

The Good Shepherd and His Sheep

by Robert C. Harbach

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Published by Grandville Evangelism Committee 2002

Preface

This short book is a careful study of the profound and rich 10th chapter of the Gospel of John. A masterful exposition, it combines the elements of instruction, devotion, comfort, exhortation, and controversy. Glorious Christian doctrine (with which the chapter is filled) are clearly, and winsomely, explained and applied—incarnation; atonement; predestination; the eternal Godhead of Jesus; and more. Common misunderstandings are cleared up, e.g., that the shepherd of verse 2 is Jesus himself. Sharp warning is directed against threats to the church in the present day, particularly the presence of pastors and “evangelists” who refuse to enter the sheepfold by the door and who are mere hirelings.

It is to be wished that the book may have wide circulation among evangelicals, who are so often ignorant of, and even opposed to, the great truths set forth in John 10.

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Harbach’s studies on John 10 were first published as a series of articles in *The Standard Bearer*. The Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, MI is to be commended for now making these articles available to a wider circle.

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Chapter 1

Christ the Sheepfold Door

John 10

The Door of the Fold

In this tenth chapter of John's Gospel we have double revelation: first, the door revelation (1–10), and, second, the shepherd revelation (11–18). Verses 1–5 contain an *illustration* of the door revelation; verses 6–10 contain the *interpretation* of the door revelation. The illustrative part puts before us the undershepherds and the porter (1–3a), then *the* Shepherd and the sheep (3b–5). There are interesting figures of speech in the passage. There are the fold, the door, the porter, the thief, the sheep, the shepherd, the hireling, the wolf. Christ is the door. Who is the porter? who is the thief? the wolf? the hireling?

Strictly speaking, this double revelation is not a parable (v. 6, KJV). The word is not *parabole*, a word which John never uses, but *paroimia*, which the KJV translates *proverb*, as in 16:25, 29. "These things have I spoken unto you in *proverbs*: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in *proverbs*, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father... His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no *proverb*." Neither does Peter ever use the word *parable*, but instead this word *proverb*. "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb..." (2 Peter 2:22). What is meant by this word *paroimia* is, *figure of speech*. Take note that Jesus spoke this parable (proverb) "unto them." This refers us back to verse one, "Verily, verily [amen! amen!], I say unto *you*." The pronoun, in turn, reaches back to 9:34–41. The two pronouns, "them" (v. 6) and "you" (v. 1) refer to "the Pharisees" (9:40).

The Lord is telling the Pharisees that though they arrogantly claim to be spiritually clear-sighted and farsighted, they are really blind and unfit for the office of shepherd in Israel. The man born blind was an example of a true sheep of Christ's flock: he would not listen to the voice of strangers, but he did know the true (good) Shepherd's voice. What Jesus is doing here is denouncing the Pharisees as *false* shepherds. So this good shepherd discourse arose immediately out of the miracle of the healing of the man born blind and its effects of chapter 9.

We may look at the picture this way: Jesus, after the labor of that day (9:4), leaves Jerusalem for Bethany calling attention to the flocks returning from their mountain pastures under the care of their shepherds to the sheepfold for the night. The sheepfold was a rather large, stone-walled corral, which, for the night, enclosed the flocks of a number of shepherds. In the morning the shepherd entered the fold, being admitted by the porter, calling his own sheep by name, and leading them out. He does this by putting forth his own sheep, usually by calling the name of the herd leader, putting it forth, as it would never make any initial move of its own accord. Then the rest of the flock would follow in its train, the shepherd leading them all out (10:2, 4).

In the night scene, the flocks are folded, the door is secured by the porter who is sentinel at his post for the night. He is a watchman on the walls and at the door guarding against a possible "thief and robber" who, bypassing the entrance, might attempt pole-vaulting the wall. "But he that entereth in by the door is [Greek] a shepherd of the sheep." The scene then reveals *a* thief, *a* robber, and *a* shepherd (1–2). In the morning the porter opens to the shepherd who identifies himself at the door and is admitted to take charge of his flock for the day. He then guides his own sheep to the particular pasture he has found for them. Keeping in mind that double revelation, Christ is the door of the sheepfold, and he is the chief (master) shepherd.

Christ is the door of the sheepfold. He did say (v. 7), "I am the door of the *sheep*." But we must exercise care in answering the question whether the central idea of the figure is that of the door by

which the sheep, or by which the shepherds enter the fold! The latter is the specific idea, missed by most commentators. For the contrast is not between sheep which enter the fold, and sheep which do not, but between a person who enters by the door, and a person who climbs up some other way. The idea in general is the sheepfold door by which both sheep (at night) and shepherds (in the morning) enter.

The “porter” is, literally, *doorkeeper* (masculine gender). The hierarchical high priest’s courtyard may have a *portress* (feminine gender), John 18:16–17, but the doorkeeper of the sheepfold is a male, not a female. Jesus does not interpret this figure. But the door is not Michael the archangel, nor some lesser angel, not Abraham, nor Moses, so revered by the Pharisees, nor, very definitely, the virgin Mary, and absolutely not *Peter*, so revered in Roman Catholic tradition as porter at the gates of heaven. Jesus, at verse 9, says with an absolute, divine assertiveness, “I am the door.” Sheep are not at all very assertive. A shepherd dog is very assertive. The humble do not exercise a bold assertiveness; the proud do that. But that is a unique, an exclusive assertiveness. No one else does, nor may assert this. “I am, exclusively, the door.” As we said, the door in the first place is specifically for the *shepherds*. Neither shepherds nor sheep can get into the fold any other way.

The sheepfold and pasture (v. 9) are spheres in the visible kingdom of grace. Some of these spheres are the covenant home, the covenant school, and the Christian church. The minister of the word moves in and out of these spheres preaching the gospel. As shepherd he in this way finds (provides) pasture. “I am the door; by me if any one [who is a shepherd—masculine] enter in he shall be safe and sound, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” The sheep do not do this. The shepherd always attends to finding pasture for the sheep (Acts 1:21; Numbers 27:15–17). Moses had prayed that the Lord would set a man over the congregation of Israel who, after his (Moses’) death, would go before them, to lead them out and bring them in as a shepherd does with his sheep. Joshua was qualified by the Holy Spirit to be this undershepherd, and was ordained to the task and given a charge to enter faithfully upon it and get on with it. So, at Joshua’s word, the flock of Israel went out and came in, he and all the children of Israel with him (27:21).

The sheep cannot get into the sheepfold any other way than by a shepherd who leads them in through the door. The walls of the visible church may be undermined or overleaped, but getting into the fold of the spiritual church is only by the door. “By [through] me,” through the mediation of Christ, men enter the sphere of the covenant (and not merely come under the administration of the covenant). “By me if anyone (who is a shepherd) enter in, he shall be saved,” that is, “be safe and sound” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). Otherwise, he himself shall be a castaway (1 Cor. 9:27).

No one can enter among the occupants of the fold as a shepherd, no one can lawfully claim to be one of these shepherds of the sheepfold, except one who enters through Christ as the door. No one can take up the calling of a faithful undershepherd of Christ’s spiritual flock but one who enters by the door. This one alone has the qualifications Christ alone gives. This one alone has received the call required by the Chief Shepherd. Only such a shepherd is in his calling safe and sound (Matthew 22:13).

The Folded Sheep

The folded sheep are distinguished from persons “not Christ’s sheep” (10:26). They are Christ’s own (10:14). These include not only Jewish but Gentile elect (10:6).

The nation of Israel was like the organism of a seed. There was an Israel (the seed) within Israel (the shell). There were descendants of Abraham who were children after the flesh; the rest were children after (according to) the Spirit. The latter were “Israelites indeed,” “Jews inwardly.” They had not only the circumcision of Abraham, but the faith of Abraham. “The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself” (Ps. 4:3). “The sheep” in that day of our Lord were “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” now redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, “as of a lamb without blemish” (1 Peter 1:18–19). They

were then “a little flock,” a Jewish flock, which Jesus referred to as “this *flock*” (10:16, Greek), which with the Gentiles would form “one fold” under the “one shepherd.”

Chapter 2

True and False Shepherds

John 10:2–9

True Shepherds Enter by the Door

True shepherds always enter the fold to tend their sheep by the door (v. 2). False shepherds, apostate ministers, do not enter by the door. They intrude themselves into the ministry by having climbed up some other way. The honor of shepherds they took to themselves, not being called of God (Hebrews 5:4). These were the Pharisees, the “you” and “them” of verses 1, 6. They were thieves and robbers. Thieves steal by stealth; robbers steal by extreme force, even by the violence of murder (v. 10). Judas was a thief (12:6); Saul of Tarsus was a robber/murderer (Acts 9).

Who is the shepherd of the sheep? Be careful at this point, for although Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd,” we must not refer these words to him. Looking at verse 2 more carefully we see that the original reads “*a* shepherd.” Three human persons are in view: *a* thief, *a* robber (so the two are not one and the same), and *a* shepherd. Besides, *Christ* does not enter the fold through himself as the door! Jesus is contrasting what a shepherd does and what false shepherds do. Christ as the shepherd is not brought into the record until verse 11. “A shepherd of the sheep” refers to one of the subordinate shepherds of the sheep. They are the official shepherds of Israel, like the seventy disciples, the twelve apostles, the ministers of the early New Testament church.

“He that entereth in by the door is the [literally, *a*] shepherd of the sheep” (v. 2). Most commentaries in their exposition apply this verse to Jesus. But this, we believe, results in a faulty exegesis. It is a shepherd who enters in by the door of the sheep. This shepherd represents the teaching and preaching elder of the church. To this person, “the doorkeeper openeth.” The spiritual shepherd of the sheep does not climb up over the wall. He does not force the door, nor sneak in unnoticed by the doorkeeper. The overseer of the door is the doorkeeper. He recognizes the shepherd as an officebearer appointed by the Chief Shepherd, and so grants him entrance. The door gives access because the doorkeeper opens. We may say that the Father is the doorkeeper. The door is subject to him. The Father brings all the shepherds and all the sheep to Jesus the good shepherd who is the chief shepherd of all undershepherds. Therefore the door opens when the doorkeeper so wills it. Christ the door, the mediator, admits true pastors at the behest of the Father. The pastor of a flock holds office in Christ’s church. Entering by the door, going in and out, and finding pasture is his daily work as an undershepherd. Early in the morning he approaches the gate of the fold. He has no problem gaining admittance. The doorkeeper opens, he enters, issues his pastoral call, steps back out through the gate, his own sheep following, he leads them, then at night he guides them back to the fold again.

The sheep *hear* his voice (v. 3), they *know* his voice (v. 4). They *do* understand his word; they believe it not because it is his, but because it is his and the Chief Shepherd’s. The people of God recognize their pastor as a divinely appointed officer and overseer of the church; and it is the mark of a true shepherd that true Christians approve of his teaching, “he calleth his own sheep by name.” Jesus is speaking of what “*a* shepherd” does in the sheep country of the holy land. The Lord is saying that he as the great shepherd has many undershepherds who have their own flock. The undershepherd calls his own sheep by name. He knows them well because he goes in and out among them. The other shepherds who bed down their sheep in the same fold do likewise. These shepherds have all entered in by the door. Therefore they shall be saved, kept safe and sound. As one shepherd put it, “I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion; and the Lord *shall* deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:17, 18). The undershepherd shall also go in and out and find pasture for his own sheep. Solomon prayed for wisdom that he might be a faithful shepherd of Israel, “that I may go

out and come in before this people" (2 Chronicles 1:10). Solomon found green pastures for the flock of Israel in his Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon.

False Shepherds Do Not Enter by the Door

These are whom the gospel account calls "the Jews" (9:22), and "the Pharisees" (v. 40). They were the "thieves and robbers" (v. 8) of whom Jesus spoke. They did not, would not enter by the door. They were never called nor commissioned by the Lord, as the apostles were. They "climbed up some other way." They were what Jesus described as "stranger" and "not my sheep." They refused the Bread of Life. What the Scribes and Pharisees presented was the husks which the swine did eat. They were officebearers in the false, hierarchical church. They persecuted the true church. They claimed to be official shepherds in Israel, but they did not feed the flock; instead, they fleeced the flock. Their system of doctrine was not the gospel. It could hardly be said to be even "another gospel." It was Judaism, a spiritually dead religion of "by-works righteousness," a piece of Jewish arrogance by which the church was never for long deceived.

Jesus had this class of persons in view when he said, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them." Rendering the text "All who made a public appearance previous to my coming, laying claim to being divinely commissioned teachers, are thieves and robbers" is totally unacceptable. For that would be to call Moses and all the prophets, including John the Baptist, impostors. This is Gnostic heresy which taught that in these words is Christ's testimony against the Old Testament.

Some took the words of verse 8 to mean, "All who came professing to be the Messiah before me were impostors." But where is there one instance of any who appeared *before* Christ making this claim? It was *after* him that many came making this claim! Others interpret "all" to mean "all for the most part." That, however, is an unjustifiable usage of the word "all," as much as it would be at John 12:32. Other strained interpretations have been tried, as, "all who have come without me," or "apart from me." But "before me" (*pro mou*) cannot be wrenched to mean "apart from me" (*choris mou*). Some would make "before me" mean "in my place" (*anti* or *huper*). There is no need for any of this.

Jeremiah, in 17:16, leads us in the right direction: "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor [shepherd] to follow thee..." Paraphrased this means, I have not gone before, but followed the Chief Shepherd! "All who ever came *before* me are thieves..." *before* me, putting themselves between me and mankind, placing themselves above me, usurping my place as mediator. Through me, if any one enter the door, admitted by the doorkeeper, he is a true shepherd. All who came "before me," present themselves to me as the door, but do not labor to enter into that strait-gate, but seek to by-pass the door, are thieves and robbers. All who do not recognize me as the door, do not use me as the door, are not true, but pretended shepherds. They stand before the door, but despising it, do not themselves enter, and do all they can to keep the sheep from entering. That is the way it was with the Scribes and Pharisees. That is the way it is with false teachers and hypocritical pastors and leaders in the modern cults. In the western hierarchical church there is the *Pope* who comes *before*, in front of, Christ. In the eastern hierarchical church there is the *patriarch*, or in this country, it is a "Rev. Ike" or Pastor Jim Jones. The church must have nothing to do with the like of these. The contextual connection is plain: in verse 7 is Christ's divine assertion that he is the door; in verse 8 we have a description of those who do *not* enter by the door: and in verse 9 a description of those who *do* enter by the door. The word *before* is *pro*, and has the sense of "in superiority to," "in preference to" (Thayer). The law of God demands, "Thou shalt have no other gods *before* [in superiority to, or in preference to] me. To come *before* Christ in this sense is the sin of *idolatry*. It is to intrude self before his authority.

For us in Christ's church this means, "Try the spirits." Not everyone has the right to go in and out among us to lead us in green pastures. No one has that right who by the doorkeeper has not been introduced through the door into the sheepfold. That one may not be considered as one of the

shepherds who follow the Chief Shepherd. Beware of those who have climbed up some other way to enter the sheepfold. Beware of a pretended shepherd in whose voice you cannot hear the echoes of the Good Shepherd's voice. When the Chief Shepherd has given us an undershepherd who shows evidence of having entered through the door, then treat him as your shepherd, hear his voice, follow him. He will not require you to receive his message merely because he says so. He will never have you accept anything on his own authority, nor to do anything because he asserts it. He never says, *I say unto you*, but always, thus saith the *Lord*. His ministry will be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16–17). He will "preach the word, be instant [diligent] in season, out of season, [to] reprove, rebuke, [and] exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (4:2). So hear him faithfully and thankfully.

If we are Christ's sheep, and our pastor is a true shepherd, then sheep and shepherd will have mutual confidence in each other, and will together walk in the ways of the Lord. There are false shepherds as well as true within the fold of the visible church. There are many ways by which men obtain admission to the office of minister, but if they do not enter by Christ the door, and if their ministerial conduct and instruction do not give evidence that he has called and sent them, they have an awesome account to give of themselves before the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, let every undershepherd severely examine his own motives, principles, and the tendency of his own doctrine and practice for having sought the Christian ministry. False shepherds, modernist ministers, including current, clever purveyors of the pseudo "health and wealth gospel," must answer for the privileges and distinctions sought in the pastoral office in which they so ostentatiously glory. They seize on an office by which they have become rich. Yet they lack the knowledge, honesty, humility, and industry to labor as a true shepherd of the sheep and preacher of the Christian, historic, orthodox, Reformed faith. Such a shepherd's aim is not the glory of God, nor the conversion of sinners, nor the edification of believers, for he cannot say to his flock, "I seek not yours, but you." The true shepherd knows his people, attends to their spiritual needs, leads them in the knowledge, experience, and practice of the most holy faith, and goes before them in every good work. Every Christian who values his own soul and his own spiritual welfare must avoid those who intrude into the ministry, whose doctrine is earthly, and who suppose that gain is godliness (1 Tim. 6:5). True people of God will flee from the hireling teachers, who care not for the sheep, for they know not the voice of strangers. Christ is the source of all the authority of pastors, their role model as the good shepherd, and the judge of all their pretensions. Many preachers of the health and wealth gospel have debased the sacred ministry in rising from obscurity to riches, grandeur, and luxury as hirelings. Their procedure does not resemble the conduct of the Good Shepherd, but is in contrast to it. They entered the ministry out of carnal motives, and therefore in an unholy manner. Let true undershepherds examine themselves, whether they be in the faith. Let them crucify the flesh and every covetous, selfish, and sensual desire. Let them declare the whole counsel of God, then they shall never earn for themselves the name of "thief," "robber," or "hireling," being faithful unto death.

Chapter 3

The Good Shepherd

John 10:11–15

In this passage the Lord Jesus takes up the beautiful figure of the shepherd and applies it to himself. He spoke of himself as “*a* shepherd” (Isa. 40:11, Ezek. 34:12), as “*one* shepherd” (Ezek. 34:23, John 10:16), as “*the*...shepherd,” and as “the *good* shepherd.” According to the prophet Ezekiel he is the Shepherd of shepherds, as well as of the sheep. His claim, I am the *good* shepherd, means that he claims all the qualifications necessary to stand in and execute the exalted office. Jesus uses the adjective in the most absolute sense in which sense it means *God* (*good* = Anglo-Saxon, *God*, as in *Good-bye*, *God* be with ye!)—I am the God/shepherd. What Jesus was saying to the rich young ruler (Luke 18:19) was, Don’t call me “good” unless you really believe me to be “*God*”! This is the *emphasis* of the words; now as to their *reference* these words refer to Christ’s teaching wherein, beginning at the law of Moses, and in all the prophets, in the Psalms, and in all the scriptures, he taught them the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27–44). The Lord must have taken his disciples through Isaiah 40:9–11. Read that passage; hear Handel’s *Messiah* in those words, and notice that through the prophet Isaiah Jesus claims to be *God* (“your God”), to be Jehovah, to be “a shepherd,” as he does also in Ezekiel 34:11–24. There, too, he refers to himself as “the Lord *God*”!

So when Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, he provides another instance of *divine* assertiveness, where he again asserts his deity. For no one can say this but *God*. A man, a prophet, as a pastor, may say only, I am *a* shepherd. Therefore, it seems strange to hear some say, Jesus never claimed to be God. He revealed himself to the Samaritan believers as “the Saviour of the world.” He could not be that and not be God. “I am the light of the world” is also an assertion of his deity. I am the good shepherd means, I am *the* shepherd with *divine* qualifications, *divine* commission, and *divine* accreditation. Plainly, Christ is God, and his own words bear out that fact. But he is God in what character? His mother knew the answer to that. It was “in God my *Saviour*.” Therefore the idea of the shepherd has a distinctively soteriological sense, that is, the Good Shepherd is the Savior of the sheep, and he saves them by giving his life for them.

Early in the chapter the contrast was: *a* thief, *a* robber, and *a* shepherd (vv. 1–2). Now it is *the* thief and *the* shepherd. *The* shepherd, plainly, means some one individual, namely, exclusively, Jesus himself. The thief would then mean some one individual, namely, the wicked one who, as a thief, entered Eden stealthily to steal, kill, and destroy. He is a murderer from the beginning.

Jesus as the good shepherd came to the sheep that they may have (and keep on having—durative present) life and abundance. Life is safety, security, and enjoyment in eternal happiness. “Abundance” is not an adverb, to have and keep having *life* is to have and keep on having *abundance*. To have life is to dwell in a state of perfect, undisturbed, unthreatened blessedness. To have abundance is to have the perfect enjoyment of that blessedness.

“The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” The Good Shepherd “*lays down* (vv. 15, 17–18, same word) his life *for* (in behalf of) the sheep” (v. 11). To lay down his life means to lay it down as one lays down the purchase price to redeem (buy back) the sheep for his own. He lay down his life not as a martyr for a cause, not as a moral example as to how a good man can die for his principles. He died for those for whom he substituted himself. He died not for fallen angels, but for sinful men; not for “the goats,” but for “the sheep.” So this is substitutionary atonement. He substituted his life in the stead of the sheep. It is voluntary atonement: I lay it down of myself; no man taketh it from me. Therefore, he was not merely passive, but *active* in giving his life for the sheep. Now the laying down of his life is *actual*; it is accomplished. It was *temporary*; I lay down my life (soul—Isa. 53:10) that I may take it again

(v. 17). For if he had laid down his life permanently (as Jehovah's Witnesses say), he could not thereafter save and care for his sheep. But by his vicarious death he saved his people. By his resurrection and life he lives to keep them.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the [or a] shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep" (v. 12). The hireling is the exact opposite of the true human shepherds (vv. 2–4), a picture of false shepherds. But neither is the true human shepherd the owner of the sheep. The Good Shepherd alone is that, or, more strictly, God in Christ is the sheep's owner. The hireling Jesus never hired, employed, or sent. The name of shepherd does not apply to him. He is "not a shepherd." The hireling is the exact opposite of a shepherd. Christ does not send hirelings to tend his sheep. How a hireling gets a few sheep to "tend" is done in some unlawful way. He usurps the place of a shepherd. He barges in amid a flock of sheep, assuming the place and office of an undershepherd. Under the hireling the sheep starve and die. They lose everything that the hireling may get his pay. Sheep to the hireling are a paying proposition. He works for pay. He hates his work, but loves his pay. He loses the wages of unrighteousness. He not only would not work if there were no hire, but he takes the pay giving as little in return as he possibly can for his hire. His effort is practically nil; his work has no quality whatever. The hireling is a mercenary. He is not a steward, but a thief. His so-called ministry is a farcical embezzlement.

There comes a time when the hireling flees. When is that? When he sees "the wolf coming." The approach of the wolf reveals the hireling for what he is. How do we interpret "the wolf" in this proverbial discourse? Some say the wolf represents Satan. But pseudo-shepherds do not flee at Satan's approach. We prefer the view that "the wolf" is any enemy of the sheep who approaches to attack them. Think of Saul of Tarsus breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. This was the time of a great persecution against the Jerusalem church. The sheep were scattered, but they went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 9:1, 8:1–4). Think of how on the missionary journeys the Jews stirred up other Jews and Gentiles inciting persecution against the apostles (Acts 13:50, 14:2). Recall that Nero had set Rome on fire, then blamed it on the Christians. Think of the massacre of the French Huguenots. Think of the persecutions of the saints in the Netherlands by the murderous Duke of Alva. Think of the Puritans who fled religious persecutions in England to the Netherlands and from there to this country. Think of the Antichrist who persecutes the church throughout this entire dispensation (Rev. 12) and how the final Antichrist will kill the saints of the end-time church (Rev. 11). Already in our land civil authorities have forced their way into churches and into Christian schools to take children from their parents. The wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. By that time the hireling is long gone!

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (vv. 14–15). As this passage stands in the King James Version it appears as two sentences with their connection none too clear. In the original the word "and" is repeated several times; but the translators have had to omit one of those "ands" to bring out the sense in rounding out their translations. Also in the Authorized Version it is plain that the word "sheep" is not in the original, since it is put in italics. There is no need for this alteration if the translation is more closely rendered. Here is how the text reads in its natural form: "I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." This is exactly how the text appears in the New American Standard Bible, not that we recommend a modern version, but at this point the NASB more accurately follows the Greek.

"I am the good shepherd." He is the Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. Here we see the Good Shepherd and his cross. He is that great Shepherd of the sheep whom the God of peace brought again from the dead (Hebrews 13:20). He is the great Shepherd in his resurrection. He is the chief Shepherd who "shall appear" in the glory of his second coming (1 Peter 5:4).

“And I know my own, and my own know me.” This is the knowledge of love, the love of appropriation, “to take, to have, and to hold.” Scripture says Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived. This was the knowledge of conjugal love. The Lord knoweth them that are his (loves those who are his). In the day of judgment the Lord will say to those on his left hand, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23), i.e., I never loved you. This knowledge (of affection) is unknown to the wicked world. “The world through its wisdom knew [loved] not God” (1 Cor. 1:21). “The world knoweth [loves] us not” (1 John 3:1). “I know [love] my own, and mine own know [love] me, even as the father knows [loves] me, and I know [love] the Father.”

“And I lay down my life *for* [*huper*, instead of] the sheep.” The preposition *for* is “unequivocally defined” in Romans 5:6–8 where it appears four times. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died *for* the ungodly. For scarcely *for* a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure *for* a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for* us.” *For* here means not merely “in the behalf of,” but *in the place of*, *in the stead of* (Thayer). Christ rescues the life of the sheep at the expense of his own.

Chapter 4

The Good Shepherd's Other Sheep

John 10:16

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aulēs*]: them also I must bring [lead], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimen*, flock], [and] one shepherd." This grand text stands guarded between two mighty pillars. The one is the statement: "I lay down my life for the sheep," and the other, following, is "I lay down my life, that I may take it again." In that first statement it is clear that Christ did by his blood what he purposed to do: he dies *for the sake of* and *in the place of* the sheep. Therefore, by his death his sheep are delivered from death. The death of Christ could not be in vain, nor his blood shed for nothing. He laid down his life for his sheep; therefore his love for them is an everlasting love. His love for them could never be a disappointed love. In giving his life on the cross the Good Shepherd shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.

The other unshakeable pillar is inscribed with, "I lay down my life, that I might [*may*] take it again." He who died and so redeemed his people by the price of his blood now lives that he may personally see to it that they are redeemed by the power of his irresistible grace. The purpose of his resurrection was to save his people from their sins. Then does he not actually save them? The purpose of his resurrection was to live to keep his people saved. The purpose of his life is to live forever to put the destiny of the sheep beyond all hazard. "For if, when we were enemies, we *were* reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we *shall* be saved by his *life*" (Rom. 5:10). It is blasphemy then to think that the goal of the Savior's death and resurrection could be missed, or the purpose of his death and resurrection frustrated.

By his words, "other sheep," the Lord implies that he had certain sheep at the time. He already had a fold a sheep: he referred to "this fold." Some believe he refers to the Jews as "this fold." But the Jews, as such, were never Christ's fold. Of the Jews as such he said, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep" (John 10:26). His fold were not the chosen of "that nation only," but also the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52). God's fold in the Old Testament era and in the early New Testament age embraced not the Jews as such but what it still enfolds to the end of the world, the Israel of God.

"Other sheep I *have*," not "I shall have." These "other sheep" were not in the minds of the apostles at that time. No one then ever dreamed that Christ had sheep in Rome, or in Spain, or farther west in Britain. But he had them! In his eternal counsel of election he had them! They were his chosen in him before the foundation of the world. He spoke of them as "my own" (v. 14, Greek). "Other sheep I have," they are "my own" property. He bought them, gave his life for them. They are his because he chose them. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Then he laid down his life for all those whom he had chosen. Christ Jesus said, "I have them" even though they were afar off in trespasses and sins, and many of them had not yet been born into this world.

The apostles did not yet understand these words, "I have other sheep." They hardly realized that they lived in a cruel Roman world, full of evil, vice, and unspeakable abominations, and that there were sheep of Christ who, in due time, would be "delivered from their sins, and fetched away from all the superstition and idolatry and filthiness into which they had wandered. They were Christ's even while they were afar off; He had chosen them; the Father had given them to Him; he had bought them" (Spurgeon). He not only determined to have them, but said, "I have them." "He calls them His own even while they are transgressing and running headlong to destruction." He the Messiah knew the messianic psalms. His mind and heart were full of them. Running through his mind were the words of Psalm 22, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations

shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations... A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." Also these words were to the forefront of his mind as he spoke the words of our text: "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord [O Adonai]; and shall glorify thy name" (Ps. 86:9). He thought of the messianic prophecy, "so shall he *sprinkle* many nations" (Isa. 52:15). He also thought of its fulfillment in the carrying out of his great commission: "Go ye...teach [disciple] all nations, [1] baptizing them... [2] teaching them..." (Matthew 28:19–20). For further commentary on "other sheep I *have*," read Romans 9:23–24, and Romans 10:12. He was pressed in his spirit, just bursting to say, "Other sheep I have."

Our missionaries have authority to go where they go, and to be where they are, having the right to go anywhere to ask after the Great Shepherd's sheep. Our missionaries push in where they are not wanted, saying, "Excuse me; I think my Master has one of his sheep here, and I am come after it." Our missionaries have a search-warrant from the chief Shepherd, and therefore have a right to enter anywhere and search after their Lord's stolen property. When we preach we do not hope that somebody will of his own free will come to Christ. We do not depend on man's free will, but upon the Lord's promise, "All that the Father giveth me *shall* come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). The outlook in preaching is not that of free will but of free grace. In preaching, we do not look to "free-willists" to jump up and come forward to make a decision for Christ. Men by nature are "whosoever won'ts" until the Good Shepherd makes them to will and to do for his good pleasure. The shepherd seeks and finds his sheep, not the sheep the Shepherd. He does not even say anything, but seeks, finds, takes, places the sheep on his shoulders, and carries it home. Free will in its wishes and desires is all the other way against the Lord, until he makes a man willing in the day of his power. He never says, "I love everybody with an everlasting love, therefore I leave it to the free will of all to come my way," but rather says, "I have loved *thee* with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I *drawn* thee" (Jer. 31:3).

"Them also I must bring [*lead*]." The Good Shepherd must lead those other sheep. He must go before them, and they must follow his lead. Those who belong to Christ in his secret, eternal counsel of predestination must be led openly to follow him openly. This the Lord had done for the little flock of his apostles and disciples. He has done this for us; he must do it for others. For they will never come unless he brings them and draws them (John 12:32) to himself.

"And they shall hear my voice." This is *how* he must bring them. He shall do it by the preaching of the gospel. Part of that preaching is the imperative, he that hath ears to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches, let him hear. The church has the same one and only commission that it always has had—to preach the gospel—to disciple the nations, baptizing them...and teaching them... Fulfilling the work of its one great commission the church is assured that in that preaching, "they shall hear my voice." But according to "free will" it is possible men may hear, but then it is just as possible they may not. Away with the uncertainty of free-willism! Jesus says, "I *must* bring them, and they *shall* hear my voice." Paul, called to be the apostle to the Gentiles, began his ministry "to the Jew first." Then the time came when he turned to the Gentiles. He did so, saying to the Jews, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, *and that they will hear it*" (Acts 28:28).

They will hear the word of the cross: "I lay down my life for the sheep" (v. 15). They will hear the gospel of the resurrection: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again" (v. 17). These two elements of the gospel Peter and John, and the rest of the apostles, always preached. Hearing (obeying) that gospel, men hear and obey the voice of Christ. Never hearing the gospel, they never hear the voice of Christ. Hearing Christ is obeying him. Ecumenical compromise would mean agreement to disobey him. "Evangelical Protestantism" advises us "in the interest of Christian love to put away our differences." But it is not love to call falsehood truth. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know [love] them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

“And there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (Greek). These words are often used in support of a false ecumenism by those who work to bring about the union of the Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic, the Anglican Church, the American “mainline” liberal and modernistic Protestant Churches, and “evangelical Protestantism.” These bodies are all aiming to merge in a titanic wave back to Rome. In that event the enormities of the Antichrist will be upon us with a vengeance.

But these words of Christ are already a reality. There is only one flock, one Shepherd, and that is the way it has always been in God’s decree of predestination from eternity, and since Pentecost onward as “the Lord added to the church daily the saved” (Acts 2:47, Greek., see J.A. Alexander, R.C.H. Lenski, and Wigram & Winter, *The Word Study Concordance*.) There never was but one, holy, catholic (universal) church of all the ages, only one head of the church, and only one flock.

Chapter 5

The Father Loves the Son

John 10:17–18

In the Greek language, “therefore” is a familiar preposition which means “because of this,” or “on account of this.” Usually it looks backward, pointing to a result or consequence expressed in the previous context. Sometimes it looks forward, indicating that the reason which follows the preposition is about to be stated. In this case, it has been said that it does not matter much whether the word be considered as looking backward or forward.

If it looks backward, it looks backward over the whole previous paragraph, where the Lord is contrasted as the shepherd as over against a shepherd, or the Good Shepherd in contrast to thieves and robbers, who came to steal, whereas he came to give life and abundance. He lays down his life to save theirs. He gathers them into the one fold in perfect peace and security. “Therefore” being a faithful Shepherd and doing all this, the Father loves the Son. And it is clear from the previous context, chapter 9, verse 35, that the Lord is referring to himself as the Son of God.

If the preposition looks forward, it refers to the immediately following words: because of this the Father loves me because I lay down my life for the sheep, in their room and stead, to deliver them from death; and I lay it down temporarily since permanent death would render me ineffectual as the Shepherd able to save to the uttermost. Now I give my restored life to keep my redeemed, to keep them from wandering, and to give them eternal life where there shall be “one flock, one shepherd.”

It really cannot be justified *textually* to take the position that “it does not matter much whether the ‘therefore’ be considered as looking backward or forward.” For grammatically, “therefore” (*dia touto*) followed by “that” (*hoti*) means “For this reason, that I lay down my life, my Father loves me.” That is the grammatical structure. Therefore, the opening preposition looks not backward, but forward. In fact, now the context takes a more forward look than before, since it now has not only the perspective of Christ crucified, but also Christ risen. For the two elements of the gospel are the cross of Jesus *and* the resurrection of Jesus! Hence it makes a great deal of difference how we understand the thrust of the opening preposition.

Further, though the Authorized Version reads, “Therefore doth my Father love me,” the original has, “Therefore the Father loves me,” not “my Father” but “*the* Father.” He loves me that I lay down my life. Of course, the Father loves Jesus as “the Son of God,” as already shown (9:35), so the Father loves the Son. Naturally, he, the Father, loves the Son as the second person of the Trinity, and, of course, that from all eternity. But what Jesus is saying here is that the Father loves the Son as the mediator redeemer who laid down his human life as a sacrifice in the place of his sheep, but who took up his life again in glorious resurrection power. The Father thus loves the Son for the victory of his death *and* for the victory of his resurrection. Also, although Jesus taught his disciples to refer to God as “*Our* Father,” he himself never said, “our Father.” He said, “*my* Father,” to be sure, but at this point it is, literally, “the Father.”

“The Father loves me.” This is a durative present tense and means, the Father *eternally* loves me, the Father *always* loves me, *continually* loves me. The word *love* (*agapan*) is that *love* which the law of God demands of us to “love God” and to “love thy neighbor” (Deut. 6:5, Matthew 22:37), including the demand, “Love your *enemies* (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). It is the love of intelligence (John 10:14), of complete understanding, involving man’s entire personality, the mind, the soul, the heart, the (human) strength, the will (and not only the emotions). This is *agapé* love, divine love, the love which is shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5), a love on the plane of the spiritual and found only in the Bible. Another New Testament word is *philein*, usually expressing the love of friends, like David and Jonathan,

a word found both in and out of the Bible. It is a love on a plane of the emotions. A third Greek word for love is *eros*, from which we get our word *erotic*. It is sensual love, closely akin to *lust* and, although it appears in certain Greek writings, it is found *nowhere* in the Bible! This is a love on the plane of the body and the physical senses. So that, although *agapan* and *philein* are used synonymously, they do have a remarkable difference. Note: the word in the great *love* chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, is *agape*.

“Therefore [for this reason] the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” We may say, here, that the Father’s love for the Son is a soteriological love inasmuch as the Father loves Jesus as *Savior*. “Because I [ego] lay down my life.” The “I” is *emphatic*, and means, “I myself.” Christ’s death, then, was voluntary. It was also efficacious, that is, bringing about the results intended, namely, to save his people from their sins. Therefore, his death not only makes atonement possible, provides atonement, but it actually atones, actually redeems.

“That I may take *it* [my soul] again.” No mere man can do this. “I lay down my life *in order that* [to the end that] I may take it [again]. If Jesus had not died voluntarily, nor had he taken it again (v. 18) in resurrection power, his death would not have had any power to save. He who is *the* Life (John 14:6) laid down his life to be swallowed up by death on the altar of sacrifice, in the doing of which, he, the Life, killed death dead—death was destroyed by the death of him who is the Resurrection and the Life to the end that he might rise again victorious over death and the grave. His own commentary on this is, “I am the first and the last, and the living one, and I became dead, and behold, I am living for ever more. Amen” (Rev. 1:18).

“No one takes it up from me, but I lay it down from myself.” I have right to lay it down, and right I have again to take it. This commandment I received from my Father.” The word *right* is *exousia*. Very often in the New Testament it is translated *power*. It means *power* of choice, *liberty* to do as one pleases (as one intends). God has an absolutely sovereign right to do as he pleases, but even so, first within the self-imposed limits of possibility. (Note: it is impossible for God to lie.) Therefore, in this sense, God has the right to do whatever is possible. Certainly, then it was possible for Jesus in his human nature to give himself up to death and by the power of his Godhead to resume his life. Second, God has a right to do whatever is proper. That is proper which is according to righteousness (right) and holiness. God is his own standard, and therefore that would be proper for him which is in harmony with his nature. In this sense, God is at *liberty* to think and act in harmony with his nature. Certainly, Jesus was at liberty to choose to give up his life for his own that he might take it again to live with his own. Nothing in the realm of the *possible* or *proper* could prevent the Lord from doing what he wanted (intended). (Ps. 115:3; 135:6.) As the second person of the Trinity, the Son has in himself absolute right and authority to do as he pleases. As the divine Mediator in human nature he has delegated sovereignty, authority, power, and right to do as he pleases (John 5).

Matthew 28:18 literally reads, “all *authority* has been given unto me” (and still is possessed by me). This authority was given the Mediator as a temporary gift. When he shall have subjected to himself all opposing authority among men, when he will have delivered up this delegated authority of the King Messiah to God, even the Father, then his special mediatorial dominion will be reabsorbed into the universal and eternal dominion of God. (1 Cor. 15:24–28—Broadus summarized). Note: Also on *exousia*, see Matthew 9:6.

“This commandment have I received from my Father.” *This* refers to his authority to lay down his life and to take it again, a *delegated* authority. The word *commandment*, says Thayer in his Greek lexicon, means “order, precept, command, charge, injunction.” The word is *entolé* and is never rendered in the A.V. any other way than *commandment*. Strange that one of the better exegetes has an aversion to “commandment” because “commands are compulsory and shut out free volition.” So he prefers the term “commission.” But a commission is what a king imposes on his ambassador, who has no other choice but to convey the word of the king. Furthermore, God’s command to Adam in the state of rectitude did not shut out his free volition. That command was perfectly suited to man and his nature,

and man was perfectly suited to God's command. God commands, Serve me! and "his service is perfect freedom." Worse yet, this exegete states that the Father put this proposition to his Son in the form of an offer, which he was "as free to decline as to accept," and that an offer is an appeal to *love*, as though a command is *not*! But John 15:10 says, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Consider also, "as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (14:31). "For as I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me" (6:38). "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). He must have been commanded to lay down his life, for "he...became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philemon 2:8).

Chapter 6

Jesus' Enemies Divided

John 10:19–21

The Division

“The Jews” in John’s gospel are the hostile Jews who had murdered Jesus and threatened with excommunication all who confessed him as the Messiah (9:22). Therefore, when this designation appears in the gospel record, reference is made to the enemies of Jesus and his flock of followers. See also 7:13, 12:42; 19:38.

“There was a division *therefore*,” the result of his right *then* having asserted his power to lay down his life, and his power to take it back, and both as commanded him by the Father. It was at that moment that there occurred a *division* among the Jews. This word “division” is literally our word *schism*. The word is used in reference to a rend or tear made in a garment (Matthew 9:16), making two smaller pieces of cloth. Then we read that a schism occurred in the party of the Pharisees. “Therefore said some of the *Pharisees*, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among *them*” (9:16). In chapter 7, verse 43, we read, “So there was a division among the *people* because of him.” The schism, or split, among the people was over him. *He* is that “stone of stumbling and rock of offense to those who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:8).

Among the Jews

Our text says “there was a division among the *Jews*.” First we read that there was a schism among the people because of him. Then we read that there was a schism among the rulers of the people, while in our text a schism occurred among the Jews, the enemies of Jesus, that is, among the rulers, the Pharisees, scribes, and the chief priests (“the Jews” in 19:7, 12, 14, 21, 31; 20:19).

“There was a division *again* among the Jews.” This takes us back not only to the verses already considered but also to as far back as 6:52, “The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So that “again” may be taken in the sense of “again, and again, and again,” and always because of him (7:43). In fact, Jesus himself put the question to his disciples, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house, divided; three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law” (Luke 12:51–53). Now here is an example of the worst division over Jesus and actually caused, brought about, by Jesus, in the rending of family ties. People today would never ask why Jesus mentioned just five in one family. For a family of five today, a day of the “Planned Parenthood” philosophy, is quite a large enough family. But Jesus uses as an example, one of the smallest Jewish families, a family consisting of father and mother, son with his wife, and an unmarried daughter. The small family is split three against two, and two against three. So that man’s foes are they of his own household.

But did not the Lord come to give peace on earth? Was it not proclaimed at his birth, On earth peace, good will toward men? Is he not the Prince of Peace, his gospel the gospel of peace, and the true God the God of peace? That is all true. But Christ did not come to give men a peaceable possession of this earth, nor outward prosperity on the earth. He did not preach what today is called “the health and wealth gospel.” No, says Jesus, Don’t think that. You will find out differently. Don’t look for a fool’s paradise, or you will be sadly mistaken.

The effect of the preaching of the gospel is and will be *division*. It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of the pure preaching of it that there is such *division* in the professing church in the world, among its leaders, its people, and its families. No, but the Lord uses the preaching, uses the gospel, uses his preachers to become a savor of life unto those who are being saved, and a savor of death unto death to those being lost. But whichever way it goes, God always causes his word and his ambassadors proclaiming his truth to *triumph*!

There are always those who hate the gospel, who are exasperated by it and enraged by those who receive it and believe it. Heathen philosophies can get along together; worshippers of diverse false gods can tolerate one another, and there is always room for another godless philosophy, room for many more false religions, and hundreds more of pagan deities. The world can tolerate all this chaos and confusion. But let the gospel be preached, and many be enlightened by it, and converted to it, being turned from the power of Satan to God; then humanity will be *divided* into haters of God and his word on one side and lovers of God and his truth on the other. Christians, missionaries, and preachers just will not mind their own business, will they? and leave well enough alone! The trouble is, it *is* our business to “preach the word, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). It *is* our business to dispute (Acts 9:29). It *is* our calling to witness against and condemn the unbelief of men and their disobedience to the gospel. Then we can expect bigotry, persecution, and division in the bonds of relation and natural affection. The pure gospel is always everywhere evilly spoken against. Preachers and witnesses to that gospel must not expect peace in the earth. Revelation 11 tells us what to expect in the church’s future. Christ’s witnesses are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

The enemies of Jesus are set at variance against one another. Knowing some of his enemies, this is not too difficult to understand. The Sadducees did not believe in angels, good or evil, nor did they believe in the resurrection of the body. There was always sharp controversy between the Pharisees and the Sadducees on these issues.

Because of His Words

“There was a division among the Jews for these words.” Many of them said, He has a demon (*diamonion*), and is insane! Why do you hear him? They called him a demoniac. An evil spirit tormented him and ranted and raved in religious fervor and delirium in a frightful case of demon possession. This was their slur against Jesus. He was mentally unbalanced, suffering a crazed imagination. It is no different today. The latest (August 1988) “religious” movie, “The Last Temptation of Christ,” presents Jesus as a weak sinner, with an inferiority complex, full of both heterosexual and homosexual lusts. The implication is, Why bother to hear him—he’s a demon-possessed maniac.

Others came to Christ’s defense. “These are not the words of one who has a demon.” In this vein we could argue, Christianity is either the true religion, or it is the greatest religious fraud palmed off on the world. If it is a fraud, it must be of the devil, the father of lies. But Christ’s gospel is no doctrine of demons, as it stands against Satan and his kingdom. His words are not from hell, and so must be from heaven.

So there was a majority faction which could not refute Jesus on principle. They took the easy way to oppose him with a slander. Their opinion was not rational; it was irrational. They said the words of Jesus came from a demon using his tongue to utter demonic ravings. But they are clever in their irrationalism. For one can detect the intent of this majority faction. They note that Jesus is making an impression on some of his hearers (John 11:47–48). At this they are annoyed and exasperated, and so must turn as many as they can against Jesus.

Let a man preach seriously and dynamically of life and death, heaven and hell, and he will be put down as a “right-wing fundamentalist fanatic,” who torments both himself and his hearers with his hallucinating imagination. So these majority Jews ridicule the minority party. Why even bother to listen to him? Why give him that satisfaction? Many today, duped by Satan, regard it as naïve, silly, and weak

to attend on the means of grace (the pure preaching of the word and the proper administration of the sacraments). No one will ever laugh them out of their “belly needs,” or their “belly god,” but they allow themselves to be laughed out of the one thing needful (Luke 10:42). But Christ’s sheep hear his voice and believe what they hear. Soon they will learn to give a good account of *why* they hear him!

“Others were saying, ‘These are not the utterances of one demon-possessed’” (Greek). A minority party is prompted to oppose the majority. *They are impressed* by both Jesus’ words and his mighty act of healing the man born blind. “Can a demon open eyes of blind people?” Never; and neither do the healing-health-and-wealth preachers (or preacherettes) ever receive from God “a word of knowledge” to the effect that he is “right now healing and restoring a person born blind.”

Chapter 7

Jesus Refuting Encircling Enemies

John 10:22–26

The Place

“At...the Feast of *the Dedication*,” Hebrew: ha-Hanukkah. We have a prophecy of it in Daniel 8:13–14. Historical mention is made of it in the apocryphal book, 2 Maccabees 1:18. It was not a divinely appointed feast, but was set by the Jews in commemoration of the sanctification of the place of worship under Judas Maccabaeus after its horrible defilement by Antiochus Euphron. The Jews enjoyed setting various vacation periods for national observance. Consider also the days of Purim: Esther 9:18.

“And Jesus was walking (the durative present tense) in the temple in Solomon’s porch.” It was winter and the rainy season (which reminds us of winters in the Houston, Texas, area, and on the Saanich Peninsula of Vancouver Island), so that it was natural for people in the temple to walk in this enclosed colonnade. This “porch” is thought to be the only remnant of Solomon’s temple remaining to that day.

The Encounter

“Then *the Jews* encircled him” (Greek). In this gospel, “the Jews” denotes, for the most part, the enemies of Jesus. Some 64 times the apostle John uses the designation in references which reveal them inimical, impertinent, self-righteous, legalistic, persecutive, murmuring, fractious, sarcastic, slanderous, and murderous. Check this out in your concordance.

“How long dost thou make us to doubt [keep us in suspense?—margin]? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (v. 24). Now they pretend to be in deep anxiety, their minds held in painful suspense (his fault!) whether he was truly the Messiah! The hypocrites! They were not interested in getting evidence that he was the Messiah. Their purpose was to entrap him in his words to charge him with blasphemy. The trouble was, no amount of evidence could have satisfied them, for he was not the kind of Messiah they wanted and had expected (John 12:32–34). (“Who is *this* Son of man?”). They implied that messianic expectation was uppermost in their mind, but that his silence on the subject mystified them. Oh, he *knows* he is *not* the Messiah but is pleased to enjoy the notoriety he had because the ignorant masses supposed he was.

One eminent exegete says that Jesus did not openly and plainly teach that he was the Messiah, having done so only privately—to his disciples, to the woman of Samaria together with the people of Sychar, and to the healed blind man. But think of the lengthy body of teaching in John 5:17–43. See also 8:12, 24, 58. On “the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me,” compare 5:36; 7:31; 10:32, 38. They were exposed to this plain teaching, but they hoped for a plain, flat denial, such as came from John the Baptist, “I am not the Christ” (1:20).

The Rebuke

“I told you and ye believed not” (the Greek is not in the past tense, as in the KJV, but in the durative present: “ye, right along, do not believe”) (v. 25). They had been told, time and time again. Compare also 6:29, 35, 51–65; 7:37–39; 8:28–29, 42, 56–58; 10:7–18. Not only had Jesus *told* them, but he had *proved* to them that he was the Messiah. “The words that I do [am *doing*] in my Father’s name, they bear witness of [these are bearing witness concerning] me” (v. 25). The works that he was then in the process of doing were the *signs* he performed, eight of them recorded in this gospel, which witness to the fact that he is God and the Christ (Messiah) (20:31).

“But ye believe not (same sense as above), because ye are not of my sheep...” (v. 26). Strange, very strange, that the eminent exegete referred to, at this point in his commentary, says that the designations “the sheep” and “the elect” both refer to the very same individuals, yet “they are not to be considered as synonymous terms”! He goes on to say, “Whether none of these...were among ‘the elect’ we cannot tell...some of them may, at an after period...have come to the Son... But it was quite evident that they were not, *at this time*, of his sheep.” This is like saying just the reverse of what Jesus actually did say: “Ye are not my sheep because ye believe not.” But that is Arminianism. The Arminians always turn scripture around. Matthew Henry, at this point, puts it better, explaining Jesus’ words as meaning, “*Ye are not of the number of the elect*, [ital. added] and your unbelief...will be a certain evidence that ye are not... Faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination” and election. For election is unto faith, and to every saving good. Reprobation is not the cause of unbelief, but unbelief is the evidence of reprobation. “Reprobation is the eternal and sovereign decree of God to determine some men to be vessels of wrath fitted to destruction *in the way of sin*” [ital. added—Rev. H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 161].

Therefore, the context speaks of two ultimate groups—(1) sheep, and (2) not sheep. Those *not* of Christ’s sheep were not the chosen of God (13:18), were not among the sheep given Christ by his Father (6:37), were not predestinated unto eternal life. For as many as were ordained to eternal life, in God’s own good time do believe (Acts 13:48). “Christ as the omniscient God knew this that they were not the chosen of God; for he was present when the names of God’s elect were written in the book of life. Having seen his sheep from all eternity, he most certainly knew them (10:14), for he knows all the sheep” (10:27; 2 Tim. 2:19)—John Gill. Jesus owns them as his *in tà próbata tà éμά*, “the sheep that are mine” (v. 27).

The inescapable truth, and the plain fact, is that “my sheep” is equivalent to “the elect.” Verse 16 makes that quite clear. The Lord is not simply berating these Jews as unbelievers—those without faith—for he actually states *why* they had not faith—they were not of his sheep—they were not in the number of God’s elect. It is not that one must believe to become one of Christ’s sheep: he believes because he is one of his sheep.

Parallel Passages

“But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” When had the Lord said this, pronouncing these Jews reprobates, i.e., “not my sheep,” and therefore not God’s elect? In chapter 8, verse 43! “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.” Make no mistake; this is not to be turned around to the very reverse: “Why cannot ye hear my word? because ye do not understand my speech!” But understand, this chapter 8, verse 43 is parallel to 10:26. So also is 8:47, “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, *because ye are not of God*” [ital. added]. So this, too, is strictly parallel with 10:26. Do not err here, either, by reversing *these* words: ye are not of God because ye hear not God’s word. “They ‘heard not’ *because* they were not of God, they ‘believed not’ *because* they were not his sheep...they belonged not to God’s elect; they were numbered among the reprobates (A.W. Pink). Another parallel passage is chapter 12, verses 37–40, “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they *could not* believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.”

The previous verse, 36, reads, “These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hid himself from them.” Jesus did, at times, retreat and withdraw from men, adopting the wise policy of not exposing himself to danger unnecessarily. But this is something else. It was not a mere judicial act, but a sovereign punitive act marked with the utmost finality. It was the end. No more would the public hear

the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, except at his trials and from the cross. But even then he never addressed the public. Here he put a period to his public ministry. During his ministry he went so far as to thank his heavenly Father that he sovereignly concealed the things of the gospel from the so-called wise and prudent, while he revealed them unto “babes.” “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matthew 11:25–26). It was his sovereign purpose and counsel to reveal his gospel to the poor, base, and foolish things of this world, making it to them a savor of life, but to conceal it from the worldly-wise, making it to them a savor of death.

“They *could* not believe because *he* hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they *should not* see...” (John 12:40). This must be understood in the light of Romans 9:18, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” On this Arthur W. Pink writes, “This affirmation of God’s sovereign ‘hardening’ of sinners’ hearts—in contradistinction from judicial hardening—is not alone. Mark the language of John 12:37–40. ‘But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him, that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? *Therefore they could not believe* [why?], because that Isaiah said again, *He hath* blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts [why? because they had refused to believe on Christ? This is the popular belief, but mark the answer of scripture] *that they should not* see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.’ Now, reader, it is just a question as to whether or not you will believe what God as revealed in his word. It is not a matter of prolonged searching or profound study, but a childlike spirit which is needed, in order to understand this doctrine” (*The Sovereignty of God*, p. 112).

Chapter 8

My Sheep

John 10:27–28

Introduction

“My sheep...” The Good Shepherd continues speaking to those he had just called “*not my sheep*” (v. 26). They are the reprobate, and in stark contrast to them he speaks to them of his elect. “My sheep *hear my voice*.” To them he had said, “Ye *cannot hear my word*” (8:43). “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore *hear them not*, because ye are not of God” (8:47). “And I know *them*.” In the day of judgment he will say to the reprobate, “I *never knew you*” (Matthew 7:23). “And they follow me” (John 10:27). Jesus had said to them, “Whither I go, ye cannot come” (8:21). “And I give unto *them* eternal life” is in exact contrast to “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (3:36). “And *they shall never perish*” is quite the opposite to, “The [reprobate] wicked shall perish” (Ps. 37:20).

The Sheep’s Character and Conduct—They Hear His Voice

The Lord Jesus, in the context of John 10, teaches double predestination: election and reprobation. This was his teaching from the beginning of his ministry. “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only unto Zaraphath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman, the Syrian” (Luke 4:25–27). God, in his sovereign predestination bestowed his grace in a sovereign, discriminating way where Gentiles were preferred to Jews. The immediate reaction to Christ’s election preaching on this occasion is expressed in verses 28–30 of Luke 4. This was also the preaching and teaching at the mid-point of his ministry. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out... And this is the Father’s will who hath sent me, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day... No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:37, 39, 44). Here, too, is election and irresistible grace. The immediate reaction to this election preaching was expressed in murmuring and complaining with, “This is an hard saying. Who can *hear it?*” (6:60–61). These would *not* hear his voice. Eventually, there was a complete rejection of Christ and his doctrine. For, “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (v. 66). They could not tolerate nor give a hearing to the doctrine of election.

Also at the end of his ministry this was his doctrine. Where we read, “These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them” (12:36), there, at that point, he ended his public ministry. He put a final period to it with proclamation of the most offensive side of divine predestination—sovereign reprobation. We have it in John 12:37–40. Why is this doctrine so prevalent and prominent throughout the ministry of Jesus? Because predestination is the heart of the gospel and the heart of the church. We learn this from Romans 9. This epistle has for its content the gospel of God (Romans 1:1), the very heart of which gospel is found in chapter nine and its doctrine of predestination.

“My sheep hear *my voice*”—and this means, especially, his voice in the preaching of the word. Romans 10:14 teaches that the voice of Christ is *heard*, not without a preacher. To hear Christ’s voice a preacher must be called and sent.

The Trinitarian Bible Society informs us that 100,000 copies of Spanish Bibles have been prepared for Mexico. Hungarian Bibles and Polish New Testaments have been delivered to these peoples. Arabic

Bibles are destined for Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East. A quantity of Portuguese New Testaments were printed for women who now live in Greece, having married Greek husbands. Greek scriptures have been printed from use in Greece. Greek New Testaments have been used in distribution to people of Greek origin living in Australia.

Where God sends the scriptures we may expect that he will also send a preacher of the word before, during, and/or after the scriptures are received and read. Think of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Why do the sheep *hear* the Shepherd's voice? Because his elect are marked like sheep, in the ear and in the foot. They "hear my voice and follow me." They *hear* because the Lord has sovereignly *made* them to hear. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12). The sheep hear when the irresistible call of God comes to them as to Lazarus in the grave to bring them forth to new life (John 5:25; 11:43–44).

"And I know them." Compare 10:3, 14 margin; 1 Cor. 8:3; 2 Tim. 2:19. In contrast to this, read Matthew 7:23; 25: 11–12; Luke 13:25–27.

The Sheep's Character and Conduct—They Follow Him

"And they follow me." Compare verse 4; 8:12; 12:26; 21:22; Revelation 14:4. God's elect sheep are in contrast to the reprobate who are not his sheep. They do not follow him. They went back, and walked no more with him (6:66). See also 9:62; Hebrews 10:38; 1 John 2:19.

The Shepherd's Grace and Gift—He Acknowledges Them

"And I give unto *them* [the sheep] eternal life," and not to those "not my sheep" (v. 26), not to his enemies who took up stones to stone him (v. 31). The pronoun "them" refers to the sheep, those chosen to be his sheep. They may be known by their outward conduct—they hear Christ's voice—and follow him.

The Shepherd's Grace and Gift to Them

"I give to them eternal life" (v. 28). No mere creature, no mere man could ever merit eternal life. It is a gift, and therefore the very opposite of payment or remuneration. Eternal life could never be *owed*. It is not a debt, for then it would no more be a gift. It is impossible for a debt to be a gift, or a gift to be a debt. That ordinary human life which man had as man, as God's creature, was a gift of mercy, mercy in the sense that it was intended to make man happy as God is happy. But it was a gift of the Creator. Man did not deserve his human life. Not even in the state of rectitude could man merit anything before God. By no scheme of works, according to law, or commandment, could man hope to win or gain eternal life. The most perfect and sinless creature could have the infinite boon of eternal life only as a mercy. God could never become man's debtor. Man as a creature is essentially the "friend-slave" of God, and as such owes everything to God. He has nothing which he has not received from God.

The Shepherd's Grace and Gift—He Preserves Them

"And they shall never perish." No, in no way shall God's elect ever perish. This is God's promise to his own. His promise comes to us of his free goodness. New life and preservation are no natural necessity. Therefore, by nature, and apart from sovereign goodness, we are all in danger of apostasy. This is a very real danger to fear. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). But where we have the promise of God we need have no fear. For God's promise gives us the right to know that we have a guarantee of eternal security, for his own word of promise is, "they shall never perish."

Notice that in verses 27 and 28 there is the durative present tense: "My sheep hear," keep on hearing; "I know," keep on knowing them; "and they follow," keep on following me; "and I give," keep on giving them eternal life. These are all unconditional statements! That may be, replies the Arminian,

but to retain the gift of eternal life, there are certain conditions to be met, or the gift will be forfeited. Then with the gift lost, its recipient goes lost. But Christ's own word denies this. He assures that recipients of eternal life shall *never* perish. They may backslide, but never perish. They may fall, but not fatally fall. But the Arminian wants to make the unconditional gospel conditional, as, *if* they follow me, they shall never perish. But understand the tense of the verb: the sheep *do* follow Christ, and they *keep following* him. What guarantees that they shall keep on following, and shall never perish is the strength of Christ's hand, and the strength of that hand of God the Father Almighty, double divine strength which guarantees "they shall never perish."

But the Arminian wants to insert all kinds of conditions where scripture is entirely unconditional. Conditionality implies that it is possible that the conditions shall never be met, and then the sheep would perish. But the simple, unconditional promise of God is, they shall never perish. Free will, however, will always deny this, and maintains that though none can pluck them out of Christ's and/or the Father's hand, yet the sheep are free to jump out of their hands. But if any sheep, supposing they could do so, did so, they would perish. The Arminian, then, makes God a liar.

Note: "Conditional theology" implies "Free-willism," and both of these evils form Arminianistic humanism. "Free will" implies not only that a saved person may be lost, but may commit spiritual suicide by "deciding" to jump out of the Son's and the Father's hands. But it is not believers who fall away and go down lost to the end. Unbelievers, who are already lost fall away to become finally lost. See Hebrews 6:4–6, 9; 10:38–39. The regenerated man's will is not free to choose to be unregenerated (1 John 3:9). Nor are the unregenerate regenerated by free will (John 1:12–13).

Eternal life is part of my only comfort. "What is thy only comfort in life and in death? That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ...and [that]...by His Holy Spirit, He *also assures me of eternal life...*" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1, Q & A 1. Ital. added) (See also 2 Cor. 1:22).

Chapter 9

The Sheep's Security

John 10:28–31

In Christ's Hand

The sheep's security and preservation are guaranteed by: (1) Christ's death on their behalf, (2) his resurrection from the dead (10:11, 15, 18) in order to give them eternal life. Eternal life itself is *the* guarantee of their security. "And they shall never perish" means that they shall be saved from everlasting perdition. Literally John recorded it, "In no way shall they perish forever." There is an eternal life (Romans 2:7, John 17:3). There is also an eternal destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is not annihilation, that is, extinction of being, but is continued conscious existence in everlasting woe, misery, and punishment. The sheep are saved from all this. They never come into condemnation (Romans 8:1). The wicked shall be cast into hell (Romans 9:17). But the sheep shall never go down to hell. Not one of them is ever lost (John 17:12). They cannot be kept from their eternal inheritance, for in the day of judgment he shall say to his sheep, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). This inheritance is reserved in heaven just for them (1 Peter 1:4). He gives it to them (Luke 12:32), and also preserves them to it (1 Peter 1:5).

He keeps them by his own power. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (10:29). This implies a mighty contest for these sheep. Satan desires to have them. (See the plural *you* in "Satan hath desired to have *you*" Luke 22:31). The Shepherd is so careful about them that he keeps them within his fold, always under his eye (Ps. 32:8), and under his special protection: "All his saints are in thy hand" (Deut. 33:3). The enemies of the sheep attempt to seize them out of his hand. But they are not able. "No one is able (*oudeis dunatai*) to seize them out of my Father's hand." Not only that, they shall not (*ouch...tis*), not any one ever shall, do it.

In the Father's Hand

But the Arminian at this point contends that although no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand, no man, no demon, not Satan himself, nevertheless the sheep, believers, are still "free agents." They still have "free will" and so could *jump* out of the Father's hand, if they chose to do so. Do the sheep have the power of will to be regenerated or to remain unregenerated? The Arminians think so! Then after willing themselves to be regenerated, and thus enter the kingdom of God (John 3), can they still choose to jump out of the kingdom to become unregenerate again, and so go lost and perish forever? Not even one of the most avid of free-willists, Billy Graham, will go that far into crazy Arminianism.

Didn't Jesus have free will? Didn't he experience the power of the Father upholding, strengthening, and keeping Him (Isa. 49:5, 8)? Could he then, by his own sovereignly free will jump out of his Father's hand? Could Jesus sin? Could he, as God, lie? Can the regenerated believer, saved from his sins, choose to revert to an unregenerated sinful life? "Whosoever is [has been] born of God doth not commit sin" (5:18). But it is "free will" we are up against here. "Free will," so blasphemous to the Arminian, enables the sheep so to will that he will jump out of those two divine hands. The great apostle Paul wrote that this is impossible. For "who [literally, *what*] shall separate as from the love of Christ?" Then Paul deals the death-blow to "free-willism": "neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, *nor any other creature* [or *creation*—and "free will" is a creation of man] shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8:35–39).

Christ's sheep are in his hands, given to him and put there by his Father. When did that happen? It was done from all eternity, when they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. "They were in the hands of Christ before they were in the loins of Adam; and were preserved in him, notwithstanding Adam's fall, and through the ruins of it" (John Gill). They are engraved upon the palms of his hands which is an indelible imprint, and can never be obliterated. They are in the hollow "of his hand" (Ps. 95:7). But according to Arminian "free-willism" there is the possibility that ultimately Christ have *no* sheep in his hand.

"My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all," greater than all gods, than all creatures (including the wills of men), than all beings (angels and demonic), than all enemies (God's or the sheep's). There is another reading, in the Latin Vulgate version, which reads, "*What* my Father gave to me is greater than all," meaning the church given to him, built on him, stronger than all its enemies, and against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. "So that these sheep have a double security..., in the hands of Christ, and...in the hands of the Father of Christ" (John Gill). There is no more possibility that they can be snatched out of the hands of the one than out of the hands of the other. This is clear from the next verse.

In the Divine Unity

"I and my Father are one" (v. 30). The text in the original reads, "I and *the* Father are one." This is important, for when Jesus says, "my Father," he is speaking as *the mediator* in reference to his human nature, but whenever he refers to "the Father," he speaks from the standpoint of his *deity*. Thus he says, in John 14:28, "My Father is greater than I." There Jesus speaks in his humiliation wherein he made himself of no reputation. But it would, at the worst, be blasphemy, and at the best be folly for a mere creature to say this. Then, let Jews, Arians, Socinians, and all Unitarians take note of this. This is the divine person of the Son speaking in reference to his human nature. On the other hand, "I and *the* Father are one" is the divine person of the Son speaking in his divine nature, affirming the Father and the Son's unity of essence. See 5:18, 1:14, 18. "We are *one*," one *thing* means one essence, one being. As the Nicene Creed has it, "I believe in one God...and in one Lord Jesus Christ...God of God...being of one substance with the Father..."

In "I and *the* Father" Jesus speaks about *two* persons, a plurality shown also in the verb, which is one word in Greek, "*we are*." The two persons never become one *person*. Therefore Jesus does not say, nor mean, "We are *one person*," but "we are one [*hen*, one thing, one substance]." The Son is of one substance with the Father. Inspired scripture at this point, in the use of *hen*, refutes neo-Arianism, the Jehovah's Witness heresy, which denies the unity of essence; and *esmen* (we are) refutes Sabellianism (and Oneness Pentecostalism), which denies the plurality and the diversity of the persons.

Neither the Father nor the Son act independently of one another. What the Son does in securing the safety of his sheep, the Father does likewise. "That thou mayest not suppose that Christ is weak, and the sheep are in safety through the Father's power, He addeth, 'I and the Father are one.' As though He had said, 'I did not assert on account of the Father no man plucketh them away, as though I were too weak to keep the sheep. For I and the Father are one'" (Chrysostom). It is power, invincible power, which here fills all Christ's discourse.

The Athanasian Creed expresses it well: "3. Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. 5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. 6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal."

"...the *Jews*..." (v. 31). In this gospel, the designation, "the Jews," has a sinister implication, referring to the enemies of Jesus with utmost hostility. There were especially the Sanhedrin: high priests, scribes, elders. These Jews understood what Jesus meant in saying, "I and the Father are one," that he thereby claimed absolute equality with the Father. Look at 5:17-18. This was why they had charged him with

blasphemy (v. 33), and they would have been right in their adjudgment of blasphemy, if Jesus had not been God. They had in mind the Levitical law (Lev. 21:16), that the blasphemer must be stoned to death. However, in their political situation they no longer had the power to execute capital punishment. Therefore, to take up stones to stone him was rebellion against the powers that exist. They knew from their own scriptures that the Messiah was *God*. For “all the angels of God” are commanded to worship him (Heb. 1:6; Deut 32:43, LXX), which also would be blasphemy if he were not God! The Son is addressed as God, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever...” (Hebrews 1:8). He is the one who has “laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands” (Heb. 1:10). Assuming that they all clearly understood these messianic prophecies that the Messiah was *God*, nevertheless they did not believe that Jesus was, or could be, the Messiah.

Therefore, “the Jews carried stones *again* to stone him”. This settles the meaning of verse 30. They were absolutely correct in understanding Jesus to be saying that he is equal to and essentially one with God. In chapter 8:58 “Jesus said, ‘Before Abraham *was*, I *am*.’” There is only one honest interpretation of this verse. Jesus here asserts his eternity. He states that he is the great I AM, the eternal God. In 8:59, “Then took they up stones to cast at him.” The Jews themselves understood Jesus as teaching his deity as the eternal God. He boldly claimed to be Jehovah. That exasperated them, for they did not believe him, regarding him as a mere man, and therefore, a blasphemer. The sheep are never in *any* power of man, but are forever secure in the power of the eternal God.

Chapter 10

Jesus One with the Father

John 10:32–42

Argued from the Heavenly Power of His Works

“Jesus answered them” (v. 32), and note, he could have done so with fire from heaven, “Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?” Thus he answered these stony-heart hearers, and with words, says Matthew Henry, that “should have melted a heart of stone.”

The entire ministry of the Lord up to this point consisted of “beautiful works,” that is, eminent works, *great* works, including not only his miracles, but his discourses in preaching and teaching. These works were given him to do “from the Father,” and on completion of them he could say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (17:4).

Since these works were “from the Father,” they were not natural works; they were far above the reach and course of nature. All his works had the effect of turning the earthly into the heavenly. In their heavenly beauty they were *shown* to the Jews, so that they could not help seeing their excellence, that they must be from the Father and that they actually visible revealed that Jesus and the Father are one! For they were done by the Son sent from the Father, and by the Father through the Son.

“Many good works I showed you,” any one of which should have convinced the Jews that he and the Father are one; that he is no blasphemer, and so should not be stoned, but worshipped.

Argument Lost Upon the Jews

“The Jews answered him, saying, ‘For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God’” (v. 33). The carnal mind, the mind of the flesh is enmity against *God*, and here it is against God incarnate. But says Matthew Henry, “they would scarcely allow any of his works to be” rated as *good*. His healing of the impotent man (chapter 5) and the man born blind (chapter 9) were black-listed as crimes of his because done on the sabbath day.

Instead of following Christ’s argument to its logical conclusion, they ignore it and (1) pretend zeal for the law (Lev. 24:16). Wicked enemies and persecutors of Christ’s church have the mark of pretended zeal for God’s glory, and a feigned horror of blasphemy. Examples of this we have in the false accusers of Naboth, in the perjured witnesses against Stephen, and in the Roman Catholic persecutors of the Spanish Inquisition. (2) Their proof of the crime was, “Thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” They could and should have known that the Messiah, promised in the Old Testament, was to be a *man*: “the man of thy right hand...the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself” (Ps. 80:17). “These expressions apply in the fullest and most perfect sense” to the Messiah. Hebrews 1:5 is conclusive. God never said this of any earthly king. The title, *the Son of Man*, the Jews *knew* applied to the Messiah. They could and should have known that the Messiah prophesied of in Scripture is *God*. Read Hebrews 1 and the Old Testament passages quoted in that chapter.

There is a mere man yet to come who shall “make” himself “God,” as, namely, the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2, and at this moment there is the Pope who calls himself, Lord God the Pope. This is the blasphemy of Antichrist.

Spiritually, these Jews could not be any worse off than they were. Jesus told them just how bad their case was. (1) *God* was not their Father (8:42, 44); (2) they had *never* seen the Father, *never* heard his voice (5:37–38); it was completely foreign to them; (3) they did not even know the Father (8:19); they were complete strangers to him; (4) the love of God was not in them (5:42). But these frightening facts

had never penetrated their consciousness. Therefore the argument of light throughout Jesus' discourse was lost on these sin-darkened souls.

Argument on the Ground of the Law

"Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, I [Jehovah] said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest because I said, I am the Son of God?'" (vv. 34–35). Christ's argument proving himself no blasphemer has two points: first, as taken from God's word. Reference is to Psalm 82:6 where judges/magistrates are called gods (*elohim*). Did anyone ever charge the psalmist with blasphemy for calling Israel's judges *gods*? Why then, Jesus asks, do you charge it on me? The argument proceeds from the Jews' own Scripture. Scripture is undebatable, and can never be corrected.

"Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified [so that he is holy and not a profane blasphemer] and sent into the world [so that he had been with God from eternity, and came from eternity], thou blasphemest!" Not even the demons, whom Christ came to condemn, ever charged him with blasphemy. In fact, he owned him the Holy One of God. Matthew Henry wrote that it was a wonder "that men who breathe in God's air should yet speak such things, or that men who have spoken such things should be suffered to breathe in God's air."

"Him whom the Father hath [from all eternity] sanctified [consecrated]" in his eternal decree of foreordination "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). "In the nature of the case, both acts (the sanctifying and the sending), precede the coming of Jesus into the world... Of no (mere) man do we ever read that God 'sent Him into the world'..." (Lenski). For this signifies a coming out of eternity into time. Thus Jesus strongly underscores his deity. The Jews were exasperated at Jesus' words in verses 30 and 36, understanding them as his claim to equality with God. What galled them was not that Jesus had claimed a unity of *disposition* with the Father, but that they understood him to speak of his unity of *nature*.

"Say ye of him"—"of him" are words not in the Greek. Therefore it would have been better to have rounded out the thought with "Say ye of me."

"Because I said, I am the Son of God?" This is what in effect he had said in verse 30, the equivalent to that statement, and exactly so the Jews had understood Jesus. See 19:7; Matthew 27:43. See further Jesus' own testimony in 5:17–18; 9:35–37; Matthew 26:63–64; Mark 14:61–62.

"If I do not the works of my Father, [as you erroneously suppose, then] believe me not [as on that presupposition you ought not]. But if I do, [and that must be plain to all who witness them], though ye believe not me [a stance taken not only absurd but dangerous; at least] believe the works [for then you will learn that if you believe the works you simply must believe me], that ye may know, and believe [knowledge and faith are not two different things: we know by believing—1 John 4:6], that the Father is in me, and I in him [or that I have all the attributes of the Godhead, and absolute equality with the Father]" (vv. 37–38, paraphrased).

"Believe the works"—for they proved him to be the Son of God. Then what of the Pope, who claims the title, "Lord God the Pope" and to be the head of the church? What are *his* works? What evidence does he give of a divine commission? Does the Pope back up his pompous titles with works of miracles and the pure preaching of the word?

"That ye may know and believe." It is Romish doctrine to teach that knowledge is one thing, and faith another: that I *know* 1 x 1 x 1 = 1, but that I *believe* that God is one in being and three in person. For faith is a certain knowledge. "I know him whom I have believed (2 Tim. 1:12).

"Believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." Modern Arians, as the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses (they are *not* his witnesses!) cannot reconcile these words with their Unitarian heresies. Their translation of the clause in John 10:33 is "...blasphemy, even because you, although being a man, make

yourself *a god*" (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures). The Jews never said this, this was not the thought that irritated them, but that Jesus being nothing but a mere man made himself *God!*

Argument Ended in Christ's Withdrawal

"Therefore they sought again to take him, but he escaped out of their hand" (v. 39). Matthew Henry wrote, "Because He persevered in the same testimony concerning Himself, they persisted in their malice against Him," then added this neat remark: "He *tied* the hands of those whose hearts He did not *turn*."

"And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode" (v. 40). Matthew Henry's artful remark here is, "The Bishop of our souls came not to be fixed in one see, but to go about from place to place, doing good."

Its Positive Effect

"And many resorted unto him...and many believed on him there" (vv. 41–42). Did they do so in true faith? (9:30–31, 37). We may believe that they did, being Christ's sheep, and, to being with, the fruit of John's ministry.

Further, as you look closely at Romans 6:1–10, NKJV, you notice that this section does not contain the exhortative nor the imperative. It is all factual/positional. We are not commanded to die to self, nor to crucify the old nature. The emphasis is all on our identification with Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen. Not until verse 11 do we have a command: "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then in verse 12 we are commanded, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." Further, verse 13, "Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." So that in verses 1–10 there is no command to *do* something, but there is the fact of our *knowing* something (v. 6), as namely the gaining of the right standpoint in our identification with Christ in his redemptive, justifying, and sanctifying work. It is knowledge of orientation to fact. On that basis we move on into the activity of faith as expressed in verses 11–14.