Christ said this, speaking to His disciple, Thomas:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

That is very narrow, isn't it? Peter agreed with our Lord because when he was speaking to Jewish authorities, and they had asked him to give an account for his power and his authority, *i.e.*, Peter, he said this:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

That is really narrow, isn't it? To say that Jesus Christ is the only Savior means that if you believe something else, you are on the broad way that leads to destruction.

But not only is the gate narrow, but so is the way that it leads to.

IV. THE NARROW WAY.

It is narrow, but it is good. In fact, this is the only way to true happiness and peace. Those who go through this gate are committed to a life that is pleasing to God, as I have said, a life of obedience to the Word of God. That sounds very distasteful to people who want the broad way, but God makes a change in the hearts of those who choose the narrow way so that their greatest joy is not in doing what they want to do, but in doing what God wants them to do.

And at the end of the narrow way, is life, eternal life. People receive that new life when they go through the door, but the greatest enjoyment of this eternal life is reserved for us in heaven. The Apostle Peter expressed it this way in his first epistle:

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
- 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

But let me point out another possible point that the Lord may have had in mind when He spoke of the narrow way that leads to life. The word "narrow" means *trouble, affliction, pressure*. You see, everyone one is walking on one of these ways, but we continue to have contact with each other. And the world is not satisfied to go on in the broad way, but they resent those of us who are not going with them. When Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey, and they revisited some places where they had preached before, and seen people saved, we are told that

they went back to those places,

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

Life on the narrow way is never easy, but we have the comfort of knowing that our Lord is with us all of the way. He will never fail us nor forsake us.

But let us not be deceived into thinking that because we are in a minority, that the narrow way is the wrong way. We often feel like we are in a minority. I know that we won't be lonesome on the narrow way, and we certainly will not be lonesome when we get to heaven. But in comparison with those who take the broad way, those who take the narrow way are fewer in number.

But did the Lord give any indication as to which way was the best? Yes, He did! And He did it right at the beginning of our text.

V. THE LORD'S ADVICE.

The Lord gave us a very important word in this connection which we find in Jer. 17:9-10:

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

The Devil is a deceiver. Our own hearts will deceive us. And the world is full of deception. That is why we can be thankful that the Lord has given us His own Word as to the way we should go. And here it is! Don't miss it. Our Lord said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." That settles it. That is the only way to go. To go through the broad gate is sin, and it leads to destruction. It leads to hell. To go through the narrow gate, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the way of everlasting life. There is forgiveness for our sins through the narrow gate. There is peace with God through the narrow gate. There is the gift of eternal life through the narrow gate. And for countless other reasons which we learn as we walk the narrow way, the "few" are right, the "many" are wrong.

Concl: When the Lord spoke these words, He was not dealing with some of the other great doctrines of our salvation, such as election and how we are drawn to Christ by the Holy Spirit. He was simply placing before His disciples the fact that all people are responsible for the gate that they take. When those of us who have gone through the narrow gate, get

in, we learn that it was God in His wonderful grace that moved our hearts toward the narrow gate and to Christ.

How thankful every human being should be that the Lord has told us that there are only two ways! And those of us who have taken the narrow way need to be especially thankful for the work of the Lord in our hearts. It is not to our glory that we are saved when as one of our hymns states, others make “a wretched choice” rather than coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I ask you this morning, Do you pass the test as having chosen the narrow way that leads to life? I hope you have, and I know most of you have. But would to God that He would move upon all of our hearts so that there would not be a single person in this congregation, or anyone who hears this message on the air, who would choose the broad way that leads to destruction. There is only one way to be saved. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

If you can't pass the test today, may God grant that you will turn to Christ and find salvation through the narrow gate.