

I Am the Door

Scripture: John 10:1–10

Code: 43-52

Turn in your Bible to John chapter 10, John chapter 10. This is a very familiar portion of Scripture, and it's a rather extensive text, running deep into the 10th chapter, beyond where we'll go today, looking at the true Shepherd, the true Shepherd.

It's one of the most beautiful word pictures in all of the New Testament. It is called in verse 6 a figure of speech, a paroimia. It's not a parable because it doesn't start "the kingdom of God is like." It is a word picture and, as I said, one of the most magnificent word pictures in all Scripture, really. And it is a word picture that is not isolated to John 10. John 10 really draws on the shepherd imagery which covers Scripture from beginning to end.

And I found myself saying, "I can't imagine a more encouraging word to give our missionaries, as well as all the rest of us, than to look at this incredible picture." It's about the true Shepherd, and its context is very important. You will note that there is no real break between chapter 9 and 10. I know it says "Chapter 10" but it's the same day, the same scene, the same people, and Jesus responding to the same event. Chapter 9 was about a man born blind who had become a beggar, and Jesus gave him his sight. And then you remember the beggar and Jesus were confronted by the leaders of Israel, who showed nothing but disdain for the beggar and nothing but violent hatred for Jesus. They threw the beggar out and they intended to kill Jesus.

In a sense, the main characters in chapter 9 are the leaders of Israel and they are false shepherds, false shepherds, who devour their people, who fleece their people. In contrast to that, in chapter 10, to the same disciples and the same Pharisees with the blind beggar standing there and the rest of the Jews gathered, Jesus contrasts Himself with them and He actually says in verse 11, "I am the good Shepherd who lays His life down for His sheep."

I want us just to look at the first 10 verses. " 'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.' With that verse, he describes the Pharisees and the false shepherds. They are thieves and robbers who have no authority and no right and no ownership of the sheep that they seek to fleece and destroy. "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.' This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.' "

Leaders of Israel were thieves and robbers who came to kill, who came to destroy. Jesus is the true Shepherd who came to give life. The picture of the shepherd here is simply a word picture. And as I say, Jesus doesn't even identify Himself as the Shepherd until verse 11. The story kind of stands on its own because it's so familiar to the population of Jerusalem and Judea. They not only understood the agrarian reality of shepherding and caring for a flock, but they knew enough about the Old Testament to know that God Himself was presented as a Shepherd. So they understood that the temporal, earthly aspect of shepherding, but they also understood that that was an illustration of God's care for His own people.

On the human side, shepherding was very common in the land of Israel. The main part of Judea is a central plateau, and it's very rocky, and it wasn't good for crops, and so it became the place where sheep would graze. From Bethel to Hebron is about 35 miles of plateau and maybe 15 to 17 miles wide. The ground is rough and stony. Grass was sparse, but that was where the sheep would normally graze. The familiar figure of the Judean hills and the shepherd was known by everyone.

The life of a shepherd, however, was hard. It was arduous. It was outside against all the elements, the heat and the cold. There is little grass in the area. Sheep tend to wander. There is no protective wall out there on the plateau, or the hillside, or wherever they were. The narrow plateau was bordered by precipices and crevices into which the sheep could fall. Easy for sheep to get lost and easy for predators to assault them, kill them. Shepherd's task was relentless vigilance, constant attention, danger was all around, danger from animals, danger from thieves and robbers who came to steal the sheep for the wool and for the meat.

One historical writer says that "Night, you meet the shepherd and he is coming back to the fold sleepless, weather beaten, leaning on his staff." Every day was a long, arduous day. There were shepherds in the Old Testament that were well known to the Jewish people. Abraham was a shepherd. Isaac was a shepherd. Jacob was a shepherd. Moses was a shepherd. He tended the flocks in Midian, the flocks of his father-in-law. David was a shepherd boy. Constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for his flock were the necessary characteristics of a good shepherd.

But the most well-known Shepherd in the Old Testament was God. Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is – " what? " - my Shepherd." Psalm 77:20 says, "You lead Your people like a flock." Psalm 79:13 says, "We Your people and the sheep of Your pastures will give thanks to You." Psalm 80:1 says, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock." Psalm 95 says, "He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." That is to say shepherding was very intimate.

But I want you to notice one portion of the Old Testament. It is the prophet Ezekiel and it's chapter 34, and I want you to turn to it. This gives us a dramatic picture of the contrast in John 9 and 10 between the false shepherds of Israel in our Lord's day and Himself as the true shepherd. Ezekiel 34. The Word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel the prophet and this is what the Lord says.

Verse 2, "Son of man – " that was a name by which God identified Ezekiel. "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without

feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek *for* them.

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: ‘As I live,’ declares the Lord God, ‘surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: “ Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.’ ” ’ ”

Then verse 11, “For thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.” God says, “ ‘I will bring them out from the peoples - ” the nations “ - gather them from the countries, bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,’ declares the Lord God.”

What is that talking about? Talking about the millennial kingdom, the kingdom yet to come. How is the Lord going to do this? Who is going to take this responsibility? Go down to verse 23. “I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the Lord have spoken.”

Wait a minute. David lived long before this. Who is He talking about? He’s talking about the Son of David, none other than Messiah. Messiah will become the one Shepherd who will gather His people, not only from Israel, but from all the countries and all the nations, and lead them into the glory of the final kingdom. Magnificent picture, magnificent picture.

“I’ll make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.” That’s the kingdom. When the Lord through the one Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, gathers all His people.

This is a prophecy, Ezekiel 34, fulfilled by Jesus. He is that one Shepherd. Let’s go from there to John 10 again. When you come into the New Testament, there are a number of places where Jesus is referred to as that one Shepherd. Matthew 18, Jesus is the Shepherd who will risk His life to seek and save the straying sheep. In Matthew 9, Jesus is the Shepherd who has pity on the people because they are “like sheep without a shepherd.” In Luke 12, He calls His true disciples His own “little flock.” I love what Peter calls him. First Peter 2:25, he calls the Lord Jesus the Shepherd of

our souls. And the writer of Hebrews in 13:20 in that great closing benediction says He is the great Shepherd of the sheep.

God, the Shepherd in the Old Testament of His people, God the one who brings judgment on the false shepherds and gathers His own sheep ultimately in a place of ultimate final blessing. But all of that comes through the one Shepherd who is Jesus Christ. So that's the background to this amazing portion of Scripture. He is utterly unlike the false shepherds, those Pharisees who are illustrated in the previous chapter. They are like the ones denounced in Ezekiel 34. The Pharisees, the Jewish leaders had set themselves up. They had seated themselves in Moses' seat, Jesus said in Matthew 23. They took something that wasn't theirs. They were false shepherds. They were deadly shepherds. They fleeced the sheep. That is, they took what they possessed and they slaughtered the sheep, destroying them. But now there is another shepherd, the true Shepherd, and it is none other than the Messiah.

Now with that as a bit of a background, let's look at the story and kind of watch it unfold. It starts with familiar words that are repeated often in the gospel of John, "Truly, truly," and that's because it's serious and solemn and sober, but it's also new. It's new. It's fresh. It's something you haven't heard before. And the picture here is of a fold. You will notice the fold in verse 1.

What is a fold? Each village would have in the village or right adjacent to the village a sheepfold, simply a pen. In each village, that pen would be a place where the sheep were brought at night to be safe. They would be out on the fields, out grazing during the day, and then at night the shepherd would lead them – sheep follow – the shepherd would lead them, and he would lead them into the fold. And there's a lot of history about this. The shepherd would bring them, each shepherd in the village would bring his sheep and all the village shepherds would put their sheep in one fold. That was the place of protection. So there were sheep in the fold that belonged to different shepherds.

But they would enter one at a time and the shepherd would stop each sheep with his rod and check each one out for wounds, perhaps, or some other thing that might be of disturbance or concern to him. He would check them over from front to back, and particularly the back because they have so much lanolin in their wool that they're easily plugged up and they can die. It was a messy and sometimes very dirty job, but that was the shepherd's role. And he would let them through one by one. He would drop his rod over the next one, and then when he had examined, let him in. That's why Ezekiel 20 tells us someday God will cause His people to pass under His rod, Ezekiel 20:37-38. He'll let them in one by one.

So the simple enclosure was surrounded by a wall, and when night came, all the sheep would come into that enclosure, and they would be let in one at a time so each shepherd could examine his sheep. Villages had many shepherds, and shepherds had some sheep. They weren't wealthy, generally speaking. They didn't have massive amounts of sheep. They knew their sheep. They knew their sheep. They would then hire a porter. The shepherds would go to rest and sleep after a day in the fields, and a hired hand – you'll notice down in verse 12, it refers to "a hired hand, and not a shepherd" – that's the same as the doorkeeper in verse 3, and his job was to close the door at night when all the sheep were in and the shepherds went to their place of rest. And he was the guard for the night. He had the night shift to guard the sheep. That was his job.

In the morning, as the sun came up, the shepherds would reappear and they would call their sheep. They would call their sheep out of the fold and lead them back out to pasture. Only the shepherds

were allowed to get by the porter, by the gatekeeper. Thieves and robbers, if they came in the night, had to climb over the wall, and that's what you have here. You have the robbers who "climb up some other way" in verse 1.

It's a really vivid picture, but what is the imagery saying here? What are we looking at? Jesus doesn't actually say He's the good shepherd until verse 11, but what is the picture? It is simply this. The sheepfold, some have suggested that's the church. It's not. Because the shepherd leads people out of the fold. The shepherd doesn't lead people out of his church. Some people have even suggested it's heaven. No. He doesn't take people out of heaven, either. Pretty simple. You say, "What is the sheepfold?" In this case, it is Israel. It is Israel. It is Judaism. The sheepfold is Judaism. The sheep are the Jewish people. The great Shepherd, the good Shepherd, the true Shepherd comes to the fold of Israel as the true Messiah and calls his own sheep out of Judaism.

And not only that, go down to verse 16. And this is consistent with what we read in Ezekiel. "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold." Who is that? Another fold? "I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." There's the one Shepherd. What's the other fold? Gentiles, nations, countries of the world, Jew and Gentile, just as Ezekiel promised that God would gather his flock from all of the nations and all the countries. The fold, then, is whatever holds temporarily the sheep that belong to God: Judaism or the world.

What is the door? The shepherd enters, verse 2 says, "by the door." The shepherd of the sheep is allowed to come in the door. What is that? That's privilege, right, authority, ownership. The guard is not going to let anybody but the shepherd in. And this is to indicate to us that Christ is the rightful Shepherd of His sheep. He has the privilege to come in and call His sheep and take them out. He has fulfilled all Messianic prophecy. He has demonstrated by words and works that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Throughout the gospel of John, He has been testified to by the Holy Spirit. In the beginning of the gospel of John, by the early disciples, by John the Baptist, by His words, by His works, even by the voice of demons. Jesus conformed to every Messianic promise. He is the rightful Shepherd. He is the one sent from the Father to be the one Shepherd, to lead the elect of Israel out of the fold of Judaism into the green pastures and still waters of salvation.

Who are the thieves and robbers who climb up another way? Any false shepherds. In this case, the Pharisees, the scribes, the self-appointed, self-glorified false shepherds who want to fleece and slaughter the sheep. The scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites who make two-fold sons of hell out of their converts, their victims, stealing, slaughtering with their false doctrine. False shepherds are everywhere. They're everywhere all the time, not just then and not just in Ezekiel's time. But all through human history, since the fall of man.

There is even yet to come a very unique false shepherd prophesied in Zechariah 11:15. "The Lord said to me, 'Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat *sheep* and tear off their hoofs. Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock! A sword will be on his arm and on his right eye! His arm will be totally withered and his right eye will be blind.'" Do you know what shepherd that is? The antichrist, the final false shepherd.

So Jesus, in contrast to the false shepherds of the past and the false shepherds in the future, and the ultimate false shepherd is the true and good Shepherd who doesn't take life, but gives it. There He stands, looking at those false shepherds on that day with that blind beggar there, the disciples there, others there. He has come to lead His own whom He knows by name out of Judaism into the green pastures of the new covenant and the blessing that God provides through salvation. There He stands in stark contrast to the false shepherds. "And to Him – " verse 3 " - the doorkeeper opens - " because He has the authority and the right. He opens to the true shepherd to come and take His sheep " - and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

It's a beautiful picture. Sheep knew their master's voice like a pet does. And by the way, they named their sheep. That's not hard to understand. We name animals. You don't have a dog with no name. You probably don't even have a goldfish with no name. Sheep knew their shepherd's voice because they heard it all the time, became familiar. A sheep might be called "Gimpy," or "Blacky," or whatever, whatever idiosyncrasy was used or event was used to find a name. The shepherd always knew his own sheep because he examined them every day and he spent the whole waking day with them. He knew every mark on every one of them. He knew them from top to bottom, back to front.

And like that shepherd in Israel, the great shepherd knows His sheep, too. He knows their name because their names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. He knows who they are. The picture here is really stunning. The true Shepherd has come to call Jewish people out of Judaism, to call Gentile people out of the folds of false religion and judgment across the world. He knows who they are. He calls them by name. They know His voice, and He leads them out.

In working a little bit with the material in this book on the parables, opening chapter is a bit polemical as I can tend to be, and it argues against this trend today. Preachers are saying we need to be storytellers. We've got to stop with the doctrine, stop with the theology, stop with complexities and depth. Jesus was a storyteller. He told these simple stories. And so they have literally made enemies out of theology in stories. So the book on the parables has a subtitle. This is the subtitle: *Jesus' Theology of Salvation in Stories*. The stories that Jesus told are so profound they are almost unfathomable. You're beginning to feel that in this, aren't you? It all started out pretty simple, and the more you think about it and the deeper you go with it, the more profoundly theological it becomes.

Shepherd always knows his sheep. They always know him. He calls them by name and the sheep follow because they know his voice. Verse 5. "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." That is – you're getting pretty deep now into theology. It's pretty serious theology here. Divine sovereignty, irresistible grace, effectual calling, this is all theological. What is our Lord saying here? He's giving us the theology of salvation. Here's the theology. The good Shepherd has already chosen His sheep. He's already named them. He knows who they are. He possesses full authority and sole authority to come into Judaism and into the nations of the world and the countries of the world to find His sheep. He knows them. He calls them by name. They recognize His voice. They follow Him. And listen to this. They will not follow a stranger. They will not.

Missionary friend, I'm telling you, that ought to encourage your heart. You're not going to lose any of

God's sheep to the false teachers that you battle. They won't follow. They know their shepherd's voice. That's the miracle of regeneration. How deep does this go? Deeper than I have – unless you want to be here until 6:00. People say, "Oh, you know, Jesus told simple stories, and here He's talking to these unbelievers and He's talking to these disciples who are kind of – they're kind of hard to teach because they seem to miss the point of so much. And you wouldn't want to introduce any complexity to them. Keep it really simple."

I don't think so. This is so profound. This fulfills the promise of the Old Testament that God will gather a flock from the world and bring that flock into the glory of a kingdom, a kingdom in which they will nothing but blessing upon blessing upon blessing, and that will move into an eternal condition of blessing.

So He comes, He calls them by name, they know His voice, they follow Him, He leads them out, and then it tells us this. Verse 4, "When he puts forth all his own, – " this is *ekball*. He has to get them out. He has to – it's an effort to get them out of the fold. We understand that. We could talk about that. It's hard to believe. It's hard to repent. Human nature resists it. It's a battle for the soul, right? He calls them by name. They hear, but not without a struggle. Not without the agonizing. He has to throw them out of the comfort of their worldly condition, their religious trappings.

But once He puts them forth, He goes ahead of them, and the sheep do what? They follow. They follow. "If you abide in My Word, you're My real disciple," John 8. He doesn't have to keep pushing us. Once He pushed us out through the miracle of regeneration, once He made us His own, once we recognized His voice, once we began to share His life, once we were set free from the bondage of the world's fold, we follow willingly, and we will not follow a stranger.

Please notice that the shepherd leads. He goes ahead of them to make the pathway, to clear the danger, to find the water, the pasture, the provision. This is a security, protection, provision. Everything is bound up in sanctification as He leads us into eternal glory and blessing. What a thrill to know all of this, and isn't it striking, really, that Jesus is unpacking this amazing, deep theology to some people who have no understanding, don't even get it, as verse 6 says, and to the disciples who were so new in understanding? But these are truths that all of us must know. He leads them out of bondage. He leads them to green pastures, still water.

I remember as a young boy my father had a hymn that he used to love to sing and so we sang it a lot in church. You may remember it. "He leadeth me, O blessed thought, O words of heavenly comfort fraught/Where'er I be, whate'er I do, it is His hand that leads me." That's the reality. The great Shepherd checks the danger, makes the path, finds the pasture, finds the water, as He leads us. This is salvation in all its beauty and its richness, sovereign salvation. And we follow.

Just another comment or two about verse 5. "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." Simple conclusion. People who are loyal to false teachers don't know the true Shepherd. Once we're out, once He has thrown us out of the fold of sin and death and judgment, we follow. We follow. We do not listen to a stranger. We follow faithfully. Not perfectly. We will never heed another voice. By the way, verse 5, there's a double negative, *ou m*, "a stranger they absolutely will not follow, but will flee." Matthew 24:24 says that "false Christs and and false prophets, if it were possible, would deceive the elect." But is it possible? No. That's why that's there. It's not possible.

Be encouraged, dear missionary. Be encouraged. Those who belong to God, those who belong to the true shepherd, they will hear His voice. They will follow. They will not hear the voice of a stranger. Nothing can break the bond between true sheep and the shepherd. "All that the Father gives to me – " John 6 " - will – " what? " - come to me." And no one comes to me unless the Father draws him. The robbers and the thieves, of course they couldn't understand this. In verse 6, "This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, they didn't understand what those things were which He had been saying to them."

Jesus then adds another word picture. This is one of the "I Am's" of the gospel of John. "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." I want you to see the picture here. Here's a second metaphor. He's not only the Shepherd that comes in to take His sheep. He's the door. He's the only way out. It's not about going in, it's about going out. And the idea of going in and out means moving with freedom when He leads you out of that fold. And it's only through Him. He alone is the door. He repeated again down in verse 9. He leads you out and there is a freedom from bondage.

If anyone goes literally through me, passes through me, he will be saved. Mark that word, underline it, draw a circle around it. That's the first time you move from the word picture, from the metaphor to reality, to the theological statement of fact. This is about what? This is about being saved. This is about salvation. This is the saving shepherd. "He'll be saved, and – " then he's free to " - go in and out and find pasture."

This we could say is the liberty that we enjoy. We've come out of that fold and we are now free in a beautiful way, really. It's really incredible to think about, but we can roam the world. We can go everywhere. We can enjoy the common grace of God that's dispersed throughout the world. We have the right to enjoy it all. We have nothing to fear, do we? What can separate us from the love of God in Christ? Can anything separate us? Romans 8. Absolutely nothing can separate us. So we go in and out and it shows a liberty now, a freedom. There is no enemy who can destroy us. We have nothing to fear. We're safe. We can roam free. No threat is held over our head.

Romans 8, it should be read often because it's intending by the use of hyperbole to show the protection that every believer has. What will separate us from the love of our shepherd? "Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword?" No. "I'm convinced that neither death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, or any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And we have a bond with our Shepherd that will go right on into the kingdom and then right on into eternity.

So the Lord is the Shepherd and the Shepherd is the door. And God feeds us and sustains us with green pastures through our whole spiritual life. We have received all things pertaining to spiritual life and godliness, have we not? All things. Fully sustained, fully supplied. But what is it that is our food? What is that pasture? Well, it's the Word, isn't it? It's the Word. "Thy Word was found," Jeremiah says, "and that's what became my food." We hear His voice. We know His voice. Where does His voice come to us? Through here. Through the Word. As the Spirit gives life to the Word, we follow the Scripture. We love the Word. We say with David, "Oh, how I love your law." It is our delight.

The contrast ends in verse 10 and it's stark. False shepherds come to "steal and kill and destroy." I think all of us, and certainly me, have been vilified by people for exposing false doctrine. But I could not be a faithful shepherd before my own Shepherd if I didn't do my part to protect the sheep. If I say something against anything, it usually shows up in some headline in such an outrageous form that it incites anger and hostility. But it's really not about me being angry. It's about me trying to discharge a compassionate responsibility to those who are being victimized by false shepherds who want nothing but to strip them of everything they have and then eat them.

The thief comes to kill the sheep. There's some interesting stories. If a thief came at night and climbed the wall, he would have a difficulty getting the sheep out willingly because the sheep don't know his voice. And so very often, they would slit the throat of the sheep in the fold and throw it over the wall. They knew that. They knew the kind of work that robbers did. They would take the wool and then eat the sheep. The thief comes to kill, comes to destroy after he has stolen. On the other hand, "I come that they may have life, and have *it perissos*, over the top."

What is salvation, then? Just summing it up, the Messiah comes, the Savior comes, He comes to the fold of Judaism and the fold of the Gentile world. His sheep are already known to Him because the Father has identified them and given them a name and written it down before the foundation of the world. He knows who they are. He enters the door because He has full authority and right to do so. And out of the world and out of Judaism, He selects His own, calls them by name. This is irresistible grace. This is the effectual call. This is a call unto life. This is regeneration. They follow.

They follow because this is a supernatural work of God that draws them out of sin and death and darkness and blindness. They follow. They know His voice. They follow Him. They go through Him, He alone being the door. They come out and then they roam the world and enjoy all the rich provision and protection that their shepherd provides for them. This is salvation. And one day, we will enjoy this at a level that was described by Ezekiel 34 in the millennial kingdom when the earth is completely rejuvenated and restored, and that will be followed by the eternal state. Unfortunately, false shepherds and false teachers destroy people. And Peter says many follow their pernicious ways.

I want to close by just looking to something Peter wrote, 1 Peter 5. You can look at 1 Peter 5 for a minute. Just to kind of keep things in perspective, this is to me and to all of you who serve the Lord as missionaries, and pastors and leaders. "I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, - " that's Peter. He says this. "Shepherd the flock of God." What a great description, "the flock of God." And what a sobering responsibility, to "shepherd the flock of God." That's what we all do. The ones who He identified, they belong to Him. He called them out. They came. They heard His voice. They follow. They will follow until they enter into eternal glory.

"Shepherd the flock of God, exercising oversight not under compulsion, - " not because you have to - but voluntarily, - " just for the sheer privilege of it " - according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, - " not for money " - but with eagerness; not as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but prove to be examples to the flock." Wow. So we are to be Christlike to the flock. We literally shepherd the flock of God as under-shepherds under Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd. And then verse 4, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." I think when we get to heaven, we're going to know the Lord Jesus as the Chief Shepherd, and He will

have for all faithful under-shepherds the full richness of the unfading crown of glory.

So be encouraged, faithful missionary. The Lord knows His sheep. He's chosen them. He's named them. The one Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, possesses full authority to come into this world and to call His sheep. He calls them out of this world. He calls them to Himself. He calls them by name. They all follow. They will not follow anyone else. He leads them from the fold of the world into the blessings of salvation in this age, the age to come, and the eternal kingdom. He goes before them to provide all they need and to give them complete protection. And He's called you to be His under-shepherd in this wondrous ministry.

Father, we thank You that You have given us this rich Word, and we know that we have just scratched the surface of all these things, but it's enough to almost overwhelm us. How magnificent is your Word. How true is it. Each passage shines like some glorious diamond, but in perfect harmony with every other passage. And the more we see it, the more clearly it shines as having been cut by a divine mind. We thank You for this truth. Thank You for calling us as your sheep.

We thank You, Lord, that You have also said that whoever comes to You, You will not turn away. And we pray today that Your Holy Spirit might prompt the heart of some who are Yours but have not yet been called. Call them this day, lest they live another day without the blessings and the benefits of Your provision and protection. Call some even from this congregation this day, as well as everywhere around the world where the truth is proclaimed, into Your fold, into Your flock. Free them from the confines, the restrictions of the world. Set them free to go in and out and find blessing. Do Your work, we pray.

Father, we ask that You would do what we can't do, for certain, and accomplish Your will in every life. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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