

Enter in the Strait Gate

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of entering the straight gate, which requires acceptance of the teachings of Jesus Christ and overcoming obstacles to salvation.

Duration: 50:28

Scripture: Matthew 7:13

Topics: "Narrow Way"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. He emphasizes that these teachings are not his own, but come from the Lord. The preacher also highlights the need for individuals to recognize their own depravity and enmity against God in order to become a true Christian. He emphasizes that entering the straight gate, which represents salvation, is a difficult task that requires individuals to let go of their idols and cherished sins. The preacher encourages his audience to be faithful in proclaiming the truth and seeking God's visitation through prayer. The sermon is based on the seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

Transcript

There's a good deal of weeping and sorrow of humans speaking in the pastor's house this morning, and it makes one express the hope that this book is God's Word. Well, each time I walk down to speak to you, I pass a cemetery over there, and one back here. And I can't prove that this is God's truth, I just hope it is, don't you? Or it has a message for us.

Now, the service this morning will bring us through the halfway mark in the time allotted for our visit with you. Last Lord's Day at this time, we dwelt upon the desperate truth that it's been a little over a hundred years since the sovereign God's been pleased to break through and bring us his presence and great power. That's a solemn thought, and it'll make the hair stand on your head just to contemplate what if it shall please God that we shall live all the days of our lives, dragging our feet, gasping for life, without the great manifestation of the Lord.

Could be. We've had a little blessing, I think, especially in some hearts with trust, but of course, we've had nothing that could be described as a visitation from the Lord. All I know to do, I'm responsible, as long as I'm your guest, for the public proclamation of the Word.

I'll have to answer for that, and you're responsible for your reception, how you water it with the salt of your tears and prayers. Someone has well said that we'll not have the blessing of God upon our churches as long as Mr. Witteye and Mr. Amen has quit coming to church. Men who, like the eleven, stood up with Peter and said, Amen, as the word went out.

Not men who booked it, not men who were not under authority, but men who had long since learned to obey them that have the rule over you. And then Mr. Witteye, who has long since learned that God says, I've seen your tears, thus I've heard your prayers, said that to a man by the name of Hezekiah. Whether God shall visit us or not is entirely something we do not know, but whatever takes place, we must try to be faithful to the proclamation of truth, the best we're able to get it from the Word of God, then the scotching for it and watering it with our prayers.

This morning I ask you to open the word, if you have it, to the seventh chapter of the gospel of Matthew. And I wish to read a passage of scripture and speak from this passage of scripture for this morning and this evening and then, God willing, tomorrow night. This morning I'm to speak on entering the S-T-R-A-I-T, straight gate.

Tonight, God willing, I hope to speak on this passage on the subject, walking the N-A-R-R-O-W, narrow road. And tomorrow night, if the Lord be pleased, we're around here, still with this passage of scripture before us to speak on how men get on this broad road that's spoken of here. In verse 13, down through verse 23, our Lord says, enter ye in at the straight gate, not S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T, but the S-T-R-A-I-T.

And the better entering, of course, of the original we're told is, our Lord says, agonize, agonize, to enter in at the straight gate. Strive, roll up your sleeves, spit on your hands, gouge your ears, afflict your heart, agonize to enter in the straight gate. For if it be true then, how true it is now, that wide is the gate, and broad is the way.

You wouldn't have to agonize to get into a wide gate. Nor would you have to be disciplined daily by the living Lord to walk in the broad road. But since the gate is wide and the way is broad, that leadeth to destruction.

And since many there be which go in that wide gate and walk in that broad way. And since the gate that you're urged to enter in is straight, and since the way you're enjoined to walk in is narrow, and since this straight gate opens up into a narrow way, and this narrow way leads unto life, and since, our Lord said, there are few that find this narrow way. No wonder our Lord, who loves sinners more than we do, and didn't come down here to condemn the world, is already that, but came down here to save.

No wonder, in view of all of these facts, he'll say agonize, agonize to enter in the straight gate. And prick up your ears, if you're interested in listening to the admonition of the Lord. And beware of false prophets, not evil prophets.

The Bible says there are evil prophets there, they're no good, they're bad men. But false prophets sometimes are awfully good men. They're just wrong, they speak lies in the name of the Lord, but they're as sincere as they can possibly be.

What a challenge that is to anyone who ever teaches a class, witnesses out on the street, or preaches publicly as I'm trying to do now. Anyone who's a child of God, and in any capacity handles the word of God. Oh my, since we're as dumb as we are, and since especially in our day the water flows so slowly,

and everything is so, has the smell almost of a funeral parlor.

And we have to fight for every inch of ground of holiness that we can possibly stand on. Instead of being encouraged by our brethren, we're discouraged in our panting after the likeness of Christ. Especially in these terrible days, where salvation is a word to be banded about, and the holy things of God are so taken for granted and assumed, instead of sought after and prized.

Surely it behooves us all to beware, lest we be a false prophet. How it humbles us to know that all of us have to say, having done what we could and did, we are still unprofitable servants. Being aware of the fact that God has given to men the job of passing on his word, and how weak we are, this is a challenge.

Beware of false prophets. Don't you listen to them. They come to you in sheep's clothing, they're awfully nice men, and they speak much of how they love souls, and how zealous they are, and how they're contending for the faith.

They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they're ravening wolves. They'll tear you to pieces. How are you going to know these false prophets? You're going to know them by their fruits.

Watch the converts. See whether they live holy lives or not. If they don't, they believe not the gospel.

They close not with Christ, for a holy gospel will produce holy people if it's received. You shall know these false prophets by their fruits. Oh surely, but that's our message Monday night.

Do men gather grapes of thorns? Why certainly not. Do they gather figs of thistles? Of course they don't. Likewise it's so that every good tree, still talking about the public preacher, every good tree brings forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. False preaching cannot bring forth good fruit. And true preaching cannot bring forth evil fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. A man told me one time he believed hell would be full of preachers. I said, the Lord beats you to it.

But this verse says, false preachers, what a challenge, false teachers. God's going to deal with them someday. Wherefore, watch out for them, by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But who shall? He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, aren't these plain words.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out the demons, and in thy name done many wonderful works. And the Lord said, then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

This morning notice, with all your hearing about you, as I know you will, you wouldn't be here just to put on a show. You're here hoping to hear from God through the poor little old preacher's simple, foolish words. Here are three things about this straight gate that our Lord bids men and women to agonize if they may enter in this straight gate that leads to a narrow way that leads to eternal life.

In the first place, the Lord says, this gate that must be entered is S-T-R-A-I-T straight. Down in the hills of West Virginia some years since, I was preaching away the best I could. After the service, a white haired old Baptist preacher, pink cheeks and white hair, snow white hair, came up to me in all of the modesty and humility and good sense of some age, said, young brother, do you know what the word S-T-R-A-I-T means in the scripture? I said, I'd be glad for you to tell me, I'd listen, and I wasn't being smart.

He said, it means difficult, difficult. Agonize to enter in the difficult gate. The gate that the Lord said must be entered is difficult, difficult.

Now, I expect I've got your unanimous agreement that this generation don't think the Lord knew what he's talking about. The idea that it's hard to become a Christian goes against the grain of what we've been hearing for a long time in far too many places. The day when the Lord was here, his teaching was very, very strange to them, and they booked him on it.

The Jewish leaders had, they said, now we'll have you to understand. We'll be Abraham's children. He just said, if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

And they said, we don't need anybody to give us freedom, we're all right. They had a perverted view of the Bible teaching of election. And it is a humbling thing that men and women who took truth and perverted it, perverted it to the terrible extent that they had to, to back up their actions, they had to take the Lord Jesus Christ and with wicked, malicious hands, kneel him to a tree.

There's nothing on earth that damns men more than truth perverted. These Jewish folks thought that because they were natural born descendants of Abraham, that they needed nobody to set them free from the bondage of sin. It's like a fellow saying, I believe in election and living like the devil.

He brings disgrace on the holy truth of God and the God of the truth. You see, these Jews were told by the Lord, if you're Abraham's children, you'd have Abraham's faith, and that isn't all, you'd have Abraham's works, and they hadn't either. And so they bucked the Lord Jesus Christ over this very question that's before us this morning.

Today we live in what's called a Christian nation, which at the same time is the most crime-ridden nation in the whole of God's universe. Isn't that something? Today we've lived all the days of our life when we've had an easy believism called it salvation. That the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the gate that must be entered is difficult and straight, is contrary to our eyes, is seen by the fact that men do not believe it because they believe that heaven can be obtained on much easier terms.

And those laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ see if these next few statements are not so. Men are quite sure that heaven can be reached without walking the only road that leads there. Men actually believe that you can be what's called saved and walk an undisciplined life and die and go to heaven.

Men actually believe that. Men today believe that the kingdom of God can be entered without passing through much tribulation. But the Bible says through much tribulation do we enter.

Men believe that they can be Christians without being disciples. Men believe that a man can go to heaven who never knows what it means when the Lord said, if any man will come after me let him deny himself not some of the things he does but himself. That's a crushing demand.

And take up his cross, not some little burden, but the cross stands for death, utterly death. Actually people today look you in the eye and tell you they're saved who've never experienced death. But my Lord said if any man will come after me let him deny himself.

Take up the cross, that's death. Follow me. Men do not believe that if you live under the flesh now you shall reap of the flesh corruption.

If you live under the spirit, I'm quoting Romans 8, 13, you shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. In other words, you living in a generation do you share their belief that a man can serve two masters, this world and the next world. In short, men do not believe that the gate is as difficult, nor the way as narrow as the Lord said it was.

Men today are quite sure that all you have to do to be what we call saved, that all you have to do to be what we call saved is to respond to the Lord's invitation to come to him. But none can savingly come to him apart from the hating of and the forsaking of their cherished sins. Why don't men come to Christ? Because they're in head over heels in love with their own way.

And I thank God that men still understand, whether church members believe it or not, that the coming of Christ means a different life and having a different master. Men say to me, Brother Barnard, I'm not ready to be a Christian. They're telling you the truth.

They don't want to live right. They don't want to be made holy. They'll tell you something.

You try to get them to come to Jesus anyhow, they say no! They got more sense than you've got. They know it'd be a mockery for anybody to claim to be saved apart from having been brought to the place that he hates, the sin that's damning him and ruining him, longs to be delivered from it. Man knows it'd be mockery to go through the bulge claiming to get religion, as we call it, without a heart forsaking of the sins that nestle in his bosom and act as a pointed shotgun in the heart of a holy God.

The gate that must be entered is difficult. How can a man tear out of his own heart his pet idol, his cherished darling? That has to be done if you get through this gate. The second thing that I bring to your attention this morning, not something new but something old, is that this straight gate must be entered.

It's a difficult gate, but it must be entered. And it's not easy. Men are enjoined to agonize to get in this straight gate.

In Luke chapter 13, my Lord said, Strive, listen to these tremendous words, My Lord says, strive to enter in at the straight gate, and then he gives these words that I expect if I understood all they meant, I don't know what on earth, I might go crazy, I can just read them and wonder to death of them. Strive to enter in at the straight gate, and he gives the reason for the agony and the striving to get in. This is the reason.

For many, many I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able. Now if that isn't the verse of scripture, I'll choose up and take sides. And that isn't what Brother Barnard thought up, that's the 24th verse of the 13th chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

My Lord, my soul, he would try to wake up men and women, boys and girls, now rocking along their familiarity way to hell in the name of salvation, and warn you that a whole castle of people, or Jesus is a liar one, are going to try to get in this gate, not going to be able to make it. I've heard it ever since I was preaching, these radio preachers, you know, making fun of the truth, that if you wanted to be saved, you'd

be saved. But the Lord says that many shall seek to enter in, and they shall not be able.

They shall not be, that scares me. When I see people switching their gums one jaw to the other, taking Jesus now, and going right back out and living the same kind of lives they've always lived, I wish that the blessed Lord Jesus could get their attention for just a minute, I doubt if he can, and just face you with the awful agony of esteem that you have. Many, are you one of those who are going to make a little effort, run out and shoot a little bear, make a little profession, cry a little bit, pray a little prayer, and stop short of entering in this difficult gate.

Many shall seek to enter in. My Lord said they shall not be able. My Lord says there are obstacles in the path of getting in this straight gate.

I think there's no more expressive word in the Bible than Matthew 23, 13. The Lord said but woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, for you neither go in yourselves, neither ye suffer ye them that are entering to go in. In my Lord's day the religious leaders were refusing to make an effort to go in the gate, and they were doing their dead level best to see to it nobody else did.

And as God is my judge this morning, the religious atmosphere of America in our churches is an atmosphere of refusal to listen to the Lord's plain word, and a concentrated effort to see to it nobody else does. What I'm saying this morning is if you get in this S-T-R-A-I-T straight gate, you'll be able to meet opposition in your family, in your church, and in your business, and everywhere else. For this generation is set that everybody ought to have a nice, comfortable religion and walk a nice, satisfying, broad, easy-going, undisciplined road and get to heaven when they die.

But God pity anybody that's a narrow-minded now as to believe that the way is a narrow way and that few there are that find it. This straight gate is difficult. Obstacles you have to overcome to get in.

It must be entered. It will not do just to hear about it, you have to get in it. Now a gate like a door, they shut that door a while ago.

That door back there is a means of shutting out or opening up. A gate shuts out or opens. A gate lets in.

A gate shuts out. But this gate the Lord's talking about is the only entrance to that way that leads to life and all who do not enter it are forever barred from eternal glory. That's a solemn thought.

Somebody might be perfectly welcome to do this for after all we're responsible one to another, to God, not to the preacher. You say, well, Brother Barnett, I don't agree with your interpretation. Well, maybe you could be right and I'm wrong.

That's happened many times. But if I'm wrong, you better be right. And you better understand what the Lord's talking about.

This gate, he said it is straight. And he said you had to enter it. And he enjoins people to strive, to agonize to get in.

To get in. The last word this morning is a simple word. What does entering this straight gate involve? Oh, if the preacher ever were right, he'd want to be right here.

He'd want to tell the truth here. For he knows that whatever the attitude of the people might be, that he has to appear before Almighty God. I'm as certain as I'm alive that I'll do business with the Holy God at the judgment face to face over what I say in these last words.

And that won't be any Sunday afternoon picnic. That'll be a solemn occasion. What is involved in entering this difficult gate? As far as I'm able to find out, three things are involved.

First, acceptance of the teachings of Jesus Christ. I do not believe that a man claims to be a Christian and can go all day without coming to God's book of instructions to hear the master's orders for the day. I cannot believe he's got in this gate.

How could a man accept Christ and reject his flesh-killing teachings? I do not believe it can be done. I think that a man will have to get him a Bible and start listening to Christ talk. For God's Son was sent down here to bring God's truth to men and women.

And I do not believe you can come to Christ except to come to Him in the truth of it. When I read that after 3,000 people were added to the 120 who made up Christ's church at that time, that the scriptures say these 3,000 joined with the 120 and went right ahead doing what the 120 had been doing, they continued steadfastly in four things, the first one I mentioned, in the apostles' doctrine, the apostle teaching. And when I'm reminded of the fact that the apostles' teaching was nothing except the teaching of Christ, He said, when the spirits come, He'll lead you into these things.

So the apostles just taught what Christ taught them. Gave them the job to teach it to the people. And we've got it in this book.

And I come to you this morning, not trying to sell you a bill of goods, and weep in my heart at churches who do not continue steadfastly sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. As He and His other self, the Holy Ghost, would take the things of Christ, and show it to us that we might walk in them. And the record of it is in this book.

Honest, actual receiving into the heart of His holy, searching, flesh-withering instruction. They may be summed up quickly by His emphasis on the righteous claims and demands of Almighty God. Who is it that's responsible for the seeing? All the law summed up in this, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and thy neighbor as thyself.

I didn't think that up. That's what the Lord is. How can anybody on earth dare to claim to be a saved child of God, who isn't constantly challenged in his daily life by this summation of what it means to be right with God.

These teachings of the Lord are summed up then in His presentation of the righteous demands of God, and His insistence upon our depraved state and our wicked enmity against Him. No man can become a Christian while he entertains any doubt upon the authority of the Bible, while he refuses to bow to the verdict which God's pronounced upon him in His Son. A man must come utterly to feel his lostness before he'll desire God's salvation.

A man must accept God's sentence upon him, know how guilty he is in God's sight. A man must part with the lies of Satan and receive Christ's truth in order to pass within this gate. I sometimes go to churches, I say this with a heartbreak, that have a Sunday school and they keep records.

And the way you do it now, some churches have what they call a six-point record system. And you get ten or fifteen or twenty percent on your record that Sunday if you bring the Bible. If you don't practice that, you've been where they did.

And I've actually been in churches where the church had to buy copies of Bibles. Keep them on the premises and pass them out to the people so they could say they brought a Bible. Doesn't that reveal the Bible's starved-ness? That this blessed book that contains in it the teachings of the Lord is so little loved and so little studied in this awful day.

What's involved in entering this straight gate? My Lord said, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll rest you. Watch it, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. You see, every church, this church is a Bible institute.

The reason we have to have colleges and Bible schools is because our church is abdicated. The reason these young people are going to be sent off to a Bible school is because our church has left God a long time ago. That's right.

They're better than nothing but can't do a very good job because God told His church to do that. The pastor was telling me that you meet on Wednesday night and study the Book of Romans. He said the attendance was increasing.

But he also told me that only about one half, a little more than one half like that, constituted that time. Are there a lot of Christians around here that are not Bible students? How could it be? How could you have done what the Lord said? Take my yoke upon you. And do what? Learn of me.

Enter into the Bible institute over whom Jesus Christ is the head. And learn of Him. I'm serious about it, dear ones.

I'm serious. The second thing that's involved in entering this gate is the true exercise of repentance. When the Lord came on the scene, He began to preach repent and believe the gospel.

Repent! The Lord Jesus sent John the Baptist to say repent! Christ is coming. He sent John the Baptist to make ready a people to receive Christ when He did come. And in what did their readiness consist? They repented.

They confessed their sins. They owed that death was their due. They needed cleansing.

The gospel is not less holy than the law. The gospel requires that a man's heart bewail his sins and be firm and sincere in his resolution against all future sin. The blessed Spurgeon, this Baptist, quote today but will not preach his message.

Brother Spurgeon said you and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together. No one's sin must you keep. They must all be given up.

They must be brought out like the Canaanite king from the cave and hanged up before the sun. You must forsake them. You must abhor them.

You must ask the Lord to overcome them. It is by abandoning one's idols and the pleasures of sin that a man can get in the straight gate. The third thing that's involved in getting in this difficult gate first is accepting the teachings of Christ.

The second is utter forsaking of your sins. And the third is a complete surrender of oneself to almighty God in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord said I'm the door.

He's the door of God's favored presence. To believe in him is to receive him, to submit to him. As your teacher, as your substitute, as your king.

Only as his holy teachings are really accepted by a contrite heart is any soul prepared to place any value on his cleansing blood. And the sincerity of our acceptance of him as our savior is evidenced by our readiness to submit to his rule in our lives. In Hebrews he's spoken of as being the king of righteousness and the king of peace.

Hear me this last word. Christ's cleansing blood is available to none who are unwilling to throw down the weapons of their warfare against God. It is by complete surrender that a person's able to enter in the straight gate.

Better late than never. Better late than never. I hear people and I hope they're better off in their hearts than in their heads.

They say brother preacher, Lord saved me a long time ago. But I haven't been living for him and I want to rededicate myself, surrender to him. I hope they're not telling the truth.

I hope that they're better as I hope I am in my heart relationship to Christ than in my dumb head. Nobody ever has got saved yet apart from utter surrender to the Lord's rule in your life. I know that for some 60 years all we've offered is a scapegoat to keep men out of hell.

And people say well I accepted Jesus as my savior. And I hope they accepted all of Christ in spite of the fact they hadn't been told about him. But you don't get in the straight gate without value.

And you can't take yourself along with it, it's too straight. It calls for unconditional surrender. You'll have to drop that shotgun and all your self-righteousness, not room for you and it to go in that straight gate.

It cannot be done except if God's Holy Spirit owns truth, crushes a person to where he'll bow to King Jesus. My Lord said, agonize to enter the S-T-R-E-I-T straight gate. Wouldn't it be blessed if a mother could go in that gate for her son? Now, have you ever seen a father with his heart breaking over his daughter? If he could, he'd go in that gate for his daughter, but he can't.

Nobody else can go in this gate for you. You don't make it, mother can't make it for you. I have sometimes sinned against God, the wishing that I could pick people up in a basket, take them through that gate, but I can't.

If you get in, you're going to have to agonize the way you say. We're going to stand and sing number 230. Ask me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19670.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/rolfe-barnard/enter-in-the-strait-gate/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net