

The Door



The Sheepfold (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "The Sheepfold," a theme which provides the answer to a very difficult but also very important question: Who really are God's people in this world?

The picture of God's people that we are looking at this week is found in the Parable of the Sheepfold in John 10. In my introductory talk yesterday, I first explained in general the purpose of a parable. A parable is a kind of mirror which takes familiar everyday things but uses them to reflect unseen spiritual realities so that each main element in the familiar everyday scene has something in the unseen spiritual realm which corresponds to it. So, really, in order to understand a parable, you have to ask yourself: What is the spiritual reality that corresponds to this material thing that I am being told about but which is not the real object of the story? And so, yesterday we looked at the elements in the Parable of the Sheepfold. And I identified them as follows (there are five main elements):

First, the shepherd. That's Jesus.

Second, the sheep. The true disciples or the real Christians.

Third, the sheepfold. The gathering place, the church on earth. A place of separation and security. And notice those two things go together. If you want security, you must have separation. It was the fold that separated the sheep and protected them from all the enemies and the dangers outside.

Fourth, the doorkeeper or the watchman. The Holy Spirit.

And fifth, the owner of all, the lord of the manor. God the Father.

Now in my talk today, I'm going to focus on one special and important feature of the sheepfold; that is the door or the gate. Both words are used in different translations.

Now right at the beginning of the parable Jesus emphasizes the special importance of the door or the gate. He kind of draws our attention to this particular feature. For instance, in John 10:1-3, this is what He says:

> "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. [You see, the focus is on the gate. Then He goes on:] The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." (NIV)

Notice, the central feature of the opening part of that parable is the gate. The only legitimate way into the sheepfold is by the gate. The parable indicates it is possible to get in some other way but anyone who does so is a thief and a robber. So it's very, very important for all of us to know what is the way, what is the significance of the gate. Because if we try to get into the sheepfold, that is, the church of Jesus Christ, but we don't come by the gate, on the evidence of Jesus Himself we are thieves. We are trying to get blessings and provisions of God for which we haven't fulfilled the qualifications. We're stealing.

Now. A little further on, Jesus explained the door. He says in John 10:7: "Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep [or the door]." And then again in verse 9: "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." You see, there's no salvation except for those who enter through the gate. You see how crucial the gate is to everything.

Now I want to lead on to a paradox, something very surprising, something we wouldn't normally expect. And let me tell you this, that whenever you find a paradox in the Bible it should stir you to seek God and to pray and to ask God to show you what is the nature of the paradox. Some people say the Bible is inconsistent and contradicts itself. I don't believe that. But I do believe that the Bible contains paradoxes, some things that are not the way we expect them to be. Some statements that sound very strange. When we come across those statements or those paradoxes, they should alert us to the fact here is something that God is attracting my attention to and if I seek Him, by the Holy Spirit, He'll help me, He'll give me insight, and I'll learn a very important lesson. You see, paradoxes, in a certain sense, are to keep out people who are just inquisitive, they're not really sincere seekers. In fact, they really want to be critics of God. That's their real purpose and function as they see it. And so they stumble over the paradox. They don't get passed it, they just say, "Well, God contradicts Himself." And they miss the real point. But the honest, humbler seeker, when confronted by the paradox, bows his heart and his head and says, "Lord, I don't really understand it, but I believe You can show me."

Now here's the paradox in this particular parable. Jesus has already said more than once, "I am the gate." Now, in verse 11, He says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." And again, in verse 14, "I am the good shepherd: I know my sheep and my sheep know me." So you see, Jesus says about Himself two things: He says, "I am the gate"; and He says, "I am the shepherd." Now that's the paradox. How can Jesus be both the gate and the shepherd. The gate is one thing; the shepherd is another.

Well, there's an answer, I believe. And I believe God has shown me the answer. I'll let you be the judge of whether you feel that what I'm saying is right. But I sought God for the answer and I believe He made it so very clear to me. And I believe it's very, very important.

I've used the word crucial. I believe it is crucial. I don't know whether you're aware, but the adjective crucial is derived from the Latin word for a cross, so it means it's something that's a cross. And that's exactly what I'm trying to say.

Jesus the door is Jesus Crucified; Jesus the shepherd is Jesus Resurrected. So, if you want to get in and have Jesus Resurrected as your shepherd, you have to come in by the door, which is Jesus Crucified. You can't just say, "Jesus is a wonderful teacher. I'm going to follow Him." That's not permitted. That's trying to get in without going through the door. Going through the door is saying, "I'm a sinner. I owe a debt I cannot pay to God for all my sins. But I believe that Jesus on the cross paid that debt. And so I come, not through my own cleverness or wisdom or righteousness, but I come only on the basis of what Jesus Christ did for me on the cross." And so Jesus Crucified is the door. And bear in mind what Jesus has emphasized so many times, if you try to get in any other way, you are a thief or a robber.

I've been saying that Jesus is both the door and the shepherd of the sheep. Crucified He's the door; Resurrected He's the shepherd. I believe you'll agree that's a tremendously important principle. And I want you to see how vividly it's brought out in the parable. What a brilliant method of teaching that parable is, because it takes something so simple and so clear and makes the things we could not understand just as simple and just as clear. And let me repeat what I've said already. When you see a paradox, don't stumble over it. Seek God about it. And it will be a door to further truth.

Now I'd like to just briefly illustrate from Scripture the two principles: Jesus Crucified is the door; Jesus Resurrected is the shepherd. We'll look at just one verse that illustrates each of these principles. First of all Jesus Crucified as the door. Romans 4:25: "He [that's Jesus] was delivered over to death

for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." That's a tremendously important fact. Why did Jesus die? He did not die for His own sins, He had no sins. He did not die because the forces of evil were too strong and overcame Him. He died because He was the appointed sacrifice for the sins of all men. He, by His death on the cross, paid the full penalty for all our sins. Then, when He was resurrected from the dead, He had power to forgive us and to give us eternal life and to justify. Justify is an important kind of theological word. I've interpreted it many times this way: I'm justified, I'm just-as-if-I'd never sinned. Because I now have imputed to me by Almighty God the spotless, sinless righteousness of Jesus Christ. He was made sin with my sinfulness that I, in turn, might be made righteous with His righteousness. And so He's the door. And when I've been made righteous with His righteousness, then I have free access into that sheepfold.

Now let's look at the other side of that truth, Jesus Resurrected is the shepherd. There's a most beautiful prayer near the end of the epistle to the Hebrews. I'll just read the first part of it. Hebrews 13:20-21:

> "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will…" (NIV)

So you see, when God the Father brought Jesus back from the dead, resurrected Him from the dead, He was the great shepherd of the sheep. And it says there that He did it through the blood of the everlasting covenant because the blood that Jesus shed, in which He poured out His soul unto death, is the all-sufficient ransom for every sinful soul of man. Because the ransom was fully paid by the death and the shed blood of Jesus Christ, then God the Father resurrected Him the third day from the dead, no longer to be crucified, no longer to be just the door, but now to become the living mighty resurrected shepherd of those who've come in through the door.

Let me close with this word of warning. If you want Jesus to be your shepherd, you must first enter through the door of His death. There is no other way into the sheepfold.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my talks tomorrow, I'll be sharing about the shepherd's provision for his sheep.

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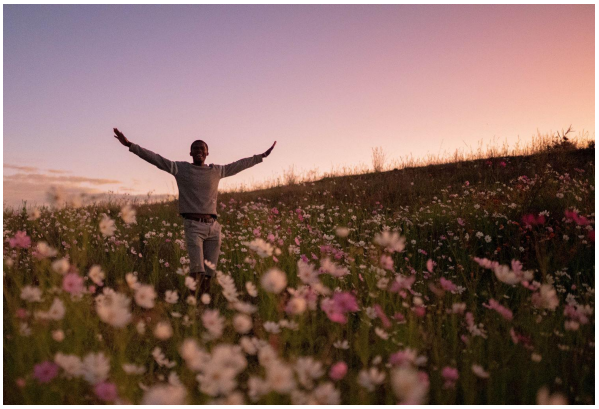

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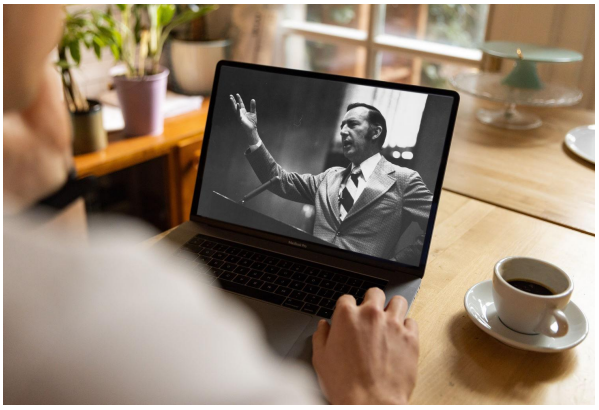

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