

# Voice of Christ

by Tim Conway

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**Scripture:** Matthew 7:13, John 10:27, Joshua 24:15, John 6:67, Matthew 5:3, John 14:6, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22

**Topics:** "Surrender to Christ", "The Narrow Path of Obedience"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Well, it was hard to come up in the pulpit and actually raise my eyes and look at all of you. Well, I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew. I think I'm losing my voice.

Sister Connie gave me this chocolate and forced me to eat it before I preached. I think it took my voice away. Matthew 7. Some of you know that since I departed here January 6th, I went back to Manchester and began a series on the Sermon on the Mount, which I just finished a couple of weeks ago.

I wasn't exactly positive whether I'd bring something from this or not, but it just seemed like I couldn't get away from certain thoughts that kept running through my mind. So, if any of you have followed the sermons and it sounds any bit familiar, I just ask you to bear with me and hear me again. Of course, Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is the Sermon on the Mount.

Some of the most well-known verses. We know a lot of verses from this sermon. Some of the most well-known probably found in Matthew 7, verses 13 and 14.

Enter, of course, the old KJV, enter by the straight gate. Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy or broad that leads to destruction. 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. Now the thing is, these words, there can hardly be words spoken by the Savior, spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, that are more serious or sobering than these. And I don't know how these words strike your ears, but I can tell you this, as a new believer, to read these words and to find out that Jesus Christ Himself said that only few find life, that's sobering.

And that's shocking even. But you know, these words, as much as anything, they're glorious too. Because even though there is a narrow gate followed by a very constricted way, the reality is it goes to life.

And brethren, you and I, after the things we've done, that there would even be a... I mean, we heard about the veil, if you saw those words, where Christ uttered His last statement. That veil was rent into. The way has been made open.

And yet for all that, few there be that find it. There is life to be found. There is life offered to sinners.

But few find it. And you think with me. Think with me.

How many people really believe they're going to taste destruction? No one. Not one of you thinks so. You may be concerned about your present situation, but I'll tell you what people do.

Everybody has a plan as to how they're going to escape. Or, they redefine it so that it's not destruction. Or they just deny its existence.

Or, I'm going to be there with all my friends as though it's going to be some kind of party. Even people that might lightly admit they'll be there. It's not destruction.

See, they've redefined it somehow. Men have a plan to deny it. Every one of you, if I ask right now which ones of you really believe that you're going to face this destruction, I doubt a hand would go up.

And even if your hand went up, it might signify a present concern that you had, but you still have some kind of thought process going on in your brain by which you think you're going to escape this thing. And you know what Jesus says? Only a few escape destruction. You can't mince words here.

That's what He says. Why? Why is it? It's because the vast majority, they go in the wrong gate and they go on the wrong way. That's clearly what He says here.

They sing, it is well with my soul, when it really isn't so well with their soul. They can hear words like this, and a lot of people automatically assume, well, if there is a way to life, I'm on it. One of the things that I want to remind all of us of this very day is that these words are not spoken in a vacuum.

They're spoken in a context. Undoubtedly, there's a way to life. And I just ask you this question.

Probably the vast majority of everybody here believes they're on it. Some of you may realize, no, I'm lost right now. What we need to ask ourselves is could we be wrong? It's always healthy to look at ourselves in light of Scripture.

It's the first step. The first step to not being deceived. Because obviously, if only few there be that find it, and even here in the context, you know these verses.

Verses 21, 22, 23. The many, they show up here. 22, that day many will say to Me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Cast out demons in Your name? Do many mighty works in Your name? See, you have a lot of people, many people, that are doing all sorts of things in Jesus' name, but they're wrong.

And Jesus says, I never knew you. Brethren, the worst thing that could happen to you, the worst possible scenario for you is that you're wrong. So the first step to not being deceived is this.

We need to define our terms. Someone might think, well, I'm religious. I go to church.

I read my Bible. And my life is hard. So I must be on the right way.

That's not what He means. What does He mean? What is this? What is this narrow gate and this hard way? I want to start by just saying the obvious. The obvious thing is this.

The narrow gate, the hard way, are the only way that lead to the glory and to the paradise of God. All who refuse to enter in at this gate perish. And you want to mark those words.

All who refuse. Because Jesus is saying enter. And if you don't enter, it's because you won't enter.

Don't boil this down to the sovereignty of God. Don't play the hyper-Calvinist with this. Jesus looks all men square in the eyes and He says, enter.

You. Enter. But, okay, okay.

But what is it? Because it's not a physical gate and it's not a physical road like we have out here. These are spiritual realities. What are we talking about here? What is this? Obviously, it's imagery.

Obviously, it's a metaphor. These are spiritual realities and there's really nothing more important than this. This is life and death.

So what is it? I want to prove this to you. I want to prove to you that this has everything to do with the voice of Christ. Everything.

I'm going to prove that to you. That's the title of my sermon. The Voice of Christ.

And I want you to think with me. Think with me. What you don't want to do with this sermon, and by the way, just remember, Jesus in Matthew's account, Jesus has come forth openly with His ministry and He preaches this sermon about His Kingdom.

This is His declaration as to what people in His Kingdom are like. You know what you don't want to do? You don't want to approach this with Pauline doctrine of justification by faith to where you say, well, we're not saved by works, therefore, you don't hear this. Don't do that.

Jesus doesn't do that. Look, I'm not denying the reality of justification by faith. I'm not denying the reality that we are not saved by works.

But you need to hear this for what it is. Don't come along and take your Pauline doctrine of justification and close your ears to this. You don't want to do that.

I'll guarantee you that most of us, if we were going to preach an initial sermon and we were going to take something and design the first sermon that Jesus would teach to this world, I doubt you and I would have

designed this sermon. Because the truth is, this sermon actually tests us at the point of our belief of the doctrine of justification by faith. Justification by grace through faith.

And it should. It should challenge us. It should stretch us.

But think with me here. These two verses we're looking at. Enter this straight gate.

Enter this narrow gate. What is it? Again, I emphasize, this sermon, these three chapters are a whole. They're to be taken together.

They're interwoven. All the verses of these three chapters are one complete whole. And you don't want to miss that.

For instance, look with me at Matthew 5.21. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder. And whoever murders will be liable to judgment. Now listen, if you have ears to hear, Jesus throughout this sermon warns of destruction.

Throughout this sermon, He warns of hell. And He says it in all sorts of different terminology. You see it here.

It's these words, judgment. Verse 22, But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. That's the destruction of Matthew 7.13 and 14.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the counsel. Jesus is not talking about going to some human counsel here. He's warning about your soul.

Whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. Now what you want to get is this, the road, the path, the gate are here. Let these verses define for us what Jesus is talking about.

You see the destruction here in this verse. Did you notice what Jesus does? He says, but I say unto you, I am speaking. I am telling you the way to miss and avoid destruction.

That's clearly what He's saying here. This is what's happening. Let these words define Matthew 7.13 and 14.

There's a way of destruction spelled out. And you see the broad way. What's the broad way? The broad way is any kind of religion where I basically treat others like garbage.

It's the broad way of religion where I basically put other people down. I call people fool. I disregard other people.

I disrespect other people. That's the way that goes to destruction. You see the broad way.

And there's a way of life implied here. What's the way of life? Well, it's to heed Jesus' words. Clearly, it's based on one thing.

But I say unto you, oh brethren, Jesus said this, My sheep hear My voice. And you know what He says? I know them and they follow Me. Do you know what He says in Matthew 7.23? You did many things in My name, but I never knew you.

And they didn't follow Him. He calls them workers of lawlessness. Workers of iniquity.

You see the issue here? You heed His voice and there's life. This is the gate. This is the way.

This is what you get repeatedly throughout this sermon. How about this? Matthew 5:27 Again, you get the same thing. You've heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.

But again, He says, I say unto you. You know, in Matthew 5, He continues to say this. He says it in v. 22.

He says it in v. 28, v. 32, v. 34, v. 39, v. 44. He keeps saying this. I say unto you.

My voice. I am telling you something. I'm giving you this instruction that goes to life.

And you see it again. He says in v. 27, you've heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you.

Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in her heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away, for it's better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. You see, He keeps going down the same path here.

He basically says, I say unto you, and if you don't regard it, the end is hell. Now this is very dogmatic language and it makes us uncomfortable. And you know what? No matter how uncomfortable it may make you feel, we don't want to ignore Jesus.

Because Jesus says that there is a straight gate and there is a hard way. And it goes to life. And I'll tell you what defines this way.

It's His voice. His voice defines it. That's what we see over and over.

Jesus declaring that when He speaks, how we respond is a life and death matter. And you can see it at the end of this sermon. Very last thing He says, Matthew 7:24, everyone then, you probably want to catch that then.

I mean, that's a very conclusive word. Everyone then, Matthew 7:24, who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock. Rain fell, floods came, winds blew, beat on the house.

It didn't fall. You go to 26, everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them. Foolish man, built his house on the sand.

Rain fell, floods came, winds blew, beat against that house and it fell. You see destruction there. Brethren, He keeps saying the same thing in this sermon over and over and over and over again.

The voice of Christ is the issue. He speaks. You know what He does here? He is setting forth a standard of righteousness.

If you ignore the voice, your house falls. What does that mean? Well, it's destruction. That is destruction.

Great will be the fall of it. You see, when He starts this sermon out, He tells us, look at Matthew 5:20. He says, unless your righteousness is like this sermon. You say, well, that's not what He says.

But it really is what He says. You see, what He's saying here is, you need to have a standard of righteousness if you're going to be one of My kingdom people. If you're going to be one of My followers, one of My disciples.

Your righteousness, again, do not read the Pauline doctrine of justification into this. Don't say to yourself, well, the righteousness that I need gets imputed to me by Christ. Listen, I'm not denying these realities.

I'm just saying, if you go there, you're not going where Jesus is going. He's talking about a practical righteousness here. He is not talking about imputed.

He is talking about what we teach and what we do. And you can see it from chapter 5, verse 19. You'll see it.

He says in 20, our righteousness needs to exceed that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, or we'll never enter the kingdom. You see that word? Enter. Enter the kingdom.

That's what we're dealing with over in Matthew 7, 13, and 14. Enter. You see that kind of language throughout here.

And what happens? What happens if your righteousness does not measure up? You don't enter. And that's destruction. That's the destruction of Matthew 7, 13, and 14.

He says in verse 19 of Matthew 5, again, don't read your Pauline doctrine of justification into this. Listen, whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Does what? He's talking about all the law and the prophets.

He's talking about that He has not come to relax, to abolish. He hasn't. He has come to instill the righteous requirement of the law into the hearts of His people.

And this is what He's calling for here. Listen, the righteousness Jesus sets forth in this sermon is not optional for anyone in His kingdom. Jesus came from glory to establish a kingdom of people whose character is like this sermon.

And I know this makes us uncomfortable. Some of you are probably uncomfortable with hearing this, but listen, you know what He's doing? He's telling His would-be followers this is the way to enter His kingdom. Jesus lays it all on the table.

That's what this sermon is. He lays it all out on the table. And I know in other places He says other things.

He tells us to count the cost. He says unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be My disciple. You must be born again.

Unless you become like a child. I realize He says other things in other places. But what He's saying to would-be followers is here it is.

Here's the standard. You see, Matthew 7.13, that's where He hits the imperative. Enter.

I've just described the gate. I've described the way. I've laid out the standard in my sermon.

And you know what? He looks each one of us face to face. And He says, what are you going to do about that? What are you? You need to enter. Enter.

That's what He's telling us. Here's the standard. Now what are you going to do? I've spoken.

Your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. I've spoken. I did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill.

And what I mean is, I'm looking for people to teach it and do it. He says, I've spoken. Those who hear My Word and do it have a foundation that won't give way.

Everyone else, there's no such foundation. There's destruction at the end of that. I just say this, are there any that want eternal life on those terms? Where you're going to be guided by His voice.

And remember, He's no tyrant. He's good. He's good and He knows the way to life.

He knows the way to the paradise of God. And He knows how to get there. And He says, come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

And you know, as hard as this way is, it's a way of rest. It's a way of having the joy of knowing your sins, not in part but the whole, are nailed to the cross. It's a good way.

It's a hard way. He doesn't make any qualms about that. He says, if you'll have life on these terms, enter.

Someone says, but I'm saved. Jesus says, there's no point talking that way unless you implement this teaching into your life. So you can say, I believe.

I'm a Christian. But you hear what Jesus is saying. What really defines the reality of that is where we're at with regards to the voice of Christ.

How do you respond when He speaks? You know, in the parallel account, He says, why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things I say? Two options. Follow what Jesus says, or don't. Jesus preaches this, then He basically says.

It's decision time. We have a decision. What do you really believe? What are you going to do? I mean, when you hear Jesus speak this way, and I know we haven't been able to develop the whole sermon.

What's in this sermon? Be salt. Be light. Let your works shine.

What's in this sermon? Gouge out eyes of lust. Don't just love your family members. Love your enemies.

Pray for those who persecute you. No anxiety allowed. Lay up your treasure in heaven.

Ask. Seek. Knock.

Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. No unrighteous judgment. Do unto others what you want them to do to you.

Oh, many other things. Jesus wants to make us uncomfortable if our faith is not the faith that actually believes that Jesus Christ speaks as Lord. You can't avoid Him.

You can't avoid Him. The Father says you can't avoid Him. He says this is My beloved Son with whom I'm well pleased.

Listen to Him. Moses doesn't allow us to avoid Him. The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like Me from your brothers.

You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you. And it shall be every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. Brethren, I'll tell you this.

Our Christianity is defined. We sing, speak, O Lord. Brethren, when the Lord Jesus Christ speaks, that is the defining element of where you and I really are and what we really believe.

It really is a faith issue. What do I believe about Christ? What do I believe about His words? What 7.14 communicates is this. You can look at 7.14. It communicates this.

The dominant characteristic of the life to which Jesus calls us is narrowness. You see that. It's a narrow gate.

It's a narrow way. It's a narrow life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ never tries to persuade anybody that Christianity is easy.

Never. Christ openly, uncompromisingly, He announces that the way to life starts narrow, stays narrow. And if you haven't entered yet, then I call you to enter.

If you are on the way, I'm just wanting you to remember Jesus promises us it's a narrow way and it's a hard way. Brethren, if you just think about sex and money, it's narrow. It's narrow.

You even look at a woman. He says, dig that eyeball out. Wow.

Brethren, that's hard. And He says if you don't, there's hell at the end. See, we don't like that talk.

But brethren, I'm not dreaming up these words myself. This is Jesus speaking. Jesus came and told His disciples, cut off that hand, dig out that eye, or go to hell.

Whoa! Does that sound Pauline? Wait, we're not saved by doing works. Well, you see, you have to define your Pauline doctrine by Christ's doctrine. If you don't, you end up... I'll tell you what happens if you don't.

You end up with the many who in the end felt pretty secure and weren't so secure. They had no foundation. You see, brethren, what this really does is it defines for us what true faith looks like.

Brethren, think of money. When He says you can't serve God in money, you know what He's saying? That if you try to serve money, you go to hell. Because you can't serve both.

He says lay up your treasure. You just think about sex and money. He's calling us to a way that is totally contrary to the flesh.

And He's dead serious. This is this way. This is the narrow way.

To say nothing of retaliation. Turn the other cheek. Give to those who want to borrow from you.

That's the idea here. Pray for your persecutors. He calls us to a life of fasting.

Brethren, somebody may say, I don't like the sounds of this. It sounds like if I'm saved, I'm saved by works. No, brethren, you know what happens here? See, when you understand these things rightly, you

do understand that it started with a list of beatitudes.

And it started with, blessed are the poor in spirit. Brethren, I'll tell you what happens when we hear words like this. You have to remember, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

See, blessed are the poor in spirit. If they have the kingdom, then they've avoided destruction. So what Jesus is doing is He's calling us onto this narrow path of obedience to His Word, but not as people who have their act together.

Not as a people who can pull this off in their own strength. This doesn't come naturally. What's happening at the beginning of the sermon is we recognize our poverty.

I'll tell you what this sermon does. It just dashes our self and our pride. God, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. But it's poverty.

See, people who keep. He's not saying, well, just because you're poor in spirit, you don't keep My words. No, no, no, no.

It's the poor in spirit who come bankrupt and He pours of Himself into those people. And He creates a kingdom people that bear the image of this. Brethren, that's the reality that we find.

You've got to leave your own riches outside. You can't come in that gate thinking you're something. You leave your own attainments, your own self-righteousness outside.

You enter this gate. I mean, how else do you think you can bless those that curse you or turn the other cheek? Brethren, you can't do that if you're trying to bring self in here and dying to self. Brethren, that's what His voice calls us to do.

Care your cross. Death to self. Unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be My disciple.

It's that kind of language. Brethren, isn't this life on this narrow way, as we go along, we need to be reminded. It's narrow.

It's hard. But as we heard, we set our hope fully on this expectation of this glory that's coming. Brethren, Paul said momentary light affliction.

We get past it really fast. I mean, it doesn't seem like it when you're in the midst of it. When you're in the fire, it seems hot and it doesn't seem like it's going to end very quick.

But brethren, if we have a proper perspective, it goes by fast. This is how straight and narrow the way is. Only the poor in spirit.

You can't bring your pride in there. Brethren, if you just think about it. Do unto others what you want done unto you.

You think about it. We are to love. If you greet basically your family and your friends, what do you do more than others? I mean, even tax collectors, they do those kinds of things.

Brethren, we need to be a people who are salt and light, who turn the world upside down. That's what He's calling us to be. Of course, it's going to be difficult.

This is the highest life imaginable. This is a life that's impossible for those who don't have the help of Christ. Without Me, you can do nothing.

It's the highest life ever lived. Because of that, it's difficult. And here at the start, Jesus shows us the whole of the Christian life.

He just lays it out there on the table. You consider those on the broad way. There's many.

Many. And you can hear them. Well, I'm saved by grace, not by works.

I believe. I'm a Christian. I'm forgiven.

You see, the great problem is that men and women endeavor to avoid and explain away the plain teaching of Scripture. We don't want to do that. They say, well, the way really isn't that narrow.

Grace is so gracious that it makes an accommodation for bypassing the narrow gate. You see, that's how people reason. Grace is so gracious that I just somehow don't hear Jesus' words here.

I'm saved by grace through faith, and so I don't really have to live this out. I'm a Calvinist. I'm reformed.

I know the tulip. You see, there are all sorts of religious people doing all sorts of things. And that's what verses 21, 22, 23 say.

You have a lot of religious people doing a lot of things, and yet, they're missing the kingdom. Brethren, brethren, brethren, it's altogether true. No one earns heaven by their works by obeying Christ.

But our Bibles equally teach, and you know it to be true, that no one enters the kingdom of heaven without doing what Christ says. That's just clear from Scripture. And of course, people want to say, well, how perfectly do I have to do it? Brethren, that's not the question you should ask.

It should send you back again to the Beatitudes. Lord, You know my failings. You see, blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

I just ask You this, do you thirst after this? Do you want this? Do you have a desire in your heart? Is one of your longings for glory just simply because you will be perfect? You'll be done with sin forever? When our Lord speaks, it ought to press us right back to the very beginning to where I have this overwhelming sense. When I hear these words, that's how I feel. I feel desirable, but I also feel the impossibility by myself.

And so in poverty of spirit, where do we go? Lord, help me to live this. Because I'll tell you this, no matter how hard that way is, you're never on that way alone. Jesus said, I'll never leave you or forsake you.

He promises to walk at our side. This is where we test ourselves. How do you respond to a sermon like this? Do you feel angry? Do you dislike it? What, gouge out eyes? Jesus says, seriously, people that look at a woman and they're not dealing with that and you just keep on going like that, you end up in hell? Seriously? If I don't lay up my treasure in heaven, seriously, if I'm not faithful to Christ with my money, there's no heaven at the end? Well, that's the way He speaks, brethren.

He said, if you hear these words of Mine and you do them, you've got a foundation that will stand up when that storm comes. Brethren, do any of you feel like when you hear this, it just makes salvation impossible

for you? Do you feel like this just makes everything hopeless? Are you agitated? Do you get annoyed? Do you feel like Jesus' words all the more conform you to the Beatitudes at the beginning of the sermon? Lord, I feel my own inadequacy. Lord, when I hear these words, I have to sigh at times.

But see, what happens is His words are corrective. This is one of the reasons we keep going back to Scripture over and over. This is one of the reasons you gather here week after week.

Why? You don't just hear the Word of God one time when you get saved and that's sufficient. Why? It's like Peter said, I remind you, we have to be reminded all the time. We have to hear His voice again and again.

But His sheep hear His voice and they know that voice. And we hear it. And we go out.

And all the more, Lord, help me to live this life. Help me to live the life You're calling me to. Do His words make you feel just utterly unworthy? Weak? Producing you? The poverty of spirit? That mourning? That weakness and meekness? But also the hunger and thirst.

Lord, I want to be like You. Do you feel that longing? There's a hunger. There's a hunger.

Lord, make me like Christ. Admit your unworthiness and your failure. You long to honor God.

You want the world to see by your good works how glorious He is. You desire that. You want to be light.

You want to be salt. Do you tremble at the threats? Do you gouge out that eye or go to hell? You tremble at the threats, but you find hope. See, I always find hope that when Jesus calls me to something, not that, well, grace is so gracious that I can ignore Him.

But grace is so powerful that He will give me the help and ability I need to grow in this reality in conformity to His words. Brethren, He will help. And what He wants us to do is build our lives upon His Word.

That's what He calls us to. What Jesus is doing is showing us what true faith really means. To think that saving faith, brethren, to think that saving faith can exist in a person who hasn't deeply grappled with the voice of Christ, it's just not true.

Brethren, true faith. We hear Christ. We grapple with His words.

He says, why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things I say? See, you believe He's Lord. You believe He has a right to command you. He has a right to your life.

You've been bought with a price. Yes, Lord, I'm Yours. But I feel my weakness.

Back to the poverty and the fear. I feel the weakness, Lord. Brethren, it's a terrible delusion to think you're Christians and it's going to turn out okay in the end if you just live your life without some conformity to this voice and grappling with this voice and hearing this voice.

Do you feel that? I mean, this is one of the first things that happens when a person begins to come under this conviction of the Spirit of God. They are confronted by this voice of Christ. They are confronted by His demands and His commands.

Do you feel that? I mean, are you constrained by that voice? That's what we need to think about. What are you going to do with this Christ? See, this Christ who speaks and says, hear My words. I mean, Moses

said, you'll be destroyed if you don't hear this prophet.

It's going to come like Me. The Father says, listen to Him. Brethren, His words are life.

And that's what He's saying. He's calling us. You enter.

You come. Fully surrendered. Trust.

It's a trust issue. It's a faith issue. Trust Me enough to fully surrender to My voice.

What are you going to say? I believe in Jesus. And then you don't do what He says. You see, He says, why would you call Me Lord? Like, act like you actually believe I'm Lord.

You say I'm Lord. And then you don't do the things that would show that you really believe I'm Lord. Because if you really believe I'm Lord, you believe you're not Lord.

This is the issue. Jesus says those on this hard path are few. Of course they're few.

Why? Because the narrow path is always a lonely road. Brethren, how can the narrow path appeal to this world and to some of you sitting here when you want heaven but you want it on the easy path? See, that's what the world wants. The world's big into heaven, but give me My way.

I want to walk My way, but I want heaven in the end. The world wants that. Religionists all over.

That's what they want. This narrow way is never going to appeal to people like that. Never.

This is why God's way never be discovered by appealing to the majority opinion. Why? Because the majority are on the wrong way. Only few there be that find it.

Brethren, if you put your ear to the ground and you listen to the majority cry of religion, that which calls itself Christianity, brethren, to travel the narrow way, it is a lonely way. We sang about Pilgrim. Bunyan had it so right.

Pilgrim, Christian. He passed through the narrow gate by himself. He went up the hill of difficulty by himself.

At times, he traveled with faithful and hopeful. But you know, most of the time, the crowd of the true Christians was small or he was by himself. He went through the valley of the shadow of death by himself.

Brethren, you know what happens? You know. You that have heard the voice and entered, you know what happens. You leave the crowd behind, including many of your family members, your friends.

It's a lonely path. It's a very intensely personal path. You come through this gate alone.

You hear Christ's voice and you come. Not with the crowd, not with the pack, not with the gang. You break.

Brethren, one of the things that we all need to take note of is this. Christ's voice puts a limitation on what we can believe. You say, what do you mean? I mean just this.

Brethren, there's a hard way that leads to life. There's an easy way that leads to destruction. That's it.

You see, we want more options. We do want the easy way that leads to life. But Jesus does not allow us any of those comfortable solutions you and I might design if we were the designers of all of it.

You know, the reality is since so many demand an easy way to heaven, guess what? You've got lots of preachers. That's why one of the things in here Jesus says is beware of these false prophets. Because you've got lots of voices that are willing and ready and out there and speaking.

Brethren, you do realize when you come to this gate, there's lots of voices saying, oh, it's not that narrow. You don't really have to go in there. Grace is so gracious.

You'll make it even if you don't go in there. Oh, lots of voices. Beware.

So, how do you enter? Jesus is clearly emphasizing that a time for decision has come. He says enter by the narrow gate. Enter.

He's telling us. This is clearly a call to action. Brethren, there's no doubt about it.

This demands a decision. It demands commitment. And you don't enter by just simply resolving to improve your life a little bit or clean yourself up.

That's not how you enter. It's not something that you want to be passive about. Because, you know, God's sovereign and you certainly can't make this happen.

Jesus is appealing to you. He's appealing to your decision. You can't just ignore this.

You can't look at this from a distance. You just don't turn and walk the other way. This hard road is to be walked.

This gate is to be entered and that way is to be walked. And that takes a commitment on your part. You must walk it.

You must enter. Destruction is on the other way. Destruction for all who will not enter and walk by this way.

Jesus, what does He expect? I'll tell you what He expects. You remember what He said? John 6. You've got people leaving Him. He said some hard things.

He described the hard way. Oh, these things are too hard. We're out of here.

And you know what He did? He turned right around to His own disciples who, by the way, weren't leaving and actually invited them to go. You guys want to go too? I've always wondered, those guys standing there, Lord, why are you saying that to us? We're not going. You know what He wanted? He wanted a recommitment from them.

Are you all in, guys? When everybody else is leaving, are you staying the course? Brethren, that's where we're all at. Brethren, He's not a tyrant. I say it again.

It's a hard way, but it's the way of salvation. It's the way that leads to that supper table of the Lamb, to our marriage with Him, to eternal life. He walked a hard way.

Do you think yours should be easy? Brethren, God does so much good in us through these realities. What Jesus is looking for in you is the same thing He was looking for from those disciples that day. He wants

your commitment.

This is a call to you. Jesus expects you to hear from you. Yes, Lord.

I hear Your voice. You've got to be in this Word if you're going to hear it. You've got to live in the Gospels, brethren, to hear this voice.

You hear it. Yes, Lord, I hear what You say. This is the hard path.

You told me to count the cost. I realize the cost. It's death to self.

And that's hard. And I feel the hardness of it because self keeps cropping up. Self wants to be pampered.

It wants to be patted on the back. It wants to be comfortable. It wants pleasure.

I hear it. Lord, I feel it. Brethren, what I would say to you is this, when He says enter, you say yes, Lord.

Yes. Say this, brethren, you say it to the Lord. No reserve.

Nothing held back. Nothing between my soul and the Savior. I'm going to stop living in denial with that area of my life that I've not fully yielded to You, Lord.

I do it because things crop up. Things come in. Idols set in.

You get lazy in certain areas. You begin to drift. No longer am I going to resist Your right to control my life, my future, my all, my everything.

No matter what the consequences are of following You because You know He promised. He never made a promise. You won't die.

You won't suffer. You won't be in prison. He never promised that it couldn't get really hard.

You see, you're not evaluating whether you're going to respond to His voice by the difficulty of what might come. Despite the consequences, I believe in You. I believe in Your words.

And I will act upon that from now on. My life is for You. Commit yourself.

Commit yourself. And don't ever forget, you don't do this in your own power. You're never on that road alone.

Never. Hear His voice. He tells you to enter.

Do some of you hesitate? What? Are you just going to continue that steady, slow drift to destruction? Don't go down that path. Some of you young people, what are you going to say? I want to live it up going my way and then hopefully I'll get it right. There's destruction.

Imagine what that's like. It's like being in the Niagara River and you're going towards the falls. I'm just going to play out here for a while.

Oh yeah, yeah, you do that. You don't know when that current is going to be so strong it's going to suck you away. And there's no more hope.

You play there on that broad way to destruction. And don't be surprised where you end up. Brethren, we don't save ourselves by entering.

But you know what Jesus said? Those that hear the voice of the Son of God, they live. By entering this gate, you don't save yourself. And I'll tell you what you prove.

You prove you've heard His voice. Those who hear live. And I hope you hear His voice coming through mine.

Enter the straight gate. It's the safe place. It's the good way.

It's the Master's highway. It's where you want to be. Are you committed? Have you made your choice? Can you read something like the Sermon on the Mount and hear everything that He says? The life that He's determined for us to live? God helping you? Can you say yes? I mean, this seems impossible, but I'm going to trust you and I'm going to take a step forward.

Is this the life you hunger and thirst after? Blessed are those that hunger and thirst. Will you dare say this sounds too Arminian? Will you say this sounds too much like man's will is involved? Brethren, it is no more heresy than Moses saying, I've set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life. No more heresy than Joshua.

Joshua. You know what Joshua said. Choose this day whom you will serve.

You going to serve those gods your father served on the other side of the river? You going to serve them? You know what Elijah said to the people. How long do you go limping between two opinions? You see, Scripture talks like this over and over. Brethren, it's not heresy to say to you, be decided followers of Christ.

Hear His voice. Hear, brethren. Brethren, as we stand, you stand and you consider this straight gate.

Ah, it's serious. Nothing is more serious. It brings each one of us face to face with my own judgment, with my own standing before God, with the most important questions of my life.

Who I am. What I'm living for. The value of the soul.

My eternal destiny. Who I believe is Lord. Who I believe has a right.

Jesus has confronted us with a life that's impossible to live. But you know what the poor in spirit do? They bring their poverty to Him. Brethren, that's where we're at.

I can't, yet I must. And we trust Him. Is He the Son of God? Did He raise the dead? Did He heal the leper? Did He cast out the demons? Did He feed the hungry? Can He heal? Does He heal? Does He save? Is He the only One who can save? Is He the Savior of the world? Is there any name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved? Is there any other? Brethren, the reality is, if so, if these things are a reality, did He go to the cross? Did He pay that penalty? Did He rise from the dead? Did He ascend to David's throne? Does He sit there triumphant? Did He soar through the heavens to be victorious? These are the questions we have to ask.

If the answer to all these things is yes, yes, yes, then there's one inevitable deduction. If He is who He says He is, He's entitled to my whole life. And you know what He says? He says this, the one who rejects

Me and does not receive My words has a judge.

The word that I've spoken will judge him on that last day. When Jesus speaks, it demands a response. Brethren, there's only one reason that we hesitate and we get nervous.

Why? Because you don't trust Him. Well, if I surrender that certain part of my life to Him, I'm just not sure I can trust where He's going to take me. You consider this day whom you will serve.

Don't halt between two opinions. If Christ is everything that He says He is, then follow Him. If you want to enjoy sin for a season, the pleasures of it, just momentarily, then go that way.

As for me and my house, God helping us, we will follow that voice all the way to the end. What say you? Father, I pray, I pray that we would have ears tuned to hear, wills broken to bow. I pray that some sick soul would all together hear those words and enter that narrow gate.

Respond to that voice. Lord, we want to be people of complete surrender and allegiance to You. We know we don't know what lies ahead.

We don't know what You might call us to. We don't know what You might call us to suffer. We want to be those people who are salt and light.

We want to be those people who are perfect like our Father in Heaven is perfect. We want to be those praying people. We want to be those pure people.

We want to be the peacemaking people. We want to be the people that uphold and don't relax the very heart and soul of the commandments of God all along the prophets. We want to be these people.

We want to be these people who make it with our eyes steadied on Christ, our ears in tune with His voice. Help, O God, our weak endeavor. Help us.

Help us. Help us. We bring our poverty to You.

Lord, You know us in and of ourselves. We're weak, prone to wander. Lord, we feel it.

Prone to wander. Prone, prone, prone. Prone to disregard the voice.

Prone to take it lightly. Prone to stray. Help us, Lord.

Stay the course. Help us on this hard way. You say Your yoke is easy.

Lord, we pray that the burden would indeed prove light as You strengthen us along this path. Lord, we want to make it. We want to make it.

We want to be devoted. We don't want to live for self. We can say it with words, but oh Lord, You know the hesitation that there is.

Kill the hesitation. We want to be a people surrendered. Lord, do in us whatever is necessary to do in us to make us into these kind of kingdom people.

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

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