

The Narrow Way: Matthew 7:13-14

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The Narrow Way: Matthew 7:13-14

Introduction

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB95)

- 13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.
- 14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

I serendipitously came across verse 14 while doing a study on what it means to deny self, carry your cross daily and to follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24.)

Whenever we study God's Word, we should prayerfully do so under guidance of the Holy Spirit with concordance in hand. For those of you more familiar with my writing and study methodology, you know that I do word studies based upon the inspired language of Scripture (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) and not from the English translations of the texts. I was surprised to see Matthew 7:14 surface when searching affliction, the Greek word thlibo.

Matthew 7:14

"For the gate is **small <4728 stenos>** and the way is **narrow <2346 thlibo>** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Translating thlibo as narrow does not render the proper understanding of what God is communicating in this verse. This is especially true when another term has already been translated as narrow in the preceding verse. Let's examine both verses 13 and 14 to gain a proper context of what is being taught.

Matthew 7:13-14

- 13 "Enter through the **narrow <4728 stenos>** gate; for the gate is **wide <4116 platus>** and the way is **broad <2149 euruchos>** that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.
- 14 "For the gate is **small <4728 stenos>** and the way is **narrow <2346 thlibo>** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The Greek adjective **stenov** stenos (sten-os') Strong's Concordance number 4728 is used in both verse 13 and 14 though translated differently (wrongly I might add) in each verse. We enter through the Stenos Gate (verse 13) and see how the Stenos gate is contrasted and compared in these two verses.

In verse 13, Stenos is rendered as narrow (strait) and **contrasted** with its opposite gate, the Platus (wide street) and Euruchos (broad way.) Followers of Christ Jesus enter through the Narrow or difficult way and not the wide, broad and easy way.

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In verse 14, the Stenos gate (narrow) is again mentioned but **compared** with what it is like ... AFFLICTION. The Stenos gate is the narrow gate of pressure and affliction, so affliction is the means by which the chosen enter Eternal Life.

The Greek verb translated as narrow in verse 14 is *yl ibw thlibo* (*thlee'-bo*) does not appear to be a sound translation. Thlibo carries the meaning of being afflicted by great pressure or pressing. Its use is generally metaphoric in the sense of trouble, peril and distress in the same manner that grapes are hard pressed or crushed in a wine press.

Verse 14 must be viewed as a mistranslation because the clear meaning and intent of God becomes obscured with thlibo being translated as narrow. The English word narrow does not carry nor embody the understanding of trouble, pressure and affliction.

The meaning of verses 13 and 14 is, "Enter through the Stenos gate (strait and narrow); for wide and broad is the way that leads you through the gate of destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For Stenos (strait and narrow) is the gate and pressed hard with affliction is the way that leads to life, but there are only a few who find it."

Remaining in context, the better translation of the NASB95 and the 1769 Authorized Version of King James would be as follows:

Matthew 7:13-14 (AV)

- 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
14 Because strait *is* the gate, and **narrow** *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (AV-Corrected)

- 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
14 Because strait *is* the gate, and **affliction/persecution** *is* the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

A similar situation exists with the NASB95 translation as well.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB95)

- 13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.
14 "For the gate is **small** and the way is **narrow** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB95-Corrected)

- 13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

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14 "For the gate is **narrow** and the way is **affliction/persecution** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

There seems to be a general reluctance due to Western cultural norms in correctly translating into English any Scripture that may be perceived as negative because the truth of God teaches that suffering and persecution is the means by which the elect, the chosen of God enter Eternal Life.

Exposition

Jesus is using the imagery of having set before us two roads leading us into an ancient city via two different gates. This was a common architecture of Middle Eastern cities to be surrounded by large walls with gates allowing entry into the cities. Some gates were broad and wide to accommodate throngs of people walking through at the same time, while other gates were private and very narrow, usually allowing only one person to enter at a time. Jesus is teaching us that the gate to heaven is the narrow (stenos) gate, one full of affliction and persecution (thlibo) and strait.

Strait vs Straight

Strait must not be confused with straight. Though both pronunciations are the same, their meanings are very different. Strait means peril, hard, difficult to walk because it is narrow, restrictive and dangerous. For this reason, the narrow gate is not very appealing to the desires of the flesh. The wide (platus) and broad (euruchoros) gates on the other hand were easy to find and walk because these were main roads, designed wide and broad to accommodate large numbers of people, garrisons with chariots, animals and the like to easily come and go.

Jesus is teaching us that the narrow gate, the hard and restrictive gate is the gate that leads to eternal life and the broad and wide gate leads to eternal death and destruction in hell. What an absolute travesty to the natural mind. That which the mind ultimately seeks (Eternal Life) must be traversed by that which it finds repulsive (Limitations and affliction) and that which the mind finds ultimately repulsive (Eternal Death) is traversed by that which it finds most desirable (Liberality and Pleasure).

Spiritual vs Carnal

The focus of Jesus' teaching is there is **ONLY ONE WAY** to enter into eternal life. That statement immediately makes the fleshly mind sick to its stomach. The mere hint of being narrow in mind and restrictive in behavior is enough to bring out the scorn and ire of the carnal mind. The carnal mind wants to be liberal in the myriad of choices it can make to satisfy its carnal, fleshly desires. The carnal mind wants to believe that **ALL ROADS LEAD TO GOD**. It doesn't matter what you believe or by what name you call your god, or how you choose to worship your god as long as you don't hurt other people (and even if you do

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you're already loved and forgiven by God through his grace) so whatever you do is good and pleasing to God because He loves you. God calls this kind of liberal thinking the wide road and the road that leads to eternal death and the destruction of the soul in Hell. Liberal thinking is the mind-set of the un-saved.

The carnal mind is the mind obsessed and bent upon the satisfaction of its carnal and fleshly desires. The natural mind is repulsed by the suggestion that only one way can be the good way, the right way to walk. The liberal mind believes there are many ways to come to salvation without the need to heed Jesus. This liberal mindset also applies to many of the pseudochristian groups commonplace today, those who believe you can come to Jesus without the need to repent from sin and obey the teachings of Jesus. Liberalism will lead people down the road of death and destruction in hell.

Jesus is teaching that He is the strait and narrow gate that we must enter through. Just as he suffered in the flesh, the road we must walk is also full of affliction and suffering. The narrow road is the hard one to find and take, yet that is the road that leads us to Jesus and eternal life. There is *no other way*, nor is there *any other name* by which Salvation is gifted to those God has granted to be His recipients of grace. There is no other way to come to Jesus except by the thlibo gate, the affliction gate. Jesus is the narrow gate and the way to Jesus is hard because it is full of much trouble and affliction. While this is not the message that people want to hear, it is the true gospel message of Jesus, the way of the cross, and the only means by which we must be saved.

The pseudochristian gospel of contemporary society would have you believe the road to the Lord is the wide road, paved with health, wealth, prosperity, blessings, and happiness. Many are deceived unto believing this lie for the wide road appeals to the flesh and the carnal desires of the flesh, but the liberal road is not the true gospel of God. God speaks of much the same thing in Jeremiah chapter 7 when God teaches His people to enter the gate of the Lord. Jeremiah 7 and Matthew 7 share much the same message. Both warn against the deception of false prophets and those who falsely claim promises of the Lord that He promises not.

Context and Flow of Matthew 7

Matthew 7 is a fascinating chapter for in it God is telling us how we are to correctly apply His Word to our lives. The flow of Matthew 7 begins with Jesus teaching Christians how to *rightly* judge. It simply amazes me that many teach that this section is teaching Christians to NOT JUDGE, which is completely false. The first six verses of Matthew seven are teaching us how to use the judgment of God when discerning our use of spiritual matters with others. This section ends with Jesus telling us not to give that which is holy to the dogs, for the dogs are representative of the unsaved and unholy who cannot discern spiritual matters. We are to judge with whom we give what is precious to God to others.

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Jesus continues His teaching (verse 7-11) by telling us to continue to ask, look, seek and knock for then the door of spiritual understanding will be opened to those who seek God. Jesus in fact makes this promise and contrasts the ways of carnal man with our holy Father God. If carnal and evil men do good things for those who ask and seek, how much more will our holy God do for those who do the same? This section of Scripture concludes with Jesus teaching us what is often referred to as the Golden Rule. God want us to be to others what we hope others would be to us.

Now comes the two verses we find in this study and flows with the context of the entire chapter. We are first to learn the standards by which God judges and learn how to use and apply God's judgments first to ourselves and then to others (v1-5). We are to refrain from giving God's holy standards to others, for when we do, we will be hated to scorn by those not understanding the value of God's precious pearls on how to rightly judge (v6). We continue to seek and ask for more truth and understanding of God, for when we do, God promises to open our hearts and mind to His great pearls of wisdom, righteousness and judgment (v7-11). When we receive spiritual gifts from God we are under obligation to live by His standards and judgment and to treat others as we would have them treat us (v12). We are not to desire the ways of the flesh, the easy and carefree road that leads to hell, but are to walk the strait and narrow road with its God ordained sufferings and afflictions that bring us to Eternal Life (v13-14). We are to hold fast and use God's standard of judgment to discern those who claim to be His followers, but in truth are false prophets, liars and deceivers whose bad fruit has earned them the fire of hell (v15-23). All who read and heed the Words of Jesus will withstand the attacks of Satan and receive everlasting life (v24-25), but those who do not will perish (v26-27).

The chapter ends with the crowd being amazed with the teaching of Jesus and also how Jesus taught ... with AUTHORITY. It was common for the Scribes, Rabbis and teachers of Scripture to frequently reference teachings from other Rabbis who came before them. Jesus used no such teaching methods when He taught. This too was another reason that so many were angered by Jesus for He taught with the authority, strength and conviction of God in the flesh.

Appendix

2346 *yl ibw thlibo* (*thlee'-bo*)

akin to the base of 5147; TDNT-3:139,334; v; *to press, afflict*:—

NAS-afflict (1), afflicted (5), crowd (2), distress (1), narrow (1), suffer affliction (1).

AV-trouble 4, afflict 3, narrow 1, throng 1, suffer tribulation 1; 10

1) to press (as grapes), press hard upon

2) a compressed way

2a) narrow straitened, contracted

3) metaphor: to trouble, afflict, distress

Scriptures

Matthew 7:14 "For the gate is small and the way is **narrow <2346 thlibo>** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Mark 3:9 And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the **crowd <2346 thlibo>**, so that they would not **crowd <2346 thlibo>** Him;

2 Corinthians 1:6 But if we are **afflicted <2346 thlibo>**, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

2 Corinthians 4:8 *we are afflicted <2346 thlibo>* in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

2 Corinthians 7:5 For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were **afflicted <2346 thlibo>** on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

1 Thessalonians 3:4 For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to **suffer affliction <2346 thlibo>**; and so it came to pass, as you know.

2 Thessalonians 1:6 For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who **afflict <2346 thlibo>** you,

2 Thessalonians 1:7 and *to give* relief to you who are **afflicted <2346 thlibo>** and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

1 Timothy 5:10 having a reputation for good works; *and* if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in **distress <2346 thlibo>**, *and* if she has devoted herself to every good work.

Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, **afflicted <2346 thlibo>**, ill-treated

4728 stenov stenos (sten-os')

probably from the base of 2476; TDNT-7:604,1077; adj ; *narrow*:—

NAS-narrow (2), small (1).

AV-strait 3; 3

1) narrow, strait

Scriptures

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the **narrow <4728 stenos>** gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

Matthew 7:14 "For the gate is **small <4728 stenos>** and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Luke 13:24 "Strive to enter through the **narrow <4728 stenos>** door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

2149 eurucwrov euruchoros (yoo-roo'-kho-ros)

from eurus (wide) and 5561; ; adj *spacious*:—

NAS-broad (1).

AV-broad 1; 1

1) spacious, broad

Scriptures

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is **broad <2149 euruchoros>** that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

4116 pl atuv platus (plat-oos')

from 4111; adj *broad*, substantially, *a street*:—

NAS-street (4), streets (5), wide (1).

AV-wide 1; 1

1) broad

Scriptures

Matthew 6:5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the **street <4116 platus>** corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is **wide <4116 platus>** and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

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Matthew 12:19 "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE **STREETS <4116 platus>**.

Luke 10:10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its **streets <4116 platus>** and say,

Luke 13:26 "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our **streets <4116 platus>**';

Luke 14:21 "And the slave came *back* and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the **streets <4116 platus>** and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

Acts 5:15 to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the **streets <4116 platus>** and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.

Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the **street <4116 platus>** of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Revelation 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the **street <4116 platus>** of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Revelation 22:2 in the middle of its **street <4116 platus>**. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.