

The Holy Highway

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:13–14

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

MATTHEW 7:14

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Introduction

We’re making our way through the Sermon on the Mount under the general heading “Building on the Rock.” Matthew chapter 7, verses 13 and 14—these are verses that talk about “The Holy Highway.” Now when you came to church this morning, you came on some kind of a road. And that’s what we’re going to be thinking about today. There are all kinds of roads in the world. As a matter of fact, there are over four million miles of roadway in the United States alone—some good roads and some very bad roads; some dangerous roads, because we have people on our highways that have more horsepower than horse sense. And I know that you will agree with that.

I was thinking of some roads that I have traveled. I have had the experience of being in Rome and traveling on the Appian Way. The Apostle Paul traveled in that road built by the Romans. It is still in better condition than some roadways in the world today. And

one of those reasons is that the Romans laid a deep foundation. And that ought to be a lesson for us.

I was thinking of some roads in this area. The Natchez Trace begins down in Natchez, Mississippi, and ends up in central Tennessee. Going back up to the eighteenth century it was an old Indian trail. I was thinking of the Overland Trail beginning in St. Louis and going out to the Far West where the stagecoaches would travel. There are many roads in the world today. After our Passion Play I was thinking of a short road, but an important road: The *Via Dolorosa*, the Way of Sorrows, that our Lord took as He went from the judgment hall to Calvary.

But really, the road I want to talk to you today about is the Holy Highway, the straight and narrow, the old S & N. Look at it here—verse 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: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto light, and few there be that find it.”* (Matthew 7:13–14) This is the King’s highway, the holy highway, the strait and narrow way; and the desire of my heart and the prayer of my heart is that if you have not done so, today before this service ends you will put your feet on the strait and narrow path that leads to life.

I’ll just tell you up front what I’m all about. I am trying to get you on this holy highway. And I want you to see three things that are in this passage, these two verses. I want you to see, as I look at it, there is a decision to face, and there is a direction to follow, and there is a destiny to find. That’s what these verses tell me.

I. There Is a Decision to Face

First of all, they tell me there is a decision to face. For our Lord says, “Enter in.” That is, it’s up to you. There is a decision that you must make. Now there are only two ways. There is the broad way and the narrow way. There is the way the way that leads to life; there is a way that leads to destruction—only two ways. Modern man does not like this. People get all uptight when you tell them that there is only one way to heaven. We like to put people in all kinds of categories and gradations. And we like to talk of men as being upper-class and middle-class and lower-class. But, you see, God never divides men horizontally; God always divides men vertically: right and left, sheep and goats, saved and lost—that’s all.

Now, you know, the Lord Jesus never preached to please the crowds. You talk about a person who cut it right down the middle: it was the Lord Jesus. Look in these verses—just look for a moment and see what our Lord is talking about in verses 13 and 14. He says there are only two kinds of travelers and two kinds of roads. Look in verse 17. He says there are only two kinds of trees. *“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil*

fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” (Matthew 7:17–18)

You’re a traveler on one of two kinds of roads. You’re a tree bearing one of two kinds of fruit. You’re a builder building one of two kinds of houses. Look in verse 24: *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” (Matthew 7:24)* Verse 26: *“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.” (Matthew 7:26)*

Two kinds of travelers, two kinds of trees, two kinds of builders—that’s what our Lord says. And in the congregation today, just look around: everybody kind of looks the same. We’re all here this morning in our Sunday morning glad rags. But God doesn’t look on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7) And in the congregation today we say that they are young and old, rich and poor, weak and strong, and so forth. But, friend, there are only two categories of people here today: the saints and the *ain’t*s. That’s all: the saved and the lost; those who are with Jesus, and those who are against Jesus; those who are loving Him, and those who are hating Him; those who are receiving Him, and those who are rejecting Him; those who are crowning Him, and those who are crucifying Him; those who are on the road to heaven, and those who are on the road to hell. And you, every one, are in one of those two ways—and that’s all. Either you’re on the holy highway, or you’re on the broad way.

Now I know what the going merchandise is in the minds of men today. They say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, don’t be narrow-minded.” Now that’s just what we are talking about today: a narrow way. “Don’t be narrow-minded. We are all headed toward the same place, just on different roads.” Have you ever heard that? “We are all headed to the same place, just on different roads.” May I tell you what Jesus Christ said? The Lord Jesus Christ said in John chapter 14, verse 6, *“I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)* He said, *“I am the way.”* Jeremiah chapter 21 and verse 8 says, *“Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.” (Jeremiah 21:8)* That’s all. That’s narrow.

Now I know there are a lot of people that say it’s not nice to be narrow. I know there are a lot of people that want to broaden the old S & N, the old strait and narrow. But Jesus did not preach that way. And so, look. If what I have to say today bothers you, or irritates you, don’t come up and argue with me about it; just read the Bible and tell God about it. Just say, “God, you made a mistake when you put this in the Bible.” But don’t take the issue with me. You ought to take the issue up with me if I don’t preach the Word of God. Jesus said, “Strait is the gate; narrow is the way that leads unto life.”

Now I know that poem by Markham:

*He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.*

*But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in.*

—EDWIN MARKHAM

That sounds all wonderful. But let me tell you what the Apostle Paul had to say. Here's what the Apostle Paul had to say. Put this verse in your margin—Galatians 1, verses 8 and 9. The Apostle Paul said, *“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”*—*anathema*. Do you know what that word literally means? “Let him be damned.” Now Paul wasn't a curser. But what Paul said is, “The road to hell is any other gospel other than the gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” And then Paul reiterates it in verse 9: *“As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”* (Galatians 1:8–9)

Now the Bible is a narrow book. There can be no compromise with the gospel. Far better it would be for you to say two and two is five than to compromise with the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I don't know why it is, but people don't like ministers to say this is the way it is. Now they want their airplane pilots to be very narrow-minded. You're flying on an airplane, and you say, “Now you are narrow minded. You let the flaps down and let the landing gear down,” and so forth. They want their pharmacists to be very narrow-minded. They want their banker to be very narrow-minded when he's handling their money. They want everybody in all of these disciplines to be narrow-minded. But somehow in the thing that matters the most—eternal life—they say, “Well, it really doesn't make any difference.”

Now I'm saying that the Lord Jesus said there are two ways and there is a decision to face. Jesus said, “Enter the strait gate, the narrow gate.” Let me tell you something about that decision. Now, listen.

A. The Freedom to Decide

First of all, there is the freedom to decide. You have the freedom to decide. Don't ever let anybody tell you, you have been predestined to go to hell. You have the freedom to decide. Otherwise Jesus never would have said, *“Enter.”* Jesus said you can choose. And you must choose. We are not machines. We are human beings. And this morning, you are free to do as you wish.

But now, pay attention. Apart from the grace of God, you are not free to do as you ought. Now, understand the distinction. You're free. You are free to do as you wish. But it takes the grace of God for you to do as you ought. You say, “Well, I can do whatever I want.” Well, that's true. But, you see, the problem is with your *wanter*. You always want what is wrong, until you have the grace of God in your heart. The only reason that you can choose to do right is because He first chose you.

But you, my friend, are free to choose. And He has chosen you, and He has invited you, and He has said, “Whosoever will, may come.” (Revelation 22:17) And He will give you the power and the ability to come. And He will take you, *if you want to come. There are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to keep you from coming. But if you choose not to come, there are not enough angels in heaven to drag you down this aisle.* There is the freedom to decide. But the only reason that you have that freedom to decide is because He has loved you and set His grace upon you.

B. The Forcing of Decision

There is the freedom of decision. But now, wait a minute. There is also the forcing of decision. Did you know that while you’re free to decide, you’re not free not to decide? While you are free to decide, you are not free not to decide. You are forced into a decision this very moment. There is no way that you can do what Pilate thought he was doing—that is, wash your hands of Jesus Christ. You cannot do that. Pilate said, “Well, I won’t decide. I’ll let the people decide.” And that lily-livered pussyfooting politician said, “I wash my hands of Jesus.” But history and eternity has proven that Pilate’s indecision was his worst decision. And the decision not to decide was a decision. And when you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re not merely neutral, because Jesus Christ said in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30, *“He that is not with me is against me.”* (Matthew 12:30) There is no way that you can be neutral. The decision not to decide is a decision.

And so today, listen carefully. You will leave this building on the strait and narrow, or you’ll leave it on the broad way. You’ll leave this building on the road to hell, or you’ll leave this building on the road to heaven. And you say, “I will not decide for Jesus Christ.” By that very act, you have decided against Jesus Christ. Put it down in your margin—Matthew 12 and verse 30: *“He that is not with me is against me.”*

C. The Fruits of Decision

You see, listen. There is the freedom of decision. There is the forcing of decision. And there are the fruits of decision. Now, let me say something else. You are free to choose. You’re not free not to choose. And you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

Now, for example, you can get in a ten-story building and open the window and say, “I’m free to jump out.” And you are. But about that time, your choices get diminished. What I mean is, you are free to jump out, but you’re not free to negate the law of gravity. You are free to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

These people talk about *free love*: “I will sleep with anybody I want to.” Well, all right, you’re free to choose that, but you’re not free to choose the consequences. And when the warm flames of lust turn to the fiery flames of hell, that’s a part of the consequences of your choice, according to the same Bible that says, *“Flee fornication,”* (1 Corinthians

6:18) and the Bible that says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” (Exodus 20:14)

You talk about the freedom of choice. People want to say, “I am pro-choice.” Choice to do what? Choice to kill a baby! You say, “We have decided not to have this baby.” No, my dear friend, you already have a baby. What you are deciding is, will it be a live baby or a dead baby. That’s what you’re deciding. You already have a baby. There is a baby that is living with in you. And you say, “I am pro-choice.” You are free to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of that choice.

There are some awful consequences. Choice is before all of us. Our Lord says, “Here’s a narrow way. Here’s a broad way.” He says, “Enter in.” Everybody is free to choose. You’re not free not to choose. And you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. So you have to choose very carefully.

Now you don’t have to choose to go to hell. To go to hell, all you have to do is refuse to receive Jesus. Because, why? You’re already on the broad way. Our Lord doesn’t say, “Don’t enter the broad way.” He says, “Enter the narrow way.” Why? Because you are already on the broad way.

There’s a gospel tract. On one side of the gospel tract it says, “What must I do to be saved?” And the answer is given: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31) On the other side of the tract it says, “What must I do to be lost?” And it’s just a box there with nothing in it. “What must I do to be lost?” Nothing. You’re already lost. You’re already lost without the Lord Jesus Christ. You must choose Christ.

II. There Is a Direction to Follow

We are sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, sinners on the broad way, sinners on the way to hell. And so the very first thing I see in this passage of Scripture as I think about “The Holy Highway,” friend, is there is a decision to face. Secondly, there is a direction to follow. Look at it again, if you will. He says here, “*Enter...in at the strait gate:*”—that’s the decision—“*for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way.*” (Matthew 7:13–14) After the decision, there comes the direction.

Now, let me talk to you about the narrow way today. The narrow way is the way that every blood-bought child is walking today. It is the holy highway.

A. It Is a Disciplined Way

And the first thing I want to say about the narrow way: It is a disciplined way. When the Bible says “*strait*” here, it is not talking about *straight* like “a straight line.” It means discipline: “Rigorous is the way.” If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, forget it. The Bible says we’re to endure hardness

as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

We say, “Well, it pays to serve Jesus.” Yes, it does. But it also costs to serve Jesus. It costs everyday. It costs every step of the way. And there is no fine print in the contract that Jesus Christ gives. The problem with many people today is they have sort of a cheap grace, an *easy believism*. The way of Jesus Christ is, while salvation is free, on the one hand, yet there is a discipline to the Christian life. Any dead fish can float down the stream.

You see, without discipline, there is no power. Loose wires just disconnected don't make a beautiful sound. But if we connect them and put them in one of those marvelous pianos and stretch them until there's tension there, discipline there, then we get the music.

Steam and vapor in the air—and there's no power there. But we compress it and put it in an engine, and it will turn the turbine and the pistons, because there is power there. Take a river and just let it meander—and there's no power there. But dam it up, and it makes a power dam that can light up a city. “Broad is the way”—easy is the way—“that leads to destruction.”

A few years ago there was a young African; he was martyred for the cause of Christ, but before he died, he wrote these words. They were found in his room. It said this: “I am a part of the fellowship of the Unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals.... My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide is reliable, my mission is clear.... I won't give up, back up, let up, or shut up until I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ.... I must go until He returns, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until he comes me. And when He comes to get His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear.”

Compare that with the Christianity we see today. We are looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve the Lord Jesus. But Jesus said, “*Strait is the gate.*” It is a disciplined way.

B. It Is a Different Way

But not only, friend, is it a disciplined way; it is a different way. Our Lord says, “*Few there be that find it*”—“*few there be,*” not many. Don't expect the crowds to be on this way. And don't follow the crowds. The crowds are almost always wrong. What is

happening in America today is, because the crowds are wrong, we have morality by majority. Do you know what most folks are taking comfort in? They're saying, "Well, I'm just like everybody else." Isn't that what they are saying? "I am just as good as those other people." Friend, our way is a different way. It starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It ends at a different conclusion. And if you're on this way, you're going to be going against the tide most of the time, because we are twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and they are different from us, and we are different from them.

C. It Is a Delightful Way

It is a disciplined way. It is a different way. And it is a delightful way. Do you think what I am saying is negative? Friend, you don't know the joy of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you a verse. Oh, I love this. It's one of my favorite passages in the Old Testament. Put it in your margin. You may turn to it—Isaiah chapter 35. It talks about the holy highway. By the way, the song that our choir sings, and we sing—"The Holy Highway"—is one of my favorite songs. Isaiah 35, verses 8 and following—here our Lord is talking about the way that Jesus is in the Old Testament; He's prophesying this holy highway. Listen to it. God says, "*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*" (Isaiah 35:8–10)

1. Because It Is a Clean Way

It is a delightful way. Why? Because it's a clean way. Verse 8: "*The unclean shall not pass over it.*" That's what He says. It's the way of holiness. There are no mud holes on the holy highway. And no *Tennessee trash* is going to be following that holy highway. And if your heart is full of sin and filth and dirt, and you've never repented, don't tell me you're on the holy highway. The Bible says here it is the way of holiness. "*The unclean shall not pass over it.*"

2. Because It Is a Certain Way

It is a clean way. And I'll tell you, it is a certain way. It's delightfully clean. It's delightfully certain. He says, "A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8) Do you know what that means? It means, a stranger without good sense can find his way on the holy highway. You don't have to have a Ph.D. to travel this holy highway. The Bible says, "God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and has revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21)

And you may be here today and you say, “You know, Pastor Rogers, I don’t know much about religion. I don’t know much about the Bible. I don’t understand all that you are saying.” Well, my friend, let me tell you that Jesus Christ loves you. And it is so clean and so pure and so simple. Come to Jesus. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is gloriously simple. And it is simply glorious.

3. Because It Is a Confident Way

This way is delightful, because it’s clean. This way is delightful, because it is clear. I’ll tell you it’s delightful, because it is confident. Oh, listen. You don’t have to worry about losing your salvation. You don’t have to worry about Satan pouncing you while you’re on the holy highway. Verse 9: *“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.”* Oh, what a wonderful road!

4. Because It Is a Cheerful Way

You get on this road and you let the Lord Jesus be your companion, and this road, which is a clean way and a clear way, is a certain and a confident way. Oh, He keeps us! And then it is a cheerful way. The Bible says, *“And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* I love Jesus. If I had a thousand lives, I’d give Him every one. Don’t feel sorry for me because I am on the Holy Highway. Oh, friend, this is what it’s all about! *“The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.”* What a wonderful, wonderful road this is!

We love to sing that song, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.” It was written by John Newton. John Newton was one of the most wicked, vile sinners that ever lived. He committed almost every sin known to man. He was a drunken rum runner. He was a South Sea slave trader. He got so low in debauchery and sin that he finally ended up selling himself as a slave of slaves. And Jesus Christ miraculously saved John Newton. He is the one who wrote the song “Amazing Grace.” His own epitaph he wrote. Do you want to hear what he wrote about himself to be put on his grave marker? Listen. He said, “John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.” No wonder he could sing on the holy highway, “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”

III. There Is a Destiny to Find

What is our Lord telling us in these verses? Number one: There is a decision to face. Number two: There is a direction to follow. It is a disciplined way. Oh, friend, this way is

a delightful way. But now, here's a third thing: Not only is there a decision to face; not only is there a direction to follow; but there is a destiny to find. Every road is going somewhere. And the one your on right now is going somewhere.

Now I want you to ask this question: "When I get to where I'm headed, where will I be?" Ask it. "When I get to where I am headed, where will I be?" Now the Lord again in a very narrow way said, "There are only two destinations." One He calls "destruction," and the other He calls "life." You see, decision determines direction, and direction determines destiny. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out, do you? Decisions determine direction, and direction determines destiny. That's what our Lord is saying. And today many of you are saying, "Well, to tell you the truth, Pastor Rogers. I'm on the broad way."

Some days ago I was on an airplane going to St. Louis. The steward got on the microphone and said, "This is flight *thus and such* headed to St. Louis. If St. Louis is not in your plans for this afternoon, I would suggest that you deplane right now." Now, friend, maybe you're on the highway to hell; and if hell is not in your plans, I would suggest you get off. I mean, if you do not want to die and go to hell, then why don't you do something about it?

There is a destiny to find. Now it may be a fearful destiny: destruction. I don't want to sugarcoat what Jesus said. Jesus—the loving Jesus—had more to say about hell than any other person in the Word of God. Jesus did. It was Jesus who talked about destruction. Don't you point your finger at me and say, "That man is a hellfire preacher." Just take it up with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "The broad way leads to destruction."

In Chicago there was a nightclub. Would you believe it? They named the nightclub The Gates of Hell. Can you imagine naming a nightclub that? The Gates of Hell. One man out on a lark asked a policeman, "How can I get to The Gates of Hell?" On the same street where this nightclub was there was a church. And do you know the name of the church? It was Calvary Church. Do you know what that policeman told that man? "You want to get to The Gates of Hell? Go right past Calvary, and you'll come to The Gates of Hell." And God has lifted up Calvary with the bloodstained Prince of Glory hanging in agony and blood, and He says, "Stop! Stop! Stop!—or you'll end up at the gates of hell."

There is a destiny to find. It may be a fearful destiny, or it may be a fabulous destiny. It may be life. You see, that life begins not when you die; it begins when you step on the old S & N. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) And not only does He add years to life; He adds life to the years. And if there were no heaven, and if there were no hell, it is worth the trip just to be on this highway. I mean, there is a destiny.

But, thank God, we're on our journey home. Each step I take is one step closer

home. How wonderful that is! It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. I may be just a heartbeat away from the end of my journey. How wonderful that is! Friend, there is a destiny to find. It may be a fearful destiny. It may be a fabulous destiny. But listen to me. It will be a final destiny.

There is no chance after death. Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 3 says, *“And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:3) That’s just a poetic way of saying, “When you die, your destiny is fixed.” Revelation chapter 22, verse 11: *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.”* (Revelation 22:11)

I’ve studied this book for many years. I’ve read it, loved it, and preached out of it. I cannot find one place where God offers one shred of hope to those who die outside the Lord Jesus Christ—not one! To the contrary, the Bible says, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27)

Conclusion

Now if you’re on the broad way today, you’re on that turnpike to torment, you’re on that highway to hell. And there are a lot of people, and you’re having a big time; and God brought you to this service this morning, and God put this preacher in front of you, and this preacher is holding up a sign. And do you know what it says? “Heaven: Exit now.” It never says the next exit; always now, because the next exit may be hell. There may not be another exit.

You say, “Well, I’m not going to decide today, Pastor.” You see, you’ve missed what I said to you. When you say you’re not going to decide, that is a decision that keeps you on the broad way that leads to destruction. You say, “Well, I’ve got plenty of time.” I hope you do. But the Bible says, *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”* (Proverbs 27:1) There is a decision to face, a direction to follow, and a destiny to find. That’s what Jesus says.