

HWMR: CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF MATTHEW 5 THROUGH 7 (Week 7)

**Entering through the Narrow Gate
and Walking on the Constricted Way That Leads to Life,
the Ever-blessed Condition of the Kingdom**

Scripture Reading: *Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 2:7; John 6:57, 63*

- Matthew 7:13 **Enter in through the narrow gate**, for wide is the gate and **broad is the way that leads to destruction**, and many are those who enter through it.
- Matthew 7:14 Because **narrow is the gate** and **constricted is the way that leads to life**, and few are those who find it.
- Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the **Paradise of God**.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also **shall live because of Me**.
- John 6:63 **It is the Spirit who gives life**; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Day 1

Matt. 7:13-14 - Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

- I. In the decree of the kingdom's constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people's life and work before God—"Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it"—Matt. 7:13-14:**
- "The way that leads to life" is the **way that leads to a living reward in life**; it is the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22)—the way of the truth (2 Pet. 2:2), the straight way (v. 15), the way of righteousness (v. 21), the way of peace (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the way of God (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26), and the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Acts 18:25).
 - The broad way leading to destruction is according to the **worldly systems, satisfying the natural tastes**; to get the crowd; to maintain a career of man; and to achieve man's enterprise—Matt. 13:31-33; Rev. 2:13, 20; 17:4-5.
 - The constricted way leading to life is according to the divine regulations, **fulfilling the spiritual requests**; to bring in God's elect; to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ; and to carry out God's economy for the building up of the Body of Christ—Rom. 1:9; Heb. 11:5-6; Rev. 1:1-2, 9-10.
 - The God-ordained way is to have a living and working that are always **narrow and constricted**, according to the pattern of the Lord's indescribable life and ministry—John 5:19, 30; 4:34; 17:4; 14:10, 24; 7:16, 18.
 - We in the Lord's recovery must **walk in our spirit**; walking in spirit **restricts us**, causing us to live a normal Christian life and making us vital, healthy believers who take the way of life for God's building—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
 - We must **learn to restrict ourselves** in our labor **according to the measure** of the rule that the

God of measure, the ruling God, has apportioned to us—2 Cor. 10:13-15.

- G. The more we are **constricted**, the more we are **regulated**; and the more we are regulated, the more we are **healthy**; to be vital means to be healthy; Paul desired to admonish every man and to teach every man in all wisdom that he might present every man full-grown in Christ; Paul did not depend on miracles, but his work was much more in the “every man” way—Col. 1:28-29; Acts 20:19-20, 31.

In the decree of the kingdom’s constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people’s life and work before God—“Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it. Here the Lord presents two options that His people may take in their journey—we may either **enter through a narrow gate and then walk on a constricted way**, or we may **enter through a wide gate and walk on a broad way**. The wide gate is much easier to walk through than the narrow gate, and it is also easy and convenient to walk on the broad way compared to the constricted way. To walk on the constricted way means to be pressed or squeezed not momentarily but all along that way or path. The Lord presents to us these two options for us to choose. We can choose either the wide gate and the broad way that will lead to destruction or the narrow gate and the constricted way that will lead to life.

If we consider this choice in relation to our living and work before the Lord as His kingdom people who desire to live in the reality of the kingdom, we can surely discern that the **Lord wants us to enter through the narrow gate and to take the constricted way that will lead to life**. There are many who enter through the wide gate and walk on the broad way that leads to destruction. However, only a few find the narrow gate and walk on the constricted way. The kingdom of the heavens is neither found nor experienced by the great majority of people; instead, the kingdom reality is lived out by a **small minority**, by a **remnant**, by **those who cooperate with the Father’s life**, which is a life of perfection. These ones reject what is of the world and what is of the natural realm to take a narrow way and a constricted path that will lead to life. (*The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 7)

Day 2

Gen. 2:9 - ...Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Rev. 22:1-2 - And he showed me a river of water of life...And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month...

II. We must **stay on the way of life**, the line of life, in the maintenance of life by **enjoying Christ as the tree of life** in the flow of life for God’s building in life by our **growth in life**—John 10:10b; Rev. 22:1-2; Eph. 4:16; 2:21-22:

- We stay on the way of life by **living and serving according to the principle of life**, not according to the principle of right and wrong.
- We stay on the way of life by **loving the Lord to the uttermost**, drawing others to run after Him—Mark 12:30; S. S. 1:4a.
- We stay on the way of life **by eating Jesus through pray-reading** and **musing** on the word and by **ministering** the word as the Spirit into others by the exercise of our spirit— John 6:57, 63; Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15 and footnote; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; 24:45; 1 Cor. 2:4-5, 13.
- We stay on the way of life by **enjoying the Triune God as the law of the Spirit of life** with its divine capacity—Rom. 8:2; Jer. 32:39.

- E. We stay on the way of life by **abiding in Christ as the tree of life** in the flow of life under His headship and according to His divine nature—Rev. 22:1-2.
- F. We stay on the way of life by **being careful about the people whom we contact** and being separated unto God from every kind of spiritual death—wild death, mild death, and subtle death—Lev. 5:2; 11:1-40; Num. 6:6-7.
- G. We stay on the way of life by **living in resurrection**, in the reality of the church as the Body of Christ, signified by the golden lampstand, a tree of resurrection life—Eph. 1:22-23; Exo. 25:31-40; Rev. 1:11-12.

We stay on the way of life by living and serving according to the **principle of life**, not according to the principle of right and wrong. **We need to be delivered from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, from right and wrong.** We need to come back to life, which is God Himself. Many brothers in the churches are caught in the web of right and wrong, good and evil. The churches will not be able to get through their situations as long as the saints are still in the realm of right and wrong. The leading brothers need to be delivered from the principle of right and wrong, and they must help the saints to be delivered from that realm of right and wrong back to life. Brother Lee brought the brothers in the church in Shanghai out of all their suspicion and accusation toward Brother Nee's ministry by **bringing them back to life**; this resulted in a revival. This may seem very basic, but if we want to take the way of life, we have to be delivered from the principle of right and wrong. (*The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 7)

Day 3

Rev. 3:7-8

- And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

Day 4

Rev. 3:12

- He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

III. The God-ordained pathway for the church is the **way of Philadelphia**; this God-ordained pathway is the **constricted way that leads to life**:

- A. The characteristic of the overcomers in Philadelphia is their **brotherly love** (3:7-8); **love prevails** among them so that they shepherd people according to God (1 Pet. 5:2) by **cherishing** them with the cheering presence of God and **nourishing** them with the healthy teaching of the economy of God (Eph. 4:11; 5:29; Acts 20:28).
- B. The Lord's recovery with Philadelphia is a **recovery in quality**, a recovery of the original substance of the church, the inner substance of God, which is **love** (1 John 4:8); to stand on the genuine ground of oneness, the ground of the church, is to choose to love all the brothers (Rev. 3:7a; cf. 2:4, 7).
- C. The Lord's using the key of David to open the door for the spread of His recovery is objective to us, but Christ is also using the key of David to subjectively **open the door in our inner being** for us to be transformed and built into the house of God as a pillar with the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of the Lord—v. 17; 3:12; cf. 21:22:

1. *The name of My God* indicates that the pillar is God; *the name of the city of My God* indicates that the pillar is the New Jerusalem; and *My new name* indicates that the pillar is Christ in a new significance; the overcomer **as a pillar becomes God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead**, he becomes a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and he becomes Christ in a new experiential sense—3:12.
 2. The **New Jerusalem is the new Christ**; as God’s enlargement and expansion, **we are Christ in a new sense as the New Jerusalem**; the new Christ is not the same as He was in the four Gospels; the bride, who is the increase of the Bridegroom, is the New Jerusalem, including all of God’s regenerated ones— John 3:29-30; Rev. 21:9-10.
 3. For us to be built into God, become a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and become a part of the new Christ is humanly impossible, but the **law of the Spirit of life** within us contains an element that deals with impossibility—Rom. 8:2; Luke 18:27; cf. Gen. 28:12-19; John 1:51.
- D. The overcomers in Philadelphia **pay more attention to life than to work**, caring more about quality than quantity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12); they have “a little power” with the realization that what pleases the Lord is not their doing much for Him but their doing their best for Him with what they have (Rev. 3:8; Mark 14:8).
- E. The overcomers in Philadelphia **keep the Lord’s word** in His unique New Testament ministry (Rev. 3:8), which brings them into the genuine **appreciation, love, and enjoyment** of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything (2 Cor. 11:2-3).
- F. Because those in Philadelphia **keep the Lord’s word**, they are “**rich toward God**” (Rev. 3:8; Luke 12:21) by **pray-reading** and **musing** upon His word to treasure up His word in their heart (Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:11, 15); we can lift up our hands unto the word of God, indicating that we receive it warmly and gladly and that we say Amen to it (v. 48; Neh. 8:5-6).
- G. The overcomers in Philadelphia **do not deny the Lord’s name**; they have abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they **call upon the name of the Lord**, who is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:9-10, 12-13); they openly confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11), and they do not preach themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and themselves as the believers’ slaves for Jesus’ sake (2 Cor. 4:5).
- H. Brother Lee’s final word to the elders in Anaheim: “The elders need to **love one another**, their wives need to love one another, and they need to love one another’s children.”

The overcomers in Philadelphia pay more attention to life than to work, caring more about quality than quantity; they have “a little power” with the realization that what pleases the Lord is not their doing much for Him but their doing their best for Him with what they have. The church in Philadelphia may not have been as strong or as gifted as the other churches. For example, the Lord praised the church in Ephesus for their works and labor and for their discerning of false apostles. To Philadelphia, the Lord said, “I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name” (3:8). Apparently, the church in Philadelphia was somewhat weak, having just a **little power**. The Lord is not looking for powerful workers or churches but for those who have a little power, **who do their best to love Him**, to **keep His word**, and to **hold on to His name**.

Recently, I talked to a brother who was discouraged by his inability and chance to meet the high standard of being an overcomer. He thought that if there will only be one hundred forty-four thousand, his chance of being part of that would be very slim. I said, “Brother, I do not know what is the standard to be an overcomer. I do not think there is an absolute standard to be an overcomer. You have a little strength. Do your best to love the Lord. What you can do may not be the same as what another brother can do, but you have to be **faithful to what the Lord has given you**. With your **little strength**, do your best to **cooperate** with the Lord, and you will be an **overcomer**.” (*The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 7)

Rev. 3:14 - And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

Rev. 3:16 - So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.

IV. Once Philadelphia **fails**, she becomes **Laodicea**:

- A. **Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia**; when **brotherly love is gone**, the **opinion** of the majority is the accepted opinion; as long as the majority is in favor, it is all right.
- B. In the eyes of the Lord, the characteristics of Laodicea are **lukewarmness** and **spiritual pride**—Rev. 3:15-18:
 - 1. Spiritual pride comes from history; some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich; they still remember their history, but they have **lost their former life**.
 - 2. The Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history, but now they have **lost that reality**.
 - 3. They remember that they were once wealthy and had become rich and had need of nothing, but now they are **poor and blind**.
- C. If we want to continue in the way of Philadelphia and avoid becoming Laodicea, we have to remember to **humble ourselves before God**—Matt. 5:3; Isa. 57:15; Gal. 6:3.
- D. Laodicea means **to know everything** but, in reality, to be **fervent about nothing**; in name it has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything; it remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God; formerly, it was Philadelphia, but today it is Laodicea—Rev. 3:15-18:
 - 1. The degraded recovered church has the knowledge of the doctrines concerning Christ but **not much living faith** to partake of the divine element of Christ.

Day 6

Rev. 3:18 - I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed..., and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

Rev. 3:21 - He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

- 2. White garments signify conduct that can be approved by the Lord; such conduct is the **Lord Himself lived out of the church**, and it is required by the degraded recovered church for the covering of her nakedness.
- 3. The eyesalve needed to **anoint their eyes must be the anointing Spirit** (1 John 2:27), who is the Lord Himself as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); the degraded recovered church needs this kind of eyesalve for the healing of her blindness (cf. Job 42:5-6).
- E. **Dead, vain knowledge and doctrinal forms** have made the degraded recovered church **lukewarm**; she needs to **repent** of her lukewarmness and be zealous, boiling, burning, that thereby she may regain the enjoyment of the reality of Christ.
- F. “He who **overcomes**, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also **overcame** and sat with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”—Rev. 3:21-22:

1. Here to overcome is to **overcome the lukewarmness and pride** of the degraded recovered church, to pay the price to buy the needed items, and to open the door so that the Lord can come in; Christ as the unique Overcomer includes all the overcomers.
2. To **sit with the Lord on His throne** will be a **prize** to the overcomer so that he may participate in the Lord's authority and be a co-king with Him in ruling over the whole earth in the coming millennial kingdom.

Among all the seven churches, no one has a higher **self-esteem** than Laodicea. **Self-pride** and **coldness** are two twin sisters. When the heart is cold towards the Lord, boastings of men often develop. Much boasting causes one to be obsessed with oneself and fills the mind with grand imaginations about oneself. The result is more boasting. What a dreadful thing it is to see such boasting in the face of judgment! Those who **walk humbly** will **walk steadily**, but those with a **haughty heart** are about to **fall**. If we do not have the thought that we are stronger than others and are not self-satisfied with our own progress, we are not yet in the realm of Laodicea. Once the self is raised, promoted, or glorified, the boastful voice of Laodicea is already silently heard. How different are the opinions of these ones from those of the Lord Jesus! We have to be careful, **for our own estimate of ourselves may not be that reliable**. Many times we forget to see the light in the light of the Lord, which results in inaccurate self-estimation. What is the use of self-examination for a person whose nature is as corrupt as ours is? The less we have anything to do with ourselves, the less we will be deceived. If we hope for the self to inform us of its true condition, we are in reality conferring with a thief. **Nothing in the whole world is more unreliable than our self**. Indeed man's heart, and specifically my heart, is more wicked than all things. If we really want to advance spiritually and to understand the true nature of ourselves, there is no other way but to ask the Spirit of the Lord to reveal Himself to us. If we listen to our own deception, we will soon become a Laodicean. Only those who are willing to be deceived and who are satisfied by the outward appearance of Laodicea will listen to what the self says about itself. How difficult it is to hear the speaking of the Holy Spirit! We may not be able to hear anything from our self other than our corruption. "I am wealthy and have become rich." What riches is this referring to? Does this refer to spiritual or material riches? According to the book of Revelation, one can only interpret something spiritually when it cannot be interpreted literally. Of course, behind the literal meaning, there is often a spiritual meaning. Here it refers firstly to material riches, but at the same time it also refers to spiritual riches. (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 1) Vol. 05: The Christian (3), Chapter 4,)*