

THE WAY OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Let's turn to [Matthew 7:13](#).

We are close to the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus now wraps it up for us, and calls us to act in faith and obedience. We can outline the remainder of [Matthew 7](#) this way:

- The way to eternal life is narrow and hard.
- Beware of those who teach otherwise.
- The road to life requires doing the will of God the Father.
- We can only know the Will of God through the Word of God, who is Jesus Christ.

Today we are looking at the first of these points, in [Matthew 7:13-14](#).

Matthew 7:13–14 2016 ESV

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Jesus gives all people a command – “enter by the narrow gate” – followed by two reasons, one negative, and one positive.

TRANSITION: Let's look at the command.

COMMAND: ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE

Enter by the narrow gate. But WHAT are we to enter? The Kingdom of God. We know this is true because of the context. Jesus speaks frequently about the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount, but there are two references that are especially important:

Matthew 5:20 2016 ESV

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 7:21 2016 ESV

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

When it's all said and done, what matters is our standing in the Kingdom of God. Will we enter it? Not unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Not if we fail to do the will of Jesus' Father in heaven.

Someone might look at [Matthew 7:13-14](#) and think, “Well, I have to choose, don't I? I've come to a fork in the road; will I choose the wide gate or the narrow gate? Will I choose the easy road or the hard road?”

But that's wrong thinking. It assumes that there are **three** gates, the **two** before us, and the **one** we've already come through. It assumes that there's **three** roads, the **one** that we've been on up to this decision point, and the **two** before us. There aren't **three** gates, just **two**. There aren't **three** roads, just **two**.

Because of sin we are born at the wide gate, and onto the easy road. The question is not whether we will go through the wide or narrow gate – we’ve already passed through the wide gate. The question is not whether we will walk the easy road or the hard road – we spend our lives in rebellion on the easy road.

Jesus doesn’t command us to CHOOSE the narrow gate over the wide gate; He commands us to ENTER the narrow gate. He doesn’t command us to CHOOSE the hard road over the easy road; He commands us to WALK the hard road.

The experience of salvation begins with an act of obedient faith in Jesus Christ. All people are commanded to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. That faith is an act of obedience.

TRANSITION: The command Jesus gives all is to enter by the narrow gate. He gives us two reasons for doing so, one negative, and one positive. Let’s think about the negative reason first.

THE WAY OF DESTRUCTION

[Matthew 7:13](#) (2016 ESV) – 13 “Enter by the narrow gate. [Why?] Because the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.”

Jesus doesn’t mean that the wide gate and easy road will eventually bring about trouble in this life; He means that the wide gate and easy road lead to divine judgment.

What does Jesus mean by saying that the gate is wide and the road is easy? He isn't talking about pleasure, or an easy life; very few people in the first century had lives that even begin to match the comfort and ease that we have today. I believe that He was talking about worldliness and worldly religion, as He does throughout the Sermon on the Mount. A faithful Pharisee would have said something like this:

“The Law says don't murder; everyone gets angry, don't worry about that. The Law says don't commit adultery, but it doesn't say you can't look. Hey, did you see the article in the Jerusalem Daily News about old Benjamin? He gave 500 shekels to the Temple building project; what a guy! Look at those righteous people over there, the ones praying right in the middle of the street; oh, they're fasting, too, you can tell by how miserable they look. That's what real righteousness looks like!”

The Sermon on the Mount is not about condemning paganism; that's already condemned in many places. The Sermon on the Mount is a direct challenge to worldly religion. What an oxymoron that is – worldly religion.

Worldly means belong to the world of human existence and experience. It means having your values, standards, morals, hopes, and dreams determined by the world in which you live.

Religion means actions that indicate belief in, obedience to, and reverence for a god or gods.

So, **worldly religion** makes no sense. It means that, while claiming to worship or reverence some deity, your actual values, morals, standards, hopes, fears, desires, ambitions, etc., are formed by the world in which you live. Of course, this means that those values, morals, standards, hopes, fears, and so on, are in a constant state of change. Very few religious people would have approved of

homosexuality 50 years ago; today, virtually no worldly religious people oppose homosexuality, and whole denominations proudly display “pride” flags while homosexual clergy officiate over their services. Do you believe pedophilia is wrong? Of course you do; it’s a sick perversion. But there are people today who are arguing that pedophilia is just another way for someone to be. It’s not going to be long before it’s defended, and then permitted in some way, and then celebrated. There are those who will say, “No, that will NEVER happen,” but they are the same ones who, 50 years ago, said homosexual marriage would never be a thing.

Tragically, I’ve known worldly Christians. They really believe that they are Christians, faithful to Jesus Christ. But when the morality and values of the world change, they can’t wait to change with it. When their world changes its opinion on right and wrong, they happily go along. They will never criticize what the world approves; they will never hold to that which the world condemns.

TRANSITION: The wide gate and the easy road are the gate and road of worldliness. It is the natural way of the world itself, and so they don’t even notice what’s happening. It’s also a source of constant pressure on Bible-believing Christians, some of whom eventually abandon Christ and follow the world’s lead. But that is the way of destruction. The way to life, Jesus says, is the narrow gate and the hard road. Let’s talk about them.

THE WAY OF LIFE

The way of life – the way Jesus commands us to go – is through the narrow gate and down the hard road.

The thing that matters most in a person’s life is their eternal destiny. If someone gets that answer wrong, nothing else in their life matter’s at all. On the day of judgment it won’t matter whether they were good, humanly speaking. It won’t

matter whether they had a pleasant life, and a solid family. It won't matter that they were a hard worker, or a good friend. It won't matter that the world thought highly of them. No amount of pleasant experiences and happy memories will survive death. It will be gone, as Ecclesiastes says, like a breath on a cold morning. Someone could live their best possible life for 100 years, but without Jesus Christ, the moment they die it would all be gone and replaced with agony and terror as they await the judgment seat of Christ.

How does someone get to eternal life? They must enter the narrow gate and walk the hard road. No one is born on the road to eternal life; to the contrary, we are born already dying in our sins.

To pass through the narrow gate means to come through Jesus Christ. In [John 10:9](#) Jesus says,

John 10:9 2016 ESV

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

No one is born naturally in Christ. We be must born again; we must enter through Jesus Christ, the door. Having entered, we must walk the road that the Lord sets out for us. Jesus says in [John 14:6](#),

John 14:6 2016 ESV

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Living on the easy road means worldliness; the world sets your values, your morals, your goals, your ambitions, your likes and dislikes. I hope it's clear that

the world is in a constant state of change; nothing is settled or permanent. Those of the world must adjust to it, sometimes at a very rapid pace.

Living on the hard road means godliness; Jesus Christ sets your your values, your morals, your goals, your ambitions, your likes and dislikes. I hope that you understand that because Jesus never changes, and His Word never changes, Christian values, morals, goals, ambitions, and so on, never change. They remained fixed and settled, because we are taught them by the unchanging Word of God.

WHY IS THE EASY ROAD EASY? WHY IS THE HARD ROAD HARD?

The easy road isn't easy because it's pleasurable, or effortless. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were very worldly in their religion, and yet they worked themselves to exhaustion trying to get it all right.

By the same token, the hard road isn't hard because it's miserable and impossible to follow. Jesus promises this in [Matthew 11](#),

Matthew 11:28-30 2016 ESV

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Does that sound like He's describing a hard, strenuous, difficult life? Not to me, either.

So why is the easy road so easy? Because, hard as it can be, it takes no effort to be on it. It's the default road. We are born on it. Almost everyone around us,

including, sadly, many who claim to be Christians, follow it without thinking. Going all the way back to the church in Laodicea in [Revelation 3](#), churches and denominations have simply gone the way of the world, in spite of their claim of being Christians. The wide road is wide because of the traffic it bears; it needs to be wide. It's easy because it takes no thought. If someone lives their entire life without considering Jesus Christ, just doing what comes naturally, they are on the easy road, even if their life is one of struggle and suffering.

And why is the hard road so hard? It's not because it requires extraordinary effort; in fact, we are given entrance through Jesus Christ as a gift of grace, through faith, and we walk on His godly road by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gate is narrow because it is no wider than Jesus Christ. We must come with empty hands; there is no room to haul in good works or any amount of pride. The road is hard because it is only as wide as Jesus Christ. You can meander down the wide road and never get close to the shoulders. But you can't walk Jesus' road - which is Jesus Himself - without being lined up with Him at all times. Oh, we drift away, of course, but never more than a step or two away from the Lord Jesus.

BRINGING IT HOME

Let's bring this home this morning.

Jesus has provided the application for us, hasn't He? We are to enter the Kingdom of God by passing through the narrow gate and walking the hard road. The gate is Jesus Himself; there is no other way to come to the Father except through Him. The road is Jesus Himself; He is the road: the truth, and the life.

The gate is as narrow as Jesus Christ; we can't get to the Father, or to eternal life, except through Him. No one can squeeze by Him; we must pass through Him.

The road is hard because we must live as He lived, as John himself wrote:

1 John 2:5-6 2016 ESV

but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

This doesn't mean that Jesus just gave us an example to follow, and salvation depends on our ability to imitate His holy life. We are not saved by our own good works, but by grace and through faith. No, it means that we follow Jesus faithfully and obediently, not in order TO BE saved, but because we HAVE BEEN saved, and He has granted us not only access to holiness and righteousness, but power through the Holy Spirit to live in holiness and righteousness.

I have regular conversations with men who make claims to be Christians, but who have never walked as Jesus walked, and never even gave a thought to it. You know something, this is the point when the Gospel most often becomes incomprehensible. A person can understand a lot of the information about the Gospel, but apart from a divine work of the Holy Spirit a sinner cannot and will not understand that all of their good works, not to mention their bad works, will result in nothing but death and judgment. Apart from the divine work of the Holy Spirit no one abandons themselves to Jesus Christ, trusting in Him and HIS work.

I shared the Gospel with a man the other night. I asked him what he thought the Gospel was, and his answer was essentially, "Well, there's a big mountain, and God is at the top of the mountain, and there are a lot of ways to get to the top of the mountain."

So I had him turn to [John 14:6](#) and read it:

John 14:6 (2016 ESV) — 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

He was stunned and speechless for a moment, but it made no difference. Jesus said that HE is the only way to God. Mind. Blown. But his heart wasn't changed, and he still is hoping in that mountain. He left just as lost and confused as when he came in. Why? Because he's determined to walk his own road, and try as hard as he can to make it on his own.

If you have not trusted in Jesus Christ – if you believe that the Gospel is “God helps those who help themselves” – then I urge you to repent of your pride and unbelief, and to believe in Jesus Christ alone, and to call upon Him to save you.

If you have trusted in Jesus Christ, then give the Lord the glory for your life, and keep your eyes peeled for others who think the Gospel is a self-help program. Many of them believe that they are Christians, but they are self-deceived.