

TWO GATES, TWO WAYS

Matthew 7:13-14

Intro: As we come to these two verses which may seem to be totally unrelated to what our Lord had been talking about, what are we to understand by His words in these two verses. It is clear that the Lord was speaking about two different gates, and two different ways, and two different destinations. Perhaps before we seek to answer these questions, it would be worth our time to read a passage in the Gospel of Luke where the Lord spoke along the same lines that He did here. Please turn with me to Luke chapter 13 where I will begin reading with verse 22. (Read Luke 13:22-30.)

You can see from the question that the Lord was asked in verse 22 that the subject was *salvation*.

Actually we can see the same in our text here in the Sermon on the Mount because one gate that the Lord was talking about leads to life, and the other leads to destruction, or *perdition*, as the word which the Lord used here is sometimes translated. The goal of salvation is heaven. “Destruction,” on the other hand, is hell. So there really is no greater subject for anyone to be concerned about. Our time here on earth is so short, but eternity is endless! Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we go through the right gate. Everyone who has ever lived, or who is living now, or who will live until the end of time, is going through one of these two gates. Our Lord spoke of *finding* the gate that leads to life, but His words indicate that most people won’t be looking for the gate that leads to life, and so they will follow the “many” who are headed for perdition.

But now let us look at our text in detail. And I want to begin by asking and answering the question,

I. TO WHOM DID THE LORD SPEAK THESE WORDS?

If you have been with me through this series, you know the answer to that question. But even if you are here for the first time today, you can get the answer to the question by reading the first two verses of Matthew 5 where this message began.

The Lord was speaking primarily to His disciples. We learn from the last two verses of chapter 7 where the sermon ends that other people had join-

ed the disciples to listen to the Lord's teaching. But it was mainly to the disciples that our Lord was speaking.

But that raises a couple of other questions. The first is, "Weren't all of the disciples true children of God?" The answer to that question is "No"! And one passage that supports my saying that is John 6:66 where we read about another time when the Lord was teaching His disciples, but some could not accept what He had been saying, and so we read:

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

They had become followers of Christ, but obviously they were not saved because the Apostle John said that they left the Lord and never came back. When the Apostle John wrote his first epistle, he referred in situations like we read about in John 6. But this is what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:19:

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Judas Iscariot is another example. He was not only a disciple, but he was an apostle, and even preached and performed miracles like the other apostles did, but his betrayal of the Lord Jesus and consequent suicide showed that he was not a true child of God.

These verses are actually a presentation of the Gospel. Why would the Lord Jesus preach the Gospel to His disciples? Let me give you two reasons:

1) He would do this just in case there might have been some disciples present who felt that being a disciple, a learner, or a follower of the Lord Jesus who were not saved, and he wanted them to know what they needed to do, to enter in at the strait, or narrow gate.

2) On the other hand, the Lord wanted even the true disciples to be assured that they were saved. When the Apostle Peter wrote his second epistle to Jewish believers who had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire, he told them "to make their calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). It is important for all of us who are saved to know that we are saved.

I can certainly preach these words to all of you this morning, telling you to enter into the narrow gate which leads to life. Most of you would be

able to say, “I have entered, and that is where I am now.” But it might cause some of you to realize that you have not entered, and so your heart would be open to what the Lord meant when He spoke these words.

So there is a message here for all of us. I don’t mind at all looking at my life for the evidences that I have truly been saved. And I hope that you feel the same way. If you haven’t entered, I hope that you will realize what a terribly dangerous situation you are in. You need to give this your immediate attention.

Now the Lord was not in doubt regarding any of His disciples, or of the people who gradually added to the crowd. The Lord not only knows who has entered in, but He knows those who are going to enter, and those who will not enter. *But He said the words we have in these two verses so that all would give serious thought to their relationship to God and to the Lord Himself, whether they had entered, or whether they had not.*

In the days when Dr. Mitchell was teaching at the Multnomah School of the Bible (as it was called then), he always taught the freshman class a course called, “Spiritual Life.” And in it he always was very clear in telling the students what a Christian is, and how we become Christians. And I believe I am telling you the truth when I say that every year there were some students who turned to Christ and were saved as a result. I am equally sure that in applying to Multnomah, all of them had said that they were Christians, but when they heard the Gospel presented in a clear manner, they realized that they were not saved. And that is when they turned to Christ.

Now a second question:

II. WHY IS SALVATION LIKENED NOT ONLY TO A GATE, BUT TO A STRAIT, OR NARROW GATE?

Notice that the word “strait” is not spelled s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t, but s-t-r-a-i-t. These two words sound alike, but their meaning is different. Straight with a g-h-t ending means that which has the same direction throughout its length, not crooked, bent, or wavy, like a straight line. A person is called “straight” when he does not deviate at all from proper and accepted and legal behavior.

But s-t-r-a-i-t has another meaning. It means that which is *narrow, tight,*

strict.

Salvation is called a “gate” because that is where and how we enter into any enclosure. But why is the gate to salvation *narrow* instead of being “broad” or *wide*? It is *narrow* because the conditions upon which anyone can enter are definitely limited. Let me point out the limitations.

First, it is limited to sinners. Now we all know that all people are sinners. But not all people are willing to recognize that they are sinners. In fact, there are those who are violently opposed to being called a sinner. Let me read to you one of the many encounters our Lord had with the Pharisees while He was here on earth. You will find these words in Matt. 9:9-13:

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The Pharisees refused to put themselves in the same category with “publicans and sinners,” and so they did not realize that their problem was sin. Nobody is ever truly saved who does not realize that he or she is a sinner, and seek forgiveness for sin. The Pharisees as a group were men who placed themselves above other people, and so they didn’t know anything about salvation.

The Gospel is for sinners, for sinners who are seeking forgiveness.

Second, salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Changing the figure of speech slightly without changing the meaning of our text, perhaps you remember that our Lord spoke of Himself as a Door, as the Door of the sheepfold. And this is what He said,

9 I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ...”
(John 10:9)

And in John 14:6 we have our Lord's words to show how really tight and narrow the entrance is into life. Most of you will remember our Lord's words. The Lord spoke these words to one of His apostles by the name of Thomas:

6 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).

There is only one way to God, only one Savior. And He is God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to this earth to suffer and die on the Cross for sinners. The wages for sin is death, spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. The Apostle Peter has told us in 1 Peter 3:18,

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

And let me tell you a third way in which the gate is narrow, is tight. It is "by grace through faith." This means it is not a reward for works that we do for God, but it is a gift of God's grace by faith in Christ and His work for sinners on the Cross. Christ took the penalty of all who ever had, or ever will, put their trust in Him as their Savior. Let me give you two well-known verses which will confirm what I am saying:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

God's grace means two things: It means that God does not give me what I deserve, which is destruction, perdition, damnation, but instead He gives me what I could never deserve, earn, or pay for, which is total forgiveness for every sin, and eternal salvation.

The Bible is the one authority for true salvation and eternal life. It alone gives us the one and only way to God.

But now let's look at the other gate.

III. THE WIDE GATE AND THE BROAD WAY.

Why did our Lord call the other gate wide? It is because this way will accept all religions, or no religion at all. You can go through this gate not believing that there is a God, or believing that God is whatever you want Him to be. You can go through this gate having gone to church all of your life, but without ever really taking the Bible seriously. People are

crowding this way because they are more concerned about having a good time than they are hearing the truth. People go through the wide gate believing that in the end everybody will be OK along with those who mistakenly believe that when you're dead, you're dead, and that will be the end. The self-righteous will go through this gate as well as the down-and-out sinner. This is the most popular way because here anything goes. You can be whatever you want to be, and this is where you belong.

But where does this wide gate lead to? What is the end of this way? The Lord Jesus said that it "leadeth to destruction." It leads to an eternal hell. The Moslem terrorists take their lives for the glory of Allah, thinking that they are going to paradise and all of those virgins that are waiting for them, but one second after death that learn to late that instead of taking the wide gate to unending, lustful pleasures, they find themselves in eternal torment. Twice in the book of Proverbs Solomon directed by the Holy Spirit said that "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." You will find this in Prov. 14:12 and again in Prov. 16:25 so that if you don't notice it the first time, you may notice it the second time. And this death is not annihilation, but a place prepared for the Devil and his angels, where the worm does not die and the fire is never quenched.

But let me point out one obvious truth before we leave these verses.

IV. THERE ARE ONLY TWO GATES.

There are not three or four or fifteen or a hundred; *there are just two!* And all of us are going through one or the other. There are no other alternatives. The broad gate which leads to destruction is where most people are going, and you will go there if you don't look for and find the strait gate that leads to life. That is why I am speaking like I am speaking today; I want you to find the narrow way. I want you to know that there is salvation in none other except Christ, the Son of God, who died taking upon Himself the penalty of all who would ever find and go through the narrow where you can only go through by faith in Jesus Christ Who (let me say it again) died and rose again that those who believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

Concl: But let me give you one further word of encouragement. The Lord Jesus is not passive in this matter that is greater than any other issue any of us will ever face. There was a Jew, who was one of the chief tax

collectors, by the name of Zacchaeus, who climbed up in a tree so that he could see Jesus as He passed by. But to his great amazement, when Jesus got to the tree where Zacchaeus was, He looked up, called Zacchaeus by name, and said, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house” (Luke 19:5). That day as the Lord spoke to Zacchaeus he entered the strait gate, and was saved. And the Lord said to Zacchaeus before he left him,

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:9-10).

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord brought someone to Trinity Bible Church today because He intended to bring you to Himself for salvation through the strait and narrow gate which leads to life, eternal life? The Lord goes out and seeks us because He knows that we will not come unless He goes after us. We may be seeking the Lord, but when we find Him, we learn that we were seeking Him because He was seeking us. So, if you are standing outside the narrow gate, enter today. Don't put it off another day. Tomorrow could be too late.