

INTRO: “*Will those who are saved be few?*” That was a big question in Jesus’ day, and it’s a big question in ours. Jewish rabbis were kicking this question around a lot in the first century, and it was widely believed that every Israelite would somehow have a share in eternal salvation, except the really bad ones (Bock, 2:1234; Fitzmyer, 2:1022, quoting *Sanh* 10:1). But Jesus upsets the apple cart, because up to this point in Luke, His teaching has ruled out the very people everyone thought had it made – moral people, rich people, and religious people. Think of the woes to the Scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers in 11:37-52. Think of the rich fool in 12:13-21. Think of the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan in 10:25-37. And Jesus made it sound hard to enter the kingdom of God. Think of the demand to take up your cross daily and deny yourself and follow Jesus in 9:23-27.

And in our day, the question is just as live, but for different reasons. The reason many people asks this question, both Christians and non-Christians, is that we think God should be an equal opportunity redeemer. We judge Him by our standard of fairness, and we assume humanity’s moral innocence; so when we’re confronted with the reality of hell, or the idea that Jesus is the only way, or the cost of following Jesus, or the fact that our morality isn’t good enough for God, then we come out asking “Will those who are saved be few?” And we ask it with a chip on our shoulder. We’re incredulous about it. “If the God of the Bible is worth His salt, then surely those who are saved will not be few, because the God I believe in wouldn’t do X, Y, or Z; or He wouldn’t require this or that of people.” It’s a challenging question; but how does Jesus respond?

Please turn with me to Luke 13:22-35, where Jesus is actually asked this question, “*Lord, will those who are saved be few?*” But Jesus doesn’t answer the question as it was asked. He actually poses and then answers a different question. He says, in effect, “You’re asking the wrong question.” He answers a question about the few in v.23, (ovli,goi) with a statement about the many in v.24 (polloi). He answers a question about the passive idea of being saved, with a command about the active idea of striving. And he answers an impersonal question about others with a personal question of his own. It’s not about the few, but the many. It’s not about passively being saved, but actively striving to enter. And it’s not about them; it’s about you. **Someone asks “Will it be few?” Jesus asks “Will it be you?”** Asking “*Will those who are saved be few?*” is a smokescreen. It makes us appear humanitarian, but it only serves to hold Jesus at arms length. The right question is, “Am I entering, am I striving to enter, through the narrow door?”¹ Jesus is saying we should be, in some sense, narrow minded. **We should agonize to enter God’s kingdom through repentant faith in Jesus;** which raises three questions for us. “Why should we agonize to enter God’s kingdom? How should we agonize to enter God’s kingdom? And why don’t we agonize to enter God’s kingdom?”

1. WHY SHOULD WE AGONIZE TO ENTER GOD’S KINGDOM? (LUKE 13:22-30) Why’s it agon...?
A1: Because the door is narrow (v.24a). Jesus answers the question with a command that involves a metaphor. “*Strive to enter through the narrow door.*” That sounds cryptic to us. What does that mean? The word translated “strive”, or in some translations “make every effort,” is avgwni,zesqe, where we get our word agonize. The Bible uses this word for military conflicts (John 18:36) and athletic competition (1Cor 9:25). It’s also a metaphor for the Christian life. When the apostle Paul talks about presenting every person complete in Christ, he says in Col 1:29 that it’s “*for this I toil, agonizing with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*” He tells Timothy, a pastor of a local church in Ephesus, to “*fight the good fight of faith*” (cf. 2Tim 4:7). He uses it of his own suffering as a servant of Jesus, Phil 1:30 “*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the conflict [agony] that you saw I had and now hear that I still have*” (Cf. also Col 2:1; 1Thess 2:2; Heb 12:1; Jude 3). The striving is a striving in making disciples, a striving in contending for sound doctrine. It’s the hard work of prayer for the churches, and struggle against our own sin.

¹ This is all confirmed by the mild adversative, de., “but” (not “and” here, *contra* ESV), which connects the answer back to the question.

Jesus commands that we agonize to enter. And notice, it's not just a 3rd person command. It's not "they should strive." It's "strive," "you strive to enter." But what room are we're supposed to enter? Where does this narrow door lead us? Well, if we slide down to vv.28-29, the issue is entry into the kingdom of God - heaven. So evidently, Jesus teaches that entering the kingdom of God takes strenuous effort. It's not easy, much less automatic. It's agonizing. Saved people strive. But why is it agonizing? It's agonizing first and foremost because the door into the kingdom of God is a narrow door. And that raises another question: what does the narrowness symbolize? Well, we might be able to get at that by figuring out what the door stands for. Jesus says in John 10:7 "*I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*" Jesus is the door in John 10, which would lead us to believe that He is the door here in Luke 13 as well.²

The narrowness of the door is the narrowness of Jesus Himself. What is it about Jesus that's narrow? It's His authority and His exclusivity. The narrowness of Jesus is that He claims to be the only way, the exclusive way, into the kingdom. "*No one comes to the Father but through me.*" And when you come to the Father through Him, you have to accept His critique of your sinfulness. That's not easy. Jesus tells us that we are not good enough for God. All our philanthropy, all our humanitarian efforts, all our charitable giving, all our morality, is tainted by our sinfulness. And if I want to enter God's kingdom, I have to have a righteousness better than my own, a perfect righteousness, in fact; a righteousness that can only be found in the blood and obedience of Jesus, given on our behalf. I have to submit to the authority of Jesus in my life. I have to turn from my sins. That's not easy either. Accepting Jesus' critique of us and submitting to His authority over us is like squeezing through a really narrow door. But we have to do it; the reason we should agonize through the narrow door is that it's the only door there is. There is no other door into God's kingdom.³

We agonize over many different things, don't we? But the purpose of our striving, Jesus says, should be to enter the kingdom of God. My whole life should be a striving to enter the kingdom of God. That doesn't mean that my vocation, my job, my way of making a living in the world, is trivial. It means that in the way I make a living, I'm striving even there to do that work in a way that pleases God, in a way that shows that I love God first and neighbor second. So what about you, friend? Are you agonizing to enter the kingdom of God? Or are you agonizing to build your own kingdom here, and lethargic toward entering God's?

You struggle in, you don't stroll (Bock, quoting Manson, *Luke 2: 1,235*). This is why we shouldn't believe the bumper-sticker theology that says "let go and let God." The idea of surrender is not the main idea of the Christian life. Jesus commands us to strive, to agonize our way into the kingdom of God. Christianity is not a "set it and forget it" religion. You don't just pray the prayer and then live your life your way. You strive. But if Christian salvation is passive, if it's not something I do or earn, then why do I have to agonize my way into it? Well notice, it's not just strive to enter. It's strive to enter through the narrow door. It's entering through Jesus, through repentance and faith in Him, that's so agonizing. That's the squeeze. The squeeze is that you can't carry all your sinful habits and presuppositions and spiritual opinions through the door with you. They won't fit. You have to leave your sin behind. You have to check your spiritual self-reliance at this door. You have to check your

² So also Bertram, *TDNT* 7:606 "Most men – it is assumed – ignore the admonition and warning, not so much because they are fast bound in the earthly, but rather because they are not ready to accept the new and alien authority of Jesus and to tread the narrow way to which He directs them, passing through the strait gate which in the last analysis He Himself claims to be, Mt 19:22; Jn 10:7."

³ The parallel passage in Mt 7:13-14 is the only other NT occurrence of *steno,j*, where the contrast is between narrow and broad ways. "*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.*" Luke omits both the contrast and the point that "those who find it are few." Luke's point is the striving. The Gk. word narrow (*steno,j*) is used in the LXX to translate fortress/stronghold (1Sam 23:14, 19; 24:1, 23); trouble and affliction (2Sam 24:14; 1Chron 21:13; Jer 30:7; Zech 10:11; Isa 8:22; 30:20); spatially narrow (Num 22:26; Isa 49:20; 2Kgs 6:1; Prov 23:27).

moral pride and your moral autonomy at the door. You no longer call the shots. You have check your worldly ways of thinking at this door, like “all people will be saved one way or another,” or “God is cool with all of us, or at least most of us,” or “all religions lead to the same God,” or “I can have my Jesus and still enjoy my sin. That’s why you have to agonize, because the door is narrow, and it’s the only one there is.

A2: Because the end is final (vv.24b-27). Look there in v.24. *“For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’”* The door is not just narrow; it’s closing. And once it’s closed, it will be much easier to be convinced of the truth of God’s kingdom. Many people, Jesus says, will wait until the door is closed to start trying to enter. But they won’t be able to, because by then it will be too late. They will see that door after they die. They will see Jesus for who He is. They will plead for entry into His kingdom. They will realize that they have been wrong about Jesus all their lives. They will try to appeal to any scrap of knowledge about Jesus that they can remember. Yet knocking on this door after it’s closed will be futile. You have to enter while it’s still open. J.C. Ryle said, “Myriads will wake up in another world, and be convinced of truths which on earth they refused to believe....Hell itself is nothing but truth known too late” (134). There is no second chance after death.

Entering God’s kingdom through Jesus is agonizing, but the agony of rejecting Jesus is worse. The agony of rejecting Jesus is far worse than the agony of following Him. Hell is filled with bitterness and sorrow and anger and regret. For the religious leaders, the bitterness will be that they trusted in their relationship to Abe, Isaac, and Jacob, but never knew Jesus. They trusted in their pedigree. They trusted in themselves. They trusted in their family. They assumed that their connections would get them in the door, and they were wrong, to their eternal, bitter, angry, sad regret. And millions of people today are following them to hell for exactly the same reasons. They are trusting in their moral pedigree, in their own righteousness, in their own family connections, in their own empty form of religion, and they are running full speed into hell. Don’t let this be you, friend. Don’t deceive yourself based on personal morality, religious participation, or family tradition. Agonize through the narrow door now, so that you aren’t agonizing in hell for eternity.

A3: Because casual acquaintance is not enough (v.26). Superficial attachment to Jesus is not enough. The point of the answer in vv.25-28 is that there will be many who heard Jesus’ speak in person, who ate a meal or two with Him, and who will still not enter the kingdom of heaven. They will be absolutely shocked that they are being denied entrance into heaven. They protest it in v.26 *“We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.”* They thought they were good to go. They thought they had a saving relationship with Jesus; but they were self-deceived. Jesus will not recognize us as His friends if we simply sit and listen to His teaching without it changing our lives. It’s not enough to hear Jesus teach and then go on eating and drinking, business as usual. It is not just superficial hearing of Jesus’ teaching, and then going away unchanged, that saves us from the penalty and power of our sin. It’s not just being fascinated with Jesus as a pop icon that leads to eternal life. There is a spiritual equivalent of following Jesus on Twitter or ‘friending’ Him on Facebook or reading his blog. You just fit him into your lifestyle wherever he’s convenient. Download the app, use it when you want, and keep doing your own thing. Yea, that’s not going to be enough. He’ll never recognize you if that’s all you do with Him in your life. That’s a virtual friendship, and you’re flattering yourself if you think Jesus will recognize you as His friend when you show up on Judgment Day if that’s how you related to Him. There has to be a definite, clear response of faith in Jesus that leads to repentance from both unrighteousness and self-righteousness. That’s is the RSVP, and without it, you will be left outside. That’s the point of v.27 *“Depart from me all you workers of evil.”*

A4: Because heaven’s demographics will shock you (vv.29-30). There’s a doubly shocking effect: not only are these moral, religious, conservative people in hell who expected to be in heaven; the people who they see in heaven are precisely the ones they thought would be in hell (Morris, 244). Heaven will be filled with people from all over the world, from every direction. People who had never heard God’s law, will hear His gospel and be saved. The very people whose immorality we think deserves hell the most, will become the forgiven citizens

of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Those who thought they were morally rich will become destitute, and those who were morally destitute will become rich. And if you think this is unfair, if that offends you, then you should think again about who you're supposed to identify with in this story. "Some will be last who are first and some who are first will be last." That principle only scandalizes the self-righteous; it's hope to desperate sinners.

2. HOW DO WE AGONIZE TO ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM? (LUKE 13:31-33)

A1: By submitting to God's authority in Jesus (vv.31-32). A few Pharisees come along in v.31 and tell Jesus that Herod, King of Judea, wants to kill him, so Jesus had better make Himself scarce. Opinion is divided on their motives. Some people think these are good Pharisees like Nicodemus, giving Jesus a genuine heads-up. Others think that they're being self-serving. After all, Jesus has just been telling a parable about people who will be surprised to find themselves in hell when they were banking on their morality and family connections to give them a safe conduct to heaven. I think that second option is probably best. The Pharisees want to get rid of Jesus just as much as Herod does. And the phrase "At that very [same] hour" is ironic. At the very time Jesus was saying these things, here come the Pharisees refusing to enter through the narrow door. They're fed up with the narrow door, so they try to manipulate Jesus into leaving their area based on fear of Herod (cf. 8:37). This is how we know that the narrow door cannot be Christ-less morality. The Pharisees were Christ-less moralists. They were squeaky clean on the outside; what they rejected was Jesus. And how often we tell Jesus to go away – we do it every time we sin. "Go away, Jesus. Find somewhere else to teach."⁴

But Jesus cannot be controlled by the fear of man. Look there in v.32. "He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'" God is sovereign over Jesus' itinerary, not man. There's a play on the word go in vv.31-33. The Pharisees had told Jesus to go away (poreu,ou) in v.31. Here, Jesus tells them to go (poreuqe,ntej) back to Herod and give him a message. And in v.33 Jesus says that he must go (poreu,esqai) to Jerusalem. So Jesus will go, but he will go on His terms, in His time, and for His reasons, not Herod's.

The point is that there is a divine timetable and plan that neither the Pharisees nor Herod can control. God is in control. The Father had laid out Jesus' course for Him, so it is necessary for Jesus to fulfill that course, and nothing can stop it. Jesus will finish His course according to divine necessity, no matter what anyone threatens to do, and it's all leading to Jesus' death in Jerusalem. He will pay the penalty for the sins of all His people. It is part of God's plan. And the take away for us is that we have to submit to the authority of God in this plan if we would be saved from the penalty of our sins. We cannot tell God to act a different way. We do not tell Jesus what he means for us. God determines what Jesus means for us. We cannot pick and choose what we accept about Jesus and what we reject, based on what's intuitive to our own understanding. Sin has darkened our spiritual understanding. Nor can we simply tell Jesus to go away and then expect our sins to be forgiven on the last day. God will not be mocked. We have to submit to God's authority in Jesus. And that's not easy for arrogant, self-satisfied, self-ruled sinners like us. That's the first way that we agonize to enter God's kingdom. We submit to God's authority in Jesus.

A2: By trusting in the finished agony of Jesus (vv.32-33). We've already touched on this. Jesus is on His way to the cross. He will finish His course by dying the death that we deserved for our sins, so that we could be counted righteous before God. He would become sin, accursed for us, so that in Him we might be counted righteous and blessed in Him. Jesus finishes His course by **enduring an agony all His own**. His agony is what earns our way into heaven. He endured a far greater agony, the agony of God's anger at all the sin of all God's people for all time. It is because His agony has taken God's anger at our sin that He Himself is the narrow door.

⁴ Also, the preposition evnteu/qen, from here, may correspond to the po,qen of v.25, 27. Jesus will say "I don't know where you are from," and the Pharisees answer basically "we are from here, and we want you to go away from here."

Only He did that. Jesus invites us to trust in His finished agony in order to enter God's kingdom. And by trusting in His agony, we will suffer agony for our loyalty to Him in this life. But what is unreasonable about that? He suffered far more for us than we will ever suffer for Him. And in the end, we have eternal life.

A3: By life-long repentance at the message of Jesus (v.33). Jesus is speaking of himself as a prophet here in v.33. His message will be rejected, and so just like all the prophets before Him, He Himself will be rejected and killed. The way to struggle into the kingdom by the narrow door is by doing the opposite, by accepting Jesus' prophetic critique of us. We accept that the problem is not with the Bible, or with Jesus, or with my environment, or with the person who wronged me, or with the prophet, or with the preacher. The problem is me. The problem is you. The problem is self. To enter God's kingdom through the narrow door is to open myself to Jesus' critique of me, and to respond by a life-long turning away from the sin that His perfect example points out in us. And there is agony in that repentance, isn't there? There's an agony in killing my sin. It hurts; but it's not that the pain of repentance is some sort of glorified penance. It's that our faith in Jesus' agony on our behalf begins to produce in us a new courage and desire to say no to our own favorite forms of ungodliness.

TRANS: So we should agonize to enter God's kingdom through faith in Jesus because the door is narrow, because the end is final, because casual acquaintance with Jesus is not enough, and because the citizenry of heaven will be shocking to us. The way we agonize to enter God's kingdom is by submitting to God's authority in Jesus, by trusting in the finished agony of Jesus, and by life-long repentance at the message of Jesus. So we know why we should agonize to enter God's kingdom, and we know how to do it. So why don't we?

3. WHY DON'T WE AGONIZE TO ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM? (LUKE 13:34-35)

Verses 31-35 illustrate the natural human response to Jesus as the narrow door. The narrowness of the door is the narrowness of Jesus in His authority and exclusivity. The Pharisees reject him, they ask Him to leave, and now Jesus laments that rejection. He's sad over it. And verses 34-35 give us 3 reasons that the natural human heart does not agonize to enter God's kingdom through repentant faith in Jesus.

A1: Because we don't like what Jesus says about us (v.34a). *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!"* The reason Jerusalem killed the prophets was that they didn't like the message of the prophets. The prophets told them they needed to repent of their sin or else they too would be judged and condemned by God. Jerusalem disagreed. They interpreted Scripture and their situation differently. They thought more highly of themselves, morally and spiritually, than the prophets thought, than God thought. And as for Jesus, they just didn't believe He was who He said He was. And they didn't believe He was who he said He was, in part, because they couldn't believe that they were who He said they were. And the more things change, the more they stay the same. The gospel is preached today, but the natural human heart will not agonize to enter God's kingdom because, quite frankly, we don't think we're as bad off as the Bible puts it. Jesus and the prophets might have been right about Israel, but not us. They were hypocrites for sure, just like Jesus said; but not us, we're better than that, smarter than that, we know ourselves better. But that's not what He says. He says we're sinners in need of saving; and that grates on our ears. At the end of the day, we don't agonize to enter God's kingdom because... we think we're a shoe in. We don't think we need to be saved. We're too nice, too clean to need saving. But look at your own thoughts and attitudes. Look your jealousy, your envy, your pride, your anger, your lust, the way you shade the truth to make yourself look better, your idolatry of safety and family and comfort and ease and prosperity, your preference for God's gifts over God Himself. Are you really as nice and clean as you think you are? Maybe Jesus is right about us after all.

A2: Because we don't want what Jesus offers to us (v.34b). *"How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"* This is the true, natural state of humanity. Jesus offers us salvation, and we refuse him, because His terms are unacceptable to us. He tells us that if we want to enter God's kingdom through faith in Him, then we have to believe that He is king. And that doesn't set well with us, because we're used to thinking of ourselves as king. I'm the captain of my own soul. I

call the shots. I do everything for the sake of self. It's an easy out to excuse your unbelief by quoting a few verses of the Bible out of context, and then blaming God for the fact that you don't want to be reconciled to that God. We'll think of God as arbitrarily picking some to save and some to pass over, assuming that God mercilessly damns innocent people who are all the while crying out to Him for salvation. People want to be saved, but Jesus is unwilling. That's not the picture we get here, is it? It's actually the opposite. Jesus says that the only thing that prevents people from being saved is their own stubbornness. *"I would...but you would not."* Jesus came down from heaven, lived a sinless life, and worked miracles that proved His divine power. He died the death that we deserved for our sins, and God raised Him from the dead. He appeared to 500 people at one time, and at to the disciples at other times. Yet because he tells us that we can no longer be king over our wrecked lives, we blame God and Jesus for sending people to hell. How is that right? God holds out a saving stance towards the world in Jesus, and the world will not have Him because we don't want to live in His kingdom. We want to live in ours. The problem is not that God is not willing to save. The problem is that we don't want to be saved (Gather, cf. Dt 32:11; Ps 106:47; 147:2).

A3: Because we like our religion better than his (v.35). *"Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" The temple religion so loved by the Jews had already been forsaken by God; yet on they went, just as devoted as ever to sacrificing animals, burning incense, not realizing that God was no longer there. Jesus words echo Jeremiah 22:5 "But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation" (Cf. Isa 64:10-11; Jer 12:7 ; Ezek 5:14). God was no longer present in their worship. Just as Ezekiel had seen God leave the first temple, so now He had left this one, and for the same reason – hypocrisy. And yet on they went with their God-less religion and this at just the time when Jesus' death was about to fulfill of all their sacrifices.*

Many people don't agonize to enter God's kingdom through faith in Jesus because our culture has become accustomed to the idea of self-atonement. We like saving ourselves. It suits us. It makes much of us. It makes us feel good about ourselves to think we can redeem ourselves and make up for our sins and mistakes before God. And we can still be the king of our kingdom, instead of having to be a subject in His. It's way more convenient for us. Religion is easier without Jesus. It makes us feel spiritual and moral without getting in the way. It's a tame, domesticated religion, like a pet, or a hobby. And if you believe, as many people do, that you don't have to choose between Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Krishna, then all the better; that way you don't have to swim upstream against the current of religious pluralism. The irony of all this is that our religion of self-atonement is Godless. It's not just that he has moved out of that house – he was never there to begin with.

And that kind of religion won't save you. Jesus says there in v.35 *"You will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"* Now what does he mean by that? Some people think he means that they won't see him until He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey in Luke 19 to fulfill Zechariah's prophecy that their king would come to them riding on a donkey. But that interpretation doesn't really work, because in Matthew's gospel, Matthew places this same conversation from Luke 13 after the triumphal entry. And in Luke 19, it's not the citizens of Jerusalem shouting out the blessing. It's Jesus' disciples who are traveling with him. What Jesus is predicting is the reaction of Jerusalem and its leaders at His second coming. They will not see Jesus again until they see Him coming on the clouds of heaven in power and great glory with all his angels. And if they have not changed their tune by then, it will be too late to be saved. Yet they will still sing the song, even if it's through gritted teeth. This is a judgment. They have rejected God's revelation, and so that revelation is being taken away from them, and they will not see Jesus again until, *"at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil 2:10-11). A Godless, Christ-less religion will not save you.

CONCLUSION

Responding stubbornly to revelation will mean that that revelation eventually will be taken away. But it will not be taken away forever. It will be revealed again, on the Last Day. The return of Jesus will be

unmistakable for all to see. No one will be able to deny His truth then. But by then, the door will have been shut, and it will be too late. And so we have come full circle. We should agonize now to enter the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus, so that we do not agonize for eternity in hell. Jesus has given us four solid reasons to agonize to enter God's kingdom, and He tells us how to do it, by submitting to God's sovereignty in faith and repentance toward Jesus. We all agonize over something eventually. I wonder, what's going to agonize you?

What's the meaning of the ο[ti] phrase? Are we to strive because many others will seek to enter through another door and be unable to enter? Or are we to strive because many will seek to enter through the same narrow door and be unable to enter through it because do not agonize, or b/c they take offense? Is this a teaching about Jesus as the only door through which one can enter eternal life, or is it about not being offended by Jesus? Or is it about both? It seems like the point is a contrast between agonizing and simply seeking. Jesus never mentions an alternative door. He doesn't say "strive to enter through the narrow gate, because many will seek to enter the broad gate and will not be able." He simply says "strive to enter through the narrow gate, because many will seek to enter [period] and they will not be able." Some seek to enter the narrow door and are unable to enter it. The reason is that they seek, but they do not strive. Does Jesus intend zhth,sousin to compare unfavorably with avgwni,zesqe? Is seeking inferior to striving? Stauffer thinks so – avgwni,zomai "means to carry on a conflict, contest, debate, or legal suit...[and] is the thought of the goal which can be reached only with the full expenditure of all our energies. Thus already in the saying of the Lord in Lk 13:24 av... is opposed to impotent zhtei/n" (TDNT 1:137; cf. 1Cor 9:25; 1Thess 2:2; Col 1:29; 2:1ff; 2Tim 4:7; 1Tim 4:7; 6:12; Jude 3). Stauffer, TDNT 1:138 says Paul agonizes "in order that," "on behalf of," and "with" ("he does not link with the term avgwni,zesqai only a i[na, but also quite frequently a 'upe,r...[and the term is] extended by a su,n." cf Lk 16:16