



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA



By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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John 10:22-42

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English Standard Version

“The Flock of Christ”

This is the 35th sermon in the series on the New Testament book of John entitled,
“The Gospel of Christ.”

John 10:22-42

“At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. 24 So the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name bear witness about Me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not part of My flock. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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. 30 I and the Father are one.” 31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone Me?” 33 The Jews answered Him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” 34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? 35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— 36 do you say of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? 37 If I am not doing the works of My Father, then do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father.” 39 Again they sought to arrest Him, but He escaped from their hands. 40 He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there He remained. 41 And many came to Him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” 42 And many believed in Him there.”

INTRODUCTION: *Arrowsmith II* ¹

In his book, *A Shepherd looks at the Good Shepherd*, Philip Keller writes about starting his flock of sheep ... “At first, sheep seemed strange and unfamiliar. So I sought expert advice and help. I was determined that I would keep only the finest stock and breed the best animals possible. There would be no half-way measures. My sheep were special and would become increasingly precious.

So I went to see a highly esteemed sheep breeder, who lived about 30 miles away. He led me out to his fields where his flock was grazing. There were about a dozen big, strong rams resting in the shade.

“Well, son,” he said, “Pick out whichever ram you wish. You are just starting out with sheep. I want you to have the best.” I replied that only he knew which was the finest ram. It was he who had poured years of his life and expertise into these sheep. Only he knew which one was the most valuable ram in his possession. Only he knew how great and precious it was to him. Not hesitating, he strode in among the rams and quickly caught hold of a fine, strong ram.

“This is Arrowsmith II,” he said. “He is the supreme Grand Champion Ram and has won all the top award across the country. No one else has ever handled him but me. He’s my top prize ram ... tremendously valuable ... more than that ... very precious to me in a very personal way.” And I considered it one of the great honors of my life that he would permit me to take the ram home to become the top ram for my flock.

And Philip Keller concludes, “That day it came home to me with great clarity that what made the difference between one sheep and another was the sheep’s owner. In whose hand had they been? Who had been responsible for raising and shepherding them? Was it a superb shepherd?”

And so it is with us. Whose hand are we in? Who is handling and shaping us? Whose life is modeling my life? Who do we belong to? Who is our shepherd?

Well, to answer those questions, we can turn, among many Biblical passages, to today’s text in John 10. And the first thing we learn is ...

v. 22-30: THE SHEPHERD IS THE CHRIST ²

“At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. 24 So the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name bear witness about Me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not part of My flock. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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. 30 I and the Father are one.” We come to our passage this morning and the first thing we see is that Jesus is back in the Temple, teaching the people. Some of the people there question Him, asking Him in verse 24, *“How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”*

What they fail to realize is that Jesus has been telling them plainly. Not only that, He’s been showing them plainly, both by His miracles and by His fulfilling of numerous Old Testament prophecies. And so Jesus answered them by letting them know that His ...

¹ The Introduction is taken from *A Shepherd looks at the Good Shepherd* both by W. Philip Keller, pages 185-186.

² The Exposition of the text is adapted from my sermon “*Believe and Belong*,” 8/16/92; *Reflections on the Gospel of John, Vol. 2* by Leon Morris, pages 384-400; *The Gospel According to John* by D.A. Carson, pages 390-401.

- **Sheep are SENSITIVE to His voice**

Jesus answers them, starting at verse 25, *"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name bear witness about Me, but you do not believe because you are not part of My flock."*

Notice Jesus doesn't say, "I told you, but you weren't **listening**."

Nor does He say, "I told you, but you didn't **hear** Me."

But rather, Jesus says, *"I told you, **and you do not believe**."*

Jesus equates hearing, listening, being sensitive to His voice ... with believing! The Apostle John, in writing this Gospel, is so convinced that the record of Jesus' words and works was more than enough to bring people to believe that Jesus was the Christ. Indeed, for those people who have eyes to see (a Biblical way of saying that they are able to understand), so clear had been Jesus' references to Himself, His use of the Old Testament, His handling of the Divine Titles, His discussions of the relationship between God and Himself, that He has virtually pointed Himself out as the Christ to all who cared to pay attention.

All of the miracles He has done speak for Him. This is the One who turned the water into wine, who healed the royal official's son, who made the lame man walk, who fed 5,000 people and then walked on the water, who made the blind man see, and who would next make the dead live. How could anyone see all this and not believe? It's because, as Jesus goes on to say, verse 26, *"but you do not believe because **you are not part of My flock. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**"*

You see ... their failure to believe came from a failure to be. They were not His sheep, therefore, they didn't believe. They didn't listen. They didn't hear Him. And so they were unable to recognize Him as the Christ as they were too busy listening to all sorts of other shepherds.

And you can't obey someone you can't hear. And that's the next characteristic of sheep we find here, that ...

- **Sheep are OBEDIENT to His leading**

Jesus continues in verse 27, *"My sheep hear My voice, **and I know them, and they follow Me.**"* Jesus wants us to understand first that He knows us. And He knows us through and through. We can put on an act for our friends; we can come to church and smile and pretend everything is going just swell.

But Jesus knows His sheep.

And He knows when everything is not swell.

He knows when we're hurting and struggling and frustrated.

He knows, because we're His creation ... He made us.

He knows, because we're His sheep ... He bought us at a great price, at the cost of His own blood.

There is a sense of ownership here ... we are His.

There is a sense of intimacy here ... He knows all about us, and He wants us to know all about Him.

There is a sense of trust here ... He always does what's right and best for us.

Therefore, we follow Him, we do what He says, we go where He sends, and we regularly listen to His Word for guidance and understanding.

For those who fail to believe, life is simply a succession of haphazard events with no real meaning. But for Christ's sheep, there's always the thought of the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for them, who constantly leads them into places where they should go, and whose voice gives real meaning to life.

And when that's true for us, then we are to know that the ...

- **Sheep are SECURE in His hand**

In verses 28 and 29, and I think these are really the key verses of this passage, Jesus says, *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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."*

As sheep, we should be secure in the hand of the Shepherd. Notice that we're not merely to **feel** secure, but we actually **are** secure. Jesus says that we "**will never perish.**" It is His gift to us. It can't be earned, only received, and once received, it can never be lost. Jesus is God's gift to us, to you and to me. As we saw back in **John 3:16**, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*

If you could perish, then it wouldn't be eternal life.

If you could be snatched away, then it wouldn't be eternal life.

If you could be lost, then it wouldn't be eternal life.

But the Good News is that it **is** eternal life, and it's your forever! You are secure! And in a world where nothing seems secure, where each day's paper brings news of tragedy and disappointment, the eternal security of the Shepherd protecting His sheep for always and forever is truly something to be thankful for.

After all, Jesus' promise to us is backed up God the Father. He has given us who are the sheep to Christ who is the Shepherd. God the Father has chosen the sheep to be part of His flock before the beginning of the world. Look at verse 29 again, *"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."*

We have been unconditionally elected, chosen by God, the One who "**is greater than all.**" Our security is guaranteed by His power. **Psalm 118:14-17** reminds us that, *"The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. 15 Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: 'The right hand of the Lord does valiantly, 16 the right hand of the Lord exalts, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!' 17 I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord."*

The Shepherd has made sure that the sheep are completely secure in His hand. And He can do that because ...

v. 31-42: THE SHEPHERD IS THE SON OF GOD

"The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone Me?'" 33 The Jews answered Him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.'" 34 Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? 35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— 36 do you say of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? 37 If I am not doing the works of My Father, then do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father.'" 39 Again they sought to arrest Him, but He escaped from their hands. 40 He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there He remained. 41 And many came to Him. And they said, 'John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.'" 42 And many believed in Him there."

As we continue our passage, we see that the religious leaders have threatened Jesus because of His divine claims. They have once again — for the 3rd time in the Gospel of John — picked up stones to kill Him with. But Jesus stops them by asking, verse 32, *"Jesus answered*

them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone Me?"

Are they going to kill Jesus because He made the **lame** walk, the **blind** see, and the **dead** live? Just which one of these **terrible** things will they stone Him for? Verse 33, "*The Jews answered Him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."*

It is ironic that God, having made Himself a man in the person of Jesus Christ, now stands accused of religious high treason, because He has claimed to be **exactly what He is — God**.

And so Jesus appeals their authority and we see that ...

- **Sheep believe what they read (SCRIPTURE)**

Jesus appeals to the Scripture and so He quotes from Psalm 82, starting at verse 34, "*Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? 35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken — 36 do you say of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world. 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"*

Jesus recalls a situation from the Old Testament that is referred to in Psalm 82 where Israel's judges are referred to as "gods" because they are the recipients of divine revelation. Therefore, how can they get mad at Jesus, who is the giver of divine revelation? Jesus defends Himself against their charge and rebukes them at the same time for not following all of the Scripture. By saying that the "**Scripture cannot be broken**" Jesus is testifying to the complete authority and reliability of the Bible. He's made a clear statement of the whole truth of the Bible. It's true in all of its parts and in every way; therefore, we must accept all of it.

He doesn't give us the right to pick and choose only those parts of the Bible that we like and that are easy. If Christ, God's one and only Son, held to the Scripture as God's Word; can we, as His followers, He sheep, hold a view of the Bible that is any less than Christ's view?

Obviously, the answer is no. We should have the same high view of the Scripture that Jesus had and we should believe God's Word, just as Jesus did.

Jesus continues to challenge them in the latter part of that same passage.

And so we see that ...

- **Sheep believe what they see (His WORKS)³**

Now He challenges them by referring to what He has done. Picking up in verse 36, "*[What] do you say of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? 37 If I am not doing the works of My Father, then do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father."*

Jesus is telling them that His miracles, done in the Father's name, revealed to Him as the Father's will, carried out by the Father's power ... when taken all together, testify to the fact that the Father has sent Him. Clearly, there is a oneness between God the Father and God the Son that is revealed in the carrying out of the divine task according to the divine will.

Remember now, that they are at the Temple, at the Feast of Dedication. Between verses 21 and 22, two months passed. It was time for another great feast. The Feast of Dedication was the newest of feasts. In fact, some of those there with Jesus had probably heard stories from their

³ The information about the Feast of Dedication is adapted from *Preaching the Word: John* by R. Kent Hughes, pages 271-272 and the sermon "Saved Completely" by Robert Rayburn, Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, WA, 11/12/00.

great-great-grandfathers, who had heard them from their great-great-grandfathers about how in 175 B.C. a madman named Antiochus Epiphanes came from Syria, with Roman permission, to rule over the area and attempted to mix Hebrew and Greek culture. In doing so, he desecrated the temple, forced pork down the priests' throats, turned the chambers of the temple into a brothel, and converted the altar meant for burnt offerings into an altar for Zeus and defiled it by sacrificing a pig on the altar of burnt offering.!

And this kind of stuff went on for 10 years, fueling the Jews' hatred of both the Syrians and the Romans and charging the messianic atmosphere into which Jesus came. But those were also the great days of Judas Maccabaeus. Maccabaeus means "the hammer" — so he was known as Judas the Hammer. It sounds like he could be a TV character today. Some sort of crime-fighting hero, Judas the Hammer, starring in "CSI: Jerusalem."

Judas Maccabaeus fought against Antiochus and after three years of fighting against overwhelming odds, defeated Antiochus in 165 B.C. This explains why the name Judas was so popular in Jesus' day. Then there came the great day when Judas Maccabaeus cleansed the temple and consecrated it. We read his own words in the non-canonical book **First Maccabees 4:5**, "*... that every year at that season the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight days, beginning with the 25th day of the month of Chislev.*"

In keeping with these words, every house in Jerusalem had eight candles in the window on the 25th of Chislev. The Feast of Dedication commemorated the cleansing of the Temple under Judas Maccabaeus. The feast was celebrated toward the end of December. We more commonly know it as the Jewish holiday presently known as the Feast of Lights, called that, because of the miracle in which the lamps in the Temple stayed lit for eight days while the Temple was being re-dedicated, even though there was only enough oil to light the lamps for one night.

It was, in modern terms, Hanukkah. This historical detail — that the Lord Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication — is, by the way, an interesting part of the argument for celebrating a feast, such as Christmas, that is not specifically ordered in the Word of God. The Feast of Dedication, of course, was not authorized in the law of Moses, but it was an appropriate celebration of God's deliverance of His people and Jesus participated in it!

It was a feast to commemorate the dedication of the Temple and the setting apart of the Temple as holy. Here Jesus claims that He is the One who has been set apart, made holy, sanctified. Because now He is the Temple, now He is where God dwells; now He is God's presence on earth. Jesus has fulfilled this feast — just as He fulfilled the Feast of Tabernacles back in John 7 and 8.

But they weren't interested in a Messiah who was going to be a suffering servant. They wanted a conquering military hero who would kick the Romans out of Israel. They wanted Jesus the Hammer who would finish the work of Judas the Hammer and force Rome to flee. They wanted a Christ according to their definition of Christ, not according to the Biblical definition of Christ.

But Jesus has told them that He has come to do the Father's will and that He does exactly and only what the Father does.

And He challenges them; he gives them an excuse, an out. He's telling them that they don't have to believe unless He does what the Father does. **But**, if He **is** doing what the Father does, than they have no excuse, there is **no other rational choice but to believe**. He offers up the evidence and challenges them to examine it. Just as He does today. If Jesus was false and a liar, then you're free to walk away. But if Jesus is who He said He is, and if Jesus does what He says He does, then act accordingly and put your faith in Him as your Savior and your Lord.

Our passage finishes with Jesus leaving them, verse 40, *“He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there He remained.”*

Jesus returns to the place where His ministry began ... the place of His baptism by John the Baptist. And while He’s there, we’re reminded that ...

- **Sheep believe what they hear (John’s WORDS)**

The people there remember Jesus and they remember John. Verse 41, *“And many came to Him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” 42 And many believed in Him there.”*

They remembered what John had told them about Jesus all the way back in John 1. **John 1:29-30**, *“The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because He was before me.’”* And again in **John 1:34**, *“And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”*

What an epitaph to be remembered by; *“everything that John said about this man was true.”* None of us could ask to be remembered by anything better — that people would look back at our lives and says, *“everything that he said about Jesus Christ was true.”*

CONCLUSION: Cliffhanger⁴

I remember seeing the movie “Cliffhanger” once a number of years ago, late 90’s I think. It was a Sylvester Stallone movie. He was supposed to be a world-class mountain climber and the movie started with a climbing sequence where Stallone and some climbing partners were traversing between two very high pinnacles. They were hauling themselves across on a rope. At one point in the sequence, a female climber got into trouble and Stallone went out on the rope, trying to rescue her. She slipped and he grabbed her hand, but their hands were wet and slippery from their physical exertions. The camera traced her fall from Stallone’s point of view, eyes looking straight down as she fell to her death on the rocks far below. For someone like me who’s not totally comfortable with heights, it was as nerve-wracking as anything I could imagine.

Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where we have to **find something** to hold on to. The “rope” we grab to hold on to may be emotional, physical, mental or spiritual. When we start to fall, we will grab for almost anything. And if we manage to grab hold, then we have to hope that **what we’re holding on to** is strong enough to sustain us.

It is hard to trust things you can’t see, isn’t it?

And yet that’s exactly what God’s asked us to do with the most critically important part of life – eternity. God has essentially said, “I will reach out to you and grab hold. I’ll take care of all your needs, both those in this world and in the world to come.”

Someone once wrote: *“Our salvation really rests on God’s strength, not ours. Our safety is in Jesus Christ’s power, not ours. Our protection depends on the Father’s firm grip, not ours. No one, including the devil, can sever that vital union that connects us with the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because it was Christ’s death and resurrection that perfects us...because of His finished work, not ours.”*

Do you really trust God? Is your eternity in His grip? His grasp on you will never slip, you will never fall, not because of your strength, but because of His strength! He will finish the job.

Are you secure in His hand?

⁴ The conclusion is adapted from the email newsletter *DayBreaks*, by Galen C. Dalrymple, 4/4/01.

Think about that.

We need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

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John 10:28-29

Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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."