

■■■■ - Walking the Narrow Way

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of choosing the narrow way of Christ over the broad way that leads to destruction, highlighting the serious implications of our faith and actions.

Duration: 48:26

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Judges 21:25, Matthew 5:1, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:13-16

Topics: "Chinese"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the seriousness of the eternal damnation of a person's soul. He highlights how the world distracts people with self-centered pursuits like success, entertainment, and sensual desires, while the world itself is heading towards destruction. The preacher challenges the audience to examine whether they have truly entered through the narrow gate of salvation and are walking in the narrow way of following Jesus. He emphasizes the importance of taking the Christian message seriously, as it deals with matters of life and death, heaven and hell, salvation, and destruction. The preacher also draws a parallel between the small gate and the narrow way, emphasizing that Jesus is the only way to salvation and that apart from Him, there is nothing.

Transcript

Let's open our Bibles again to Matthew chapter 7. Read verses 13 and 14. Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

He begins by saying, enter through the narrow gate. And we discussed that in the last sermon. That the narrow gate is the person of Jesus Christ.

That he is the one who made sacrifice for our sins. And there is no salvation apart from him. Absolutely none.

It is only through Christ. And that in itself is the scandal of Christianity. Because of this we are called an exclusive religion.

Because we say that all those outside of Christ are excluded from God's salvation. Now before someone attacks us on this matter. You must realize that most religions say the same thing.

To the Muslim and the Jew, we are wrong. And we are outside of salvation according to them. The Buddhist and the Hindu.

If they would be true to their teaching, they would say the same thing. And the atheist himself would say that we have a completely wrong view of everything. So everyone has to make their stand.

The Christian chooses to make his stand upon the person of Christ. Now he says, enter through the narrow gate. And then he says, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction.

The idea here is this. There are almost an infinite number of saviors out there. And they say that they are the gate.

And they make a broad gate. All of them put together. And most people are going through those gates.

But Jesus says that it leads to death. But not only is there a wide gate. There is also a broad way.

And most are walking on it. Now, there is something very important about this broad way. It is undefined.

It is basically walking any way you want to. Being subject only to your own heart. This is a very frightening statement.

Because it describes most people who call themselves Christians. They say that they have passed through the narrow gate. They say that they are believing in Jesus.

But they walk in the broad way. They do not walk according to the specific commands of Christ. They do not walk as someone following Christ.

They do what is right in their own eyes. Now, I want you to look at your own life. Especially young people, listen to me.

Do you consciously seek to walk according to the commandments of Christ? Are you thinking about His will? What He desires for you in specific situations? Most would have to admit, no, they are not. They say they believe in Jesus. But walk just like everybody else.

Imitating everyone else. With almost no thought of the will of Christ. That is very dangerous.

Because He says this about the wide way. It leads to destruction. You see, this passage is found in the Sermon on the Mount.

And the Sermon on the Mount is extremely important for Christianity. As a matter of fact, if you look in chapter 5, and in verse 1, it says, when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them.

Now, why the word mountain? Honestly, Matthew could have used the word hill. But He uses the word mountain. Why? He is trying to demonstrate something extremely important to us.

There are two mountains. In Scripture. We have Mount Sinai.

Where the law was given to Moses. This was the center of the Jewish religion. God gave the law to Moses.

And that law was to govern the people. But now Matthew is telling us something else. God has come down on the mountain.

In the person of Jesus Christ. And He opens up His mouth. And He begins to teach us things.

It demonstrates the importance of what is being said. So we work our way down the mountain. We work our way through the Sermon on the Mount.

And we see the great authority of Christ. And the great things that He is teaching us about Christianity. What it means to follow Him.

But then He comes to the last part of the Sermon on the Mount. He is in chapter 7. And it seems like everything begins to change. Because He begins to teach the people with great warnings.

And what He is basically doing is this. He is saying, I am not just some teacher. Who is giving you a few principles.

Through which you can make your life better. What I am teaching you. Has to do with life and death.

Heaven and hell. Salvation. Destruction.

This is not something to take lightly. Your entire life depends upon your response to His Word. Sometimes people say to me.

Why are you always so serious about this? It is a serious thing. I am not called to be a Christian comedian. I am called to warn you.

The Christian message. Is full of promise. It is full of blessing.

It is full of warning. It is full of warning. Here it is.

What will you do with it? He comes to us and He says. Look there are two different types of gates here. There is the narrow gate.

That is me. And there is the broad gate. That is everyone else.

Choose you this day. Where will you pass? And then He goes on from the gate. He says you go through that broad gate.

You will be on the broad way. Everyone else is going that way. Your culture is going that way.

Your friends are going that way. Media is going that way. Government is going that way.

Education, academics are all going that way. If you go that way. You will be with them.

You will receive their approval. They will like you. And with them you will be destroyed.

Then He goes on. He says the way is broad. It leads to destruction.

And there are many who enter through it. Look at this. Many.

Most. Will enter through it. And we see that don't we? I mean look at the world.

If you look at Canada or the United States of America. Would you say the great majority of the people are worshipping Christ? Would you say that our academic circles exist for the glory of Christ? Absolutely the opposite. Would you say our government seeks to submit to Christ? The music that fills the airways, is it about Christ? Walk down the street.

Do you see people serving Christ? No. That's why in one sense the kingdom is a secret or hidden kingdom. Now let's go on.

And then he says, For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and there are few who find it. The gate is small. I've said this, I'll say it again.

Christ is the way. The truth. And the life.

And apart from him there's nothing. You see this is why it's so important that we preach Christ. We ought to be a joyful people.

The news we have is good news. But it is so important. That it requires not only our attention.

But that we share it with a seriousness. If Jesus Christ is telling the truth. The great majority of this world will be condemned.

That's serious. There are so many things going on in this world that are very serious. But none of them are more serious than the eternal damnation of a man.

Nothing is more important to you than to discern what will happen to your soul. You see that's one of the things that this world does to you. It gets your mind so filled, so bombarded with things that don't matter.

Most people are consumed with self. With money. With success.

Entertainment. Sensual desires. Video games.

All the while the world is marching toward destruction. This is what Jesus says. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life.

Now let's make a relationship between the small gate and the narrow way. Many of you may say I've passed through the narrow gate. I believe in Jesus.

I have passed through the narrow gate. Well let me ask you this question. Are you walking in the narrow way? See they don't say that anymore in contemporary Christianity do they? If I were to rewrite the gospel based on what I hear preached in most churches.

It would sound like this. Pass through the narrow gate. And then walk any way you choose.

Take the broad path. Walk with everyone else. Do what is right in your own eyes.

But that is not what Jesus says. The evidence that you have truly passed through the narrow gate. Is that you are seeking to walk in the narrow way.

The way that is marked out by the commandments of Christ. Do you see that? Now again I'm not saying that those who have truly believed will do all of this perfectly. The strongest Christian will stumble and fall.

But the direction of his life. Will be determined by the commandments of Christ. I so wish that God would take the blinders off of people.

I wish they would take the blinders off of the preachers. I wish God would take the blinders off of the preachers. We have these churches where everybody is supposedly believing in Jesus.

And everyone is worshiping Jesus because the music is so good. Then walk out of the building and forget about Jesus. And then walk any way they choose.

This is a direct contradiction of scripture. The evidence that you believe. Is that you are walking in a new direction.

You are no longer going with the crowd. You are going against it. That's why Jesus said be very afraid if everyone speaks well of thee.

When a religious figure dies. And everybody in the world talks about how great they were. There's a problem.

Now listen to what it says. It says the narrow way leads to life. Life.

Real life. Abundant life. Eternal life.

Now there's something about eternal life you need to understand. Although it is dealing with a quantity of life. Unending life.

That is not the main idea of eternal life. Eternal life is a quality of life. And in John 17 Jesus tells us what that is.

That we would know God. And His Son. That is eternal life.

That we would enter in to an intimate fellowship with God through His Son. And that is one of the reasons why eternal life begins at conversion. And doesn't begin when you die.

Because at the moment of conversion. You begin an intimate relationship with God. And as you walk with Him over the years.

That relationship deepens. You grow in your relationship with Him. It leads to life.

Life that is independent of circumstances. When I disciple my children. When we talk about things such as life.

I tell them over and over. Life is knowing God. Life is following His commands.

Life has nothing to do with circumstance. Life has nothing to do with material things. Life has to do with relationship.

The relationship I have with God. The relationship I have with my wife. The relationship I have with my children.

The relationship I have with my brothers and sisters in Christ. The relationship I have with other human beings. It has nothing to do with most of the things you are chasing after.

Most people will be hindered in their relationship with God. Because of their work. And they are working.

For things. They won't have time for their wife. Because they are working for things.

They won't have time for their children. Because they want things. They won't have time for brothers and sisters in Christ.

Because of things. In the end you have spent your entire life for things. I tell my sons.

I want you to be rich in relationships. I want you not to take that higher paying job. If it means taking you away from your God and from your family.

It's all about relationship. Yes, we must eat. Yes, we must have clothes.

Yes, we must have a house to live in. But the simplest of these things should make us content. If we have relationships.

That begins with Christ. Oh dear friends, this is so important. And as you grow older you begin to see this.

It's like the old preacher says. There's only a few things that are eternal. God.

His word. And the souls of men. Invest your life in that which is eternal.

Real life. It is only through Christ. And it is only on the narrow way.

Commandments of Christ. The commandments of Christ are not something that are separated from His person. The Christian life is not just following a group of principles.

The Christian life is not just following rules or wisdom. The commandments of Christ are markers on the side of the road. To keep us following Him.

Following a person. Although doctrine is important. My doctrine is the person of Christ.

Although commands are important. They are not the end of things. They direct us to Christ.

The Christian religion is about life. And that life is found in a person. And to follow that person.

Is to walk in a narrow way. A way marked out by His command. Now look what it says here.

In verse 14. And there are few that find it. Now what does this mean? Jesus Christ.

Is saying something terrifying. He says that most people are on the path to destruction. And only a few are on the path that leads to life.

Now let me share with you what He is not saying. When a lot of people read this passage. This is what they think.

Well when you look at the whole world. You see that only a small percentage of that world. Are people who profess Jesus Christ.

So because of that. We see this passage is true. No that is not what He is saying.

He is not saying that there is a small group of people. Who profess faith in Christ. And they are a small group compared to all the other people who don't.

What He is saying is this. Within the group that calls themselves Christians. Only few will find it.

That changes everything. Now you may ask what is my basis for saying that. The following warnings.

Let's just look at them quickly. I am submitting to you this. That Jesus is saying among those who call themselves my disciples.

Only a few of them will find life. The rest are deceived. They are on the broad way.

And they are headed to destruction. The reason why I say that is this. He then begins to teach about fruit.

He says you will know them by their fruit. So what He is saying is this. There are many people who will say they are Christians.

But the fruit of their life will prove they are not. So He is saying if you say you are a Christian. But the fruit of a Christian is not in your life.

You are on the broad way. Then He goes on in verse 21. Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom.

He is saying there is a whole bunch of people who will call Him Lord. But they are not going to enter into the kingdom. Then He says that there are two groups.

Both of them hear the word of the Lord. But only one of them do the word of the Lord. And by doing the word of the Lord.

They prove that they have truly believed. That they have passed through the small gate. That they are on the narrow way.

And that their end is life. The rest claim to hear. But they do not do.

And by not doing. They demonstrate they have not truly believed. And they are destroyed.

This is a very, very serious thing. And you must listen to it. Ask yourself the question.

Have I passed through the small gate? Well ask yourself this question. Do you walk on the narrow way? Is your life governed by the commandments of Christ? When you disobey the commandments of Christ. Does it bring you to repentance? Do you seek to know the commandments of Christ? So that you might walk more carefully? Or do you commit the heresy found in the book of Acts? Or the book of Judges? Where everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

It is a true statement. That there are more practical atheists than there are professing atheists. Possibly very few of you would stand up and say I'm an atheist.

But you live as though you were an atheist. You get up in the morning. You go through the day.

You go to bed at night. With almost no thought of Christ. With almost no thought of the word of Christ.

It's practical atheism. We must listen. Now let's go on.

In verse 15. He says, beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.

Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? In the specific and immediate context Christ is talking about false prophets. But there is a wider application that encompasses all of us. It is the undeniable relationship which exists between the internal and the external.

What a man is on the inside is proven by what he does on the outside. This is extremely important in our culture. Or at least in the North American culture.

Where we have made a complete divorce between what we say we are and what we do. You will often hear a person in the church say this. Don't judge me because you don't know what's in my heart.

I don't have to know what's in your heart. I just need to listen to what comes out of your mouth and watch the way you live. For out of the mouth comes the content of the heart and the will of a man the decisions he makes demonstrates the nature of a man.

What he actually is on the inside. Now this is extremely important. He says beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing.

It is something external. They have dressed themselves in a type of religion. Paul says they have a form of godliness but they deny the very power that causes true godliness.

They dress themselves. They put on their mask and he says this will be very very common. They will look like sheep but inside they are ravenous wolves.

Then how can we know them? I mean if their disguise is that clever how can we ever determine? From this passage and Galatians chapter 1 I can give you two ways to expose them. In Galatians 1 it is this if they preach a gospel other than the biblical apostolic gospel that is the first clue. And many people are doing that.

Even within evangelicalism they have taken the glorious gospel of our blessed God reduced it down to a few principles if you agree to those principles and you pray the prayer at the end of the tract they pronounce you saved. That is not the gospel. Another way you will know them by their fruits.

I was a young pastor in Peru probably only about 27 years old when this happened. Yeah, 27. And I was getting ready for church it was about 5 minutes before church was to start and these three men walked in.

They were much older than me they had very strong personalities and they walked in to take control. I was a young man and they said, who is the pastor? I said, I am. And they looked at me despising me.

They said, we are prophets. And I said, oh that is wonderful. They said, we want to speak to the people.

I said, what a blessing that will be great. They said, when do you want us to come forward to speak? I said, in about 6 months. They said, what do you mean 6 months? I said, well if you are prophets you have obviously read Matthew 7 and I can only know if you are a true prophet by your fruit.

So when you live among me for about 6 months to a year and I can determine that you are true prophets then you can speak in this room. They got very angry. They rebuked me and they walked out the same door they came in.

You will know them by the way they live. Do you realize how many so-called prophets you have met in your life? They feed off of God's people. They walk among God's people as though they were kings.

We are the man of God. They have got to have a better house. They have got to have a bigger car.

No. A man who preaches the gospel faithfully has a right to be supported. He has a right to live with dignity.

To provide a home for his wife and children. To be able to educate his children. He does have needs.

But to live in luxury he is not representing Christ. He is not representing Christ. If we are men of God what do we care about money? I had a man who was very, very wealthy one time.

And he came to me. He said, Brother Paul, sometimes you know I am so ashamed. I am very sad.

I have so much money. And I look at men like you and I feel sad. I said, Yeah, I feel sad for you too.

He says, What do you mean? All you got was money. I open up God's word and I hear him speak to me. I bow my knee and I sense his presence.

I have a home in glory that will swallow this world. You can tell that God really doesn't think a whole lot about money. Just look at who he gives it to.

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. A man once walked into a poor pastor's house and he saw all his children.

And he looked at the children and he said, This is what makes a rich man poor. He said, No, sir. These are what make a poor man rich.

Relationship. The presence of God. So if a prophet demands profit, he's not a profitable prophet and you need to get away from him.

I know I've said this over and over. It's all about relationship. Relationships.

It's all about God wakes you up at one in the morning and wants to talk to you a bit through his word. It's all about the peace of God that passes all understanding. It's all about waking up at two in the morning just to watch your wife sleep.

It's all about a little baby. It's all about a person whose life is ruined being suddenly transformed and changed. It's all about going somewhere and working so that starving children don't starve anymore.

All these other things are just rot. They're just rot. A true prophet, he has a Bible and he has a towel by which he washes the feet of the saints and he has a hoe by which he works his garden.

He has a shepherd's staff. He cares for the flock. He'll know them by their fruit.

He will know them by their fruit. But in the same way, we will know whether or not we are Christians by our fruit. And that's what we'll be talking about in the next session.

Are you a Christian? Well, you will know by your fruit. Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would take this word and use it in the life of your people.

I pray that men might be born again for your glory and the glory of your Son. Amen.

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