

**“Are there few who are saved?”** What a strange question to ask Jesus. This man seemed more concerned about *how many* would go to heaven, rather than whether *he* would go to heaven. It’s like asking a car expert how *many* good used cars there are in the State of Florida, rather than **“How can I find one for myself?”**

**“Are there few who are saved”** is also a *dangerous* question! The person who asks may despair of being one of the “few” chosen by God in eternity. **Or** he might throw up his hands and say, *“It’s all decided; what I do with the Word of God makes no difference!”* Our Savior will not let this dangerous question stand. We all need to make the question **personal** and be concerned about **how** we OURSELVES are finally saved. So, Jesus says:

**“KEEP ON STRUGGLING TO GO THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR!”**

**I.**

Several years ago I heard a Catholic priest say that Mother Theresa’s suffering for others was like the “God forsakenness” that Christ suffered on the cross, so that her suffering had **“redemptive”** value. Teachings like that cause people to ask, “Will only a few people be saved – only really **good** people?”

Jesus tells us: **“Keep on struggling to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able to.”** Is Jesus saying that by good works and religious devotion we are to *struggle* to enter through the narrow door to heaven, like Mother Theresa? Not at all! **We’ll talk later about what this “struggling” means.**

But first, the Lord pictures the kingdom of heaven as a house with **only one** entrance – a **narrow** door. The door is open, but only for a time. It is closing when God’s patience with impenitent sinners ends, and when He takes the gospel from those who have despised it. So Isaiah says: **“Seek the Lord while He may be found,”** (Is. 55:6) At God’s pre-appointed time, He will close the **narrow** door, either by our death or Christ’s second coming, whichever is first. **Then, those who rejected Christ will be forever locked out of heaven.**

But Jesus pictures them as continuing to argue after the judgment. They will **“stand outside knocking and pleading: ‘sir, open the door for us.’** And they will say, **“We ate and drank in your presence, and You taught in our streets.”** They make it seem like they had a close personal relationship with Jesus. They even admit that they heard Him teach! Notice that they do **not** say, “You taught **US!**” but only *“You taught in our streets.”* Their relationship with their Savior was only *outward*.

Those who are Christian in name only may argue that they had belonged to a really strict church where the Bible was taught. They may insist they were members of a Christian family and kept good company. *Yet Christ’s judgment upon their unbelief will stand!* For He will answer: **“I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity!”**

**II.**

What could be worse than being driven from God’s presence?! And what will eternal separation from God be like? **Jesus says: “There will be weeping THERE and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.”**(v. 28) Is Jesus talking about “HELL”? How could God send anyone to hell? Yet, Jesus, God’s Son, spoke about hell more than 180 times! (34 times in Luke)!

An *AARP Magazine* report in 2007 noted that 70% of the people surveyed over 50 years old believe there is a Hell. But 43% of them said that Hell **is only a state of being**, no more than a person's really bad experiences on earth. A man once told me that living with his wife was "Hell." But in the original Greek of v. 28 Jesus says that **"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth THERE** – in that PLACE!

Jesus describes the intense anger and suffering in **Hell** with the words, **"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** Unbelievers in hell will **not** be utterly destroyed or burned up. They will have eternal tears, pain and anger! Their suffering will be made worse because they will be able to **see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob**, and all believers enjoying the peace and blessings of eternal life in heaven!

### III.

Jesus also prophesies to the unbelieving Jews that **many others** will enter through the narrow door by faith in Jesus. **"People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God."** Sinners like us from all over the world will come to know the joys of eternal life in heaven! Our foreign missionaries keep going with the Gospel, because they know it will **"not return empty"** (Is. 55:11); it will bear fruit wherever it is proclaimed!

**"Indeed,"** Jesus adds, **"there are last who will be first, and first who will be last."** The Jew of Jesus' day regarded themselves as **"the first"** people that ought to be saved. They boasted that they were children of Abraham; they had the temple and the priesthood. The **Gentile** people in the rest of the world were regarded as the **"the last."** But when the Jews hardened their hearts against the Gospel of Christ, millions of Gentiles like us became and are becoming **"first!"**

On the other hand, some who have the Word of grace and salvation in their churches will be **"last."** Let us be warned! We still have the pure Gospel among us in the Word and Sacraments. But if these blessing become **boring**, and God's grace becomes **despised**, the eternal riches He offers in Christ may be lost, and Christ may take His message somewhere else!

That's what happened to the Jews in Jesus' day. That's what happened in Luther's Germany. The same can happen to any church today! That's why Jesus tells us: **keep on struggling to go through the narrow door.**

### IV.

Let's be clear on what this door is. Jesus says, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."** (*John 14:6*). *The only begotten Son of the Father* took upon himself all sins, all that would block our entry into God's presence. By His perfect sacrifice, Christ overcame Death and opened heaven to all who believe in Him.

Christ is the open door! People think they can choose any door they wish to gain salvation, as long as they are **"sincere"** in their religious devotion. But Jesus says there is **only one** door and you have to be very **THIN** to get through this door. You can't be **FAT** with your own pride, religious devotion and works. There's no room for your money or possessions; no room for anything you think will earn your way in!

But if there's no room through this door for our works, our efforts to save ourselves, then why does Jesus say, **"Keep struggling to enter"**? – Because going through that door is a continuing **struggle**. We struggle every day with sin and temptation – the temptation to **not** listen to God, to **not** repent of our sins, to **not** trust in God above all things. We **struggle** just to get ourselves and our children to church and Sunday school. Because we live in a fallen world and in this sinful flesh,

Jesus says, **“Keep struggling to enter.”**

The Greek word translated **“strive”** in the NKJV is AGONIDZO, from which we get our English word **“agonize.”** It was used to speak of athletes competing for a prize. They **“agonized”** to win the prize. We agonize, we struggle in the fight of faith! We press on to run the race, keeping our eyes on the prize, the crown of life that God freely awards us for Christ’s sake.

The psalmist says, in Psalm 95, **“Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart.”** Do you see the amazing paradox of our Christian life? *Entering the narrow door to heaven is **both a gift AND a struggle.***

The door is open now. Keep on hearing the voice of His saving Word! When the devil haunts you with the thought that your sins have once again blocked the way to the heavenly mansions, **struggle** against him by remembering your Savior’s sacrifice and His unchanging word **“I am the door for the sheep. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.”** (Jn.10:9) Amen.