

The Door of the Sheep
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John 10:6-10
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Turn with me in your Bibles to John 10. We began looking at this passage last Sunday. It is a tremendously rich passage in which we have two of the seven predicated 'I AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. The 'I AM' sayings are one of the primary focuses of John here in this Gospel. It's a marvelous revelation that Jesus gives when He says, "I am the bread of life." That was His first 'I AM' saying in John 6. Then in John 8 He said, "I am the light of the world." Today we begin to look at John 10:6-10 in which He says, "I am the door of the sheep. I am the door." We'll look at Verse 11 next week, Lord-willing, we'll look at, "I am the good shepherd." "I am the door of the sheep." The title of the message this morning is: 'The Door of the Sheep'. Let's read Verses 1-18 to get the context.

John 10:1-18:

"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. 2 But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." 6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a

hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we ask that You might now bless this time in Your word. We pray that You might grant, that we might behold wonderful things from Your law, and that we might be transformed by the power of Your Spirit, and the power of Your word. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

‘The Door of the Sheep’, this image, this rich image that Jesus uses, this 1st Century sheep-farming image was very accessible to the people of His day, and it is rich in meaning. Ted mentioned earlier, we said last week that the Lord didn't make sheep as an afterthought, or didn't as an afterthought say, “Well, they are kind of like people.” No, He made sheep to be a picture of what people are, what human beings are, and how great our need is for God. There is much that we learn here. In fact, the word ‘*sheep*’ is used 13 times in the first 16 verses of that chapter, 18 times in all in the chapter because there are a couple of other references later in the chapter.

This idea of sheep is a big concept in the Old Testament as well. The word ‘*sheep*’ occurs 250 times in the Old Testament. God as our shepherd, numerous Psalms speak of that. The prophets continually come back to the fact that God is our shepherd, Jeremiah and Ezekiel particularly. So this idea of sheep is very rich in meaning, and we need to explore it. What we're going to see is Jesus, as the door of the sheep, answers the great needs that we have as men. So there are three points I want to gather our thoughts around. The first is: Our profound neediness. Our profound neediness or our profound dilemma. Then we're going to look at our many failed remedies, and then finally, God's only way. Those are our three points.

1) Our Profound Dilemma or Neediness:

Man's profound dilemma, or man's profound neediness, the first point, is seen in this image we are sheep. This *'figure of speech'* we see in Verse 6, where it says, ***...This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.*** In the first five verses He introduced this metaphor of sheep, and He used the metaphor of the sheepfold, and says that the right shepherd comes through the door. Well they didn't follow that, they didn't understand what He was getting at so He expands on it. What He does is He doesn't continue kind of as a one-for-one parable. The parables that are recorded in the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you can follow the parable as a one-for-one story. What I mean is, once the story is told, the representations stay intact, but in this particular story, it shifts around. For instance, in the synoptics you have the *'Parable of the Sower'*. The sower is the man who takes the word of God and sows the word of God. Jesus, ultimately, and everyone else who sows the word of God, and the seed is the word of God. The soils represent the hearts of the recipients of the preaching of the word. He expands on that, explains it, but He doesn't change it.

What you have here in the first five verses is a metaphor introduced of 1st Century sheep-farming in which the door is the way that the true shepherd comes in, but in Verses 6-10, Jesus becomes the door. You see there is a shift. Then in Verses 11-18 He is the shepherd again. So what happens is, and this phrase *'figure of speech'* translated in Verse 6 kind of picks up on that. It means *'a dark saying, a metaphorical figure'* which is intended to teach things, but at the same time can hide things. So Jesus uses this imagery of sheep-farming and kind of mines out really a couple of parables together. In Verses 6-10, He is focused on, as I said, the door of the sheep, and He's the door. In Verses 11-18, the shepherd, and then later He is going to talk about the flock itself. So He expands upon this initial metaphor, but one thing that is constant throughout is who the sheep are, and the sheep are us. Our profound dilemma, or our profound neediness, is seen in this metaphor in a striking way. We are sheep, and there are three things I want us to see about sheep.

A) Sheep are Defenseless:

First of all, sheep are defenseless animals. They are among the most defenseless animals. I mean think about it, you watch those nature shows. I'll sometimes watch the nature shows where the cheetahs are chasing the antelope. I think we should always be pulling for the underdog. You pull for them to get away, right? They don't show the sheep trying to get away from anything because there is no contest.

If a bear or a wolf comes upon sheep, it is over. There is just killing. There is nothing to it. So you don't see them featured on the shows because they don't have speed, they don't have camouflage. Some animals in nature are blessed with camouflage, they are hiding in the environment. Sheep don't have that. White sheep against a green background. "Here I am. Come get me, I can't run fast. I don't have horns." So they are defenseless. They are completely defenseless. They are absolutely helpless against all would-be attackers.

B) Sheep are Dumb:

Secondly, they are not only defenseless, sheep are dumb. Sheep are dumb, they are naïve. Dumb works better with the liberation. Sheep are defenseless, sheep are dumb. Maybe it hits a little closer to home as it should anyway. We are dumb. We are defenseless and we are dumb. We don't have the ability to defend ourselves against the attacks of Satan, against the attacks of the world system, against the attacks of sin, and in our own hearts. We are utterly defenseless and we are dumb. Sheep don't go out and forage and find their own food. You know goats are much better at that. They can find something to eat. Sheep don't know how. I had done some research a few years back when we were looking at the metaphors, a series earlier on eldering because the Elders are shepherds, under-shepherds, under the true shepherd. Jesus is the only Shepherd, really. He works through under-shepherds. It is always Christ that we are to follow, but in studying that, I remember doing some research and had revisited that this week.

There was a study done at the University of Tennessee back around 2000. It was fascinating reading this study that is on the university website. I accessed it through them, and basically there is no Christian viewpoint. They are not trying to prove any theology points, but it's fascinating what they tell you about sheep-farming, even though in the west we do it differently. We don't get out in front of the sheep, we tend to herd the sheep with sheepdogs. We don't do it the same way, but the sheep are the same no matter how you treat them. One of the things that was really interesting in that paper that I remember being struck by was, as they are talking about caring for sheep in this paper, they were saying, "If you are going to care for sheep you've got to make sure they eat." It doesn't just mean that you take them to good pasture, it means that you make sure that they eat. It talked about how you need to regularly, when the sheep come in, you need to take time to feel of the sheep. You know they've got all that fur on them, I mean that wool, right? So you can't tell how thin or how fat the sheep is unless you feel inside of it. This person at the University of Tennessee was saying, "You've got to make sure that you feel because a lot of times sheep will go out in the pasture and just forget

to eat.” “I just forgot to eat for three weeks,” you know? “My stomach was hurting. What is it? What’s that mean? My stomach is hurting and growling. I just can’t figure it out.” That’s what sheep do. Sheep are dumb, they will sit beside other sheep who are eating poison, watching them die, and then keep eating it. “Oh, that’s good. You are out of the way now. I’ll eat this.” So you have to prepare the area, the pasture has to be cleared of any bad stuff to bring them into the good stuff, and then you have to make sure that they ate it in the first place. Sheep will stand by water thirsty and not drink. Shepherds sometimes, when they see a sheep that’s not doing well, have to force the head of the sheep into the water, as if suddenly by being submerged in the water, “Oh, yeah. This was what I was looking for.”

Now all of that is to say, “This is what we are.” How naïve are we? All men are like this and fallen men are completely this. I mean, unsaved men, but even saved men, don’t we find that we still are sheep. We have to continually be looking to the shepherd, looking to Christ. Isn’t it amazing how quick we are to forget what we need, how we can find ourselves spiritually emaciated, struggling with sin? Maybe it is kind of a spirit of anger and frustration, or depression, and our Bible remains unopened. God has to take our noses somehow through our circumstances, and push our face down into the water of His word. We can be around the teaching of the word, there it is. We can even be reading the word, but we’re somehow not feeding on it. And He has to feel of our sides to see that we’re not getting nourishment. He has to help us to remember we’re supposed to eat, and what it means to eat.

C) Sheep are in Danger:

Sheep are defenseless, they are dumb, and sheep are also in danger. These are the underlying assumptions of this metaphor. Sheep are in danger because they are defenseless, and they are dumb, and so they need some care immediately. They need constant care, constant supervision, and constant leadership. He speaks in the passage of robbers and thieves. Later He speaks of wolves. So sheep are in danger continually, and so we see our own great need for protection, our need for provision. This is so helpful to think about this for ourselves and also dealing with unbelievers and not getting frustrated. You know sheep are naïve, they are dumb, that means naïve. Naïve is a little nicer way to say dumb, isn’t it? We are naïve. I mean we are naïve, easily led astray. We believe anything.

If you just think about culture around us, and then how we see this play out continually, it gives you patience. Think about it from a political standpoint.

Sheep are naïve. It seems that our country is moving more and more towards socialism every day. That we are on a model and attempting to be like the European socialistic democracies. European socialism has failed. Socialism has failed every time it has been tried but, “Let’s try it again.” It doesn’t make sense and when you think about that is when you will remember that we are sheep. You can understand that. Think about moral naivety. I mean, how many are being led astray morally today? And how easily? I mean, you see the rise of immorality, and the rise of perversion, and how easy it is for any of us to be led into that. For any unbeliever, the moral decay that we see in society, people are being told it seems like all the time.

We were watching TV this week and one of the news shows. I can’t remember which one it was, a news show, and they are talking about how these two twin boys, one was telling the other that he wanted to be a girl. It is trumpeted by society, “Isn’t this wonderful? Isn’t this freedom?” Do you see the liberty that people are having now? They think that’s freedom, that’s life, to question their sexual creation and how God has made them, and to go with their feelings, and to go with the culture, and they think that’s life and it’s death. It’s poison. When you realize that people are sheep it makes you more patient. They aren’t the enemy, they are just sheep like us. We ought to have compassion on them.

Certainly spiritually, look at how defenseless and naïve we can be spiritually. Isn’t it amazing what people will believe in order not to believe the Gospel? The more that you look into any religion, isn’t it astounding that they believe it? I mean nothing else makes sense. Nothing else makes sense of the world. Biblical Christianity is the only thing that makes sense. Six-day creation is the only thing that makes sense. It doesn’t make sense that the world evolved, as the atheists believe, out of just nothing, just became something, and then something became life. It was just the ingredients being there long enough. It’s kind of like believing that if I put some flour, some sugar, some eggs, and some milk on my counter at night before I go to bed, maybe there will be a cake in the morning. That’s what they believe. That’s really what they believe. That’s irrational. Well, they are sheep. We could name one after another, after another, and say, “They really believe that?” Yeah, they do. There are people who adhere to all kinds of bizarre belief systems, and it’s sad, it’s awful, but it is understandable. It is just an evidence of what God has always said about us. So when we see that, we should remember how grateful we are that He’s given us eyes to see. We ought to be humbled by that, not proud because there but for the grace of God go we. So our profound dilemma is we are defenseless, dumb, and in danger.

2) The Many Failed Remedies:

The many failed remedies, I kind of started into that with that discussion of the spiritual, well even the moral and political things. You know so many great leaders through history, I say great in the sense of not their real benefit, but that became well-known, were people who promised salvation in some way—social salvation, political salvation. There is no salvation in that way, but Jesus deals with that in Verse 8.

John 10:8 ~All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

All who came before Me... It's a strong statement. In fact, the phrase can be translated, "All whosoever came before Me..." The NIV gets a little closer to this when it says, "All whoever came before Me..." The force of it is something like that, "All, without exception, whoever came before Me are thieves and robbers,..." Now I think He is speaking about many of the contemporaries of His day. First of all the religious leaders, but also false messiahs, religious zealots, but He's really speaking of everyone other than those who have come preaching Him. He's not talking about Moses, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, He's talking about everybody but them because they came preaching Him, and He was preaching through them. He says basically in this passage that every other way is false, and it tells us how we're supposed to see competing ideas, competing theologies. Not the person that advocates it, but the idea itself. The way we are supposed to see competing teachings and ideologies is they are deadly and destructive. Everything but the true Gospel is death. That's what He's saying. "All who came before Me, all whosoever came before Me are thieves and robbers." *'Thieves'* is a word which pictures stealing by stealth, secretly, hidden, like *'to burglarize'*, *'to come in secretly and take'*, but the robber is a different word. It speaks of violence, it speaks of confrontation, and just taking violently from somebody. So He's saying that, "All who came before Me were stealing one way or the other. They did it secretly in coming across as those who are looking like, from outward appearances, those who were honest, but they were stealing, or they came as robbers." But every other way of salvation that is offered is a dead end. Our profound need, our defenselessness, our naivety, require something that no other religion, no other set of ideas has, that no other person has, but save one, the Lord Jesus Christ. So the point of the passage is to show us really the exclusivity of the Gospel, the exclusivity of Jesus. He says, "I am the door," and He says it twice. Verse 7, "I am the door." Verse 9, "I am the door."

3) God's Only Way:

It comes to the third point, God's only way. Our profound dilemma and neediness, our many failed remedies. Every other remedy is a failure. God's only way to be dealt with, to be saved, is to come to Jesus. The emphasis on this is striking. The '*I AM*' sayings are all like bold, kind of italicized, highlighted in the text. They had that force when Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." It is as if God is calling all focus, "Look at Jesus. Look what He's saying." He says this in this passage, "I am the door." He says it twice. What does that mean? "I am the door." There are three things that this passage is saying. It is saying that Jesus is the only way to three things.

A) Jesus is the Only Way to Experience Safety:

Jesus is the only way to experience safety. That's the first thing. God's only way, God's only remedy is Jesus, and Jesus is the only way to safety. In Verse 9 it says: *...if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved...* This word *saved* is an important word in the New Testament. It's one which has become familiar and used, and often over used to the point where we kind of forget what it means. I know growing up in the south as I have, and in Baptist churches, you hear people say, "I got saved Sunday," and what they mean by that is often they mean, "I went to the front of the church (I joined the church), and I prayed a prayer," and it may be genuine, but they don't have that idea of the fullness of what being saved means. Being saved isn't becoming a church member. Being saved isn't even just becoming a member of the family of God. It is that, but it's much more. Being saved means being saved from our sin and being saved from the wrath of God. So the question is: Saved from what? What are you saved from?

Jesus is saying, "I am the only way to salvation. I am the only way that defenseless and naïve sheep who are in danger can be saved. They must come to Me. There is no other way." When you consider all the many faceted, many failed remedies and there's one way, that's basically what Jesus is saying in Matthew when He says, "Broad is the way and wide is the gate that leads to destruction, but narrow is the way and little is the gate that leads to life." There's only one way to be saved, and it is through Jesus Christ. But when you come to Him, as He says here in Verse 9, "If you enter through Me," if you do as He calls, and repent of your sins, and believe in Him, believe that He died on the cross for you, believe that He rose again, then you will be saved. The idea of saved here is to be safe and sound, to be made whole, even, and to be protected. That's the original meaning of the word. The picture is that when a person comes to Christ, he is suddenly safe forever.

Think about a sheep, now, out in the wilderness, exposed and separated. That is what He says we are until we come to Jesus, and so that any moment if a wolf, or a coyote, or a bear, or a lion comes along, the sheep is dead. We've already established any of them can outrun him, and any of them can kill him. He's a sitting duck, and the urgency is how do you get saved? You hurry to the gate. The race is on to get to the gate before you're destroyed. That's kind of the urgency of this metaphor, and Jesus Christ is the gate. So the urgency is to run to Jesus, and once you run to Jesus and you come to Him in repentance and faith, you are saved forever. You are delivered from death. You are delivered from potential destruction that will never touch you again. He's the only way to safety.

B) Jesus is the Only Way to Freedom:

In Verse 9, He says: *...if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out...* The phrase is *go in and go out*. He will go in and go out. The picture is that in the everyday life of a sheep, a sheep that has got things the way it needs to be, has a good shepherd, and he's protected, and so at night he goes into the fold with the other sheep, and he sleeps in the safety and protection of the shepherd. Remember, there's a watchman at the gate from the metaphor earlier. He's watching over the sheep. The pen is secure. Nothing from the outside can get in, and the sheep can't wander out from the inside. That's security and safety. Then in the morning, the shepherd comes. Remember we talked about the multiple different flocks that would be gathered in a community sheepfold, and they would hire one guy to stand at that one entrance, and he would recognize the shepherds and let them in and open the gate. The shepherd in Palestine would call his sheep, and his sheep would know who they are and they'd take off, and all the other sheep are just sitting around still, thinking, "What's going on?" Then their shepherd comes and they follow him.

So they follow him out to be led out to eat, to graze, and to find water, and so they find abundance. The idea is that the everyday life of the sheep is going out to find provision and going in to find safety, and it is only the sheep that are able to go in and out in security. It's only the sheep that have real freedom. The message here is that the only people in the world who are free are Christians. Every other person, though they trumpet freedom and they believe the lies that are out there, that they're free because they are doing what they want to do, following the desires of their own hearts, they think they're free, but in reality they're in bondage.

We were driving down the road recently, and we saw one of those chicken trucks. You see feathers coming out sometimes, and they've got all these stacks of chickens. When I go by those things, I don't even want to think about it. I just drive by and don't look at it. We're going to be eating some of that sometime soon, right? But you think about chickens... I didn't mean to get into this discussion, actually, as much as I have, but I'm going to go a little bit here. The way that we care for animals is not unimportant. We ought to be kind to our animals. I think there's a lot of animal mistreatment in the food industry, and maybe the chickens aren't living like that all the time. Maybe they just have to live like that for a car ride. It's kind of like if you have to sit in a car, you put three kids in a back seat, and they feel like a chicken in a cage on top of a thing, right? But if they live that way, this is why we try to buy free-range chickens. There you go. They get to run around. They're free. This was not in my notes, actually.

The idea is seriously that the sheep are free. They have a measure of freedom that they've never known before, because when you are in the security of the relationship with a shepherd, when you have the security of the fold, when you can go in and out following the shepherd, you know what true freedom is for the first time. You're free as you were created to be. Freedom is not freedom to give yourself to sin. That's bondage. Freedom is freedom to live as you were intended to live, which is life. Everything that Satan tries to get us to do, he tries to get us to pervert what God has already given us.

For instance, I mentioned sexuality and all the deception that's out there. With the deception of immorality and homosexuality and all of that, all that Satan is doing there is trying to get what God has created which is good, and perverting it. There's a wonderful passage in C. S. Lewis' book *The Screwtape Letters* in which he points out – actually, the dialogue is between two demons and it's an interesting book, but it's profound in its implications in many places. One demon is counseling another demon on how to handle a person, and he's giving insight into the ways of Satan. He points this out in the book. As one senior demon is telling the younger demon, he says, "Yeah, it's good to use the pleasures to capture a soul." The younger demon has basically been bragging on how he's getting his patient, the human being assigned to him, into bondage through the pleasures, and the older demon says, "It's a good thing, but remember something. You have to proceed with caution when you are in the area of pleasure, because when you are in the area of pleasure (this is the demon talking, now), you are, strictly speaking, on the enemy's ground."

He's talking about God. Pleasure is God's ground, and what the demon says is this: "All of our research, all of the demons in hell, their research has never enabled us to create one pleasure. What we must do is deceive people into taking what He has made, what God the enemy has made, and using it in ways which He does not intend, and the idea is if you pervert the way they use it, you will have an ever-increasing desire for an ever-diminishing return. They will have a more intense desire and they will get less and less pleasure out of it." And this is how he ends it: "What really gladdens the heart of our father Satan is to get a man's soul and give him nothing in return."

I remember reading that and pondering that. What that says is that even the person who is committing sexual perversion, the pleasure they get in the moment is a gift from God. Think about that. They are dishonoring the Lord, but whatever pleasure they're getting there is given by God. Every pleasure is from the Lord. Now, what this ought to make us do is say, "Why would I go anywhere else but to God? He's the One that created these things. He's the giver of every good and perfect gift, and He knows how they are to be used, how they are to be enjoyed." Freedom is coming to walk behind the Shepherd, and saying, "Lord, show me how I'm to live. Show me how I'm to live my life." That's freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17 ~ ...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

We are the freest people the world has ever known. It doesn't matter whether we live under a free government or under tyranny. If you're a Christian, you are free, and if you're not a Christian, you're a slave. Whether you live under a free government or not, it is irrelevant. The only issue is, are you free in Christ? Do you know Him or do you not? Jesus is the only way to safety and He's the only way to freedom.

C) Jesus is the Only Way to Life:

John 10:9 ~ ... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

He contrasts that with a thief who comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. Satan, who is enticing people to an imaginary freedom, his goal is to steal, and to kill, and to destroy, but Jesus, who offers Himself as our Savior, says, "Come to Me that you may have life. I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly."

There are some rich words here that we need to look at. The word for life here in Verse 10: ***I have come that they may have life...*** is the word ζωή (zōē). It's not the word βίος (bios) from which we get our word biology. Bios is more natural life. This word zōē means not mere existence, life that is not merely passing one's days, but it means true life. It means the blessed life, the happy life, the life that satisfies. That's the life Jesus gives. That word itself means that. "I have come that they may have life that satisfies." His motivation in coming is to bless.

Isn't it astounding the God of the universe has come into the world and undergone the incredible agony of living in this sinful world, and then dying on the cross so that we might have life? And then He says in Verse 9: ***... and will go in and out and find pasture.*** Look back in Verse 9 for a moment. Going in and out we said was freedom. Finding pasture is life. In fact, the word pasture here is a word which really focuses on the act of eating, itself. I might find food. The sheep metaphor means *find pasture*, but the word pictures the pleasure that sheep find in eating.

I mentioned earlier that God is the One who created every good thing. He's the one that created us with all the taste buds that we have in our mouths. I mean, just stop and think about things like that. Isn't that amazing? We could just eat and everything would be bland, oatmeal in, oatmeal out, no sugar, because it doesn't matter, because we don't have taste buds anyway. We're just fueling up just like a car. "I'm full. Ready to go." No, He made it so that we can taste sweet, and sour, and bitter, and all these different things, and then He creates a world where there are all these different tastes. I get amazed. I grew up and as a guy, and just hamburgers and hotdogs, that was fine. My mom was always cooking good stuff, but it's like if we'd go to McDonald's, back then that was great, although we didn't go to McDonald's very much back then. There weren't that many around.

Remember years ago those of you who are old enough to remember, McDonald's was a big deal? Now it's every day. I remember when the first Chinese restaurant came in. We were excited about that. We started eating Chinese food regularly. I mean, in the Atlanta area, we were just overrun with these ethnic restaurants. Mexican, I loved Mexican food. I haven't really run into a food I don't like. I mean, Thai food, Indian food, and the different seasonings that they use, isn't it astounding? Patti made something the other day that had all these different seasonings in it. Basil, and parsley, and I can't remember, but several other things, fresh stuff, and she was telling me that you're supposed to put it in the refrigerator and let the spices marry. Let it marinate for an hour. The spices have to marry, then you're ready to eat it, and they married very well. But the Lord made that.

The Lord made us like this, and so Jesus' heart, God's heart from the very beginning is to bless man. Then Jesus comes back to say, "I've come that you might have life, and you might have it to the full." The word *full*, here, or *abundantly*, is picture the word overflowing, abounding, having more than enough. The idea is over, and above, and beyond your needs. That's what God wants us to have.

So Jesus is the only way to life. He's the only way to satisfaction. He's the only way to abundance. In fact, something else He shows here is that it's not just about heaven, but it's about the life here and now. When He says in Verse 10: ***I came that they may have life and have it abundantly...*** there are two verbs there 'may have' and then 'have', which are basically both present tense verbs. The idea is continuous, ongoing action. "I came that they may right now enter into a state of ongoing life, that they might enter into a state of ongoing, continual abundance." It's not just for heaven. It's for now.

The glory of heaven in the picture of the New Testament, particularly John, the glory of life eternal comes into the person's experience at the moment they repent and believe. The moment they're born again they come to have this life, and Jesus wants us to have it more, and more, and more. That's the invitation for every person. Why would you continue in your defenseless and naïve way of living, your sadness, your misery, your lostness, when you can come to the Shepherd, when you can come to the door? And then the message is for us as Christians to live once we come to faith in Christ. He remains the only access point every day of our lives to life abundantly. You have to live a Christ centered life if you want to experience the abundance.

I mean, think about that sheep in the gate image. To get out in the morning, he's got to go which way? He's got to go through the gate. So when he's hungry, there's only one way. It's through the gate. If he's coming back in with the shepherd and he hears a wolf howl, what's the way to safety? It's through the gate. You have to continually be looking to Jesus Christ. The Christian life isn't something where you get saved and then you live the rest of your life not really thinking about the Lord. No, it's to live in the presence of Jesus Christ every moment of every day. That's what we're trying to do, and that's fullness. That's abundance. When we find ourselves struggling, when sin comes in and we find ourselves remembering that we're being dumb sheep again, what's the answer? Find Christ. Go straight to Him.

I've been reading a book that's been very helpful to me, and I'm just kind of taking it and ruminating on it. It's so rich. It's the book *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* by Jerry Bridges. The basic message of the book is as Christians, the gospel is not just for unbelievers who need to get saved. The gospel is for Christians every day of their lives. We need it every single day, over, and over, and over again. We need to live in light of the gospel every day. One of the things he talks about is how you overcome sin, and I want to share with you some of what he quotes. He quotes John Owen, a 17th century theologian from England who was used so mightily by God, and he says this is how you learn to run to Christ.

He says that the believer, when he sees that he has sinned, when we sees that he's fallen down, what is he to do? There are some who say, "Just get up and remember Jesus has forgiven you. Don't think about it. Just move forward." Well, that's not exactly right. And there are some who say, "When you fall, you ought to just sit down in your misery and wallow in it, and keep thinking about it until you hate it more." That's not exactly right either. The answer is you go to Jesus. How do you do that? Listen to what Owen says:

The way that you go to Jesus on a daily basis is when you have sinned, when you have fallen, you endeavor to continually keep alive upon your heart a sense of the guilt and evil of sin, even when you're under comfortable persuasions that you are accepted by God. A sense of pardon takes away the horror and fear, but not a due sense of the guilt of sin.

What he's saying is you need to think about how ugly your sin is, how awful it is, how offensive it is, and you need to stay there for a little while. Sometimes only a few seconds is all you need, but you stay there and you think about how terrible this is. You don't just skip past it. "Thank you. I'm forgiven." No, you look at it and you see how ugly it is. He said:

It's the daily exercise of the saints of God to consider the great provocation that is in sin—their sins. This the saints do. They gather up their sins. They lay them in the balance of the Law. They see and consider their weight and what they deserve.

Now, listen to this:

And then they hearken to the voice of Christ calling to the sinner, "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden. Come with your burdens. Come, you poor soul with your guilt of sin."

“Why?” we say, “What are we to do?” Jesus answers: “Why, this is Mine,” says Christ. This agreement I made with My Father that I should come and take your sins and bear them away. They were My lot. Give Me your burden. Give Me all your sins. You know not what to do with them. I know how to dispose of them well enough so that God shall be glorified and your soul delivered.”

The saints lay down their sins at the cross of Christ upon His shoulders. This is faith’s great and bold venture upon grace, faithfulness, and truth of God, to stand by the cross and say this: “Ah! He is bruised for my sins. He is wounded for my transgressions. The chastisement of my peace is upon Him. He is thus made sin for me, in my sin today. Here I give up to Him my sins that I’m not able to bear that He is able to bear. He requires it of my hands that I should be content, that I should lay them at His feet.

Owen goes on to say:

This is every day’s work. I know not how any peace can be maintained without it.

He says that when you have this idea, when you look at your sin long enough to see how ugly it is, and then you run to Christ, and you remember He died for these things, he says:

Having thus by faith given up their sins to Christ, and having seen God laying them all on Him, they draw near and take from Him that righteousness which He has wrought out for them, so fulfilling the whole of what the apostle said when he said, “He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” They consider Him their righteousness. This exceedingly endears the souls of the saints to Him, and it constrains them to value Him above everything else.

Every time that we sin and we fall and we look to Christ, we see that He is a glorious and sufficient Savior, and He becomes dearer and more precious, and what’s happening is you’re harkening to His voice, and you’re following more closely upon His heels. Even our sins He brings around to be closeness and intimacy when we keep our eyes on Jesus. He is the only way to live and that is life. That is life to be able to face the reality that we’re still sheep, and to glory in the fact that we have a wonderful, precious Shepherd. Jesus is the only way to safety, He’s the only way to freedom, and He’s the only way to life.

Let’s pray together...

Our Father, we rejoice that You have offered Your own precious Son. Lord Jesus, we marvel that You were joyful in coming and doing the will of Your Father, and coming and saving sinners like us. We pray that You would help those who are in the room today that have not yet come to You, not yet truly come to You. Maybe they've been baptized, maybe they're members, but they realize they've not really come to You in faith. We pray that today might be the day of their salvation, that today might be the day that they hearken to Your voice. Grant them repentance and faith.

Father, we pray that You would make us more patient and gentle in our dealings with unbelievers, when they're just doing what's natural to them and what's natural to us apart from Your grace. We pray that You would help us to see in every evidence of weakness, in every evidence of deception in this world, to help us see reminders of gratitude, that we might be intensely grateful that You have opened our eyes and opened our hearts.

Father, we pray that You would help us to be increasingly contented, overflowing with joy and freedom, and overflowing with life, so that people around us might see that we have found life, and when they see that, give us ready tongues to tell them the way and the truth and the life is Jesus. We pray in His Name, Amen.

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