

# 'The Shadow of the Cross' ch.10:11-42

by Charles Alexander

---

*In 'The Shadow of the Cross', Charles Alexander explores the profound implications of Jesus' impending sacrifice and the unity of the Trinity in the atonement process.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 82:6, Jeremiah 23:5, Matthew 11:27, Luke 19:41, John 5:23, John 10:27, John 10:30, John 10:36, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 1:3

**Topics:** "Divine Authority", "The Cross"

---

## Description

Charles Alexander delves into the profound events surrounding Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication, highlighting the escalating enmity and the clear declaration of His divinity, leading to the ultimate rejection by the Jewish leaders. The shadow of the cross looms as Jesus proclaims His eternal Sonship and unity with the Father, emphasizing the necessity of faith in His works and the eternal security of His sheep. The discourse culminates in a dramatic confrontation where Jesus asserts His deity, prompting the Pharisees to attempt to stone Him, but His divine timing prevents their actions, setting the stage for the impending sacrifice on the Cross.

---

## Transcript

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS (John ch.10 continued)

The shadow of the cross is already falling across the Saviour's pathway as He moves majestically through the prophecies to which He gives voice and meaning in those closing months of His ministry. He travels to Jerusalem in the midst of the Feast of Tabernacles (chapter 7). There is a rising tide of enmity and hatred as His testimony to Israel reaches its climax. Yet the enemies are baffled in all attempts to arrest or kill. At the Feast of Tabernacles they sought to take Him (chap. 7:32) but the arresting officers were strangely unable to carry out their orders

(see verses 44-46).

The next day He appears in the temple area and speaks freely in the treasury, but "no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come" (ch.8:20). "Who art thou?" ask the Pharisees, and the Lord enigmatically replies, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning" - a saying which, in a previous study, we have shown to have its origin in the prophecy of Isaiah ch.42 vs. 48. "From the beginning" points back to the first verse of the Bible where the Lord is revealed as the great Creator. "I am the beginning" is what the Lord is saying. "I am he - the first and the last" the Lord declares in the 12th

verse of that great 42nd chapter in Isaiah. Christ declares to the Pharisees that He is the great I AM, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending. This majestic description of Absolute Deity, He claims for Himself, and well do, the Jewish leaders understand His claim, for they take up stones to cast at Him, but the Lord passes miraculously through the midst of them - His hour is not yet come. (chapter 8 vs. 59).

There follows immediately, the same day, the healing of the blind man by that creative act of mingling His spittle with the dust, and anointing the eyes of the blind with the clay - an act indicating that His claim to be the Creator, who formed man out of the dust of the ground, is no vain boast. "Herein is a marvellous thing", declared the man to the Pharisees, "that ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes" (chap.9 vs. 30).

Now in our chapter 10 they again take up stones to cast at Him (v.31) but are arrested in their evil intention. We see therefore how powerless are the men of earth to bring about the death of Christ. Not until the divine moment fixed in the holy counsel of God before the world was, can the Son of God be taken as a prey by wicked men - not until He declares "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke ch. 22 vs. 53). Or, as He says to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above" (John ch.19 vs. 11).

So now in our chapter 10 of John, He declares that He "lays down His life for the sheep" and that "no man taketh that life from Him, but He lays it down of his own accord; He has power to lay it down and power to take it again, and this by the command of the Father" (verses 15-18).

It is fundamental to the doctrine of the atonement that the redeeming work of Christ should not only be a voluntary surrendering of His own life in obedience to the Father's will, but also, that the nature of His death should be such as to unfold to all creation the full and final vindication of God's righteousness.

Death by stoning would not have sufficed. Sudden and violent death would not have allowed the Victim to have completed with hallowed dignity and selfless submission, a full, perfect and sufficient atonement. There must be His formal surrender into the power of evil. There must be the public trial and exhibition of suffering innocence identifying Him with the prophecy of Isaiah 53, "A Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised and rejected of men."

Moreover the agony of death must not come as a sudden blow, as in the case of stoning, but as a public exhibition of sufficient duration to allow of those mysterious Words of the Cross which when fully understood, spell out the purpose of His sufferings and show to all eternity the truth, wisdom and grace of God:

Seven times He spake, seven words of love: And all three hours His silence cried for mercy on the souls of men. Jesus our Lord is crucified.

We anticipate the story of His sufferings, but only to prepare us to understand His own preliminary words: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (ch. 10 vs. 17)

## THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE ATONEMENT

But again, lest we should commit the further error of dividing the unity of the Godhead, and represent the atonement as belonging to the initiative of the Son to appease the wrath of the Father, the Lord adds, "This commandment have I received of my Father" (vs.18). Elsewhere the Lord tells us that always it is the

Father's will which is the rule of His great life: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John ch.5 vs.19). Again, "I can of mine own self do nothing..... I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (vs.30). The initiative in salvation lies always with the Father and we have it again in the words of the Saviour Himself, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John ch.3 vs. 16).

Perfervid preachers should be careful how they represent the atonement. Nothing could be more derogatory to the Godhead, or subversive of the true doctrine of the atonement, than to represent the Son as having come, as it were, of His own initiative into the world to effect an atonement for sin. The Son everywhere shows this to be contrary to the fact. He came not to change, but to do, the Father's will - or, as one of our great Reformation divines put it, "If Christ died not by the will of God, where is our redemption?" The essence of the atonement lies in the obedience of the Son to the Father's will, as we have it in our chapter, "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again..... this commandment have I received of my Father" (ch.10 vs 17-18).

Again in the Garden, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, NOT AS I WILL BUT AS THOU WILT" (Matt, ch.26 v, 39] Who can dwell upon that most sublime of all utterances, the Saviour's prayer to the Father as He moved out of the Upper Room with His disciples on His way to Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha - the Prayer of John Seventeen -in which the Lord finally dedicated Himself to the Father's holy will and purpose in going forth to suffer and to die - "Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee..."

And where is the Third Person at this solemn hour of betrayal and deal He is there, the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, the Spirit of Holiness and Love, of Meekness and Sacrifice, according to that word of Paul's in Hebrews, that Christ "through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews ch.9 vs 14).

All the resources of the Godhead, in eternal love, justice and righteousness, were concentrated at the cross to bring about eternal redemption and to raise a New Creation out of death - a new creation in which all that the Godhead ever set out to do will be finally and eternally realised:

"God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"

(Romans ch.5 vs. 8).

When He sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John ch.4 vs.14 the Father gave Himself in the completeness and perfection of that LOVE WHICH HE IS. Behold the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity, the Father and Son in the Communion of the Spirit (which proceedeth from Both), in the Holy Mystery of God becoming Man, God surrendering Himself to death and the curse, God righteously judging sin by the article of death, yet gloriously living again by conquest of death and its curse, in a new, eternal, and unchanging Kingdom of light and life and love, brought from the grave, solving forever the problem of evil, and vindicating by love's sacrifice the divine right to create, to rule and to reign evermore: "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over him.....Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans ch. 6 vs. 9-11).

All this treasure lies behind the right understanding of the Saviour's discourse on the Good Shepherd. Great was His patience as He was cruelly beset by the ignorance and evil intentions of these wicked men who heard Him only to destroy and condemn. Great indeed is the divine patience and longsuffering, but Augustine has said, "God is patient because He is eternal."

## THE HIRELINGS

The contrast between the Good Shepherd and these hirelings is painful indeed, but the Lord must endure all this, for it is decreed that He must die by the sinful hand of man in order that by death sinful man should be redeemed, and live for ever. How many of these evil men survived to believe on Him at the last, we do not know, but this we know that we, who like them are equally undeserving, have nevertheless been brought to believe in the Crucified, and believing, to have life through His Name.

What lessons too, for ambitious preachers who are fascinated by "success" and secretly long to see themselves as the idol of the multitude, or at least to be crowned with the laurels of earthly success. But there are first which shall be last, and last which shall be first, and Paul had little personal property but His old cloak, and his precious books and parchments. His success in this world was in terms of shipwreck, hunger, peril, nakedness, prison - such a cross as this he had to carry. Many a man (or woman) since then, each in his or her appointed sphere, at home or abroad, has likewise gladly suffered, endured, laboured, and counted their life as not being dear unto themselves because the love of Christ has meant more than all the world beside.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world" -so wrote Paul to the Galatians (chap. 6 vs 14).

Pastors and preachers will do well if they remember this, for only by the cross will they be delivered from the fate of the hireling whose own the sheep are not.

The Pharisees and scribes have long since disappeared from history as a recognisable body, but they have many descendants who in other spheres display the same characteristics. The title "pastor" means a shepherd, and let those who bear it in the Church, including all who rank as elders and deacons by whatever name they may be called, take care that they be not numbered among the hirelings.

The officers of Israel used their office for oppression and gain, crushing the conscience of the people and usurping lordship over the flock. These Judean hirelings have long since, disappeared from history, but their counterparts live on in the history of the NT Church. An oppressive priesthood in the Western and Eastern churches used their ghostly authority to crush the souls given into their charge, and to make gain or power the chief pursuit of their office. Always there were pious exceptions, but these were few. The Reformation made a radical alteration, but alas, corruption is always at work in the soul of man, and it was not long before the characteristics of the hireling began to reappear in Prelacy and Presbytery alike, not to mention Independency.

Wherever the flock is, there will soon appear the hireling who seeks personal gain or the satisfying of ecclesiastical pride, and not the welfare of the people of God. The 34th chapter of Ezekiel makes grim reading, and it is relevant as much today as ever. The shepherds of Israel were denounced by the Lord, through His prophet: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat, ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock....." (See Ezekiel ch. 34 vs. 2-10).

The Lord declares through Ezekiel that He, the Lord God (v. 11) will search for His sheep and find them. In our parable of the Good Shepherd, Christ presents Himself as the fulfillment of that prophecy and in doing so declares in effect that He is none other than "the Lord God" who speaks there of the salvation of His sheep.

"I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE"

We are not surprised therefore to find the Lord crowning His parable of the Good Shepherd, with a clear declaration of the unique relationship He bore to the Father, leading to the supreme claim, "I and my Father are one" (v. 30). Twelve times precisely the Lord refers to the Father by name in this 10th chapter of John (from verse 25 onward). Seven times it is "My Father". The symbolism of these sacred numbers will be appreciated by all students of the Gospel of John.

In our English translation "My Father" is actually found eight times, but in verse 30, "my" is in italics, and the reader is referred to the margin where "the Father" is clearly given. We do not enter here into the reason for the alteration, but the marginal reading is approved by all.

The sacred numbering signifies the perfection of the divine purpose in the Incarnation of the Son. Such enumerations in the Gospel of John are not designed by the writer, John, but dictated by the Spirit of God who thus guided the apostle in mind and memory to show the perfection of the divine revelation.

It is of great significance that our Lord's first utterance after His resurrection was in His instruction to Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John ch.20 vs. 17). The atonement was complete, and in Christ, redeemed Man entered into a new relationship with God. See Romans ch. 8 vs. 15 and Galatians ch.4 vs. 6.

This altered relationship is well expressed by Charles Wesley:

My God is reconciled,

His pardoning voice I hear,

He owns me for His child,

I can no longer fear.

With confidence I now draw nigh

And Father, Abba Father, cry.

Only as members of Christ can we share that new, reconciled relationship with the Eternal Father. Here too is yet another proof of the Deity of the Son. What presumption it would be for any Person less than God not only to claim such a relationship to God but further to set up Himself as the only means by which the creature can enjoy this new and reconciled relationship with the Father.

DEITY INCARNATE

In all creation there has been none, save the Incarnate Son of God, who could claim the right to address the Father as "My Father", and the sevenfold use of the term in our chapter is in the highest sense remarkable. It conveys the meaning that our Lord Jesus Christ has a unique and exclusive relationship

with the Father, shared by none, angels or men. It implies and declares a common life, a unity of Being, an absolute claim on the part of the Son to participation in the unity of the Godhead. Chrysostom puts it clearly - "I am no other than the Father, only that I remain the Son, and the Father -remaineth the Father."

That this is the force of the Saviour's words is placed beyond all doubt by His declaration in verse 15: "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father....."

Who is He who thus claims a unity of self-knowledge with the Father? This mutual "knowing" of Father and Son goes to the heart of the mystery of Godhead - the Three in One. Here is deity most profound and Godhead most absolute.

Elsewhere (Matthew ch. 11 vs. 27) the Lord declares, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."

Stier on this passage in Matthew is unsurpassed: "No exposition can exhaust, no dogmatic speculation can penetrate, the depths of this saying, which points to the deep things of the Godhead. We do better to spell it out in simplicity with the babes, and to yield up our souls thus to the mighty and effectual revelation of the Holy Spirit, who will teach us what is the confession of the Father and the Son."

Again, Stier draws attention to the fact that following immediately on the Lord's declaration in the Matthew passage quoted above, He goes on to announce that great invitation to all who feel their need, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thus the 'babes' of Matthew ch. 11 vs.25 come to their Saviour who reveals the Father to them, as in obedience to His urging they "take his yoke upon them and learn of Him, who is meek and lowly in heart," and in so doing they find rest to their souls.

Of the words of the Lord, "All things are delivered unto me of (by) my Father" (Matt, ch. 11 vs.27), Stier observes, "This 'delivered' is as inscrutable as it is absolute, and by no means applies to the Son of Man only in His humanity, but to the Eternal Son, who also as the Son has received all things from the Father (John ch.5 vs 26). The Son does not say that all things are revealed unto Him. He Himself is the revealer, even as the Father is. It is not all power in heaven and earth (Matt, ch.28 vs. 18) which is immediately contemplated here, but the full perception and knowledge of eternal truth, and the justification of the supreme wisdom of God's counsel. God is Himself Truth and Wisdom. He knoweth Himself in the Trinity of His Being, reciprocally as Father and Son in the unity of the Spirit. The Third Person is not here expressly mentioned, because He was not yet manifest, as the Son was, in the Son of Man. What completeness does this give to the Lord's discourse, compacted and rounded as it everywhere is, when such a testimony to His divine and eternal dignity is set over against the deep humiliation of Him who had come into the generation of that age. The Son hath all things to reveal and to administer, but as given Him of the Father. Thus even while He is testifying of His own supreme dignity, He first gives honour to the Father, and then proceeds to cry: Come unto me, for only with me and in me, is everything to be found."

John the Baptist discerned this in his profound declaration in John ch.3 vs. 34-35: "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son and "hath given all things into his hand."

Returning now to the declaration of the Lord in John ch.10 vs.15, we are now ready to perceive that the claim of our Lord that His knowledge of the Father is the equal counterpart of the Father's knowledge of

the Son, is the very formula of deity, and if it did not properly require the equality of the Person speaking, with the Person spoken about, it would be a statement of most terrible presumption. If it did not imply that the Son's knowledge of the Father was equal to the Father's knowledge of the Son and that this mutual 'knowing' expressed absolute and eternal unity with the Godhead, then it was a hideous impiety on the part of the One who uttered the words.

#### CREATION'S GOAL

But here is Deity most profound, and Godhead most absolute in the mutual self-knowledge of the Father and the Son, and it is confirmed in the remarkable additional claim (as though part of the necessary declaration of His own absolute deity), ".....and I lay down my life for the sheep" (v.14). What is this but the expression of the eternal goal or destiny of God, the eternal purpose of His great life, to redeem His own creation by means of that death which slays and overcomes death? - a death which abolishes death and brings life and immortality to light - a death which only God the Creator can die - and as God cannot die, a death which requires that God must assume human nature and become incarnate Man for the purpose of dying.

So, by death, God proclaims His deathless love for sinful man, and we now understand better those imperishable words, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The theme transcends the utmost limits of prose, and we must find more adequate expression in such a hymn as that of Johann Andreas Rothe (1688-1758), Lutheran pastor, beautifully translated by John Wesley:

Now I have found the ground wherein Sure my soul's anchor may remain. The wounds of Jesus, for my sin Before the world's foundation slain; Whose mercy shall unshaken stay, When heaven and earth are fled away.

Father, Thine everlasting grace

Our scanty thought surpasses far,

Thy heart still melts with tenderness,

Thy arms of love still open are,

Returning sinners to receive,

That mercy they may taste and live.

O Love, Thou bottomless abyss,

My sins are swallowed up in Thee!

Covered is my unrighteousness,

Nor- spot of guilt remains on me,

While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,

Mercy, free, boundless mercy! cries.

## THE DIVINE KINSMAN

Or perhaps deeper and more tender yet, those almost unexampled lines of Jean Ingelow - And didst Thou love the race that loved not Thee? And didst Thou take to heaven a human brow? Dost plead with man's voice by the marvellous sea? Art Thou his kinsman now?

O God, O kinsman, loved, but not enough!

O Man, with eyes majestic after death!

Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough,

Whose lips drawn human breath!

By that one likeness which is ours and Thine,

By that one nature which doth hold us kin,

By that high heaven where, sinless,

Thou dost shine,

To draw us sinners in:

By Thy last silence in the judgment hall, By long foreknowledge of the deadly tree, By darkness, by the wormwood and the gall, I pray Thee visit me.

Come, lest this heart should, cold and cast away, Did e'er the Guest adored she entertain Lest eyes that never saw Thine earthly day Should miss Thy heavenly reign.

The fact that the world became divided into the 'sheep and the goats' does not destroy this mystery of the holy love of God. There is no dilemma in the mind of God. All questions will be answered at the judgment seat. Though "the great gulf fixed" between the righteous and the wicked at the last, is eternal in its nature, it will contain no unanswered questions. If "the bottomless pit is the soul of the wicked" there will be mute acknowledgment there of the righteousness of God, and eternal acquiescence in the just judgment of love spurned. All problems will be solved then, and in the meantime faith is content serenely to wait.

## "HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME"

That One who is God should lay down His life for the sheep, opens a door to the nature of the Divine Being. Eternal love begins to beget its echo in the human heart. "He loved me and gave Himself for me. I am dead with Christ, crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed and that henceforth I should not serve sin. I am no longer my own: I am bought with a price. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" writes Paul (see Galatians ch.2 vs.20 and Romans ch. 6 vs.6).

Our creation obliges us to obedience, but redeeming love creates it within our renewed being. "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me -and a stranger will they not follow: they know not the voice of a stranger." Thus hearing the voice of the Shepherd the soul rejoices in self-dedication to her Lord, and thus losing herself, finds herself, enfolded in everlasting arms.

"Tell me," pleads the Mystic Bride, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth where thou feedest - where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" (Song of Songs ch.I vs.7). Thus King Solomon in an ecstasy of purest inspiration teaches us the nature of salvation in the yearning of the soul for union with Christ who is her life and her love for ever.

## THE GOAL OF PERFECT LOVE

The shadow of the cross as we have already indicated was falling across the Lord's pathway as He made these remarkable utterances. As He prepares for the last journey which is the ultimate goal of the divine life and love, He fully unveils the relationship of the only begotten Son to the Eternal Father in the unity of the Godhead. It is a unity of perfect love - a love which demands the life, and an answering love which yields that life, thus:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" - verses 17 - 18.

Thus the Only Begotten moves toward the goal of deity - to lay down His life for His lost sheep, and having laid it down, take up that life again, beyond the tomb and the dying. The life laid down becomes a life fulfilled, complete, exalted. Divine and holy love seeks not itself, but pours itself out in a great act of redeeming mercy, and so achieves a new creation of love which can never again be sullied by sin. This is the eternal purpose of God in creation. Love realises its goal not in getting but in giving; not by self-glory but by dying.

The freeness of this act of dying and giving is reflected in the sentence, "No man taketh my life from me but I lay it down of myself." He who is true God became true Man, and neither man nor devil had power to bring Him to death, until He surrendered Himself into the hand of all evil.

On the words, "This commandment have I received of my Father" Augustine characteristically writes, "The Word received not the commandment in word, but in Him who is the Only Begotten Word of the Father every commandment resides. When the Son is said to receive of the Father what He possess essentially in Himself.....there is no lessening of His authority, but only the setting forth of His (eternal) generation." That is, He who is eternally generated of the Father is always what He is, without beginning, change, or ending. It is proper for Him as the Son to obey the Father's will but that will is inscribed in His own Being, eternally, and is the very condition of His great life in the Godhead.

Augustine concludes; "For the Father added not after-gifts as to a Son whose state was imperfect at birth, but on Him whom He begat in absolute perfection He bestowed all gifts in begetting. In this manner He gave Him equality with Himself and yet begat Him not in a state of inequality."

On the voluntary nature of Christ's death, Dr Stier remarks, "The Redeemer only submits to the enemy, that He may thereby overcome him. Without conscious design to overcome and redeem, the death of Christ would neither be permissible nor possible."

## A PROPHETIC DIVISION OF ISRAEL

"There was a division among the Jews" (vs. 19) when they heard the saying of the Lord that no man could deprive Him of life - He had power to lay down His own life, and power to take it again, according to the commandment of the Father. We have learned in the Gospel of John to find a depth of meaning in all the

historic circumstances through which the Lord passed, and this is no exception. This division among the Jews was prophetic in its nature. Some held with Him and some were against Him. Some, hearing Him declare His immunity to death at the hand of man, scoffed as at the saying of a madman - "He hath a devil and is mad." Others, strangely moved by words of such stupendous meaning, saw clearly that the One who stood before them was no ordinary Person. Unable yet to declare the truth concerning Him their rational mind ruled out subterfuge or hallucination. "These are not-the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

It is thus the soul is brought to conversion. The light begins to penetrate its darkness, and gloom. The God-given faculties of the reasonable soul which God has created in man are capable, (when blind prejudice and the love of sin are for the moment overthrown by profound, conviction) of bringing in a verdict for the truth. Conscience may be very much stifled by indwelling sin, but Bunyan's "Mr. Recorder" still retained an old tattered copy of the holy Law of God, and Diabolus could never make him wholly his own. "When his fits were upon him" writes Bunyan, "he would speak with a voice as great against Diabolus as when a lion roareth, and make the whole town of Mansoul shake."

To be "dead in trespasses and in sins" does not mean the end of conscience. That, the Lord will never permit. Conscience is never more alive than in hell itself, as the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus clearly teaches. God never leaves Himself without witness in the soul of man, else sin would cease to be sin.

The division among the Jews was a division of conscience. There was an apprehension among some that He who could open the eyes of the blind must be of God, and this awakening was full of rich possibilities of further enlightenment. In short this is the division which always appears where the Word of God is proclaimed. "It is the great divide between Israel after the flesh and the true Israel of God - that new Israel of Jew and gentile which sprang out of the ashes of the old nation then bent upon its own destruction"

The "death" of the soul is not the equivalent of the death of the body. The soul has that "voice within" which speaks for God and truth however much this may be denied. In our doctrine of man's "total depravity" nothing must be allowed to obscure the essential fact of conscience.

The soul cannot die as the body dies and is buried and moulders away in the grave. The soul lives for ever; it cannot sleep or lapse into unconsciousness, for even when the body sleeps the soul struggles for expression - hence the phenomenon of "dreaming" with its extraordinary expansion of imagination. The death of the soul - its total depravity -lies in the perversion of all its faculties. Instead of finding its centre in God, it finds its centre in itself. Every created faculty remains, so that the soul is capable of the highest flights of poetic or musical imagery (proving its divine origin), with all the excellence of art in painting, philosophy, sculpture, and the extraordinary achievements of natural science Nor are any of these faculties to be despised, but rather accepted as indications of man's godlike origin - fashioned in the divine image and likeness. Where the soul is born again of the Spirit of God, these faculties become dedicated to the divine glory. Where it is otherwise, the soul finds its centre in itself and no longer seeks its true expression in the holiness of God. Corrupted by sin, and without the true light, the will is debased, and dedicated to other ends than the divine purpose in its creation.

Yet though debased and corrupt, the spirit of man remains subject to the strivings of conscience. Left to itself the soul is incapable of rising from its state of alienation from God, but there is a zone of human experience where the soul comes near to that kingdom of God yet enters not in. Even Felix trembled when Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, while Agrippa was

constrained to cry aloud, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" - not an insincere cry, else Paul would not have answered the king with such deference and encouragement, though in the case of both these men, Felix and Agrippa, they heard and saw and felt, only to revert again to the depravity from which for a moment they were raised by the voice of God in His servant Paul. How often the faithful preacher has his own hopes raised, as sinners respond so far to his exhortations, only to fall back again into their own sinful preferences - and how often too, he has the agony of seeing those who make fair profession of Christ, relapse, even after many days and much praiseworthy activity, into their former ways.

"Will ye also go away?" the Saviour asked His disciples, as many who had made fair profession were offended and went no more with Him. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Truly, if we be saved by grace, only grace can bring us through to the end. Yet the words of the Lord convey a most solemn warning to show diligence even to the end: "What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch!"

#### WINTER IN SOLOMON'S PORCH

"And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter, and Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch" (v. 22-23).

The Feast of the Dedication was not one of the three obligatory feasts of the Mosaic code. These were the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of the Dedication was observed to commemorate the cleansing of the Second Temple after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes in the days of the Maccabees in the second century before Christ. This feast fell in mid-December when the winter in Palestine is of some severity. Solomon's porch was said to be the only surviving remnant of the original temple, having escaped in part the Chaldean overthrow, though this is disputed. The porch enters again into New Testament history in Acts ch.3 vs.11, following the healing of the lame man who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. It was there that Peter gave the second of his great inaugural addresses at the establishment of the New Testament Church. The first was on the day of Pentecost a short time before. It is evident that Solomon's Porch was a sheltered place of public resort inside the boundary of the temple buildings, and to it the Jewish public had continual access.

Verses 22 - 23, therefore, appear to denote that the Lord had retired for a season from the vicinity of Jerusalem after the events leading up to the end of verse 21. The Feast of Tabernacles, to which those events belong, terminated some three months before the winter feast of the Dedication. The Lord had evidently retired from the vicinity of Jerusalem on account of the menacing nature of the Jewish Council, and because He knew that only at the Passover the following spring was He destined to be taken by the Jews.

He probably retired to the same vicinity beyond Jordan, where John had been baptising before his arrest and death (see verse 40). Now He is back in Jerusalem and His presence in the Temple precincts soon brings Him into contact again with the Jewish adversaries.

Time was ebbing fast. He would return to Bethany for the raising of Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11), an event which finally determined the Jewish Council to seek His death. Again He would retire to the wilderness (chapter 11 vs.54) until the Feast of the Passover, when He returned to Bethany, six days before the feast, on the eve of which He was arrested and condemned to be crucified.

As the Cross appeared ever nearer, so the Lord's declarations of His eternal Sonship became more plain.

"AND IT WAS WINTER"

The winter season can only indicate prophetically, the time spoken of so dramatically by Jeremiah the prophet, who was the last prophet, sent to Israel before the Chaldean destruction: "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jer. ch.8 vs.20). How significant that it was at that precise season of the year (the ninth month, that is, according to the Jewish calendar, December), that King Jehoiakim sat in his winterhouse to listen to the reading of Jeremiah's prophetic roll in which all the judgments which were then about to fall upon the apostate nation were threatened. Jehoiakim did not even wait to hear all the prophecy. "When Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he (the king) cut the roll with a penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed" (Jeremiah ch.36 vs. 23). This contempt for the Word of God was soon avenged in the Chaldean overthrow under the generalship of Nebuchadnezzar. The city and temple of Jerusalem were destroyed all except Solomon's Porch - and the city and land remained a desolate waste for 70 years, until the Persians overthrew the Chaldean empire and commanded Ezra and Nehemiah to restore the temple and sacrifice and rebuild the shattered city.

Now a greater than Jeremiah was here. The Lord Himself walked in Solomon's Porch at that same season of the year when Jehoiakim committed, on behalf of the nation, that last sacrilege of burning the Word of God. Nothing can be clearer than that this record, "And it was winter" points us back to the days of Jeremiah when the Lord's prophet was rejected and judgment became inevitable. Three months after the Lord walked in Solomon's Porch came the last great Passover feast when the rejected Lord of glory was crucified. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"

(1 Corinthians ch.5 vs. 7-8).

The days of the old covenant and of the earthly people were running out fast when Christ walked in Solomon's Porch and it was winter. Three years before, the Lord walked with His disciples in Galilee and proclaimed the days of harvest - "The harvest truly is plenteous the labourers are few; pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers" Now the Summer was gone and the harvest was past, and Israel was set upon its course of rejection of the Son of God. Winter was closing in fast upon the nation and they knew it not. Soon it would be known how the prophet's words were being finally realised, ".....and we are not saved."

Gone were those days in the early part of the Lord's ministry when He could say, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest" (John ch.4 vs.35). Summer had fled now. The harvest was passed, and Israel was not saved. Shortly the Lord would ride into Jerusalem for the last time, and as He came over the Mount of Olives and the full glory of the city burst upon the view, He would weep over the city and cry, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.....O Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often would I have gathered thy children.....Behold your house is left unto you desolate....."

(Luke ch. 19 vs.41-42; Matthew ch.23 vs 37-38).

"The Redeemer's tears wept over lost souls" declared John Howe the Calvinist and Puritan. O 20th century Calvinists and Reformed brethren, take heed!

So, the Old Covenant was about to finish its course. Shortly it would expire at the Cross, and the New, the Everlasting Covenant, would take its place; a new Israel would arise - a spiritual Israel, in whom the promises of the Old Testament would be wondrously fulfilled, in a perpetual summer and a never-ending harvest - as the days of heaven upon the earth.

"YE ARE NOT OF MY SHEEP"

Still in Solomon's Porch the Jews throng about Him and demand that He speak plainly and tell them IF THOU BE THE CHRIST (verse 24).

How often must the hard of heart be told the truth and still they will not believe! But these things are always hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed only unto babes. Spiritual truth is not a commodity which only requires to be plainly spoken in order to be believed. The outward ear is a poor conveyor of truth, but there is an inward ear of which the Saviour elsewhere speaks, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." There is a blindness and a deafness which only repentance can relieve, and of repentance these objectors knew nothing.

Bengel well expresses the true situation with those who complained (as they still complain) that the truth is not made sufficiently plain for them: "As if indeed He never has told or shown it" We often think: If I could hear or read it expressed in this or that way, I could believe. But God alone knows how it is fitting to speak to us in order to cherish and exercise our faith."

Luther (one time Professor of Theology at Leipzig) adds, "It is true that Christ never testified of Himself in Jerusalem so plainly and roundly as, for instance, to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John ch. 4). Yet He had told it clearly enough for them to be able to know that it was He. If they could never have confessed Him before, they could do it now."

It was not for want of telling that these men continued in unbelief. Christ shows them the true reason: "I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (v.25-26).

"As I said unto you" - the Lord in this phrase undoubtedly refers these men to a former occasion, and we have not far to seek for that encounter. A period of time had elapsed since the Lord related the two parables in the earlier part of the chapter. The healing of the blind man and the altercation with the Pharisees which resulted therefrom took place at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. We have now arrived at the time of the Feast of Dedication, so that between verses 21 and 22 three months have elapsed, during which it appears the Lord left the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. Now He returns and walks openly in Solomon's Porch. Those Pharisees who had been contending with Him throughout the whole of the events recorded from chapter 7, verse 1-4, onward, and indeed who had intended to stone Him, as described in chapter 8. vs. 59 would remember only too well to what He was referring: "I told you and you believed not." Here they were gathered around Him again, and could not but remember that He had said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." That sentence so filled them with fury that they took up stones to cast at Him, but He went away unharmed through the midst of them because His time was not yet come. In that sentence He claimed He was both Messiah and God - the eternal I AM.

Why then did they not believe? Because they were not of His flock. "Ye are not of my sheep." What are the marks of His sheep! He goes on to say, "They hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (i.e. the true Shepherd, for they know his voice" v.4).

That is, they only are Christ's sheep who hear Him and follow Him. The Lutheran divines do not see in these words any conclusive doctrine of eternal election, for they argue that the passage has to do with the identity of those who were manifestly Christ's sheep in that they followed Him. The Reformed (Calvinistic) divines, however, interpret the words in the absolute sense of an eternal election.

There follows one of the greatest of all utterances: "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

The doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is plainly taught in these verses, but we are enjoined by what goes before, to be cautious in the application of this doctrine. Let those take comfort from this statement of the Lord, who have the marks of Christ's sheep, and those marks, we have seen, are that they "hear" the Shepherd's voice, and they follow Him. They clearly discern the doctrine of Christ, His place in the unity of the Godhead, His glorious inheritance as the Only Begotten Son, the possessor of the divine nature.

Let us indeed rejoice that we have been saved with so great a salvation, but let us also give heed to the warning and see to it that we have the marks of His sheep, in knowing and loving the Shepherd's voice as He speaks in His Word, and giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

"I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE"

But now the final crisis bursts upon them. The Lord's concluding word had been, "I and my Father are one."

The Jewish interrogators can no longer mistake His meaning, and they take up stones again to stone Him (as they had done three months before) -and for the same reason, namely that He claimed to be the Eternal Son, God manifest in the flesh.

This time the Lord reasoned with them - He had done many good works amongst them for which of these were they bent upon stoning Him? This forced from them their acknowledgment that they had heard and understood, that He claimed to be God manifest in the flesh - "I and my Father are one."

"The Jews answered Him saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (v. 33).

In this remarkable exchange between the Lord and the Pharisees, the entire doctrine of Christ's divinity is laid bare. The Lord refutes them from the Scriptures of the Old Testament which they professed fanatically to believe. Thus:

The Lord quotes from Psalm 82 v. 6: "I have said Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High." The Psalm describes the office and authority of the judges and rulers in Israel, who derived their authority from God, and were in that sense, acting for God in relation to the people. If it was proper to describe as "gods" those to whom the Word of God came, conferring authority upon them to act in the place of God, how could these Pharisees be justified in denying the Godhead to Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, and who now claimed to be the Son of God? Was that claim valid? Was it not reasonable in view of the mighty works which He performed? How could He be an impostor and a blasphemer if thus He wrought the creative works of God, such as the healing of the man born blind, and the raising from the dead? If He were not of God, and if His claim to be the Eternal Word of God, was not

valid, -would not God Himself deny Him? (see verses 34-38).

Some have thought that the Lord's argument is weak, as though He were comparing Himself with the lesser authority of the judges of Israel, but this is not the case. What He was saying was that if they were described as 'gods' who acted in the place of God as magistrates and officers of the people, how much more exalted was He whom the Father had sent into the world, and who therefore had a prior existence in heaven with the Father and had come down to the world in fulfillment of the Father's will that He should be the Saviour of His people?

A profound meaning is to be recognised in the use of the term, "the word of God" in verse 35: "If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came....." The "word of God" which came to the judges and rulers of the Old Testament must be given the same value as that which we find in the Prologue to this Gospel of John, namely, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Word which came to the princes of the Old Covenant, as described in Psalm 82, was none other than the Son of God. That which proceeds from God is God. We are glad that the commentator in The Speaker's Bible recognises this. He writes, "This phrase (the Word of God) which is used of the divine communication under the Old Covenant cannot be without reference to the Word before the Incarnation, through whom God held converse with His people and made His will known."

We endorse this view, which has not had sufficient attention by the standard theologians. The sending forth of the Word of God means more than a mere spoken command. When at creation the Lord said Let there be light, we are not to be confined to an actual sounding voice that echoed through the void. His Word was Himself in the putting forth of His creative power - and that Word was Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

When God spake by the prophets, that was Christ, the power and the wisdom of God. So the Word of God which came to the judges and rulers of Israel could be none other than the Eternal Word speaking by the prophets, and girding with authority those principalities and powers by which God maintains His purposes in the world. In Hebrews we are told that the Son upholds all things by the word of His power.

(Heb. ch.I vs.3)

In due time the Son Himself appeared - God Incarnate, the Possessor of heaven and earth, to whom, as the Son, the Father has given and committed all things, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father who hath sent Him (John ch.5. vs.23).

## THE PICTURE COMPLETE

So the Lord demanded of these Pharisees and rulers, "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him" (v. 36-38). The picture is complete. This is the true end of the Saviour's ministry and words, according to the gospel of John. At this point the Pharisees sought again to take Him (v.39) but His time was not yet come, and they could lay no hands upon Him. He departs from Jerusalem and resides privately beyond Jordan, where John the Baptist first baptised and where the Lord's own ministry was inaugurated as He submitted Himself to baptism and the heavens were opened to Him. Thither went many earnest souls out of Israel to be ministered unto and many believed on Him there. He returned to Bethany for the raising of Lazarus, but again must leave the environs of Jerusalem on

account of the hostility of the Jewish leaders. This time He went further north to the territory of Ephraim and returned to Jerusalem for the last passover feast with His disciples, and to Gethsemane and betrayal and the death of the Cross and accomplishment of man's redemption.

The judgment of the unbelieving nation took place there in the wintertime, in the Temple court. In such a place was Israel judged. Their acts in the temple against Christ and His sheep were official acts. There the nation formally and finally rejected their Shepherd and to this day have never found another. Then and there they would have destroyed Him (vs.39) but could not - not then - not at the Feast of Dedication (v.22). They took up stones to cast at Him (v.31) but a divine arrest was upon them. The Lamb of God could only be taken and slain at another feast - the feast of the Passover. Nor yet would He die a Jewish death. He must be crucified. He would not be crushed by their stones, but pierced and crucified on Roman wood, by Roman nails and thus made the spectacle of a curse for us, to endure for six long hours the agony of death during which He should, by His sevenfold utterances enlighten all worlds, seen and unseen as to the nature, purpose and consequence of His atonement.

"The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him," by divine decree and not by the will of men.

How significant, too, that on the third occasion of their frustration and the prevention of their evil designs, when the stones were actually in their hands, they affirmed the offence thus - "Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Yes, indeed. And did they not know from Jeremiah and Ezekiel that Messiah would be both man and God? And had He not given invincible proof, by the mighty work wrought on the blind man standing beside Him, that He was in fact God? "And this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jehovah Tzidkenu)" (Jeremiah ch.23 vs.6).

The prophetic time had come for God to raise up unto David a righteous Branch. Heaven's king was here, to reign and prosper (Jer. ch.23. vs.5).

So near to the truth were these men - yet so far.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-alexander/the-shadow-of-the-cross-ch1011-42/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**