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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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JOHN 10 v 9

"I am the door: by Me if any man enter
in, he shall be saved, and shall
go in and out, and find pasture"

The figurative and parabolical Scriptures are very instructive and beautiful. The Lord uses such language in condescension to the necessity of His people who do not know naturally very much. This figure of a door tells us plainly, though it be but a parable, that there is only one entrance into the kingdom of God. It may have reference to the conclusion of the preceding chapter. The blind man's eyes had been opened, and the Pharisees, the rulers, knew that if the miracle were true and known as being performed by the Man they hated without a cause, it might spread His religion and they, having questioned the man who was blind, put him to the test more than once. He, by grace, which at the moment he did not know was grace, taught them - "Dost thou teach us?" - and they excommunicated him, cast him out of the national church, out of the religion which they had. And the Lord said "For judgment I am come into this world that they which see not might see and that they which see might be made blind". May not such a judgment fall on any of us. Some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words and said unto Him "Are we blind also?" And Jesus said unto them "If ye were blind ye should have no sin, but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth in you. Verily, verily I say unto you he that entereth not by the door into the sheep fold but climbeth up some other way the same is a thief and a robber". These men had apparently climbed into the kingdom in their blindness, and it mattered not to them how they got in. That is the religion of today; may it not be ours. We are no better than any blind person in regard of God, and if we do know anything and have entered into the kingdom by the only door, we owe everlasting thanks to the God of all grace. The sheep know the shepherd's voice. In the east the shepherd goes before the flock. It has been done and it may still be done in some parts of England. I remember, when I was quite a young man,

visiting some relatives in Lancashire, seeing a flock of sheep preceded by the shepherd, I said to him, "Would they follow me?" "Try it Sir," he said. He said, "they know not the voice of strangers; they would not follow you. They would not follow me, but they know the voice of the shepherd." But the Pharisees did not understand the parable. No, God must give us understanding if we are ever to have it and live. "Then Jesus said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

To Nicodemus, Christ said "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". A very great, a very solemn Scripture. Such is the blindness and deadness of men to God and His things that without the new birth they cannot see. There is no kingdom beside that which is before them, and a part of which they may be. But the new birth is the impartation of another life, another light, and another eye, yea and another ear. I am the door of life to the dead, that is to say, when the life of Christ is in a sinner, he enters into the presence of God in a way in which he has never before entered into it. Let us take that first. Divine life ushers its possessor into the presence of God as it never was entered into before. Not with comfort, not with joy; he enters into it in some real, true apprehension of who and what God is. It is no notion, no religion to play with, but a solemn entrance into the presence of God, as He reveals Himself, not as men find out. All true knowledge of God is by Jesus Christ. All real entrance into the particular presence of God is in and by Jesus Christ. There may be many even in this day, there may be some in this chapel now, who have entered into a natural religion, and they read in the Romans the eternal Godhead and power of Jehovah in creation and they feel themselves to be guilty if they do not acknowledge Him by His creation work. Yet such do not like to retain God in their knowledge, because it troubles them. They can see that there is something in God which, if they knew, would kill them and they are afraid. The same God, who is seen in His eternal power and Godhead in creation, is seen in Christ and when men see that, and partake of the life of Christ, they enter into God's presence which they have not known before. By that word I used

"the presence of God" I mean His presence in salvation, His presence as a gracious God. Naturally, He is present everywhere, and we are all near to Him as His creatures. That is His omnipresence; you cannot hide yourself from Him. If you say you will take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there, God will be. If you say the darkness shall cover you, then that very darkness shall be light to you in the omniscience of Jehovah. But this entrance into the kingdom, into the church, and by that I do not mean simply one particular congregation or church but the whole church of God spread over the world. Entering into that kingdom there is the high privilege, unknown yet in its comforting blessedness, of approaching Jehovah, and they approach Him as Christ gives them the grace of repentance. He is exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins". Well, that is a great thing, Christ giving repentance, Christ giving a sinner His life, and that life so operating in his conscience, in his heart, in his understanding, in his affections, that he says - "What a lost soul I am"

"I am the door". He enters into God's presence as did the poor man whose eyes Christ had opened. Christ, after his excommunication by the rulers, met him and said "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He met a living soul, but ignorant for the moment; He met a poor outcast. That is always what He does in His love. He met him and said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" If I were to come and say to most of you individually - Do you believe on the Son of God? you might not like it. What, ask us such a rudimentary question? Of course, we do. Ah, said this living man, "Who is He Lord that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." If you have faith you have a grand object to see. If you are not seeing Him now, you will see Him, and you will just follow this man - "And he worshipped Him", and that is what you will do. Kings, authorities, pleasures, world, pride, self, all things in you and about you will just go, die, and in your manner and measure you will enter into the experience of John as related in the Revelation "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead", and then you will live, for He will speak to you. Christ is the door to that worship.

Worship God then in His Son
There's He's love and there alone

What a wonder, some of us have worshipped Him in Christ. Blessed be God for that. I have worshipped Him in His Son, have had glimpses of Him and have died to myself every time. It is a wonderful, beautiful religion.

He enters in some way and degree into the gospel, the glorious gospel of God, the everlasting gospel. Part of it is this - "With the Lord there is mercy". "With the Lord there is forgiveness that He may be feared". "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin". That is wonderful, very remarkable, that God has forgiveness in His heart, in His hand, even in the heart and hand of Jesus Christ. Poor sinner, if you enter into the kingdom by Christ the only door, certainly you will see that sooner or later, and O, what a ground for you to stand on. Forgiveness? You cannot count your sins, can you? Neither will you be able fully to reckon up the goodness, the grace, the wisdom, the love, and the merit of God in the forgiveness of all your sins. "I am the door".

I am the door into everlasting life. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish". They are in My Father's hand and no man can pluck them out of that hand. They are in My Father's hand in choosing them. They are in My hand as their Mediator and Saviour and no man can pluck them out of My hand. A double safety, so to put it; the Father's hand in choosing them and the Son's hand as their Mediator and their Saviour.

All this made a great division among the Jews. There was no man in that day, and there has been no man since that day, so disputed about, and so murmured against, as the Lord Jesus. Some of them said, half believing as it were - "Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" One might have whispered in the ear of all these poor people - "Would the devil do it if he could? He has no kindness in him". Jesus loves His people and says - Now enter into the kingdom by Me. What next? "He shall be saved". He enters into salvation. "By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" That is, faith is the gift of God. Grace saves and faith brings that

salvation into the conscience, A great point that. "He shall be saved". Saved from himself, saved from his sins, washed from them, purged from his guilt, the blood of Jesus purifying his conscience. "He shall be saved." Well that is a great thing is it not? A poor sinner who cannot cease condemning himself, who constantly finds himself wrong. Divine discoveries of himself make himself most loathsome in his own eyes, hateful in his own feelings. O, no natural man can enter into it, how loathsome a moral upright man comes to feel himself to be. The chief of sinners, yet so moral in his character, so beautiful in his character that nobody can find fault with him, yet, under the light of divine grace, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as that Christian man grows in years, he grows in knowledge of himself. He comes again and again to say with Job - "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes". You would not say this to your intimate friends but you say it before God. Never mind what you may appear to be to men, honestly you are before the Lord, saying "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes". A very positive religion this is. There is a great deal that is negative in us, but there is a positive side to religion, God's religion.

"He shall go in" by Me. He shall enter into the presence of God by Me. God will deal with him in Me, and he shall deal with God in Me. The Father and the sinner shall meet in Me. Even as righteousness and peace kissed each other, as mercy and truth met in everlasting amity, in Christ, so the sinner and God meet together, and they love each other. It is more than you can say when you get this experience, more than you are able to express. He says - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". And the drawing may be through many difficulties and troubles and tribulation, many temptations and sorrows, but it comes to this, he is drawn by the Father to the Son and he is drawn by the Son to Calvary and at Calvary his load falls off his back, his comforts abound. He finds there the river of pleasures which is at God's right hand, and there, in the still waters of divine mercy and peace and truth he would like to live all his days. But no, he shall go in and enjoy himself. O the sweet days some of us have had, yea sometimes it is reduced to hours and at other times it may be just like a flash, come and gone at once, but still a man goes in. David went in and sat

before the Lord and said "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto?". So you say, "Lord is it possible? Why hast Thou done this to me?" You would object your sin if love would let you. You would object your unworthiness if grace would let you. But no, love conquers, love dissolves, love removes legality, love takes away prejudice against God. Love does it all and you say the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of love, a very beautiful religion. O, the man is at rest; Jesus gives him rest. Rest from sin's dominion, rest from a restless disposition. Rest in the atonement, rest in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, real rest. What a great thing it is to have our heart drawn out and to be attentive to the things of God, but He has to give it. Not a pleasant thing, when you have enjoyed God's favour and found it to be better than life, to go away from that sweet experience into some sad affliction, into some desertion of God, into some temptation of the devil, into some bitter experience of your native vileness and infidelity and lust. This is very painful, but here it is, he shall go out from that rich experience, from that divine presence. This makes room for a fresh discovery of God in Christ and that short Psalm which I read, the sweetness and power of which I, myself, have had some little experience. O, what a great thing it is. You have gone out, and sometimes you may have been out so long that you begin to wonder if you ever were in. Think of John the Baptist, what a sight of Christ he had, what a preacher of Christ he was made. "Behold the Lamb of God". Twice he said it. He was there, standing on the shore, after having baptised Christ, and seeing Him, he said "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world". "Behold the Lamb of God". John saw Him. John's preaching offended Herod and Herod beheaded him. John was put into prison before that for his faithfulness. He went out, and it would seem that Christ, for the time being, left him there unvisited, unspoken to, and the darkness of his mind rose, and became thick, and he wondered if he had made a mistake, if his preaching had been wrong, if his testimony had been a deception. Go, said John, to his disciples, go to the Lord Jesus, go to the master whom I have preached, and about whom I am now wondering, and ask Him - "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" Do you know what that means, have I made a mistake? Was that sweet experience that I had false? Was the hope that I built on Christ delusion? And Jesus received these two enquiring disciples of John

and before speaking to them about the message they brought, He worked miracles, raised the dead, fed the hungry, healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, and preached the gospel. Then said He - "Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, and blessed is He who", having gone out for a time, "is not offended in Me". Ah He is worthy of all the trust you can put in Him, all the confidence you can have in Him, all the love you may ever feel to Him; it will all fall short of His worthiness. Honours rest on Him. O, my friends, Christ is kind when He lets the devil come after you, because you are driven out of yourself. Christ is kind when darkness is made His pavilion round about Him so that you do not see Him, because you may more earnestly enquire after Him, that you may say - "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God." Christ could not be unkind to a sheep. He may come into the fold and see a sheep cast. You know what that means; a sheep that is cast on its back cannot raise itself, cannot rise, and if unattended by the shepherd it must die; so, at least, I have been informed. Now what does the shepherd do? He puts it right, puts it again on its feet. So you may be cast in your feelings, in your experience, in your knowledge, in your confidence, in your hope, in your love, and cannot get right, cannot get on your feet again. What does the shepherd do? He comes and puts the sheep on its feet. He loves the sheep. They are in His hand. O, poor sinner wanting Christ, go on seeking Him. "I will be found of them" He said. When? "When they search for Me with all their heart" Seek the Lord and He will be found of you.

"I am the door", entrance, the only place of ingress. When you were to enter the building this evening for the service, you found the door open. You had not to climb up to the window and in some other way get in; there was the door. And so, when a sinner is to enter into the kingdom, there is only one door. There is the sheep-fold in the wilderness. The fold is hedged and there is a door, and the shepherd stands there and, as it were, they go by him, through him, into the sheep-fold. Says the Apostle Paul in the same vein of truth, "For through Him", that is the door, "we both", Jew and Gentile, "have access unto the Father by the Spirit".

Now this door is also the shepherd. I am the Shepherd, and the sheep know His voice and they follow Him. You know what that means

who have heard Him speak. The holy solemnity, the sweet effect, the melting influence of His divine voice, you have understood a little. And He may say to you - "O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely". I remember being astonished out of measure when that came to me, when I could not help saying, "is it possible that there is that in me that answers to a comely countenance, to a sweet voice?" You may feel the same. What, Christ want to see me? What, Christ counts my voice to be sweet? What is it? The voice of prayer, the voice of praise, the voice that arises in your heart out of His lovingkindness made known to you. So, dear friends, we have before us this wonderful truth, the wonderful character of Jesus in this figure, "I am the door" into the living church of God, into the blessed fold of the Lord Jesus. Sheep, bought with blood. "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood".

Now these hints may be a help to some of you. I am glad to have been able to come and speak them to you. In a sense this is a very poor opening to me, for today I enter the fifty third year of being with you, but I could not be with you this morning, much as I wanted to be. But, considering how ill I was in the pulpit last Wednesday and that my strength was burned up with a high temperature, it perhaps is something remarkable that I am here now. May the Lord look upon us as a little body and cause us to know more of this door. Never think of being assured of salvation but by entering by this door, and do not nourish expectations of heaven if you have not entered in by this door. Every blessing, every good thing, every touch of mercy, every beam of love, every intimation of an interest in God, must be had, will be had, can only be had, by entering by this door. Think of it. God set our hearts and minds more and more on this, and if He will spare me a little longer to preach, may I more and more enter into this, and find Paul's determination in my own soul in some little measure - "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified".

AMEN.