

The Gospel of John 10:1-13

I The Shepherd, the Door and the Pasture for the Sheep

- A. The sheepfold signifies the law, or Judaism as the religion of the law, in which God's chosen people were kept and guarded in custody until Christ came. The sheepfold, in its better usage, signifies the law of the Old Testament, but in its common and ordinary usage, it signifies Judaism, the religion of the law. Originally, before the first advent of Christ, God gave His law to the people of Israel.
1. What was God's purpose in giving them the law? Did He expect them to keep it? No, that was not His purpose. Galatians 3:23-26 reveals God's purpose in giving the law. Before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was about to be revealed. So the law was a child-conductor until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. Once faith came, we are no longer under a child-conductor; for we are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
 2. Before faith came, we were kept under the law. In other words, we were guarded or kept like sheep in a fold. The Greek word translated " guarded or kept" means confined. Before faith came—that is, before Christ came—the chosen people of God were confined under the law. They were "shut up" under the law. "Shut up" is a special word in Greek, meaning to be kept in custody or under special care in a ward. For instance, if the parents of a family pass away, the children might be put...under the care of someone else. This shows how the chosen people of God were placed under the custody of the law before faith in Christ came. The law kept God's chosen people and eventually it brought them to Christ.
 3. Once we have been brought to Christ, we are justified by faith. Since faith has come—that is, since Christ has come—we are no longer under the custody of the slave (law). The law was the fold. The sheep are God's chosen people. After Christ came, He wanted all of His people to come out of the law's custody. The blind man who was cast out of the Jewish synagogue and who came to the Lord Jesus is one of God's chosen people. He was under the custody of the law, but he was taken out of it unto the Lord Himself. He was led by the Lord out of the Judaism-fold. Hence, this chapter is a continuation of ch.9.
- B. Thieves and robbers (v.8) signify those who came into the law, but not through Christ. All who came before Christ "are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them" (v.8)
- C. Christ is the door not only for God's elect to enter into the custody of the law, as did Moses, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah in the Old Testament time, before Christ came, but also for God's chosen people, such as Peter, John, James, and Paul, to come out of the fold of the law now that Christ has come.
1. Thus, the Lord indicated here that He is the door not only through which God's elect may go in, but also through which God's chosen people may go out. The door signifies freedom. In Christ we have the freedom to go in and out. This means that we do not have any legality. The freedom we enjoy is Christ as our life-giver.
 2. Because Christ is our freedom, our door, nothing can bind us. We are not bound by any legality. This does not mean, of course, that we are free to indulge the flesh (Gal.5:13). In the proper church life we are in a condition where we are not in bondage to legality. Because Christ is our door, we have true freedom, and we are not bound by anything legal.
- D. The pasture here signifies Christ as the feeding place for the sheep. When the pasture is not available (winter or night), the sheep must be kept in the fold. When the pasture is ready, there is no further need for the sheep to remain in the fold. To be kept in the fold is transitional and temporary. To be in the pasture enjoying its riches is final and permanent. Before Christ came, the law was a ward, and being under the law was transitional. Now that Christ has come, all God's chosen people must come out of the law and come into Him to enjoy Him as their pasture (Gal. 3:23-25; 4:3-5).
- E. Because they did not have such a revelation, the leaders in Judaism considered the law, on which Judaism was based, as permanent. As a result, they missed Christ and could not participate in Him as their pasture. The pasture is a place full of tender grass; a place full of the supply of life. When the sheep are in the pasture, they do not lack food. Today our pasture is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit. In our daily Christian life we need to have the definite realization that we are in the pasture enjoying Christ as the rich supply of life. Christ is our door, our Shepherd, and our pasture. As the door, He is our freedom, and as the Shepherd, He is leading, guiding, and directing us in life. Now we see that as the pasture Christ is our life supply. Day by day, we need to enjoy Christ as our pasture.

II The Shepherd, the Divine Life and the Soulful Life for the Flock

- A. The Lord came to give life and give it more abundantly. "Life" here, in the Greek is Zoe. This word is used in the New Testament for the eternal, divine life. Eternal life is in the Son (John 1:4) and the Son is eternal life (John 11:25, 14:6, Col.3:4). Therefore, if you have the Son you have eternal life (1John5:12) This life is offered to us abundantly (John 4:14 and 7:38) As long as we have Christ as life within us and we enjoy and experience Him as life, we shall have Him as the door, the Shepherd, and the pasture. The door will be our freedom, and the pasture will be our life supply.
- B. For the Lord to dispense the eternal life to us, He had to be willing to let His natural, human life be broken to allow the eternal life to flow, as symbolized by the water flowing out of His broken body. (John 19:34) Here in verse 11 and succeeding verses (vv.15,17-18), the Lord says He must, as the good Shepherd, give up His life for the sheep. Life, here, in the Greek, means "psuche", soul; i.e. soul-life. As a man the Lord has the psuche life, the human life, and as God He has the zoe life, the divine life. He laid down His soul, His psuche life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep that they may share His zoe life, His divine life (v.10b), the eternal life (v.28), by which they can be formed into one flock under Himself as the one Shepherd. As the good Shepherd He feeds His sheep with the divine life in this way and for this purpose.
- C. The Shepherd, who is life to us, leads us, guides us, and directs us in everything. Therefore, we should not be directed by anything outward, but instead should be directed inwardly by Christ who is life to us. This Christ is our Shepherd, our Guide. The Lord shepherds us not in the way of outward activity, but that He shepherds us inwardly in the way of life. This means that the Lord shepherds us from within. Inwardly we have Him as our Shepherd, as a Shepherd of life and in life. The Lord shepherds us by being life to us from within. We enjoy His shepherding when we live by Him as our life. On the one hand, the Lord lives in us. On the other hand, we live in Him, by Him, with Him, and through Him. When we live in the Lord in this way, we are under His shepherding. As we are under the Lord's shepherding, there will be a life consciousness within us and also an instruction, a guidance, in life. The life within us, which is actually Christ Himself, will indicate that the Lord intends to lead us in a certain way. This life consciousness with its leading and instruction indicate that we are under the Lord's shepherding.