

JOH 10:24-28 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."
25 Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

As we saw last week Jesus had been telling the Jews in very plain language that He was the Messiah, even though He didn't use direct language in many cases. Part of what we'll see in our text this morning is that when Jesus uses direct and clear language the Jews freak out, proving that they weren't interested in plain language at all.

In response to the question from the Jews, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly," Jesus answers in a way that once again rebukes them for not paying attention.

JOH 10:25 Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me,

Some of your bibles use the word works instead of miracles, which is a little better translation. While the context certainly is clear that Jesus was referring to miracles, it also includes all the works Jesus was doing in His Father's name, from demonstrating love and compassion, along with justice.

Everything Christ did in public was a work which went directly back to the mission the Father gave to the Son for all to see which demonstrated that Jesus was none other than the Messiah spoken of in the Scriptures and sent from the throne of God.

But the point should be well taken, and that is that Jesus didn't come only using words, but backed up His words with power and authority. This doesn't mean that His words weren't sufficient in and of themselves.

In fact, a number of Jesus' followers came to Him based only on His words and the promises He gave them according to the word of

God. Peter, for example, made it quite clear that it was the words of Jesus that caused him to stay on with the Lord.

JOH 6:66-69 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Consider your own lives. I dare say that most of us came to Christ as a result of the words someone spoke concerning the truth of who Christ is and why He came, which was to redeem us from our sins as we were encouraged to repent of our sins and trust Christ alone for our salvation.

Having said all of this, however, it is still essential to understand the relationship to the word of God and the power of God as it concerns salvation. Though we are told that the gospel of Christ is the power unto salvation, it is not divorced from the power of the Holy Spirit, who must first open our eyes to the truth of the gospel.

The gospel of Christ is the power of the word but only to those who believe, as that passage makes clear. The words of God themselves don't save anyone. Rather it is an embracing of the gospel by faith that does.

^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 1:18** For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Notice that there are two groups in this passage. The foolish who are perishing and those who are being saved through the power of the cross.

But as the word of God makes clear, all men outside of Christ are foolish because of their darkened hearts and the deadness of their hearts.

So, how does one go from foolish and dead to being saved?

Only as we are born from above, or born again by the Holy Spirit who is that agent of the Godhead who imparts the life giving grace of regeneration, an act of God as He causes us to be born again.

Titus 3:5-7 ⁵ *He saved us*, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,* ⁶

whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

This is precisely what our Lord Jesus was saying to Nicodemus when He told him that unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:7-8 ⁷ "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Being born of the Spirit is directly tied to being born again, which is to say that our initial spiritual birth did not come from us believing, but rather we believed because we were first given life and the gift of faith to accept that salvation in Christ alone.

And you might remember how Nicodemus responded to this and our Lord's subsequent rebuke.

John 3:9-10 ⁹ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"

In what sense should Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, have understood this truth of being born again by the Spirit?

In that this truth was clearly taught in the OT Scriptures that he should have been familiar with and should have been teaching to Israel. Let me take you to the passage Jesus had in mind.

Ezekiel 36:23-27 ²³ "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. ²⁴ "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ "Then *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.* ²⁶ "Moreover, *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Being washed in water, (the cleansing flood of Christ's blood), and having the Spirit impart life to His people is precisely what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus this:

John 3:5 ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

It is this rebirth of the Spirit, (which by definition must take place outside of the one being enacted upon, since no one can cause their own birth, either physically or spiritually), that Paul refers to when referencing the power of God.

2 Corinthians 13:4 ⁴ For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you.

But as we come back to our text in John Jesus will drive home the point that both the word and the power of God witness to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Scriptures.

And by the way, the Jews knew that such a man would come on to the scene with power and authority to do the kinds of works Jesus was doing, and that such a man would be sent from God.

ISA 35:3-6 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; ⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." ⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

This is the very passage that Jesus uses of Himself when John the Baptist, from a prison cell, questioned if Jesus was truly the Messiah.

LUK 7:20-22 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" ²¹ At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²² So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

What our Lord meant by this was that the very qualifications of the Messiah, which the Scriptures insist must accompany the One sent from the Father, were being performed at the hands of Jesus.

And so, the rebuke Jesus levels at these Jews cuts to the heart of the matter, and that is, that there is no evidence which would be sufficient for people whose hearts are bent on rejecting Christ.

And, as we've said so many times before, we have all run into people like these. You can talk till you're blue in the face, you can do cart wheels for people and bend over backwards showing how the word of God clearly points to Jesus Christ as the only Savior of the world, and yet people will still reject the truth, as they use the excuse that the evidence is not sufficient.

You can explain how over 300 OT prophecies clearly speak of the Son of God coming into this world to redeem sinful men. You can go to the Scriptures which tell us for example how the Messiah had to be born of a virgin.

ISA 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

That's a pretty tall order for you and me, but for God that's not a problem, which is why Mary did not conceive through a man, but rather by the Holy Spirit.

You can cite biblical evidence as to how the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem, which Jesus was. You can cite evidence that the Scriptures clearly showed how the Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver which the OT Scriptures make clear.

ZEC 11:12-13 I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said to me, "**Throw it to the potter**" - the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.

Guess what, that's the exact price Judas got, but because he had suddenly felt guilty for his betrayal of Christ he gave it back to the Pharisees and guess what they did with it?

MAT 27:5-10 So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. 6 The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." 7 So **they decided to use the**

money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. 8

That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9

Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

"They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, 10 and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Someone might say that these examples are mere coincidences. Maybe if only two or three of these OT Scriptures came to pass. But not 300 plus. In fact, Josh McDowell quotes Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks*, to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability.

Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies, we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power."

Stoner illustrates this number by supposing that we take 10 to the 17th power silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover the entire state of Texas two feet deep. He then says, to take one silver dollar and mark it and stir the whole mass thoroughly.

Now blindfold a man and tell him he can travel the entire state, but that he must then pick up one silver dollar and show that it is the right one. What are his chances? 1 in 10 to the 17th power.

These prophecies which were fulfilled in Christ had to be inspired by God who knows the beginning from the end.

By the way, Stoner goes on to show how only 48 prophecies of the 300 concerning Christ, all coming true, finds the averages going way up. 1 in 10 to the 157th power. Instead of using silver dollars as an example he has to use electrons. But we haven't got time to go there.

The point is that the evidence is there and still men reject Christ to their own detriment, even as these Jewish leaders in our text are doing.

Jesus gives these Jews no excuse for not believing by adding that not only did He convey to them that He was sent from the Father, according to the OT Scriptures, but that His works proved it.

But they still would not believe. And here, Jesus gives a fascinating reason as to why they didn't believe.

JOH 10:26-27 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Two things need to be noted here:

1) These particular Jews are not Christ's sheep, therefore they don't listen to Him.

2) Christ's Sheep not only listen, they prove it by their faith in Him to the extent that they follow Him.

Let's deal with the first premise. These particular Jews in our text don't listen to Jesus because, as the Lord says, they are not His sheep.

But wait a minute, I thought Israel was chosen of God and is even referred to as the sheep or flock of God.

ISA 63:11 Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people - where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock?

JER 23:1-2 "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. 2 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the LORD.

How then can Jesus say that these Jews He is addressing are not His sheep? Because, though Israel as a nation is chosen of God, and identified as the sheep of God, it is clear that there is a distinction between the general identification of Israel and the spiritual identification of individuals in that nation.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the church in Rome.

ROM 9:6-8 It is not as though God's word had failed. ***For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.*** 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 ***In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.***

In other words, simply being identified with Israel didn't make you a child of God. What makes a person a child of God is faith in God and His promises regarding the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

It's just as true today. Simply because someone identifies himself with the church doesn't necessarily make him a child of God. Only as he truly believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is he a child of God, forgiven of his sin and given the hope of eternal life.

Jesus is saying to these Jews that though they have all the religious characteristics that might identify them with Israel, they prove themselves not to be God's sheep because they won't follow Christ.

Again, this is quite an indictment when you consider that these were the elite religious leaders in Israel. And Jesus has just gotten through calling them reprobates. And this isn't the first time. Our Lord was consistent with His rebuke of these leaders as you'll remember back in the eighth chapter of this gospel.

JOH 8:42-45 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 ***You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.*** When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

That's what Jesus is basically saying in our text.

JOH 10:26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

Notice the order that Jesus uses when making this statement. He does not say, 'you are not my sheep because you do not believe.' Rather He says, you do not believe because you are not My sheep.

This is the language of ownership through purchase. And what this means is that the purchase takes place before any sheep can be considered Christ's. If they have not been purchased then they necessarily are not His sheep, and therefore will not come.

But because they are His sheep, (chosen before the foundations of the world), He has already deemed them as His, coming into this world to bring them home to safe pastures as the Father has given

them to the Son. Something we've already addressed back in John 6.

John 6:44 ⁴⁴ "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:65 ⁶⁵ And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

These are the ones who were chosen before the foundations of the world who are deemed His sheep.

Ephesians 1:3-6 ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as ***He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world***, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ ***He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself***, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

But here's the beauty of God's salvation. For those who are His sheep; those who have had their eyes opened and have embraced Christ for eternal life, they have been given some pretty awesome promises.

JOH 10:27-29 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

"My sheep listen to my voice." In other words, we who are in Christ have ears to hear. We have the ability to come to this word of God and hear what the Lord is saying to us. We have spiritual ears and eyes when it comes to the things of God.

And the reason for this is because God is the One who has given us this ability as the Spirit of God has opened our eyes and ears to hear and receive. And so, when the Lord says, come to Me, we hear our God and come by His grace as we use the faith He has given us to believe on Him and His promises.

But notice that Jesus says He knows us. Can you imagine being personally known by the creator of the universe? I mean known by name?

That which God deems special He individually names as He has done with every star in the universe.

Isaiah 40:26 ²⁶ *Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars*, The One who leads forth their host by number, *He calls them all by name*; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power, *Not one of them is missing*.

JOH 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

What would be the point of being one of Christ's sheep and then not following our Great Shepherd?

Jesus says, they will follow Him. And the reason is that His sheep have been called out by name and have an appreciation and love for the Shepherd. When we begin to appreciate how the shepherd has laid down His life for the sheep, you and I in Christ, then it compels us to follow where He leads.

These Jewish leaders in Israel had no intention of following Christ, and showed how they were not His sheep, who didn't have ears to hear. And in fact, they demonstrated how they covered their ears, if you will, when Jesus tried to give them what they needed to hear. It's like that psalm.

PSA 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Despite the evidence all around us, there are people today who say, there is no God. And yet, these same people try and explain the existence of the universe on a mistake and chance.

To hold to such notions without evidence is nothing short of a faulty belief system, which is bad religion. Because, no matter how much you try and reconcile this earth and universe in terms of billions of years of mutation and evolution, you still have to go back to physical matter which predates life.

Where did that stuff come from if someone didn't create it? Oh, it created itself, or it always existed? Did it? Then that would make matter a god. That takes more faith than simply admitting that a personal Almighty God created all things, including you and me, and who wants to have a personal eternal relationship with us, which is where Jesus goes next in our text.

JOH 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

Now, if Jesus had been accused of not speaking clearly earlier, He is not being ambiguous now. Who but the Messiah could make the claim that He can give anyone eternal life?

If He were a lunatic you could blow such a statement off. But not when He has just healed a man born blind and given him his sight back. This is what Jesus meant earlier when He said, "... The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me...." (JOH 10:25)

The very person who is standing in front of these Pharisees is the same person who claims to be God and Savior, and who is offering this eternal life to these men, but they want nothing to do with Him. Though they think He's a lunatic, He is none other than the Lord God Almighty incarnate.

And not only does He have the ability to give His people life, He drives home the point that this life is not some fleeting thing. It is eternal, which is to say that not only is it eternal in quality, it is eternal in quantity. Like that refrain from the song, Amazing grace, "when we've been there ten thousand years, we've only just begun."

By the way, eternity works both ways. Eternal condemnation is just as real for those who reject God and His Savior. The prophet Daniel makes mention of this.

DAN 12:2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

For believers in Christ we will receive everlasting life, and as our Lord says in verse 28, "... and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

When Jesus says, "they will never perish," He means it. To suggest that somehow we can undo what God has established is not to place much ability in our God and Savior. In fact, Jesus has already pointed this truth out earlier in this gospel.

JOH 6:39-40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

One of the things that always comes up in a discussion on eternal security is the notion that somehow I can let go of Christ and

therefore forfeit eternal life. And part of the reasoning for this is the fact that even believers still sin and if we are supposedly given a blank check as to our futures in Christ it will lead to a sinful life with impunity, while claiming that I am still a child of God. Mere fire insurance if you will.

And while it is true that good works are a very important indicator as to whether someone has embraced Christ, the truth remains that even a born again child of God messes up, but there is still forgiveness.

If you would have taken bets on King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed, as to whether God would continue to hold on to him, most of us would have gone with David being lost and condemned by God.

But, only by God's grace, David repented and the Lord didn't let go of him. We can even look to an apostle by the name of Peter who denied Jesus three times before our Lord's crucifixion and yet Peter was not forsaken of God, but he too repented and was restored and was given the assurance of his salvation.

What about Annanias and Sapphira? These were two people who were part of the church in Jerusalem shortly after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here's what we read.

ACT 5:1-5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

The same thing ended up happening to his wife Sapphira. Some have concluded that they were obviously unbelievers for God to do this to them. But we would be jumping to conclusions if we took that position. Nowhere does it say they were unbelievers, only that they made a foolish decision to lie to Peter and thus lie to God.

God took them home to make an example of them. They weren't given time to repent. One thing this shows us is that despite how

God will not allow one of His sheep to perish it doesn't mean He will always be patient with those who don't follow Him as He desires.

Does this mean we should always be looking over our shoulders? No, but it should cause us to consider the love we've been given and in turn love God above all. By the way, that incident with Ananias and Sapphira did have its desired effect.

ACT 5:11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Sometimes God's discipline can be severe, but the bottom line is that He loves those He disciplines. And though all discipline seems hard at the moment it's always intended to lead us back into the arms of Christ, which I believe is where Ananias and Sapphira ended up, with the question from Christ that Peter posed to them, 'what were you thinking?'

We'll pick up on this next week. But remember, we who are in Christ will never perish and no one can snatch us out of His hand. May that be an incentive to love and obey our Lord so as not to go our own way as He calls each of us by name.