


week #28



A Narrow Gate; a Hard Way	Coram Deo	Study
<p>“This call to decide does not mean we are able to choose the right path before we become Christians. Salvation is by grace through faith, a gift to God’s people chosen from the foundation of the world. However, those whom the Father transforms by grace inevitably choose to serve Christ.”</p>	<p>“As we share the Gospel, let us tell people that following Jesus means we abandon our agenda for His. Following Him means a reorientation of life, one that might make others hate us.”</p>	<p>Open It Explore It Get It</p>

“For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (v. 14). Matthew 7:13–14

A Narrow Gate; a Hard Way

Good preachers typically offer an application of the content they have delivered in their sermons. Often, an exhortation is given and the congregation is called to make a decision based on what they have heard. People need to be encouraged to act after God’s Word has been delivered. Once we have heard what the Lord demands of us, we will be held responsible if we do not obey.

Pastors follow the model of Jesus at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount when they call upon their flocks to make a decision. In today’s passage, our Savior makes

final application of all that He has said in Matthew 5:1–7:12. Now that we know what He demands of us, we must choose to follow Him. Ultimately, 7:13–27 shows us we have only two options. We will either follow Christ wholeheartedly or we will go down the path of destruction. There can be no half-hearted commitment to Jesus; if we are not on the narrow road of discipleship, then we are on the wide road to eternal damnation (vv. 13–14).

This call to decide does not mean we are able to choose the right path before we become Christians. Salvation is by grace through faith, a

gift to God’s people chosen from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:8–9). However, those whom the Father transforms by grace inevitably choose to serve Christ. Good works, including our confession of Jesus and our obedience to His commands, follow necessarily from a changed heart (v. 10). Moreover, we still need this grace even after it first sets us on the true way of Christ in our conversion. We must daily turn to the cross and seek Christ in order that we might finish the race. Our Creator gives more grace to all who humble themselves, admit their weaknesses, and ask for strength (James 4:6–10).



As we share the Gospel, let us tell people that following Jesus means we abandon our agenda for His. Following Him means a reorientation of life, one that might make others hate us.

(Continued)

As Matthew Henry writes: “We can neither go in, or go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true that grace is freely offered, and shall not be lacking to those who seek it and submit to it.”

Our Lord echoes the great prophets and leaders of Israel when He calls us to choose the narrow path of godliness (for example, Josh. 24:14–15). Lest we apostatize as the nation of Israel did, let us commit ourselves each day, by His grace and Spirit, to live out the kingdom ethic as Jesus has commanded.

Coram Deo (before the face of God)

Matthew Henry summarizes Jesus’ teaching in today’s passage: “We must endure hardship, must wrestle and be in agony, must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection. We must go through much tribulation.” Christ’s way is narrow and we dare not pretend otherwise. As we share the Gospel, let us tell people that following Jesus means we abandon our agenda for His. Following Him means a reorientation of life, one that might make others hate us.¹

Passages for Further Study

Deut. 30:11–20

Jeremiah 21:1–10

Luke 9:57–62

Revelation 20:11–15

Open It!

1. When you are traveling to a particular destination are you one who looks for the quickest route possible or do you look for a more scenic and picturesque drive?

2. When lost are you open to asking directions or do you enjoy the challenge of figuring it out on your own?

Read It | Matthew 7:12-14

Read the entire passage before proceeding to the questions below.

Explore It

1. What two words does Jesus use in describing the gates that man can enter?

2. How does Jesus describe the journey beyond each gate?

3. To where do each of the gates lead?

Get It

I would like to share an observation with you that I have made over the years. Now, this is profound, so hang onto your hats: Where you wind up depends on which road you take! In other words, you cannot go south from here in North Carolina and expect to go to New York City. You cannot go east from here and wind up at the Mississippi River. I realize you could do this if you were to circumnavigate the globe, but using the roads which are in place now, it would be absolutely impossible for you to do that. Just as this is true in the physical realm, it is also true in the spiritual realm. Where you wind up in eternity will be determined by the road you take here on earth.

It is impossible to take the wrong road and go to

Heaven, and it is impossible to take the Heavenly road and go to Hell.


What you do while in this world will determine forever, where you spend your forever. This life has been described as nothing more than a brief pause between two very long eternities. Now, that shouldn't take any of us by surprise. After all, we are surrounded by death from the day we born into the world. Loved ones pass away, friends leave this world, and deep inside, we know that it will happen to us someday as well. The fact that you will not live forever is a common theme throughout the Bible. Since we are going to leave this world someday soon, and when we do, we will continue to live either in Heaven or Hell forever, it is essential that you know where you will end up. ²

1. Running rampant in our world today is the view that all religions and faiths lead to eternal life with God. Why is this view so popular today?
2. What is your response to someone who insists there are multiple ways to God/Heaven?

Enter (eiserchomai) ice-er'-khom-ahee means to go or come into and so to enter into. The aorist imperative conveys the sense of urgency, calling for immediate and effective action! **Don't delay! Enter now!** Don't procrastinate is the idea. Don't admire the principles of the Sermon on the Mount but refuse to follow those principles. Beware of putting off "doing business" with Jesus, making absolutely sure you know Him intimately and not just that you know about Him. Prolonged procrastination might end in perdition!³

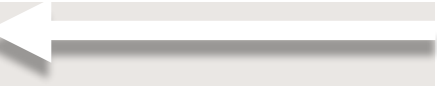
3. If Jesus demands instant obedience to His command to enter by the narrow gate, what causes so many from doing so? What things will we miss out on if we procrastinate in obeying?

(Continued)



The way that is broad is the easy, attractive, inclusive, indulgent, permissive, and self-oriented way of the world. There are few rules, few restrictions, and few requirements. All you need do is profess Jesus, or at least be religious, and you are readily accepted in that large and diverse group. Sin is tolerated, truth is moderated, and humility is ignored. God's Word is praised but not studied, and His standards are admired but not followed. This way requires no spiritual maturity, no moral character, no commitment, and no sacrifice. It is the easy way of floating downstream, in "the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Ep 2:2)

4. In your own opinion, give the top three reasons why you think people tend to choose the "wide path" with regard to their religious thinking?
5. What does the "wide-road" theology of today tend to sound like? What are some popular statements or catchphrases?
6. In what ways do churches allow this broad gate religion to seep into ministry? In what ways does a church protect from such error?



It is the tragic way "which seems right to a man," but whose "end is the way of death" (Pr 14:12).

A West Indian who had chosen Islam over Christianity said his reason was that Islam "is a noble, broad path. There is room for a man and his sins on it. The way of Christ is too narrow." It seems that many preachers today do not see that issue as clearly as that unbelieving Muslim.⁴





In order to enter by the narrow gate one must strip himself of many things, such as a consuming desire for earthly goods, the unforgiving spirit, selfishness, and especially self-righteousness. The narrow gate is therefore the gate of self-denial and obedience. On the other hand, "the wide gate" can be entered with bag and baggage. The old sinful nature—all it contains and all its accessories—can easily march right through. It is the gate of self-indulgence. So wide is that gate that an enormous, clamorous multitude can enter all at once, and there will be plenty room to spare. The "gate," then, indicates the choice a person makes here in this life, whether good or bad....It is clear, therefore, that our Lord does not follow the method that is used by certain self-styled revivalists, who speak as if "getting saved" is one of the easiest things in the world. Jesus, on the contrary, pictures entrance into the kingdom as being, on the one hand, most desirable; yet, on the other, not at all easy. The entrance-gate is narrow. It must be "found." And the road with which it is linked is "constricted."⁵

7. In what sense is the gate of Christianity small and the road narrow? Why do you think many people dislike the notion that there is only one true gate?

8. What types of challenges have you experienced in traveling the narrow way?

9. In what ways is your life on the narrow path different than those who find themselves on the way to destruction?

You can be sure that the narrow way is more demanding. But you can be equally certain that it leads to a life more satisfying than anything the world has to offer.



(Continued)

10. In what ways is the narrow way more demanding? How is it more rewarding?

11. Why is verse 12 so important to remember when we engage people who are on a different path than we are? How does this verse guide our times of evangelism to the non-believer?

12. How does this passage challenge our view of the gospel simply involving “the sinner’s pray” or “accepting Jesus?” What components must be included in our gospel presentation?

13. Jesus closes our passage by saying that “few find the narrow way.” In what ways might this be discouraging? Encouraging?

14. With who is God calling you to share the way to eternal life? Talk through with your group a plan as to how you might go about sharing the gospel.

¹ R.C. Sproul, A Narrow Gate; a Hard Way. *From Ligonier Ministries, the teaching fellowship of R.C. Sproul. All rights reserved. Website: www.ligonier.org*

² Alan Carr, Sermon “Where Will You End Up?”

³ www.preceptasutin.org

⁴ John MacArthur, Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary

⁵ Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker