

Gospel of John Chapter 10 - John Karmelich

My lesson title is "Am I Really Saved, Part 2"? (That assumes you read the last lesson!) All of us who are saved Christians mess up and we ponder after we've sinned if we still "got our ticket punched"! The danger is we deal with whether we trust in what we're doing to try to prove our worth to God as well as those around us, that we're a good Christian. It's a battle to let go of the fear of losing our salvation and trust God is doing what He's doing to guide the world for His glory. Our job is just to trust in what He promised us: Eternal salvation by just believing Jesus is God and Lord of our lives and that we're saved by Him keeping that promise to us and nothing else!

I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but even us in the "choir" need reassurance every now and then, as humans mess up and think we've sinned too much and not worthy of God's love. The answer is yes, we're not worthy, that's a given, and there is nothing we can do to prove our worth to God. That's a big part of the Christian message: that we can let go of that fear of not being good enough and trust in God keeping His promise to us on His own. To state the other side of that point, that's not a license to go sin all we want. God created us believers to glorify Him with our lives and be a witness for Him. I believe there are rewards in heaven based on how we used our lives, so there's an eternal motivation to use our lives as a witness for Him, and turn from sin as much as possible. If you haven't figured out by now, I am getting into all of this because that's the underlying lesson of this text. Ok then, let me take on this chapter, why it's here and why it's relevant to us as believers.

As I implied this chapter opens up as a continuation of the last chapter. For those who don't know, the Bible chapter breaks weren't added until roughly the time of the printing press. Anyway, Chapter 9 had the story of a man born blind and Jesus gave him eyesight. That man then used the miracle story to be a good witness for Jesus in amazing ways even though what he knew about Jesus was limited. Anyway Chapter 10 continues at the same spot (Jerusalem) with Jesus now focused on a speech to His disciples (that includes you and me) about what salvation is and isn't. OK let me begin:

Jesus starts by describing a sheepfold. For us city-folks, that's an enclosed outdoor area where farmers of that day kept their sheep. The disciples knew it was an illustration as the Old Testament has lots of illustrations describing Israelites as sheep and their leaders as the shepherds. A typical enclosure had a high fence (to keep wolves out) and a single gate. It was common for multiple shepherds to keep their sheep in the same area, and each shepherd had a unique call their sheep recognized and went out when they heard that familiar sound. In the first six verses, the text says the disciples didn't get the point yet, so Jesus decides by verse 7 to explain it better. They understood the illustration in the literal sense, but not what Jesus meant.

In verse 7, Jesus says He's the door to that sheepfold. He then compares other shepherds to thieves and robbers. The idea is other Israelite leaders were trying to lead people away from Jesus. We know we're believers because we know Jesus' voice, not literally! As we study His Word, we learn what He desires of us! The text says He leads them out. The big question is, out of what? It can't be the world, because Jesus wants us to be witnesses in the world. He's referring to Judaism as to this day denies Jesus is God and, therefore, is a false religion. Jesus also states that He has sheep that are in other folds. It refers to non-Jewish believers ("Gentiles") who'll come to believe Jesus is God. The text states Jesus lays down His life for the sheep (obviously a cross-reference) and His sheep (obviously us) recognize who's Jesus based on what we've studied about Him. Therefore, those of us who make Jesus Lord of our lives have no reason to fear death.

There were religious Jews listening to this speech and to state the obvious, some believed and some did not. One of the hardest things for anyone to do is to get past one's religious beliefs one grew up with to become a true follower of Jesus.

The text moves to a few months later. Chapters 9 and 10 (to Verse 21) take place during one of the fall feasts held in Jerusalem. Verse 22 to the chapter end takes place at another feast that occurs around our Christmas time. This feast honors a revolt against the Greek leaders who ruled over Israel roughly 100 years earlier. Some Jews led a successful revolt over Greece and it became the Hanukkah festival. Now back to Jesus time, some Jewish religious leaders asked Jesus plainly if He is the Messiah. The reason Jesus was subtle about it was because the Jewish leaders wanted someone to overthrow Rome and not die for their sins. With that understood, Jesus said in effect, "I already told you I'm Him (the Messiah), but you don't believe Me because you are not one of My sheep that will inherit eternal life." The way to tell when Jesus says something important is right after He says it the Jewish leaders try to stone Him for saying that! That's what occurs here. He was not blunt to the Jewish leaders as they wanted a King who would end their bondage to Rome! (In other words they wanted someone who would let them do what they wanted, and not turn their lives over to God!)

Jesus then uses something clever to avoid the stoning. He quotes Psalm 82. It says, "You are gods." It is saying in that Psalm that because God gave the Jewish justices the right to say who lives or dies they are like "little gods." Jesus' point is, if God can ordain that, why can't He ordain the Son to come in the world? Jesus is trying to get the religious leaders to see past their idea of what the Messiah is (for those who don't know, the Greek word for Messiah is "Christ"). He is stating this to let the religious leaders think instead of getting violent. (By the way, a way to tell who's winning an argument is the other side resorts to violence. It means their arguments aren't working!) Obviously they didn't kill Jesus. As they were thinking about what He said, Jesus and His disciples went away. Of course Jesus knew it was His destiny to fully give up His life for our sins. It'll occur when God the Father meant it to occur on what is the Passover holiday (in the spring of the following year from that date).

OK John, neat stuff and I guess we already believe all of this. Why should we care? Because it is easy to get our minds off the fact that God Himself paid the full price for our sins. We never have to prove our worth to Him. Most of us need that reminder every now and then when we ponder our relationship in terms of our eternal standing with God. Many Christians argue one can lose one's salvation, but I'm not one of them. This chapter states we are in God's hands. I just can't see God losing His grip on us if we "sinned too much." If that's the case, what's too much? The only sin I'm convinced is unforgivable is a lifelong denial of Jesus as God.

What about people who truly committed their lives to serving Jesus then have a long time denying it? I let God judge the hard cases. When "push comes to shove" it's amazing what people will confess at the end of the day!

OK, John back to us. If we believe we're saved, why worry about this? Because all of us have seasons of doubt about our salvation. It's a normal thing to experience. I'm convinced God allows such times to strengthen our faith and trust that He's still in control despite whatever doubts we may have at any time! It is simply a matter of trusting Him even when we don't sense Him working. If we can do that, then we won't have to worry about the eternal. We can just focus our time on what God calls us to do, which is live our lives as a witness for Him.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John