

**Mini Bible College**

**INTERNATIONAL BOOKLET TWENTY-FIVE**

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**VERSE BY VERSE**

**(Chapters 8-10)**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the third in a series of six booklets, which are providing notes for those who have heard our one hundred and thirty broadcasts that present a verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of John. If you do not have the first two booklets, I encourage you to obtain them so that you will have a foundation that will provide some continuity you will find helpful as you read this booklet.

I remind you that the Apostle John is the author of this Gospel. He made his purpose very clear when he told us why he wrote this fourth Gospel: “And truly, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” (20:30,31)

Let us now continue our study of how John presents Jesus the Christ to us that we might believe and have life in His name.

## Chapter One

### “Three Facts of Sin and Salvation”

(8:1-36)

In the seventh chapter of the Gospel of John we read that when Jesus taught, He was the greatest Teacher in the world and when He preached, He was the greatest Preacher in the world. How I would love to have heard that great sermon He preached, which is recorded in very abridged form in that chapter (7: 37-39). As we might expect, there was a divided response to His great preaching.

After the events described in Chapter Seven, we read that everyone went to their own home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. That was His custom. When other people went home, He would find a solitary place to pray. We then read that at dawn, He is in the courts of the Temple, with many people gathered around Him, and He sits down to teach them. When the Jewish rabbis taught sitting down, that posture was a symbol of their authority.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand in shame before the group and said to Jesus: “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. Now what do you say?”

Their question was a trap. They believed He would disagree with Moses and they wanted to discredit Him. I find it interesting

that they believed He would disagree with Moses. It must have been obvious from His teaching and from the way He related to people that He was merciful, and that He loved unconditionally. They do not see how He is going to be true to His practice of passing the Law of God through the prism of the love of God before applying it to the lives of people, even sinners, and still remain true to the letter of the Law of Moses.

Jesus knelt down and was writing on the ground with His finger. When they persisted with their question, He eventually straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Then He knelt down again and continued writing on the ground.

In response to His question, those who had recommended the condemnation and execution of this woman, began leaving, one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her. “Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?” “No man, Lord,” was her response.

The subtle, deeper meaning here is that no man has condemned her, but Jesus is more than a man. According to the question with which Jesus answered the question of the religious leaders, the only man there who had the right to throw the first stone that day was Jesus. That makes His words to her the most beautiful

words this sinner ever heard: “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”

In the Gospel of John, make the observation that one of the ways Jesus teaches is what we might call “the symbolic act”. The prophets liked to teach by using symbolic acts. Jeremiah was the champion of this preaching style and Ezekiel was called the “pantomime prophet” because he acted out his sermons.

Jeremiah once took a large vase into the Temple when the Temple was crowded. He smashed the vase into tiny pieces on the floor, and then preached a powerful sermon, in which he essentially declared: “This is what God is going to do to this nation if you do not repent of your sins, and He is going to use the Babylonians to do it!” We can be certain that Jeremiah got the attention of those who heard that sermon before he preached that powerful message! Many of the prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel preached by using symbolic acts.

In the spirit of the prophets, observe how many great discourses of Jesus recorded in this Gospel begin with a symbolic act from Jesus. The entire second chapter could be classified that way. In Chapter Three His most dogmatic declaration is preceded by His interview with Nicodemus. In Chapter Four He precedes the claim that He is the Living Water that can quench our thirst and become a spring from which others drink living water. In the same chapter, His great teaching about sowing and reaping a spiritual harvest is preceded by an interview with a very thirsty woman who discovered

the Living Water and became a spring from which others made the same discovery.

Then He precedes that great dialog with the religious establishment, through which He teaches many things, with the healing of that man at the Pool of Bethesda. In Chapter Six He fed five thousand hungry families, and then He preached that He was the Bread of Life.

Chapter Eight begins with another symbolic act, which is His loving word to this woman who is a sinner. There is no question about the fact that she is a sinner, or that she was caught in the act of adultery. Jesus will follow the symbolic act of this interview with a dynamic and eloquent sermon about sin.

When Jesus responded to the question of the scribes and Pharisees with His profound question, it is interesting that, beginning with the oldest and working down to the youngest, one translation reads, "being convicted by their own conscience, one by one they left and did not throw any stones, until only Jesus and the woman were left there."

There has been much speculation about what Jesus wrote on the ground while He was apparently ignoring these accusers. I read one old Puritan commentator who suggested that He may have been writing the names of the men in that group who had had sex with this woman. Although that is pure speculation and reading into the text

something that is not there, it does make us wonder what He did write on the ground.

Some suggest that He wrote commandments, which these people realized they had broken. The fact that He was God and knew what was in men gives rise to infinite speculation. It may be that He merely wrote on the ground because He was ignoring them. The heart of this event was His attitude toward sin and the way He related to a guilty sinner.

One of the ways we reveal opinion of ourselves is the way we compare ourselves to others. When these religious leaders accused sin in the life of this woman, Jesus wisely asked, "Are you without sin? If you are without sin, be the first one to throw a stone." The oldest realized more quickly than the youngest that they were sinners. If you do not think you are a sinner, we might ask, "How old are you?" Those who are fifty will probably have a more honest answer to this question than those who are twenty.

In the third chapter of this Gospel, we are told that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (16-18). He did not merely preach that truth. He demonstrated that dimension of His Gospel message. I believe sinners could read that in His eyes and facial expression when He looked at them.

Why was it that sinners appear to have loved Jesus and to be with Him? When He went to the banquets of the publicans and

sinners, they not only felt comfortable with Him; they seemed to love having Him there. Was it because He laughed at their risqué jokes, or approved what they were saying and doing? Never!

I am convinced that it was because He loved them, and they knew that He loved them. They could see it in His eyes. They could read it in His face. They could sense in the inflection of His voice that He did not condemn them. He showed and He told them that He did not condemn them.

He also expressed love for this woman when He said to her, "Go now and leave your life of sin." One of my favorite authors wrote that there are three facts of sin. One: Sin has a penalty. Two: Sin is a power. Three: Sin has a price tag. Those are the three facts of sin.

He also wrote that there are three facts of salvation. One: the penalty for sin has been cancelled because of the death of Jesus Christ. The first fact of sin has been overcome by the first fact of salvation - by what Jesus did when He died on the cross.

Two: The second fact of salvation is that the Holy Spirit is a Power strong enough to control the power of sin. "He Who is in you, is greater than he who is in the world." (I John 4:4) That is the way this same apostle expresses the second fact of salvation in his epistle of assurance at the end of the New Testament. If you have believed; if you have taken that drink of Living Water, and the Holy Spirit is flowing out of you like a spring or a river, realize that the Holy Spirit

is also a Power great enough to overcome sin in your life. That is the second fact of salvation: Sin is a power, but the Holy Spirit is Power, Who is greater than the power of sin.

The third fact of sin is the most difficult to overcome through the miracle of salvation. What we might call "the stain" of sin, or "the price tag" of sin, leaves many irreversible scars. Paul wrote that sin pays its wages and he describes those wages as "death". (Romans 6:23) The metaphor of death in this context means the worst possible consequences.

The consequences of sin can be horrible, and are often irreversible. We cannot unscramble scrambled eggs, and many of the consequences of sin cannot be reversed. The worst consequences of sin can be described as "irreversible scars". For example, if we commit the sin of murder and come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, the future penalty we deserve for our sin has been overcome through the cross. However, that does not bring that murdered victim back to life, or free us from prison and the punishment our society believes we deserve.

There is a beautiful word in the Scripture that describes the way God overcomes the third fact of sin with the third fact of salvation. It is the word "justified". When we trust Christ for salvation and forgiveness, it is not only that we are forgiven or pardoned. It is just as if our sin never happened.

Think of your life as if your life were a cassette tape. Now imagine that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord will play this "tape" of your life. Before He plays the tape, where the sin begins He cuts the tape and where it ends He cuts it again. He splices all the sin out of that tape. When He plays the tape of your life or mine, it will be just as if we had never sinned.

In connection with this beautiful Gospel word, "justified," the expression "in His sight" is found more than one hundred fifty times in the New Testament. In His sight, there is no sin. Even though there are still scars on the horizontal level in human relationships, in the sight of God there are no scars. You may better appreciate the fact that this is very good news if I present an illustration.

Imagine that you are being tried for a crime of which you are innocent. Your trial is before a judge, in a courtroom that is crowded with spectators. You would want to have a lawyer who would be determined to convince the judge of your innocence rather than the crowded courtroom of spectators. A lawyer could convince the people attending your trial that you are innocent, but if the judge is not convinced, you will be found guilty. However, the spectators may think you are guilty, but if the judge thinks you are innocent, you will be set free. The important issue is what the judge believes about your guilt or innocence.

We learned in Chapter Five that the Father will judge no man but has committed all judgment to the Son (5:22). When we appear

before that Judge of all the earth, that horizontal dimension of judgment and justification by men will be meaningless. The only dimension of judgment and justification that will matter then will be what Christ thinks about our guilt or innocence. That makes these three words that appear so many times in the New Testament very Good News. The Gospel of justification is that “in His sight” it will be just as if we have never sinned!

However, there are sin scars in our own lives and on the horizontal level in our relationships. When we sin, we not only scar ourselves but we also scar those around us. This is what Martin Luther meant when he said that, “Sins are often twins.” Since we often sin with somebody else, we leave scars in their lives as well as our own.

In the words of James, when we go out into the world, it is as if we are wearing an immaculate white robe. There are no spots on it. When we sin, we get a spot on that robe and we probably put a spot on somebody else's robe. We keep spotting that robe with sin until, when we come to Christ, that robe looks like one of those robes that an artist wears, that has paint spots all over it.

Now when we come to Christ, in His sight, that robe is spotless. But on the horizontal level, where other people are concerned, it is very, very difficult, and sometimes it is impossible to erase those spots. On the horizontal level, even God cannot solve the problem of the stains, scars, or irreversible consequences of sin. That

is why I have observed that Jesus showed great love for this woman when He said, “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Since there are scars of sin that are irreversible on the horizontal level, when your child is out there in the world and you know that they are not walking with the Lord, the thing to pray for is, “Oh God, please may there be no irreversible scars!” That is why the Bible consistently teaches us not to sin. God loves us and wants to protect us from the terrible consequences of sin. There is nothing good about sin! May I repeat that? There is nothing good about sin. So, do not sin. “Go now and leave your life of sin!”

The Good News of the first two facts of salvation is that the penalty of sin has been removed and the power of sin can be conquered. But, on the horizontal level, that “price tag” of sin can be very costly. “The wages of sin is death!” What that means is that there is absolutely nothing good about the consequences of sin.

The dynamic truth to discover in the symbolic act with which this chapter begins is the attitude of Jesus toward a sinner, the attitude of that sinner toward Jesus, and attitude of Jesus toward sin. What this symbolic act teaches us is a beautiful illustration of the Gospel Jesus came to put in place and proclaim to this world.

We also have the attitude of Jesus toward these legalistic accusers. The story of the interview Jesus has with this sinner sets the stage for a magnificent sermon He preaches about sin and the consequences of sin. In my commentary on Chapter Seven (found in

booklet 24), I observed that Jesus was a great preacher. We are going to see that again here in Chapter Eight. They say when you read the Bible, if you look for nothing, you will probably find it. I would therefore like to give you an assignment. I would like to tell you what to look for in this eighth chapter of the Gospel of John.

Remember, this is still part of the hostile dialog Jesus has with the religious leaders. That dialog is now going to reach its zenith. And when it does, we are going to read the good news that some of these Jewish religious leaders were converted. You have a great Gospel passage here when we read: "Even as He spoke, many put their faith in Him. And Jesus spoke to those Jews who believed in Him, and He said, 'If you continue in My word, you will be My disciples indeed. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'"

Those who did not yet believe said to Him, "We are Abraham's descendants. We have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say we will be set free?" Jesus responded, "I tell you the truth. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in a home, but a son belongs to that home forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (8:30-36)

Like His powerful sermon on the last day of the feast, this dynamic message of Jesus was met with a sharply divided response. Some believed, but then at the end of the chapter we read: "At this,

they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds."

Although He preaches His sermon in the context of a dialog, as you read this chapter, try to summarize the essence of what He preached. As you summarize, observe that in effect, He says to these scribes and Pharisees: "I know where I have come from, and I know where I am going. But you do not know where I have come from, where I am, or where I am going because you are controlled by ignorance. You people are coming from ignorance. You are controlled by ignorance, and you are going to die in your ignorance, if you do not believe in Me!" (8:14, 19)

And then He essentially preaches: "You are coming from sin, you are in bondage to sin, and you are going to die in your sins if you do not believe in Me." (21-24) That is followed by: "Your father is the devil. You people are coming from the devil, you are under the control of the devil, and you are going to the devil if you do not believe in Me." (37-44) He also preaches: "I am from above, but you are from beneath." In other words, "You are coming from hell, you are controlled by the power of hell, and you are going to go to hell if you do not believe in Me." (23, 24)

That is a paraphrase and a summary of the way John records His sermon. See if you can pick that message out of the dialog in these verses that follow the story of the woman taken in adultery. Trace this dialog from where it begins in Chapter Five, all the way

out to the end of Chapter Eight, where some of them picked up stones to stone Him. When you paraphrase and summarize what He actually said to those Pharisees and teachers of the Law, you will understand why those who did not believe picked up stones to stone Him. What He said was not subtle, but dynamic and dogmatic, powerful preaching.

What do you think it must have been like to hear Him preach? I am not surprised that the religious leaders were incensed at what He preached and picked up stones to stone Him. I am also not surprised that many of these Jews believed as a result of His sermon. Jesus told them to continue in His Word and become His disciples indeed (30-36).

As you study this hostile dialog here in Chapter Eight, have you made your decision about Jesus? If you have been thinking with me through these first eight chapters of the Gospel of John, may I challenge you with a question? What do you personally believe about Jesus? If you have examined all these claims of Jesus, especially in chapters five, six, seven and eight, I wonder, do you believe Jesus when He makes these claims?

Jesus told those who believed to continue in His Word and become His disciples indeed (30-36). And are you ready to hear those words of Jesus, "Continue in My Word, and be My disciples indeed?" Or, should you be intellectually honest and stone Him out of your life forever? Remember that He only really leaves you these

choices: You can decide that He was a liar; You can be kind and decide that He was a lunatic, or you must decide to call Him your personal Lord and Savior.

That is who Jesus is, that is what faith is, and that is what life is in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John.

## **Chapter Two**

### **“Three Dimensions of Faith”**

(8:30-36)

When Jesus had finished preaching this dynamic sermon, which is recorded in the eighth chapter of this Gospel, as we might expect, there was a negative and a positive response. The positive response gives us one of the most important passages in the New Testament. When we read that many of these Jewish religious leaders believed, we are told that to those Jews who believed, Jesus said:

“If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can You say that we shall be set free?’ Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth everyone who sins (continuously) is a



slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (8:33-36)

Jesus never called anyone a "Christian" and Jesus never asked anyone to become a Christian. The Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary the church of Christ has ever had, never called anyone a Christian, and he never asked anyone to become a Christian. The word "Christian" is only found three times in the Bible. It was a name the unbelieving world gave to the followers of Christ. You will only find that word used one time in the Bible by a believer. Peter wrote, "If a man suffers as a Christian, then he is following the example of Christ." Clearly, the word "Christian" is not the word that God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Apostle Paul chose to describe the authentic followers of Jesus.

As a pastor, I have frequently heard these words: "Pastor, I am not sure I am a Christian." My response has often been, "Well, Christian is not really the word the Scripture uses to describe the followers of Christ. If we use the words that are used in the New Testament, the issues may be clearer. Jesus did tell people to believe and when they did, He called them 'believers'. He used this word for those who did more than merely believe in their heads. When Jesus called people believers, He meant those who trusted Him with their hearts and their wills. To Jesus, those who believed committed their lives to Him. May I ask you a question? If you overheard us talking

about you and we referred to you as an unbeliever, would that offend you?"

People usually know whether or not they are a believer and most of them responded that being described as an unbeliever, would offend them. Then I talked to them about the new birth - what the new birth is, and what the evidences of the new birth are. When I ask them if they were born again, they would often say, "No, I think I have not been born again."

I would then focus a third dimension of faith by asking this question, "Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?" The response I often received was, "What is a disciple?" Then I would respond: "That is the problem!" In this great instruction of Jesus to those who have professed to believe, we find faith presented in three dimensions. The first dimension is to believe. Believe in all the ways John profiles what it means to believe. However, the decision to believe is only the first dimension of faith in Christ.

The second dimension of faith in Christ is to continue in the Word of Jesus and become His disciple indeed. The word "disciple" is such a beautiful word. It is like the word "apprentice". It means a learner who is doing what he or she is learning, and learning what they are doing.

There is a large shipyard where I live, and they have an apprenticeship school. They put young men and women in a classroom for two weeks. Then they take them out in the shipyard,

where they apply for two weeks what they learned in the classroom. After two more weeks in the classroom they go back into the yard for two weeks. In five years they become sheet metal workers, pipe fitters, or whatever the skill is they are learning by way of apprenticeship. That is the essence of what Jesus meant when He invited people to follow Him and called them disciples when they did.

According to Jesus, the first dimension of faith is to believe. The second dimension is to become a disciple and follow Him. And then He predicted a third dimension of faith. He did not say how long we must follow as an apprentice before we enter into this third dimension. He simply profiled that third dimension of faith when He said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

When some of them responded by saying, "What do you mean, free? We are not slaves." He said, "Anyone who continuously sins is a slave." He essentially said that one slave does not have the authority to set another slave free. But a son has the authority to set a slave free. When He had established that metaphor, He said, "When the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

I am convinced that what He was saying was something like this: There is a hymn in which we find these words: "Beyond the sacred page I seek You, Lord. My spirit pants for You, Oh living Word." Jesus was saying, "Come to My Word. Because you believe in Me, continue in My Word and be My disciple indeed. As a

disciple, while you are continuing in My Word, one day you will move beyond the sacred page and come to know Me by relationship - that I am the Son, Who is the Truth. When you personally come to know Me in that way, I will set you free."

When He said, "Continue in My word until you know the truth," He did not simply mean intellectual or theological propositions. He meant to come to know by relationship the One Who is the Truth. This word "know" is used in the Old Testament in the sense of intimate relationship. We read that Adam knew his wife and she conceived a son. This Hebrew word for "knew" means to know by relationship.

In this passage, Jesus is presenting faith in three dimensions. Faith begins with the decision and commitment to "believe". That is how we begin our journeys of faith. But that is only the beginning. The Chinese say that a journey of a thousand kilometers begins with the first step. But, what follows that first step? Discipleship! The theme of the hostile dialog at this point is bondage. In effect, He is saying to these religious leaders "You are bound. You are bound by your ignorance. You are bound by the devil. You are bound by hell. You are bound by sin." But, when you move beyond that sacred page and know Him, you will know the Truth Who will set you free from ignorance, from sin, from hell, and from the devil."

Someone anonymously wrote a little poem that goes like this:

“A Famished Bear”

"A famished bear, whose foot was clenched  
Within a murderous trap wrenched about  
In fright and pain around the tree  
That held his chain,  
Emitting many a hideous howl.  
His state was noticed by an owl who  
Perched above him, fat and free,  
Philosophized from out of the tree,  
'To what avail this fuss and noise?  
The thing you need, good bear  
Is self-control and poise!'"

Whoever wrote that little poem was making an eloquent statement about life. Their statement is that there are two kinds of people in this world. People who are free and people who are not free. Today we call the people who are not free "addicted". They may be addicted to cocaine. They may be addicted to heroine or hard drugs. But that is not the only thing to which people are addicted. They could be addicted to lust. They could be addicted to sin in all of its shapes, forms, and sizes. They could be addicted to appetite, or to their work, or to anything that they do compulsively. The point is

they are not free. And they are pictured by that pathetic bear chained to a tree.

According to Jesus, the ultimate, deadly addiction that is at the source of all addiction is sin. He got to the root of this problem of people who are not free when He said that anyone who continues in sin is not free.

When He was born, angels announced that His name was to be Jesus, because He would save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). Observe that this prophecy was not that He would sacrifice His Life for the forgiveness of our sins. The prophecy was that He would save us from our sins. When the Apostle John dedicated the Book of Revelation to Jesus, he described Jesus as "The faithful Witness Who loved us and loosed us from our sins." (Revelation 1:5)

The name "Jesus" means "Savior" and the word "save" means "to be delivered". If we know the meaning of His name and what the angels prophesied about Him, we should expect Jesus to show us how to be set free from our sins.

Are you free? Are you doing what you want to do or are you doing what you need to do and what you must do? We who believe in Jesus and follow Him place great emphasis upon the glorious reality that our sins are forgiven because Jesus came. That is a glorious Gospel truth. But, the angels announced that He was to be called Jesus because He would deliver us from our sins. No matter what your addiction may be, Jesus can save you from your addiction.

Trust Him to be your personal Savior now and be saved from your addiction!

How do you feel about people who are not free? When you realize that the people you meet are not doing what they want to do, but what they must do, how do you feel about them? Do you feel any compassion when you meet an alcoholic, a drug addict, or someone who is caught the murderous trap of narcotics? When Jesus found people "in bondage" He did not want to leave them that way (Luke 13:10-16).

The poem I quoted above, sadly profiles millions of people in our world today who are addicted to sin in the form of addiction to chemical substances. They are graphically and tragically pictured by that pathetic bear chained to the tree. Sadly, the poem also profiles many believers today who are free, but have no compassion at all for those who are not free. They are pictured as that fat owl that is looking down on the pathetic bear with no sympathy at all.

Whoever wrote the poem may have been trying to tell us that Jesus Christ was no "fat owl". He did not look upon the bondage of people with detached indifference. When your life intersects with those who are not free today, and the risen Christ lives in you, how do you think He feels about those addicted people?

One of my favorite authors was grieved over the liberal theology that doubts nearly everything about Jesus, when he wrote: "I believe that He is (meaning Christ), while they are not even sure

that He was; and while they are not even sure that He did, I know that He still does." Another author added to that quote: "God is Who He says He is and God can do anything He says He can do. You are who God says you are. You can do anything God says you can do, because He is, and He is in you."

I think the most dynamic truth in the New Testament is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27) What does that mean? Christ in you. First of all, it means that He is. A well-known paraphrase of that verse reads: "That you may discover this great secret; Christ in your heart is your only hope!"

Do you believe that? Do you believe that the same Christ Who was in a body for thirty-three years lives in your body today? Do you not only believe in the incarnation that was, but in the incarnation that is today? I do believe that and I believe that the Christ Who is in our hearts today feels the same way about addicted people as He did when He was here in that body of His own. The Christ, Who lives in you and me today does not like to meet people who are not free and then leave them that way.

I have had experiences of meeting people who were not free when I felt that the Christ in me was crying out to see those people delivered from their awful bondage. The best small group experience I have known was a weekly meeting in my home, over a five-year period of time, with eight men who were recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. In that group I saw Christ miraculously

set people free, as He did when He was here. What I saw happen in that group is the application in your life and mine to what we have profited in John Chapter Eight, verses thirty through thirty-six.

May I ask you a personal question? If you have been with me throughout this verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of John, how do you feel now about the answers to these three questions I have been asking? Are you finding beautiful answers to the question, "Who is Jesus?" Here in this eighth chapter of John, He is the Son, Who sets people free because He does not want His disciples to be like that pathetic bear trapped and held in bondage by his chains.

Are you discovering answers to the question, "What is faith?" as we have moved through eight chapters of the Gospel of John? In this chapter we find my favorite answer to that question. It tells us that faith comes in three dimensions: The first dimension is to believe. The second dimension is, because you believe, continue in His Word, and become His disciple indeed. The third dimension of faith is to continue in His word until you move beyond the sacred page, and know by relationship the One Who is the Truth until He sets you free.

In this eighth chapter of John, have you found answers to that third question, "What is life?" In one word, that answer is freedom. I like this description of faith because it is my testimony. It is possible for a believer to experience everything at the beginning of their faith journey. The moment they believe, they can meet the Son

in reality and relationship, and be set free. That was not what I experienced when I came to faith in Jesus Christ. I believed, became a disciple for thirteen years and only then experienced this third dimension of faith. When I was set free, it was an experience that was as real to me as getting out of a prison.

Today, millions of us live in "instant" cultures - instant coffee, tea, pudding, instant information - why we simply have instant everything. We therefore want instant spirituality. As I have observed, God can do that and sometimes He does do that. But I also believe He does not always give us everything at the beginning of our faith journeys when we believe. I have met many believers like myself who had many years of following before they entered into the realities of relationship with Him that set them free. These three dimensions of faith demonstrate the reality that salvation is not only a destination. Salvation is also a journey.

Have you believed, in the sense that you have entered into an apprenticeship? How long have you been following Christ in that process of apprenticeship? We should not be surprised if we are disciples indeed in an apprenticeship process that takes time. Jesus did not say how long we should be His disciples before He sets us free. Stay faithful. Continue in His Word and He will make you free.

**Chapter Three**  
**“Seeing Is Believing”**

(John 9:1-12)

In our verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of John, we now come to Chapter Nine where we read: “As He went along (this is Jesus), He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man, nor his parents sinned’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him Who sent Me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’

“Having said this, He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ‘Go,’ He told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (Siloam means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, ‘Is not this the same man who used to sit and beg?’ Some claimed that he was. Others said, ‘No, he only looks like him.’ But he himself insisted, ‘I am the man.’

“‘How then were your eyes opened?’ they demanded. He replied, ‘The Man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed,

and then I could see.’ ‘Where is this man?’ they asked him. ‘I do not know,’ he said.” (9:1-12)

Observe again the symbolic-act teaching of Jesus. In Chapter Five, He heals the man at the Pool of Bethesda, and then gets into a long dialog with the religious leaders, which is laced with discourses. In Chapter Six, He feeds five thousand hungry families, and then the dialog provides the opportunity for His Bread of Life Discourse. In Chapter Seven, the Feast of the Tabernacles provides the symbolic metaphor for His great invitation sermon, which invites all who are thirsty to come and discover that He is the Living Water Who can quench their thirst and make them a river from which others can drink. Chapter Eight begins with an interview that illustrates His dynamic sermon that leads to the conversion of some of these religious leaders.

This ninth chapter also begins with a symbolic act. He heals a blind man - a forty-year-old man, who was born blind. This symbolic act provides the metaphor that illustrates a discourse in which He claims that He is the light of the world. Like the healing recorded in the fifth chapter, this healing and the discourse it illustrates, revive that hostile dialog with the religious leaders. At this point they have decided that they cannot co-exist with Jesus and have already begun devising their plans to put Him to death.

This chapter also begins with a profound question. When Jesus and His disciples meet this man who has been blind from his

birth, the disciples ask Jesus a question that was in alignment with the theology of their day. Their question was: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

The ancient rabbis believed sickness was the result of sin. According to the theology of these rabbis, this man would not be blind unless someone had sinned. The so-called "comforters" of Job agreed that sickness and suffering is the result of sin. It was not much of a comfort to Job for them to suggest that all his misfortune befell him because of sin in his life. The tragic death of Job's ten children must have been the consequence of sin in the lives of his children, according to his "comforters". The question implies that this man was born blind because God was punishing his parents for their sins, or that he was being punished as a consequence of his own sin. The thought that this man's blindness was the result of sin in his own life is more difficult to understand since he was born blind. The rabbis believed it was possible for a baby to sin in the womb before it was born. It may be that is what is implied by this question. Millions of people today believe in reincarnation. They believe the misfortune we have in this lifetime was earned in a previous lifetime. That may also be implied by this question. How wonderful to hear Jesus say, "Neither this man nor his parents."

That leads us to the question: "If this blindness is not the result of sin on the part of this man or his parents, why was he born blind?" We are now prepared for this amazing teaching of Jesus:

"This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." That is a profound and amazing answer to this question of the disciples.

I have been in a wheelchair since 1983, and I have searched the Scriptures looking for God's answers to the question, "Why do we have evil and suffering, especially in the life experiences of good people?" I have discovered thirty biblical reasons why God permits His people to suffer. Jesus has focused one of the best biblical explanations for suffering in this profound declaration: "This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

The foundation of this teaching is that the purpose of a human life is to display the works of God. Jesus showed us how we do that when He prayed at the end of His life: "I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the works You have given Me to do." (John 17:4)

He gave us another example of how we exhibit the works of God by the way we live when He followed the teaching of His eight beautiful attitudes with a vivid and eloquent metaphor. According to Jesus, when we become His disciples, it is as if we are candles that have been lighted. He always has a candlestick on which He is going to place us when He has lighted our candle. He followed that metaphor in the Sermon on the Mount with a great exhortation: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

In His last hours with the apostles, Jesus said to them: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and placed you, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." (John 15:16) Jesus meant that He was going to strategically place the apostles like candles on candlesticks so they might be fruitful.

At the end of that verse He essentially taught, "When you understand that you have been saved to be fruitful, then God the Father will start answering your prayers." The problem is that most of us come to salvation as we approach everything else in our lives - with a self-centered motive - with the question, "What is this going to do for me?" Our motivation should be, "What is this going to do for Jesus? How can this glorify God?" Not, "What can I gain from this experience of salvation?"

We have a great teaching here when Jesus declares that the blindness was that the works of God might be seen in this man's life. The word we use most in this life is the word "Why?" When we get to heaven, the word we will use most will be the word "Oh!" While we are living in this dimension, we need to search the Scriptures for the answers to our why questions. The Book of Job teaches that these things happen by the permissive will of God. They come from Satan, but only by way of God's permission. When things tragic things happen, like this man's blindness, people ask, "Why?" The way Jesus answered this question of His apostles is my favorite explanation.

According to Isaiah, when the Messiah comes, one of His credentials will be: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." (Isaiah 35:5) John's purpose for writing is that he is giving us a record of miraculous signs Jesus performed which should convince us that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God (20:30, 31). The healing of this man born blind is one of those miraculous evidences.

Having suggested that the purpose of this man's blindness was "That the works of God might be displayed in his life," He adds this great statement: "As long as it is day, I must do the work of Him Who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."

I challenge you again to observe how obsessed Jesus was with the work of God. He mentions the work of God after His interview with the woman at the well. He was overflowing with joy because He did the work of God when that woman found the Living Water. It was then that He made this statement: "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." (4:34)

All the way through the Gospel of John, you will find Jesus making references to these works the Father wanted Him to do. In Chapter Five, He said they were one of the proofs that He was Who He claimed to be. I have referenced above how He glorified His Father God by finishing the works that were assigned to Him, and how on the cross His last words were, "It is finished. Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." (John 17:4; 19:30; Luke 23:46)



Here He includes the disciples (which means He is including you and me), when He says, “As long as it is day we must do the work of Him Who sent Me because night is coming when no one can work.” (9:4) What Jesus calls the “night” means the end of our life span. It could also mean that, as we go through this world, there are opportunities to do the works of God that have a limited time of opportunity.

Having shared these truths, we read that He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes. Then He said, “Now go wash in the pool of Siloam.” Make the observation that Jesus does not always heal the same way. Here is another great answer to John’s question, “What is faith?” We read that, “The man went and washed and came seeing.”

That is a beautiful profile of faith and another answer to that question, “What is faith?” Without Jesus making the clay, putting it on the man's eyes, giving the man his assignment and above all, being the Great Physician, there would have been no healing. But He allowed the man to have a part in his own healing. And it required faith on the part of the man.

When the water was turned into wine, the servants had to have the faith to draw out the water they had put in those large 80-liter vessels and start serving it as wine. The little boy's lunch was multiplied as it was passing from the hands of Jesus through the hands of the disciples into the hands of the hungry multitude. On

those occasions the apostles and the servants at the wedding had a part in the miracle. They had to implement faith; then the miracle took place. He does not always do it that way, but that is the way He worked those miracles and the healing of this blind man.

So the man went and washed in the pool of Siloam, and came home seeing. Immediately we see this man on his “candlestick”. His neighbors are the first ones to see the light of his candle. They say, “Is this the same man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “Yes.” Some said, “No, he just looks like him.” The man himself gives witness and says, “I am the man.”

Here we have a good profile of what we have already learned about a witness. A witness is not only something we are or the way we live our lives. There will be times when we are on our “candlestick” as a witness that we must verbalize as we – let our light shine – and bear witness to the miracle that has happened to us. People will be attracted to us because of what they have seen God do in us. When they ask for an explanation, we are instructed to verbalize the reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Something wonderful has happened to this man. When people see the evidence of that miracle, they are awed by what has happened, how it happened and what that could mean in their lives.

So they asked him, “How did you receive your sight?” The man answers, “The Man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go and wash. I went and washed, and now I

see." And when they asked, "Where is this Man?" He responded, "I do not know."

There was so much about his miracle he did not understand, but he did know this: Once he was blind; now he can see. And he does know what happened to him in terms of how it happened. "I was blind. I was born blind, but the man they call Jesus, made clay and put it on my eyes and told me to go wash. I went. I washed. I see!"

Again, we have this focus on faith: the doing leads to the knowing. In our journey of faith, seeing is not believing. Believing leads to seeing. We have this answer to what faith is graphically illustrated for us here in the experience of this man who was born blind, but can now see because he has met, believed and obeyed Jesus.

### **The Light of the World**

When Jesus healed the man at the Pool, I referred to that as a strategic healing because it was the catalyst that established the dialog Jesus wanted with the religious leaders. This was a pattern with Jesus. He reached the woman in Samaria because He was only passing through Samaria and He planned to see Samaria reached by that woman after He had traveled through that area. He was passing through Jericho when He reached Zacchaeus, who reached Jericho for Him after He had passed through Jericho.

As I have observed, like the healing of the man at the pool in Chapter Five, this healing became a catalyst that resumed the hostile dialog with the religious leaders. Jesus followed the healing of this blind man with the discourse in which He claimed that He was the Light of the world. Near the end of the chapter, John tells us that He followed this discourse with the application that, as the Light of the world, He was a very special kind of light. He was a light that gave sight to those who were blind and, at the same time, He was a kind of light that revealed the blindness of those who claimed to see.

The Pharisees were standing by and heard His discourse. They understood what Jesus was claiming and they made the right application. They said, "Are You trying to tell us that we are blind?" Jesus responded: "If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say you see. Therefore, your sin remains."

There was an explosion that caused part of a cave to collapse in a coalmine in America. After the explosion, about thirty miners were trapped for three days before the rescuers were able to reach them. The trapped miners spent those three days in total darkness. When the rescuers broke through to the miners, after much joyful celebration, one of the rescued miners asked, "Why did you men not bring any lights with you?" They had actually brought many lights and lanterns with them. His question silenced the celebration because everyone realized that he had been blind for three days,

blinded by the explosion that caused the cave to collapse, but he did not know he was blind until the light came.

In a spiritual context, that is what Jesus was saying to these religious leaders. They were spiritually blind, but they thought they could see. They even boasted about their spiritual sight and insight. On the other hand, this man Jesus had healed, who was physically blind and was given his sight, was a picture of the people who know that they do not see, as they ought to see. When the One Who is the Light of the world comes, they receive sight and they are healed of their spiritual blindness.

When the religious leaders were offended and asked, "Are you trying to tell us we are blind?" In so many words, Jesus was saying, "Yes, that is precisely what I am telling you."

The healed man was excommunicated from the synagogue. When Jesus finds him and makes Himself known to him, the man believes and confesses Jesus to be his Lord. As I have observed, this chapter and the story of this healing provide beautiful answers to the question "What is faith?" When he believes, calls Jesus his Lord, and worships Jesus, we must include those critical steps of faith as we answer that question.

As we see Jesus affirm, and draw a confession of faith and worship from this man He has healed, we also discover beautiful answers to the question, "Who is Jesus?" Like the woman at the well, observe the way this man gradually realizes who Jesus is. At

first he has no idea at all who Jesus is. He is simply "the one they call Jesus." His understanding of Who Jesus is, progresses until he confesses Jesus to be his Lord and worships Him.

The man who received his sight because he met Jesus, and the applications Jesus makes to his story also answer that third question focused by John throughout this Gospel, "What is life?" Those who have lived forty years before experiencing salvation will tell us that their experience of salvation was like being born blind. After being spiritually blind for forty years, they encountered the Light of the world. He revealed their blindness then healed their blindness, and now they see for the first time in their lives. Life is realizing that you were born spiritually blind, but having met Jesus, you can join this man and exclaim, "There is so much I do not know, but this one thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see!"

As you move with me through these chapters of the Gospel of John, will you let the Life, Who is the Light that lights every man reveal your spiritual blindness? Will you then walk in the Light that He is, as He shows you how you can be part of the faith process that works the miracle He wants to make of your life? Ask and then answer those three questions of John in this chapter of his profound Gospel.

## **Chapter Four**

### **“Called Out Ones”**

(John 10:1-16)

When the blind man who miraculously received his sight is put out of the synagogue, Jesus then preaches a profound and beautiful sermon in which He clearly claims that He is the Good Shepherd David profiled in his inspired Psalm about the Good Shepherd (Psalm 23). Before we consider that sermon, I must share a principle of Bible study with you.

There were no chapter divisions in the books of the Bible when they were originally written. The books of the New Testament were divided into chapters and verses more than one thousand years after they were written to help us study and make reference to specific passages. When you come to a chapter division, it is therefore always wise to ask yourself, “As I read this new chapter, is there a change of subject or context? Is there anything in the chapter I have just read that will help me understand the chapter I am now about to read?”

That is what we find as we read the tenth chapter of John. The fact that the man Jesus healed was put out of the synagogue helps us to understand this great teaching of Jesus: “Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he

who enters by the door is the shepherd of his sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he calls out his own sheep he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (10:1-5)

Jesus begins this teaching with the words, “Most assuredly.” In other words, “I am now about to say something that is especially true and important.” Then He uses an inspired metaphor, and we read: “They did not understand what He was telling them.” (10:6) His metaphor was about a sheepfold. It is very important to understand enough about sheep management when Jesus used this metaphor to understand what a sheepfold was.

This metaphor introduces us to one of the many fascinating aspects of sheep management. A sheepfold was an enclosed area in a village, or town that was used to house sheep overnight. Shepherds might be passing through a town or village with their sheep. While they were spending the night in an inn, they would put their sheep in this common sheepfold.

Imagine that five or six different shepherds have placed their sheep in one common sheepfold. In the morning, when the shepherds come for their sheep, each shepherd simply calls his sheep. He has a special way of calling them. Then he walks away from the sheepfold. When he calls his sheep and walks away, his sheep know

his voice and follow him. They will not follow another shepherd or someone who is trying to steal them.

Now Jesus is using this as a metaphor and they did not understand what He was telling them. I am convinced that Judaism was the sheepfold in this metaphor of Jesus. He was making the declaration, that as a shepherd comes to a sheepfold, calls his sheep and the sheep know his voice and follow him, as the Good Shepherd, He was calling His sheep out of the sheepfold of Judaism.

We should realize that all the apostles were Jews, and that all the members of the church we meet in the first nine chapters of the Book of Acts are Jewish. Jesus was obviously referring to the man He had healed. These Jewish religious leaders had put that man out of the synagogue because He made Jesus his Lord and worshipped Him. Through this eloquent metaphor, Jesus was saying, "You did not put him out of the synagogue. I called him out of that sheepfold; he is following Me because he is one of My sheep and he knew My voice."

Jesus makes another "I Am" declaration here in this tenth chapter: "I am the door of the sheep." In His metaphor about the sheepfold, He is the Shepherd Who is calling His sheep out of the common, or shared sheep pen. But when they do not understand this figure of speech, we read, "Therefore, Jesus said again." Now He is making another attempt to explain what has happened to this man who has been healed and put out of the synagogue: "I tell you the

truth, I am the door for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (10:7-10)

We find many answers to the question, "Who is Jesus?" when He declares on so many occasions, "I am. I am. I am." The profound answer we find here is presented when Jesus claims to be the Good Shepherd of which David wrote, and then uses this additional metaphor: "I am the door for the sheep."

A pastor was traveling in the Holy Land, studying sheep management because he was determined to learn the meaning of the many sheep metaphors in the Bible, like those used by David in his pastoral Psalms and those we are now considering. This door-of-the-sheep metaphor was demonstrated for him one evening. At the center of a large village, he was impressed to find a large, sheep pen in which many flocks of sheep were spending the night. A shepherd was assigned the responsibility of keeping the sheep overnight. The sheep pen was a solid wall all the way around, so that when the sheep were within the wall they were safe.

Where you would expect to find a door or gate, there was a space about 2 meters wide. Since the pastor thought the sheep might escape the sheepfold or that predators might come in, he asked the

shepherd, "Where is the door?" The shepherd himself lay down, stretched his body across that opening and said, "I am the door". No sheep can come in or go out of this corral unless it passes over me and no predator can enter this corral without waking me."

We discover the primary intended personal application to this metaphor when He says, "Whoever enters through Me will be saved. And there is this additional application: "The one who is come into the sheepfold by way of Me shall go in and go out, and find pasture." Jesus is making the bold declaration to the Jewish religious leaders that He is establishing another sheepfold. He is calling out of the sheepfold of Judaism those who will make up this new fold. He was actually prophetically and metaphorically profiling the church He declared He was going to build.

As we read the Gospel of Matthew, until we get to Chapter Sixteen, Jesus is building a kingdom. When we read the sixteenth chapter of the first Gospel, we hear Jesus declare that He is going to build His church and all the powers of Hell are not going to keep Him from building that church. The word "church" literally means, "called out ones". In this profound and beautiful metaphor, Jesus gives us a marvelous profile of the church.

This is actually a double metaphor; When He claims that He is the door through which the sheep must pass to be saved; the interpretation of that word "saved" is literally to be safe or secure. However, the intended application is that it is only through Jesus that

we can be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus will say the same thing another way later in this Gospel when He makes the dogmatic claim that He is the way to God and there is no other way to His Father God (John 14:6).

The second part of the metaphor, which describes the sheep moving into and out of the sheepfold and finding green pastures, prophetically profiles the plan of Christ to place those who are saved in the sheepfold of the church. As they come in and out of the spiritual community of their church assemblies, they will find everything they need to live for Christ and serve Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

God tells us that it is not good for a human being to be alone and so He places the solitary in families (Genesis 2:18). When lost sheep find the door to salvation, the Good Shepherd is also the Door to the sheepfold, which places those saved sheep in families.

Have you observed this theme in the Bible? You might call it, "The Coming and the Going of the People of God." The great workers for God are great worshippers of God before they become workers for God. Those who are going for God, first experience a coming to God. They have a meaningful coming before they have a fruitful going.

When you study biographies in the Bible, look for the "coming" experiences of the people of God that often precede their "going" experiences. For example, Moses had eighty years of

coming before he had forty very fruitful years of going. I am convinced that our going is often fruitless and meaningless because we simply go - we do not come to God first. This is a beautiful metaphor: "They will come in and go out and find pasture." God blesses our coming, and then He blesses our going.

Observe the many invitations of Jesus that invite us to come to Him. "Come to Me, all of you who labor under heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy; My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." (John 7:37-39) In the Gospel record, we read that when people respond to these invitations with a meaningful coming, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is satisfied, and they find rest for their souls.

Eventually they always hear the Great Commission. "Now go. Now that you have had a meaningful coming, now that you have had a drink of this Living Water, let this drink of water become in you a spring from which others drink. Let the quenching of your thirst result in rivers of living water flowing out from you to others." In other words, you have experienced a meaningful coming. Now have a meaningful going. "Come in and find pasture, and then go out."

Many believers have found great consolation in the promise of this Good Shepherd in verse four that He goes before them when

He calls forth His own sheep and they follow Him. There are times in our lives when our Good Shepherd wants to do a new thing (Isaiah 43:19). He then calls us to step out and follow Him into that new chapter He wants to write in our journal of faith. He loves us so much that sometimes His call is not only a voice that calls us forward into that new dimension of faith and service. Sometimes, in His loving Providence, He arranges catalysts that provide a kick from the rear.

When He has a new place for us on the scroll of His will, He has three works He must perform in our lives. First, He must get us out of the old place. Since we are security oriented, we do not want to leave the security of the old place. That is why He must add to the voice that provides a pull from the front, the catalyst that kicks us out of the old place.

During the transition time between the old the new thing to which He is calling us, His second work is to keep us going so that He might pull us through the time of transition. His third work is that He must get us right so that He might settle us into that new place He has for us, and that new thing He wills to do in us, for us, and through us.

This entire process is illustrated in the Old Testament when God wanted to move the children of Israel from Egypt into the Promised Land of Canaan. God told Moses: "Then He brought us

out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers." (Deuteronomy 6:23)

The voice of God, which was leading them forward into the new thing and the new place was dramatically demonstrated by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night which guided them through the wilderness of their unbelief into the Promised Land. With their backs to the Red Sea, the Egyptian army charging them in a cloud of dust certainly represented the kick from the rear that was the providential catalyst to get them out of the old so He could bring them into the new place He willed for them. This is an Old Testament version of the same truth Jesus is teaching by this profound metaphor.

There is another devotional application in this metaphor. When we hear Jesus say that He is the Door of the sheep, if we know that He is our Shepherd, then no “predator” (problem) can get to our lives unless it first passes over the body of our Shepherd. That should be such a comfort to devout people who have problems like illness and disability. As a bedfast invalid now, I personally find great comfort in this application.

As in the Book of Job, these problems may not be coming directly from the Lord, but they cannot reach us unless they come to us by way of His permissive will. Satan had to get permission from God to afflict Job, and I believe he has to get permission from our Shepherd to afflict us. No predator, no problem can get to you or me

unless it first passes by Him.

There is yet another application in this profound metaphor when He makes that solemn declaration to the religious Jewish leaders: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." What does Jesus mean when He says that all who have come before Him were thieves and robbers? (1, 2) Or what did He mean when He said, "The man who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber?" What does He mean later in this passage when He refers to the “hired hands”?

Remember, when He cleansed the Temple He said, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17) When the Romans conquered Jerusalem forty years after Jesus spoke these words, they found the equivalent of more than five million dollars in the Temple safe. The way the religious leaders exploited the religious pilgrims was a corrupt and very profitable business that deserves these labels of thieves and robbers.

He also calls them “hired men”. By this He means they care nothing for the sheep. They are merely hired men. Make that observation as He changes the metaphor in the following verses: “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired man is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs



away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The hired man runs away because he is a hired man and cares nothing for the sheep.” (10:11-13)

This was a severe condemnation of these Jewish religious leaders. They were the thieves and robbers and the hired men He is referring to here. They were part of the corrupt religious system of exploitation that was making them rich. It is obvious that they cared nothing for that man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been crippled for thirty-eight years. They cared nothing for him and they were not at all pleased that he had been healed. In the same way, they had no compassion whatsoever for this blind man and it seems that they were not at all pleased about the miracle that he can now see.

How could they be so calloused and have no compassion at all for these pathetic people Jesus loved so much? The explanation could be right here. They were not shepherds. They were hired men, which means they were religious professionals, who worked for wages, and the prestigious benefits that accompanied their profession. And they were thieves and robbers. They were what we might call "religious racketeers" and "swindlers." They were making millions of dollars by exploiting religious pilgrims during holy days, and the people of God on a regular basis.

Later in this Gospel, Jesus commissions Peter to show his love for his Lord and Savior by feeding and shepherding the sheep Jesus loves. These religious leaders cared nothing about those sheep.

While like Peter, they had been charged, and professed to be called to the responsibility to feed and shepherd those sheep, they were making millions of dollars for themselves by fleecing and exploiting the sheep.

But in direct contrast to them, Jesus makes these "I am" claims. "I am the Good Shepherd. (He makes this claim twice.) I know My sheep and My sheep know Me. The Father knows Me, I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep."

As in Chapter Five, Jesus is in effect claiming: "The Father and I have a relationship. I know the Father and the Father knows Me. I am calling out My sheep, like the woman at the well, Nicodemus, the man at the Pool of Bethesda, and this blind man who has received his sight." He is referring to these people when He says, "I know My sheep. They know Me. They hear and know My voice. They will not hear or follow the voice of a thief or a stranger, but they know My voice, and they are following Me."

In the context of these profound sheep metaphors, Jesus also states: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." I have heard this verse applied in many ways. In a church that is made up of one race, I have heard this verse quoted to acknowledge the fact that there are people of other races who are believers. I have also heard people of a particular theological persuasion reluctantly acknowledge this same reality by quoting this verse - that there are people who do not believe as they do, who are also part of the fold.

The interpretation and application intended by Jesus is demonstrated in the Book of Acts. In that inspired history book of the New Testament, until you get to Chapter Ten, all the believers in the church are Jewish. The glorious miracle that the church He is going to build will include Gentiles is the primary interpretation and application of what Jesus means by the statement, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." The interpretation and primary application of this verse is that non-Jewish people will be part of this new flock. The Lord gave Peter a supernatural revelation, and repeated it three times to convince him that the church is to include Gentiles (Acts 10).

A Messianic Jewish evangelist, who was a dynamic and powerful preacher, spoke to several hundred Seminary students. When many of us were congratulating him after his fine sermon, one of the seniors in the seminary said to this man, "You are the first Jewish Christian I have ever heard of." The Jewish preacher turned to this senior and asked, "And have you never heard of the twelve apostles?" We forget that all twelve of the apostles were Jewish.

The Gospel preached by the risen, living Christ and His followers is described as a Hebrew-Christian revelation of truth for two reasons. One: All that we believe as followers of Christ is squarely based on the Scriptures, which are the Jewish Old Testament first, and then the New Testament, which tells us that Jesus came, and what that should mean to those who believe in Jesus.

Two: The church of Jesus Christ is Jewish before it becomes a sheepfold of saved sheep, who hear and know the voice of Christ, who calls them out of Judaism to follow Christ.

### **In Summary:**

Summarizing these first sixteen verses of John Chapter Ten: Who is Jesus? In this chapter He is the Door that leads into the sheepfold and He is the only door by which sheep can enter that sheepfold and find salvation. The sheep can then have a meaningful and continuous coming in and a fruitful going out through that Door. That is Who Jesus is in this great chapter.

And what is life, in this chapter? Eternal life is being one of His sheep. It is the salvation that is found by entering into the sheepfold through the Door that He is, and being kept safe and secure. Life is continuously coming in and finding the green pastures. Our needs are met when we come, because He came that we might have life and have it to the full. Life is then finding in the sheepfold of the spiritual community of the church all that we need to live for Christ, serve our Lord and glorify God.

And what is faith? Faith is the conviction that the risen, living Christ is the Door that leads to salvation and to the blessings of the sheepfold. Faith is believing that He is the only Door through which we must pass if we want to be saved and enter into eternal life.

Therefore, faith is refusing to follow the voice of the strangers, thieves, and robbers.

Faith is also hearing His voice and making the commitments involved in following Him. Faith is the decision to make a change, knowing that when He calls out His sheep He goes before them, and will confirm that miracle as we follow Him. In other words, faith is divine guidance and the confident conviction that has the courage to follow divine guidance.

That is Who Jesus is, that is what faith is, and that is what life is in the first sixteen verses of John Chapter Ten.

## **Chapter Five**

### **“Secure Sheep”**

(John 10:17-42)

"I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me -just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father - and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

"The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down

of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and to take it up again. This command I received from My Father." (14-18)

He is now obviously profiling His most important work. He ministers publicly for three years and He is already in Jerusalem, which will be the setting for the most important work He does in this world.

As I have observed in my approach to this Gospel, there are twenty-one chapters in the Gospel of John. Approximately half those chapters tell us about the first thirty-three years of the life of Jesus, and they say absolutely nothing about His birth or the first thirty years of His life. They only really record the last three years of His life. By the time we find ourselves reading Chapter Twelve, the thirty-three years of His life have been lived, including His three years of public ministry. All the other chapters - approximately half the content of this Gospel - describe the last week of His life.

There are eighty-nine chapters in the four Gospels. Only four of them cover His birth and the first thirty years of His life. Eighty-five chapters focus the last three years, and twenty-seven chapters report the last week of His life. Why is that last week of His life so very important? The written description of the last week of the most important life ever lived is half the content of this biography of Jesus because those chapters and verses record the miracle that He died and rose again for our salvation. His death and resurrection was for

the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world in general and your sins and mine in particular.

As the followers of Jesus, we are commissioned to preach the Gospel to the whole world. At the conclusion of all four of the Gospels, and at the beginning of the Book of Acts we are told that we are to make disciples for Jesus in every nation of the world as we preach the Gospel. If we take that Great Commission seriously we must begin by realizing that before we attempt to articulate that Gospel, we must know precisely what that Gospel is.

In the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, Paul gives us a clear definition of this word "Gospel". I fear that it might be embarrassing if the average pastor gave paper and pencil to his congregation and asked them to write the answer to this question: "What is the Gospel we are commissioned to preach to the world? List some verses of Scripture with your written answer."

In the first four verses of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul tells us what the written answer to the pastor's question should be. As he concludes his letter to them Paul essentially writes: "Now I want to remind you of what the Gospel is which I preached to you when I came to Corinth. This is what I preached. This is what you believed. This is what saved you. And this is what you stand upon. If you believe anything else and stand on anything else, you are lost. Now here is the Gospel: Jesus Christ

died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures."

Specifically, explicitly, precisely and simply, that is the Gospel we are to proclaim to the whole world. When we have a clear understanding of what the Gospel is, we understand what was so important about that last week of His life. We also then understand what Jesus is profiling for us here in these verses, when He says, "The reason why My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life, only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me. I lay it down of my own accord."

It is intriguing to observe throughout this Gospel that Jesus never claims He does anything by Himself. According to Jesus He never does anything. The Father does it all, in and through Him. The Father is the Source, Power, and the Purpose of every word He speaks, and of every work He does. The Father is literally the One Who is doing everything Jesus does.

Here we have an exception to that claim. This is the one time He says that He is going to do something. He says, "The Father loves Me because I lay down My life to take it up again. Nobody is going to take My life from Me. I have the power, or the authority, to lay it down, and the authority, or the power, to take it up again." And then He says, "This command I have received from My Father." So He is really not claiming to be doing anything apart from the Father here, either. It sounds that way at first. He has a commandment

from the Father and He has authority from the Father to die, and be raised from the dead.

Later in this chapter, He will tell us that He and His Father are one (30). What He means is that everything He is, everything He says, and everything He does, is simply an overflow or expression of His oneness with the Father. And this can be exciting for us when we think about that question, “What is faith?”

When He teaches the apostles in the Upper Room Discourse, He essentially tells them that, after His death and resurrection, it will be possible for them to be as at one with Him as He then was with the Father.” (14:20-24) What a wonderful challenge to realize that we can be as at one with Christ, the risen Christ Who is, as He was and is now one with the Father.

In the context of this teaching, He gave the apostles an amazing promise. He told them that if they would be as at one with the Holy Spirit as He then was with the Father, they would do greater works than He had done. He must have meant that their works would be greater in the sense of quantity rather than quality because there would be so many of them. His extraordinary teaching, which we will consider in more depth when we study those chapters together, was essentially that the Word of God was spoken and the work of God was accomplished on earth through Him because He was one with the Father. If they would be at one with the Holy

Spirit, the Word and the work of their Lord and Savior would be spoken and accomplished on earth through them.

In this passage, He is talking about His death and resurrection. Do you remember that very dogmatic statement Jesus made to Nicodemus, when He declared that He must die on the cross because His death on the cross was God’s only salvation, and that He was God’s only Savior? He is building on that declaration here in this passage when He essentially declares: "Now when that happens, do not think that I was simply crucified on that cross the way other people who opposed Rome were dragged off and crucified. No man is going to take My life from Me. I am going to lay it down by an act of My own will, and the proof of that is I am going to take it up again by an act of My own will."

We should not be surprised to read: “At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?’ But others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’” (10:19-21)

The subject now changes here in Chapter Ten. A new section begins here at verse twenty-two. Months have passed before what is now being described here takes place: “Then came the Feast of Dedication (also known as the Jewish Hanukkah) at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. The Jews gathered around Him, saying, ‘How long will

You keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ (or the Messiah), tell us plainly.’

“Jesus answered, ‘I did tell you, but you did not believe. The miracles I do in My Father's name speak for Me, but you do not believe because you are not My sheep. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one.’ (25-30)

“Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me? We are not stoning You for any of these’, replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because You, a mere Man, claim to be God.’” (10:31-33)

“Who is Jesus?” in the Gospel of John? Be sure to make this observation as you read this Gospel: In many passages it is very clear that He is the Messiah. In many other passages like this one, it is very clear that He is God. Not merely godly, or the Son of God. He is God. He is actually part of the Godhead. He is the Son, God is the Father and they are profiled along with the Holy Spirit as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three of them are God.

We find this triune God pictured throughout the Bible. For example, in the very first chapter of the Bible the words for God are

plural. We read: “Let us make man in our image.” If you read the creation account carefully, you will see the presence of the Father and the Spirit referenced in the miracle of creation, since the words that refer to God are plural words. (Let Us make man in Our image, etc. etc.) We are told that the Spirit of God hovered over the waters during the creation process. In the magnificent prayer our Lord prays to the Father in this Gospel, He prays: "Give back to Me the glory I had with You before the world was created." (17:5) We therefore know that the Son was present with the Father and the Spirit when the world was created.

This session of the dialog resumed when they asked Him, "How long are You going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." He points out to them that He has already clearly answered their question but they did not believe Him.

At the end of Chapter Eight, there was no doubt whatsoever in the minds of the religious leaders that Jesus was claiming to be God. They tried to stone Him for blasphemy because they clearly understood what He was claiming. We have that same response to the claims of Jesus here in this passage: "Again they picked up stones to stone Him." John writes, "again" because they did that at the end of Chapter Eight after He made these same claims.

There is an emphasis on the theme of the Providence of God that runs through the Gospel of John. In Chapter Six, John presented the ministry of the Lord in the context of the Providence of God: All

that the Father gives Him will come to Him, and unless the Father draws them, it is impossible for them to come to Him. When the Father does draw them, and they come, He does not turn them away. (6:37-47)

When they asked Him about His work, in effect He responded, "This is what I do all day. I simply move through this world, and as I do I declare these words that are Spirit and life. When I speak these words, those who are My sheep who have been given to Me, are drawn to Me by the Father and the Spirit. They hear My voice and they come. And when they come I never turn them away."

In Chapter Five, He said, "You do not lack evidence for believing in Me. You do not believe in Me because you do not want to believe in Me." Here in Chapter Ten, He gives another reason why they do not believe when He says, "You do not believe because you are not My sheep. My sheep listen. I know them and they know me. They follow Me. I give them eternal life. They shall never perish." Those are the characteristics of His sheep, and He is saying to them, "You do not believe because you are not one of My sheep."

When He gives His sheep eternal life, they shall never perish. Once they are saved, can they lose their salvation? Listen to this paraphrase of the answer of Jesus to that question: "If you really are one of My sheep, it is because the Father has drawn you to Me and has given you to Me. The Father is the reason you are coming, the

power behind your coming, and His glory is the purpose for your coming to Me for salvation." (28-30) That is what is really happening when we believe and are saved.

He follows that beautiful metaphor with this great interpretation and application: "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, they follow Me, I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish because no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me is greater than all and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (27-30) When we really understand salvation, we realize that our salvation is not a matter of our holding on to Christ but that He is holding on to us.

When our children were small, we lived in a beach town and I frequently took them to the beach. When one of our sons was small, as we started walking into the surf, the waves were coming in very powerfully. I wanted to hold his hand, but He insisted that he wanted to hold on to my hand. So, I permitted him to hold my hand. The first wave knocked him down. As he came up coughing, and spitting out salt water, he reached up to me and said, "You hold my hand this time, Daddy!"

My little son discovered that his father holding on to him worked far better than him holding on to his father. Jesus is teaching here that salvation and the security of our salvation is not a matter of

us holding on to our Shepherd. The good news is that He is holding on to us.

Jesus presents another sheep metaphor in these verses. He speaks of His sheep being in His hand. Think of His opened hand, with a sheep, which represents you and me, in the palm of His hand. Now listen to His promise that nobody can snatch that sheep out of His hand.

As you are beginning to think that the sheep might be able to exercise its freedom of choice and make the deliberate decision to jump out of that hand, listen as Jesus describes the Father's hand coming down on top of the Son's hand, clasping the two hands together with the sheep secure between those two hands. Now you have the complete metaphor in perspective as Jesus says, "My Father Who has given them to Me is greater than all; and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand." (29)

We are creatures of choice, and there are prodigals. But prodigal sons do not stay in their hog pens their whole lifetimes. When the prodigal does not return from the hog pen, the verdict is that he never was a son. But, if you are a prodigal yourself, or you have a prodigal child, it is great consolation to know that prodigals do return. It is never too late to come to your senses and like the prodigal son, decide that you do not belong in the hog pens of this world. And never stop praying for the return of prodigal children

because it is very possible that they are really authentic children of God, or sheep, and they will come back. (Luke 15:11-24)

When Dr. J. Vernon McGee was my college Bible professor, I asked him the question, "What if the prodigal son had died in the hog pen? His answer was, "Then he would have been a dead son, not a dead hog!" Being in the hog pen did not make him a hog. It made him a son who was out of place.

These are some of the questions that are raised by this part of John Chapter Ten. In my opinion, the most important verse in this chapter is verse thirty: "I and the Father are one." This is one of the greatest statements Jesus ever made. This is His explanation for everything He is, for all the words He speaks and for all the works He does. According to Jesus, this is the dynamic explanation of His Life and work: "I and the Father are one."

He makes another profound statement in this same context: "It is possible for My sheep to know Me, and for Me to know them, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father." In other words, He and the Father were one, and it is possible for us to be one with Him, the risen Christ, the Christ Who is. Not the historical Jesus Who was, but the Christ Who is because of His resurrection.

When we grasp the meaning of this teaching/promise, the practical and devotional is the awesome reality that it is possible for us to be so at one with Him that the words of Christ can be spoken on earth through us, and His works can be done on earth through us.



This teaching/promise will be within the reach of every authentic disciple through our being one with the Holy Spirit. He will tell us more about this in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-16).

**In Summary:**

A good way for me to summarize the meaning and personal application of all the sheep metaphors in this great chapter is to raise those three questions again. “Who is Jesus?” He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep - the Good Shepherd, prophetically profiled by David, in what is probably the most familiar and best-loved chapter in the Bible, Psalm Twenty-three.

And “What is faith?” Faith is hearing His voice and following Him because we are His sheep and we hear His voice. Faith is not a matter of our ability to hold on to Him. Faith is seeing ourselves in the palm of His hand, trusting that He is able to hold on to us. Faith is seeing the hand of the Father coming down on the hand of the Son with us secure between those two hands.

And “What is life? Life is salvation and life is temporal and eternal security. Life is feeling safe and being safe in this life and in the life to come. Life is that kind of security. Life is being secure in the palm of His hand, because we are folded in between those two hands - the hand of the Son and the hand of the Father. Life is going in and coming out, and finding salvation. Life is having a meaningful coming to Him and a fruitful going for Him that results

in “life more abundantly” - life to the full - and what Jesus called “the fruit that remains”. (10:10; 15:16) That is what life is, according to the beautiful pastoral metaphors in John Chapter Ten.

I trust that you are discovering Who this Jesus is, that you are growing in the faith – the kind of faith John presents in this Gospel, and that you are experiencing the quality of life John labels as eternal life. I invite you to continue in His Word and to continue in our study of this inspired Gospel of John in our next booklet, which will be Booklet 26 in our series of 33 Booklets. We await your letter requesting the next booklet. Please also share with us what God is doing in your life.