

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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SHEPHERDING —
THE NEED
OF THOSE
OUTSIDE RELIGION

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Living Stream Ministry

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[John 10](#) is a very interesting chapter, but it is also a misunderstood chapter. This chapter is actually a continuation of [chapter nine](#). [Verse 21](#) helps us to realize this, for the question is asked, “Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” Both chapters center around the record of the case of the man born blind. The thought in this chapter is deep. On the surface, it seems easy to understand, but actually it is not easy to understand this parable or allegory. The Lord brought out this allegory about the sheepfold immediately after He cured the blind man who was cast out of the synagogue by the Jews. This incident, therefore, became the setting for the parable of the sheepfold.

We must now consider the significance of the sheepfold in this parable. It is not easy to define the sheepfold. Perhaps you know something about the Bible and especially about the Gospels. Perhaps you were told from your youth about

the stories from the Gospels in Sunday School. Perhaps you have even graduated from seminary. Let me ask you this question: what do you realize about the sheepfold? What have you been taught about this matter? The key to unlocking the secret of this parable depends very much upon the meaning of the sheepfold.

THE LAW, OR JUDAISM, THE RELIGION OF THE LAW

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. 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. "But before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was about to be revealed. So the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But faith having come, we are no longer under a child-conductor; for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Before faith in Christ came, we were kept under the law. In other words, we were kept like

sheep in a fold. The Greek word translated “guarded” 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 in the custody of their aunt or uncle. In other words, they are 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 people under custody “unto the faith,” which is better translated as “for preparation to the faith.” [Galatians 3:24](#) says that “the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ.” The law was our slave to bring us to our schoolmaster, who is Christ. In ancient times, the children of the rich, Jewish families were escorted to their schoolmaster by a trained slave. Likewise, the law served as a slave to bring us to Christ. Before we were brought to Christ, the schoolmaster, we were under the care of a slave, the law. God the Father used the law as a slave to take care of us and to bring us to Christ. Before Christ came, we were put under the hand of the law which

was to be our custodian. The law was responsible for the care and protection of God's chosen people and eventually it brought them to Christ. 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.

Now we understand what is the sheepfold. Before Christ came, God put His chosen people under the custody of the law. The law was the fold. For example, if you visit the ranch country, you will discover that the sheep do not stay in the fold most of the time. Most of the year the sheep stay in the pasture. The pasture is the permanent place for them to stay, but the sheepfold is merely a temporary place. Only when the pasture is not ready will the sheep be kept in the fold. The fold is used temporarily to keep and protect the sheep until the pasture is ready. This illustrates that Christ is the pasture, the permanent place for the Lord's children to stay. But before Christ came, God prepared the law as the sheepfold to keep and confine His chosen people temporarily.

However, when the Lord came, the Jewish religion had utilized the law to form Judaism. Judaism had become the sheepfold. Before the

blind man was healed by the Lord, he was one of the sheep confined in Judaism. When he was cast out of the synagogue, he was actually driven out of Judaism. Therefore, he was put out of the fold. Formerly, he had been one of the sheep in the fold; now, he was cast out of the fold of Judaism.

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

The sheep are God's chosen people. In eternity past, God with His foresight had chosen His people. In time, before Christ came, God put His chosen people into the custody of the law. 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.

CHRIST FOR "GOING IN" AND "GOING OUT"

What does it mean to say that Christ is the door? Most Christians think that the door is for people to enter into heaven. Perhaps some of you reading this still hold on to this concept. But the door here is not for you to go to heaven, for this door enables people to go in and out. If this door

were the door into heaven, how could people go out of it? This door is not the door into heaven.

The Lord is the door to the sheepfold. Originally, the fold was the law, and the Lord was the door into the law. The Lord was not only the door into the law; He is also the door for people to come out of the law. [Verse 9](#) says, “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture.” Christ is the door, not only for God’s elect to enter into the custody of the law, as did Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., in the Old Testament time before Christ came; but also for God’s chosen people, such as Peter, James, John, and Paul, to come out of the fold of the law after Christ came. So the Lord indicates in [verse 9](#) that He is the door not only for God’s chosen people to go in, but also for God’s chosen people to go out. Those who went into the law were people like Moses, the psalmists, and the prophets. Christ was the door for these people to go into the fold of the law. In other words, they went into the fold through Christ and for Christ. If we adopt this point of view when reading the writings of Moses, the psalmists, and the prophets, we will realize that they entered into the law of God through Christ. Christ was their entrance into the law.

At the time the Lord Jesus came, so many people were still in the fold. However, after the coming of Jesus, God no longer intended to keep His chosen people in the fold of the law. God wanted them to come out of the law into Christ. Thus, by that time, Christ no longer was the door for God's chosen people to enter into the fold; He was the door for those who were already in the fold to come out. The blind man was one who was coming out of the fold. Formerly, all of the servants sent by God went into the law through Christ. But although Christ had come, the fold was still full of sheep who were confined within it. What should they do? They had to come out of the fold through Christ. During the Old Testament age, God sent many of His servants into the fold of the law through Christ. Now during the New Testament age, God intends to bring His people out of the law through Christ as the door. Now I believe you understand that the sheepfold was the Old Testament law, which was utilized by the Jews to form the religion of Judaism. Then Judaism became the fold to confine all of the Lord's chosen people. But Christ has come and the pasture is ready. Therefore, there is no need for the sheep to be confined any longer in the custody of the Judaistic law. They

must be released from the fold of the law that they might enjoy all of the riches of the pasture.

Moreover, the Lord is also the shepherd. He is not only the door of the fold, but also the shepherd. He comes to call His people out of the fold, and His sheep can recognize His voice. He is the first one out of the fold, which is the law. Now He walks before His sheep, who all will eventually follow Him. Peter, James, and John came out of Judaism. Even Paul came out of Judaism. All of the Jews who believed in the Lord Jesus followed Him out of the Judaistic fold.

The blind man was one who came out of Judaism. He was cast out of the synagogue of Judaism. He was cast out of that fold because of the living Jesus. Therefore, the Lord took the opportunity to speak forth this parable. The Lord let the Jews know that their religion was just a fold. He made it known that the pasture is now ready and that it was unnecessary for the sheep to remain in their fold. Now is the time for the sheep to come out of the fold and to enjoy the riches of the pasture. The one the Jewish people cast out of their synagogue became one who enjoyed the Lord as the pasture.

The Lord is first the door, then the shepherd, and finally the pasture. The shepherd takes all of

the sheep out of the fold through Himself as the door and brings them to Himself as the pasture. He is the shepherd who brought the sheep out of the fold; He is the door through whom the sheep are brought out; and He is the pasture to whom the sheep are brought. He simply brought the sheep out of Judaism through Himself, unto Himself, and for Himself. He is everything—the exit, the shepherd, and the pasture.

CHRIST AS THE FEEDING PLACE FOR THE SHEEP

Outside the fold is the green pasture. Pasture here signifies Christ as the feeding place for the sheep. When the pasture is not available in the winter time or in the 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 transitory and temporary. To be in the pasture to enjoy its riches is final and permanent. Before Christ came, the law was a ward, and to be under the law was transitory. Now, since Christ has come, all God's chosen people must come out of the law and come to Him to enjoy Him as their pasture ([Gal. 3:23-25](#); [4:3-5](#)). This should be final and permanent. Now is the spring time, the right time for

the sheep to come out to the pasture and feed on the green grass. The disciples Peter, James, and John were also ones in the fold, but they came out of it to feed upon Christ as the pasture. When they were in the old religion, they were starved to death in the fold. There was no door, meaning there was no freedom, and there was no pasture, meaning there was no feeding. One day, they met Christ, the living One, the shepherd, and He said, "Come and follow Me." They followed Him out of the fold and into the pasture.

If you follow the Lord as your shepherd, it will stir up a storm that will force you out of the fold. You do not need to strive or to exercise any effort to follow the Lord Jesus out of the fold, for, as long as you follow Him, the old religion will force you to get out. They will cast you out. The more you follow this living Jesus, the more religion will force you out. Religion cannot put up with Jesus, and Jesus will never remain in religion. These two are absolutely different, and there is no possibility of reconciling them. Jesus is life, and religion is something other than life. The living Jesus simply cannot tolerate religion. Praise the Lord that we are all out of religion and are feeding on the green pasture! The pasture certainly is not in the fold; it is outside of the fold. If you

are going to enjoy the pasture, you must come out of the fold. Once you come out of the fold, you will find yourself in the pasture. Hallelujah!

The Lord came that the sheep might have life and might have it abundantly ([John 10:10](#)). This means that the Lord came to impart Himself as life to His sheep because He is their pasture. As long as the sheep stay in the pasture, they will have the supply of life abundantly. By feeding on the pasture, the sheep will enjoy the pasture as their abundant life supply, for the Lord is their abundant life. They will enjoy the Lord and experience Him as their life more abundantly.

How could the Lord fulfill this matter of being the pasture of life to the sheep? It is by realizing that the grass, in order to be eaten, must pass through the process of death. All of the living grass eaten by the sheep must pass through the process of death. Hence, as we shall see, the Lord said that He had to lay down His life for His sheep. He first had to die that He might minister Himself as life to the sheep.

**CHRIST LAYING DOWN
HIS SOULISH LIFE THAT THE SHEEP
MAY HAVE THE DIVINE LIFE**

In [verse 10](#) the Lord said, “I came that they

may have life and may have it abundantly,” and in [verse 11](#) He said, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” In these two verses two different Greek words are used for life. In [verse 10](#) the Greek word is *zoe*, which is the word used in the New Testament for the eternal, divine life. In [verse 11](#) the Greek word is *psuche*, the same word for soul, which means the soulish life, that is, the human life. These two verses indicate that the Lord Jesus has two kinds of lives. 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 ([10:15, 17-18](#)) that they might share His *zoe* life, His divine life ([10:10](#)), the eternal life ([10:28](#)), by which they may 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.

The Lord’s divine life could never be slain. What was slain in His crucifixion was His human life. In order to be our Savior, He, as a man, laid down His human life to accomplish redemption for us that we might receive His *zoe* life. He laid down His human life in order that

we, after being redeemed, might receive His zoe life, the eternal life.

ONE FLOCK BY LIFE UNDER ONE SHEPHERD

The shepherd, the divine life, and the human life are all for the flock. In [verse 16](#) the Lord said, “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd.” Who are the sheep that are not of this Jewish fold? They are the Gentiles. And what is this one flock? The one flock signifies the one church, the one Body of Christ ([Eph. 2:14-16; 4:4](#)), brought forth by life, which the Lord imparted into His members through His death ([John 10:10-18](#)). Before, the fold was Judaism; now, the flock is the church. The sheepfold was, and still is, Judaism, but the flock is the church. The flock is the church which includes two peoples—the believing Jews and Gentiles. The Lord brings both together into one flock and under one shepherd. Now, the one flock and the one shepherd are the one Body and the one Head.

Why are the shepherd, the divine life, and the human life all for the flock? Because the people in the flock are fallen persons in need of

redemption. As a man, the shepherd had the human life. He sacrificed His human life in order to accomplish redemption for His flock. In this way His flock was redeemed. Then His flock received His divine life, and by this divine life the sheep live together as the flock. Thus, the flock is formed into one unit, into one entity. This is not accomplished by the human life, but by the divine life.

In the human life we are condemned and divided; in the divine life we are accepted and united. In the divine life we are all one entity, meaning that we are one flock under one shepherd in one life. If we live by our human life and not by the divine life, we will only cause trouble. Furthermore, we would become strangers and stray away from the flock. Whenever you live by your human life, you are no longer a sheep but a stranger. A sheep is a regenerated person with the divine life. We all must live by the divine life and thus become genuine, real, and pure sheep. Then we shall all be in the flock. As long as we live by our human life, we will resemble a wild animal, perhaps a devouring lion or a wild horse. If we do not live by the divine life, there can be no flock. The flock is produced, kept, maintained, and formed by the divine life. How

good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psa. 133:1). However, dwelling in unity simply means to dwell in the divine life. Praise the Lord that in the divine life we are truly one and love one another. This is not possible in our human, psuche life, but only in the divine, zoe life. We receive this zoe life through the redemption accomplished by our shepherd who laid down His psuche life. He sacrificed His psuche life to accomplish redemption for us all that we might receive Him as our zoe life. Now we are in the zoe life under one shepherd to be one flock. This is not an organization; it is a flocking together in life. It is wonderful. Hallelujah! The flock is not a matter of religion, but of life.

THE ETERNAL LIFE, THE SON'S HAND, AND THE FATHER'S HAND

In 10:28-29 the Lord says, “And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall 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.” The eternal life is for the believers’ living. Both the Son’s hand as the hand of power and the Father’s hand as the hand of love are for the believers’ protection. Eternal life

shall never run out, and the hands of the Son and the Father shall never fail. So the believers are eternally secured and shall never perish.

When I first began to work in this country, many dear saints asked me if I believed in eternal security. I always answered, “Why not?” After awhile everyone knew that I do believe in the wonderful, eternal security. As long as we have eternal life, we have eternal security. What can be more secure than eternal life? I have the real insurance policy in my spirit. Not only do I have eternal life, but I have two hands—the Son’s hand of power and the Father’s hand of love. These two hands embrace me, and Satan is unable to snatch me out. I am eternally secured by the divine life and by these two divine hands. Praise the Lord! These hands are always on the alert, and no one can kidnap us. Therefore, we shall never perish. We have a divine living and an almighty protection. Thus, we, the sheep, are secured forever. Do not argue doctrinally about eternal security. We enjoy the fact. Do you have eternal security? I do not ask whether you believe in eternal security but whether you have it. Regardless of whether or not we believe in the doctrine of eternal security, we are eternally secured.

THE PERSECUTION OF RELIGION

In [verse 30](#) the Lord said, “I and the Father are one.” Here the Lord asserts His deity, that He is God ([10:33](#); [5:18](#); [1:1](#); [20:28](#); [1 John 5:20](#); [Phil. 2:6](#)). The Jews took up stones in order to stone Him, saying, “We are not stoning you for a good work, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, are making yourself God” ([10:33](#)). The Jews persecuted Christ because of His “blasphemy.” It is the same today. Religion claims that we preach heresy. Religion was trying to protect its “belief.” Actually, they had no belief. They had unbelief and they were protecting vanity. Therefore, they persecuted the Lord Jesus.

LIFE’S DESERTION OF RELIGION AND LIFE’S NEW STANDING

In [10:40-42](#) we see life’s desertion of religion and life’s new standing. Christ deserted Judaism and went to the place where John the Baptist preached the New Testament gospel. This is very meaningful. The Lord deserted Judaism and took a new standing for the New Testament. Today we are here on this new standing. We are following the shepherd, we are on the pasture, and we have a new standing.

The testimony of the Old Testament was the sheepfold, but the testimony of the New Testament is Christ as the pasture. Are you a sheep? Do you prefer to remain in the fold when the pasture is ready? Do you still like to be confined and kept under the custody of the fold? Or will you come out of the fold and go into the pasture to enjoy the riches of Christ? Today, the Lord Jesus is no longer in Judaism. The Good Shepherd is no longer in the fold. He is staying where the testimony of the New Testament is established. He has given up the fold and is staying in the place where He is the pasture. Therefore, you also must give up the fold and come to Him. This means that you must give up “Judaism” and come to take Christ as your everything. He is everything to you. Just look at the sheep. The pasture is everything to them. The sheep enjoy the pasture as the resting place, the food, the water, the life supply, and as everything else. You too must come out of the fold and go into the pasture—that is, you must come out of “Judaism” and go to Christ alone. You have to come out of the “law” and go to the place where Christ is enjoyed. Where is Christ now? Christ is outside of all the Judaistic types of groups and in the place where John the Baptist testified of Him.

Christ is the all-inclusive pasture. The fold is the law and Judaism. Christ, the very exit out of the fold, is the shepherd who leads you out of the fold and brings you to Himself who can be everything to you. He is now your pasture.

Allow me to repeat once again. Where is Christ now? He is not in Judaism, but in the very place where the New Testament is testified. Christ is in the place where John the Baptist testified of Him. This is very meaningful because the Lord is now out of the fold and is standing in a new position where He is everything to the chosen people of God. Therefore, you must come out of the old fold and go into the new pasture where Christ Himself is everything to you.

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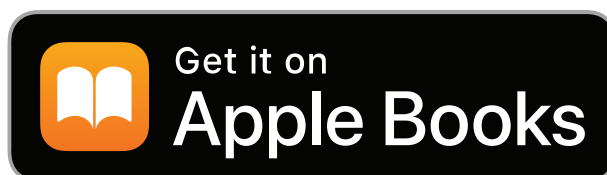
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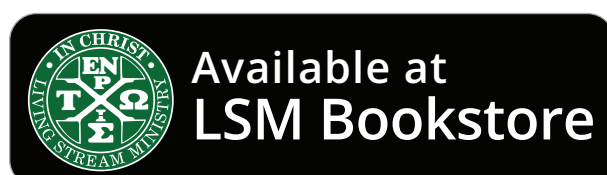
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