

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

**And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."
(Luk 13:23-24)**

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The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment (Part 13)

The Gate is Narrow and Few Enter it

May 31, 2026

Sermon Text: Matthew 7:13-14

Scripture Reading: Romans 9

Mat 7:13-14 "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.

We have, in this series on the doctrine of eternal punishment, looked at these two verses several times, emphasizing the *narrowness* of the way to life in Christ contrasted with the *wideness* of that Broadway that leads to destruction.

This morning, as we look at these scriptures again, our focus will be upon *the few who enter through it, let alone who even find it.*

....and there are few who find it.

You have virtually the same thing in Luke's Gospel –

Luk 13:24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell

you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

This doctrine of *the many vs the few* is to be found from Genesis to Revelation. “Lord are there few who are being saved?” God’s Word says, “yes.” In comparison to the billions and billions of human beings who ever lived, who now are living, and who will live, the ratio of those saved is small.

Most human beings will end in hell because most travel on Broadway, that easy path which leads to destruction.

And this morning we want to look at a survey of scriptures which speak to this very truth. Why? Why is this such an important subject? Why are we studying it this morning? Why not just focus upon the glories of heaven, the love of God, the beauty of this great salvation in Christ? Because:

If we carelessly assume that most everyone who says they are a Christian certainly is, if we think of believing in Christ and

following Him as a rather easy and popular matter – we will be subject to Satan’s deceptions and might even be deceived about our own salvation. Strive! Narrow! Few!

These truths are not meant to promote pride in us – just the opposite. A Christian is, as we have been learning from the sermon on the mount, *poor in spirit. Humble.* Not someone who says “look at me. I am one of the few.” No. We want none of that. What we must see is the depth of our own sin and unworthiness and the Lord’s incredible grace in saving us.

In the Beginning – Just a Few

John Bunyan, in his sermon entitled “The Strait (Narrow) Gate,” states his thesis this way:

“I shall prove that in all ages, only a few have been saved. And, more particularly, I shall prove that only a few of those who profess to be Christians have been saved.”

“To begin,” (Bunyan) “In the old world, when it was most populous,

even in the days of Noah, we read that only eight persons were saved out of it.”

1Pe 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

2Pe 2:4-5 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; (5) and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Think carefully. In Noah’s day, there were already many, many people in this world. All but 8 of them were destroyed. They are in hell to this very day. Condemned-

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark

for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Few were saved. Noah and his family were sinners like all the rest, but God in His mercy had elected them and given them faith. Just 8 people however.

Then we come to the days of Abraham. He was an idolater, a Gentile. And yet out of all humanity, the Lord chose him –

Isa 51:1-2 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn And to the quarry from which you were dug. (2) "Look to Abraham your father And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was but one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him."

Later, in that same time, we see the example of Lot. In all of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities, out of all those people, the

Lord saved Lot and his family (less his wife). *Few were saved.*

Jud 1:7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

The came the days of the judges, those dark days in Israel when “every man did what was right in his own eyes” and the Godly man almost ceased to exist.

How was it in David’s day? We need not wonder:

Psa 12:1-8 For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David. Help, LORD, **for the godly man ceases to be, For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.** (2) They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak. (3) May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, The tongue that speaks great

things; (4) Who have said, "With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" (5) "Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy, Now I will arise," says the LORD; "I will set him in the safety for which he longs." (6) The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times. (7) You, O LORD, will keep them; You will preserve him from this generation forever. (8) **The wicked strut about on every side When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.**

And Isaiah said that in his time there were such a very few Godly ones that:

Isa 1:9 Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah.

Likewise in Jeremiah’s time:

Jer 5:1 "Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, And look

now and take note. And seek in her open squares, If you can find a man, If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, Then I will pardon her.

Micah experienced the very same scarcity:

Mic 7:1-2 Woe is me! For I am Like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, Or a first-ripe fig which I crave. (2) The godly person has perished from the land, And there is no upright person among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; Each of them hunts the other with a net.

And even when the Lord Jesus Himself came into this world, what did He find? – *His own received Him not.* Few followed Him.

In the age of the New Testament, in our day, what is the condition of the mass of humanity?

1Jn 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

And in Revelation, John affirms the same thing when the Beast, the Antichrist, arises-

Rev 13:3-4 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; (4) they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

Now, in addition, God's Word also confirms that *few are they who find it*, by referring to the saved, to the church, in terms such as:

- A handful (Psalm 72:
- Gleaning after the harvest is in
- A remnant

Few are they who find it. Many travel on the easy, broad way and end in hell.

The Lord Chooses the Few, the Weak, the Last

A repeated theme in Scripture is this – *the last shall be first and the first, last*. He chooses the weak ones of the world, the ones despised by the world:

1Co 1:26-29 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; (27) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, (28) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, (29) so that no man may boast before God.

He chooses Lazarus the beggar, not the Rich Man. *The gate is narrow and few are they who find it.*

Few of Those who Claim to be Christians have been Saved

You cannot go through the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, without realizing that

of the many who profess to be Christians, very few of them really are and will be saved. You must be born again. It is not enough to say you are a Christian, or to come to church, or to pray or read your Bible – these are all excellent – but *you must be born again* or you will not last.

Let's consider some examples-

Joh 6:60-66 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (61) But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? (62) "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? (63) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (64) "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. (65) And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come

to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." (66) As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

What do we see here? Crowds of people who initially claimed to be Jesus' disciples. They had made some profession of faith in Him. But then, as He continued to teach them that they must be born again, that they must be joined to Him by the Spirit, that salvation is of the Lord and not of man, they started to falter and grumble. And eventually, many of them left Him.

And so it is in the visible church today. As long as sinners are simply told, "believe in Jesus and He will forgive you and you will go to heaven," as long as there is free bread disbursed to them, they will continue. But when they start to hear the "hard sayings" of Jesus, their profession and faith is revealed to be false, and they are gone.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

The wisdom of God will be foolishness to him. He will not see Christ as that priceless pearl who he must have, even if it costs him everything.

The gate is narrow and few are they who find it. Many will seek to enter in, but will not be able.

What was the Apostle Paul's experience as he served Christ? *The Apostle Paul!* Surely if any preacher would have a huge following, it would be him. I mean, he performed amazing miracles! His own life had been radically transformed. He had SEEN the Lord! He had been caught up into heaven. But what was his ministry experience?

2Ti 4:9-16 Make every effort to come to me soon; (10) for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. (11) Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. (12) But Tychicus I have sent to

Ephesus. (13) When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. (14) Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. (15) Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. (16) At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.

Paul gives us a very clear example of *few who profess to be Christians being saved* in the tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. I have pointed it out to you before because it is a very neglected scripture and a very, very important one.

Paul turns our attention there to the nation Israel in the days of the Exodus –

1Co 10:1-6 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; (2) and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; (3) and all ate

the same spiritual food; (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. (5) **Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased;** for they were laid low in the wilderness. (6) **Now these things happened as examples for us,** so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

ALL of the Israelites in the wilderness *professed* to be God's covenant people. They ALL enjoyed the privileges of that old covenant – baptized into Moses, drank that spiritual water, ate that spiritual bread, and yet with the vast majority of them God was to pleased, His wrath was upon them, and they never entered into Canaan.

Now, and do not miss this – here is Paul's point and application to us:

These things happened as examples for us.

And one of the example lessons is – *few members of the visible church are actually saved*. These things, Paul says, are written for OUR benefit, so that we will beware of falling into the same pit.

Why Are Few Professing Christians Saved?

First, let's be certain that we understand where we MUST begin if we are to properly understand salvation in Christ.

Mankind, in Adam, ever since the Fall, is *totally depraved*. ALL human beings enter this world in this very condition. There is not island of goodness in them to merit God's mercy. Their very *will and desires* are in bondage to sin. They are all under God's just condemnation. You. Me. Everyone on our birthday. Free will? Yes, free to do what we want, but what the sinner always wants is sin, not Christ.

Now, totally because of God's gracious mercy, all because He chose to love us while we still hated Him, He chose to create a

new humanity. He chose to send His Son as the second and last Adam to represent those the Father chose out of this mass of humanity. He died for their sins. These the Father pronounces justified. It is to these that He grants faith and repentance, making them new creations – they are born again by the Spirit.

And the rest of mankind? He leaves them to themselves, "free" to reject Christ, all for the glory and praise of His justice.

Rom 9:21-29 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? (22) What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? (23) And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, (24) even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from

among Gentiles. (25) As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" (26) "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." (27) Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; (28) FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY." (29) And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."

Therefore, we return to our question – *why are FEW of the visible church, of people who claim*

to be Christians, why are few of them actually saved?

That is, why will there be, on that day when Christ comes to judge the world, MANY who call Him Lord and announce all the great things they did in His name, and yet they end in hell. Why? *Because their profession of Christ was a false one. The object of their faith was a cheat, a false god, an idol.*

- Their repentance was false, as in the weeping “sorrow” of Esau and Judas.
- Their religious “experience” or “awakenings” was false, not true conviction produced by the Spirit which drives a sinner to Christ.
- The object of their faith was not Christ, but themselves. They point to their own works, their association with a church, their service in a church, their baptism...Faith can have many objects besides Christ. The Pharisees trusted not only in their works but in their natural lineage from Abraham, yet in truth

they were of their father the devil.

Here is Bunyan once more: [I have paraphrased some of this for clarity]

“To professors. Sirs, give me leave to set my trumpet to your ears. When every man has put in all the claim they can for heaven, only a few will have it for their inheritance; I mean, but few professors. *For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

I begin with those of you whose religion lies only in your tongues; I mean, you who are little or nothing known from the rest of the rabble of the world except you can talk better than they. *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love...love to Gode and Christ and the saints and to holiness, I am nothing. A prating tongue will not unlock the gates of heaven.*

And I address the *covetous professor*. You who use religion

for worldly gain. Money to your account. Praise to your reputation. Religion for the sake of filthy lucre. Will your covetousness which is idolatry gain you heaven?

I come next to the opinionist. That is, to the professor whose religion consists of focusing upon circumstantial, secondary matters, who regard everyone who is not of the same opinion as they, not being Christians at all. Will your opinions on the mode of baptism or the King James Version only – will these things serve as righteousness before the Lord?

And then I address the *formalist*. This is the person who has lost everything except the outer shell of religion. He is zealous for outward forms, for liturgy, for the approved minister’s garments, for the church building, but all of his form has none of the Lord’s Spirit or power or true godliness. It will leave him in his sins.

Others we might address are the *legalist, the libertine, or the latitudinarian*. (This last man is *wide*. His god is his belly –

whatever suits his taste. His religion is always like the rooster on the wind vane, turning this way or that). There is the professor who compares himself with others instead of with the Word of God. He comforts himself as being holy because he regards himself as better than the next man.

And then you have that other professor who is for God and for Baal too. He can be anything for any company he might be in. He can throw stones with both hands; his religion changes as fast as his company does; he is a frog of Egypt, and can live in the water and out of the water; he can live in religious company and again as well as out. He will hold with the rabbit and run with the hound; he carries fire in the one hand and water in the other, *he is a truly anything but what he should be*. This one also is one of the man that will seek to enter in, and shall not be able....

So, fellow professors, let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. O!

to come short! Nothing kills like it, nothing will burn like it! I do not intend to discourage you, but to awaken you. The churches have need of being awakened, and so have all of us. What a strange disappointment will many professors meet with at the day of God Almighty!

- They will expect to escape hell, and yet fall into it.
- They will look for heaven but its gate shall be shut against them
- They will expect that Christ will have compassion upon them, but will find none
- They will be intensely *amazed* as their own madness and folly is exposed
- They will forever have the taste of heaven lost to them, and thoughts of ‘I was almost to heaven, I was almost a Christian – O how these things will sting.’”

Think on these things. Think upon them carefully, lest any of us find ourselves wanting on that Day.