

Practical Religion
LESSON TWO: SELF-EXERTION

“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” (Luke 13:24)

Introduction

The man posing the question in Luke 13:24 is unknown. His motives for asking are unknown. He may as well be any of us. What is it to us how few or how many enter through the narrow gate? Christ directs us away from lofty speculations and back down to earth with a vision of our holy duty in Christian living. We must *strive!* “Know the way of salvation experimentally, obey the command of the Lord practically, and be found safe in the great day of his second coming!” (p. 22).

Christ’s Command to Self-Exertion

- I. *Description* of the way of salvation: the “narrow” gate:
 - a. The gate was *made for sinners* by the Lord Jesus Christ [Jn. 10:9; 14:6; Ep. 3:12]
 - b. The gate is called “narrow” *for good reason*
 - i. Narrow to all 1) who **love sin**, 2) who **set their affections on this world**, 3) who **dislike trouble**, 4) who **love the company of the world**, or 5) who are **self-righteous**
 - c. The gate is *the only one* by which men can get to heaven
 - i. All that are ever saved are saved by Christ, simple faith in him—not by repentance, works, regularity in means of grace, conviction and sorrow over sin [Ac. 4:12]
 - d. The gate is *ever ready to open* [Jn. 6:37]
 - i. No sinner of any kind is forbidden to draw near
 - ii. The one condition is this: *really feel your sins and desire to be saved by Christ in his way*
 1. WSC Q31: “What is effectual calling?” A: “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth *persuade and enable* us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”
 - e. The gate is one through which *thousands have entered* unto salvation
 - f. *What a privilege it is* to have this gate at all [Lk. 10:23, 24]
 - g. *How thankful you ought to be* if you have really gone through this gate
 - i. Let’s not be like lepers who go away healed but thankless [Lk. 17:17]
- II. *Plain command*: “Strive to enter”:
 - a. STRIVE teaches we must *use means diligently* [Hb. 4:11, 12]
 - i. God has appointed such means for our comfortable approach to him
 - b. STRIVE teaches *man is a free agent* [Nu. 13:30; Ro. 6:13; Col. 3:5]
 - i. It is a miserable religion which says, “We can do nothing of ourselves”
 - c. STRIVE teaches we can expect *many adversaries and hard battle* [Mt. 11:12]
 - i. The heart—naturally sensual and earthly
 - ii. The world—full of opposition and temptation
 - iii. The devil—a roaring lion
 - d. STRIVE teaches *it is worthwhile* to seek salvation [Pr. 8:19]

- i. This is true gold, durable riches: the peace of God, hope for the future, the indwelling Spirit, Christ's incorruptible righteousness, and the assurance of our pardon!
 - e. STRIVE teaches *laziness in religion is great sin*
 - i. It is a breach of our Lord's commandment to neglect of the soul
 - f. STRIVE teaches that all outside the narrow gate are in *great danger*
 - i. They are in danger of being lost forever
 - g. STRIVE is brimful of *condemnation for thousands of baptized persons*
 - i. Those in regular attendance of worship, but only in form; those who seldom read the Bible; and those who never pray
- III. *Awful prophecy*: "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able":
 - a. All other prophecies and promises of Scripture have been *fulfilled*
 - b. A time is coming when *seeking God will be useless* ("Hell is truth known too late")
 - i. Knowledge will come to many too late
 - ii. Repentance will come to many too late [Mt. 27:4]
 - iii. Faith will come to many too late
 - iv. A desire for salvation will come to many too late

Striving for Application

- IV. Questions and Imperatives for Personal Application
 - a. There will be *a great change* soon
 - i. What is dear to you now?
 - ii. What is cheap to you now?
 - b. Some may hear who neither like the faith nor practice what Christ requires: *One day, you will confess that we were right.*
 - c. Some may hear who love the Lord with sincerity: *Time is short: eternity hastens on. The cross is only for a little season: the crown is forever.*"
 - d. Have you entered in at the narrow gate or not?
 - i. Baptized, unbaptized, young, old, boy, girl, man, woman, memorized the catechism or can't remember a word of it, in-person, live-streaming, healthy as can be or at death's door, Democrat, Republican—whatever: *have you entered at the narrow gate or not?*
 - ii. The gate stands open! Jesus Christ offers to save you. All things are ready. Come!
 - e. Enter without a day's delay.
 - i. Has anyone ever reached heaven, that eternal rest, except through the narrow gate?
 - ii. Has anyone ever entered that gate without striving?
 - iii. Has anyone ever entered the narrow gate and afterwards been thoroughly sorry?
 - iv. *Therefore seek him without delay!* Go to that merciful and mighty Savior in prayer—today—pour your heart out to him. Keep nothing back. Tell Christ you cast yourself fully on him and plead his promises, that he put his Spirit in you.
 - f. Tell others of the blessings you have found. [Jn. 1:45, 46; Ac. 9:20; 2 Pt. 3:9]
 - i. All converted people ought to be missionaries; therefore, pray for more zeal to commend the narrow gate to all outside
 - ii. The hour draws near when the gospel missionary work will be done; therefore, awaken your deep sense of responsibility in the matter of souls