

Luke 13:22-30 Commentary

Luke 13:24 is the main focus of this exposition but Luke 13:22-30 is included in this exposition in order to establish the context of Jesus' command in Luke 13:24.

- For the complete commentary on Luke 13 click [here](#) for verse by verse exposition.

[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, awakened 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'rers 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

Luke 13:22 AND HE WAS PASSING THROUGH FROM ONE CITY AND VILLAGE TO ANOTHER, TEACHING AND PROCEEDING ON HIS WAY TO JERUSALEM: Kai dieporeueto (3SIAI) kata poleis kai komas didaskon (PAPMSN) kai poreian poioumenos (PMPMSN) eis lerosoluma:

- **Through:** Lk 4:43,44 Mt 9:35 Mk 6:6 Ac 10:38
- **Proceeding:** Lk 9:51 Mk 10:32 33 34)

Bob Utley notes that in this verse we again see "Luke's emphasis on Jesus traveling on His way to Jerusalem to His divine appointment (cf. Lk 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29)." ([Luke Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe comments that "The events recorded in John 9–10 fit between Luke 13:21 and Luke 13:22. Note in John 10:40–42 that Jesus then left Judea and went beyond the Jordan into Perea. The events of Luke 13:22 thru Luke 17:10 took place in [Perea](#) as the Lord gradually moved toward Jerusalem." ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament. Victor](#))

And He was passing through - Was He just **passing through** or was He **passing through** with a purpose? What was He doing as He passed through? (Teaching) Jesus did not waste one precious moment! And neither should we as we are "passing through" this world blinded to His life giving Gospel (2Co 4:4-note, 2Co 4:5,6-note Jn 3:18 19 20 21 Acts 26:17 18)! Like Jesus we are **aliens and strangers** (1Pe 1:1-note, 1Pe 2:11-note) who are on mission to accomplish the **good works** for our Master (e.g., see Ep 2:10-note, Php 2:13-note Ep 5:18-note Gal 5:16-note).

Plumtre writes that "this is apparently the continuation of the same journey as that which Lk 9:51 recorded the beginning." ([A New Testament Commentary for English Readers](#))

Passing ([1279](#)) (**diaporeuomai** from **diá** = through + **poreúomai** = to go) means to go or pass through. Used 5x in 5v in **NAS** = Lk 6:1; 13:22; 18:36; Ac 16:4; Ro 15:24-note. The **present tense** speaks of continuous action - Jesus was "on the move"!

A T Robertson - Making his way to Jerusalem. Note tenses here of continued action, and distributive use of *kata* with cities and villages. This is the second of the journeys to Jerusalem in this later ministry corresponding to that in John 11.

Teaching ([1321](#)) (**didasko** [word study] from **dáo**= know or teach; English = **didactic**; see also studies of noun **didaskalia** and adjective **didaktikos**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. In the 97 NT uses of **didasko** the meaning is virtually always to teach or instruct, although the purpose and content of the teaching must be determined from the context.

Luke uses the **present tense** to vividly picture the focus and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ to redeem every precious moment (Ep 5:16KJV-note) as He walked along those dusty roads with His disciples knowing that the end of the road was His death on a Roman Cross, but fully cognizant that this would accomplish His triumph over sin, death and Satan!

Can you imagine being one of the disciples constantly hearing the Truth Himself **teaching** accurately the Word of Truth. **Only His glorious countenance in heaven could be better!** (Ps 16:11, Rev 21:3-note Rev 21:4-note Rev 21:5-note Rev 21:6-note Rev 21:7-note Rev 22:3-note Rev 22:4-note Rev 22:5-note)

Beloved, we are called to walk in His steps (1Pe 2:21-note, cp Jn 13:15 1Co 11:1 Ep 5:2-note Php 2:3 4-note Php 2:5-note 1Jn 2:6 3:16 Re 12:11-note), and yes that will bring **persecution** (Jn 15:19 20 Lk 6:22; 21:17 Jn 17:14 15 Mt 10:34, 35, 36 take comfort in Jn 16:33,14:27), but it also conveys a **responsibility** (and accountability one day future 2Ti 2:15-note) to **continually teach** the **Word of Life** (Php 2:16-note, 1Jn 1:1) to faithful men and women who will be able to teach others also (2Ti 2:2-note, cp Jesus commission in Mt 28:18 19 20 especially Mt 28:20!)

In Scripture to **teach** means to pass on the truth about the Word of God, the God of the Word and the faith of the saints, with the goal of influencing the understanding and stimulating obedience to the truth taught and resultant Spirit energized transformation and Christ-likeness. The essence of a disciple in fact is that he or she is a learner. The teacher teaches and the disciple hears and processes what is heard so that this truth affects his or her innermost being. Ultimately the purpose of *didasko* is to shape the will of the one taught. Finally, teaching of sound doctrine is vital to the growth and stabilization of one's faith (cp Ro 10:17).

It is notable that in the Gospels Jesus is addressed as **Rabbi** or **Teacher** more than any other name, which clearly attests to the importance He placed on this activity. In fact some 45 of the 58 NT uses of the Greek word for **teacher** (*didaskalos*) are used of Jesus (most of these referring to His public teaching). In addition 47 of 97 occurrences of **didasko** are used in the Gospels to describe the teaching activity of Jesus. **Teaching** was also a primary activity of the leaders of the early church (see Acts 4:2, 18, 5:21, 25, 28, 42, etc). How tragic that we are seeing a drift away from the teaching of **sound doctrine** (1Ti 4:6 2Ti 4:3-note Titus 1:9-note) from the pulpits, even in churches that refer to themselves as "Bible churches"!

John MacArthur adds that the Greek verb **didasko** refers to the passing on of information, often, but not necessarily, in a formal setting. It focused on content, with the purpose of discovering the truth-contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about of various ideas and opinions was the primary concern (see Acts 17:21). Synagogue teaching, as illustrated by that of Jesus, was basically expository. Scripture was read and explained section by section, often verse by verse. ([MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Proceeding on His way to Jerusalem - When you walk with Jesus, you walk in the light (Jn 8:12 1:4 9:5 12:46) for He tells you where is going as in the following passages...

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension (Lk 24:51, Acts 1:2 9 Ep 4:10), He was determined to go to Jerusalem (I love the King James Version which is more literal here than the NAS = **He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem**)

Mark 10:32 They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

Proceeding (present tense to = continually) ([4160](#))(*poieo*) usually means to make, to do or accomplish, this latter in the sense of undertaking some action and here in Lk 13:22 speaking of **making** His way (His *purpose* - see discussion of "way" below) to Jerusalem.

Way ([4197](#)) (*poreia*) means a journey which **Thayer** says in the Hebrew mind spoke of "a going", i.e., a purpose, a pursuit or an undertaking, which is the sense in the only other NT use (Rendered "*pursuits*" in Jas 1:11-note).

Luke 13:23 AND SOMEONE SAID TO HIM, "LORD, ARE THERE JUST A FEW WHO ARE BEING SAVED?" AND HE SAID TO THEM: eipen (3SAAI) de tis auto, Kurie, ei oligoi hoi sozomenoi (PPMPN)? o de eipen (3SAAI) pros autous (3MPA):

- **Are:** Mt 7:14 19:25 20:16 22:14
- **And:** Lk 12:13 14 15 21:7,8 Mt 24:3 4 5 Mk 13:4,5 Jn 21:21,22 Ac 1:7,8)

And someone said to Him - Some have said this may have even been one of His 12 disciples but Lk 13:28 suggest that such would be unlikely (unless of course it was Judas Iscariot!)

Are there just a few - He is asking the wrong question. The question for every man and woman to ask is "Am I saved?" And Jesus turns the question of the solitary man into an answer to the masses ("**to them**") that were around Him.

Kent Hughes writes that this

was a smug, self-complacent question because the general understanding among the Jews was that all Jews except the very worst would be saved. The Mishnah ([See discussion of Talmud](#)) was explicit about this:

All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written, Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified. And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, and [he that says] that the Law is not

from Heaven, and an Epicurean. (Sanhedrin 10.1) ([Luke Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe comments on the question noting that "As with the question about Pilate, Jesus immediately made the matter personal. "The question is not how many will be saved, but whether or not you will be saved! Get that settled first, and then we can discuss what you can do to help get others saved." I sometimes receive "theological letters" from radio listeners who want to argue about predestination, election, and other difficult doctrines. When I reply, I usually ask them about their prayer life, their witnessing, and their work in the local church. That often ends the correspondence. Too many professed Christians want to discuss these profound doctrines, but they do not want to put them into practice by seeking to win people to Jesus Christ! D. L. Moody prayed, "Lord, save the elect, and then elect some more!" ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament. Victor](#))

C H Spurgeon - A question which has been asked many times since. If a book could be published by authority detailing the number of the saved, many would hasten to read it. It would be far more wise to ask, "Shall I be saved?" We may get a clear answer to that personal inquiry, but upon the larger question we are not yet in possession of more than clouded light. "If but three persons are to be saved, why should not I be one of them?" was a sensible remark we once heard from an earnest seeker. (Spurgeon, C. H. The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible)

Henry Cowles adds that "Jesus answered, not to that question of curiosity, comparatively unimportant, but to a kindred one infinitely more vital—How can ye yourselves be saved!—Noticeably he directed this answer, not to that one person who put the question, but "to them"—to the masses who were about Him—the whole audience. ([Henry Cowles - Luke - at top of page enter 168](#))

John Stevenson observes that...

This is one of those types of questions that you hear from unbelievers: "What about the man in Africa?" Jesus doesn't immediately answer it. He says, "Instead of worrying about the man in Africa, you should be worrying about the man who is standing in your sandals." Do you see it? The man asks, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And Jesus answered, "Make certain that you are one of those few."

There are several points made throughout this passage.

The door is narrow and not everyone enters (Lk 13:24).

The door is only open for a short time and then it will be shut (Lk 13:25).

The door will only be open to those who know Jesus and who are known by Him (Lk 13:26).

There is time for you to know Him today, but tomorrow may be too late.

The door will be opened to many rather than just a few (Lk 13:29-30). This was the original question. Now it is finally answered. But it is not answered in the way that the question anticipated. ([Kingdom Controversies](#))

Cyril of Alexandria explains that Jesus was not evading the question but that it was His practice "to meet His questioners, not of course according to what might seem good to them, but as having regard to what was useful and necessary for His hearers. And this He especially did when any one wanted to learn what was superfluous and un-edifying. For what good was there in wishing to learn, whether there be many or few that be saved? What benefit resulted from it to the hearers? **On the contrary it was a necessary and valuable thing to know in what way a man may attain to salvation.** He is purposely silent therefore with respect to the useless question which had been asked Him, but proceeds to speak of what was essential, namely, of the knowledge necessary for the performance of those duties by which men can enter in at the strait and narrow door." ([Sermon Luke 13:22ff](#))

Holman Christian Study Bible comments that "The question *"are there few being saved?"* may reflect two important realities about Jesus' ministry: (1) Many of His teachings insisted that true discipleship comes with many difficult challenges (**Ed:** cp Mk 8:35, Lk 14:33, et al), and (2) though large crowds came to hear Jesus in every town and village, there were relatively few who authentically followed Him as disciples (**Ed:** cp response of the disciples in Jn 6:66 [following because of the "benefits" Jesus offered such as "free bread" Jn 6:10-11-12-13]) and Jesus' test of discipleship Jn 8:31 directed at those who had "believed" Jn 8:30 but who proved to be only professors who manifested intellectual assent and not genuine belief when in this same section sought to stone Him for declaring Himself to be "I Am" - Jn 8:58, 59, cp similar pattern Titus 1:16-note). ([HCSB](#))

Uteley notes that this question about the number saved "was a highly discussed issue among the rabbis (cf. Mt 7:13 [note] = "destruction...many", Mt 7:14 [note] "life...few"). They argued whether all the Jews would be saved from God's wrath on Judgment Day or just certain sects within Judaism (their own). This question may also relate to the OT concept of "remnant" (cf. Isa. 10:20-21-22-23; 16:14; Micah 2:17; 4:6-7-8; 5:7-8-9; 7:18-19-20). The tragedy of ancient Israel was that although they were the special chosen nation of YHWH, most never had a personal faith relationship with Him. Israel's history is one of judgment, restoration, and judgment again. The prophets only saw a faithful remnant (she'ar - 07605) returning from Assyrian and Babylonian exile. ([Luke Commentary](#))

David Guzik - We often wonder about the salvation of others. But in His reply (Strive to enter through the narrow gate), Jesus points

back to the only person's salvation we can really know and asks, "are you yourself saved?" The rabbis of that day used to love to debate the question of whether many or few would be saved. But Jesus won't be drawn into this debate. His only question is, "are you saved?" ([Luke 13 Commentary](#))

Brian Bell observes that

The real question is not "**are there few who are saved**", but "will you be among the saved?" Instead of entering the kingdom, some people only ask questions about it. But...

**Salvation is not a theory to discuss
It is a miracle to experience.**

In our soft age we are more concerned with statistics than about spiritual power. ([Luke 13](#))

Being saved ([4982](#))(sozo) has the basic meaning of delivering or rescuing one from great peril, in this context the terrifying wrath to come (cp 1Th 1:10-note, 2Th 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10). Additional nuances of **sozo** include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, heal, be made whole. **Sozo** is in the **present tense** (continually) and the **passive voice** (power coming from outside Source, the Spirit).

The phrase **being saved** is found 5 times in the NT - Luke 13:23 Acts 2:47 Acts 27:20 1 Cor 1:18 2 Cor 2:15

And He said to them - Notice that "**them**" is plural (in the Greek), so Jesus addresses the following remark to all the audience not just the one who asked the question. Jesus answers the The Lord answered a speculative question with a direct command.

Godet - The question of Lk 13:23 was to a certain extent a matter of curiosity. In such cases Jesus immediately gives a practical turn to His answer. Cp. Lk 12:41, 42, John 3:2 3; and hence Luke says (Lk 13:23): "He said to them." Jesus gives no direct answer to the man; He addresses a warning to the people on the occasion of his question. ([Luke 13:22 Commentary](#))

Matthew Henry - Our Saviour came to guide men's consciences, not to gratify their curiosity. Ask not, How many shall be saved? But, Shall I be one of them? Not, What shall become of such and such? But, What shall I do, and what will become of me? Strive to enter in at the strait gate. This is directed to each of us; it is, Strive ye. All that will be saved, must enter in at the strait gate, must undergo a change of the whole man (cp 2Co 5:17-note). Those that would enter in, must strive to enter. Here are awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. Oh that we may be all awakened by them! They answer the question, Are there few that shall be saved? But let none despond either as to themselves or others, for there are last who shall be first, and first who shall be last. If we reach heaven, we shall meet many there whom we little thought to meet, and miss many whom we expected to find.

Pastor Steven Cole 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. ([Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door](#))

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](#))

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** (1SPAI) **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)

Greek: **Agonizesthe** (2PPMM) **eiselthein** (AAN) **dia tes stenes thuras, hoti polloi, lego** (1SPAI) **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;

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 asks...

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**....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.

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. ([Piper, John: What Jesus Demands from the World - go to page 164ff](#)) ([Another source](#))

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](#))

Piper goes on to emphasize that 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)

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](#))

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](#))

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 about 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!

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.

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?!

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.

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.

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

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.**

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
- Luke 13 Resources

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](#)

Luke 13:25 ONCE THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE GETS UP AND SHUTS THE DOOR, AND YOU BEGIN TO STAND OUTSIDE AND KNOCK ON THE DOOR, SAYING "LORD, OPEN UP TO US!" THEN HE WILL ANSWER AND SAY TO YOU "I DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE FROM": aph' ou an egerthe (3SAPS) o oikodespotes kai apokleise (3SAAS) ten thuran, kai archesthe (2PAMS) exo estanai (RAN) kai krouein (PAN) ten thuran legontes, (PAPMPN) Kurie, anoichon (2SAAM) hemin; kai apokritheis (APPMSN) erei (3SFAI) humin, Ouk oida (1SRAI) humas pothen este. (2PPAI):

- **Once:** Ps 32:6 Isa 55:6 2Co 6:2 Heb 3:7,8 12:17
- **Shut:** Ge 7:16 Mt 25:10
- **Lord:** Lk 6:46 Mt 7:21,22 25:11,12
- **I know:** Lk 13:27 Mt 7:23 25:41
- Luke 13 Resources

**The door is strait and the way narrow and uphill,
but one moment in heaven
will make amends for a lifetime of striving to enter!**

Shuts the door - This explains why they **will not be able** to enter the door. The great lesson of this passage is that the call of the Gospel has limitations of time, for the door named "mercy" will not remain open indefinitely - yes, for a time but not for ever. Entrance is only possible while the narrow door stands wide open. Every pitiful or plausible plea will be to no avail. The door is sealed shut. Those outside are hopelessly and forever debarred.

Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door- This explains Lk 13:24b, why they will not be able to enter. Conversion and pardon for sin are no longer available, no longer possible! This day comes to every sinner who dies outside of the safety of the "Ark" of Christ Jesus, for once the door of the ark is closed, it cannot be reopened (cp Ge 7:16, 21, 1Pe 3:20). An unrepentant sinner's last heart beat and last breath is equivalent to the **head of the house** shutting the door, shutting out that person's soul eternally from entrance into the kingdom of heaven and God's very presence! This is a terrible thought to ponder beloved. It should drive us to travel the highways and byways proclaiming the good news while the door of salvation and the day of grace remain open! (Let the following "modernized" version of an old Fanny Crosby hymn motivate you to go forth [cp Mt 9:37, 38] - [Rescue The Perishing](#))

Matthew Henry has some poignant comments on the "**door of distinction**"...

Now, within the temple of the church there are carnal professors who worship in the outer-court, and spiritual professors who worship within the veil; between these the door is now open, and they meet promiscuously in the same external performances. But, when the Master of the house is risen up, the door will be shut between them, that those who are in the outer-court may be kept out.... As to those that are filthy, shut the door upon them, and let them be filthy still (Re 21:8-[note](#), Re 21:27-[note](#) Re 22:15-[note](#)); that those who are within may be kept within, that those who are holy may be holy still (Re 22:14-[note](#)). The door is shut to separate between the precious and the vile, that sinners may no longer stand in the congregation of the righteous. Then you shall return, and discern betwixt them.

A door of denial and exclusion. The door of mercy and grace has long stood open to them, but they would not come in by it, would not be beholden to the favour of that door; they hoped to climb up some other way, and to get to heaven by their own merits, and therefore when the Master of the house is risen up he will justly shut that door; let them not expect to enter by it, but let them take their own measures. Thus, when Noah was safe in the ark, God shut the door, to exclude all those that depended upon shelters of their own in the approaching flood. ([Luke 13 Commentary - Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Bible](#))

The **Psalmist** warns of the danger of procrastinating in regard to one's eternal destiny

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; **Surely in a flood of great**

waters they will not reach him. (Psalm 32:6-note)

Isaiah issues a warning calling for an immediate response from the readers...

Seek (red = this is imperative!) the LORD while He may be found (**Ed**: While the "door" is still open!); **Call** upon Him while He is near (**Ed**: Before He closes the "door" **AS HE DID** in Noah's day when the flood came - Ge 7:16-17, 23!). (Isaiah 55:6)

Paul issues a warning to the unrepentant sinner quoting the Lord Who...

says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE **TIME** I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE **DAY** OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." **Behold**, (command to draw the hearer's attention to what follows) **now** is "**THE ACCEPTABLE TIME**," **behold**, **now** is "**THE DAY OF SALVATION**" (2Corinthians 6:2)

Comment: In the preceding context (2Co 5:20), Paul as an ambassador of Christ, has just begged the sinful readers on His behalf to be reconciled to God. Paul echoes Jesus' warning (Lk 13:22-30) that **the acceptable time...the day of salvation** will not last forever. The sinner must strive to enter today! Observe the repetition of expressions of time and two "**behold's**" calculated to grab the reader's attention and bring them to a point of decision (now)!

Murray Harris writes that "To emphasize the seriousness and urgency of his appeal and to highlight the privilege of the present and the danger of procrastination, Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8 and then applies the passage to the age of grace." ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Alexander Maclaren notes that "in reference to each stage of life, specific opportunities are given in it for securing specific results, and these can never be recovered if the stage is past; so mortal life as a whole is the time for entrance, and if it is not used for that purpose, entrance is impossible. If the youth will not learn, the man will be ignorant. If the sluggard will not plough because the weather is cold, he will 'beg in harvest.' If we do not strive to enter at the gate, it is vain to seek entrance when the Master's own hand has barred it. ([Luke 13:22-30 The Strait Gate](#))

"**Lord (kurios) open up to us!**" - When the door is shut, the day of grace will have come to an end. Today is the day to call Jesus "**Lord**", not when the door is shut! And if we call Him "**Lord**" it is not just a mouthing of our *lips* but reflected in the living of our *lives*! To call Jesus **Lord** is to surrender to His sweet will, which speaks not of perfection but of the general direction of our life. Think for a moment -- Here when it is too late, even these lost souls recognize Him as Lord. How much more should saved souls not choose to recognize Him as Lord and to submit to His will for their life!

Notice how sin deceives the sinner (He 3:13-see discussion of **deceitfulness of sin**) so that they think they can address Jesus as "**Lord**" while demonstrating absolutely no evidence that they have surrendered their selfish will to their Master's perfect will during their lifetime! They do things like the song says "my way", not "my Master's way"! Their sinful behavior points to their self-centered belief.

And why do you **call** (**present tense** = this was their habitual practice!) Me, '**Lord, Lord**,' and **do not do** (**poieo** in the **present tense** = this was also their habitual practice, their lifestyle!) what I say? (Lk 6:46)

Comment: Did you notice the "*disconnect*" between what they *said* and what they *did* (more accurately what they did NOT do)? **Profession** never saved anyone! In Titus 1:16-note they were continually **professing** [**present tense**] but they were also continually **denying** [**present tense**] by their deeds! Deeds do not save! Deeds do demonstrate the authenticity of one's profession. Profession must always be coupled with possession. The English definition of profession is an open but often false declaration or claim! Do not be deceived dear reader!

And later the other virgins also came, saying, '**Lord**, open up for us.' But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, **I do not know you**.' (Mt 25:11, 12)

Not everyone who says to Me, '**Lord, Lord**,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does (**present tense** = as their habitual practice - the idea is that this is their general direction, not perfection!) 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?' (Notice He does not dispute their claims! Miracles don't save us, except one miracle, the miracle of a circumcised heart, a new heart, a new [miraculous] birth!) "And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS**.' (Mt 7:21-23-note)

Then He will say to them - Notice that "**them**" is plural, so Jesus is not addressing this only to the one who asked a question (Lk 13:23 "someone said to Him") but to the entire audience (and to all who read His words).

I do not know where you are from - Again Jesus uses the plural for **"you."** The point is that they had no personal relationship with the Lord, as emphasized by the Lord's two categorical denials of relationship.

Kent Hughes makes some piercing statements - We may be preachers and have perhaps ministered to thousands. We may be Sunday school teachers and point many little ones to Christ. We may be missionaries and are held up as paragons of sacrifice, and yet end up as castaways. Why? Because mighty works do not save us, but only vital union with Christ through real faith. So the burning question is, does Christ know you? Are you in authentic relationship with Him? The corollary question is, has the relationship with Christ that you claim to have turned you away from evil? Are you morally improved from God's point of view? Or will he say, "Away from me you evildoer!"? The telling question is not a matter of ministry or standing in the church but of authentic righteousness. (Ibid) **Woe!**

Luke 13:26 "THEN YOU WILL BEGIN TO SAY, "WE ATE AND DRANK IN YOUR PRESENCE, AND YOU TAUGHT IN OUR STREETS": tote arcesthe (2PFMI) legein, (PAN) Ephagomen (1PAAI) enopion sou kai epiomen (1PAAI), kai en tais plateiais hemon edidacas (2SAAI);

- **We:** Isa 58:2 2Ti 3:5 Titus 1:16
- Luke 13 Resources

Then you (plural) **will begin to say** - Always take a moment when you encounter an **expression of time** (in this case **"then"**) and query the text with questions like *"When is then?"* or *"What will happen then?"*, etc. Jesus is warning that *hearing* His words of invitation must be coupled with *heeding* His words of warning!

We ate and drank in Your presence - Seeing Jesus or sitting with Jesus at a dinner table never saved anyone. Sharing a meal normally speaks of intimacy in the ancient world (e.g., see Jesus' invitation in Rev 3:20-[note](#)) but that would not be sufficient to bring about salvation. The speakers may perhaps be alluding to the time when Jesus fed the five thousand (Jn 6:10) but when they were faced with His "hard teaching", refused to become His true followers, even departing from Him in that moment of crisis (cp strive to enter!) (Jn 6:53-65 -- see the crisis point reached in Jn 6:66). Judas Iscariot had an even closer relationship to Jesus, masquerading as a disciple (one who did not even depart in Jn 6:66) and yet his subsequent departure ("failure to strive" so to speak) proved that Judas was not a genuine disciple (Read Jn 13:26-30). External appearances, no matter how convincing to other men, mean nothing unless there has been an internal change, a "circumcision" of one's heart (See Excursus on Circumcision Of the Heart).

Matthew Henry comments **on what** those who find themselves shut out had falsely placed their confidence...

First, They had been Christ's guests, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favors: We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, at thy table. Judas ate bread with Christ, dipped with him in the dish. **Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's supper, and in it partake of the children's bread, as if they were children.**

Secondly, They had been Christ's hearers, had received instruction from Him, and were well acquainted with His doctrine and law: "Thou hast taught in our streets—a distinguishing favour, which few had, and surely it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now; for would Thou teach us, and not save us?" ([Luke 13 Commentary - Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Bible](#))

You taught in our streets - **Where? Which streets?** (Always practice interrogating the text with the **5W/H questions**) The answer is everywhere Jesus went in Israel, because wherever He went He gave primacy (preeminence, supremacy) to teaching of the Word of Truth, a practice all genuine disciples should diligently seek to imitate (Mt 28:19-20). As an aside note that false disciples refused to continue to follow Jesus (Jn 6:66, cf 1Jn 2:19-note). Continuing to follow Jesus (or "abide") is a prerequisite which He Himself laid down to define what constitutes a genuine disciple (see Jn 8:31 - these so called *"believers"* proved themselves to be only *professors*, those who had only an intellectual *belief* as their subsequent *behavior* proved -- genuine *belief* should always issue in Spirit enabled, God honoring *behavior*! Read the entire discourse between Jesus and these "believing" Jews in John 8:31-59, but see especially Jesus "assessment" of their "belief" in Jn 8:44-47 and their subsequent response to Jesus' words in Jn 8:58, 59).

Taught ([1321](#)) (**didasko** from **dáo**= know or teach; English = **didactic**; see also studies of noun **didaskalia** and adjective **didaktikos**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. **Didasko** means to teach a student in such a way that the will of the student becomes conformed to the teaching taught. They may have heard Jesus teach but like the old saying, it went in one ear and out the other! The ultimate Teacher, with the ultimate Word and yet they failed to hear in a way that produced any change in their behavior. The problem was not with the Teacher's words but with the hearer's hearts! And to make matters worse, their hearts were deceived (Jer 17:9), thinking that hearing and not heeding Christ would warrant entrance into the

kingdom of heaven.

THE MOST DANGEROUS PROCRASTINATION IN LIFE!

Steven Cole comments that...

Salvation requires our urgent attention (because of) the soon-closed door (Lk 13:25 26 27). We all tend to procrastinate, but Jesus tells us that salvation is the most dangerous matter in all of life to procrastinate about. Salvation requires our urgent attention because the time is coming soon when the door will be shut. The day is coming when the head of the house (God) will get up and shut the door. Clearly, at that point there will not be another chance to get in. Once the door is shut, it is shut. Those inside are in. Those outside are out. You ask,

"When will the door be shut?"

That's for the head of the house to decide. The final closing of the door will be at the judgment, which will take place at the **Second Coming** of Christ. John describes the scene:

"And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.... And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:12-[note](#), Rev 20:15-[note](#)). (**Ed Note:** I believe that this Great White Throne judgment follows a period of 1000 years referred to as the **Millennium**, a period which is inaugurated by the Second Coming of Christ to earth).

Since the Lord is coming soon, you don't want to procrastinate about salvation! But each person's eternal destiny is fixed before the day of judgment, at the point of death. Hebrews 9:27-note states

It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.

Since life hangs by a thread, even for the youngest and healthiest among us, we dare not procrastinate about the matter of salvation. Maybe you're thinking,

"I'm young and healthy and the second coming is probably not going to happen soon. I've got some time before I need to deal with these matters."

But that's not wise because the head of the house might slam shut the day of opportunity for you to respond to His offer of salvation. This was true for Jesus' hearers. Messiah was in their very midst and they were in danger of rejecting Him. They had the unique opportunity of hearing Jesus Himself teaching the Word of God, but that window of opportunity was about to close, because Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem. In a few short years Titus, the Roman general, would destroy Jerusalem and the temple and the Jews would be dispersed for 1,900 years.

As with them, so with us: the opportunity to respond to Jesus is now. Don't mistakenly think, "I've got plenty of time." You might not have another opportunity like that which you have right now as you hear the Word of God proclaimed. You may leave here and your mind gets caught up with work or duties at home or other things, and the tug of the Spirit on your heart fades. It is said of Esau that after he had sold his birthright, later,

when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears (Heb 12:17-note).

He missed his day of opportunity with God. Once that door is shut, there will be no bargaining or working out a last minute deal. We must enter on God's terms and in God's time, or not at all. At the judgment, everyone will know the truth and realize what a horrible mistake they have made. But it will be too late. As J. C. Ryle puts it, "*Hell is nothing but truth known too late*" (Expository Thoughts on the Gospels [Baker], 3:134). Salvation is an urgent matter! ([Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door](#))

Luke 13:27 AND HE WILL SAY, "I TELL YOU, I DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE FROM;**DEPART** FROM ME ALL YOU EVILDOERS": kai erei (3SFAI) legon (PAPMSN) humin, ouk oida (2SRAI) [humas] pothen este; (2PPAI) **apostete** (2PAAM) ap' hemou, pantes ergatai adikias:

- **I tell you:** Lk 13:25 Ps 1:6 Mt 7:22,23 25:12,41 1Co 8:3 Gal 4:9 2Ti 2:19
- **Depart:** Ps 5:6 6:8 28:3 101:8 119:115 125:5 Ho 9:12 Mt 25:41

CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL DISOWN & DISCARD PROFESSORS

And He will say (literally = "He will say, I tell you") - This is a prophecy of a painful pronouncement! The verb **I tell you** is in the present tense implying Jesus was continually warning them of their painful future if they refused to repent and believe.

Do not (absolute negation) **know where you are from** - The master disavows any relation to these individuals. This passage parallels Jesus' declaration in the Sermon on the Mount...

Not everyone who says to Me, '**Lord, Lord**,' will enter the kingdom of heaven (Equates with genuine salvation); but he who **does** (present tense = their habitual practice, the general direction of their life. **Note:** Direction not perfection!) the will of My Father Who is in heaven (i.e., their holy [supernatural not natural!] behavior proves that they have a holy [supernatural] Source of power, the Holy Spirit - Their works show their faith to be genuine, saving faith. **Be careful, Do Not Misinterpret!** = their doing of the will of the Father **does not save** them, for by works no man can be saved [justified - declared righteous] Ro 3:20-note, Ro 3:28-note. Their supernaturally enabled works simply show they are saved!). 22 **Many** (This ought to make us weep, beloved! And even more so when we consider the "many" who will go to destruction in Mt 7:13-note) 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?' (Notice Jesus does not dispute or discount their claims of the "miraculous"! **So what?** Beware of following any "miracle" worker whose lifestyle does not produce the good fruit of godliness!) 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never (absolute denial that at any time I ever) knew (ginosko - in context this speaks of utmost intimacy ~ union, oneness, in Christ and Christ in us) you; **DEPART** (present imperative = command calling for continuous action!) FROM ME, YOU WHO **PRACTICE** (worked at it with active zeal and the present tense indicates this was their habitual practice, their general lifestyle) **LAWLESSNESS**.' (Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note)

Depart (868) (**aphistemi** [word study] from **apo** = separation of one thing from another + **histemi** = stand) literally means to stand off from (English = apostasy) means to withdraw, forsake, depart from or remove oneself from.

Compare two other occurrences of **Jesus** issuing this same command to unbelievers to **"Depart"** = Mt 7:23-note (**depart** = **apochoreo**) and Mt 25:41 (**depart** - **poreuomai** = to transport oneself from one place to another = **'the eternal fire'**, referring not to **Hades [Sheol]** but to **Gehenna**)

Matthew Henry writes that "It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ, the principal part of the misery of the damned."

Beloved ambassador of Christ (2Co 5:20-note), may our Father cause the Spirit of Christ to take this study on our Lord's command to **strive to enter the narrow door** and **break our hearts**, empowering us by His Spirit to go forth boldly (Acts 1:8-note, perhaps we need to ask others to pray for us as Paul did in Eph 6:19-20-note) with the message of justification "as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." (Ro 3:24-note). Take a moment and listen to Fanny Crosby's heart piercing words **Rescue The Perishing** and then go forth with the Gospel seeking to rescue the perishing from the wide gate and broad road that leads to eternal destruction.

Thayer summarizes the meaning of **aphistemi**...

Transitively (denoting a verb which requires a direct object), in present, imperfect, future, 1 aorist active -- to make stand off, cause to withdraw, cause someone to move from a point of reference, to remove; tropically, to cause or excite to revolt, to mislead, to alienate, refers to political defection (Ac 5:37, cp use in Lxx of Dt 7:4 "draw...away").

Intransitively (denoting a verb when it does not require a direct object), in perfect, pluperfect, 2 aorist active -- to stand off, stand aloof, with the genitive of person to go away, depart, from anyone (Lk 13:27-note) (from Ps 6:9; cf. Mt. 7:23); Acts 12:10; 19:9; to desert, to leave in a lurch, to withdraw from one, Acts 15:38; to cease to vex one, Lk. 4:13; Acts 5:38; 22:29; 2 Co. 12:8; to fall away, become faithless, to apostatize as in Heb. 3:12-note which is the antithesis of the call to draw near in Hebrews 4:16-note and thus it implies a refusal to listen to God's voice.

All you evildoers - The late comers are shut out because of the evil deeds (manifesting their unregenerate hearts) not because they are "late". Their character is unfit for the mansion of purity.

Matthew Henry minces no words noting that "This is their ruin, that, under a pretence of piety, they kept up secret haunts of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery (**Ed**: identifying uniform, distinctive dress, outward appearance - cp 2Ti 3:5-note)."

Evildoers - This expression is two words in Greek and is more literally rendered "workers of unrighteousness". **Evil** (**adikia** from **a** = not + **dikê** = right) means not attaining to God's standard of what is right. **Doers** (**ergates**) describes one who is engaged in some kind of work. In other words the ones Jesus addresses work at their sin!

Cyril of Alexandria adds that "the light has no communion at all with the darkness: nor can any one be near unto the perfectly pure God who is held by the pollutions of sin, and whose stain is not yet washed away." ([Sermon](#))

Steven Cole comments that "**Salvation requires our urgent attention because there is a great difference between casual acquaintance with Jesus and a personal relationship with Him.** Those who are shut out seem surprised. They call out, "Lord, open up to us!" But He says, "I don't know where you're from." They reply, "We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets." They were acquainted with Him. But the problem was, He was not acquainted with them. He tells them, "I do not know where you are from. Depart from Me, all you evildoers." If you have a genuine personal relationship with Jesus, you will not continue in your evil deeds. Salvation is God's free gift, apart from works, but those who are truly saved will make progress in holiness, apart from which no man will see the Lord (Heb 12:14-note). Now, not later, is the time to make sure that you have a personal relationship with Jesus, not just a casual acquaintance with Him. One major evidence of such a relationship is that you are growing in holiness, not just outwardly, but in your heart. Thus salvation requires our earnest effort and our urgent attention. ([Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door](#))

Warren Wiersbe addresses the question of **why they waited so long to seek entrance...**

(1) Salvation is not easy. The sinner must enter a narrow gate and walk a narrow way (Lk 13:24; cp Lk 9:23, 24, 25). The world's crowd is on the easy way, the way that leads to destruction (Mt 7:13, 14-note), and it is much easier to walk with them....

(2) Their false sense of security. Jesus had been among them. They had even eaten with Him and enjoyed His fellowship, yet they had never trusted Him. God gave the nation many privileges and opportunities, but they wasted them (see Lk 10:13 14 15 16). God is long-suffering; however there comes a time when even God shuts the door.

(3) Pride also played a big part: they would not humble themselves before God. In their own eyes, they were first, but in God's eyes, they were last—and the Gentiles would come and take their place! (see Mt 21:43) Imagine the "unclean Gentile dogs" sitting at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the unbelieving Jews were outside!

(4) These people were lost because they depended on their ancient religion to save them; but Jesus saw them as "workers of iniquity," not doers of righteousness (Isa 64:4; Titus 1:16). It takes more than reverence for tradition to get into God's kingdom!

(5) But the major reason was given by Jesus Himself: "Ye would not" (Lk 13:34). Their minds had been instructed by the Word (Luke 13:26), and their hearts had been stirred by His mighty works, but their wills were stubborn and would not submit to Him. This is the deadly consequence of delay. The longer sinners wait, the harder their hearts become. "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb 4:7).

The Spanish composer **Manuel de Falla** was notorious for not answering his mail. When he heard that a friend had died, the composer said, "What a pity! He died before I answered his letter, which he sent me five years ago!" ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament, Victor](#))

Luke 13:28 "IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL 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 BEING THROWN OUT: ekei estai (3SFMi) o klauthmos kai o brugmos ton odonton, hotan opsesthe (2PAMS) Abraam kai Isaak kai Iakob kai pantas tous prophetas en te basileia tou theou, humas de ekballethentes (PPMPA) exo:

- **weeping:** Ps 112:10 Mt 8:12 13:42,50 22:13 24:51 25:30
- **when:** Lk 16:23 Mt 8:11
- **the kingdom:** Lk 14:15 23:42,43 2Th 1:5 2Pe 1:11
- **you:** Lk 10:15 Rev 21:8 22:15)

In that place - What place? In view of Jesus' use of the phrase **weeping and gnashing of teeth** and its definite association with eternal punishment in hell in other NT passages, this **place** must refer to the hell.

There will be - A prophecy of future judgment on Israel many of who are relegated to hell because of their unbelief in their own Jewish Messiah!

Weeping and gnashing of teeth - This phrase is repeated 7 times in the Gospels most often in the book of Matthew which most commentators feel was directed primarily to a Jewish audience - Mt 8:12 Mt 13:42 Mt 13:50 Mt 22:13 Mt 24:51 Mt 25:30 Lk 13:28. This phrase is one of the ways Jesus refers to **hell**.

I do not agree with the **NET Bible comment** that "*weeping and gnashing is a figure (Ed: Non-literal, a figure of speech) for remorse and trauma.*" While one might attempt to interpret this repeated description of torment in hell in a figurative sense, there is no justification for interpreting it other than in the plain literal sense - hell will be a place of endless tears and continual gnashing of teeth, a manifestation of inconsolable grief and unrelenting torment! We do a grave injustice to our listeners if we attempt to "soften the blow" regarding Jesus' description of Hell in an attempt to not offend their conscience. **Weeping and gnashing of teeth** is an offensive and awful description because hell is an awful place for an unrepentant sinner to be confined for eternity! We are to preach the whole counsel of God's Word, whether it is convenient or not and in so doing we are to reprove, rebuke, and comfort with great patience and instruction (2Ti 4:2-note). In short we are to afflict the comfortable (reprove, rebuke sinners satisfied and "comfortable" in their sin) and comfort the afflicted (comfort those who desire to repent, speaking to them of the saving Gospel).

John MacArthur - Jewish tradition taught that **sinners**-a term synonymous with Gentiles in their thinking-would spend eternity in the outer darkness of **Gehenna**. Jesus concurred with them about the destiny of condemned sinners (see Mt 22:13 24:51), but He declared them totally wrong about the identity of those condemned sinners....Being a physical descendant of Abraham was a great privilege and advantage (Ro 3:1 2), but in spite of what most Jews believed, it did not guarantee salvation. It is the children of Abraham's spiritual faith, not the children of his physical body, whom God adopts as His own children (Ro 8:14 15 16 17; Gal. 3:7 89, 26 27 28 29; cf. Ro 4:11, 16). ([MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Lawrence Richards - This was why repentance and faith in Jesus are such urgent matters. Individuals who failed to turn to Him will be shut out of the future kingdom, where "**there will be weeping . . . and gnashing of teeth.**" (Richards, L. The 365 Day Devotional Commentary. Victor Books)

Weeping (2805) (**klaithmos** from **klaio** = to weep or bewail) is a noun which describes a strong inner emotion which is evoked in weeping, crying, lamentation (cries of grief, the act of bewailing as an expression of sorrow).

Hell is a place of conscious sorrow for the unconscious would not weep.

Klaithmos - 9x in 9v - Mt 2:18; 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28; Acts 20:37

Matthew 2:18 "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, **weeping** AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL **weeping** FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE."

Matthew 8:12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be **weeping** and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 13:42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be **weeping** and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:50 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be **weeping** and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 22:13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be **weeping** and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 24:51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be **weeping** and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be **weeping** and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 13:28 "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 yourselves being thrown out.

Acts 20:37 And they began to **weep** aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,

In most of these NT uses the tears are genuine, but their effect on the wrath of God is nil, as it is too late for those who shed them.

The image is of utter hopelessness and is intended as a **warning** to those who read or hear these difficult to accept sayings!

Klauthmos - 30x in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)** - Ge 45:2; 46:29; Dt 34:8; Judg 21:2; 2Sa 13:36; 2 Kgs 20:3; Ezra 3:13; Job 16:16; 30:31; Ps 6:8; 30:5; 102:9; Isa 15:3; 16:9; 22:12; 30:19; 38:3; 65:19; Jer 3:21; 22:10; 31:9, 15 16; 48:5, 32; Lam 5:13; Dan 6:20; Joel 2:12; Mic 7:4; Mal 2:13

The first OT use is of godly Joseph weeping...

(Ge 45:2) And he **wept** so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

(Ge 46:29) And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and **wept** on his neck a long time.

In contrast to the eternal weeping of the ungodly, the **Psalmist** describes the temporary weeping of the godly

Psalm 30:5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; **Weeping** (klauthmos) may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.

The **Psalmist** writes...

Psalm 112:10 The wicked will see it (Ps 112:9) and be vexed, He will **gnash his teeth** and melt away. The desire of the wicked will perish.

Spurgeon comments: The last verse sets forth very forcibly the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, thus making the blessedness of the godly appear all the more remarkable. Usually we see [Ebal](#) and [Gerizim](#), the blessing and the curse, set the one over against the other, to invest both with the greater solemnity.

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved. The ungodly shall first see the example of the saints to their own condemnation, and shall at last behold the happiness of the godly and to the increase of their eternal misery. The child of wrath shall be obliged to witness the blessedness of the righteous, though the sight shall make him gnaw his own heart. He shall fret and fume, lament and wax angry, but he shall not be able to prevent it, for God's blessing is sure and effectual.

He shall gnash with his teeth. Being very wrathful, and exceedingly envious, he would fain grind the righteous between his teeth; but as he cannot do that, he grinds his teeth against each other.

And melt away. The heat of his passion shall melt him like wax, and the sun of God's providence shall dissolve him like snow, and at the last the fire of divine vengeance shall consume him as the fat of rams. How horrible must that life be which like the snail melts as it proceeds, leaving a slimy trail behind. Those who are grieved at goodness deserve to be worn away by such an abominable sorrow.

The desire of the wicked shall perish. He shall not achieve his purpose, he shall die a disappointed man. By wickedness he hoped to accomplish his purpose -- that very wickedness shall be his defeat. While the righteous shall endure for ever, and their memory shall be always green; the ungodly man and his name shall rot from off the face of the earth. He desired to be the founder of a family, and to be remembered as some great one: he shall pass away and his name shall die with him. How wide is the gulf which separates the righteous from the wicked (Lk 16:26-note), and how different are the portions which the Lord deals out to them (Lk 16:23 24). O for grace to be blessed of the Lord! This will make us praise him with our whole heart.

Gnashing (1030) (**brugmos**) describes striking, grinding or biting of teeth together. In the context of the NT **brugmos** is a manifestation or picture of the extreme anguish and utter despair of those consigned to eternal torment in hell.

Webster says gnash means to strike the teeth together as in anger or pain, both emotions probably in play in the fires of hell.

The root verb **brucho** is used in Acts 7:54 to describe the Jews who were "cut to the quick" by Stephen's sermon and began "gnashing their teeth at him", clearly a manifestation of intense anger.

Brugmos - 7x in 7v in the **NAS** - Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28 (see these passages above under the discussion of weeping) The only OT use is in the **Septuagint** translation of Pr 19:12.

J S Lang comments that Jesus' picturesque phrase expresses...

the agony of eternal torment (and)...perhaps more than any images of fire and brimstone, **the weeping and gnashing of teeth** suggests pain, regret, and eternal sorrow of an earthly life wasted. (Lang, J. S.. 1,001 Things You Always Wanted to Know About Angels, Demons, and the Afterlife. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Comment: In one sense Jesus is commanding those who have ears to hear His warning to **'agonize'** (Strive - agonizomai)

temporally to enter the door, lest they suffer **agony** eternally because they fail to enter the door!

Robert Morey commenting on Jesus' description writes that "The rabbinic picture used by Christ of people **weeping and gnashing their teeth**" in the excruciating pain caused by the fires of **Gehenna** cannot be ignored or downplayed (Mt13:42, 50). In Re 14:10-[note](#), Re 14:11-[note](#), we are explicitly told that they will be tormented by sulfuric fire...for all eternity...without rest day or night. The words of the Apostle could not be clearer or plainer. The text says "*tormented*," not annihilated. (Morey, R. A. Death and the Afterlife. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House)

Steven Cole says that Jesus' fearful description of hell should serve to remind all procrastinators that "Salvation requires our careful self-examination because of the horrible consequences of making a mistake. **Weeping and gnashing of teeth** doesn't sound like a fun experience, especially when it continues through all eternity! Think of it as an eternal root canal without anesthesia! These men had assumed that they would be included in the kingdom. They were Jews, not "filthy" Gentiles. They were related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now they find themselves shut out and, of all things, those "dirty" Gentiles from east and west and north and south are inside, dining with the patriarchs and prophets! Contrary to popular modern views, hell will not be a wild party for all the wicked. And, contrary to most popular thinking, hell will not be just for the worst of the worst—the Hitlers of this world. These men were religious Jews who thought they were deserving of heaven. But they would not submit to Jesus and so they faced the horrible eternal consequence of being in that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Because there will be many religious people in hell, all of us who attend church should examine ourselves to make sure that we are not cast into that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. ([Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door](#))

Teeth Provided! - An old-fashioned, hell-and damnation preacher was scolding his congregation for their terrible misdeeds. "Remember what it says in the Bible," he thundered. "Jesus told us that for those who do evil there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [Matthew 22:13] At this point the preacher saw a very old parishioner grinning up at him, unconcerned, toothless. He accepted the challenge and pointed at the grinning gums, "Don't worry, James Lippincott. Teeth will be provided!" (Streiker, L. D. - Nelson's Big Book of Laughter)

Hendricksen comments that...

The **weeping** is that of inconsolable, never-ending wretchedness, and utter, everlasting hopelessness. The accompanying grinding or **gnashing of teeth** is that of frenzied anger, unmitigated rage. For this weeping and grinding of teeth there are three causes:

- a. They "**see**" (are made aware of the presence of) Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God; that is, the kingdom in its final consummation.
- b. They also take note of the fact that ever so many others, including (converted) Gentiles, from every region of the earth—east, west, north, and south—are participating in the Messianic banquet (cf. Mt 8:11, 12).
- c. They themselves are "**thrown out**"; that is, not only was admission refused, but also they were forcefully expelled. ([Hendricksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. Vol. 11: New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke. Baker Book](#))

When you see - Not "if" but **when** (See above for [Spurgeon's comments](#) on Ps 112:9-10). This is a prophetic promise that will be fulfilled. We see a similar description of the rich man in [Hades](#) able to visualize the patriarch Abraham...

And in [Hades](#) he (the rich man) lifted up his eyes, being in **torment** (*basanos*), and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. (Lk 16:23-note, cp Lk 16:28-see in depth commentary)

THOUGHT: Notice the rich man's desire expressed in Lk 16:28. **What did the reality of literally experiencing the torment of [Hades](#) do to the rich man's desire to "witness" to his five brothers?** If our passion for lost souls has grown cold, perhaps we might consider asking the Spirit to burn into our hearts some sense of the horror of the torment of those forever lost in Hell so that we might be motivated like the rich man to go to those who are still physically alive and warn them of the horrible wrath to come (1Th 1:10+) so that they repent and believe the Gospel (Lk 16:30+, Mark 1:15+).

Torment (931) (**basanos** - cp "touchstone" - basanite, Latin = lapis Lydius) is used only 3x in the NT (Mt 4:24+ = "pains" [NAS]; Lk 16:23+ Lk 16:28+) and originally referred to a stone used for testing gold and other metals, and then came to mean applying torture (e.g., the torture-rack) to question and extort prisoners' confessions. Therefore "**basanos**" must refer to a most extreme form or degree of human suffering - severe pain associated with torture and torment!

Basanos - our English word *basanite* indicates [a] basically, a [touchstone](#) to test gold and other metals [Basanite was used in this way - If you use one thing as a *touchstone* of another, you use it as a test by which you judge the second thing = a

'**Lydian stone**'] used for testing gold because pure gold rubbed on it left a peculiar mark]; [b] Basanos described *the instrument of torture* by which slaves were tortured; i.e., were forced to reveal the truth by torturing them [\[see metaphor\]](#); and [c] *torment or acute pain*). The derivative verb **basanizo** means literally to rub on the touchstone (**basanos**) or to test by means of the touchstone and then to test or make proof of anything. Figuratively, the verb **basanizo** refers to any severe distress, and so means to afflict, to harass, to vex, to torment. **Basanizo** then can mean to subject one to severe torment or distress, as with diseases (Mt 8:6), with birth pangs (Re 12:2), by the threat of Jesus' punishment of demonic spirits (Mt 8:29, Mk 5:7, Lk 8:28), by prophetic warnings (Re 11:10), of the torment associated with God's righteous judgment (Re 14:10, 20:10)

BDAG describes **basanos** as "severe pain occasioned by punitive torture" and records an ancient writing from Herodas describing torture ordered by a court to exhort a confession. Specific torments in the Luke passage (Lk 16:19-31) are the flame, in agony, the sight of the righteous, thirst, the victims' memories of their previous lives, and the realization that they are in a hopeless situation. (Borrow [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament, and other early Christian literature](#))

NIDNTT on **basanos** - The noun βάσανος, attested as early as the 6th cent. BC in the poetry of Theognis, is thought to be a loanword (poss. from Egypt. bḥn, "basalt"). It orig. referred to a touchstone, i.e., a hard black stone used to test the quality of gold or silver by inspecting the streak left on the stone surface (Pindar Pyth. 10.67, περι νπι δ κα χρυσος ν βασανν πρέπει κα νόος ρθός, "gold shows itself [genuine] when tried by a touchstone, and [so does] a right mind"). By metonymy, the word itself came to mean "test, trial," and was used esp. of "questioning, inquiry" (Hdt. 8.110.2, Themistocles sent some men τοσι πιστευε σιγν νς πσαν βασαννον, "whom he trusted to remain silent in all interrogation"); and because of the usual procedures in such questioning, it further developed the sense "torture," and thence more generally "torment." The derived vb. βασανίζω ("to test, examine, question by torture, torture"), attested early as well, occurs freq. (for its use with ref. to illness see G. H. R. Horsley, NewDocs 4 [1987]: 142). The noun βασανιστής ("examiner, torturer") is found fewer than 10× in the class. period (only Antiphon, Isocr., Demosth.) 1 In the LXX the noun βάσανος occurs c. 60×, but more than 40 of the occurrences are found in 4 Maccabees, in connection with the **torments** suffered by the Jewish martyrs under the Seleucids (e.g., 4 Macc 4:26; 5:6; cf. 2 Macc 7:8)....The combined uses of βασανισμός and βασανίζω in the book of Revelation account for half of the NT occurrences of the word group and thus call for special comment. In Rev 9:5, the noun is used twice and the vb. once when describing the torments that were brought about by the locusts after the fifth angel sounded his trumpet (here the sense of the noun may be act., "the act of inflicting torment," but elsewhere pass., "the experience of suffering torment"; cf. BDAG 168). The vb. is used of the torment that the two witnesses or prophets brought on the earth (Rev 11:10), of the pain experienced by the "woman clothed with the sun" when she gave birth (Rev 12:2), and of the eternal torment that comes upon the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and those who worship the beast (Rev 14:10 [with the noun in v. 11, "the smoke of their torment will rise forever"]; Rev 20:10). Finally, βασανισμός is applied to the punishment for which Babylon the Great is destined (Rev 18:7, 10, 15). (See [The Concise New International Dictionary of New Testament](#))

TDNT on **basanos** - The βάσανος originally belongs to the calling of the inspector of coins. It is linked with the Heb. root בחן ("to test") and the Egyptian bḥn; ("basalt"). According to K. Sethe. bhn is the word which underlies the Heb. בחן and the Gk. βάσανος. βάσανος is generally accepted to be a loan word. βασανίτης is most closely related to it. Βασανίτου λίθου προς is the mountain of the bḥn stone. R. Herzog thinks that he may deduce from the etymological development that the ars spectandi, the testing of gold and silver as media of exchange by the proving stone, was first developed by the Babylonians, then came to the Aramaeans and Hebrews by way of Lydia (Λυδίαλιθος [Bacchyl. Fr., 14, 1, Blass]; βάσανος, Bacchyl., 8, 58), and from them to the Gks. In non-biblical Gk. βάσανος is a commercial expression, or is used in relation to government. It then acquires the meaning of the checking of calculations, which develops naturally out of the basic sense of βάσανος, βασανίζειν (P. Oxy., 58, 25 [288 A.D.]). In the spiritual sphere it has the figur., sense, which is closely related to the original concrete meaning, of a means of testing (Anth. Pal., VII, 54: νδρ ν κρινόμενων ν βασανν σοφίης). The word then undergoes a change in meaning. The original sense fades into the background. βάσανος now comes to denote "torture" or "the rack," espec. used with slaves (P. Lille, I, 29, 22; Ditt. Syll.3, 356, 12). βάσανος occurs in the sense of "torment" in Theocr. Idyll., 13, p. 13, 5, Meineke; Thom. Mag., p. 94, 4, Ritschl; Demetr. Eloc., 201, 4. An inscription from Cyprus (Salamis), BCH, 51 (1927), 148, 18, contains the malediction: ν βασάνοις πόλοιο. Vet. Val., IV, 13, p. 182, 19, Kroll has a reference to torments of soul (ψυχικς βασάνους). **The change in meaning is best explained if we begin with the object of treatment. If we put men instead of metal or a coin, the stone of testing become torture or the rack.** The metal which has survived the testing stone is subjected to harsher treatment. Man is in the same position when

severely tested by torture. In the testing of metal an essential role was played by the thought of testing and proving genuineness. The rack is a means of showing the true state of affairs. In its proper sense it is a means of testing and proving, though also of punishment. Finally, even this special meaning was weakened and only the general element of torment remained. ([Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

Specific torments in the Luke passage (Lk 16:19-31-see in depth commentary) are the flame (whether literal or figurative), in agony, the sight of the righteous, the sensation of unquenchable thirst, the remembrance of one's previous life, and the worst of all the realization that they are in a hopeless situation for all of eternity!

The related verb **basanizo** means to test by rubbing a [Touchstone \(assaying tool\)](#) .

There are 11 uses of **basanos** in the Septuagint (1Sa 6:3 4, 8, 17 Ezek 3:20; 7:19; 12:18; 16:52, 54; 32:24, 30) and some 45 uses of **basanos** in the Apocryphal writings - 1 Macc 9:56; 2 Macc 7:8; 9:5; 3 Macc 3:27; 4 Macc 4:26; 5:6; 6:27, 30; 7:2, 10, 16; 8:9, 19; 9:5f, 9, 16, 18; 10:11, 16; 11:1, 6, 23; 12:12; 13:15; 14:5, 8, 11; 15:11, 18ff, 32; 16:1f, 17; 17:3, 7, 10, 23; 18:20f; Wis 2:19; 3:1; 17:12; 19:4; Sir 33:27

Webster defines a [Touchstone](#) as a black siliceous stone related to flint and formerly used to test the purity of gold - pure gold leaves a yellow streak on the touchstone. Figuratively touchstone ([Touchstone = metaphor](#)) came to mean a test or criterion for determining the quality or genuineness of a thing.

Kingdom of God - This phrase is tantamount to salvation for Jesus said "unless one is born again (from above, from God), he cannot see the **kingdom of God**" (Jn 3:3).

Kingdom of God - 66x in 65v in **NAS** -

Mt 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; Mk 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14 15, 23 34 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Lk 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28 29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20 21; 18:16 17, 24 25, 29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 18; 23:51; Jn 3:3, 5; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31; Ro 14:17; 1Co 4:20; 6:9 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21; Col 4:11; 2Th 1:5

Kingdom of Heaven - 32x in 31v in **NAS** - Mt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1.

See related discussion - Kingdom of Heaven or God

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God - This description underscores that the primary group Jesus addresses is the Jews, the nation of Israel. The broader application clearly would include Gentile sinners who refuse the Savior's offer of salvation.

The Jews saw themselves as descendants of the patriarchs and thus felt that they they had a right to the kingdom of God because of their ancestors. Jesus warned the Jews declaring...

do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, '**We have Abraham for our father**'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. (Mt 3:9 10).

In John Jesus gives a solemn, but indisputably clear warning to Jews who had expressed an "intellectual" belief in Him but who were still clinging to the fact that they were Abraham's physical offspring...

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are **Abraham's offspring**, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free?'..."37 "I know that you are **Abraham's (physical) offspring**; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father." 39 They answered and said to Him, "**Abraham is our father.**" Jesus said to them, '**If you are Abraham's (spiritual) children, do the deeds of Abraham.** 40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this **Abraham did not do.** 41 "You are doing the deeds of your (spiritual) father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." (They were deceived! Self-delusion is a frightening state!) 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word (They heard His audible words, but did not have spiritual circumcised ears and circumcised hearts to hear the spiritual truth of Jesus' audible words!). 44 "You are of your father the devil, (What proves this to be a true statement?) and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning,

and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. 45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me (And their subsequent seeking to murder Jesus proved they belonged to the devil and were not spiritual children of Abraham and did not have genuine, saving faith - see Jn 8:58, 59). (John 8:31-33, 37-45)

And so here in Luke 13:22-30 Jesus upset the expectations of the Jewish audience by announcing that many of the sons of the kingdom would not be allowed to participate in it, and that many Gentiles would be granted entry! Many "sons of the kingdom" (Jews) would find themselves outside the banquet.

The upshot of Jesus' statement directed to the Jews is that being Jewish did not guarantee a place in the Kingdom of God! Jews as well as Gentiles must all strive to enter by the narrow door (Jn 10:9)!

Henry Cowles agrees commenting that "The obvious sense of these words is that many Jews will be excluded from God's kingdom and many Gentiles admitted. The men who said—"We have Abraham to our father," and yet disowned Jesus of Nazareth, will see Abraham with all the sainted patriarchs and prophets admitted to this kingdom, but themselves excluded. ([Henry Cowles - Luke - at top of page enter 168](#))

John MacArthur adds that "The Gospel came through Abraham's seed, as Matthew...attested through Jesus' genealogy (Mt 1:1). But the benefit of the Gospel, which brings salvation, is appropriated by faith, not by genealogical descent. The Jews played an integral part in God's bringing the Messiah and His gospel, and they are yet destined to play an important role in the end times. It was integral to God's plan of salvation that His own Son be born, live, and die as a Jew. But the fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-or any other Jew-will be in the kingdom of heaven will not be because of their Jewishness but because of their saving faith...Those who reject Christ, even though they are physical descendants of Abraham, will have no place at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. ([MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#))

J C Ryle alluded to the belated "wake up call" to the Jews who would be cast out of the presence of the King when he said that "Hell is nothing but truth known too late!"

Steven Cole comments "**Salvation requires our careful self-examination because there are two and only two final categories.** The closed door makes a final separation between those inside and those outside. There are none sort of in and sort of out. While there are gradations of rewards for those who are in and gradations of punishment for those who are out, there is a great chasm fixed between the two (Luke 16:26-note), with nothing in the middle. You won't be basically in heaven because you're a basically good person. Either you're in because you have entered through the narrow door, which is Jesus Christ, or you're out because you have trusted in your own goodness or in the fact that you're a church-going American Christian. You need to examine yourself and carefully answer the question, "If I were to stand before God and He said, 'Why should I let you into My heaven?' what would I say?" The only correct answer is, "I am trusting completely in Your Son Jesus and His shed blood." ([Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door](#))

Discussion Questions related to Luke 13:22-30...

Are we too casual about salvation because we have disregarded the biblical doctrine of hell? (Ed: My personal response is "Sadly this is too true of me. May the Spirit break my heart for what breaks my Father's heart and may He give me a clear understanding of the doctrine of hell that serves to set my heart aflame for lost souls so that they do not have to be eternally aflame. In the Vine. Amen" Several years later God answered and prompted me to write on Eternal punishment!) Scripture says that without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14-note). How can this be harmonized with salvation by grace through faith apart from works (Eph 2:8, 9-note)? How can a person who is unsure about his salvation gain true assurance (cp 1Jn 5:10 11 12 13 - Especially from 1Jn 5:13, what is the practical step one can take to assure their assurance? [Clue: What are "these things"? See 1Jn 2:29, 3:9, 14, 4:7, 5:4] cp Ro 10:17-note If that passage is true [which it is], "listen" to the following Words... Heb 6:11 12-note, Sin damages assurance = Ps 32:3-note ["*The Spanish inquisition with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest which conscience holds within the heart.*" - Spurgeon] Assurance is a lifelong fight = 1Ti 6:12 Assurance is to be prayed for = Eph 1:18, 19-note; Assurance is God's will and gift to be received = Ro 8:16-note)? How can we know that we have entered through the narrow door (cp Jn 20:31, 2Co 5:17-note)? (Note: Questions modified including addition of Scripture references - [The Narrow Door](#))

Related Resources:

- Eternal punishment
- [What does the Bible mean when it refers to the gnashing of teeth?](#)
- [What is the outer darkness in Matthew 22:13?](#)

- [Will there be tears in heaven?](#)
- [What does hell look like? How hot is hell?](#)

Luke 13:29 "AND THEY WILL COME FROM EAST AND WEST AND FROM NORTH AND SOUTH, AND WILL RECLINE AT THE TABLE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD: kai echousin (2PFAI) apo anatolon kai dusmon kai apo borra kai notou kai anaklithesontai (3PFPI) en te basileia tou theou:]

- Ge 28:14 Isa 43:6 49:6 54:2,3 66:18-20 Mal 1:11 Mk 13:27 Ac 28:28 Eph 3:6 7 3:8 Col 1:6,23 Rev 7:9,10

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?... AND WHO'S NOT!

They will come from east and west and from north and south - The "four corners" of the world. Why is "they?" In context this refers to Gentiles who have "striven" and entered through the narrow door by grace through faith in the only way (Jn 14:6) into the Kingdom of Heaven, through the Door, the Messiah (Jn 10:9).

In the story of the **healing of the Centurion's son** (Mt 8:5-9) we read a similar description...

Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. I say to you that **many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven**; 12 but the sons of the kingdom (The Jews) will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place **there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**" (Mt 8:10-12)

Will recline at the table - This is a prophecy to be fulfilled in the **Millennial Kingdom**. This banquet represents the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 25:6, 7, 8, 9 (cp the striking contrast presented in Isaiah 65:13 14). In Jesus' day the Jews viewed themselves as uniquely privileged because of the patriarchs and felt that the Gentiles were excluded from the kingdom.

C H Spurgeon - It will very much aggravate the sorrows of the lost to see so many saved whose prospects did not appear to be one half so hopeful as their own. (Spurgeon, C. H. The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible)

William Barclay writes that "The idea of the Messianic Banquet was at once the seal and the symbol of the new era was a common feature in apocalyptic writings and an extremely popular subject of discussion, thought, and expectation."

Several Scriptures allude to that glorious future date on the calendar of every believer -- an invitation to dine with the King of kings at the blessed Marriage Supper of the Lamb (cp Mt 22:1-14; Mt 25:1-13; Mt 26:29; Lk 22:16; Rev 19:9-[note](#)) (See several articles on the [Marriage of the Lamb](#)). **Fausset** writes that "*The consummation of this blessed intercommunion shall be at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, of which the Lord's Supper is the earnest and foretaste.*" Jesus prophetically promised that He would partake of the Passover meal again until He dines with believers in the **Millennial Kingdom** (Mt 8:11; Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18).

As **Henry Cowles** says "This feast is for known friends, not for old enemies." ([Luke - at top of page enter 168](#))

Luke 13:30 "AND BEHOLD, SOME ARE LAST WHO WILL BE FIRST AND SOME ARE FIRST WHO WILL BE LAST: kai idou (2SAMM) eisin (3PPAI) eschatoi hoi esontai (3PFMI) protoi, kai eisin (3PPAI) protoi hoi esontai (3PFMI) eschatoi:

- Mt 3:9,10 8:11,12 19:30 20:16 21:28 29 30 31 Mk 10:31

Behold ([idou](#)) - This urgent command (aorist imperative) serves as an "attention grabber" and draws the readers attention to the profundity of Jesus' following statement. **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

Some who are last who will be first - Note "**some**", not all! The **last** speaks of the Gentiles. Note the quantifier "**some**" describes a portion of those in both groups, the **first** (Jews) and the **last** (Gentiles) who will enter the narrow door of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Some are first who will be last - The **first** in context most likely refers to the Jews, who were the first to be privileged with God's favor and the first to receive His gracious call to come into His Kingdom, but who failed to enter because of their unbelief, even as many of the Jews failed to enter His rest after being warned (cp He 3:7, 8, 9-note Heb 3:10 11-note) - "And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest (**katapausis**), but to those who were disobedient (**apeitheo**)? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief (**apistia**).\" (Hebrews 3:18, 19-note)

MacArthur - Jesus' concluding statement, And behold, **some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last**, further intensifies the shock these lost Jews will feel. Not only will Gentiles be in the kingdom, but they will also be equal with the Jews who are there. In the realm of salvation "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for [the redeemed] are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28; cf. Eph. 2:11-16). (Luke Commentary)

W A Criswell - "There are last" refers to the Gentiles and "there are first" refers to the Jews, some of whom would have a lower rank than the Gentiles whom they despise.

Robert Stein on last...first - Compare Matt 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31. The parallels in Matthew and Mark indicate that Jesus used this proverb primarily to signify the admission of Israel's outcasts (tax collectors, sinners, the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind) and the exclusion of the religious elite (Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, priests). Luke and his readers, however, also would have understood this in terms of Acts 13:46; 18:6; and 28:28, i.e., the unbelief of much of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles. The lack of the article before "last" and "first" indicates that neither all the last nor all the first would experience this reversal. Some Jews (the disciples and the church of Acts 1–9) did believe. The saying contrasts not all the last and all the first but "last ones" kinds of people and "first ones" kinds of people. Both the NIV and the RSV seek to convey this in their translations. Compare Luke 1:51–53; 2:34; 6:20–26; 14:11, 15–24. (New American Commentary)

Constable - The people who are **last** in this context probably refer to Gentiles whom the Jews regarded as least likely to enter the kingdom (cf. Mt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31). The ones who are **first** were the Jews. They considered themselves to be superior to Gentiles in many ways. They were also the first and the foremost objects of Jesus' ministry.

While the preceding interpretation is that favored by most evangelical commentaries, one other possibility that has been raised is that the terms "**last...first...first...last**" could possibly relate to degrees of glory in eternity future. In other words, some who were "first" on earth (in terms of privilege, prestige, honor) might be "last" in glory. I personally think that the context favors the interpretation of those who were "**first**" to receive the Gospel as the Jews and the "**last**" being the Gentiles but in fairness one cannot be dogmatic.

Steven Cole has a most interesting application of Jesus' closing words on this section...

Salvation requires our careful self-examination because those who assume they're in may be out. Jesus says that there will be a great reversal. Many who thought they were **first** will be **last**. Many whom the "first crowd" thought were **last**, will be **first**. The Jews of Jesus' day despised the pagan Gentiles. They thought that if they ate with Gentiles they would be defiled. But Jesus says that many Gentiles will be in the kingdom, eating with the patriarchs and prophets, while many self-righteous Jews would be shut out. These verses demand our careful attention because **we who are in the church** are in the same place as the **Jews** of Jesus' day. We are familiar with the things of God. Perhaps like me, you were raised to know the Gospel. But being in the church is not enough.

Have you personally entered through the narrow door? Have you come to Jesus as a guilty sinner and laid hold of Him as the only acceptable sacrifice for your sins? Are you seeking to know Him and grow in Him as your Lord and Savior?

General acquaintance with Jesus won't be enough in that terrible day (cp Mt 7:21-note Mt 7:22 23-note). Don not assume that just because you **know about** Jesus, you **know** Him (**Ed**: And I would add even more important that "He **knows** you!").

Conclusion - [David Brainerd, the great missionary to American Indians](#), was once witnessing to a chief who was very close to trusting in Christ. But he held back. Brainerd got up, took a stick, drew a circle in the dirt around the chief, and said,

"Decide before you cross that line."

Brainerd knew that if the chief missed that moment he might never be so close again. My prayer is that the Lord will use this message to draw that line around you if you have never entered through the narrow door, which is Christ alone. Salvation is not just an interesting theological notion to discuss. It is of crucial importance for every person because the door is narrow and it soon will be shut forever. But right now it is still

open. Jesus says to you, "**Strive** (present imperative) to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." ([Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Door](#))

**It is impossible to take the wrong road and go to Heaven,
and it is impossible to take the Heavenly road and go to Hell.**

J C Ryle comments that...

our Lord gives us a general caution against **the way of the many** in religion. It is not enough to think as others think and do as others do. It must not satisfy us to follow the fashion, and swim with the stream of those among whom we live. He tells us that the way that leads to everlasting life is **narrow**, and **few** travel in it. He tells us that the way that leads to everlasting destruction is **broad**, and full of travelers. **Many are those who enter in by it.**

These are fearful truths! They ought to raise great searchings of heart in the minds of all who hear them. "Which way am I going? By what road am I traveling?" In one or other of the two ways here described, every one of us may be found. May God give us an honest, self-inquiring spirit, and show us what we are!

We may well tremble and be afraid, if our religion is that of the multitude. If we can say no more than this, that "we go where others go, and worship where others worship, and hope we shall do as well as others at last," we are literally pronouncing our own condemnation. What is this but being in the **broad way**? What is this but being in the road whose end is **destruction**? Our religion at present is not saving religion.

We have no reason to be discouraged and cast down, if the religion we profess is not popular, and few agree with us. We must remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage: **The gate is narrow.**

**Repentance and faith in Christ,
and holiness of life,
have never been fashionable.**

Editorial Note on the importance of Repentance: Repentance is not considered by many today as a component of salvation - Let the Scriptures speak for themselves -- John the Baptist called for repentance "validated" by fruit [Mt 3:2, 8, Lk 3:3, 8, Mk 1:4, Acts 19:4, cp Ac 13:24] Jesus began His ministry preaching repent [Mt 4:17, 11:20, 21, 12:41, Mk 1:15, cp Mk 6:12, Lk 5:32, 5, 10:13, 11:32, 13:2,3, 5, 15:7, 8, 9, 10, 16:30, 24:47]. Peter preached repentance [Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31] as did Paul [Acts 20:21, 26:20, cp Acts 11:18, cp Ro 2:4-note] and as did John [Rev 2:21-note]. God desires for all to repent [Ac 17:30 2Pe 3:9note] [Multiple articles on Repentance](#) or well done article in [Baker Evangelical Dictionary - Repentance](#).

The true flock of Christ has always been small. It must not move us to find that we are reckoned singular, and peculiar, and bigoted, and narrow-minded. This is "the narrow way." Surely it is better to enter into life eternal with a few, than to go to "destruction" with a great company ([J. C. Ryle. Expository Thoughts](#))

Robert Frost wrote a secular poem that closely parallels Jesus' words:

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

Wiersbe observes that in regard to one's eternal destiny...

the greatest danger is self-deception (cp He 3:13-note; Pr 28:26, Is 44:20, Obad 1:3, Ro 7:11-note; Ep 4:22-note; Jas 1:14-note). The scribes and Pharisees had fooled themselves into believing that they were righteous and others were sinful (cp Mt 5:20-note, Mt 23:29). **It is possible for people to know the right language, believe intellectually the right doctrines, obey the right rules, and still not be saved.** ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#)) (Bolding added for emphasis)

Keep in mind that most Jews believed that Israel as a whole would be saved (a delusion Paul dealt with vigorously in Romans 2) and that the few who were lost would be exceptions to the general rule. Jesus' teaching radically destroys that delusion.