

Jesus The Door

Follow the Good Shepherd

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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People have superstitions, or various folkloric sayings about all kinds of things. After 6000 years we have collected these strange ideas about things happening outside the realm of reason. But, it is more than just the run of the mill superstitions about crossing the path of a black cat, or walking under a ladder, or stepping on a crack (break your mother's back) sort of thing, or, breaking a mirror; all of which bring the doer some form of bad luck, like seven unlucky years.

I was surprised, though, when I was looking through this particular topic to find so much superstition or folklore about doors, like the doors we walked through into this room. For instance, if you want to really be on top of things in your life, you need to know when to use which door of your house. You probably were not aware of this. They did not teach this in elementary school. You had to hear it down at the local watering hole, or backyard gossip, or who knows where.

But, listen to this: If you are looking at a house that you wish to occupy—you are house hunting—and you have gone to several, and you have narrowed it down to one or two, you really want to look this house over. Well, it is bad luck to use the front door. Make sure you go in the back door. Now, you are probably wondering “why?” I will tell you in a moment.

Here is another situation—if you have a home already, and you have just gotten married, you should not use the back door, but the front door.

Now, the reason, for both of these things, is that the back door is the door that they use to carry out the dead. So, it is a bad luck door. I do not know why this is. I guess you do not want to start your marriage off with “dead” being one of the things in your mind. But in some places, these superstitions are reversed. You should not walk in to the . . . oh, never mind. I cannot keep them straight! In some places, they carry the dead out the front door, so you just have to know what the local superstitions are.

As you know, there is that superstition called, “feng shui,” a Chinese-Oriental superstition. They have a lot about doors. If you go onto the Internet and look up “feng shui” and “doors,” you will find pages and pages of tips that people give about doors, and where to put them. It is especially important that you align your front door with your back door properly, according to this superstition because you do not want them to be aligned in such a way to walk in the front door and see the back door. They believe that if you open the front door letting all the good energy in, it will just escape out the back door. You want the good energy to be able to swirl through the house, and fill the whole house with this good energy.

In the same tradition, it is important for the doors-facing direction, as well as its color to be coordinated so that it attracts the best quality energy. So, if your front door faces south, it should be sun or a fire color likered or orange, because that will attract all the good energy into the house from the south.

But, if your door faces north, you want the cold winter colors like black and blue. I do not know where they get this stuff. Oh, and make sure that the door opens inward, no matter which way it is

facing, or what color it is. Just make sure that it opens inward, because that is inviting to the good energy. It will want to come in.

What a bunch of mumbo-jumbo!

Doors, though, are a well-represented biblical image. There is a lot about doors in the Bible. In fact, there are 273 mentions of doors in Scripture, so it tends to be one of the, maybe not a major symbol in the Bible, but it is a fairly big one. Perhaps, though, the most important mention of door in Scripture is used by Jesus Christ Himself in reference to Himself. In John 10, He calls Himself, “The door of the sheep.”

So, today we are going to explore what Jesus meant by this expression, “The door of the sheep.” And, believe me, it has far more meaning to our Christian lives than those silly superstitions ever could. I call them, stupid-stitions.

I think that after we are through, it should give you a greater appreciation of our Savior and all of the work that He does for us, standing there as, “The door of the sheep,” because that is in direct relation to us. He *is* the door, we are the sheep, and He opens and closes for us depending on the situation.

Please turn to John 10 and we will start off by reading this section. If you have a *New King James Bible*, and it is paragraphed the same way that mine is, you will see that they put it in with the “Good Shepherd” section, and it is. But, they have broken it off from verses 1 through 6. I do not know that it should be. But first, let us read it.

John 10:7-10 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Here, we have, as it begins Jesus saying to them, “again,” and this is a clue that He is repeating something because they did not get it the first time. And if we go back to verse 6, it says:

John 10:6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

So, what we have here in verses 6 and 7 is the fact that the people who were around Him did not take His meaning properly, and so, in verses 7 through 10, and on further down into the Good Shepherd passage, He is explaining what He meant in the first five verses. He is adding a bit more to it.

Let us read those first five verses so that we get a bit of the background of this, “The Door of the Sheep.”

John 10:1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Immediately we see that He explains this again when we went through verses 7 through 10. So, He is showing a dichotomy—a contrast—between the thieves and Himself. He is not like other shepherds. He is not like those who *pretend* to be shepherds, who are thieves and robbers and are coming in to destroy.

John 10:2 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

That is Him. We should not just understand that it is Him alone that He is referring to here, but He could also be referring to any proper, righteous, godly shepherd that is an under-shepherd of His. So, do not narrow it down too far.

John 10:3-5 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

In these particular verses He is trying to emphasize the fact that there is a relationship between the sheep and their Shepherd. One of the hallmarks of the Good Shepherd, as well as those who are shepherds under Him, is that they are there to help the sheep. And the sheep know them. The sheep hear their voice. They recognize their voice. So, there is a relationship between the two sides—the sheep and the Shepherd. What it results in is a peaceful co-existence, and a right measure of authority between the sheep and Shepherd—each one knows their place within the organization. And, the sheep willingly follow the Shepherd. He leads them out, and gives them good food. Then, there is contentment and peace in the flock.

But, a thief and a robber coming in is immediately shied away from, or should be, because their motives are not the same at all. All they want to do is take and destroy.

I do not know what was so difficult about this, but the people who were listening to Him did not get it. They could not make the leap from this pastoral image to a congregation of people who believe similarly. They could not move on to the next level. So then, He moved on to verses 7 through 10, and began to explain it a bit more.

What we have is that He defines this a bit closer. He says,

John 10:7-9 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

Jesus is speaking of a sheepfold. They also call it a pen, or a corral. This is all the same idea. In Judea they made walls of stone, and there was a gap between the stones at two ends, so that the animals could go in and out, the sheep and the shepherds through this gap. So, it was a walled, or fenced-in area where the sheep could be gathered in a confined space. But, they are not always out in the pasture. They need to come home once in a while, because there are things that need to be done to the sheep, and they need to be corralled in a place where that could be done.

Of course, it had an entryway. Oftentimes, there was a gate—like swinging on hinges—or a door of some sort. That was the easiest way to do it, because you could close the gate and leave it, and the sheep would stay inside it.

Sometimes, though, they did not have a gate or door. Sometimes it was just the gap between the ends of the walls, and so the shepherd had to stand, sit, or lie in the gap. This sort of reminds you of standing in the gap, does it not? He had to lie, stand, or sit in the open gap, and he *became* the door of the sheep. So, it becomes easy to understand what Christ was alluding to here. There was no gate, other than Himself. *He was the door of the sheep*, and by Him, they could go in or out. And the thief, or the robber could not get in, because they cannot get by Him.

That is the illustration we have, here, that we are looking at. So, Jesus' audience, used to seeing shepherds and sheep around the area all the time, because Israel was a large sheep area, should have known and should have been able to understand this illustration without any problem. I do not know what was holding them back, except perhaps God, or their own carnality was blinding them to it.

Now, we are all familiar with doors. We use them dozens of times a day. We go in and out, and we do not even think about them. They are just there. We know what they are, and we use them without thinking.

But, have you ever sat down to think about what the purpose of a door is? That is what I want to talk about today. What is the purpose of a door? We are going to list five purposes, and they are the most common, I think. At least, they are the most common in how they apply to the work of Jesus Christ right now. I hope that this will give us a far greater admiration and appreciation for the work of our Savior, not just the work that has been completed, but also the work that He is continuing to do.

It says in the book of Romans that it is by His life we are saved. That means now—that He lives. He is not dead on the cross, like some denominations of Christianity seem to leave Him in. They always picture Him in terms of being dead. But, He is not dead. He has risen again. He is there at the right hand of God the Father on His throne. And, He is at work constantly on our behalf.

1. A door provides access.

This is probably the simplest application of all. It provides access. An individual enters a space by an open door. Not only does he enter the space, but he is able to have access to all of the things behind that door. So, it is not just that he gets entrance into the room, but also access to what is all behind the door.

It almost reminds you of that old game show called, "Let's Make a Deal," where there were prizes behind door #1, or door #2, and so on. Well, we do not have to make a deal here. We have already the best deal ever. We can open up the proper door through Jesus Christ.

Think of it this way: Many of you work for a company that give you a card-key, or some special key to give you access to certain spaces in the building. And your card-key may be programmed so that it will give you access to some places, but not others that are more sensitive, where they do not want you to have that access. So, it keeps some out while letting others in.

Christ is our access. He gives us access to the most important, most sensitive places in the whole universe.

Turn to John 14. We will try to fit a few scriptures in with each one of these purposes of a door. This one is the top of the mind for all of us when you talk about God or Christ being an access. He tells them,

John 14:4-6 "And where I go you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

So, He is the access point to the Father. Turn to Acts 4. This is at the end of Peter's speech to the Sanhedrin after they ran afoul of them at one point.

Acts 4:8-12 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

So, Christ is the means of access to salvation. That is essentially the point I want to make here. *Christ is the means of access to salvation*. As Peter says so plainly, there is no other way in the universe to salvation except through Christ. His name, His authority provides us acceptance before God, through His blood. He has taught us the way, and the truth, and we follow His examples and His commands to be transformed into His image.

He is also the Head of the church of God, and He leads and guides us as His representatives on earth as we make progress wandering this wilderness in faith toward the Kingdom of God. He is our High Priest, and He does all those activities of a priest there in heaven at the very hand of God. He is the Mediator between us—the Mediator of the Covenant. And, He is our soon coming King.

We begin to see how much He means to us by all these things.

Not only that, He is the One who dispenses the Holy Spirit to us, and that comes through Him. Where would we be without the Holy Spirit? Without God and Christ living in us by that Spirit?

There are more, but this is all that I chose to list at this point. These are just a few quick ways that our Savior provides the means for our salvation. It is through Him, it depends on Him, and it is modeled on Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Turn to Hebrews 10. I believe that John Reid came to this section in his sermon. We can say that this is a conclusion on this particular point.

Hebrews 10:19-23 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a

true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Paul is telling us very clearly that because of what Christ has done, and because of where He is now, alive and active and powerful, at the right hand of God, giving us access to the very throne of God, through the veil of the Holy of Holies, which He says is His own flesh, we can be confident and even bold with our relationship with the Father. We do not have to worry that God is not going to be pleased with us coming to Him, because He wants us there. He wants us to come by Jesus Christ, The Door of the Sheep. He wants us to take advantage of that access to Him, because that is where the answers lie.

We can go to Him, and have this two-way communication with Him. We do not have to worry that He might demean us, or belittle us for our stupid questions, or idiotic fears. He wants us to come there to gain strength, and answers, deepening that relationship with Him. And that is done all through The Door—Jesus Christ, our Mediator.

And Christ is still The Door. It was not just back there in Bible times when so many miracles seemed to happen. He is The Door, now. He has that same power. He has the same will. He is holding that door open so that we can come before God in praise and thanksgiving, making our requests known to Him, and expecting in that courageous boldness that help we need from our faithful God. “He who promised is faithful.”

So, He has given that access, the door is wide open. Walk through it often, and get to know Him, and get the strength we need in these ever-worsening times.

2. A door provides protection.

Doors keep out things that we want to remain outside. Those things that “go bump in the night.” Remember in John 10 that He mentioned thieves and robbers? They are not the same thing. Thieves and robbers are two different “animals.” Thieves are those who take from you by cunning and stealth. They are the ones who slip over the wall in their black ninja suits, and you do not see them in the dark. They are there to take by stealth, deception, and cunning. They are the ones that you do not see. They slip in, and they slip out, and you find yourself short a hundred bucks, or your computer.

On the other hand, there are robbers. Robbers are more vicious. Robbers are those who take openly, and usually with violence. They are the thugs with the guns, brass knuckles, and the baseball bats. They are the one who come up behind you, and push you down, and take your purse. They are the ones who break down your door, and come in, and put you under the gun, while some of their buddies take your things. They are open, violent stealers.

So, thieves take things by cunning and stealth, while robbers are open and violent.

But, we are not talking about physical thieves and robbers. We are talking about false ministers, false prophets, false teachers; there are both kinds. There are the smooth, oily kind that seem so good on the outside. And there are the other ones who are very brash in what they do. They beat people over the head, and make them conform to their image. I think we have seen both in this age of the church. The robbers are the ones who abuse the brethren; the ones who make them do things according to their interpretation of Scripture, or their interpretation of administration. You cannot take a step one

way or the other without getting pounded down for “not obeying the law of God!” as they see it. Or, “You have not conformed to the government of God!” You hear that a lot.

And, to them the government of God is themselves—“they have been put in this place, so you had better do what you are told.” “You want to by a Dodge? No, you must buy a Chevy! And, it must not be green, it must be blue.” It got to that point [in WCG] where people were actually coming up to the minister and asking them, “Well, I found this really good deal on a BMW. Should I buy it?” “No, that would be proud and ostentatious. You should buy something more pedestrian.” They did not quite say it that way, but they would say, “Buy an American car,” or “Buy something cheap (which might be the same thing at times).” But, there were ministers like this. Those are the robbers that Jesus was talking about.

Of course, there are the other kinds that are more smooth, and they say all the right things, but they are only in it for themselves, and what they can take from the brethren. So, there are both of those, and Jesus is The Door that protects us from them—both kinds.

Doors are the first line of protection on our homes (I am talking physically, again), our vehicles, our places of business, the place where we keep valuables—if you have a safe, it has a door that locks, keeping our valuables inside. Without a gate, on a sheep pen or corral, a wolf or other predator could terrorize the flock while they are sleeping, just by walking through the door. But the door, if there was one, or the shepherd acting as the door, will keep the enemies out.

So, let us look at this for a few minutes. Please turn to II Corinthians 1. This could be point (A) under this number 2 (The Door provides protection), that *He will protect us physically*.

II Corinthians 1:8-10 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

Paul was one who relied on the Door of the sheep as his Protector. Think of all the places that he went throughout his ministry, and all the trials and perils that he went through, and he needed the Door of the sheep for himself to protect him physically.

Let us continue reading in II Corinthians 11 to get another taste of the way that Jesus Christ as the Door of the sheep protected the apostle Paul in his ministry. And, He will do the same for us. In this next passage Paul is comparing himself to other ministers. He says,

II Corinthians 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

How many times did that man die? You have to wonder how many times God had to resurrect him from the beatings that he took. It is incredible to think about.

II Corinthians 11:24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

Can you imagine even one time? Being put up against a pole, with your hands tied, you cannot move, and someone behind you has a leather whip, perhaps with some stones in it, but maybe not, I do not know, but that is what they used on Christ. They were cruel people back then. And being given 39 stripes, each time? He went through that five times!

II Corinthians 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep.

You may have heard Ronny [Graham] talk about “Unbroken,” the 47 days or so that they were in the deep, on a raft. I wonder what Paul was clinging to for a night and a day?

II Corinthians 11:26, 28 In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; . . . besides the other things, [he did not even list them all!] what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

And through all of that Paul trusted in Christ as his door, providing him with protection that he needed against all of the troubles that faced daily. And, He, Christ, is our door in this way too, if we just trust in Him. Paul certainly trusted in Him. He was a man of great faith. He saw it over and over again, as he had to journey around Asia, and southern Europe. God and Christ continually helped him out, acting as his door.

Please turn to II Thessalonians 3. This is point (B) *He will protect us from Satan and his demons.*

II Thessalonians 3:1-3 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly [have free course] and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

So, we know that we have protection from this very powerful unseen spirit being whose influence reaches all over the world. And it combats with our mind on a daily basis—minute by minute basis, trying to tempt us away from the ways of God. But, God is faithful—again we come up with that concept. God is faithful to do this, that He will protect us from this influence that we cannot see.

I am sure that we are terribly unaware of the great conflict that is going on around us all the time. We just cannot see it. God’s angels are about the camp as it were. God’s angels about us, protecting us, the apple of His eye. He has us written in the palms of His hands. He wants to protect us. And so, He surrounds us with His servants, the angels. But there are demons out there who are constantly trying to get at us. We have the illustration in Daniel, of him asking help from God, and God sends an angel to him immediately, Michael the Prince. And Michael came, but the god of this world, in Persia, struggled with Michael for three weeks. And only with the help of Gabriel, another angel, was Satan kept at bay and the message from God was then able to get through to Daniel.

Can you see, or can you imagine that sort of thing, that sort of spiritual battle is going on for you and your benefit? That you send up a prayer to God and it comes back on the wings of an angel, but there are demons out there who do not want it to happen, and they put a fight.

It is an illustration, but I think we understand how it works in our lives. You want something of God, and you ask Him for help. He sends the answer immediately, but the demons start immediately putting roadblocks in your way. And so, it make take three weeks, three months, three years for the answer to finally come to you, because of all these little stumbling blocks they put in your way. God sent it immediately, but the demons do whatever they can to keep us from responding to it in the way that we should.

But, Christ is the Door. He gives us protection against them. He can, with a word, sweep them aside if we show faith in Him as our Door. He will do it. We should be praying on a daily basis for His protection from these very powerful spirit beings who are our *deadly enemies*, who want nothing else than to destroy us and our opportunity for eternal life.

For point (C) please turn to Ezekiel 34. If you know your chapters, this is, “The Bad Shepherds chapter.” The New King James has it, “The Irresponsible Shepherds.” Point (C) is that *He will protect us spiritually from false doctrines and ministers*.

Ezekiel 34:1-5 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.

If you will notice, He was telling them through verse 4 all the things that they did not do. And, those are the very things that define them as shepherds! They did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring back what was driven away, or seek what was lost. These are the things that shepherds are supposed to do. It is on their resume.

But, all they did was see the wool, and the meat out there. And they knew there was money in it, or some other sort of advantage to them. And that is what they were there for—not to help the sheep, but to help themselves.

Ezekiel 34:21-25 "Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—my servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

This, of course, is mainly given to the physical Israelites, but it obviously has a spiritual connection to us. We are spiritual Israel as Galatians 6:16 says. God wants to protect us from the wolves in sheep's clothing who enter the churches of God, or prowl about its periphery. There is an awful lot of that going on these days. We have more and more access to it, and they to us, through the Internet, and all sorts of media. There are people out there who want to take advantage of you.

But, we have the Door of the sheep, and He stands as a bulwark against those false teachers—people who want to lure you into their ways, so that you can line their pockets for whatever it is they want. They want the glory, the fame, or what have you. The Door of the sheep, however, is trying to guard our minds against error, and deception. We need to be cooperating with Him, being very cautious, very careful about what we allow ourselves to read, to observe on the Internet, to hear from these others.

I am not saying that you should just listen to our sermons. That is not what I am saying. I am not saying that we should have a book burning of all the booklets of the other churches of God. That is not at all what I am saying. But, I am saying to *be careful*. There is access to all these things out there, and you need to be thinking about what you are hearing. You need to be deciding as you go through whether it conforms to the Word of God, or not. Do not be fooled by someone's style of delivery. Do not be fooled by honeyed words. Do not be fooled by amazing prophetic predictions that seem so exciting. Do not allow all those little things to get you. Sink your teeth into the meat, and see what is there. Is it good meat? Or, is it rotten?

What are the person's motives? Is he trying to get a following for himself? Or, is he sincerely trying to preach the Word of God? Is he an intellectual? Is he someone who seems like a media superstar? Is he a person who just wants to preach? Or, is he a person who really cares and wants to pastor?

Think about those things, because it is important. You never know what Satan might use. But, we have the Door of the sheep, and if we rely on Him, He can keep us from these things. He can give us the warnings that we need. Just be careful.

Why am I saying this? Why am I emphasizing this so much? It is because it is out there! And, it is out there in force. It is gaining momentum. As we have heard this Feast, Christianity is being undercut, undercut, undercut—every day. Our media is entirely secular. Actually, I wonder sometimes whether they have gone from amoral to immoral? They certainly have in in terms of gay marriage, and that sort. They push the homosexual agenda. But, we have the Door of the sheep. Guard our minds from these things.

Remember, if you go through the New Testament, certainly the epistles of the various apostles, you will find they consistently caution us against false teachers. Every one of them does it. Maybe not in every book, but every author does, saying, "Beware! The wolves are out there! Be careful! Stick with the truth. Be faithful to Him. He will be faithful to you. He will protect you from these things."

3. A door is a separator.

Doors provide a boundary; a mark of delineation between spaces. A door separates inside from outside. A door separates the house from the garage, or the bedroom from the hallway, or, the bedroom from the bathroom. It separates the office from the closet; warehouse from the store; the public area from the private area. You get the idea. There is a door that separates those two areas, and we know that confined into one space is one thing, and confined in the other space is the other thing.

Christ, as the Door, is the One who separates us from the world. Inside is the flock of God. Inside is His church, in which we all have many things in common, particularly Christ Himself. And, outside is all the rest—the world; all our enemies; and whatever else. Christ is the Door that separates us, and provides a boundary between us and all else. We are Christians, are we not? His name separates us from all others. We are those who follow Christ. So, we are different from those who follow

Mohammed; or those who follow the one they think of as Moses; or, those who follow Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism.

We follow Christ, and that separates us from the others. Unfortunately, others have taken His name upon themselves. But, do you know what? If we really follow Christ, we are separated from them too, because the difference becomes obvious. Those who take the name of Christ upon themselves do not act like Christians—certainly not with the test commandment, the Sabbath day. And, here we are, at the Feast of Tabernacles, where are they? This is part of the test commandment too.

So, following Christ provides us separation from the world. Christ, Himself, is the reason for that separation.

Please turn back to John 14 again. I think we are beginning to see just how much we owe to Christ.

John 14:19-24 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

And the thought continues:

John 15:4-5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

So, as long as we are in Christ, abiding and dwelling in Him, continuing in Him, and He abiding and continuing in us, we will be different. We are on a totally different plant, here, as it were. There is no other Vine like the one we have been attached to, and this vine requires us to bear fruit, and that is another sign of separation. If we start bearing the fruit of the Spirit, we are going to be different from all others who consider themselves Christian. Truth be told, if we start keeping His Word, we are going to be *radically* different, because the way of Jesus Christ is totally opposite the way of this world. And, it is Christ who is that difference.

As Joe Baity pointed out in his sermonette on Friday, referring to II Corinthians 6, what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? There is nothing in them where there is any point of contact. They are total opposites.

God tells them, if we would go further in that chapter, come out from among them and be separate, and that line of demarcation begins and ends with Jesus Christ. He is the Door of the sheep.

You can see this also in Galatians 5. Here it mentions that we have God's Spirit, that is what is in us—Christ, and the Father living in us through that spirit. And we see the conflict, here, in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:16-18-21 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [And then he begins to show us the difference.] Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness [licentiousness], idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These are the things that we should have; the things we are producing by being attached to the vine:

Galatians 5:22-25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

So, those not only have the spirit, but use it.

So, here in these few verses we see these opposing sides in this struggle, and we can see, if we would compare those lists, they are polar opposites. Pitted on one side is the flesh, with its slavish devotion to human nature inspired by Satan; while on the other is the converted mind, led by God's Spirit, which should be equally devoted to living God's way.

Those two natures that we still have within us are at war one against the other. It is Christ, by His Spirit, who provides the strength and grace to help us as new creations to pull away and separate from that old man.

4. A door, when open, is a sign of fellowship.

When a door is open to us, it is welcoming. Remember I mentioned that feng shui—make sure the door opens inwardly, because it invites the good energy. Well, in a similar way, though not really comparing them, Christ is that open door that provides us fellowship. I know that here at the Feast, as we walk around the corridors, we usually peek inside, and if it is somebody we know, we greet them, and they invite us in. That happened a few nights ago with us and the Eggers, on Wednesday evening after the first service. They had their door open, and we popped in for a little while and had some nice fellowship with them. I am sure that you all do that all the time here at the Feast of Tabernacles as well.

That is the kind of thing that Christ has done for us—He has opened the door to fellowship. And, it is not just with Himself, but it is with the Father, and it reaches down to each other. It is not just that He opens the door to Himself, and the Father, but our whole family in the church is able to fellowship with one another.

I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful [there is that idea again], by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

So first of all, by the faithfulness of God in calling us, we have fellowship with Christ Himself. We all know John 6:44, which tells us that the Father has drawn us to Christ so that we could hear the

truth, and believe it, and accept Christ as our Savior. As we saw earlier in point number one, this fellowship with the Son provides the access we need to all those things that will give us salvation.

Turn to I John 1. This is an amazing opening to this short epistle.

I John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

That is because that access has been opened. The door to fellowship has been opened to Christ, the Father, and to each—what joy that brings! Once we are in communication with the Almighty God of heaven and earth, real understanding and growth in His character, and eternal life in the Kingdom of God commences. We share that growth, that understanding, that path with many others in the church. Romans 12 shows us a little bit of that. This next passage is the simplified version of what we find in I Corinthians 12.

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Look down the row, or in the row in front of you—do you think that you would know that person except that Christ has opened up fellowship with him or her? Probably not. Many, of course, are related. But there are many in this room that would never have known each other except that they were both brought into the church by the Father through Christ. And now, we have fellowship with one another, and we have all been placed into one body—the body of Christ. It says that we are members, not just of the body, but members of one another. Have you ever really thought of that? We are not just parts in the body of Christ, but we are joined one to another in that body; not just little individuals, but we are all part of that same thing, and we have links—joints as he puts it in another place—with each other.

Paul is trying to get across that in the body of Christ, we are so united by God as to be mutually dependent on one another. As one cell all by itself would soon die, we would soon die as one cell by itself—one member of the body, supposedly, all by itself. We need the fellowship of each other in the body. Each person in the body renders necessary service to the others. What one is, and what one does is helpful to the continued existence and usefulness of the others. It is a symbiotic relationship. What one person does, if he does it just for himself, means nothing. But the things that we do in the body go beyond ourselves. They help the others, and because we help the others, the others are able to do something that helps us. We are dependent upon one another.

So, in that way it is not truly possible in the least to be an independent Christian. It does not work. The Door of the sheep has purposely made us part of His flock, and in the other illustration, part of His body for our individual good, to bring us to salvation, and for the good of the whole flock, in bringing about His purpose and plan.

So, we need one another. There needs to be a church. There needs to be groups—congregations—to help us all along the way. And it is the Door of the sheep that has brought us into His fold.

5. A door is a means to go in and out.

Think about it: If a door does not open to allow any kind of access, or egress, it is essentially a wall, not a door. If it does not have hinges to allow it to be opened and closed, it is not a door. It is fixed in place, people who are inside cannot get out, and the people who are outside, cannot get in. But, Christ has hinges, as it were. He allows us to go in and out. Sheep do not remain in a fold all the time. They would soon die in there because as David mentioned, they would eat everything in sight, taking the grass all the way down to the roots, and it would be a dust bowl, and they would die. Where would they get their water? Eventually there would only be sheep carcasses. They have to be able to go out. The shepherd takes them out to pasture for a time, and then brings them back in.

Now, this going in and out is a symbol of our daily life. It is our walk with our Shepherd. By following Him, we can go safely and securely about our daily activities, living godly in this present age.

By following Christ's lead, we can find pasture, which is a symbol not just of food to graze on, but of all the good and spiritual things that the food produces. So, it is not just the food, but also what the food produces. And what it is supposed to produce is fit, healthy, and strong Christians. Going in and out is the way that it happens.

Please turn to I Peter 2. I want you to notice what Peter, here in I Peter 2, says. Then we will go to I John and see what he says. These two places are where Christ is presented as our example to follow. We are following Him as our example.

I Peter 2:21-23 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. [We can go in and out behind Him.] Who committed no sin, nor was deceit [guile] found in His mouth." [This is the example we are to follow.] Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

Keep this in mind as you turn to I John 2.

I John 2:5-6 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. [If we are keeping God's Word, and being perfected.] He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Did you notice what these two apostles linked following the example to? Peter, in the first one, linked it to suffering. He said, "Follow Christ's example in the bad times, in the conflicts of this world." John linked walking with Him with keeping His Word. I think what we have here in the two epistles are two different ways in which we go in and out. Or maybe, we have the two ways that we go in and out. These two things parallel going in and out as (1) keeping God's Word, which is following Him internally. It is what we do in us. And (2) the suffering that Peter brought out—suffering patiently—is how we follow Him when we are outside in the world, because that is what happens when we go outside. We are exposed to all of those problems that are out there, all the other ways, all the temptations. We just have to kind of take it, but we take it in the same way that Christ

took it. He did not revile. He took it patiently. He did not use guile, He did not try to revile in return, or any of those other things. He endured patiently while He was in the world.

So, we can follow Him anywhere we go by the strength and help that He, as the Door, continually provides us. And it says in John 10:10,

John 10:10b I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

So, by Him, by the Door of the sheep, no matter what the conditions are around us, whether we are out in the world, or whether we are in our own chambers, we can have an abundant life through Him. And then we will certainly have the abundant life in the Kingdom of God.

Let us conclude in Revelation 14. We read this in my first sermon. These are the 144,000, the firstfruits of the Lamb. John says,

Revelation 14:1, 4 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. . . . These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

As mentioned in my previous sermon, these firstfruits of God are shown following Him wherever He goes. It is clear that this is not a new thing to them. They are already, and have been for a long time in the habit of following Him in everything, because they have made it their way of life in this age right now. It is this hallmark, other than the other ones that we see, but for our purposes today, it is this hallmark that sets them apart. They are tenacious, dogged followers of Christ their shepherd—the Door of the sheep.

They have relied upon Him as the Door of the sheep throughout their converted lives, and they want no other life than to follow Him for all eternity.

This is what awaits us through the Door of the sheep.