

THE MAN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD - PART 2

“I Am The Door”

Dr. John Allan Lavender

John 10:1-9

NOTE: This sermon was not part of the original series preached in 1956. Rev. Lorton Heusel dealt with the text on Jan 8, 1956 as part of a pulpit exchange. It was on that occasion that Jo Linda Lavender, age 6, gave her heart to Jesus. “At first I was disappointed I wasn’t preaching when she made that decision,” Dr. Lavender confessed, “but later, I was overcome with joy that our little family of three was now complete in Christ. After all, that’s what really matters!” As it turned out, John would not be preaching when his two other children came to the Lord either. He first preached this sermon on October 1, 1972. It is included here to complete the “I am’s” of Jesus and as an illustration of later Lavender.

I am indebted to Roy and Revel Hession, co-authors of a potent little book entitled *We Would See Jesus*, for some of the thoughts I want to share with you this morning. They point out that:

“The very fact the Lord Jesus said ‘I am the door’ presupposes the presence of a wall, or barrier, which excludes us from God.”

And, as each of us has learned from painful experience, such a wall does, in fact, exist.

A WORD ABOUT THE WALL

The Bible names this barrier. It calls it sin and informs us in Isaiah 59:2 that sin results in separation from God. Sin—that prideful, willful determined independence which says, “I’ll be my own God...plan my own life...go my own way”—Sin, and the many sins which issue from it, always build a wall between us and God. And we remain outside that wall until we enter the one door through that wall which God has provided for us. The Door Named Jesus.

Again and again, as I talk with folks about their need of a Savior and ask them if they are a Christian, I hear them say something like, “I think I’ve always been a Christian.” Well, the truth is, no one has always been a Christian. Rather, each of us has always been a sinner. And we remain a sinner, separated from God, until we walk through The Door Named Jesus to be saved by Grace.

Now, it's important for us to remember this separating power of sin is not limited to those who are unsaved-sinners. It's a problem for saved-sinners, too. Those of us who have come to God through The Door Named Jesus can, and often do, erect additional walls which shut us off from Him. That does not mean we lose our position as children of God, but it does mean we lose the power which comes from close fellowship with God. As a result, we flounder and fail when we should go on to higher ground.

There are other areas of rebellion besides “the far country” of original guilt. There are the smaller, more subtle but nonetheless real “far countries” called

jealousy,
resentment,
bitterness,
self-pity,
pride,
greed,
lust,
judgementalism,
finger-pointing,
criticism.

And, out there is a mighty famine which leaves us “in want” even as it did the Prodigal.

Is there one saved-sinner within the sound of my voice this morning who has not known a coldness of heart toward the Heavenly Father? Is there one among us who, from time to time, has not suffered from a lack of interest in reading the bible or a reluctance to pray? Is there one among us who has not suffered an accumulation of defeats in various areas of life because rebellion has put a barrier between us and our God? And I say to my fellow sinner-saints, as I do to you who are pre- Christians, there is only one solution to the problem. There is only one way through the barrier sin builds. There is only one way to salvation for sinners and cleansing renewal for sinner-saints. And that is by going through The Door Named Jesus.

A WORD ABOUT THE DOOR

So, let's talk about Jesus for a moment. And the first thing I want to say is that

JESUS IS AN OPEN DOOR.

Sin separates us from God, but Jesus is the way through to God. And while He is the only way through—thank God He is an open way. A wide-open way.

“Through Him”, said Paul, “we have access to the Father” (Ephs.2:18).

“He”, said the writer to the Hebrews, “is a new and living way” (Heb.10:20).

Jesus is an open door to God!

Before Jesus came, folks could only think of God as a stranger, at best, and an enemy at worst. This is dramatically portrayed in John 9 which records the events immediately preceding this pronouncement by Jesus that He is “the door”.

Turn to chapter 9 and follow along as I capsule the events for you. In the early verses we're told Jesus met a man, born blind, spat on the ground, mixed clay with the spittle, anointed the man's eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. John 9:7 says:

“He went...and washed...and came back seeing.”

Wouldn't you think everybody in town would jump up and down for joy because of this? Well, they didn't. Their view of God had been so twisted and distorted by the religious establishment with their “God In A Box Of Rigid Legalisms”, the common folks couldn't imagine God doing something kind like that. He was a Not-So-Friendly Stranger whom they had to appease, rather than the kind and loving Father Jesus revealed Him to be.

And so, because of their fear, they put this poor fellow through an inquisition. It was against the

Rabbinical law to do any kind of work on the Sabbath and that's what Jesus had done. He had made clay! He had also opened a blind man's eyes, but the Pharisees didn't care about that. They couldn't rejoice in that. All they cared about was this minor infraction of a rule which wasn't even God's Law, but one of their own.

And so, instead of congratulating this fellow on his new-found sight, they put him on trial.

John 9:17-24 records how they pressured and badgered him trying to get him to say Jesus had not performed this healing. Instead, the man insisted that this man called Jesus, who was a prophet, (no, he added, *more* than a prophet, a Man from God!) had restored his sight. Look at the progression of his perception.

“The *man* called Jesus” (verse 11),
“who is ‘*a prophet*’” (verse 17),
“no”, he added, “more than that” (verse 33),
a man “*from God*” had restored his sight.

And that did it! When the man said Jesus had to be from God to heal someone like himself who was congenitally blind—“blind from birth”—do you know what the Pharisees did? Look at the last part of verse 34: “They cast him out.”

They excommunicated him. That's the true meaning of the phrase “cast out”: Excommunicate. So that's what they did to this fellow. They cut him off from the House of Israel. He was excluded from the society of so-called devout and decent souls.

What did Jesus do when He learned what had happened? Look at verse 35:

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He found him,
He said to him, ‘Do you believe on the Son of God?’ He answered,
‘Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?’ Jesus said to him, (and
note the calm, clear, unequivocating nature of Christ's claim to be

the Son of God), ‘You have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you.’”

The once-blind man said,

“Lord, I believe. And he worshiped Him” (John 9:38).

What a wonderful transformation!

TWO HEALINGS

This man born blind was given two healings. His physical eyes were opened. He could see. For the first time in his life, he could really see!

But even more wonderful than that, his spiritual eyes were also opened. The system shut him out.

The Savior took him in. The law had been a shut door, forbidding him. Jesus was an open door, inviting him.

And I say to you, my friend, that door remains open to this day. The only barrier between you and God is your sin. But what appear to be obstacles—your coldness, your unbelief, your sin—are the very things which qualify you to enter the door. Jesus is a door for sinners.

“I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners”,
he said (Mark 2:17).

You cannot suppress or conquer sin by yourself. But you *can* judge it as sin. You *can* bring it to Jesus. And when you do, you discover that what, from a distance appears to be a forbidding, all-excluding wall has a door punched through: A Door Named Jesus. And if you go through Jesus, you will find peace with God. Praise His precious name! Jesus is an open door.

Also I want to say

JESUS IS A DOOR OPEN ON STREET LEVEL.

That is to say, Jesus is a door open for the sinner *as* a sinner, for the failure *as* a failure.

The Door Named Jesus is not just for “good folk” who manage by valiant effort to clean up their lives and get things in apple-pie order. No. No. No. The door is open on street level so we can enter just as we are. I as I am. You as you are.

I love that old hymn:

“Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot
For Thee alone canst cleanse each spot
Oh Lamb of God I come.”

Human pride would have us try to cleanse each spot on our own, instead of letting Jesus do it. In other words, human pride would have us raise the door a bit as if to suggest we are capable of coming to God on our own.

But it's raising the door which keeps us out. All we do is put it out of reach.

Do you see it, my friend? Your self-effort to clean up your life and get things shipshape before you come to the Savior actually keeps you from walking through The Door Named Jesus because it's down on street level. Your desire to become better on your own deifies you and denies you salvation.

The door is on street level. The level of your shame. The level of your sin. The level of your failure. The level of your doubt. The level of your despair.

All God requires is your willingness to admit that that's where you are: on street level! Along with the rest of us sinners. For then, and only then, can you come by faith to God through Jesus who is the door. A door open on street level. The level of human need.

And to my fellow Christians let me say this. The temptation to put the door somewhat higher

than street level is as self-defeating for saved-sinners as it is for those who have never known the Savior.

We know when we break fellowship with God. We know when we fail our Lord. We know what it's like to be a saved-sinner. But, if we feel God can't renew a failure as a failure, then we'll try to make ourselves better on our own. And when we attempt it, we put the door beyond our reach.

For Jesus is an open door on street level. The level of saved-sinners who also need to go through The Door Named Jesus to find cleansing and forgiveness.

The Door Named Jesus is available to the sinner as a sinner, and to the failing saint as a failing saint! The glorious good news of the gospel is that help and hope are immediately available to all of us as we are and where we are. All we have to do is go for The Door Named Jesus. Whether we be Christian or non-Christian. Whether we be an unsaved-sinner or a sinner-saint. The solution is the same:

We must confess our sin as sin.

We must turn away from it, that is, repent.

We must walk by faith to God through Jesus.

Praise the Lord, Jesus is an open door and, what is more, He is an open door on street level. On the level of our need.

And then may I say Jesus is

A LOW AND NARROW DOOR.

The Bible repeatedly mentions a most devastating and debilitating disease called “The Stiff Neck.”

It is the scripture's figurative way of describing pride and the unwillingness of pride to bow low in true repentance.

You see, our flesh is willing to repent (or apologize), provided we can make it seem all we are guilty of is an unfortunate slip. That on a particular occasion we just “acted out of character with

our true self.” But that's one of Satan's most diabolical deceptions. We haven't acted *out* of character; what we've done is reveal our *true* character. And what we really need to say to God and others and ourself is “Now you see me as I really am! Now I've revealed my true form.”

If our neck is stiff and our will is unbroken, if we are unprepared to acknowledge our sin as sin, then we can never enter The Door Named Jesus. We'll hit our head on the lintel. For Jesus is a low door. And we must bow low in true repentance before we can enter in.

We must also understand that Jesus is a narrow door. He, Himself, said it:

“Narrow is the gate that leads to life” (Matt. 7:14).

As the Hessions point out,

“At first the road to the cross seems broad, and we can all go together. But as we get nearer to the place of repentance, the path gets narrower. There is not room for us to get lost in the crowd. And when, at last, we come to the One who is the door Himself, there is not room even for two. If (we) are going to enter (we) will have to stand before Jesus alone.”

We don't like to do that! We don't like to be the only one to repent. The devil tells us the folks all about us—especially some of those Christian folk—are just as bad as we. Maybe worse. He tries to make us unwilling to repent unless others repent first. But we'll never get through the door that way.

You must face Jesus alone, my friend. As if you were the only sinner on earth. For Jesus is a personal Savior for a personal sinner and the only way to God is through that low and narrow door, The Door Named Jesus. You must come to Him as you are, and you must face your need alone.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOING THROUGH THE DOOR

Ever so quickly, let me say a word about the blessings which will abound to you if you go through The Door Named Jesus. Not the least of these is that

YOU FIND SALVATION.

Look at our text—John 10:9—and keep it in front of you as we close:

“I am the door: if anyone enters by Me, *he will be saved.*”

That's your basic need, isn't it! To be saved! After you've paraded all your good deeds before God and have come to the end of them, after every human prop has been swept away and you have nowhere else to turn, after the legalistic religious systems have shut you out and there is no hope, then all you can do is cry with the Philippian jailer,

“What must I do to be saved?”

And what does Jesus say in response to your cry?

“I am the door: if anyone enters by me, *he will be saved.*”

At once. Forever. Altogether. The world shuts you out. Jesus takes you in. Praise His Name!

When you go through The Door Named Jesus

YOU ALSO RECEIVE SECURITY

and the right and privilege or, as our text says, to

“*go in and out*” (John 10:9b).

I've been teaching My Bethel class how knowledge of the historical situation surrounding a passage of scripture casts a good deal of light on it. This particular text is a case in point. When Jesus spoke of freedom to “go in and out” unmolested, He used a well-known Hebrew phrase which describes a life which is safe and secure.

When people can “go in and out” without fear, their country is at peace. When people can “go in

and out” without fear, the forces of law and order are in control. When people can “go in and out” without fear, they enjoy security for themselves and for their families.

The Book of Numbers describes a true leader of a nation as one who is able to
“lead (the people) out and bring them in” (27:19).

The Book of Deuteronomy says the man who is obedient to God is blessed
“when he comes in and blessed when he goes out” (28:6).

The Psalmist declares the faithfulness of God by saying He will watch over
“our going out and our coming in” (Psalm 121:8).

The phrase “go in and out” was fraught with meaning for Jews, and it means a lot to us Christians, too. For when we come to God through Jesus, we discover He is not a prison door; He is the door to freedom!

JESUS PROVIDES BOTH ACCESS AND EGRESS

Through Jesus, we have access to safety. Inside the door, we find reassurance and rest, fellowship and instruction, a sense of belonging and joy.

But Jesus is also a door of egress to service. Outside the door, we have the privilege of participating in the building of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men. Outside the door, we can share in the progress of God's work on earth.

So The Door Named Jesus is the door to true freedom. It is the door which gives meaning to life.

For, through Jesus, we are free to go out or come in—as the need may be—with absolute security.

And then, praise God, by going through the door, you not only find salvation and have security but also

YOU RECEIVE SUSTENANCE.

Look at what our text says:

“We shall ‘go in and out *and find pasture*’” (John 10:9c).

Spiritual food is found through Christ, in Christ, and around Christ.

But, more often than not, sustenance is found in the act of serving...of going forth to meet the needs of those about us.

Some of you are afraid to teach because you think you don't know enough. But the truth is the teacher learns by teaching.

Some of you are afraid to step out by faith and test the promises of God by tithing; but the truth is, the giver receives by giving.

Some of you are afraid to witness. You say you are not sure enough of your own faith. But the truth is the witness is fortified by witnessing. By sharing with another, your own faith becomes more real.

It's a law of life, you see.

“The measure you give is the measure you get” (Luke 6:38).

And, oh, how I wish each of you would learn to live by that law. It is in going out to feed that you are fed. It is going out to teach that you are taught. It is going out to bless that you are blessed. It is going out to give that you receive.

“I am the door: if anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go
in and out, *and find pasture*.”

Your salvation...your security...your sustenance are all gained by going through The Door Named Jesus.

A WORD TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

And then this final word to those still outside the door.

If you are away from God this morning—separated by the wall named sin—and long to be with Him, to know Him and enjoy peace with Him, may I say the way to Him is simple and clear.

You do not have to be *like* Jesus. You only have to come *through* Jesus. God has given you a door. Not an example! But, having provided a door, He means for you to use it.

When Jesus advertised the fact “I am the door”, He also announced the most liberal invitation imaginable:

“If *anyone* enters by me, he will be saved.”

Note the universality of that. “If *anyone—anyone—anyone* enters by me, he will be saved.”

It's entering that counts. It's entering that makes the difference. It's entering that seals the saving act.

Those who reap the benefits of salvation, security and sustenance are not mere observers. Nor do they just knock at the door. Or sit down in front of the door. Or march back and forth before the door. They go *through* the door. They *enter in* by confession and faith.

They are no better than those who are still outside the door. They have merely met the one qualification God has set. The invitation is to “anyone”. The qualification is “who enters”.

A tourist was traveling through the Holy Land and came upon a shepherd who was gathering his sheep. It was evening and he was collecting them in a sheepfold on a near-by hillside. The sheepfold consisted of a square plot of ground enclosed by a wall about three feet high. On one side, there was a small opening and sheep passed through that one, narrow way.

The tourist noticed there wasn't any door to guard the opening and inquired of his guide what

happened at night. How were wild beasts kept from destroying the flock? The guide replied, “The shepherd is the door. At night, he lies across the opening and nothing can get in or out except over him.”

Likewise, my friend, Jesus is the open door to everlasting life. Through Him, you have salvation:

“If anyone enters by me, *he will be saved*”

Through Him, you have security:

“If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved *and will go in and out.*”

Through Him, you have sustenance:

“If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and go in and out *and find pasture.*”

This morning I invite you to The Door Named Jesus. He is a low and narrow door. But, He is an open door. A door open on street level. The level of your need. Will you enter?