

Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus, the One Way to Life

Enter through the narrow gate

The first question that we have to ask about this verse is Enter Where? Jesus is teaching about the Way to Eternal life. Long before being a Christ-follower was called Christianity, it was first called simply The Way. We are not only Christ followers, but we are identified personally with Him.

through the narrow gate

The Way leads to the entry through the narrow gate. To get to the right gate, you have to choose the right way.

for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction

The alternative to the narrow gate is a wide gate: there are only two gates, the narrow and the wide, and that everyone must go through one of these two gates. A wide gate (such as the main gate of a city) is set up to deal with the movement of large numbers of people.

Default Gate

Most people assume that as long as they don't mess up their life too badly on earth, that they'll go to heaven when they die. But, that's not what the Bible says. According to scripture, we see that the default destination for humanity is not the Kingdom of God. David said In **Psalm 51:1-5** that he was not only born "a little baby sinner", but he was a sinner even before he was born! Romans 3:23 **23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, and just in case you think "well, I understand everyone else is a sinner, but I'm a pretty good person", then Romans 3:10-11. The wide gate is reached by the broad way. They say, Just go with the flow, but no-one tells you that the bridge is out up ahead, and all these people are headed for a sudden fall into death. We always think that death is something that happens to the other guy. We think that hell is only for "really horrible people". But, from a biblical perspective, when the Bible lists those who are destined for hell, based on our own behavior, we would all fall into this list in one way or another, at some time in our lives. Revelation 21:8 tells us **8 But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**" Some of these things could be found amongst churchgoers such as: The cowardly – those who would never stand for Jesus in front of their friends, and hide their Christianity to get along, and make their lives easier. The faithless – those who went to church but never really trusted God enough to obey him with their relationships, or their resources, or anything important to them. The idolaters – those who wouldn't put God first in their lives, but instead put money or status or power first in their lives.

Liars -those who came to church but whose submission to God was not sincere. All fall short, and we must trust Jesus as Lord and Savior to be saved. Well, you say, But God loves us, would he really send those he loves to hell? (see Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10).

and there are many who enter through it. Hell is an eternal place of torment. We don't want anyone to go there, but the fact is that all of us—no matter where we fall in that list, fall short of the glory of God, His perfect righteous standard, and are deserving of this default destination.

You say, "But how is that fair? An eternity in hell for only 75 years of sin?" Sin gains its wickedness by the one it's committed against. The amount of goodness and innocence that you're sinning against determines the seriousness of the crime, and it is an infinitely holy God that we have sinned against, Psalm 51:4 **4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight.** And sin against an infinitely Holy God, who loves us with an everlasting love, is infinitely wicked. You say, "Why can't God just let it go?" Because he is also infinitely just. And justice demands restitution in some way. The desire we all have for God to ultimately right all wrongs and restore justice to the universe—that necessitates judgment. As Romans 12:11-12 says **11 For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, to Me every knee will bow, And every tongue will give praise to God." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.** You say, "Well, why doesn't God do something about it?" He has! He put on

Jesus the full punishment for our sin. He took on every single bit of it so nothing would be left for us. There are only two ways to pay for sin: You can accept God's plan and the Son of God can die for it, or we can pay for it eternally in hell. And if we don't receive what he has offered to us—the free gift of salvation through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross—then what other choice does God have? If we won't accept salvation, if we continue to push God away, if we insist on pushing down his will and magnifying our own, what more can God do? As C.S. Lewis said, there are, in the end, only two groups of people—those who say to God, "Your will be done," and those to whom God says, "Your will be done." And with sadness and loss, ratifies the decision that they have made to go to hell. Hell is a bad choice based on believing the lies and deception on this fallen world, and the ruler of this age, the devil, rather than God the author of truth and life. But it doesn't have to be that way for you.

¹⁴ For the gate is narrow

God always provides what is needed, and if He has provided a narrow gate that leads to life, then that's all that is needed. It's a sad commentary on humanity, but it's truthful. Romans 3:12 says **12 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, There is not even one.**" None of us deserve eternal life, but a few are able to find it, because God, in His Love for us, has made The Way through Jesus His Son. 16 **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life."**

and the way is constricted that leads to life,

The way is not constricted because there are too many people trying to follow. I've been in some crowded churches from time to time, but I have never seen a church that needed a "No Vacancy" sign. **and there are few who find it.**

No, the Bible says that there are few who find it. And why is that? Because the word for "constricted" here means pressure, and it has another connotation that is used in Matthew: it also means suffering under pressure. As Christians, we suffer due to persecution: Paul says in 2nd Timothy 3:11-12 **11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! 12 Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.** The pressure of persecution will always come upon you if you make a stand for Jesus, and the more public and against the grain you stand, the more persecution. And, of course no-one except a masochist enjoys being persecuted. It's necessary, not enjoyable. We rejoice because of the end result of suffering, that it teaches us that God will get us through suffering and that He doesn't abandon us during suffering. James 1:2-4 **Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

Suffering produces a tenacity and a grounding in Jesus, our Foundation, our Solid Ground, a trust that our anchor will hold during the storm, that we will not be shipwrecked, that nothing else will produce. Romans 5:3-5 **More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.** And so we rejoice at how these sufferings change us and conforms our character to look more like Jesus. And as we see this in ourselves, it gives us a witness that we're not the same as we were before, and we learn to respond to the love that has been poured into us by loving others. Following The Way to life put us under pressure, because it takes pressure to mold us and shape us. It takes pressure to fix the twisting and deformity that happens to us through years of living in this fallen world—all of the worldly bad habits we learn, all of the fleshly ways of thinking, all of the worldly wisdom that's demonic.

God had a specific design in mind when He created us, and when we first come to Him, we look nothing like it. Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, **"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the**

earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. When we come to Him, we bear the image of God in that we have dignity because we were created in His image, but that image has been deformed by sin, and needs a lot of correcting. Romans 8:29-30 **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.** If Hebrews 5:8 lets us know that suffering was good for Jesus' character saying **Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.** Then how much more do we who are sinners by nature require this molding of our character? And this process of becoming more and more identified with Jesus through suffering becoming more and more like Him, although it's often uncomfortable, is absolutely necessary. Romans 8:13-17 **For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.** The amount that we are willing to allow ourselves to learn the lessons of suffering, and allow God to shape us and conform us is directly proportional to the amount we'll be glorified together with Him. (Phil 3:12-16)--Keep pressing on toward the goal of reaching that Narrow Gate through living your life in the Way of Jesus and for the Kingdom of God.