

Luke 13:24 Commentary

Luke 13:24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [Agonizesthe](#) (2PPMM) [eiselthein](#) (AAN) [dia tes stenes thuras, hoti polloi, lego](#) (1SPA) [humin, zetesousin](#) (3PFAI) [eiselthein](#) (AAN) [kai ouk ischusousin](#) (3PFAI).

Amplified: Strive to enter by the narrow door [force yourselves through it], for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Berkley: Strain every nerve to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will be unable to. (Modern Language Bible)

ESV: Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

GWT: Try hard to enter through the narrow door. I can guarantee that many will try to enter, but they won't succeed.

HCSB: Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and won't be able

ICB: Try hard to enter through the narrow door that opens the way to heaven! Many people will try to enter there, but they will not be able.

KJV: Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

NET: Exert every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

NLT: Work hard to enter the narrow door to God's Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: And Jesus told them, "You must do your utmost to get in through the narrow door, for many, I assure you, will try to do so and will not succeed ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

Wuest: And He said to them, Be endeavoring with a strenuous zeal to enter through the narrow door, because many, I am saying to you, will seek to enter and will not be able ([Eerdmans](#))

Weymouth: Strain every nerve to force your way in through the narrow gate," He answered; "for multitudes, I tell you, will endeavour to find a way in and will not succeed.

Young's: Be striving to go in through the straight gate, because many, I say to you, will seek to go in, and shall not be able;

Luke 13:24 STRIVE TO ENTER BY THE NARROW DOOR, FOR MANY, I TELL YOU, WILL SEEK TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE: [Agonizesthe](#) (2PPMM) [eiselthein](#) (AAN) [dia tes stenes thuras, hoti polloi, lego](#) (1SPA) [humin, zetesousin](#) (3PFAI) [eiselthein](#) (AAN) [kai ouk ischusousin](#) (3PFAI).

Strive: Lk 21:36 Ge 32:25,26 Mt 11:12 Jn 6:27 1Co 9:24 25 27 Php 2:12, Php 2:13 Col 1:29 Heb 4:11 2Pe 1:10)

Narrow: Mt 7:13,14-note

ENERGETIC EFFORT ENTERS THE NARROW GATE

Keep the context in mind in interpreting this passage - Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to die. His words of warning in answer to this question are some of the last words He will speak. There is an urgency about His mission and His message speaks of that urgency. **O how we all need to seek by the enablement of His Spirit to imitate His passion for people's souls**

Strive to enter - If this verse is taken out of context, it might suggest that sinners would be able to do something (some work) that would merit entrance **by the narrow door** and thus one could "work" his or her way to heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth that Jesus intended to convey! Jesus is not teaching works based righteousness (which is nothing but filthy rags at best - Isa 64:6), but that following Him has a cost. Jesus and not Jewish legalism (keeping of the laws which no one can do perfectly - Jas 2:10) is the door (Jn 10:9) that enters the house (salvation) in this passage and in Mt 7:13-note He is the narrow gate that leads to the narrow way.

The Bible repeatedly states that salvation is **ONLY** by grace through personal faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that this

transaction is independent of human works or merit (Ep 2:8, 9). What Jesus is describing in the issuance of the command to **strive** is the unpopular truth that the way of salvation is **narrow** and "difficult", truths which are unpacked in more detail in the following comments.

Kent Hughes - This is the kind of moral effort necessary to enter the kingdom. (Alexander Maclaren said) "We are not saved by effort, but we shall not believe without effort."

Cyril of Alexandria exhorts us to listen to Jesus' words in this "hard saying" for even as "A ship is guided to the right port by means of the helm...the word of God pilots the soul of man, and leads him without risk of error to every thing that is necessary for salvation." ([Sermon Luke 13:22ff](#))

Norval Geldenhuys notes that "As very often happened, the Saviour does not give a direct reply to the speculative question, but points out to those present the practical side of the matter: they are not to waste their time and strength in arguments as to how many will be saved, but everyone must **strive** hard and make sure that he himself is saved, for whether the saved are to be many or few one thing is certain—the gate leading to life is strait, and only those who strive with might and main, and whole-heartedly to enter, will be saved. (Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament. Eerdmans Publishing Co)

The NET Bible notes add that "The idea is to "strain every nerve to enter" because of the supreme importance of attaining entry into the kingdom of God. (NET Notes)

J B Phillips is right when he says that "The Kingdom is not entered by **drifting** but by **decision**."

Strive (75) (**agonizomai** [word study] from **agon** = conflict or the place of assembly for the athletic contests and then a reference to the contests which were held there, gives us English "agony" - cp the picture portrayed in Lk 22:44 = "**agonia**") means to exert oneself, to fight, to labor fervently, to **strive** (devote serious effort or energy = implies great exertion against great difficulty and suggests persistent effort), to struggle, to contend with an adversary - all of these actions picturing an intense struggle for victory. When you read that the gloves of the Greek boxer were fur lined on the inside, but ox-hide with lead and iron sewed on the outside and that the loser in a wrestling match had his eyes gouged out, you get some sense of appreciation of the intensity of the Greek athletic contests and you can imagine how much effort such a contest might motivate! That is a picture of agonizomai which encompassed the concentration, discipline, conviction, and effort needed to win in athletic competition. It pictures a runner straining every nerve to the uttermost ("agonizing") to cross the goal in first place.

Jesus uses the **present imperative** which is a command calling for continual striving, striving that is evidenced as one's lifestyle, one's habitual practice. The picture is one of a continual contention, a lifelong war (manifest by many "battles"). **But with whom are we to be continually contending and/or warring?** Until we see Jesus face to face, our intractable, unyielding, inveterate, unyielding, entrenched, incorrigible, obstinate, powerful and wily **enemies** are the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil**. In other words we must never, ever let down our guard (cp Mt 26:41-note), for our mortal enemies never lay down their arms and call a truce! Notice that the verb **strive** is in the plural which addresses this command not just to the questioner but to the entire audience present (and by way of application to every person ever born). **How would my day to day life be different (seek to be specific) if I really understood what Jesus was commanding and if I really surrendered to His sweet will (word)?** Consider praying "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way." (Ps 139:23, 24-note).

Puritan Thomas Watson wrote "Sometimes the work we are to do for heaven is set out by **striving**. Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." **Strive** as in an agony—**strive** as for a matter of life and death. Though we must be men of peace—yet, in matters of religion, we must be men of strife. It is a holy strife—a blessed contention. Indeed, the Apostle said, "Let nothing be done through strife"; but, though strife does not do well **among** Christians—yet it does well **in** a Christian. **He must strive with his own heart—or he will never get to heaven.** ([The Heavenly Race](#))

SOME THOUGHTS ON WHAT IT MEANS TO STRIVE

Note first that **strive** is a command calling for continual obedience and remember that God never commands something of us that He does not enable or empower. It follows that if someone is able to continually strive (whatever that looks like - which will be elaborated on below), they show themselves to be genuine believers with a new heart and an indwelling supernatural power to strive. Stated another way, striving does not save us but it proves we are saved. Faith alone saves, but faith that saves is never alone. We are not saved by works but by a faith that works. One "fruit" of genuine faith is a God given power to strive and fight and keep on doing so to the very end.

The English dictionary definition also helps us to understand what it means to **strive** = to means to devote serious energy or effort,

to endeavor, to struggle in opposition, to make an effort to accomplish an end, implying great exertion against great difficulty and specifically calling for persistent effort. To make great efforts. To use intense exertions. To endeavor with earnestness. To labor hard. The various senses of strive are applicable to exertions of body or mind. A workman strives to perform his task before another. A student strives to excel his fellows in improvement. To contend. To contest. To strain. To struggle in opposition to another. To be in contention or dispute and often followed by *against* or *with* before the person or thing opposed; e.g., *strive* against temptation; *strive* for the truth. To fight vigorously against. Make every effort. To do one's utmost. To "give it one's all." "To knock oneself out." "To make an all-out effort." "To bend over backwards." "To go for broke." "To leave no stone unturned."

Hendriksen writes that the verb **agonizomai** places us "in the (athletic) arena or in the wrestling-ring. The struggle is fierce. Our opponents are Satan, sin, self (the old, sinful nature). To strive means to exert oneself to the full, to strain every nerve in our struggle with these opponents....these words were not meant to scare God's children. They do not mean that entrance into the palace of salvation is only for those who are without sin. All those who struggle—in obedience to the command, "Strive to enter"—will enter. Another misconception must be removed. The command, "Strive to enter," does not imply that salvation is, after all, the product of human exertion and not of grace. **It is all of grace, enabling grace.** The true situation is described in Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note. (**Ed:** Where "work out" is **present imperative** = command calling for continual effort [cp idea of "striving"] to bring our salvation to completion! Is this not one picture of how believers are to strive to enter the narrow gate?) (New Testament Commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke. Baker)

Note that elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus uses **agonizomai** to picture a description of a fight. Paul uses **agonizomai** with a similar meaning...

Fight (agonizomai in the **present imperative**) the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1Ti 6:12)

Comment: Henry Alford renders it "strive the strife".

I have **fought** (agonizomai) the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith (2Ti 4:7-note)

The point is that the life of a believer is "war" and calls for us to struggle, wrestle and exert ourselves. As **John Piper** says here in Luke 13:27 "the phrase 'strive to enter' means that entering is a battle."

And so Jesus' command is to enter through the narrow door which is equivalent to entering the **kingdom of God** (Lk 13:28, 29) which in turn equates to salvation. As Jesus said "unless one is **born again** (from above, from God), he cannot see the **kingdom of God**" (Jn 3:3). So the door through which we are to strive to enter is the door to the kingdom of God or Heaven. To not enter this narrow door will result in confinement to the place of **weeping and gnashing of teeth**, which is Jesus' way of describing hell. In summary, what is at stake in the striving Jesus is calling for is entrance into either **heaven** (through the narrow door) or **hell** (the narrow door shut).

TRUE CHRISTIANITY IS A FIGHT

J C Ryle - True Christianity! Let us mind that word "true." There is a vast quantity of religion current in the world which is not true, genuine Christianity. It passes muster, it satisfies sleepy consciences; but it is not good money. It is not the authentic reality that called itself Christianity in the beginning. There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday and call themselves Christians. They make a "profession" of faith in Christ. Their names are in the baptismal register. They are reckoned Christians while they live. They are married with a Christian marriage service. They mean to be buried as Christians when they die. But you never see any "fight" about their religion! Of spiritual strife and exertion and conflict and self-denial and watching and warring they know literally nothing at all. Such Christianity may satisfy man, and those who say anything against it may be thought very hard and uncharitable; but it certainly is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded and His apostles preached. It is not the religion which produces real holiness. True Christianity is "a fight."...The principal fight of the Christian is with the world, the flesh and the devil. These are his never-dying foes. These are the three chief enemies against whom he must wage war. Unless he gets the victory over these three, all other victories are useless and vain. If he had a nature like an angel, and were not a fallen creature, the warfare would not be so essential. But with a corrupt heart, a busy devil and an ensnaring world, he must either "fight" or be lost. (**See the entire article - [Are You Fighting The Fight?](#)**)

John Bunyan (author of Pilgrim's Progress) has an **entire book on the Strait Gate (!!!)**.

Strive supposes that great idleness is natural to professors; they think to get to heaven by lying, as it were, on their elbows. It also suggests that many will be the difficulties that professors will meet with, before they get to heaven. It also concludes that only the laboring Christian, man or woman, will get here...

What does strive import?

When Jesus says **Strive**, it is as much as to say, Bend yourselves to the work with all your might. "Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going." (Eccl 9:10) Thus Samson did when he set himself to destroy the Philistines 'He bent with all his might.' (Jdg 16:30) Thus David did also declaring "Now with all my ability I have provided for the house of my God." (1Chr 29:2) And thus you must do, if you would enter into heaven.

When Jesus says **Strive**, he calls for the mind and will, that they should be on his side, and on the side of the things of His kingdom; for no one strives indeed, except those who have given the Son of God their heart, of which the mind and will are a principal part; for saving conversion lies more in the turning of the mind and will to Christ, and to the love of his heavenly things, than in all knowledge and judgment. And this the apostle confirms when he says stand "firm in one spirit, with one mind striving (sunathleo) together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil 1:27-note) ([Luke 13:24 The Strait Gate](#))

It is notable that other NT writers present a similar picture of **'striving'** in the context of salvation.

Peter charges his readers...

Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent** (aorist imperative = command to do this now! Don't delay!) to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things (2Pe 1:5-note 2Pe 1:6 7-note), you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (cp 2Pe 1:10, 11-note)

In **Hebrews** in the context of reminders that many in Israel failed to enter God's rest by faith the writer exhorts his readers...

Therefore (Because of the danger of "false faith" Heb 3:18, 19-note), let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. (Hebrews 4:1-note)

Therefore (because of the risk of not entering and the rewards of entering God's rest)**let us be diligent** (same verb used in Peter's exhortation above = **spoudazo**) to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11-note)

Comment: The picture of spoudazo is that of giving careful attention to some goal or objective. The idea is give maximum effort, do your best, spare no effort, hurry on, be eager! Hasten to do a thing, exert yourself, endeavour to do it. In short it is a call to give your utmost for His highest! In the context of Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 4 the exhortation is to be diligent to concentrate your energy on achieving the goal of entering God's promised Rest in Christ. Diligence in this sense is similar to the idea of **strive** in Lk 13:24 in that it speaks of an intensity of purpose followed by intensity of effort toward the realization of that purpose, of entrance through the narrow Door of Jesus by grace through faith.

Jesus warned His disciples

And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be **saved** (**sozo**). (Mt 10:22, cp Mt 24:13)

Comment: Does this admonition not speak of **"striving"** (Lk 13:24) to enter the narrow gate. Note however that Jesus is not saying that it is by one's endurance (self effort or works) that they will be saved. His point is that one is enabled to endure because of the fact that they are saved. In other words their endurance in spite of persecutions, ridicule, rejection, etc, is sure proof that they have entered the narrow door of genuine salvation.

Jesus also alluded to the **"striving"** (Lk 13:24) necessary to enter the narrow door of genuine salvation when He declared that...

it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (See **My Personal Testimony**) And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be **saved** (**sozo**)? (Mt 19:24, 25,

Comment: Be sure to **check the context** Mt 19:16-17 18 19-20 21 22 23. [See parallel in Mk 10:17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24-25 26-28 29 30 31 Luke 18:18-25, 26-28 29-30, see also Lk 12:33 34 Mt 6:19 20 21-note] What did Jesus tell the rich young ruler that would require "striving" ["agonizing"]? Remember that Jesus was not teaching that giving up his possessions [which equates with a self work] would earn or merit salvation.

John MacArthur explains it this way "*He [rich young ruler] sincerely wanted eternal life, but he wanted his*

riches and his self-righteousness even more. Whoever wants anything more than Christ will forfeit Christ." (cp Mk 8:35)

Walter Kaiser comments: This teaching was not given to one special individual; it was intended for Jesus' followers in general. He urged them to have the right priorities, to seek God's kingdom and righteousness above all else (Mt 6:33). But it is very difficult to do this, he maintained, if one's attention is preoccupied by material wealth. (Kaiser, W. C. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity)

Jesus equated entrance into the kingdom of God with being saved as indicated by the disciples' question. These are "hard sayings" from the mouth of our Lord, but they are the truth about genuine salvation, truth which the world desperately needs to hear and heed in these last days during which the Gospel is being "diluted" (cp Paul's warning in Gal 1:6 7 8 9 10)!

In another place Jesus helps us understand what it means to **continually** (present tense) **strive** when He says...

For this reason you **be** (**present imperative** = command to continually be prepared, in a state of readiness) ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Mt 24:44)

In explaining to His disciples and the multitudes what it meant to come after Him, denying self, taking up one's cross and following Him, Jesus declared that

whoever wishes to **save** (**sozo**) (referring to one's physical life) his life shall lose it (eternally); but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall **save** (**sozo**) (spiritually) it (eternally). (Mk 8:34, Be sure to **check the context** Mk 8:34, 35, 36)

John Piper exhorts us to...

STRIVE TO ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR, FOR ALL OF LIFE IS WAR

And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."—LUKE 13:23–24

Jesus taught us that life is war. When he said, "Strive to enter through the narrow door" (Luke 13:24), the Greek word behind the English strive is recognizable in English transliteration: agōnizesthe. You can see the word agonize in that Greek word. The implication is that we must struggle, wrestle, and exert ourselves. But the most important fact about the word "strive" is that the one other place where we find it on Jesus' lips is John 18:36, where he says his disciples would be "fighting" if his kingdom were of this world. "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting [ēgōnizonto], that I might not be delivered over to the Jews." So here the phrase "strive to enter" means that entering is a battle.

STRIVE TO ENTER WHAT?

Entering what? The kingdom of God. This is plain from the following context. After saying that we should "strive to enter through the narrow door," he refers to a master of a house who rises and shuts the door so that no one else can enter (Luke 13:25). Those outside knock and say, "Lord, open to us," but the master says, "I do not know where you come from." Then they say, "We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." But he responds, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" (Luke 13:25–27).

Then Jesus applies this picture to the real situation of some who will be excluded from the kingdom of God while Gentiles from all over the world will "recline at table in the kingdom of God." "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28–29).

So the "**narrow door**" through which we must "**strive**" to enter is the door to the kingdom of God. Outside there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13:28). This is one of the ways Jesus refers to hell: "Throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:50). The alternative to entering by the narrow gate is destruction. "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction" (Matt. 7:13). In other words, what is at stake when Jesus demands that we "strive to enter" is heaven and hell. It is an ultimate issue.

THE GREATEST THREAT IS OUR OWN SIN EVERY DAY

But what does Jesus want us to strive against so that we can enter through the narrow door? What are the obstacles? If life is war, who is the enemy? In our striving, the aim is not to hurt anyone. Jesus is

clear that we are to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27). Saying that life is war does not mean that we make war on people, but on sin, especially our own. In fact, it is only our own sin that can keep us from entering the kingdom, not anyone else's. The sin of others can hurt us, even kill us. But that does not keep us from entering the kingdom of God. Our own sin is the greatest threat to entering the kingdom of God. But temptation to sin comes from an amazing variety of sources.

Jesus is demanding serious personal vigilance. The command to “**watch**” is one of his most frequent commands. The idea is that we must be awake and alert and ready, lest the temptations of life take us off guard and we be overcome and ruined. Jesus said to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, “**Watch and pray** that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38). This command is relevant to all of life. Temptations abound, and Jesus does not take them lightly. The watchword of all of life is, **watch, be alert.**

I say **all of life** because Jesus warned that the days just before His second coming would be in many ways very normal. It will be, Jesus says, like the days of Noah before the flood came and swept people away who were utterly unsuspecting (**Ed Comment:** This is another reason to support the doctrine of the Rapture as Pre-Tribulation - if it is Post-Tribulation, those days surely will not be “normal”). They were not watchful. Life seemed too normal, so they were not vigilant. “As in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark ... so will be the coming of the Son of Man.... Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (Matt. 24:38–39, 42). Nothing is more normal than eating and drinking and marrying. The point is that we must be vigilant all the time, not just when the times feel perilous. They are always perilous. Soul-destroying temptations to unbelief and sin are present in everyday, normal life. Striving to enter through the narrow door is a lifelong, all-day, every-day calling.

PAIN AND PLEASURE CAN KEEP US FROM ENTERING THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR

Jesus' demand for vigilance is all-embracing. Both the pleasant parts of life and the painful parts of life present dangers to the soul. In the parable of the four soils he warns about both. The painful and the pleasant threaten to destroy the faith-sustaining work of the word in our lives. When the word falls on rocky ground it sprouts, then dies. This represents those who hear the word, but then “tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word” (Matt. 13:21), and they fall away. They do not enter through the narrow door.

When the word falls on thorny ground it sprouts, then dies. This represents those who hear the word, but then “they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life” (Luke 8:14). They do not enter through the narrow door. One person falls away because of pain (tribulation or persecution); the other person falls away because of pleasure (riches and pleasures of life). The call for vigilance is all-embracing. There is no unembattled place in this life.

Surprising to us perhaps, Jesus' demand for vigilance is directed more often at the pleasures of life than the pain. Some people are driven away from God by their pain, but more are lured away by their pleasures. Pleasures seldom awaken people to their need for God; pain often does. So Jesus is more concerned to warn us about the dangers of prosperity than the dangers of poverty.

THE PERILS OF PRAISE AND PHYSICAL INDULGENCE

One powerful lure away from the kingdom of God is the praise of man. Therefore, Jesus said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts” (Luke 20:46). “Beware” means be alert, take care, pay close attention to. This is a call for vigilance against the lure of following those who live for the praises of man. “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them” (Matt. 6:1). We feel good when people speak well of us. It may not be wrong. But it is dangerous. It is a time for vigilance. “Woe to you,” Jesus says, “when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

Less subtle is the lure of physical indulgence. Jesus focuses on alcohol and the dissipating effects it has on our minds and bodies. He says, “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap” (Luke 21:34). There are drugs and foods and practices that “weigh down” the heart. They make the heart sluggish. This is the opposite of vigilance. We will not “strive to enter through the narrow door” if we are self-indulgent and use drugs or food or drink in a way that dulls our spiritual alertness and vigilance.

MONEY IS A MORTAL THREAT TO ENTERING THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR

The danger Jesus warns against most often is the danger of money. It is a mortal danger. Heaven and hell hang in the balance in our vigilance against the lure of money. Jesus made this as clear as possible with the words, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). The issue is entering the kingdom. Striving for wealth is not the striving that leads to the narrow door.

Over and over Jesus warns us to be vigilant against the lure of riches. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Matt. 6:19). "You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24). "Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matt. 6:31). "The deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word" (Mark 4:19). "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy" (Luke 12:33). "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24). "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

THE "HEALTHY EYE" WILL HELP US STRIVE TO ENTER THE NARROW DOOR

It appears, then, that striving to enter the kingdom of God through the narrow door is largely a battle about how we relate to money. We should linger here since Jesus did. He is jealous that we "guard against all covetousness." He is deeply concerned with our "eyes" when it comes to the treasure of our lives. We see this in a puzzling statement he made in Matthew 6:22–23, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" In other words, if the eye is good (literally, "single"), the whole body will be full of light. But if the eye is bad, the body will be full of darkness. In other words, how you see reality determines whether you are in the dark or not.

You will naturally ask, what does that have to do with money? First of all, notice that these words of Jesus are sandwiched between the command to lay up treasures in heaven (6:19–21) and the warning that you can't serve God and money (6:24). Why is this saying about the good and bad eye sandwiched between two teachings on money? I think it's because what makes the eye good is how it sees God in relation to money. That's the issue on either side of this saying. In Matthew 6:19–21 the issue is: You should desire heaven-reward, not earth-reward. Which, in short, means: Desire God, not money. In Matthew 6:24, the question is whether you can serve two masters. Answer: You cannot serve God and money.

This is a double description of light! If you are laying up treasures in heaven, not earth, you are walking in the light. If you are serving God, not money, you are walking in the light. Between these two descriptions of the light Jesus says that the eye is the lamp of the body and that a good eye produces a fullness of this light. So, what is the good eye that gives so much light and the bad eye that leaves us in the dark?

WHAT IS THE GOOD EYE?

One clue is found in Matthew 20:15. Jesus has just said that men who worked one hour will be paid the same as those who worked all day, because the master is merciful and generous. And besides, they all agreed to their wage before they worked. Those who worked all day grumbled that the men who worked one hour were paid too much. Jesus responded with the same words found here in Matthew 6:23, "Is your eye bad because I am good?" (literal translation).

What is bad about their eye? What's bad is that their eye does not see the mercy of the master as beautiful. They see it as ugly. They don't see reality for what it is. They do not have an eye that can see mercy as more precious than money.

Now bring that understanding of the "bad eye" back to Matthew 6:23 and let it help us discern the meaning of the "good eye." What would the good eye be that fills us with light? It would be an eye that sees the Master's generosity as more precious than money. Which means that the good eye sees God and his ways as the great Treasure in life, not money. The good eye sees things as they really are. God is really more valuable than all that money can buy.

You have a good eye if you look to God and love to maximize the reward of his fellowship—that is, lay up treasure in heaven. You have a good eye if you look at Master-money and Master-God and see Master-God as infinitely more valuable. In other words, a "good eye" is a wisely valuing eye, a discerning eye, an astutely

treasuring eye. It doesn't just see facts about money and God. It doesn't just perceive what is true and false. It sees beauty and ugliness; it senses value and worthlessness; it discerns what is really desirable and what is undesirable. The seeing of the good eye is not neutral. When it sees God, it sees God-as-beautiful. It sees God-as-desirable.

That is why the good eye leads to the way of light: laying up treasures in heaven and serving God, not money. The good eye is a single eye. It has one Treasure: God. When that happens in your life, you are full of light. And this is so important that Jesus adds in Luke 11:35, "Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness." In other words, be vigilant. Don't be casual or slack or careless about this matter. Strive, wrestle, fight to keep your eye good. That is, do what you must to see God, not money, as supremely valuable and desirable.

In the next chapter we will continue to unfold the implications of Jesus' demand to strive to enter by the narrow door. We will see how he calls for vigilance and watchfulness in regard to false prophets and false christs and the suddenness of his second coming. And then we will turn to the question, how does the demand for vigilance fit with his demand that we rest in him? How does the seriousness of watchfulness fit with the sweetness of Jesus' care? ([Download the free Pdf copy of Dr Piper's book - What Jesus Demands from the World](#))

In the parable of the soils, Jesus gives us examples of those who **do not keep on striving** and will not be allowed to enter the narrow door...

The one on whom seed (Mt 13:19 = the word of the kingdom = equivalent to the Gospel) was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises (**Note:** Not just any affliction and persecution but specifically that which comes) because of the word, immediately he falls away (skandalizo = see related noun skandalon). (Mt 13:20-21)

The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked (suffocated, caused to die, figuratively causing the Word of God to be ineffective in a person's life) with worries (anxieties) and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity (No fruit = no Root = no Salvation). (Lk 8:14, cp Mk 4:19 amplifies Luke's description adding "deceitfulness" and "desires")

John Piper comments on the previous two passages that neither of these "enter through the narrow door. One person falls away because of pain (tribulation or persecution); the other person falls away because of pleasure (riches and pleasures of life). The call for vigilance is all-embracing. There is no unembattled place in this life." ([Piper, John: What Jesus Demands from the World - go to page 164ff](#)) ([Another source](#))

As John Piper discussed above another powerful lure away from the Kingdom of God is the praise of men...

Beware (prosecho in present imperative = we must continually pay close attention and be vigilant lest we fall into the trap of men's praises) of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets (Lk 20:46, cp Pr 27:21)

Piper: This is a call for vigilance against the lure of following those who live for the praises of man.

Beware of (prosecho in present imperative = we must continually be vigilant against) practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. (Mt 6:1-note)

Piper: We feel good when people speak well of us. It may not be wrong. But it is dangerous. It is a time for vigilance.

Another striving that must be to avoid self-indulgence

Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. (Lk 21:34-35).

Piper: We will not "strive to enter through the narrow door" if we are self-indulgent and use drugs or food or drink in a way that dulls our spiritual alertness and vigilance....

The danger Jesus warns against most often is the danger of money. It is a mortal danger. Heaven and hell

hang in the balance in our vigilance against the lure of money. Jesus made this as clear as possible with the words,

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God (Mk 10:25, compare Jesus' frequent warnings related to money and possessions - Mt 6:19, Mt 6:21, Mt 6:24, Mk 4:19, Lk 6:24 12:15 33 14:33).

The issue is entering the kingdom. **Striving** for wealth is not the **striving** that leads to the **narrow door**. (Ibid)

Pastor Steven Cole (recommended resource - sermons flow almost like verse by verse commentaries! [Click here to access his sermons](#)) in his sermon on Luke 13:22-30 entitled [The Narrow Door](#) comments...

Somewhere in some village some unnamed person in the crowd asked Jesus an interesting theological question: "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" I don't know the man's motives for asking the question. Perhaps he saw the increasing opposition from the religious leaders and he could sense that the crowds, although superficially interested in Jesus' message, tended to side with their leaders. But he asked this question, "Are there just a few who are being saved?"

Most of us have wondered about that question as we look at the billions of pagans compared with the few committed Christians. It would have made for an interesting theological discussion. But Jesus did not answer the question directly. Instead, He directed the question away from abstract theological speculation and toward specific application for each person in the crowd. The man had asked, "Will the saved be few?" Jesus turned it around to ask, "Will the saved be you?"

Remember, Jesus was speaking to a crowd made up mostly of religious Jews. Almost to a person they believed in the one true God. They were not agnostics or polytheists. They believed in the Hebrew Scriptures and lived in basic accordance with them. In giving His answer, Jesus was not addressing a pagan audience. He was talking to the "church" crowd, most of whom assumed that they would go to heaven because they were good Jews. And He gives us church folks some important and practical lessons on the subject of salvation: Salvation requires our earnest effort, our urgent attention, and our careful self-examination (**Ed**: e.g., 2Cor 13:5-note). It requires our earnest effort because the door is narrow. It requires our urgent attention because the door is soon to be closed. It requires our careful self-examination because once it is closed, the door will be eternally-closed. ([The Narrow Door - Luke 13:22-30](#) - **recommended** resource - sermons flow almost like verse by verse commentaries! [Click here to access his sermons](#))

Rescue the Perishing

-- Fanny Crosby

(Please listen to the vocal)

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

Refrain

***Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.***

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive;
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;
He will forgive if they only believe.

Refrain

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

Refrain

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;

Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;
Tell the poor wand'rer a Savior has died.

Refrain

Fanny Crosby tells the story of how she came to write **Rescue the Perishing**...

It was written in the year 1869, when I was forty-nine years old. Many of my hymns were written after experiences in New York mission work. This one was thus written. I was addressing a large company of working men one hot summer evening, when the thought kept forcing itself on my mind that some mother's boy must be rescued that night or not at all. So I made a pressing plea that if there was a boy present who had wandered from his mother's home and teaching, he would come to me at the close of the service. A young man of eighteen came forward and said, 'Did you mean me? I promised my mother to meet her in heaven, but as I am now living that will be impossible.' We prayed for him and he finally arose with a new light in his eyes and exclaimed in triumph, 'Now I can meet my mother in heaven, for I have found God!' (**Ed:** He had entered through the strait gate that leads to heaven. Hallelujah! May his tribe increase. Amen)

A few days before, Mr. Doane had sent me the subject "Rescue the Perishing," and while I sat there that evening the line came to me, "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying." I could think of nothing else that night. When I arrived at my home I went to work on it at once; and before I retired the entire hymn was ready for a melody. The next day my words were written and forwarded to Mr. Doane, who wrote the beautiful and touching music as it now stands.

In November, 1903 (**Ed:** year hymn written = 1869), I went to Lynn, Massachusetts, to speak before the Young Men's Christian Association. I told them the incident that led me to write "Rescue the Perishing," as I have just related it. After the meeting a large number of men shook hands with me, and among them was a man, who seemed to be deeply moved. You may imagine my surprise when he said, "Miss Crosby, I was the boy, who told you more than thirty-five years ago that I had wandered from my mother's God. The evening that you spoke at the mission I sought and found peace, and I have tried to live a consistent Christian life ever since. If we never meet again on earth, we will meet up yonder." As he said this, he raised my hand to his lips (**Ed:** as you doubtless know Fanny was blind); and before I had recovered from my surprise he had gone; and remains to this day a nameless friend, who touched a deep chord of sympathy in my heart. It is these notes of sympathy that vibrate when a voice calls them forth from the dim memories of the past, and the music is celestial. (**Fanny Crosby's personal testimony**)

Comment: Please take a moment to watch and listen to the vocal rendition of [Rescue The Perishing](#) based largely on Fanny Crosby's famous hymn (**Hint:** Select Full Screen view for maximum impact). **Beloved I will be amazed if you can watch and listen to this youtube video of Fanny Crosby's classic hymn without weeping.**

May our hearts break for what breaks our Father's heart and may His Spirit so fill us that His Good News "becomes like a burning fire" (Jer 20:9 23:29) in our bosom and we cannot hold it in for the sake of Jesus Who is [Mighty To Save](#). ([Hillsong version](#)) Amen

Arthur Pink - That Jesus should employ such an expression (**strive**) clearly implies the slothfulness and carelessness which characterize mere **nominal** (Christians in name only!) **professors**, as it also denotes that there are real difficulties and formidable obstacles to be overcome. The Greek word there used for "**strive**" (*agonizomai*) is a very expressive and emphatic one, meaning "agonize"...Ah, my reader, becoming a Christian is not done simply by holding up your hand in a religious meeting or signing some "decision" card. Alas, that such multitudes have been deceived by these satanic catch-pennies....Sermons on repentance and faith in Christ avail us nothing unless they move our hearts to comply therewith. The Greek word here rendered "strait" (Lk 13:24KJV) signifies restrained, cramped, or better "narrow" as it is rendered in the revised version. And what is meant by this strait or narrow door? A "door" serves two purposes: it lets in and shuts out. This door (Jn 10:9) is the only avenue of admittance to that "way" which leads unto life, and all who **enter not** by it are eternally barred from the presence of God and the realm of ineffable bliss. The second use of this "door" is solemnly illustrated at the close of the parable of the virgins. The foolish ones lacked the necessary "oil" (the work of the Spirit in the heart), and when they sought to obtain it the Bridegroom came and "the door was shut" (Mt 25:10), and though they besought Him to open it unto them, He answered "I know you not." (Mt 25:12)

As **Henry Cowles** explains strive to enter this way - What did he say? This:—Agonize [**strive**] to enter in at the narrow gate; for many, I solemnly assure you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able"— will find it impossible to gain admission. The idea is not that they fail for want of sufficient earnestness and endeavor, there being no stress upon **agony** as successful while ordinary seeking fails; but the distinctive emphasis is upon **striving now while yet the door stands open**, as opposed to **seeking in vain**

after the door is shut. The issue turns on the line of making the effort, and not upon the earnestness or the energy of the endeavor. Thus Jesus Himself explains His meaning. When once, in the exercise of his rightful authority, the master of the house has risen up and has officially, solemnly, shut the door, it can be opened no more. From and after that closing of the door...there can be no admittance. ([Henry Cowles - Luke - at top of page enter 168](#))

John Butler makes an excellent point that **strive** "does not suggest *works for* salvation but the *emphasis* one should put on salvation. Our salvation must be the most important matter in our life...Many are not saved because they want to enter on their own terms instead of God's terms, or they want to enter on the basis of good works, or they think they will enter because God is love and will not cast out anyone. Some think they can buy their way into heaven. **Many** who think they are going to heaven will not go to heaven when they die. (Butler, J. G. Analytical Bible Expositor: Luke. Clinton, IA: LBC Publications)

Brian Bell observes that **strive** although meaning to **agonize** like an athlete or fight like a soldier in war does not signify that we are "saved by our hard work. Rather it warns us to avoid an easy, complacent, and theoretical attitude toward the eternal destiny of the soul. We are to fight, or be at war with... *Who?* - Not who, but *what?*"

**Be at war with sin
(especially your own sin!)**

Strive to enter the narrow gate – because God's way is **narrow**. ([Luke 13](#))

J C Ryle comments...

Whatever others may do in religion the Lord Jesus would have us know that our duty is clear. The gate is strait. The work is great. The enemies of our souls are many. We must be up and doing. We are to wait for nobody. We are not to inquire what other people are doing, and whether many of our neighbors, and relatives, and friends are serving Christ. The unbelief and indecision of others will be no excuse at the last day. We must never follow a multitude to do evil. If we go to heaven alone, we must resolve that by God's grace we will go. Whether we have many with us or a few, the command before us is plain--"**Strive to enter in.**" ([Luke chapter 13](#))

(**Ryle** commenting on John 10:9 adds) Let us take heed that we use this door, and do not merely stand outside looking at it. It is a door free and open to the chief of sinners--"If any man enter in by it, he shall be saved." (Jn 10:9) It is a door within which we shall find a full and constant supply for every need of our souls. We shall find that we can "go in and out," and enjoy liberty and peace. The day comes when this door will be shut forever, and men shall strive to enter in, but not be able. Then let us make sure work of our own salvation (cp 2Pe 1:10 11-note). Let us not stand tarrying outside, and halting between two opinions. Let us enter in and be saved. ([John 10](#))

Frederic Godet writes that **agonizomai** "refers...to the difficulty of passing through the narrow opening (and) in the application, to the humiliations of penitence, the struggles of conversion. ([Luke 13:22 Commentary](#))

Matthew Henry ([Luke 13 Commentary](#)) comments on **strive to enter**...

(1.) All that will be saved must enter in at the strait gate, must undergo a change of the whole man, such as amounts to no less than being born again, and must submit to a strict discipline.

(2.) Those that would enter in at the strait gate must strive to enter. It is a hard matter to get to heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. (**Ed: How does this compare with the "invitation" presented in many churches today? Just a thought to ponder in light of Jesus' words.**)

We must **strive** with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, **strive** against **Sin** and **Satan**. We must **strive** in every duty of religion; **strive** with our own hearts, **agonizesthe**—

**"Be in an agony.
Strive as those that run for a prize.
Excite and exert ourselves to the utmost."**

Matthew Henry points out that Jesus' following discussion contains a number of points that should serve to strongly motivate us to submit and obey His command to strive to enter the narrow door..

(1) Think how many take some pains for salvation and yet perish because they do not take enough, and you will say that there are few that will be saved and that it highly concerns us to strive. Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; they seek, but they do not strive. Note, The reason why many come short of grace and

glory is because they rest in a lazy seeking of that which will not be attained without a laborious striving. They have a good mind to happiness, and a good opinion of holiness, and take some good steps towards both. But their convictions are weak; they do not consider what they know and believe, and, consequently, their desires are cold, and their endeavours feeble, and there is no strength or steadiness in their resolutions; and thus they come short, and lose the prize, because they do not press forward. Christ avers this upon his own word: I say unto you; and we may take it upon his word, for he knows both the counsels of God and the hearts of the children of men.

(2) Think of the distinguishing day that is coming and the decisions of that day, and you will say there are a few that shall be saved and that we are concerned to strive

(3) Think how many who were very confident that they should be saved will be rejected in the day of trial, and their confidences will deceive them, and you will say that there are few that shall be saved and that we are all concerned to strive...Many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of heaven, which they never distrusted or called in question, and therefore conclude their state is good because they never doubted it. They call Christ, Lord, as if they were his servants; nay, in token of their importunity, they double it, Lord, Lord.

DON'T PUT OFF UNTIL TOMORROW WHAT YOU MUST DO TODAY! TOMORROW MAY BE TOO LATE!

Puritan writer **John Owen** notes that **agonizomai** "embraces in its general sense, not only great and continued effort, but such timely action, as to avoid being excluded in the way referred to in the following verse. The contrast lies principally in the idea of prompt and energetic effort on the one hand and a fatal procrastination (put off from day to day; delay; defer to a future time) on the other. This brings out with emphasis the **NOW**, with which all the offers of salvation are made to men in the Word of God. See Isa 1:18; Jer. 25:5; 35:15; Zech. 1:4; Lk 14:17; Ro. 13:11; 2Co. 6:2; Heb 4:7. It is most unquestionably true, that men are often beguiled to ruin, by mistaking a few vain and feeble efforts for the energetic action requisite to obtain salvation; but that is not here the prominent idea (**Ed**: Do not misunderstand - Owen is not saying our efforts merit entry through the narrow door, for by works shall no man be saved). Our Lord intends to warn men against delaying to enter the strait gate, until it is shut, and they are forever excluded. This will appear more clear from the following verse (Lk 13:25). (Owen, J. J. Commentary on Luke)

Enter (1525) (eiserchomai from **eis** = into + **erchomai** = come) means to go or come into and so to enter into. (Aorist Active Infinitive)

The narrow door - KJV has the "**strait gate**".

Frederic Godet writes that "The **strait gate** represents attachment to the lowly Messiah; the magnificent gateway by which the Jews would have wished to enter, would represent, if it were mentioned, the appearance of the glorious Messiah whom they expected. ([Luke 13:22 Commentary](#))

IVP Commentary - Jesus is clear from the start: "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door." The verb here, make every effort, or better "strive" (NRSV; Greek *agonizomai*), suggests great labor and struggle in the effort to get through the door. The verb is used in other contexts of an athlete in training (1 Cor 9:25). Our world places many obstacles before us, as does our own pride. Access to God is not a wide-open, take-anyroute-you-want affair. He sets the route's ways and means. So many . . . will try to enter and will not be able to. Such restrictiveness would not surprise this Jewish audience, since it was already taught that Israel was God's elect nation (m. Sanhedrin 10:1; 2 Esdras 7:47; 8:4--9:22). Second Esdras 8:3 reads, "Many are created, but few are saved." The surprise in Jesus' reply is not that access may be limited, but who gains entry. There will come a time when the householder arises and shuts the door, announcing that the time for filling the room has come to an end. Those on the outside of the closed door will knock, seeking entrance, but it will be denied. The basis of the refusal is the Master's declaration that he does not know those who knock. Earlier, when there had been opportunity to get to know the Lord, those outside had not been interested. So the Lord now says, "I don't know you or where you come from." The Lord's denial perplexes those who appeal for entry, since they once had meals in Jesus' presence and listened to his teaching in the streets. But Jesus' reply makes it clear that exposure is not knowledge. Something more than presence is required in coming to know Jesus. So he tells them, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!" Outward contact with Jesus means nothing; inward reception is everything (Lk 6:46-49; Jn 1:12). There is no bargaining with the Lord here. The issue is simply, Did you know him? ([Luke 12 Commentary - Know the Time- Israel Turns Away but Blessing Still Comes - BibleGateway.com](#))

Arthur Pink notes that " It is not enough to listen to preaching about this **gate**," nor to study its structure or admire the wisdom of its appointment: it must be entered. Sermons on repentance and faith in Christ avail us nothing unless they move our hearts to comply therewith....**And what is meant by this strait or narrow gate?** A "gate" serves two purposes: it lets in and shuts out. This

gate is the only avenue of admittance to that "way" which leads to life, and all who enter not by it are eternally barred from the presence of God and the realm of ineffable bliss. The second use of this "gate" is solemnly illustrated at the close of the parable of the virgins. The foolish ones lacked the necessary "oil" (the work of the Spirit in the heart), and when they sought to obtain it the Bridegroom came and "the door was shut" (Mt 25:10), and though they sought Him to open it unto them, He answered "I know you not."

John MacArthur: Entering the narrow gate is difficult because of its cost in terms of human pride, because of the sinner's natural love for sin, and because of the world's and Satan's opposition to the truth. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

F B Meyer adds that the **door** was "so narrow that there is no room to carry through it the love of self, the greed of gain, the thirst for the applause and rewards of the world."

Alexander Maclaren

We note, first, the all-important exhortation (**Strive**) with which Christ seeks to sober a frivolous curiosity. In its primary application, the 'strait gate' may be taken to be the lowliness of the Messiah, and the consequent sharp contrast of His kingdom with Jewish high-flown and fleshly hopes. The passage to the promised royalty was not through a great portal worthy of a palace, but by a narrow, low-browed wicket (small gate), through which it took a man trouble to squeeze.

For us, the **narrow door** is the self-abandonment and self-accusation which are indispensable for entrance into salvation. 'The door of faith' is a narrow one; for it lets no self-righteousness, no worldly glories, no dignities, through. Like the Emperor at Canossa, we are kept outside till we strip ourselves of crowns and royal robes, and stand clothed only in the hair-shirt of penitence (repentance, grief of heart for sins). Like Milton's rebel angels entering their council chamber, we must make ourselves small to get in. We must creep on our knees, so low is the vault; we must leave everything outside, so narrow is it. We must go in one by one, as in the turnstiles at a place of entertainment. The door opens into a palace, but it is too strait for any one who trusts to himself.

There must be effort in order to enter by it. For everything in our old self-confident, self-centered nature is up in arms against the conditions of entrance. We are not saved by effort, but we shall not believe without effort.

The main struggle of our whole lives should be to cultivate self-humbling trust in Jesus Christ, and to 'fight the good fight of faith.' (Read the entire sermon - [The Strait Gate](#))

STRIVING... COUNTING THE COST!

J C Ryle has some pithy comments in his article entitled "**The Cost**"...

THE COST OF BEING A TRUE CHRISTIAN - Let there be no mistake about my meaning. I am not examining what it costs to save a Christian's soul. I know well that it costs nothing less than the blood of the Son of God to provide an atonement and to redeem man from hell. The price paid for our redemption was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. We "are bought with a price." "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all" (1Co 6:20; 1Ti 2:6).

But all this is wide of the question. The point I want to consider is another one altogether. It is what a man must be ready to give up if he wishes to be saved. It is the amount of sacrifice a man must submit to if he intends to serve Christ. It is in this sense that I raise the question: "What does it cost?" And I believe firmly that it is a most important one.

I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man has only got to attend a place of worship twice on Sunday and to be tolerably moral during the week, and he has gone as far as thousands around him ever go in religion. All this is cheap and easy work: it entails no self-denial or self-sacrifice. If this is saving Christianity and will take us to heaven when we die, we must alter the description of the way of life, and write,

**"Wide is the gate and broad is the way
that leads to heaven!"**

But it does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an "Egypt" to be forsaken, a

"wilderness" to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run.

**Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair
and taking him easily to heaven.**

It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory. Hence arises the unspeakable importance of "counting the cost."...

1. True Christianity will cost one his self-righteousness..

2. True Christianity will cost a man his sins. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice which is wrong in God's sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it and labor to keep it under, whatever the world around him may say or think. He must do this honestly and fairly. There must be no separate truce with any special sin which he loves. He must count all sins as his deadly enemies and hate every false way. Whether little or great, whether open or secret, all his sins must be thoroughly renounced. They may struggle hard with him every day and sometimes almost get the mastery over him. But he must never give way to them. He must keep up a perpetual war with his sins. It is written, "Cast away from you all your transgressions." "Break off your sins . . . and iniquities." "Cease to do evil" (Ezek. 18:31; Dan. 4:27; Isa. 1:16). This sounds hard. I do not wonder. Our sins are often as dear to us as our children: we love them, hug them, cleave to them and delight in them. To part with them is as hard as cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. But it must be done. The parting must come.

3. Also, Christianity will cost a man his love of ease. He must take pains and trouble if he means to run a successful race toward heaven. He must daily watch and stand on his guard, like a soldier on enemy's ground. He must take heed to his behavior every hour of the day, in every company and in every place, in public as well as in private, among strangers as well as at home. He must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his imagination, his motives, his conduct in every relation of life. He must be diligent about his prayers, his Bible reading, and his use of Sundays, with all their means of grace. In attending to these things, he may come far short of perfection; but there is none of those who he can safely neglect.

4. Lastly, true Christianity will cost a man the favor of the world. He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted and even hated. He must not be surprised to find his opinions and practices in religion despised and held up to scorn. He must submit to be thought by many a fool, an enthusiast and a fanatic, to have his words perverted and his actions misrepresented. In fact, he must not marvel if some call him mad. The Master says, "Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

I dare say this also sounds hard. We naturally dislike unjust dealing and false charges and think it very hard to be accused without cause. We should not be flesh and blood if we did not wish to have the good opinion of our neighbors. It is always unpleasant to be spoken against and forsaken and lied about and to stand alone. But there is no help for it. The cup which our Master drank must be drunk by His disciples. They must be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). Let us set down that item last in our account. To be a Christian, it will cost a man the favor of the world.

Considering the weight of this great cost, bold indeed must that man be who would dare to say that we may keep our self-righteousness, our sins, our laziness and our love of the world, and yet be saved! Moreover, I grant it costs much to be a true Christian. But what sane man or woman can doubt that it is worth any cost to have the soul saved? When the ship is in danger of sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. When a limb is mortified, a man will submit to any severe operation, and even to amputation, to save life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing! A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown. ([Read the full article](#))

Kent Hughes tells the story of a well known follower of Christ, Alistair Begg, who was in Cambridge, Mass restaurant putting the final touches on his sermon for a convocation when...

he looked across the aisle and saw an Asian girl intently reading what appeared to be a Bible. He watched further and saw that she was indeed studying the Scriptures. So he asked, "I see that you are reading the Bible. Are you a Christian?" She smiled and replied,

"Oh yes. I've found the narrow way."

Her answer was remarkable. Neither he nor I in all our years in ministry had ever heard anyone answer like that. In the ensuing conversation she explained that she had come from Korea to study at Harvard, and she was the only Christian in her family. Here was a young Christian woman 10,000 miles away from her Buddhist home (with its three million gods, the antithesis of "the narrow way") in the midst of Harvard's aggressive pluralism (which tolerates everything except the narrowness of the gospel) who so profoundly understood her Christian faith that she expressed it with unabashed acumen as "the narrow way." ([Luke That You May Know the Truth Volume 2](#))

Narrow (4728) (**stenos** - derivation uncertain - one source says from histemi = to stand, Vine says from root sten- as in stenazo = to groan) pictures obstacles standing close to each other. The meaning is restricted, less than standard width, limited in size, a small breadth or width in comparison to length. Limited in extent, amount or scope as a narrow gorge between high rocks. **Stenos** comes from a root that means "to groan," as from being under pressure, and is used figuratively to represent a restriction or constriction.

Vine comments that "the gate which provides the entrance to eternal life (is) **narrow** because it runs counter to natural inclinations, and "the way" is similarly characterized."

Jesus by using this figure of speech is saying that choosing for Him is not the popular nor the easy way!

In Mt 7:14 this adjective **stenos** modifies "**the way**", so that both the **gate** and the **way** are narrow.

There are only 3 NT uses of **stenos**, here in Luke and twice in Matthew (Mt 7:13 and Mt 7:14)

Enter (aorist imperative = Command to do this now! Don't delay! Conveys a sense of urgency.) by the **narrow** gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. 14 For the gate is small, and the way is **narrow** that leads to life, and few are those who find it." (Mt 7:13, 14-note)

Robert Frost wrote a secular poem that closely parallels Jesus' teachings

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I---
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."*

Stenos - 16x in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)**- Nu 22:26; 1Sa 23:14, 19, 29; 24:22; 2Sa 24:14; 2Ki 6:1; 1Chr 21:13 (Figurative use - "I am in great distress"); Job 18:11; 24:11; Pr 23:27; Isa 8:22; 30:20; 49:20; Jer 30:7; Zech 10:11. Several of the OT uses are used to translate "stronghold".

Numbers 22:26 The **Angel of the LORD** went further, and stood in a **narrow** (**Hebrew** = tsar = narrow, tight; **Lxx** = stenos) place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left. 25 When the donkey saw the **Angel of the LORD**, she pressed herself to the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again.

2 Samuel 24:14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great **distress** (Hebrew = tsarar = to suffer distress; **Lxx** = stenos). Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

Jeremiah 30:7 'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's **distress** (Heb = tsarah = trouble, distress, calamity, anguish, state of very unfavorable circumstance, with a focus on the emotional pain and distress of the situation Dt 31:17 Jer 4:31; **Lxx** = stenos) but he will be saved from it.

Comment: Jacob's Distress or **Trouble** describes a period of time, specifically the last 3.5 years of **Daniel's Seventieth Week**, which Jesus designated as **Great Tribulation** (Mt 24:21, cp Mk 13:19, Re 7:14-note). During this time the Antichrist ("Beast" of Rev 13, "[Little Horn of Daniel 7](#)") will be allowed by God and empowered by Satan (Rev 13:4-note, Rev 13:5-note where 42 months = 3.5 years) to have essentially "free reign" on the earth and will attempt to destroy the Jews in the greatest "holocaust" the world has ever seen. And yet in the midst of this horrible time to come, God makes the sure promise that He will save Jacob from it or out of it, which is a prophecy of the Messiah's return to deliver Israel (see Ro 11:25,26, 27-note cp Zech 13:8, 9).

H A Ironside cautions us to remember that Jesus is not saying

that we are to be saved by our own efforts, for by these we would never be saved at all; but we must be in **earnest** (ardent in pursuit, eager to obtain, having a longing desire) when the door to life stands open, and we

are invited to enter in. We must be sure that we **heed** (regard with care, give close and careful attention, attend to) the gracious invitation and do not pass carelessly by, lest we find at last that we have lost our opportunity...We may well take these warning words to our hearts today for they are intended for us as truly as for the people of Israel of old. The door into the kingdom of God still stands open, but it is a narrow door. None can pass through that door with their sins upon them. But as Christ Himself is the Door (Jn 10:9), we may find in Him deliverance from our sins, and thus enter into the way of life. The narrow way is that of **subjection** (state of being under the authority or control) to Christ; a way that involves denial of self (cp Mk 8:34, 35) and recognition of our responsibility to live for Him Whose grace alone can save us.

I plead with you to give heed to the words of our Lord, **Strive to enter in at the strait gate.**"

**Do not let anything keep you
from making sure of your eternal salvation.**

(cp 2Pe 1:10, 11-note)

But be like the man in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, who, when he heard of the impending destruction of the city in which he lived and learned that life was to be found only through entering the **wicket** (small) **gate**, refused to be turned aside by any of his own townspeople, and putting his fingers in his ears, ran from them crying, "Life! Life! Eternal Life!" (**Ed**: Indeed a picture of a man "striving" to enter the wicket gate!) and so made his way toward the shining light pointed out to him by Evangelist (see [Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan -Part 1, Stage 1](#) - scroll down to subheading entitled "Evangelist directs him."). (Addresses on the Gospel of Luke. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers)

David Guzik comments that

The way is narrow. We can't bring our self-centeredness, pride, lusts, hate or especially our own righteousness. As the famous hymn [Rock of Ages](#) says:

**Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling.**

Strive to enter: Therefore, we must strive (the word is literally "agonize") in order to lay these things aside and come in. The Greek word for strive has "the idea of a struggle or prize-fight." (Bruce) Strive to enter through the narrow door is not a call to save yourself by good works. Good works are not the right door. You can strive to enter all your life long, but if it isn't at the right door, it makes no difference. Jesus Himself is the door (Jn 10:9). He is the (only) door. **Then why must we strive to enter?** Because there are many obstacles in the way. The **world** is an obstacle. The **devil** is an obstacle. But probably the worst obstacle is your own **flesh**. ([Luke 13 Commentary](#))

Kent Hughes writes that the image of the **narrow door** "suggests the moral posture of the person who would strive to enter the kingdom. I. H. Marshall notes that "the imagery is akin to that of a camel passing through the needle's eye, and suggests the difficulty of facing up to the demands of Jesus in self-denial." The passage to Heaven is not through the great portal of a palace, but a narrow, low door through which one must humbly squeeze. And after entering, the road remains narrow, as Jesus explained when he preached at another time: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Mt 7:13, 14-note). Few people are willing to assume the humble posture and to shed what is necessary to get through the gate, and few are willing to tread the narrow road. (Ibid)

Darrell Bock - The verb "make every effort" (agonizesthe) speaks of laboring to get in. This implies that there is a specific route by which to enter; that is why Jesus mentions a **narrow door** and sets forth what it is. Those who fail to enter by that **door**, even though they desire to get in, will not succeed. Once the **door** is shut, it will be too late. For individuals, the **door** shuts at death—if not before, because of the **hardness of one's heart** (**Ed Comment**: See repeated warning in Hebrews to not harden one's heart = He 3:8-note, He 3:15-note, He 4:7-note, cp Jn 12:40 quoting Is 6:10-note which speaks of Divine "judicial" hardening - i.e., you continue to refuse to listen to God and finally He delivers a "judicial" hardening so you can no longer hear! Frightening, mysterious thought - God's sovereign hardening and yet not to be divorced from human responsibility and culpability! Woe!). ([Bock, D. L. The NIV Application Commentary: Luke: Zondervan](#))

Spurgeon encourages us to "not be ashamed of being called Puritanical, precise, and particular (in regard to the fact that the way of salvation is **narrow**)....It is a way of self-denial, it is a way of humility, it is a way which is distasteful to the natural pride of men; it is a precise way, it is a holy way, a strait way, and therefore men do not care for it. They are too big, too proud, to go along a narrow lane to heaven; yet this is the right way. (Commenting on the related passage in Mt 7:13-note Spurgeon notes that) There are many broad ways, as Bunyan says, that abut upon it; but you may know them by their being broad, and you may know them by

their being crowded. The Christian man has to swim against the current; he has to do more than that, he has to go against himself, so narrow is the road (Ed: And so narrow is the door!); but if you wish to go down to perdition, you have only to float with the stream, and you can have any quantity of company that you like....Do not be ashamed of being called **narrow**. (cp 2Ti 1:8-note, 2Ti 1:12-note) Do not be ashamed of being supposed to lead a life of great precision and exactness. There is nothing very grand about breadth, after all. And I have noticed one thing: the "*broadest*" men I have ever met with in the best sense have always kept to the narrow way, and the "*narrowest*" people I know are those who are so fond of the broad way.

Steven Cole comments...

Salvation requires our earnest effort because the door is narrow and exclusive, not wide and all-inclusive. Strive comes from a Greek word used of athletic contests and of war. Obviously, it implies a great deal of effort. You don't win wars or athletic contests by being passive. You never see an athlete receiving the gold medal, who says, "I had never worked out or run in a race until a few weeks ago. I thought it would be fun, so here I am." Every athlete who wins strives to win. He invests great energy and effort into winning. It is not an accident if he wins. It is the result of deliberate and sustained effort. Not everyone receives the prize. Only a few are winners. The fact that the door is narrow implies that it takes some deliberate thought and effort to go through it. There aren't many doors into the same place, so that you can take your pick. There is one and only one door, which is Jesus Christ. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Him (John 14:6). The entrance is narrow and exclusive, not broad and all-inclusive.

There isn't one great big door that's easy to find and stroll through without thinking about it. There is one narrow door. You might not like the fact that it is narrow. You may think that it's too exclusive. You may say, "I believe that God is loving and that He will accept everyone who tries to do his best. I believe that all sincere people will get through the door." But, the fact is, according to Jesus it is narrow, not wide. He made it narrow without checking with us for our ideas about how wide it should be. Whether you like it or not, Jesus claimed to be the only way to God. You can either enter through the narrow door, which is Christ alone, or you can invent a broad door that includes many ways to God, and thus contradict what Jesus Himself said. Jesus is asking,

"Are you striving to enter the narrow door? Are you making your salvation a matter of deliberate and sustained effort? Are you sure that you're entering the narrow door as defined by Jesus and not a broad door of your own choosing?"

You say, "Whoa! I thought that salvation is a free gift, received simply by grace through faith, not a matter of our effort. How does this harmonize with striving for it?"

Jesus isn't talking about salvation by works or human effort. But He is talking about our attitude toward it. Those who are only mildly interested about salvation will not obtain it. Those who view salvation as an interesting topic for discussion are missing the point. Those who say, "I believe that all roads lead to God and all good people will go to heaven" are engaging in human speculation, but they are not submitting to Jesus' divine revelation. They are putting their thoughts about being open-minded and tolerant above Jesus' words that the door is narrow. The salvation of your eternal soul should not be a casual subject that is good for an occasional stimulating theological discussion!

It ought to consume your attention. It shouldn't be a matter of mild interest that elicits a halfhearted response. You need to take great pains to make sure that you have entered the narrow door. Jesus doesn't say, "Stroll through the big door sometime when you're not doing anything else and check it out." He says, "Strive to enter by the narrow door." Again, picture the Olympic athlete. He makes winning the gold medal the focus of his life. Everything he does is controlled by his goal of winning the gold. He won't eat anything that is not good for him, because it might hinder his muscles from performing at their maximum on the day of the race. He doesn't go to parties and stay up late the night before, because he wants to be rested and ready to give everything to the race. He will refrain from engaging in fun activities that his other friends enjoy, such as skiing or playing softball, because he doesn't want to break his leg or tear his ligaments. He is disciplined to work out for hours, often when his body is screaming, "That's enough!" because he wants to win.

That's the kind of attitude that we should have toward our own salvation, according to Jesus. It shouldn't be a nice thing to think about every once in a while when you don't have anything better to do. It should be on your mind every day. It should govern everything you do. It should determine how you spend your time, your money, and your leisure hours. You must strive to enter because the door is narrow. It's not a great big wide door that you can wander into without thinking about it. You must be earnest to make sure that Christ alone is your hope of salvation. ([Luke 13:22-30 The Narrow Door](#))

[Jesus Sinners Doth Receive](#)

Jesus sinners doth receive;

Oh, may all this saying ponder
Who in sin's delusions live
And from God and Heaven wander!
Here is hope for all who grieve—

Jesus sinners doth receive.

Come, ye sinners, one and all,

Come, accept His invitation;
Come, obey His gracious call,
Come and take His free salvation!
Firmly in these words believe:

Jesus sinners doth receive.

Oh, how blest it is to know:

Were as scarlet my transgression,
It shall be as white as snow
By Thy blood and bitter Passion;
For these words I now believe:

Jesus sinners doth receive.

John MacArthur - The requirement that sinners **enter through the narrow door** further indicates the intensity of the struggle (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). The door is a tight fit, requiring those who enter through it to strip themselves of their personal baggage. It is also made hard to find by the many deceptive voices luring the unwary and undiscerning to the broad gate that leads to hell. Therefore many will seek to enter and will not be able.

John Piper writes that "the **"narrow door"** through which we must **"strive"** to enter is the door to the kingdom of God. Outside there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13:28). This is one of the ways Jesus refers to hell: "Throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:50). The alternative to entering by the narrow gate is destruction. "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction" (Matt. 7:13). In other words, what is at stake when Jesus demands that we "strive to enter" is heaven and hell. It is an ultimate issue. ([Download free Pdf copy of Dr Piper's book - What Jesus Demands from the World](#))

Door ([2374](#))(**thura**) referred to a literal door as allowing one to enter and exit some place (Mk 1:33), a courtyard or outer door (Acts 12:13), a reference to the Temple gate (Acts 3:2), the door of a tomb (Mk 15:46), or the door of heaven (Rev 4:1 - this last use being in a sense metaphorical). Figuratively **thura** referred to Jesus Himself as the metaphorical door through which one could enter into salvation (John 10:7, 9).

And so in John we read that **Jesus** taught "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9) and added "I am **the** (specific, exclusive) way, and **the** (specific, exclusive) truth, and **the** (specific, exclusive) life; (absolutely) no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (John 14:6) In Greek the definite article "the" is important as it speaks of specificity...in other words, had Jesus been one of many ways, He would not have used the definite article "the" but would have identified Himself as "**a**" way, "**a**" truth, "**a**" life, one of many gates/ways. Jesus did not teach that there are many roads that lead to the Kingdom of Heaven but clearly taught "I am the only **Way**."

Many are skeptical, agnostic or even antagonistic regarding Jesus' teaching on the **narrow door or narrow gate** and scoff at the idea of such rigid "exclusivity" regarding salvation. The Gospel message however is clearly very dogmatic, very exclusive and very narrow. Obviously while we as Christians are not to be narrow-minded people per se, we must be narrow-minded regarding the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6), if we truly believe that salvation is found in no one else, and that there is no other name under heaven that has been given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). As offensive as such a truth may be to non-Christians, we must continually make it clear in our witness (our life, then our lips!) to them, for without Christ they are lost and bound for the lake of fire (Re 20:11, 12, 13, 14, 15-[see notes](#), cp Mt 25:41, 2Th 1:9, Re 14:11-[note](#), Re 19:20, 20:10 - see chart on [Births, Deaths, and Resurrections](#)).

Here are a few other NT passages that support this "narrow minded" view and to encourage you to defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints...

Matthew 5:20 (note) "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and

Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Comment: This would have shocked many in the Jewish audience, who knew the Pharisees as the most religious people in the world. But as Jesus alluded to they may have had religion but in their hearts they rejected the "narrow gate" of Christ.

Matthew 7:21, 22 (note) Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

Comment: This is a frightening verse, for it clearly teaches that "many" people who profess Christ are self-deceived. It isn't a matter of outward profession, but inward faith and obedience, that saves us.

John 8:24 "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

John 10:9 "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Romans 3:10 (note) as it is written, "THERE IS **NONE** RIGHTEOUS, **NOT EVEN ONE**; 11 THERE IS **NONE** WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS **NONE** WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; 12 **ALL** HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS **NONE** WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS **NOT EVEN ONE**..." 23 for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified (declared righteous) as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

1Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (There is no other foundation for a holy, blessed, abundant, eternal life other than Christ).

1Timothy 2:5-6: For there is one God, and **ONE** mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. (Only one Mediator. Only one ransom, the blood of Christ shed on the Cross.)

Hebrews 2:3 (note) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard

Hebert Lockyer gives us an example of one who entered the small gate and tread the dangerous way of a disciple in his fascinating book entitled [Last Words of Saints and Sinners](#) writing that

John Bradford, Chaplain to Edward VI in 1552, was one of the most popular preachers of his day in England. With the accession of Queen Mary, Bradford was arrested for seditious utterances and heresy. Refusing to recant, (he was) condemned to be burnt at Smithfield, and he met his death tied to the same stake as a young man found guilty of the same supposed crime. As the flames covered their bodies, Bradford consoled the youth by saying

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

Elsewhere, **Lockyer** gives a tragic quote which is in diametric opposition to that of John Bradford...

Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899), famous American lawyer and prominent agnostic, lectured on Biblical inaccuracies and contradictions. His famed lecture *The Mistakes Of Moses* led one defender of the Bible to say that he would like to hear Moses speak for five minutes on *The Mistakes Of Ingersoll!* Standing by his graveside, his brother exclaimed

*"Life is a **narrow vale** between the **narrow peaks** of two eternities. We **strive in vain to look beyond the heights**. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailings."*

Comment - This "eulogy" is fascinating in that it uses some of the same words our Lord Jesus Christ used to warn people of the wailing that awaited those who rejected His offer of salvation!

John Milton makes mention of the **small gate** in **Paradise Regained**

*"A deathlike sleep,
A gentle wafting to immortal life.*

*Truth shall retire
Bestruck with sland'rous darts,
And works of faith rarely be found.
And to the faithful, Death **the gate of life.**"*

A correct knowledge of and response to the two gates and two ways is an urgent matter!

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The Narrow Gate - The story is told of Professor T. H. Huxley, the father of agnosticism. As he came to the end of life, the nurse attending him said that as he lay dying, the great skeptic suddenly looked up at some sight invisible to mortal eyes, and staring a while, whispered at last, "So it is true." And he died.

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According to Svetlana Stalin, when her father, Joseph Stalin, was dying, he was lying with his eyes closed. At the very last moment, he suddenly opened his eyes and looked at the people in the room. It was a look of unutterable horror and anguish. Then he lifted his left hand, as though pointing to something, and dropped it and died. One wonders how many who are attracted to his socialistic views are told how he departed this life to the next?!

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The Broad Road to Destruction - In 2001 George Barna reported that 51% of Americans believed that if a person was generally good, or did enough good things for others during their life, they would earn a place in heaven.

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STRAIT IS THE GATE TO ALL THAT COME

by Karolina W. Sandell-Berg

[\(Play hymn\)](#)

Strait is the gate to all that come,
And narrow is the way,
Which leads unto the heav'nly home,
Where yet is room for thee,
Where yet is room for thee.

In Heav'n, where God His own shall take,
There's also room for thee.
In Jesus' Name, for Jesus' sake,
The gates shall opened be,
The gates shall opened be.

Where thousands stand arrayed in white,
Whom God His own declared,
There yet is room and life and light,
By grace for thee prepared,
By grace for thee prepared.

In Jesus' heart there's room, I know,
And in His Heav'n of bliss.
He in His Gospel tells me so,
Thanks be to God for this,
Thanks be to God for this.

Now God be praised, that even I
May in that city dwell,
Where peace shall reign eternally,
And all with me be well,
And all with me be well.

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I have always been amazed to watch the freighters go through the Soo Locks that join Lake Superior and Lake Huron in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. To me, it's a wonder of piloting as I see the captain inch his 1,000-foot-long ore boat safely through the Poe or the Davis Lock. There it can be lowered to the level of Lake Huron or raised so that it can enter Lake Superior.

The captain eases the boat through the gates of the lock at a barely discernible pace because it is only a couple feet wider than the ship itself. The process may take a while, but it gets the ship safely through. It would be much easier for the captain to approach the wide mouth of the St. Mary's River that flows alongside the locks and joins the two lakes. But it is shallow, fast-moving, and filled with huge rocks and white-water rapids. A freighter trying that route would be doomed to destruction. If you were the ship's captain, which way would you choose? The narrow way, of course. It's the only safe way

There is a narrow way in the spiritual life; the way of faith in Christ. It leads to heaven. Trust Jesus today Take the narrow way! —D. C. Egner

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Which Highway? - Roads. They're everywhere. Criss-crossing the landscape, taking us wherever we want to go. Freeways. Avenues. Toll roads. Boulevards.

And now there's yet another type of thoroughfare that's taking us to never-before traveled areas. It's called the "information superhighway," and it promises to be an avenue to discovery and knowledge. Via computer hookups, we can access vast libraries of new information.

Asphalt and concrete roads lead us to physical destinations. Computer highways take us to places of the mind--information destinations that can enlighten, educate, and entertain us. All those roads. All those decisions. All those possibilities.

Yet no road, no highway, no computer network can compare with the only true superhighway--the narrow way.

In Matthew 7, Jesus told us about that way. It is entered through a narrow gate, its course is difficult, and it is not as crowded as the broad way that leads to destruction. Jesus was talking about the path that we take when we put our faith in Him. He was talking about the road to heaven.

Are you on that highway? We have so many paths to take in life, but God's way is the only one that leads to eternal life. --J D Brannon

Oh, choose now the path of salvation
And enter in at the strait gate!
Come now, while the Savior is calling;
Tomorrow may be too late! --Haines

**The path that fools have trod
is a well-beaten one.**

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The Narrow Way
by William Cowper

What thousands never knew the road!
What thousands hate it when 'tis known!
None but the chosen tribes of God
Will seek or choose it for their own.

A thousand ways in ruin end,
One only leads to joys on high;
By that my willing steps ascend,
Pleased with a journey to the sky.

No more I ask or hope to find
Delight or happiness below;

Sorrow may well possess the mind
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow.

The joy that fades is not for me,
I seek immortal joys above;
There glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love.

Cleave to the world, ye sordid worms,
Contented lick your native dust!
But God shall fight with all his storms,
Against the idol of your trust.

FOR MANY, I TELL YOU, WILL SEEK TO ENTER AND WILL NOT BE ABLE: hoti polloi, lego (1SPA) humin, zetesousin (3PFAI) eiselthein (AAN) kai ouk ischusousin (3PFAI) (For: Pr 1:24 25 26 27 28 14:6 21:25 Ec 10:15 Isa 1:15 58:2 3 4 Eze 33:31 Mk 6:18 19 20 Jn 7:34 8:21 13:33 Ro 9:31 32 33 10:3)

For (see value of observing **terms of explanation**) - Introduces the first portion of Jesus' explanation for their need to **strive** to enter. He explains that **they will not be able** to enter.

Many (pollus) means just that - not a few but a large number of souls. In Mt 7:13 note Jesus clearly warned that there would be **many** who would enter through the wide gate and travel the broad highway which ended in utter, eternal ruin and loss of all purpose for which they were originally created (see **apoleia**). As an aside Hell was not created originally for man but for Satan and his demons - Mt 25:41.

I tell you - You is in the **plural** which indicates that Jesus is addressing this not just to the one who ask the question in Lk 13:23 but to the entire audience.

Bob Utley comments "that many of those who thought they were certain of entrance into the kingdom will be surprised (cf. Lk 13:28; Mt 8:12). This is a shocking verse for legalists of all ages and cultures. Salvation is not human effort, but a response of personal faith to God's gift and provision—Jesus (cf. Jn 10:1-18 14:6)."

Will seek (2212) (zeteo) means to try to learn location of something often by movement from place to place in process of searching. Try to find by searching for what is lost. Zeteo describes man's search for God (Acts 17:27). There is a seeking which Jesus commends but it is before the door is shut...

Matthew 6:33-note "But (contrast with Mt 6:32) **seek** (present imperative) first His kingdom (and by "default" the King of that kingdom, Christ Jesus) and His righteousness (Which He gives as a gift by grace to those who place their trust in His perfect righteousness and substitutionary atonement), and all these things will be added to you.

Norval Geldenhuys - When once the gate is shut and the time of grace has expired, many will attempt to enter, but then they will not be able to do so, for it will then be for ever too late. (Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament. Eerdmans Publishing Co)

Not (ou) - This signifies absolute negation sounding the death knell of finality when the door is shut!

C H Spurgeon - Now is the accepted time, but ere long the day of grace and of this mortal life will end, and then it will be too late to seek for mercy. (Spurgeon, C. H. The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible)

Able (2480) (ischuo [word study]) from **ischus** = might) means to be strong in body or in resources. **Ischuo** can speak of physical power (Mk 2:17, 5:4, 9:12). It can speak of having the required personal resources to accomplish some objective as in Php 4:13 or conversely with the negative speaks of that which is good for nothing (Mt 5:13-note).

Jesus says that those who fail to enter the narrow door will have no power to enter once it is shut.

Ischuo - 28x in 28v in **NAS** - Mt 5:13; 8:28; 9:12; 26:40; Mark 2:17; 5:4; 9:18; 14:37; Luke 6:48; 8:43; 13:24; 14:6, 29f; 16:3; 20:26; John 21:6; Acts 6:10; 15:10; 19:16, 20; 25:7; 27:16; Gal 5:6; Phil 4:13; Heb 9:17; Jas 5:16; Rev 12:8. **NAS** = able(5), am...strong enough(1), been able(1), can(1), can do(1), could(8), force(1), good(1), healthy(2), means(1), overpowered(1), prevailing(1), strong enough(3), unable*(2).

David Guzik comments that

The punctuation supplied by translators in Luke 13:24 25 is poor. It should read *will not be able when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door*. The point is that there will come a time when it is too late to enter - that is why one must have an urgency to enter now. This is true regarding our soul's salvation.

You can know something about Jesus and not be saved.

You can be in the presence of Jesus and not be saved.

It is likewise true of so many areas where God challenges our lives. We must be urgent to do what God tells us now. For example, many men are terrible husbands, until the day when their wife just gives up - then they wake up, but it may be **too late!** You begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, '**Lord, Lord**, open for us': Many will seek to enter (in the sense of wishing to enter), but they will not be able to. When the door is open, it is open; when it is shut, it is shut. There is a real difference between a mere **seeking** and **striving** to enter. **A casual wish to be saved isn't enough, because there are too many obstacles on the way** ([Luke 13 Commentary](#))

Steven Cole comments that...

Salvation requires our earnest effort because **many will seek to enter and will not be able** to do so. The following verse indicates that they will not be able to enter because they missed the deadline. It is not that many strive to enter, but only some of those striving succeed. Rather, as the following verses show, some will wake up to the serious issues involved in their own salvation too late. They had assumed that all was well with them because they were decent, religious people. They knew Jesus in a casual way, but they had not taken the Gospel to heart. They had never repented of their sins. But they didn't consider these matters seriously until it was too late...I am making the point that if you follow the crowd you will not follow the Savior into eternal life. Jesus says that there are **many** (and He is talking about the religious crowd) who will not enter through the narrow door. If you follow them, you will be shut out when that door slams shut. And, it always takes effort, both mentally and morally, to go against the majority. You have to think about matters for yourself and decide,

"I will not follow conventional wisdom. I will not go along with group pressure. I will follow the Lord Jesus Christ."

So Jesus' first point is that salvation requires our earnest effort. If you are only half-hearted about it or go with the crowd, you will miss it! **You must strive to enter by the narrow door.** ([Luke 13:22-30 The Narrow Door](#))

ARE YOU STRIVING OR SEEKING TO ENTER?

Alexander Maclaren notes the reason for the command to **strive to enter**....

It is briefly given (here in the last clause of) Luke 13:24, and both parts of the reason there are expanded in the following verses. Effort is needed for entrance, because many are shut out. The questioner would be no better for knowing whether few would enter, but he and all need to burn in on their minds that many will not. Very solemnly significant is the difference between **striving** and **seeking**. It is like the difference between wishing and willing. There may be a seeking which has no real earnestness in it, and is not sufficiently determined, to do what is needful in order to find. Plenty of people would like to possess earthly good, but cannot brace themselves to needful work and sacrifice. Plenty would like to 'go to heaven,' as they understand the phrase, but cannot screw themselves to the surrender of self and the world (cp Mk 8:35 36 37).

**Vagrant, half-hearted seeking,
such as one sees many examples of,
will never win anything,
either in this world or in the other.**

We must **strive**, and not only **seek**. (Read Maclaren's entire sermon - [The Strait Gate](#))

Godet - I declare unto you, says Jesus: They will think it incredible that so great a number of Jews, with the ardent desire to have part in that kingdom, should not succeed in entering it. The word polloi, **many**, proves the connection between this discourse and the question of Lk 13:23. Only Jesus does not say whether there will be few or many saved; He confines Himself to saying that there will be **many** lost. This is the one important matter for practical and individual application. ([Luke 13:22 Commentary](#))