

***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” – Mathew 7:13-14***

**I. In Mathew Chapter 7, the Lord Jesus breaks down “life” in a very simplistic, straightforward way**

- a. The Lord Jesus tells us that there are only “two paths” or “two roads” that a person can travel upon in life
  - i. The first path that the Lord mentions is wide and broad – “...***a wide gate and a broad path***”
  - ii. The second path that the Lord mentions is narrow and difficult – “...***a narrow gate and a difficult path***”
  - iii. Each of these paths lead to a different place (\*two destinations\*): One leads to “destruction” and the other leads to “life”
  - iv. Two *paths* and two *destinations* – this is how the Lord Jesus summarized life...
- b. Now, this teaching by the Lord is very distinct and contrary to what the world is teaching today
  - i. You see, the view among mainstream society is, “***All roads lead to heaven,***” regardless of what you believe or how you live, they claim that we are all going to end up at the same place...
  - ii. However, this is not true, this is not what Jesus taught – the Lord tells us that there are only two paths in life that someone can travel upon
  - iii. One path leading to life and one path leading to death...
- c. And this morning, I want to talk about each of these paths...

**II. The first path that the Lord Jesus teaches us about is described as the “Wide Gate” and the “Broad Way”**

- a. This is the path that leads to destruction and death
  - i. Now, according to Jesus, this is the path that ***many are choosing*** to travel upon...
  - ii. The path that is easy and convenient – the path that does not require commitment, discipline, faithfulness, loyalty, sacrifice, integrity, etc.
  - iii. A “***live for myself***” type of path, a “***I’m going to do what I want to do***” type of lifestyle...
- b. As we observe the world today, it is very clear that sin, evil, immorality, and wickedness is increasing at an alarming rate
  - i. Whether it is murder, drugs, alcohol, homosexuality, sexual immorality, hate, anger, rebellion, etc.

- ii. Men and women, young and old, are openly partaking and practicing sin like never before (living w/o conscious or conviction)
- c. And this life of sin is the “wide gate” and “broad way” that the Lord Jesus was talking about
  - i. And the Lord Jesus tells us that this path leads to destruction and death – **“An Eternal Separation from God”**
  - ii. Many are walking down this path thinking they are **okay**, but they are not okay, they are on their way to destruction (they are deceived)
  - iii. **Proverbs 14:12** declares, **“There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death”**
- d. Many people don’t like to talk about hell – many Pastors refuse to teach on the subject...
  - i. Yet, the Bible teaches us that Hell is a literal, real place; a place of torment, anguish, and outer darkness
  - ii. A place prepared for Satan and his demons, and a place waiting for all those who reject Christ and His salvation
  - iii. Sin offers life, but only delivers death...
- e. Therefore, the first path that we read about is the “wide” and “broad” path that leads to destruction

### III. The second path that the Lord Jesus teaches us about is described as the “Narrow Gate” and the “Difficult Way” (Praise God for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Path)

- a. This is the path that leads to life
  - i. Now, according to Jesus, this is the path that very few are choosing to travel upon
  - ii. This second path represents the Christian life or the Christian walk – the path that leads to heaven i.e. eternal life
- b. The Lord describes this path as a narrow, difficult path
  - i. This speaks of commitment, sacrifice, loyalty, faithfulness, discipline, devotion, self-control, submission, surrender, etc.
  - ii. The Christian path is not an easy path – the road to heaven is a very difficult, tough road to travel upon
  - iii. In **Acts 14:22**, the apostle Paul declared, **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”**
  - iv. Yet, although the Christian path is a difficult path, it is the only path that leads to eternal life (heaven)
- c. Therefore, make sure you are always traveling upon this “narrow” and “difficult” path
  - i. Don’t allow the enemy, the world, or the flesh to influence you to walk of this path...don’t allow something or someone to take you off this path...
  - ii. You see, many things and many people are going to try to influence you to turn back and stop walking this path...

- iii. However, whatever happens, no matter how hard it might get, you must continue on the path that leads to life
- d. Make sure you finish the Race
  - i. In **1 Corinthians 9:24**, the apostle Paul declares, “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it*”
  - ii. The Christian life is often times compared to as a race in the Bible – and Paul tells us that we must run this race in such a way that we obtain the prize, in other words, we must finish the race...
- e. Sadly, many people have started this race, but for whatever reason, they *do not finish*
  - i. They remove themselves from the race, they fall back into their old lifestyles, and they allow the things of this world to disqualify them from the prize...
  - ii. They start, but they do not finish...
- f. Yet, the Bible teaches us that we need to run this race in such a way that we obtain the prize – “*We need to finish what we started*”
  - i. And this morning, I want to share with you “*four principals*” that you can apply to your Christian walk to help you finish this race you have started...
  - ii. Four principles that will help you stay in the race and obtain the prize
- g. Please turn with me to *\*Hebrews 12:1-2\**

#### IV. Principle #1 – “Be encouraged by those who have gone before you”

- a. In verse 1a, the author of Hebrews declares, “*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...*”
  - i. We must receive encouragement from the saints who have gone before us and learn from their example
  - ii. Christian who have gone before us...Saints in the Bible who have left us an example of what it truly means to be committed to the Lord
  - iii. Whether it is Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Peter, Paul, D.L. Moody, A.W. Tozer, Billy Graham, etc.
  - iv. We are surrounded by a cloud of “witnesses” who testify of their own experiences of God’s faithfulness, God’s provision, and God’s love
- b. Interestingly, the idea behind this verse is a giant stadium filled with rows and rows of people (as high as the clouds) cheering on the runners
  - i. The runners are surrounded by thousands of fans cheering them on, “*Keep going, keep running, don’t stop, you are almost there!*”
  - ii. The runners receive encouragement and motivation from those cheering them on...

- iii. In the same way, we must allow ourselves to receive encouragement from those who have gone before us and from those who surround us
- iv. Allow yourself **to be encouraged** by the body of Christ – it is so important that you continue to come **to church** and get encouraged...
- c. Personally, I have been greatly impacted and encouraged by my Father and Mother in my Christian walk
  - i. Some days, if I listen carefully, it's as though I can still hear the voice of my Mom saying, "**Adam, keep on going! Keep on running! Don't stop! You are almost there!**"
  - ii. You see, now she is part of the great cloud of witnesses that surround us...
- d. Therefore, to stay in the race, we must allow ourselves to be encouraged by those who have gone before us and by those who surround us

V. **Principle #2 – “Lay aside everything that is keeping you from finishing the race”**

- a. In verse 1b, the author of Hebrews continues by declaring, “...let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us...”
  - i. We must lay aside and remove everything and anything that will keep us from finishing the race
  - ii. This is the idea behind it, Ancient runners who competed in the Olympics would remove as much of their clothing as possible before they began to compete
  - iii. Anything that held them back from running/finishing, they laid aside...
- b. In the same way, anything and anyone that is keeping us from growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ (\*not helping\*) must be laid aside and removed
  - i. Notice carefully how the author used the word “weight” – this does not necessarily mean a sin or a vice...
  - ii. However, it speaks of something that is holding you back from growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ
  - iii. I'm sure if we all think hard enough we can think of things in our lives that are keeping us from having a deeper relationship w/ Christ
  - iv. Whatever it may be, big or small, we must lay it aside – especially, if it is sin...
- c. Therefore, to stay in the race, we must **lay aside** everything that is keeping us from finishing the race

VI. **Principle #3 – “Run the race with endurance”**

- a. In verse 1c, the author of Hebrews continues by declaring, “...and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”
  - i. We must run this Christian race with endurance...
  - ii. Always remember, the race that we are running is not a “sprint” but a “marathon”

- iii. Therefore, because of this, you must pace yourself and run in a way that you will finish the race...
- iv. This speaks of discipline, faithfulness, commitment, diligence, perseverance, devotion, and dedication
- b. The Christian walk is a walk of discipline, commitment, and dedication – it should never be based on emotions, feelings, or experiences
  - i. Never base, or measure, your relationship with the Lord Jesus on feelings or emotions
  - ii. Many say to themselves, “*Well, I don’t feel like going to church today, praying today, reading my bible – I don’t feel the Lord*”
  - iii. Listen, regardless of how you feel, you must continue serving the Lord – learn to walk by faith and not by sight Cf. **2 Corinthians 5:7**
  - iv. Beloved, stay focused, stay faithful, stay committed, “*Lord, regardless of how I feel, I am going to stay faithful to You*”
- c. Therefore, to stay in the race, we must run the race with endurance

VII. Principle #4 – “Keep your eyes on Jesus”

- a. In verse 2, the author of Hebrews continues by declaring, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”
  - i. We must always keep our eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ...
  - ii. If we are going to finish this race, if we are going to make it to the end, we have to keep our eyes on Jesus
  - iii. Not on our circumstances, not on people, not on the church, not on the Pastor or a church leader, but on Jesus Christ
  - iv. You see, people will fail you, but Jesus will never fail you...
- b. Jesus is our ultimate example
  - i. He finished the race that was given to Him by His Father; He completed His mission, accomplished the work of redemption, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory
  - ii. Therefore, we must always keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and He will keep us and preserve us to the end...
  - iii. **Philippians 1:6** declares, “*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*”
- c. Therefore, to stay in the race, we must keep our eyes on Jesus

VIII. So, in closing, we see that there are two paths in life, “The path that leads to life and the path that leads to destruction”

- a. This morning, make sure you are walking upon the path of life, and don’t you ever stop walking this path until you obtain the prize...

- i. An old hymn says it best, *“I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back”*