

The Shepherd Who Preserves His Sheep

John 10:1–33; Canons of Dort 5.3

Studies in the Canons of Dort #28

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YOU have been born again. You now have a living hope. You now have an eternal inheritance. But you can wake up tomorrow morning without your new life, without your hope, and without your inheritance. Do you believe this? This is exactly what so many believers today believe. I call this a gospel of sand. It's as if God grabbed hold of us like a handful of sand on the beach, but then grains started falling through the cracks in his fingers. Do you believe this? This is what our forefathers labored against at the Synod of Dort (CD 5, RE 3). Look with me for a moment at the Canons of the Synod of Dort 5.3 on page 109 in the back of your *Psalter Hymnal*:

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

This is what we believe! But we hear it so often, “You Reformed believe in your logic, in your confessions, in your tradition, in your old writers more than in your Bible.” Let's take on this challenge from one passage of

Scripture tonight. What did Jesus say? And so we turn this evening in the Gospel of John as Jesus rebukes the Pharisees. He is the “good shepherd” while the Pharisees are false shepherds undergoing judgment for their lack of obedience to God’s command to them to lead Israel, his flock. As we enter John 10 it is now after the Feast of Tabernacles in the month of December and time for the Feast of Re-Dedication. This feast is not in the Law of Moses but was added because of a great event in Israel’s history. In 167 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes marched upon Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple, changing the altar of burnt offering into altar for the supreme Greek god Zeus. But after two years, in December, 164 B.C., Judas Maccabaeus the great Jewish zealot defeated the army of Antiochus, cleansed the Temple of the idolatry, and held a re-dedication ceremony. Our Lord uses this opportunity to continue his public proclamation that he was the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament prophesied. He was God in the flesh—*Immanuel*—“God with us”; he was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world;” he was the hope of Abraham and all the Old Covenant saints. And as such he gives three reasons he is *the shepherd who preserves his sheep*.

Jesus is the Door (vv. 7–10)

The first reason Jesus is the shepherd who preserves his sheep is that *Jesus is the door*. Listen to verses 7–10. In verse 7 he speaks one of his “I am” statements: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”**

Whenever you read Jesus saying, “truly, truly,” that’s translating the words “amen, amen.” It’s one of the most serious ways Jesus speaks as if to say, “No listen up; this is absolutely serious.” And then he compares himself to the false shepherds of the Pharisees: **All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them** (v. 8). And again he says, **I am the door** (v. 9). Now listen to the importance of that: **If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly** (vv. 9–10). If you as a sheep enter through Jesus you are saved!

Jesus is the Shepherd (vv. 11–18)

The second reason Jesus is the shepherd who preserves his sheep is that *Jesus is the shepherd*. Then there’s another “I am” statement: **I am the good shepherd** and as **the good shepherd** Jesus says he **lays down his life**

for the sheep (v. 11). Would he die for us only to have us not live for him? Then again, in contrast to false shepherd who flees the sheep when the wolf comes near because he does not care about them (vv. 12–13), Jesus says, **I am the good shepherd** (v. 14). And as this kind of shepherd he says, **I know my own and my own know me** (v. 14). Can Jesus disown what is his? Can we run away so far that he who knows us so well cannot find us? And look at how powerful this image is in verse 15: **just as the Father knows me and I know the Father**. Did you get that? How does Jesus know us and we know him? In the same way that the Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father. Can the Father disown his son? Can the Son not love the Father? You see why it's ridiculous to say a true believer can lose salvation. And that leads to our third point...

Jesus is the Son of God (vv. 28–30)

The third reason Jesus is the shepherd who preserves his sheep is that *Jesus is the Son of God*. Look at verse 28: **I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand**. I mean, this verse in itself should eliminate the objection completely, forever! Look at it again: **I**, the eternal, almighty Son of God through whom the universe

came to be **give them eternal life, and** therefore because I have given this **they will never perish**. Literally Jesus says, “they will not perish forever.” This is the strongest way of saying something in Greek. Jesus uses a double negative, aorist subjunctive. And how long is **never**? Forever, and ever, and ever! And because this is such an absolute statement Jesus says **no one will snatch them out of my hand**. No one! Not Satan. Not the false shepherds. Not even yourself. **No one** means **no one**.

Then notice how much stronger Jesus says this in verse 29: **My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand**. The Father gave the sheep to the Son, Jesus Christ, and Jesus gives the sheep eternal life. We cannot be snatched from Jesus’ hand; we cannot be snatched from the Father’s hand. No one has the right, the might, the ability, or the authority to take us! Then in verse 30 he tells us why this is true: **I and the Father are one**.

This is your powerful Savior! And this is a gospel that powerfully saves! This is no gospel of sand but a gospel that withstands all assaults! What a reason to praise him when I feel low and lost! What a reason to be assured tonight! What a reason to tell a lost sinner there is hope in Jesus’ name.

Amen.