

SOTM20-The Strait Gate & The Narrow Way

Luk 16:16 The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

All through the SOTM, Jesus has been teaching as if the people listening were already born again. At this point in the teaching, Jesus returns to the current situation, talking with people who want to be disciples but who have no opportunity to be born again until after He is resurrected from the dead. His instructions to them also apply to us today and give insight into why there is such a lack of transformational power, and also such a lack of signs and wonders demonstrated in the church at large today.

The gospel has been so watered down in this generation it little resembles the gospel brought to us by Jesus Christ. Remember ... there is no other gospel than the one He brought. Let me make a natural comparison. Aspirin was put into the earth by God at creation. It has many wonderful properties to help mankind. If you dilute aspirin by half, then by half again, then by half again and repeat that process ... it is still aspirin, but it has been so weakened it has no more effect upon the body. That is what has happened to the gospel in this generation. It has been so watered down by weak-kneed, cowardly, people-pleasing preachers that it has almost no transforming power on the majority of the people who hear it.

Mat 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (14) Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Jesus first focuses on “entering in” through the strait gate. First of all, let us be very clear, Jesus is the gate ... the only gate ... the only door through which anybody may enter the kingdom. There is no other way to be saved. Just a few verses of confirmation.

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Joh 10:7-9 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. (8) All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. (9) I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Act 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

When the altar calls are given today, they are given in such a manner as to make people think that in order to be saved, it is as easy as simply asking the Lord to forgive you of your sins, and then asking Jesus to come into your heart. He does forgive you. He does come into your heart if you ask Him to. But let us examine how seriously Jesus teaches about what is truly involved to “enter” the kingdom of God. In order to see what he is teaching in fullness, I am going to bring Luke’s account of this same teaching from his gospel as well. Luke brings out some points that Matthew did not, and vice versa.

Mat 7:13 Enter ye at the strait gate

First of all, Jesus uses the word “strait” and not “straight.” There is a vast difference between these two words. “Straight” simply means “not crooked.” But “strait” means, “pent up, narrow, difficult to be entered.” The Greek word G4728 is “stenos” and carries the meaning of it being “narrow from obstacles standing close about.” The word “strait” in English is used to describe narrow shipping channels between dangerous rock outcroppings that are always extremely dangerous for ships to pass through. The Greek word implies you have to almost “squeeze” yourself through the “narrow” passageway between rocks on both sides of the path. **The point is ... it takes effort and is not easy!**

Luk 13:24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate

Luke records Jesus using the word “strive.” This Greek word is G75 agonizomai *ag-o-nid’-zom-ahee* It literally means “to agonize.” It was commonly used by the athletes who agonized in the gymnasiums preparing for the Olympic games. It means “to struggle in agony putting forth all of your powers to gain the prize.” Why does Jesus use this word regarding “entering” the kingdom? At this point I feel like I should review every lesson we have already taught in this series on the SOTM. Remember those lessons about gouging out the eye and cutting off the hand in order to stop sinning? **BEING SAVED MEANS DYING TO YOUR OLD LIFE AND BEING RESURRECTED TO A WHOLE NEW LIFE.** It is death and rebirth. Entering the kingdom of God does not mean “staying the same and continuing as you were before ... simply having fire insurance now.” **IT IS NOT EASY SURRENDERING YOUR LIFE TO ANOTHER.** You are no longer going to live according to your own will. You will now live according to the will of your heavenly Father. **PREVIEW - Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.**

IT IS NOT EASY TAKING DOMINION OVER THE FLESH. IT WILL RESIST YOU. Pastor Dave often said, “*It is not the devil holding us back from revival. It is unmortified flesh that is holding us back. The handles remaining in unmortified flesh are what the devil uses to defeat us.*” True repentance is much like sailing through the narrow strait, with the rocky cliffs on either side threatening shipwreck at any moment. It takes diligence, watchfulness, and endurance to pass through the narrow strait of salvation.

Mat 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (14) Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Wide is the gate of the flesh, broad is the way of living after the flesh ... which leads to destruction ... and MANY there be which go on the broad path. Call it a lifestyle of sin. Call it living after the flesh. The end result is death.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Notice the path to eternal life involves both a GATE and a WAY. Salvation is not just an entry point and living any way you want to after you enter. No, salvation is a gate and a way ... a narrow path that you must walk all your life.

Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

1Co 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. (25) And every man that striveth [G75 “agonizes”] for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. (26) I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: (27) But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [castaway is the same Greek word translated reprobate in Romans chapter one].

Peter calls this “narrow way” the “way of righteousness.”

2Pe 2:20-22 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. (21) For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (22) But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The “dog” and the “hog” are describing the flesh ... the part of us that did not get born again, the part of us that Paul says we must “keep under” by the dominion of our spirit. The flesh is that part of us we are to “mortify” while living on planet earth, even if it is as painful to us as “gouging out the eye or cutting off the hand or foot.” In a word ... genuine REPENTANCE is part of salvation ... it is part of pressing through the narrow strait ... it is part of the GATE into the kingdom. And even after you are in, you must walk the narrow “way” of the “highway of holiness.”

The Highway Of Holiness - We often quote this passage from the book of Hebrews: Heb 12:12-14 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; (13) And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (14) Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

The writer of Hebrews is teaching based on the prophecy of Isaiah about the highway of holiness. Notice how revival lives on this highway of holiness:

Isa 35:3-10 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. (4) Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you. (5) Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. (6) Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. (7) And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes. (8) And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*. (9) No lion shall be there [“as a roaring lion], nor any ravenous beast [no ravening wolves in sheep’s clothing] shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall

walk there: (10) And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Mat 7:14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

FEW there be that find it. Jesus was asked if many or few would be saved?

Luk 13:22-27 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. (23) Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, (24) Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (25) When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: (26) Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. (27) But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

In a previous lesson we shared how Jesus taught us to ask, seek, and knock. He promised if we knocked, the door would be opened to us. But notice in this passage there comes a time when a person can knock, and the door will not be opened. I have preached many funerals in my lifetime. I often say, *“There are no unbelievers beyond the grave. All those in hell know the truth, but it is too late then. The door to salvation, for them, has been shut and it will never be opened to them again.”*

There is an Old Testament type and shadow of this teaching by Jesus about when the Master has “shut the door.” Do you remember Noah and the ark? Noah did not shut the door before judgment came. **God shut the door.**

Gen 7:16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness. For a hundred years while he and his sons built the ark. He was preaching a message of, *“Repent. Judgment is coming.”* But after a hundred years of preaching, not a single person, not even a relative like a cousin or an uncle ... not one single person chose to repent and get on the boat with Noah and his family. Nobody believed Noah while the door was open to them. But once God shut the door,

and the rains came, and the flood waters were rising around them ... I remember pastor Dave Roberson teaching, "*Can you imagine the banging on the door and the screams for mercy once the flood waters were about to cover them? Then they believed, but it was too late.*" Of the millions on earth in Noah's day, only a FEW ... eight souls ... were saved.

I fear for this generation of unrepentant, so-called "Christians" that fill our churches today. I fear for those who have listened to the false prophets who continually tell them that the grace of God covers their sins and they do not need to repent, or even tell God they are sorry for their sins. It is no wonder that the very next thing Jesus teaches about in the SOTM is "false prophets."

Mat 7:15-20 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

The fruit of a false prophet is false doctrine. The fruit of false doctrine is a powerless gospel. Powerless to save from sin. Jesus came to save us from our sins through the knowledge of the truth.

Joh 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; (32) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

If ye continue "In **MY** WORD!" Any preacher who tells you that the words of Jesus do not apply to the Christian is a false prophet. Any preacher who tells you that the SOTM does not apply to the Christian is a false prophet. Any preacher who does not send you through the narrow gate of repentance, regeneration through faith in Christ, and the narrow highway of holiness is a false prophet. Any preacher who tells you that the grace of God allows a lifestyle of sin is a false prophet. By their fruits ... their false doctrine ... their teachings that oppose the teachings of Jesus Christ ... you shall know them.

2Pe 2:1-3 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord [denying that His teachings apply to born again Christians] that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2) And many shall

follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (3) And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.