

ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE

TEXT: LUKE 13:23-30

INTRODUCTION:

1. Back in the 19th century, Dewitt Talmage pastored a big church in Brooklyn.
2. One day, another prominent New York pastor said to Pastor Talmage, "I have a very large audience, but they are all Christians. I can't get the worldly people to come in and listen to me. I hear that a good many worldly people come to hear you. You must preach some very strange things. What did you preach about yesterday?" "Well," he replied, "I preached yesterday morning on, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found"; and in the evening I preached about "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The other pastor said, "Is that all?" "Yes," Talmage replied, "that is all."
3. I do not know how many worldly people we have here this evening, but I too will preach, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."
4. Here in Luke's Gospel, someone – we are not told his name – asked Jesus, "Lord, are there few that be saved?"
5. This is a good question and there is no doubt in my mind but that the man was sincere. He had probably seen the big crowds gathering around our Lord, and then noticed how most of the people drifted away as our Lord explained what it really meant to be one of His disciples (cf. Luke 9:23-26).
6. As you study this passage, you will notice that our Lord does not answer the man directly, but rather He gets right to the heart of the problem (Luke 13:24).
7. In other words, never mind how many will be saved –the real important question is: ARE YOU SAVED?

8. And though our Lord doesn't answer the question directly here, we know from other Scriptures that, sadly, the answer is, "Yes, there are few that be saved."

A. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord stated that most people prefer the wide road that leads to hell. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

B. Jesus said that He alone is the way to heaven – "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

C. When you consider that most people in the world (e.g., Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Shintoists, et al) do not believe in Jesus Christ, then it is obvious that most people in this wicked world are lost and on their way to hell.

D. Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to get to heaven, one had to be born again (John 3). When you consider that most of the world's billion and a half nominal Christians (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Greek Orthodox, whatever) are not born again, then it is clear that few are saved.

E. Surveys tell us that many of the people who claim to be born again seldom attend church, do not read the Bible, do not believe in hell, and live and act just like those who do not profess to be Christian. Therefore, it is obvious that they are not truly saved.

F. "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

I. THERE ARE FEW THAT BE SAVED BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE DO NOT WANT TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE (13:24).

1. The "strait (narrow) gate" represents repentance (Luke 13:3, 5).
2. The strait gate represents the new birth (John 3).
3. The strait gate represents submission to Christ (Luke 13:34).
4. "We must be earnest when the door to life stands open, and we are invited to enter in; we must be sure that we heed the gracious invitation and do not pass carelessly by, lest we find at last that we have lost our opportunity" (Harry Ironside).
5. Notice the word "strive" (13:24). It is from this Greek word that we get our English word *agonize* – there is a struggle involved when a sinner comes to faith in Christ.
6. Alexander Maclaren said, "We are not saved by effort, but we shall not believe without effort."
7. "Jesus never suggested...that it was going to be an easy thing to be a Christian. That heresy has been reserved for this soft age, in which we are more concerned about statistics than about spiritual power" (G. Campbell Morgan).
8. Albert Barnes says the Greek word translated "strive" is taken from the Grecian Games. "In their races, and wrestlings, and various athletic exercises, they *strove* or agonized, or put forth all their powers to gain the victory...So Jesus says that we should strive to enter in; and he means by it that we should be diligent, be active, be earnest; that we should make it our first and chief business to overcome our sinful propensities, and to endeavour to enter into heaven."
9. It is a fact that most people are lazy when it comes to spiritual things. They do not want to strive.

10. They may strive to make money, or strive at the gym or on the tennis court, or strive for worldly pleasures, etc. But they will not strive to enter in at the strait gate!
11. Many are too proud to enter in at the strait gate. Many mistakenly believe that they are good enough to deserve a place in heaven (13:25).
12. But striving to enter in at the strait gate means humbling yourself and admitting that you a sinner who deserves to go to hell –a lost, hell-bound, hell-deserving sinner.
13. In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Evangelist, directed a lost sinner to the Wicket-gate.
14. The man earnestly ran straight for the Wicket-gate. His wife and children cried after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying "Life! Life! Eternal Life!"
15. Two neighbors tried to fetch him back by force. The name of the one was Obstinate, and the name of the other was Pliable.
16. Obstinate tried to dissuade the man, but Pliable decided to go with him. But once they reached the Slough of Despond, Pliable turned back.

II. THERE ARE FEW THAT BE SAVED BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE PROCRASTINATE (13:24, 25).

1. Some wait until it is too late, and then they discover the door has been shut (13:25).
2. Someone has rightly said, "If unbelief has slain its thousands, then procrastination has slain its ten thousands."
3. Our Lord says that the opportunity to enter the door is limited: "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door..." (13:24, 25).

4. Most people do not realize the danger and the folly of putting off salvation – some day the door will be slammed shut and it will be too late (Matt. 25:10-13).
5. They think they have all the time in the world to get saved but the Bible teaches just the opposite.
6. “He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).
7. The longer sinners wait and put off salvation, the harder their hearts become. That is why the writer of Hebrews says: "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7).
8. Harry Ironside was teaching a small children's Sunday school class and told them: "How sad to know, each time you say `No' to the Lord Jesus, your heart gets harder and harder until by-and-by God calls it a heart of stone, and if you persist in spurning His grace, you will die in your sins and go to hell." One little girl was only five years old and her mother brought her to church but her father was not saved. As soon as she got home she jumped into her father's arms and said, "Daddy, Daddy, feel your heart! Is it getting like a stone yet?" He said, "What are you talking about?" and she told him what she learned in Sunday school. The father said angrily to his wife, "What have they been teaching her down there in Sunday school anyway?" So the wife tried to explain to him but started crying and his little girl hugged him and said, "Oh, Daddy, don't go on saying `No' to Jesus – you need to get saved." When he saw his wife crying and his little daughter pleading, he said, "Well I think I had better settle this thing," and he got on his knees and asked Christ to save him.
9. Some of the saddest words in the Bible are found here: "I know ye not..." (13:25). Most people claim to "know God" but my friend, does God know you? (cf. Gal. 4:9).
10. This brings us to my final point – There are few that be saved because most people do not understand the Gospel.

III. THERE ARE FEW THAT BE SAVED BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL (13:26-30).

1. These people our Lord describes had a familiarity with Him but did not have a personal relationship with Him (13:26-30).
2. There are millions of people today who sincerely believe that they will get to heaven because of their baptism or church membership, or because their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, etc.
3. They have a false sense of security, a false peace –they are self-deceived and under a strong delusion; they are confused. They do not understand the Gospel.
4. I read a story one time about a chaplain in the British Army. (It was long ago, and sadly things have changed since then.) The chaplain would ask men who were applying for the chaplaincy one question – if a man is dying on the battlefield and you only have a few minutes, what would you say to him?
5. If they did not give a clear Gospel presentation, the chaplain told them they were not needed.
6. Many Israelites expect to get into heaven because they are descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (13:28-30), but Jesus said that they will be "thrust out" (13:28).
7. Likewise, many Gentiles are expecting to get into heaven because their parents were good Christians.
8. But they will be "thrust out" of the kingdom of God (13:28). And unless they repent, some day they will be "weeping and gnashing" their teeth (13:28).
9. Weeping indicates the pain, suffering and anguish of eternal torment; and the gnashing of teeth indicates their torment as well as their bitterness and hatred towards God – the sufferings of hell do not change the wicked heart of man (cf. Rev. 22:11).

10. One of the supreme agonies of hell will be the remembrance of wasted opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

1. A pastor was witnessing to an unsaved lady but the lady objected by saying, "I cannot understand why some one like me who has tried to live a good, clean, moral life should not stand a better chance of heaven than a dirty, wicked person."
2. The pastor said, "Suppose we wanted to go into a place of interest where the admission fee was one dollar. You only have fifty cents, I have nothing, which would stand the better chance of getting in?" She replied, "Neither one of us."
3. "Right, therefore the moral person stands no better chance of getting into heaven than the dirty, wicked sinner. But suppose a rich man who saw our situation presented a ticket of admission to both, at his expense, then what?"
4. The lady replied, "Then we could both go in."
5. The preacher then explained, "Our Lord knows all about our situation, and He came and died on the cross so that we might be saved. Heaven is available to those who receive God's free gift of salvation. Only be careful that your fifty cents doesn't make you too proud and you refuse God's free offer."