

Dear Friends,

In these few verses, John records Jesus' words that cover so many questions and issues. Sadly, contemporary Christianity seems far more compelled to judge other people's eternal status than to examine their own selves and how they are doing in their own faith-walk. It seems that these confused but dear people want to do what they can't do, but they refuse to do what they could do, and what Scripture commands them to do, examine self and their own status in the faith.

In addition to emphasizing the power of His voice, not merely His words spoken by someone else, Jesus also affirmed, emphatically so, His own deity, His full God-hood and equality with the Father, the reason the unbelieving Jews who engaged Him in this conversation were ready to stone Him.

If we fully grasp Jesus' teaching in this lesson, our security as His child, as a 'Sheep' in His flock, is untouchable. We rest in His hands, and He is God in human flesh, but we are also held securely in the Father's hands. Before any evil creature can do you lasting harm, they must go through both Jesus and the Father.

Yes, this life is fraught with painful trials, diseases, and disappointments. But nothing can tear you away from both Jesus and the Father. In the end, you shall be carried safely and eternally into His eternal shelter where you shall enjoy His amazing and endless love. Rest in Him now. Eternity is coming, and you shall also find your eternal rest in Him at that day.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

Our Good Shepherd is God Incarnate

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. (John 10:26-33 KJV 1900)

In our last Gleanings, I discussed the difference between Jesus' words and His voice. Discounting the different languages, we can read the "Words of Jesus in red ink" in our Bibles and speak Jesus' words, but no one can duplicate His voice. He alone can speak with the power described in Scripture attributed to His voice. Further, He alone knows the hearts of all humans, so He is fully within His knowledge to pronounce judgment against or for anyone regarding their spiritual state, His "Sheep" or not. We can no more pronounce such judgment with accuracy or with His authority than we can duplicate His voice.

Jesus fully knew the wicked hearts of the men who challenged Him in this passage. Despite their pretense of godliness, He knew their hearts to the core. If you and I examined a group of supposedly religious men in our time, we would be at a loss to know if they were all authentic or wholly pretentious. Consider the inner circle of leaders in Judaism in Jesus' time. While many of them, even their high priest, were likely similar in spiritual state to these men whom Jesus condemned, there were also a few like Nicodemus who were willing to sacrifice their life and career for their faith in Jesus. And, according to John 19:38, others such as Joseph of Arimathea, believed in Jesus, genuinely so, but failed to make a public confession of Him "...for fear of the Jews." Jesus knew all these men, and He knew their hearts, including both their faith and their fears. You and I would be at a total loss to distinguish these men. We would likely condemn Joseph, perhaps even Nicodemus, as if they were no different from the wicked men whom Jesus

condemned in our study passage. A wise lesson for us; do not attempt to do what you can't do, what only Jesus can do. Trust Him as the Judge, and rather than judging another person whom you are not qualified to judge, invest your spiritual time and energy examining yourself, "**whether ye be in the faith.**" (2 Corinthians 13:5 KJV)

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. Notice Jesus' precise language. "*My sheep hear my voice....*" Every blessing, every security to His sheep, relies on Jesus and His power, focused especially on His "Voice." In these verses, His voice relates to His love for His sheep, and His gracious work on their behalf; not one blessing is caused by the goodness of the sheep.

I and my Father are one. In our English language, this sentence is direct and forceful. Apparently, it is no less so in the first century language in which Jesus spoke the words. He spoke with purpose so that no one could doubt or question His intent. Jesus carefully identifies Himself and His Father, God, two individuals. However, He concludes the sentence with a surprise to many Bible readers, "...**are one.**" Not two, but one. Jesus forcefully and clearly stated that He and the Father are wholly united, agreed, and in perfect harmony. Further, by claiming God as His "**Father,**" Jesus also claimed full equality with the Father. His claim of equality reveals why the Jews immediately became enraged and "...*took up stones to stone him.*" They understood what He said and what He intended to communicate by those words. 1 John 5:7 (KJV) states a truth most hated of all Biblical doctrines by Satan. No doctrine, no idea, no teaching of man can claim the stamp of Biblical and therefore authentic truth that fails to fully harmonize with this verse. If any doctrine or teaching fails either of John's stated truths in this verse, that teaching is errant. Statement (Truth) 1, "**There are three....**" Statement (Truth) 2. "...**and these three are one.**" Jesus reinforced this future teaching by John in this simple forceful sentence. Where did John get this truth? From Jesus personally.

Why is this truth so important to believers in Jesus? If we are His people, in the symbolism of this lesson, we are His "Sheep." What does this sentence teach relative to us? Not only are we Jesus' personal "Sheep," but we are also equally God, the Father's "Sheep." No being or power in existence can take those so belonging both to Jesus and to the Father away from Him. They must first drag God Himself from His throne of sovereign authority before they can touch or harm one of His own "Sheep."

For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. The Jews who were ready to stone Jesus understood precisely what Jesus said. By calling God His Father, Jesus claimed equality with God. We read not one word of Jesus correcting them or telling them they misunderstood Him, do we? This conversation mirrors Jesus' conversation with a similar group in John 5:1-18. They stated the point clearly in John 5:18. By calling God His Father, Jesus made "...**himself equal with God.**"

It is wholly appropriate that Jesus affirmed this truth again in the context of His teaching on His work as the "Good Shepherd" of His sheep. When Jesus spoke of Himself as the Shepherd and as being equal with God the Father, the words He spoke could not be doubted or contradicted.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

In verses 28 and 29, Jesus states and repeats that none is "**able to pluck them out of my hand,**" for their being in His hand, and His being equal with the Father is equivalent to every sheep being personally

held in the Father's hand. One of many reasons I so highly respect the King James Bible is that the translators intentionally italicized any word they supplied in the translation that was necessary to convey the meaning of the Greek text into English, though no word was necessary in the proper Greek language syntax. Modern translations freely add words based on the editors' opinions of the text with no italics to communicate their additions.

In both verses in this clause, "*man*" is italicized, meaning the translators supplied it. If we read the two verses without the italicized word "man," the weight of Jesus' conclusion is even stronger. Not only does no "man" lack the power or ability to pluck a single sheep out of His hand, but no being of any kind is able to do so, "...***none is able to pluck them out of my hand.***" Jesus spoke the same assuring, comforting words that Paul wrote at the conclusion of Romans 8 (Romans 8:35-39).

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 KJV 1900)

Imbed this assuring truth into your mind and go back over Jesus' teaching in this complete lesson. When Jesus taught (Verse 7), "***I am the door of the sheep,***" meaning that He personally put Himself between His sheep and danger, in effect He said that God Himself "Has your back."

This truth does not mean that children of God are wholly immune from the trials and diseases of life. It does mean that nothing shall ever so harm one of the Lord's sheep as to tear that sheep, that beloved child, away from the "Fold," from that final eternal link with Him that assures our eternity with Him in glory. Consider Jesus' prayer for His followers.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. (John 17:15 KJV)

We cannot expect heaven before heaven. But we can face our trials, knowing that Jesus prayed to the Father for us in our trials, and that He and the Father jointly have committed to protect and be with us.

Consider the implications of Jesus' words below.

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14:20 KJV)

The day of which Jesus spoke in this verse was the day when He sent the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), just ten days after He ascended back to the Father. (Acts 1) If we believe Jesus' words and the harmonious witness of New Testament Scripture, we too may "...know" this same assuring truth.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? (1 Peter 3:12-13 KJV)

When we are confronted, often assaulted unexpectedly, by life's trials, one of our first reactions is often to wonder. Is the Lord here? Does He know? Why didn't He prevent this calamity? We fail to grasp the message of this passage. He is present, His ears are open to your cries at all times and in all circumstances. And His face is always against evildoers. They may seem to succeed for a time but trust the Lord. In His time and way, He shall manifest just how "Against" them He is. Their day is coming, and they cannot evade His righteous judgment against them.

Rest in comfort on the promise of Verse 13. There is a divine limit to what evil can come, "...*if ye be followers of that which is good.*" Life may well be dreadfully painful at times, but we can't imagine what it might have been without the Lord's intervention. Follow Him, do "...*that which is good.*" This promise is introduced by "**if**," a word of conditionality. What follows is contingent on our following that which is good. Do good. Trust Him. His better day shall soon dawn. Rest in His loving grace.

Elder Joe Holder