

# CHAPTER 10

In this chapter we have,

- I. Christ's parabolical discourse concerning himself as the door of the sheepfold, and the shepherd of the sheep (v. 1-18).
- II. The various sentiments of people upon it (v. 19-21).
- III. The dispute Christ had with the Jews in the temple at the feast of dedication (v. 22-39).
- IV. His departure into the country thereupon (v. 40-42).

## JOHN 10:1-18

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

It is not certain whether this discourse was at the *feast of dedication* in the winter (spoken of v. 22), which may be taken as the date, not only of what follows, but of what goes before (that which countenances this is, that Christ, in his discourse there, carries on the metaphor of the sheep, v. 26, 27, whence it seems that that discourse and this were at the same time); or whether this was a continuation of his parley with the Pharisees, in the close of the foregoing chapter. The Pharisees supported themselves in their opposition to Christ with this principle, that they were the *pastors of the church*, and that Jesus, having no commission from them, was an intruder and an impostor, and therefore the people were bound in duty to stick to *then*, against *him*. In opposition to this, Christ here describes who were the false shepherds, and who the true, leaving them to infer what they were.

I. Here is the parable or similitude proposed (v. 1-5); it is borrowed from the custom of that country, in the management of their sheep. Similitudes, used for the illustration of divine truths, should be taken from those things that are most familiar and common, that the things of God be not clouded by that which should clear them. The preface to this discourse is solemn: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, — Amen, amen.* This vehement asseveration intimates the certainty and weight of what he said; we find *amen* doubled

in the church's praises and prayers, <sup><9413></sup>Psalm 41:13; 72:19; 89:52. If we would have our *amens* accepted in heaven, let Christ's *amens* be prevailing on earth; his repeated *amens*.

**1.** In the parable we have,

**(1.)** The evidence of a thief and robber, that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner, v. 1. *He enters not by the door*, as having no lawful cause of entry, but *climbs up some other way*, at a window, or some breach in the wall. How industrious are wicked people to do mischief! What plots will they lay, what pains will they take, what hazards will they run, in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God.

**(2.)** The character that distinguishes the rightful owner, who has a property in the sheep, and a care for them: *He enters in by the door*, as one having authority (v. 2), and he comes to do them some good office or other, to *bind up that which is broken*, and *strengthen that which is sick*, <sup><9446></sup>Ezekiel 34:16. Sheep need man's care, and, in return for it, are serviceable to man (<sup><4007></sup>1 Corinthians 9:7); they clothe and feed those by whom they are coted and fed.

**(3.)** The ready entrance that the shepherd finds: *To him the porter openeth*, v. 3. Anciently they had their sheepfolds within the outer gates of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to or the master of the house gave the keys to.

**(4.)** The care he takes and the provision he makes for his sheep. The *sheep hear his voice*, when he speaks familiarly to them, when they come into the fold, as men now do to their dogs and horses; and, which is more, he *calls his own sheep by name*, so exact is the notice he takes of them, the account he keeps of them; and he leads them out from the fold to the green pastures; and (v. 4, 5) when he *turns them out* to graze he does not drive them, but (such was the custom in those times) he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they, being used to it, *follow him*, and are safe.

**(5.)** The strange attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd: *They know his voice*, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger (for *the ox knows his owner*, <sup><2003></sup>Isaiah 1:3), and *a stranger will*

they not follow, but, as suspecting some ill design, will flee from him, not knowing his voice, but that it is not the voice of their own shepherd. This is the parable; we have the key to it, <sup><468></sup>Ezekiel 34:31: *You my flock are men, and I am your God.*

2. Let us observe from this parable,

(1.) That good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the *sheep of his pasture*. Good men, as new creatures, have the good qualities of sheep, *harmless* and inoffensive as sheep; *meek* and quiet, without noise; *patient* as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; *useful* and profitable, tame and tractable, to the shepherd, and *sociable* one with another, and much used in sacrifices.

(2.) The church of God in the world is a *sheepfold*, into which the *children of God* that were scattered abroad are *gathered together* (<sup><415></sup>John 11:52), and in which they are united and incorporated; it is a good fold, <sup><464></sup>Ezekiel 34:14. See <sup><312></sup>Micah 2:12. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a *wall of fire about it*, <sup><315></sup>Zechariah 2:5.

(3.) This sheepfold lies much exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that debauch and deceive, and cruel persecutors that destroy and devour; *grievous wolves* (<sup><412></sup>Acts 20:29); thieves that would steal Christ's sheep from him, to sacrifice them to devils, or steal their food from them, that they might perish for lack of it; *wolves in sheep's clothing*, <sup><415></sup>Matthew 7:15.

(4.) The great Shepherd of the sheep takes wonderful care of the flock and of all that belong to it. God is the great Shepherd, <sup><121></sup>Psalms 23:1. He knows those that are his calls them by name, marks them for himself, leads them out to fat pastures, makes them both feed and rest there, speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, *to set them in the way of his steps*.

(5.) The under-shepherds, who are entrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust; magistrates must defend them, and protect and advance all their secular interests; ministers must serve them in their spiritual interests, must *feed their souls* with the word of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel ordinances duly administered, *taking the oversight of them*. They must

*enter by the door* of a regular ordination, and to such *the porter will open*; the Spirit of Christ will *set before them an open door*, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flocks by name, and watch over them; must lead them into the pastures of public ordinances, preside among them, be their mouth to God and God's to them; and in their conversation must be examples to the believers.

**(6.)** Those who are truly the sheep of Christ will be very observant of their Shepherd, and very cautious and shy of strangers.

**[1.]** *They follow their Shepherd*, for they *know his voice*, having both a discerning ear, and an obedient heart.

**[2.]** *They flee from a stranger*, and dread following him, because they know not his voice. It is dangerous following those in whom we discern not the *voice of Christ*, and who would draw us from *faith in him to fancies concerning him*. And those who have experienced the power and efficacy of divine truths upon their souls, and have the savour and relish of them, have a wonderful sagacity to discover Satan's wiles, and to discern between good and evil.

**II.** The Jew's ignorance of the drift and meaning of this discourse (v. 6): *Jesus spoke this parable* to them, this figurative, but wise, elegant, and instructive discourse, *but they understood not what the things were which he spoke unto them*, were not aware whom he meant by the *thieves and robbers* and whom by the *good Shepherd*. It is the sin and shame of many who hear the word of Christ that they do not understand it, and they do not because they will not, and because they will *mis-understand it*. They have no acquaintance with, nor taste of, the things themselves, and therefore do not understand the parables and comparisons with which they are illustrated. The Pharisees had a great conceit of their own knowledge, and could not bear that it should be questioned, and yet they had not sense enough to *understand the things that Jesus spoke of*; they were above their capacity. Frequently the greatest pretenders to knowledge are most ignorant in the things of God.

**III.** Christ's explication of this parable, opening the particulars of it fully. Whatever difficulties there may be in the sayings of the Lord Jesus, we shall find him ready to explain himself, if we be but willing to understand him. We shall find one scripture expounding another, and the *blessed*

*Spirit* interpreter to the *blessed Jesus*. Christ, in the parable, had distinguished the shepherd from the robber by this, that he *enters in by the door*. Now, in the explication of the parable, he makes himself to be both *the door* by which the shepherd enters and the shepherd that enters in by the door. Though it may be a solecism in rhetoric to make the same person to be both the *door* and the *shepherd*, it is no solecism in divinity to make Christ to have his authority from himself, as he has life in himself; and *himself* to enter by his own blood, as the door, *into the holy place*.

**1.** Christ is *the door*. This he saith to those who pretended to *seek for righteousness*, but, like the Sodomites, *wearied themselves to find the door*, where it was not to be found. He saith it to the Jews, who would be thought God's only sheep, and to the Pharisees, who would be thought their only shepherds: *I am the door* of the sheepfold; the door of the church.

**(1.)** In general,

**[1.]** He is as a *door shut*, to keep out thieves and robbers, and such as are not fit to be admitted. The shutting of the door is the securing of the house; and what greater security has the church of God than the interposal of the Lord Jesus, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, betwixt it and all its enemies?

**[2.]** He is as a *door open* for passage and communication. *First*, By Christ, as the door, we have our first admission into the flock of God, <sup><346></sup>John 14:6. *Secondly*, We go in and out in a religious conversation, assisted by him, accepted in him; waling up and down in his name, <sup><302></sup>Zechariah 10:12. *Thirdly*, By him God comes to his church, visits it, and communicates himself to it. *Fourthly*, By him, as the door, the sheep are at last admitted into the heavenly kingdom, <sup><253></sup>Matthew 25:34.

**(2.)** More particularly,

**[1.]** Christ is the door of *the shepherds*, so that none who come not in by him are to be accounted *pastors*, but (according to the rule laid down, v. 1) *thieves and robbers* (though they pretended to be *shepherds*); but the *sheep did not hear them*. This refers to all those that had the character of shepherds in *Israel*, whether magistrates or ministers, that exercised their office without any regard to the Messiah, or any other expectations of him than what were suggested by their own carnal interest. Observe, *First*, The

character given of them: they are *thieves and robbers* (v. 8); all that *went before him*, not in time, many of them were faithful shepherds, but all that *anticipated* his commission, and went before he sent them (~~2021~~ Jeremiah 23:21), that assumed a precedency and superiority above him, as the antichrist is said to *exalt himself*, ~~2021~~ 2 Thessalonians 2:4. “The scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, *all, even as many as have come before me*, that have endeavoured to forestal my interest, and to prevent my gaining any room in the minds of people, by prepossessing them with prejudices against me, they are *thieves and robbers*, and steal those hearts which they have no title to, defrauding the right owner of his property.” They condemned our Saviour as a thief and a robber, because he did not come in by them as the door, nor take out a license from them; but he shows that they ought to have received their commission from him, to have been admitted by him, and to have come after him, and because they did not, but stepped *before him*, they were *thieves and robbers*. They would not come in as his disciples, and therefore were condemned as usurpers, and their pretended commissions vacated and superseded. Note, Rivals with Christ are robbers of his church, however they pretend to be *shepherds*, nay, *shepherds of shepherds*. *Secondly*, The care taken to preserve the sheep from them: *But the sheep did not hear them*. Those that had a true savour of piety, that were spiritual and heavenly, and sincerely devoted to God and godliness, could by no means approve of the traditions of the elders, nor relish their formalities. Christ's disciples, without any particular instructions from their Master, made no conscience of eating with unwashen hands, or plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day; for nothing is more opposite to true Christianity than Pharisaism is, nor any thing more disrelishing to a soul truly devout than their hypocritical devotions.

[2.] Christ is the door of *the sheep* (v. 9): *By me (di emou — through me as the door) if any man enter into the sheepfold*, as one of the flock, he *shall be saved*; shall not only be safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy, he *shall go in and out*. Here are, *First*, Plain directions how to come into the fold: we must come in *by Jesus Christ* as the door. By faith in him, as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. There is no entering into God's church but by coming into Christ's church; nor are any looked upon as members of the kingdom of God among men but those that are willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer. We must now enter

by the *door of faith* (<sup>4407</sup>Acts 14:27), since the door of *innocency* is shut against us, and that *pass* become unpassable, <sup>01024</sup>Genesis 3:24. *Secondly*, Precious promises to those who observe this direction.

**1.** They *shall be saved hereafter*; this is the privilege of *their home*. These sheep shall be saved from being distrained and impounded by divine justice for trespass done, satisfaction being made for the damage by their great Shepherd, saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be *for ever happy*.

**2.** In the mean time they shall *go in and out and find pasture*; this is the privilege of *their way*. They shall have their conversation in the world by the grace of Christ, shall be in his fold as a man at his own house, where he has *free ingress, egress, and regress*. True believers are *at home* in Christ; when they go out, they are not *shut out* as strangers, but have liberty to come in again; when they come in, they are not *shut in* as trespassers, but have liberty to go out. They go out to the field in the morning, they come into the fold at night; and in both the Shepherd leads and keeps them, and they *find pasture* in both: grass in the field, fodder in the fold. In public, in private, they have the word of God to converse with, by which their spiritual life is supported and nourished, and out of which their gracious desires are satisfied; they are replenished with the goodness of God's house.

**2.** Christ is the *shepherd*, v. 11, etc. He was prophesied of under the Old Testament as a *shepherd*, <sup>23011</sup>Isaiah 40:11; <sup>23023</sup>Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24; <sup>3307</sup>Zechariah 13:7. In the New Testament he is spoken of as the *great Shepherd* (<sup>330</sup>Hebrews 13:20), the *chief Shepherd* (<sup>0109</sup>1 Peter 5:4), the *Shepherd and bishop of our souls*, <sup>01025</sup>1 Peter 2:25. God, our great owner, the sheep of whose pasture we are by creation, has constituted his Son Jesus to be our *shepherd*; and here again and again he owns the relation. He has all that care of his church, and every believer, that a good shepherd has of his flock; and expects all that attendance and observance from the church, and every believer, which the shepherds in those countries had from their flocks.

**(1.)** Christ is a *shepherd*, and not as the thief, not as those that *came not in by the door*. Observe,

**[1.]** The mischievous design of the thief (v. 10): *The thief cometh not with any good intent, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. First, Those*

whom they *steal*, whose hearts and affections they steal from Christ and his pastures, they *kill and destroy* spiritually; for the *heresies* they *privily bring in* are *damnable*. Deceivers of souls are murderers of souls. Those that steal away the scripture by keeping it in an unknown tongue, that steal away the sacraments by maiming them and altering the property of them, that steal away Christ's ordinances to put their own inventions in the room of them, they *kill and destroy*; ignorance and idolatry are destructive things. *Secondly*, Those whom they cannot *steal*, whom they can neither lead, drive, nor carry away, from the flock of Christ, they aim by persecutions and massacres to *kill and destroy* corporally. He that will not suffer himself to be robbed is in danger of being slain.

[2.] The gracious design of the shepherd; he is come,

*First*, To *give life to the sheep*. In opposition to the design of the thief, which is to *kill and destroy* (which was the design of the *scribes* and *Pharisees*) Christ saith, *I am come among men*,

1. That *they might have life*. He came to put life into the flock, the church in general, which had seemed rather like a valley full of dry bones than like a pasture covered over with flocks. Christ came to vindicate divine truths, to purify divine ordinances, to redress grievances, and to revive dying zeal, to *seek* those of his flock that were *lost*, to *bind up that which was broken* (<sup><3346></sup>Ezekiel 34:16), and this to his church is *as life from the dead*. He came to *give life* to particular believers. Life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened (<sup><0017></sup>Genesis 2:17); that *we might have life*, as a criminal has when he is pardoned, as a sick man when he is cured, a dead man when he is raised; that we might be justified, sanctified, and at last glorified.

2. That they might have it *more abundantly*, *kai perisson echosin*. As we read it, it is *comparative*, that they might have a life *more abundant* than that which was lost and forfeited by sin, more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan, more abundant than could have been expected or than we are *able to ask or think*. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, *that they might have abundance*, or *might have it abundantly*. Christ came to give life and *perisson ti* — *something more, something better*, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live



comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice. Life in abundance is *eternal life*, life without death or fear of death, life and *much more*.

*Secondly, To give his life for the sheep, and this that he might give life to them (v. 11): The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

**1.** It is the property of every good shepherd to hazard and expose his life for the sheep. Jacob did so, when he would go through such a fatigue to attend them, <sup><340></sup>Genesis 31:40. So did David, when he *slew the lion and the bear*. Such a shepherd of souls was St. Paul, who would gladly *spend, and be spent*, for their service, and *counted not his life dear to him*, in comparison with their salvation. But,

**2.** It was the prerogative of the great Shepherd to give his life to purchase his flock (<sup><408></sup>Acts 20:28), to satisfy for their trespass, and to shed his blood to wash and cleanse them.

**(2.)** Christ is *a good shepherd*, and not as a hireling. There were many that were not thieves, aiming to kill and destroy the sheep, but passed for shepherds, yet were very careless in the discharge of their duty, and through their neglect the flock was greatly damaged; *foolish shepherds, idle shepherds*, <sup><315></sup>Zechariah 11:15, 17. In opposition to these,

**[1.]** Christ here *calls himself the good shepherd* (v. 11), and again (v. 14) *ho poimen ho kalos* — *that shepherd, that good Shepherd*, whom God had promised. Note, Jesus Christ is the best of shepherds, the best in the world to take the over-sight of souls, none so skilful, so faithful, so tender, as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he.

**[2.]** He *proves himself* so, in opposition to all hirelings, v. 12-14. Where observe,

*First*, The carelessness of the unfaithful shepherd described (v. 12, 13); he that is a hireling, that is employed as a servant and is paid for his pains, *whose own the sheep are not*, who has neither profit nor loss by them, *sees the wolf coming*, or some other danger threatening, and *leaves the sheep to the wolf*, for in truth he *careth not for them*. Here is plain reference to that of the idol-shepherd, <sup><317></sup>Zechariah 11:17. Evil shepherds, magistrates and ministers, are here described both by their bad principles and their bad practices.

**a.** Their *bad principles*, the root of their bad practices. What makes those that have the charge of souls in trying times to betray their trust, and in quiet times not to mind it? What makes them false, and trifling, and self-seeking? It is because they are *hirelings*, and *care not for the sheep*. That is,

**(a.)** The wealth of the world is the chief of their good; it is because they are *hirelings*. They undertook the shepherds' office, as a trade to live and grow rich by, not as an opportunity of serving Christ and doing good. It is the love of money, and of their own bellies, that carries them on in it. Not that those are hirelings who, while they *serve at the altar, live, and live comfortably, upon the altar*. The labourer is worthy of his meat; and a scandalous maintenance will soon make a scandalous ministry. But those are *hirelings* that love the wages more than the work, and *set their hearts* upon that, as the hireling is said to do, <sup><5245></sup>Deuteronomy 24:15. See <sup><4022></sup>1 Samuel 2:29; <sup><2541></sup>Isaiah 56:11; <sup><3335></sup>Micah 3:5, 11.

**(b.)** The work of their place is the least of their care. They *value not the sheep*, are unconcerned in the souls of others; their business is to be their brothers' lords, not their brothers' keepers or helpers; they *seek their own things*, and do not, like Timothy, *naturally care for the state of souls*. What can be expected but that they will flee when the *wolf comes*. He *careth not for the sheep*, for he is one *whose own the sheep are not*. In one respect we may say of the best of the under-shepherds that the sheep are *not their own*, they have not dominion over them not property in them (*feed my sheep and my lambs*, saith Christ); but in respect of dearness and affection they should be *their own*. Paul looked upon those as *his own* whom he called his *dearly beloved and longed for*. Those who do not cordially espouse the church's interests, and make them their own, will not long be faithful to them.

**b.** Their *bad practices*, the effect of these bad principles, v. 12. See here,

**(a.)** How basely the hireling deserts his post; when he sees *the wolf coming*, though then there is most need of him, he *leaves the sheep and flees*. Note, Those who mind their safety more than their duty are an easy prey to Satan's temptations.

**(b.)** How fatal the consequences are! the hireling fancies the sheep may look to themselves, but it does not prove so: *the wolf catches*

*them, and scatters the sheep, and woeful havoc is made of the flock, which will all be charged upon the treacherous shepherd. The blood of perishing souls is required at the hand of the careless watchmen.*

*Secondly, See here the grace and tenderness of the good Shepherd set over against the former, as it was in the prophecy (<sup><380></sup>Ezekiel 34:21, 22, etc.): *I am the good Shepherd.* It is matter of comfort to the church, and all her friends, that, however she may be damaged and endangered by the treachery and mismanagement of her under-officers, the Lord Jesus is, and will be, as he ever has been, *the good Shepherd.* Here are two great instances of the shepherd's goodness.*

**a.** His *acquainting* himself with his flock, with all that belong or in any wise appertain to his flock, which are of two sorts, both known to him: —

**[a.]** He is acquainted with all that *are now of his flock* (v. 14, 15), as the good Shepherd (v. 3, 4): *I know my sheep and am known of mine.* Note, There is a mutual acquaintance between Christ and true believers; they know one another very well, and knowledge notes affection.

**[a.]** Christ *knows his sheep.* He knows with a *distinguishing* eye who are his sheep, and who are not; he knows the sheep under their many infirmities, and the goats under their most plausible disguises. He knows with a *favourable* eye those that in truth are his own sheep; he takes cognizance of their state, concerns himself for them, has a tender and affectionate regard to them, and is continually mindful of them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; he visits them graciously by his Spirit, and has communion with them; he *knows* them, that is, he approves and accepts of them, as <sup><390></sup>Psalm 1:6; 37:18; <sup><397></sup>Exodus 33:17.

**[b.]** He is *known of them.* He observes them with an eye of favour, and they observe him with an eye of faith. Christ's knowing his sheep is put before their knowing him, for he knew and loved us first (<sup><400></sup>1 John 4:19), and it is not so much our knowing him as our being known of him that is our happiness, <sup><400></sup>Galatians 4:9. Yet it is the character of Christ's sheep that *they know him*; know him from all pretenders and intruders; they know his mind, know his voice, know by experience the power of his death. Christ speaks here as if he gloried in being known by his sheep, and thought their respect an honour to him. Upon

this occasion Christ mentions (v. 15) the mutual acquaintance between his Father and himself: *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father*. Now this may be considered, either, *First*, As the ground of that intimate acquaintance and relation which subsist between Christ and believers. The covenant of grace, which is the bond of this relation, is founded in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, which, we may be sure, stands firm; for the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter, and there could be no mistake, which might leave the matter at any uncertainty, or bring it into any hazard. The Lord Jesus *knows whom he hath chosen*, and is sure of them (<sup>4818</sup>John 13:18), and they also *know whom they have trusted*, and are sure of him (<sup>4812</sup>2 Timothy 1:12), and the ground of both is the perfect knowledge which the Father and the Son had of one another's mind, when *the counsel of peace was between them both*. Or, *Secondly*, As an apt similitude, illustrating the intimacy that is between Christ and believers. It may be connected with the foregoing words, thus: *I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father*; compare <sup>4817</sup>John 17:21.

**1.** As the Father knew the Son, and loved him, and owned him in his sufferings, when he was *led as a sheep to the slaughter*, so Christ knows his sheep, and has a watchful tender eye upon them, will be with them when they are *left alone*, as his Father was with him.

**2.** As the Son knew the Father, loved and obeyed him, and always did those things that pleased him, confiding in him as his God even when he seemed to forsake him, so believers know Christ with an obediential fiducial regard.

**(b.)** He is acquainted with those that are *hereafter to be of this flock* (v. 16): *Other sheep I have*, have a right to and an interest in, *which are not of this fold*, of the Jewish church; *them also I must bring*. Observe,

**[a.]** The eye that Christ had to the poor Gentiles. He had sometimes intimated his special concern for *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*; to them indeed his personal ministry was confined; but, saith he, *I have other sheep*. Those who in process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called *sheep*, and he is said to have them, though as yet they were *uncalled*, and many of them *unborn*, because they were chosen of God,

and given to Christ in the counsels of divine love from eternity. Christ has a right, by virtue of the Father's donation and his own purchase, to many a soul of which he has not yet the possession; thus he had *much people* in Corinth, when as yet it lay in wickedness, <sup><4830></sup> Acts 18:10. "Those other sheep *I have*," saith Christ, "I have them on my heart, have them in my eye, am as sure to have them as if I had them already." Now Christ speaks of those *other sheep*, *First*, To take off the contempt that was put upon him, as having *few followers*, as having but a *little flock*, and therefore, if a *good shepherd*, yet a *poor shepherd*: "But," saith he, "I have more sheep than you see." *Secondly*, To take down the pride and vain-glory of the Jews, who thought the Messiah must gather all his sheep from among them. "No," saith Christ, "I have others whom I will set with the lambs of my flock, though you disdain to set them with the dogs of your flock."

**[b.]** The purposes and resolves of his grace concerning them: "*Them also I must bring*, bring home to God, bring into the church, and, in order to this, bring off from their vain conversation, bring them back from their wanderings, as that *lost sheep*," <sup><4835></sup> Luke 15:5. But why *must* he bring them? What was the necessity? *First*, The *necessity of their case* required it: "I *must* bring, or they must be left to wander endlessly, for, like sheep, they will never come back of themselves, and no other can or will bring them." *Secondly*, The *necessity of his own engagements* required it; he must bring them, or he would not be faithful to his trust, and true to his undertaking. "They are *my own*, bought and paid for, and therefore I *must not* neglect them nor leave them to perish." He *must* in honour *bring* those with whom he was entrusted.

**[c.]** The happy effect and consequence of this, in two things: — *First*, "They shall hear my voice. Not only my voice shall be heard *among them* (whereas they have not heard, and therefore could not believe, now the *sound* of the gospel shall *go to the ends of the earth*), but it shall be heard *by them*; I will speak, and give to them to hear." Faith comes by hearing, and our diligent observance of the voice of Christ is both a means and an evidence of our being brought to Christ, and to God by him. *Secondly*, *There shall be one fold and one shepherd*. As there is one shepherd, so there shall be one fold. Both Jews and Gentiles, upon their turning to the faith of Christ, shall be incorporated in one church, be joint and equal sharers in the privileges of it, without

distinction. Being united to Christ, they shall unite in him; two sticks shall become one in the hand of the Lord. Note, One shepherd makes one fold; one Christ makes one church. As the church is one in its constitution, subject to one head, animated by one Spirit, and guided by one rule, so the members of it ought to be one in love and affection, <sup><40B></sup>Ephesians 4:3-6.

**b.** Christ's *offering up himself for his sheep* is another proof of his being a *good shepherd*, and in this he yet more *commended his love*, v. 15, 17, 18.

**(a.)** He declares his purpose of *dying for his flock* (v. 15): *I lay down my life for the sheep*. He not only ventured his life for them (in such a case, the hope of *saving* it might balance the fear of *losing* it), but he actually *deposited* it, and submitted to a necessity of dying for our redemption; *tithemi* — *I put it* as a pawn or pledge; as purchase-money paid down. Sheep appointed for the slaughter, ready to be sacrificed, were ransomed with the blood of the shepherd. He laid down his life, *hyper ton probaton*, not only for the good of the sheep, but *in their stead*. Thousands of sheep had been offered in sacrifice for their shepherds, as sin-offerings, but here, by a surprising reverse, the shepherd is sacrificed for the sheep. When David, the shepherd of Israel, was himself guilty, and the destroying angel drew his sword against the flock for his sake, with good reason did he plead, *These sheep, what evil have they done? Let thy hand be against me*, <sup><1247></sup>2 Samuel 24:17. But the Son of David was sinless and spotless; and his sheep, what evil have they not done? Yet he saith, *Let thine hand be against me*. Christ here seems to refer to that prophecy, <sup><387E></sup>Zechariah 13:7, *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd*; and, though the smiting of the shepherd be for the present the *scattering* of the flock, it is in order to the gathering of them in.

**(b.)** He takes off the offence of the cross, which to many is a stone of stumbling, by four considerations: —

**[a.]** That his *laying down his life for the sheep* was the condition, the performance of which entitled him to the honours and powers of his exalted state (v. 17): “*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life*. Upon these terms I am, as Mediator, to expect my Father's acceptance and approbation, and the glory designed me — that I become a sacrifice for the chosen remnant.” Not but that, as the Son of God, he was beloved of his Father from eternity, but as *God-man*, as

*Immanuel*, he was *therefore* beloved of the Father because he undertook to *die for the sheep*; *therefore* God's soul delighted in him as his elect because herein he was his *faithful servant* (<sup>2301</sup>Isaiah 42:1); *therefore* he said, *This is my beloved Son*. What an instance is this of God's love to man, that he loved his Son the more for loving us! See what a value Christ puts upon his Father's love, that, to recommend himself to that, he would lay down his life for the sheep. Did he think God's love recompence sufficient for all his services and sufferings, and shall we think it too little for ours, and court the smiles of the world to make it up? *Therefore doth my Father love me*, that is, me, and all that by faith become one with me; me, and the mystical body, *because I lay down my life*.

**[b.]** That his laying down his life was in order to his resuming it: *I lay down my life, that I may receive it again*. *First*, This was the effect of his Father's love, and the first step of his exaltation, the fruit of that love. Because he was God's *holy one*, he must not *see corruption*, <sup>410</sup>Psalm 16:10. God loved him too well to leave him in the grave. *Secondly*, This he had in his eye, in laying down his life, that he might have an opportunity of declaring himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection, <sup>410</sup>Romans 1:4. By a divine stratagem (like that before Ai, <sup>485</sup>Joshua 8:15) he yielded to death, as if he were smitten before it, that he might the more gloriously conquer death, and triumph over the grave. He laid down a *vilified* body, that he might assume a *glorified* one, fit to ascend to the world of spirits; laid down a life adapted to this world, but assumed one adapted to the other, like a corn of wheat, <sup>424</sup>John 12:24.

**[c.]** That he was perfectly voluntary in his sufferings and death (v. 18): “No one doth or can force my life from me against my will, but I freely *lay it down of myself*, I deliver it as my own act and deed, for I *have* (which no man has) *power to lay it down, and to take it again*.”

*First*, See here the power of Christ, as the Lord of life, particularly of his own life, which he had *in himself*.

**1.** He had power to *keep his life* against all the world, so that it could not be wrested from him without his own consent. Though Christ's life seemed to be taken by storm, yet really it was surrendered, otherwise it had been impregnable, and never taken. The Lord Jesus did not fall into the hands of his persecutors because he could not avoid it, but

threw himself into their hands because his hour was come. *No man taketh my life from me.* This was such a challenge as was never given by the most daring hero.

2. He had power to *lay down his life*.

(1.) He had ability to do it. He could, when he pleased, slip the knot of union between soul and body, and, without any act of violence done to himself, could disengage them from each other: having voluntarily *taken up* a body, he could voluntarily lay it down again, which appeared when he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

(2.) He had authority to do it, *exousian*. Though we could find instruments of cruelty, wherewith to make an end of our own lives, yet *Id possumus quod jure possumus* — *we can do that, and that only, which we can do lawfully*. We are not at liberty to do it; but Christ had a sovereign authority to dispose of his own life as he pleased. He was no debtor (as we are) either to life or death, but perfectly *sui juris*.

3. He had power to *take it again*; we have not. Our life, once laid down, is *as water spilt upon the ground*; but Christ, when he laid down his life, still had it within reach, within call, and could resume it. Parting with it by a voluntary conveyance, he might limit the surrender at pleasure, and he did it with a power of revocation, which was necessary to preserve the intentions of the surrender.

*Secondly*, See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him by law, or extort it by force, he *laid it down of himself*, for our redemption. He offered himself to be the Saviour: *Lo, I come*; and then, the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself to be a sacrifice: *Here am I, let these go their way; by which will we are sanctified*, <sup><300></sup>Hebrews 10:10. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that *his laying down his life* was his offering up himself.

[d.] That he did all this by the express order and appointment of his Father, into which he ultimately resolves the whole affair: *This commandment have I received of my Father*; not such a commandment as made what he did necessary, prior to his own voluntary undertaking; but this was the *law of mediation*, which he was willing to have *written in his heart*, so as to *delight* in doing *the will of God* according to it, <sup><908></sup>Psalms 40:8.



## JOHN 10:19-21

### CHRIST'S CONFERENCE WITH THE JEWS

We have here an account of the people's different sentiments concerning Christ, on occasion of the foregoing discourse; there was a division, a *schism*, among them; they differed in their opinions, which threw them into heats and parties. Such a ferment as this they had been in before (~~478~~ John 7:43; 9:16); and where there has once been a division again. Rents are sooner made than made up or mended. This division was occasioned by the sayings of Christ, which, one would think, should rather have united them all in him as their centre; but they set them at variance, as Christ foresaw, (~~479~~ Luke 12:51). But it is better that men should be *divided* about the doctrine of Christ than *united* in the service of sin, (~~481~~ Luke 11:21). See what the debate was in particular.

**I.** Some upon this occasion spoke ill of Christ and of his sayings, either openly in the face of the assembly, for his enemies were very impudent, or privately among themselves. They said, *He has a devil, and is mad, why do you hear him?*

**1.** They reproach him as a demoniac. The worst of characters is put upon the best of men. He is a distracted man, he raves and is delirious, and no more to be heard than the rambles of a man in bedlam. Thus still, if a man preaches seriously and pressingly of another world, he shall be said to talk like an enthusiast; and his conduct shall be imputed to fancy, a heated brain, and a crazed imagination.

**2.** They ridicule his hearers: “*Why hear you him? Why do you so far encourage him as to take notice of what he says?*” Note, Satan ruins many by putting them out of conceit with the word and ordinances, and representing it as a weak and silly thing to attend upon them. Men would not thus be laughed out of their necessary food, and yet suffer themselves to be laughed out of what is more necessary. Those that hear Christ, and mix faith with what they hear, will soon be able to give a good account *why they hear him*.

**II.** Others stood up in defence of him and his discourse, and, though the stream ran strong, dared to swim against it; and, though perhaps they did not believe on him as the Messiah, they could not bear to hear him thus

abused. If they could say no more of him, this they would maintain, that he was a man in his wits, that he had not a devil, that he was neither senseless nor graceless. The absurd and most unreasonable reproaches, that have sometimes been cast upon Christ and his gospel, have excited those to appear for him and it who otherwise had no great affection to either. Two things they plead: —

**1.** The excellency of his doctrine: *“These are not the words of him that hath a devil; they are not idle words; distracted men are not used to talk at this rate. These are not the words of one that is either violently possessed with a devil or voluntarily in league with the devil.”* Christianity, if it be not the true religion, is certainly the greatest cheat that ever was put upon the world; and, if so, it must be of the devil, who is the father of all lies: but it is certain that the doctrine of Christ is no doctrine of devils, for it is levelled directly against the devil’s kingdom, and Satan is too subtle to be divided against himself. So much of holiness there is in the words of Christ that we may conclude they are *not the words of one that has a devil*, and therefore are the words of one that was sent of God; are not from hell, and therefore must be from heaven.

**2.** The power of his miracles: *Can a devil, that is, a man that has a devil, open the eyes of the blind?* Neither mad men nor bad men can work miracles. Devils are not such lords of the power of nature as to be able to work such miracles; nor are they such friends to mankind as to be willing to work them if they were able. The devil will sooner put out men’s eyes than open them. Therefore Jesus *had not a devil*.

## ◀BIB▶ JOHN 10:22-38

### CHRIST'S CONFERENCE WITH THE JEWS

We have here another rencounter between Christ and the Jews in the temple, in which it is hard to say which is more strange, the gracious words that came out of his mouth or the spiteful ones that came out of theirs.

**I.** We have here the time when this conference was: *It was at the feast of dedication, and it was winter*, a feast that was annually observed by consent, in remembrance of the dedication of a new altar and the purging

of the temple, by Judas Maccabaeus, after the temple had been profaned and the altar defiled; we have the story of it at large in the history of the Maccabees (lib. 1, cap. 4); we have the prophecy of it, <sup><2783></sup>Daniel 8:13, 14. See more of the feast, 2 Mac. 1:18. The return of their liberty was to them as life from the dead, and, in remembrance of it, they kept an annual feast on the twenty-fifth day of the month *Cisleu*, about the beginning of *December*, and seven days after. The celebrating of it was not confined to Jerusalem, as that of the divine feasts was, but every one observed it in his own place, not as a *holy time* (it is only a divine institution that can sanctify a day), but as a *good time*, as the days of Purim, <sup><709></sup>Esther 9:19. Christ forecasted to be now at Jerusalem, not in honour of the feast, which did not require his attendance there, but that he might improve those eight days of vacation for good purposes.

**II.** The place where it was (v. 23): *Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch*; so called (<sup><481></sup>Acts 3:11), not because built by Solomon, but because built in the same place with that which had borne his name in the first temple, and the name was kept up for the greater reputation of it. Here Christ walked, to observe the proceedings of the great sanhedrim that sat here (<sup><381></sup>Psalm 82:1); *he walked*, ready to give audience to any that should apply to him, and to offer them his services. He walked, as it should seem, for some time *alone*, as one neglected; walked pensive, in the foresight of the ruin of the temple. Those that have any thing to say to Christ may find him in the temple and walk with him there.

**III.** The conference itself, in which observe,

**1.** A weighty question put to him by the Jews, v. 24. They *came round about him*, to tease him; he was waiting for an opportunity to do them a kindness, and they took the opportunity to do him a mischief. Ill-will for good-will is no rare and uncommon return. He could not enjoy himself, no, not in the temple, his Father's house, without disturbance. They came about him, as it were, to lay siege to him: *encompassed him about like bees*. They came about him as if they had a joint and unanimous desire to be satisfied; came as one man, pretending an impartial and importunate enquiry after truth, but intending a general assault upon our Lord Jesus; and they seemed to speak the sense of their nation, as if they were the mouth of all the Jews: *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us.*

(1.) They quarrel with him, as if he had unfairly held them in suspense hitherto. *Ten psychen hemon aireis* — *How long dost thou steal away our hearts? Or, take away our souls?* So some read it; basely intimating that what share he had of the people's love and respect he did not obtain fairly, but by indirect methods, as Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; and as seducers deceive the *hearts of the simple*, and so *draw away disciples after them*, <sup><513></sup>Romans 16:18; <sup><413></sup>Acts 20:30. But most interpreters understand it as we do: "*How long dost thou keep us in suspense? How long are we kept debating whether thou be the Christ or no, and not able to determine the question?*" Now,

[1.] It was the effect of their infidelity, and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had so fully proved himself to be the Christ they were still in doubt concerning it; this they willingly hesitated about, when they might easily have been satisfied. The struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ, and their corruptions, which said, No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. Those who choose to be sceptics may, if they please, hold the balance so that the most cogent arguments may not weigh down the most trifling objections, but scales may still hang even.

[2.] It was an instance of their impudence and presumption that they laid the blame of their doubting upon Christ himself, as if he *made them to doubt* by inconsistency with himself, whereas in truth they made themselves doubt by indulging their prejudices. If Wisdom's sayings appear doubtful, the fault is not in the object, but in the eye; they are all *plain to him that understands*. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves to *doubt*.

(2.) They challenge him to give a direct and categorical answer whether he was the Messiah or no: "*If thou be the Christ, as many believe thou art, tell us plainly, not by parables, as, I am the light of the world, and the good Shepherd, and the like, but totidem verbis — in so many words, either that thou art the Christ, or, as John Baptist, that thou art not,*" <sup><411></sup>John 1:20. Now this pressing query of theirs was *seemingly good*; they pretended to be desirous to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was *really bad*, and put with an ill design; for, if he should tell them plainly that he was the Christ, there needed no more to make him obnoxious to the jealousy and severity of the Roman government. Every one knew the Messiah was to be a king, and therefore

whoever pretended to be the Messiah would be prosecuted as a traitor, which was the thing they would have been at; for, let him tell them ever so plainly that he was the Christ, they would have this to say presently, *Thou bearest witness of thyself*, as they had said, ~~488~~ John 8:13.

2. Christ's answer to this question, in which,

(1.) He justifies himself as not at all accessory to their infidelity and skepticism, referring them,

[1.] To what he had said: *I have told you*. He had told them that he was the Son of God, the Son of man, that he had life in himself, that he had *authority to execute judgment*, etc. And is not this the Christ then? These things he had told them, and they believed not; why then should they be told them again, merely to gratify their curiosity? *You believed not*. They pretended that they only doubted, but Christ tells them that they did not believe. Skepticism in religion is no better than downright infidelity. It is now for us to teach God how he should teach us, nor prescribe to him how plainly he should tell us his mind, but to be thankful for divine revelation as we have it. If we do not believe this, neither should we be persuaded if it were ever so much adapted to our humour.

[2.] He refers them to his works, to the example of his life, which was not only perfectly pure, but highly beneficent, and of a piece with his doctrine; and especially to his miracles, which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. It was certain that no man could do those miracles except God were with him, and God would not be with him to attest a forgery.

(2.) He condemns them for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding all the most plain and powerful arguments used to convince them: "*You believed not*; and again, *You believed not*. You still are what you always were, obstinate in your unbelief." But the reason he gives is very surprising: "*You believed not, because you are not of my sheep*: you believe not in me, because you belong not to me."

[1.] "You are not disposed to be my followers, are not of a tractable teachable temper, have no inclination to receive the doctrine and law of the Messiah; you will not herd yourselves with my sheep, will not come and see, come and hear my voice." Rooted antipathies to the gospel of Christ are the bonds of iniquity and infidelity.

[2.] “You are not *designed* to be my followers; you are not of those that were given me by my Father, to be brought to grace and glory. You are not of the number of the elect; and your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain evidence that you are not.” Note, Those to whom God never gives the grace of faith were never designed for heaven and happiness. What Solomon saith of immorality is true of infidelity, *It is a deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein,* <sup>1224</sup>Proverbs 22:14. *Non esse electum, non est causa incredulitatis proprie dicta, sed causa per accidens. Fides autem est donum Dei et effectus predestinationis — The not being included among the elect is not the proper cause of infidelity, but merely the accidental cause. But faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination.* So Jansenius distinguishes well here.

(3.) He takes this occasion to describe both the gracious disposition and the happy state of those that are his sheep; for such there are, though *they* be not.

[1.] To convince them that they were not his sheep, he tells them what were the characters of his sheep. *First, They hear his voice* (v. 27), for they know it to be his (v. 4), and he has undertaken that they shall hear it, v. 16. They discern it, *It is the voice of my beloved,* <sup>1225</sup>Song of Solomon 2:8. They delight in it, are in their element when they are sitting at his feet to hear his word. They do according to it, and make his word their rule. Christ will not account those his sheep that are deaf to his calls, deaf to his charms, <sup>1226</sup>Psalm 58:5. *Secondly, They follow him;* they submit to his guidance by a willing obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful conformity to his spirit and pattern. The word of command has always been, *Follow me.* We must eye him as our leader and captain, and *tread in his steps,* and walk as he walked — follow the prescriptions of his word, the intimations of his providence, and the directions of his Spirit — *follow the Lamb* (the *dux gregis* — *the leader of the flock*) *whithersoever he goes.* In vain do we *hear his voice* if we do not *follow him.*

[2.] To convince them that it was their great unhappiness and misery not to be of Christ's sheep, he here describes the blessed state and case of those that are, which would likewise serve for the support and comfort of his poor despised followers, and keep them from envying the power and grandeur of those that were not of his sheep.

*First, Our Lord Jesus takes cognizance of his sheep: They hear my voice, and I know them.* He distinguishes them from others (<sup>1227</sup>2 Timothy 2:19),

has a particular regard to every individual (<sup>4806</sup>Psalm 34:6); he knows their wants and desires, knows their souls in adversity, where to find them, and what to do for them. He knows others afar off, but knows them near at hand.

*Secondly*, He has provided a happiness for them, suited to them: *I give unto them eternal life*, v. 28.

**1.** The estate settled upon them is rich and valuable; it is life, eternal life. Man has a living soul; therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul: therefore the happiness provided is eternal life, running parallel with his duration. *Life eternal* is the felicity and chief good of a *soul immortal*.

**2.** The manner of conveyance is *free*: *I give it* to them; it is not bargained and sold upon a valuable consideration, but given by the free grace of Jesus Christ. The donor has power to give it. He who is the fountain of life, and Father of eternity, has authorized Christ to give eternal life, <sup>4870</sup>John 17:2. Not *I will* give it, but *I do* give it; it is a present gift. He gives the assurance of it, the pledge and earnest of it, the first-fruits and foretastes of it, that *spiritual* life which is *eternal* life begun, heaven in the seed, in the bud, in the embryo.

*Thirdly*, He has undertaken for their security and preservation to this happiness.

**a.** They shall be *saved from everlasting perdition*. *They shall by no means perish for ever*; so the words are. As there is an eternal life, so there is an eternal destruction; the soul not *annihilated*, but *ruined*; its being continued, but its comfort and happiness irrecoverably lost. All believers are saved from this; whatever cross they may come under, they shall not *come into condemnation*. A man is never undone till he is in hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, not one.

**b.** They cannot be kept from their *everlasting happiness*; it is in reserve, but he that gives it to them will preserve them to it.

**(a.)** His own power is engaged for them: *Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare that he has them not

only within his fold, and under his eye, but *in his hand*, interested in his special love and taken under his special protection (*all his saints are in thy hand*, <sup><63B></sup>Deuteronomy 33:3); yet their enemies are so daring that they attempt to pluck them out of his hand — *his* whose *own* they are, whose *care* they are; but they cannot, they shall not, do it. Note, Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are *preserved in Christ Jesus*: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of Christ from following him, reproving and threatening them, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail.

**(b.)** His Father's power is likewise engaged for their preservation, v. 29. He now appeared in weakness, and, lest his security should therefore be thought *insufficient*, he brings in his Father as a further security. Observe,

**[a.]** The power of the Father: *My Father is greater than all*; greater than all the other *friends* of the church, all the other shepherds, magistrates or ministers, and able to do that for them which they cannot do. Those shepherds slumber and sleep, and it will be easy to pluck the sheep out of their hands; but he keeps his flock day and night. He is greater than all the enemies of the church, all the opposition given to her interests, and able to secure his own against all their insults; he is *greater than all* the combined force of hell and earth. He is greater in wisdom than the *old serpent*, though noted for subtlety; greater in strength than the great red dragon, though his name be *legion*, and his title *principalities and powers*. The devil and his angels have had many a push, many a pluck for the mastery, but have never yet prevailed, <sup><64B></sup>Revelation 12:7, 8. *The Lord on high is mightier*.

**[b.]** The interest of the Father in the sheep, for the sake of which this power is engaged for them: “It is my Father *that gave them to me*, and he is concerned in honour to uphold his gift.” They were given to the Son as a trust to be managed by him, and therefore God will still look after them. All the divine power is engaged for the accomplishment of all the divine counsels.

**[c.]** The safety of the saints inferred from these two. If this be so, then *none* (neither man nor devil) is *able to pluck them out of the Father's*



*hand*, not able to deprive them of the grace they have, nor to hinder them from the glory that is designed them; not able to put them out of God's protection, nor get them into their own power. Christ had himself experienced the power of his Father *upholding* and *strengthening* him, and therefore puts all his followers into his hand too. He that secured the glory of the Redeemer will secure the glory of the redeemed. Further to corroborate the security, that the sheep of Christ may have strong consolation, he asserts the union of these two undertakers: "*I and my Father are one*, and have jointly and severally undertaken for the protection of the saints and their perfection." This denotes more than the harmony, and consent, and good understanding, that were between the Father and the Son in the work of man's redemption. Every good man is so far one with God as to concur with him; therefore it must be meant of the *oneness of the nature* of Father and Son, that they are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory. The fathers urged this both against the Sabellians, to prove the distinction and plurality of the persons, that the Father and the Son are two, and against the Arians, to prove the unity of the nature, that these two are *one*. If we should altogether hold our peace concerning this sense of the words, even the stones which the Jews took up to cast at him would speak it out, for the Jews understood him as hereby making himself God (v. 33) and he did not deny it. He proves that none could pluck them out of *his hand* because they could not pluck them out of *the Father's hand*, which had not been a conclusive argument if the Son had not had the same almighty power with the Father, and consequently been one with him in essence and operation.

**IV.** The rage, the outrage, of the Jews against him for this discourse: *The Jews took up stones again*, v. 31. It is not the word that is used before (~~485~~ John 8:59), but *ebastasan lithous* — *they carried stones* — great stones, stones that were a *load*, such as they used in stoning malefactors. They *brought* them from some place at a distance, as it were preparing things for his execution without any judicial process; as if he were convicted of blasphemy upon the notorious evidence of the fact, which needed no further trial. The absurdity of this insult which the Jews offered to Christ will appear if we consider,

**1.** That they had *imperiously*, not to say *impudently*, challenged him to tell them plainly whether he was the Christ or no; and yet now that he not only said *he* was the Christ, but proved himself so, they condemned him as a

malefactor. If the preachers of the truth propose it *modestly*, they are branded as cowards; if *boldly*, as insolent; but *Wisdom is justified of her children*.

2. That when they had before made a similar attempt it was in vain; he *escaped through the midst of them* (<sup>488</sup>John 8:59); yet they repeat their baffled attempt. Daring sinners will throw stones at heaven, though they return upon their own heads; and will strengthen themselves against the Almighty, though none ever hardened themselves against him and prospered.

V. Christ's tender expostulation with them upon occasion of this outrage (v. 32): *Jesus answered what they did*, for we do not find that they *said any thing*, unless perhaps they stirred up the crowd that they had gathered about him to join with them, crying, *Stone him, stone him*, as afterwards, *Crucify him, crucify him*. When he could have answered them with fire from heaven, he mildly replied, *Many good works have I shown you from my Father: for which of those works do you stone me?* Words so very tender that one would think they should have melted a heart of stone. In dealing with his enemies he still argued from his works (men evidence what they *are* by what they *do*), his *good works* — *kala erga* excellent, eminent works. *Opera eximia vel praeclara*; the expression signifies both *great works* and *good works*.

1. The divine power of his works convicted them of the most obstinate infidelity. They were works *from his Father*, so far above the reach and course of nature as to prove him who did them *sent of God*, and acting by commission from him. These works he *showed* them; he did them openly before the people, and not in a corner. His works would bear the test, and refer themselves to the testimony of the most inquisitive and impartial spectators. He did not show his works by candle-light, as those that are concerned only for *show*, but he showed them at noon-day before the world, (<sup>489</sup>John 18:20. See <sup>490</sup>Psalms 111:6. His works so undeniably *demonstrated* that they were an incontestable *demonstration* of the validity of his commission.

2. The divine grace of his works convicted them of the most base ingratitude. The works he did among them were not only miracles, but mercies; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endear himself to

them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these he had repeated, and multiplied: “*Now for which of these do you stone me? You cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore you will pick a quarrel with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which.*” Note,

(1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful. See how God argues to this purpose, <sup><5316></sup>Deuteronomy 32:6, <sup><2115></sup>Jeremiah 2:5; <sup><3163></sup>Micah 6:3.

(2.) We must not think it strange if we meet with those who not only hate us without cause, but are our adversaries for our love, <sup><5312></sup>Psalm 35:12; 41:9. When he asks, *For which of these do you stone me?* as he intimates the abundant satisfaction he had in his own innocency, which gives a man courage in a suffering day, so he puts his persecutors upon considering what was the true reason of their enmity, and asking, as all those should do that create trouble to their neighbour, *Why persecute we him?* As Job advises his friends to do, <sup><3323></sup>Job 19:28.

**VI.** Their vindication of the attempt they made upon Christ, and the cause upon which they grounded their prosecution, v. 33. What sin will want fig-leaves with which to cover itself, when even the bloody persecutors of the Son of God could find something to say for themselves?

1. They would not be thought such enemies to their country as to persecute him for a good work: *For a good work we stone thee not.* For indeed they would scarcely allow any of his works to be so. His curing the impotent man (John 5) and the blind man (John 9) were so far from being acknowledged good services to the town, and meritorious, that they were put upon the score of his crimes, because done on the sabbath day. But, if he had done any good works, they would not own that they stoned him *for them*, though these were really the things that did most exasperate them, <sup><3147></sup>John 11:47. Thus, though most absurd, they could not be brought to own their absurdities.

2. They would be thought such friends to God and his glory as to prosecute him for blasphemy: *Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* Here is,

(1.) A pretended zeal for the law. They seem mightily concerned for the honour of the divine majesty, and to be seized with a religious horror at that which they imagined to be a reproach to it. A blasphemer was to be stoned, <sup><B246></sup>Leviticus 24:16. This law, they thought, did not only justify, but sanctify, what they attempted, as <sup><A29></sup>Acts 26:9. Note, The vilest practices are often varnished with plausible pretences. As nothing is more *courageous* than a well-informed conscience, so nothing is more *outrageous* than a mistaken one. See <sup><A65></sup>Isaiah 66:5; ch. 16:2.

(2.) A real enmity to the gospel, on which they could not put a greater affront than by representing Christ as a blasphemer. It is no new thing for the worst of characters to be put upon the best of men, by those that resolve to give them the worst of treatment.

[1.] The crime laid to his charge is *blasphemy*, speaking reproachfully and despitefully of God. God himself is out of the sinner's reach, and not capable of receiving any real injury; and therefore enmity to God spits its venom at his name, and so shows its ill-will.

[2.] The proof of the crime: *Thou, being a man, makest thyself God*. As it is God's glory that *he is God*, which we rob him of when we make him altogether such a one as ourselves, so it is his glory that *besides him there is no other*, which we rob him of when we make ourselves, or any creature, altogether like him. Now, *First*, Thus far they were in the right, that what Christ said of himself amounted to this — that he was God, for he had said that he was *one with the Father* and that he would *give eternal life*; and Christ does not deny it, which he would have done if it had been a mistaken inference from his words. But, *secondly*, They were much mistaken when they looked upon him as a *mere man*, and that the Godhead he claimed was a usurpation, and of his own making. They thought it absurd and impious that such a one as he, who appeared in the fashion of a poor, mean, despicable man, should profess himself the Messiah, and entitle himself to the honours confessedly due to the Son of God. Note,

1. Those who say that Jesus is a *mere man*, and only a *made God*, as the Socinians say, do in effect charge *him* with blasphemy, but do effectually prove it upon themselves.

2. He who, being a man, a sinful man, makes himself a god as the Pope does, who claims divine powers and prerogatives, is unquestionably a *blasphemer*, and *that* antichrist.

**VII.** Christ's reply to their accusation of him (for such their vindication of themselves was), and his making good those claims which they imputed to him as blasphemous (v. 34, etc.), where he proves himself to be no blasphemer, by two arguments: —

1. By an argument taken from *God's word*. He appeals to what was *written in their law*, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture *on his side*. It is written (<sup>386</sup>Psalm 82:6), *I have said, You are gods*. It is an argument *a minore ad majus* — *from the less to the greater*. If they were gods, much more am I. Observe,

(1.) How he explains the text (v. 35): *He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken*. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and therefore they are called *gods*, (<sup>428</sup>Exodus 22:28. To some the word of God came immediately, as to Moses; to others in the way of an instituted ordinance. Magistracy is a divine institution; and magistrates are God's delegates, and therefore the scripture calleth them gods; and we are sure that the scripture *cannot be broken*, or broken in upon, or found fault with. Every word of God is *right*; the very style and language of scripture are unexceptionable, and not to be corrected, (<sup>488</sup>Matthew 5:18.

(2.) How he applies it. Thus much in general is easily inferred, that those were very rash and unreasonable who condemned Christ as a blasphemer, only for calling himself the Son of God, when yet they themselves called their rulers so, and therein the scripture warranted them. But the argument goes further (v. 36): If magistrates were called Gods, because they were commissioned to administer justice in the nation, *say you of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest?* We have here two things concerning the Lord Jesus: —

[1.] The honour done him by the *Father*, which he justly glories in: He *sanctified him*, and *sent him into the world*. Magistrates were called *the sons of God*, though the word of God only came to them, and the spirit of government came upon them by measure, as upon Saul; but our Lord Jesus was himself the *Word*, and had the *Spirit without measure*. They were constituted for a particular country, city, or nation; but he was sent *into the*

world, vested with a universal authority, as Lord of all. They were *sent to*, as persons at a distance; he was *sent forth*, as having been from eternity with God. The Father *sanctified him*, that is, designed him and set him apart to the office of Mediator, and qualified and fitted him for that office. *Sanctifying* him is the same with *sealing* him, <sup><462></sup>John 6:27. Note, Whom the Father sends he sanctifies; whom he designs for holy purposes he prepares with holy principles and dispositions. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he finds or makes holy. The Father's sanctifying and sending him is here vouched as a sufficient warrant for his calling himself the *Son of God*; for because he was a *holy thing* he was *called the Son of God*, <sup><415></sup>Luke 1:35. See <sup><404></sup>Romans 1:4.

[2.] The dishonour done him by the Jews, which he justly complains of — that they impiously said of him, whom the Father had thus dignified, that he was a *blasphemer*, because he called himself the *Son of God*: “*Say you of him so and so? Dare you say so? Dare you thus set your mouths against the heavens? Have you brow and brass enough to tell the God of truth that he lies, or to condemn him that is most just? Look me in the face, and say it if you can. What! say you of the Son of God that he is a blasphemer?*” If devils, whom he came to condemn, had said so of him, it had not been so strange; but that *men*, whom he came to teach and save, should say so of him, *be astonished, O heavens! at this*. See what is the language of an obstinate unbelief; it does, in effect, call the holy Jesus a blasphemer. It is hard to say which is more to be wondered at, that men who breathe in God's air should yet speak such things, or that men who have spoken such things should still be suffered to breathe in God's air. The wickedness of man, and the patience of God, as it were, contend which shall be most *wonderful*.

2. By an argument taken from *his own works*, v. 37, 38. In the former he only answered the charge of blasphemy by an argument *ad hominem* — *turning a man's own argument against himself*; but he here makes out his own claims, and proves that he and the Father are one (v. 37, 38): *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*. Though he might justly have abandoned such blasphemous wretches as incurable, yet he vouchsafes to reason with them. Observe,

(1.) *From what* he argues — from his works, which he had often vouched as his credentials, and the proofs of his mission. As he proved himself sent

of God by the *divinity* of his works, so we must prove ourselves allied to Christ by the *Christianity* of ours.

[1.] The argument is very cogent; for the works he did were the *works of his Father*, which the Father only could do, and which could not be done in the ordinary course of nature, but only by the sovereign over-ruling power of the God of nature. *Opera Deo propria* — *works peculiar to God*, and *Opera Deo Digna* — *works worthy of God* — the works of a divine power. He that can dispense with the laws of nature, repeal, alter, and overrule them at his pleasure, by his own power, is certainly the sovereign prince who first instituted and enacted those laws. The miracles which the apostles wrought in his name, by his power, and for the confirmation of his doctrine, corroborated this argument, and continued the evidence of it when he was gone.

[2.] It is proposed as fairly as can be desired, and put to a short issue. *First, If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.* He does not demand a blind and implicit faith, nor an assent to his divine mission further than he gave proof of it. He did not wind himself into the affections of the people, nor wheedle them by sly insinuations, nor impose upon their credulity by bold assertions, but with the greatest fairness imaginable quitted all demands of their faith, further than he produced warrants for these demands. Christ is no hard master, who expects to reap in assents where he has not sown in arguments. None shall perish for the disbelief of that which was not proposed to them with sufficient motives of credibility, Infinite Wisdom itself being judge. *Secondly*, “But if I do *the works of my Father*, if I work undeniable miracles for the confirmation of a holy doctrine, *though you believe not me*, though you are so scrupulous as not to take my word, yet *believe the works*: believe your own eyes, your own reason; the thing speaks itself plainly enough.” As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and common providence (Romans 1:20), so the invisible things of the Redeemer were seen by his miracles, and by all his works both of power and mercy; so that those who were not convinced by these works were *without excuse*.

(2.) *For what he argues — that you may know and believe*, may believe it intelligently, and with an entire satisfaction, that *the Father is in me and I in him*; which is the same with what he had said (v. 30): *I and my Father are one*. The Father was so in the Son as that in him *dwelt all the fulness*

of the Godhead, and it was by a divine power that he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father as that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of his mind, not by communication, but by consciousness, having lain in his bosom. This we must *know*; not know and *explain* (for we cannot by searching find it out to perfection), but know and *believe* it; acknowledging and adoring the depth, when we cannot find the bottom.

## JOHN 10:39-42

### CHRIST RETIRES BEYOND JORDAN

We have here the issue of the conference with the Jews. One would have thought it would have convinced and melted them, but their hearts were hardened. Here we are told,

**I.** How they attacked him by force. Therefore *they sought again to take him*, v. 39. Therefore,

**1.** Because he had fully answered their charge of blasphemy, and wiped off that imputation, so that they could not for shame go on with their attempts to stone him, therefore they contrived to seize him, and prosecute him as an offender against the state. When they were constrained to drop their attempt by a popular tumult, they would try what they could do under colour of a legal process. See Revelation 12:13. Or,

**2.** Because he persevered in the same testimony concerning himself, they persisted in their malice against him. What he had said before he did in effect say again, for the *faithful witness* never departs from what he has once said; and therefore, having the same provocation, they express the same resentment, and justify their attempt to stone him by another attempt to take him. Such is the temper of a persecuting spirit, and such its policy, *male facta male factis tegere ne perpluant* — to cover one set of bad deeds with another, lest the former should fall through.

**II.** How he avoided them by flight; not an inglorious retreat, in which there was any thing of human infirmity, but a glorious retirement, in which there was much of a divine power. He *escaped out of their hands*, not by the interposal of any friend that helped him, but by his own wisdom he *got clear* of them; he drew a veil over himself, or cast a mist before their eyes,



or tied the hands of those whose hearts he did not turn. Note, No weapon formed against our Lord Jesus shall prosper, <sup>HEB</sup>Psalm 2:4. He *escaped*, not because he was afraid to suffer, but because *his hour was not come*. And he who knew how to *deliver himself* no doubt knows how to *deliver the godly out of temptation*, and to make a way for them to escape.

**III.** How he disposed of himself in his retirement: He *went away again beyond Jordan*, v. 40. The bishop of our souls came not to be fixed in one see, but to go about from place to place, doing good. This great benefactor was never out of his way, for wherever he came there was work to be done. Though Jerusalem was the royal city, yet he made many a kind visit to the country, not only to his own country Galilee, but to other parts, even those that lay most remote beyond Jordan. Now observe,

**1.** What *shelter* he found there. He went into a private part of the country, and *there he abode*; there he found some rest and quietness, when in Jerusalem he could find none. Note, Though persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, they cannot drive him or it out of the world. Though Jerusalem was not gathered, nor would be, yet Christ was glorious, and would be. Christ's going now beyond Jordan was a figure of the taking of the kingdom of God from the Jews, and bringing it to the Gentiles. Christ and his gospel have often found better entertainment among the plain country-people than among *the wise, the mighty, the noble*, <sup>1CO</sup>1 Corinthians 1:26, 27.


**2.** What *success* he found there. He did not go thither merely for his own security, but to do good there; and he chose to go thither, where John at first baptized (<sup>JOH</sup>John 1:28), because there could not but remain some impressions of John's ministry and baptism thereabouts, which would dispose them to receive Christ and his doctrine; for it was not three years since John was baptizing, and Christ was himself baptized here at Bethabara. Christ came hither now to see what fruit there was of all the pains John Baptist had taken among them, and what they retained of the things they then heard and received. The event in some measure answered expectation; for we are told,

**(1.)** That they flocked after him (v. 41): *Many resorted to him*. The return of the means of grace to a place, after they have been for some time intermitted, commonly occasions a great stirring of affections. Some think Christ chose to *abide at Bethabara, the house of passage*, where the ferry-

boats lay by which they crossed the river Jordan, that the confluence of people thither might give an opportunity of teaching many who would come to hear him when it *lay in their way*, but who would scarcely go a step out of the road for an opportunity of attending on his word.

(2.) That they reasoned in his favour, and sought arguments to induce them to close with him as much as those at Jerusalem sought objections against him. They said very judiciously, *John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this man were true*. Two things they considered, upon recollecting what they had seen and heard from John, and comparing it with Christ's ministry.

[1.] That Christ far exceeded John Baptist's power, for *John did no miracle*, but Jesus does many; whence it is easy to infer that Jesus is greater than John. And, if John was so great a prophet, how great then is this Jesus! Christ is best known and acknowledged by such a comparison with others as sets him superlatively above others. Though John came in the spirit and power of Elias, yet he did not work miracles, as Elias did, lest the minds of people should be made to hesitate between him and Jesus; therefore the honour of working miracles was reserved for Jesus as a flower of his crown, that there might be a sensible demonstration, and *undeniable* one, that though he came after John, yet he was *preferred far before him*.

[2.] That Christ exactly answered John Baptist's testimony. John not only *did no miracle to divert* people from Christ, but he said a great deal to direct them to Christ, and to turn them over as apprentices to him, and this came to their minds *now*: all things that *John said of this man were true*, that he should be the *Lamb of God*, should *baptize with Holy Ghost and with fire*. Great things John had said of him, which raised their expectations; so that though they had not zeal enough to carry them into his country to enquire after him, yet, when he came into theirs, and brought his gospel to their doors, they acknowledged him as great as John had said he would be. When we get acquainted with Christ, and come to know him experimentally, we find all things that the scripture saith of him to be true; nay, and that the reality exceeds the report,  1 Kings 10:6, 7. John Baptist was now dead and gone, and yet his hearers profited by what they had heard formerly, and, by comparing what they heard then with what they saw now, they gained a double advantage; for, *First*, They were confirmed in their belief that *John was a prophet*, who foretold such

things, and spoke of the eminency to which this Jesus would arrive, though his beginning was so small. *Secondly*, They were prepared to believe that *Jesus was the Christ*, in whom they saw those things accomplished which John foretold. By this we see that the success and efficacy of the word preached are not confined to the life of the preacher, nor do they expire with his breath, but that which seemed as *water spilt upon the ground* may afterwards be *gathered up again*. See ~~301B~~ Zechariah 1:5, 6.

**(3.)** That many believed on him there. Believing that he who wrought such miracles, and in whom John's predictions were fulfilled, was what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, they gave up themselves to him as his disciples, v. 42. An emphasis is here to be laid,

**[1.]** Upon the persons that believed on him; they were *many*. While those that received and embraced his doctrine at Jerusalem were but as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, those that believed on him in the country, beyond the Jordan, were a full harvest gathered in to him.

**[2.]** Upon the place where this was; it was where John had been preaching and baptizing and had had great success; *there* many believed on the Lord Jesus. Where the preaching of the doctrine of repentance has had success, as desired, there the preaching of the doctrine of reconciliation and gospel grace is most likely to be prosperous. Where John has been acceptable, Jesus will not be unacceptable. The jubilee-trumpet sounds sweetest in the ears of those who in the day of atonement have afflicted their souls for sin.