

The Door – *John 10:1-9*

Introduction – “*Most assuredly I say to you...*” begins chapter 10. The antecedent is important. Jesus is continuing His discussion with the Pharisees who had followed Him out of the temple and were with Him when He spoke words of salvation to the blind man who had received his sight but had been excommunicated by those Pharisees (9:35-41). And so, it is important to note that this discourse’s first audience is the offended Pharisees who asked, “*are we blind also?*” (9:40). This discourse, which will later include the famous, “*I am the good Shepherd*” phrase, does not take place in a serene setting. There are two clashing worldviews at war here. Either Christ is the only door and the true shepherd, the only Way and the only Savior, or He isn’t. In these few verses, Jesus strings together different metaphorical uses of a “door” to challenge all who would not commit to Him.

Jesus is the True Shepherd the Doorkeeper Lets In (vv1-3a) – First we have a doorkeeper. He is a watchman over the sheepfold. He will only allow a true shepherd, one who owns the sheep, into the sheepfold to call his flock. The thieves and robbers, “false shepherds,” are not allowed in the door. These details would be familiar to John’s readers. In larger towns, one would find a common property for many shepherds to keep their sheep at night. The doorkeeper would keep guard all night to protect the sheep from thieves or wild animals. In the morning, the watchman, recognizing the true shepherds, would allow them in to retrieve their sheep.

The watchman identifies the true shepherd. In context of the book of John, this would be John the Baptist who identifies Jesus (i.e. John 1:29) and John the Baptist represents all of the OT prophets, who themselves were the watchmen of Israel (i.e. Ezek 33:7). The OT and the prophets identify Jesus as the promised Savior, for He comes fulfilling all their prophecies. He is the True Shepherd as opposed to the thieves and robbers who come to kill and destroy (John 10:10, Ezek 34, Psalm 23). The Pharisees Jesus is speaking to are those false shepherds, devoted to their own gain, willing to excommunicate the man whose eyes Jesus had restored. This would only be the beginning of the savage persecution by the Jews of the Christians in the days when John is writing this gospel.

Jesus is the True Shepherd Who Calls His Own (vv3b-6) – In these common sheepfolds, different flocks would be guarded together during the night. They would intermingle. But in the morning, each shepherd would come and call his own sheep. Only his sheep would hear and respond to his particular voice. He might even call each sheep by its own pet-name, a name only the sheep and the shepherd knew. Of course, this is what happened with the man born blind. Jesus knew that he was one of His sheep (John 9:3) and called Him to salvation (9:35-38). No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws Him (John 6:44) and so the purposes of the Father and the Son are united. The unbelieving Pharisees did not recognize the voice of Jesus because they were not of His sheep (10:6, and more on this when we get to 10:26-27).

This is a good illustration of the general call and the effectual call of election. There is a call to all to come (the call goes out to the entire sheepfold), but only those who recognize the voice of the true shepherd actually hear the call. Many are called but few are chosen (Matt 20:16). Rom 8:30, like many other scriptures, attest to this. “*Whom He called, these He also justified.*” Not all are justified, therefore not all are called. So, who are called? Look at the previous clause: “*Whom He predestinated, these He also called.*” And who were predestinated? Those whom God “*foreknew*” (Rom 8:29). And who were they? They who were “*the called according to His purpose*” (Rom 8:28). They are the called not because of anything in them, but solely upon His sovereign purpose (see also Eph 1:4-6).

Jesus knows the name of each of His own before we even come to Him, for they were given to Him before the foundation of the world. Our salvation begins with His personal call to those He already knew by name (John 1:47-49, 6:36-40). He calls you personally, with a name just between He and you (Rev 2:17). Chapter 10 is sandwiched between the call of the man born blind and the call of Lazarus out from the grave. Standing before the door of the tomb, the true shepherd would call “*Lazarus, come out*” (John 11:43) displaying His power to call the spiritually dead sinner into salvation and eternal life.

Jesus is the Door Leading to Salvation and Freedom (vv7-9) – We began with Jesus being identified as the true shepherd at the door and now He says He is the door. This is not confusing if you know about the rustic sheepfolds out in the fields. These were smaller and less substantial, piles of rocks topped with thistles with an open space in the wall. After bringing in the sheep, the shepherd would lay his own body across that space to protect the sheep. He became the door. All of His sheep came in at His call and were saved. And all would come out by His call and be led by Him to find pasture.

Consider verse 9. How do we enter this door? “*...by Me.*” No one can, will, or wants to enter of Himself, for we are all by nature dead in trespasses and sins. It is granted on behalf of Christ that we believe in Him (Phil 1:29). Faith is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). We only come when the Father draws us; we only believe when Christ, by His Spirit, empowers us.

By means of this true Shepherd, we will go in and out. Interestingly, this is what Moses, shortly before His death, asked for his sheep, for he was a shepherd of God's people: *"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd."* (Num 27:16-17). God answered that prayer, and provided Joshua to be the next shepherd of God's people – and a type of the greater Joshua, Jesus (a Greek translation of Joshua). And as Joshua brought God's people into the Promised Land, so the greater Joshua brings His sheep into the New Creation where we partake of all that we have inherited in Him. And we have inherited it all in Him, for it has all been given to Him (Psalm 110:1).

Anyone - *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."* (John 10:9). Anyone really means anyone. It meant those who Pharisees and other Jews who called for Jesus' crucifixion and then mocked Him on the cross, but to whom Peter preached the gospel at Pentecost and many were saved. It means the goody-two-shoes who has never committed a notorious sin but realizes her heart regularly breaks God's holy law. It means the man who has lived for himself at whatever cost to others. It means those with means to sin openhandedly and brazenly in front of all. It means those religious types who dabble in church but never make a true commitment. It means those who are broken from a life of hardship and have turned a despairing and bitter heart away from God. It means anyone who has mocked God and the gospel of Jesus, who think Christians are extremist to believe that everyone must believe what the Bible says is true and true for everyone. It means those who say that Jesus may be "a door" but not exclusively "the door."

Before you is the Cross. It has a door in it and you are called to go through. On this side of the Cross, facing you, it is written, "Whosoever will, may come." You stand there and somehow decide to go through. You believe, and the burden of your sin drops away. You are safe and free for the first time in your life. Joyfully, you turn and see written on the backside of the Cross, "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." (Barnhouse).

Jesus is the door. Jesus is the way. You have been called. There is a pasture of eternal satisfaction before you. You are a dumb and dirty, easily led astray sheep. Thieves and robbers, sin and misery have been at your heels. But you have heard a voice, you have a Shepherd. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ.