

The strait gate and narrow way. (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] With the Lord's help, I would direct your attention to the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 7, verse 14. The Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 7, verse 14.

Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

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The Lord Jesus was discriminating in his teaching, and invariably left open that personal exercise in the souls of those that listen to him.

Hence, in this chapter, there are many wonderful truths set forth. Truths upon which the soul may ponder.

[1 : 16] Truths from which they may draw comfort and nourishment for their souls. How we need, then, the Spirit of God to so lead and bless us this evening, that we might find food and blessing in our meditation.

Truths upon which, in the margin, we have for because, how. And how striking this is.

How straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that go in thereat.

Few there be that find it. The children of God find this to be so. They find it more and more as they go along in life's journey.

My mind was impressed during the day with that hymn of Mr. Hart on this particular subject, and how many points he there brings forth which are instructive.

[2 : 35] I shall not go through the whole of the hymn, because it is very long. But there are certainly one or two points that we may mention, especially after discoursing in the first part, he then comes to this.

If this be, Lord, thy way, then who can hope to gain? The prize, that prize, such numbers never seek.

Such numbers seek in vain. Tis thy almighty grace, that can suffice alone.

Thou giveth us strength to run the race, and then bestows the crown. Thou giveth us strength to run the race, and then bestows the crown. Now, here we have the secret which lies underneath the solemn words that are before us for our meditation this evening.

And the more we become aware of the narrowness of the way, as well as the straightness of the gate, we shall need that abundant grace that will enable us to enter in, and to continue, and eventually land upon Canaan's happy shore.

[4 : 08] The people of God find this way to be exceedingly narrow, insofar that in the hymn we have this line, there seems no way at all.

There seems no way at all. Have we found that to be so, and what have we thought we would do when there seems no way at all?

Were we ready to turn back? I'm sure some of us at least have had thoughts of this description in our mind at some time or other, when there seemed no way at all, no clarity, nothing defined.

But when we thought to turn back, were those words a directive to us? No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.

What a word that has been. Perhaps it has been to me, perhaps to some of you as well, when we've been perplexed by reason of the way.

[5 : 38] Now, because, because, a statement, because straight is the way, or, may we look at it personally from our experience and say, how straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

we have therefore the gate, and we have therefore the way. Now, if we've come through the gate, we shall certainly carry on through the way.

It is not possible for any person to go through the gate, and not find themselves in the narrow way.

In the same way, but, as we have it in the previous verse, wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many be which go in thereat.

Maybe we were quite contented at one time to go in that broad road. Now, God works a miracle here.

[7 : 01] And from the broad road and the wide gate, he touches one here and there as a brand, plucks out of the fire, directs them to the straight gate and the narrow way.

How do we interpret this? Because they are undoubtedly joined together, the gate belongs to the way, and the way belongs to the gate.

If we therefore come in through the gate, Jesus says, I am the door, we come in through Jesus Christ, come in depending upon Jesus Christ, come in hoping upon Jesus Christ, then we shall continue in the narrow way which will cause us to have the same element as we go along in life's journey until we reach the celestial city.

we cannot fall out of the narrow way if we stray, yet the narrow way is Jesus Christ.

It's not to be considered geographically, God's providence may lead us geographically here and there, but the narrow way is Jesus Christ.

[8 : 30] As ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him the narrow way. How few there are that find that way.

But we shall not be improperly concerned about those that do not find the way. Our principal consideration, though not an unselfish one, is that we may feel that we have found the way.

that we are walking in Christ Jesus. By so doing, we shall not walk after the flesh, but shall walk after the spirit.

But how straight is this gate? How straight it is. And by reason of its straightness, because straight is the gate, it follows that the way is narrow afterwards.

It is narrow because it is just this, nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

[9 : 47] Helpless look to thee for grace, naked come to thee for rest, black eye to the fountain fly, wash me as saviour, or I die.

when we consider the general religion of the day, then how many there are who, if they profess Christ on the lip, do not support it by their actions day by day, depending more upon the works that they perform, than the work that is performed for them.

That is Jesus Christ. Now, the narrow way is beset with many temptations.

Mr. Hart says, before we journeyed far, two dangerous gulfs are fixed, dead slow, and pharisaic pride scarce a hair's breadth betwixt.

Is it not so? And therefore, must we not cry continually. If we are conscious of the narrowness of the way, we shall not quibble with the apostles' words, pray without ceasing.

[11 : 26] The very way itself will cause us to pray without ceasing. The narrow way brings the soul into many exercises.

False lights delude the eyes and lead the steps astray that traveler treads the surest here that seldom sees his way.

Isn't this trying? If only we could see the way clearly. if only we could see that all was right.

But could we see how all was right? Where were room for credence? Tis by faith and not by sight Christians yield obedience.

That is faith in Jesus Christ. One says faith in Jesus can repel all the fiery darts of hell and how many they are.

[12 : 38] This is an internal conflict. Satan will send his darts individually and intentionally and he will choose his darts as well.

But faith in Jesus and this is the only manner of victory. Faith in Jesus can repel all the fiery darts of hell.

This is a narrow way. And we read that it leads to life. So you may say am I in the narrow way? Well you're in the narrow way if it leads to life.

Now if we have life we have faith. And if we have faith we have faith in Jesus Christ. And we have faith in him that he will defend us from the enemies of our souls.

Deliver us from the false lights that may appear to us here and there. In the desert you know many a traveler has been greatly disappointed by that which appears and yet is not.

[14 : 09] It appears to be an oasis near. How light that is. But when he approaches he finds that it is about something that appeared and yet was not.

How many of Satan's suggestions and situations which he prepares are just in that category because straight is the gate.

It was straight when we came in. It's good if we've come in at the straight gate. It's good if we've come in being regenerated by the Spirit of God being taught by the Spirit of God that there is one way of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Whoso believeth on the name of the Son of God on Jesus Christ shall be saved. that's a narrow way and it's a straight gate too.

How many people and maybe ourselves among them sometimes because our old nature works have said but what else?

[15 : 38] What else? Believing on Jesus Christ is that all? what else? And thus we discover and we have to discover that the way is narrow because there's nothing there's no room for anything else.

It's Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. My hope my only hopes in thee.

Oh God be merciful to me. What a narrow way that is. But we're in it if we've come in at the straight gate and we prove it if we find it leads to life.

Everything in Christian experience can be proved and this can be proved by you all of you as to whether you're in the narrow way does it lead to life?

Now does it lead to life in your prayers? You may say well my prayers aren't worth anything at all. My prayers seem to be lifeless.

[17 : 03] Are they? How did you know that? How did you know that? Is it not because you have life and your cries and groans lead you to press after life?

The Lord Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life. Now the narrow way will lead you to life will lead you to Jesus Christ and you may feel that you're very crippled you may feel that your prayers are very poor why is that?

There's no room for Jesus Christ and pride about your good prayers in your heart at the same time and in consequence it becomes a matter of Jesus only and if it is to be Jesus only then it must be on this ground that we can't take pride even in our prayers and that's why we stumble along sometimes and that's why we are so troubled and we are reduced to nothing in our own feelings because pride will keep creeping to our hearts self righteousness into our spirits and immediately we're down about are we in the narrow way when these things come we are if it leads us to life we are if it leads us to

Jesus Christ we are if we come to just a few words instead of whole sentences and long prayers just to seek for the mercy of God because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it and then we discover that we're in the way of when we feel that we need grace grace is never realized never appreciated until it's required how easily people may talk about the doctrines of grace but what a difference is there is in the feeling of the need of grace now people

I fear can speak about the doctrines of grace and never feel the need of them and because they never feel the need of them they're not in the narrow way because it doesn't lead them to life now the Lord Jesus Christ is life he's the life of grace he's the fullness of grace and as we may go stumbling on stumbling on often ashamed of ourselves often distressed because of our own personal weaknesses yet he giveth more grace who does Jesus Christ does who is the life then are you in the narrow way are you being led to life life in grace so it is not just a theory it is not just that which enables us to say yes

[21 : 15] I believe in the grace of God I am a Calvinist as distinct from an Arminian we can divide ourselves like that and yet not be in the narrow way but if we're alive we must surely be deeply concerned to be in the narrow way and some may be ready to say oh I could prove it well now the narrow way leads to life now the grace of God that is communicated is it lively do you feel it is life let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need how is life felt in the soul how is it felt in the body it is something which is strangely felt and has an undoubted effect and is it not so spiritually when God gives us his grace he gives us his strength he nourishes us grace is nourishment and what does grace do to us grace brings into our souls

Jesus Christ who is the fullness of grace brings to our faith that which believes and sees the wonder of those words he know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor that you through his poverty might be rich he became poor willingly voluntarily he became poor literally this was so with Jesus Christ he had not where to lay his head he had no certain dwelling place when he died he didn't have to make out a will to dispose of his possessions and yet he was the possessor of heaven and earth he was the possessor yea he was the creator of all things all things are mine if I were in need in the

Psalms we read he said I would not tell thee the cattle upon a thousand hills and the gold and the silver are mine how does grace nourish us grace nourishes our faith have we a living faith or have we a dead faith we shall find we have a living faith in the narrow way because it will lead unto life it will lead unto lively crying it will lead unto a living Christ what makes us need this grace what makes us pray like this what makes us hope in God on the left hand and right close cragged rocks are seen distrust and self wrought confidence it is hard to squeeze between sometimes we seem to gain great length of ground by day but finally last when night comes on we have quite mistook the way what conditions are entered upon in the narrow way but it's leading to life the conditions make us cry the conditions make us look unto

Jesus who is the life the conditions make us pray for more grace the conditions make us hope in God the conditions cause us to say guide me O thou great Jehovah pilgrim through this barren land I am weak but thou art mighty hold me by thy powerful hand and another condition which may well prevail but it leads to life sometimes we have no strength sometimes we want the will and sometimes lest we might go wrong we choose to stand quite still you know the children of Israel they murmured because of the way but in that particular it would not appear that at that time they were in the narrow way there was that which was in their kind of mind this is my meaning that seemed to as it were turn them out of the way but

God will not let his people move out of the narrow way if they appear to he will bring them back into it depend on on me on me thou canst not fail make all thy want the wishes known fear not his merits must prevail ask what thou wilt it shall be done

[31 : 14] so that all the hosts of enemies that may rise up to fill you with dismay cannot get through to you or they may come very near they may come very near you know in the first world war the warfare was to a large extent performed in the trenches and between lines not too far apart now from time to time there were what was called bayonet charges now the gleam of the bayonet may well have been terrifying to the defending people but

the soldiers were instructed to scream and to shout to make as much noise as possible and this is what dismayed the enemy as much as anything there would be no or comparatively little terror if there was only a charging with the bayonet with no screaming and shouting now you know satan may come at us like this lots of screaming lots of shouting and this is what may well put fear into us from time to time but has he got a blade can he get near enough to plunge it into our heart after he has tried but every time the children of God will find this in

Christ they're provided for he is their provision narrow is the way indeed but it leadeth the life what is the provision the Lord Jesus tells his hearers in the sixth chapter of John about the bread of life and he shows to them the importance of eating that bread and drinking that blood now this was very mysterious to his hearers they couldn't understand it but there's one verse that explains it to us so simply and that is in the 56th verse he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him in other words united to

Jesus the vine it is a continual communication as we may observe the sap in the tree reaching out to its outermost branches lowest branches highest branches this is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ in union with the lamb one of our hymns says furthermore in union with the lamb from condemnation free the saints from everlasting were and shall forever be condemnation what a word it is but there's no condemnation to them that believe no condemnation to them that believe and why do they believe because of this union with

Christ or was a narrow way but in the narrow way there is union with Christ and since there is union with Christ this leads to life and we're willing we're willing to be separated under Christ and yet in a way we may say our willingness is not required because we are the gospel is very wide and a number of illustrations are used in order to bring to our attention the many facets of it but narrow is the way in Christ united to Christ moving in Christ walking in

[39 : 30] Christ feeling that he is our defence our protector our provision our bread and water of life and it leads to life union to Christ leads to life has it led us to life are we in an narrow way so that we can say I am indeed because it's led me to Jesus Christ when all around my soul gives way then Jesus is my help and stay painful the path to the flesh yet it's led me to life and therefore I'm in the narrow way it's led me to that only one that can help me the only one that can save me the only one that can speak comfortably to me and let us remember those great words in

Isaiah 40 comfort ye comfort ye my people accept your God speak ye comfortably unto her unto Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord hand double for all her sins one point that is worthy of our particular attention is this comfort ye comfort ye my people saith your God now sometimes we may hear our friends and brethren say well you need comfort well now when God commands comfort that's wonderful because when he commands it then it will be a reality we are warned let no false comfort lift us up to confidence that's vain but when

God says comfort ye comfort ye my people saith your God and you'd such hear these words when they're ready to perish desolate forsaken then it will lead to life surely it will lead to life speaking comfortably to Jerusalem and crying unto her that her warfare is accomplished cry above the noise and the shouting of the enemy that her iniquity is pardoned you know iniquity is regarded always in its immensity if God speaks to us like this it will not be a matter of because your iniquities are limited you haven't been as bad as some it will be because your iniquities are great you may remember the psalmist said remember not against me the iniquities of my youth but

God embraces it all together about her iniquity the whole of it comprising that which has taken place in the past and that which will add to the bulk in the future yet the whole of it is dealt with the whole of her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins pardon will bring life into your soul and if so you know you're in the narrow way and this is one of the features of it that it leads it leads unto life what life pardoned and sealed upon the spirit brings into the soul the fullness of praises of thanksgiving rejoicing in God it leads to life and then we know that we're in the narrow way then again their pardoned son receive it first and then compelled to fight they find their latter stages worse than travel much by night but you know what the scripture says the darkness and the light are both the light to thee god is not troubled by the darkness he sees under both conditions and he leads his people safely on through the narrow way in the narrow way now you see the narrow way is a way of humility but it leads to life there's no life in pride there's no life in haughtiness of spirit it brings death into the soul to be carnally minded is death and what is it to be carnally minded but to be proud and to be haughty but what a blessing when god manifests that we're in the narrow way because he brings us low

I was brought low said the psalmist and the lord helped me are we too high so that we fly over the narrow way we're not called to fly over it we're called to walk in it and therefore we must touch the ground so the psalmist says I was brought low he didn't say I brought myself low but I was brought low who brought him low it was the lord the almighty god that brought him low and then seeing nothing in himself that was worthy of any mention he could walk in this way pathway of humility a pathway where in his very soul would magnify the lord because the humbleness of his mind or her mind would bring such to see themselves so small that they would almost seem to have elbow room in a narrow way and then

[47 : 23] Christ was all the more round about them Christ was their song Christ as we have it in alliance let Christ be first and Christ be last and Christ be all in all which can be so when we are small and even in the narrow way we seem to have elbow room so that Christ is all round about us wherever we look we see Christ I will go before thee and I will be thy reward I will be on thy right hand and on thy left hand how good it is to be surrounded by the person of Christ observing the sacred offices of Christ because it leads to life oh the narrow way it leads to life but we may call to mind this

Hezekiah was much troubled when the Lord said to him set thine house in order thou shalt die and not live why did God say that to him may we not suggest this that he he said it to him in order to bring to his attention as to whether he was in the narrow way or not now God brings us into places sometimes and God's sole purpose is to prove where we are whether we're in the narrow way whether what is now upon us will lead us to life the first conclusion that hezekiah came to was this that it would lead him to death as a crane and as a swallow so do

I chatter but as he reflected upon the matter afterwards his testimony was this by these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit not in the affliction but in the exercise of faith that the affliction produced or shall we say rather God produced by reason of the affliction and it was a narrow way then because it was Jesus only it was a narrow way then because it was a question of give me Christ or else I die but it led to life oh I say it led to life and therefore he says by these things men live in and all these things is the life of my spirit the living the living he shall praise thee as I do this day and we may well have reason to praise

God when we know that we're in the narrow way because it leads to life and so we may pass on to go right along the journey here below with many indications of our being in a narrow way because of the continual changing circumstances leading us to Jesus Christ who is the life and the fullness of life and the light of life until we come down to the end of our journey here below now it will be proved then whether we're in the narrow way because it will not be only a question of leading us unto life but it will be the glory of entering into life that is the fullness of life life in all its expanded sensitivity of it life in the fullness of it life in seeing

Jesus Christ without a veil between life in rejoicing in this then when landed on that shore where my mind was fixed before with sweet lust with sweet pleasure I shall see all my safety was in thee and the life has been over us in the narrow way it's led us to life led us to Jesus Christ again and again and now we enter into what the psalmist says and at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore the pleasures of life eternal life the life of loving Christ alone may the

[53 : 10] Lord grant to us many intimations that we are in the narrow way this is the only way we shall be able to decide it because it leads to life you see people may attempt to try and discover a means a formula whereby they can come to a conclusion that they're in the narrow way but this is the way does it lead to life does it lead to Jesus Christ who is the life does it inspire life in our prayer and in our praises does it inspire life in our repentance does it inspire life in our sorrow after a godly thought does it inspire life in our confessions then we're in the narrow way simply and only because in all these things we are discovering that it leads unto life may we find it to be so amen