

John 10

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon on John 10 explores the nature of Christ's invitation, the varied responses of humanity, and the implications of true belief and discipleship.

Scripture: John 8:30-31, John 8:34, John 8:36-37, John 8:51, John 10:9, John 10:27, John 14:21

Topics: "Discipleship", "Obedience To God"

Description

Paris Reidhead preaches on the importance of following Jesus as the Good Shepherd, emphasizing the need for believers to hear His voice, know Him intimately, and obediently follow Him. Reidhead highlights that true discipleship involves a willingness to walk in loneliness, away from those who do not hear or obey the voice of the Shepherd. He stresses that every step of obedience to Christ is a step away from others, and the ultimate success for a Christian is found in obediently following Jesus. Reidhead challenges listeners to cultivate a sensitivity to God's voice early in their Christian journey and to commit to following Him wholeheartedly, regardless of the cost.

Transcript

John 10 By Paris Reidhead* John, Chapter 10. This morning we considered the invitation of our Lord, and our Lord's failure, the only failure that the sovereign God has ever experienced is His failure to have the yearning longing of His heart for a world that is determined to be doomed realized. Now I want to see the nature of His success in the lives of those whom He calls to Himself. So I shall begin reading with verse 9 of Chapter 10 and will conclude with verse 30: I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 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. 19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? 22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt?

If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.

May God bless to our hearts this His Word and cause this to spring alive in our thinking. We heard our Lord this morning as we meditated upon His words, recorded for us in Matthew the 23rd Chapter and verse 37, arms outstretched, hands extended, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not." Now we find that our Lord is talking to these very people in Jerusalem at this time of the Feast of Dedication in the winter, and He is there dealing with these very people.

I want you to notice the reactions of these who will not follow Him. I think it is important that you should understand that they are doing it for several very good reasons. Everything that we do seems rational to us at the time, being rational creatures. That is unless we have lost contact with reality and are acting in a haphazard manner. Everything we say, everything we do seems to be the right and proper thing to do and to say in the circumstances and at the time we find ourselves doing it.

We must remember this. We must recognize that we behave this way. And therefore when these people refused to follow Christ, and said to one another, "Why hear ye Him," they had very good reason for this. They presumed that He had a devil, and He was mad, and therefore they could not demean themselves to follow a mad man. This was their response. The teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ seemed so utterly irrational and impossible and so completely apart from all that they had been taught previously, that the only thing they could say was, He must be insane.

No man that was sane would talk this way. Well obviously no one has a responsibility to follow a mad man. And this was their approach. This was the means whereby they had moral rest, by rejection of Him. And He was just out of contact with reality. He was actually an emissary of Satan, and therefore was to be ignored. So we have one class of responses given in this. There are those in the area around you, in the apartment where you live, in the village where you may serve, that consider Jesus Christ to be unworthy of being regarded seriously.

They just do not consider that it is worthwhile. It is beneath them, beneath their dignity, beneath their intelligence, beneath their station in life, and the expression of the kind of background they have had to even think about following Christ. It would be madness on His part to demand it, and madness on their part

to offer it. Now let us recognize that this is the response of individuals when they come face to face with the claims of Christ. We will find everywhere we go, and in every country and in every culture, and all

times, those who react to the testimony of Christ are on quite the same basis as those are acted to Him personally. Then there is another group. There is another group that have said these words are not the words of Him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

Now there is certain crediting of Him with the supernatural, recognition of the fact that He is unusual, He is different, and there is something about Him that intrigues them. And so they become curious. They begin to think and ask questions, and they will talk with you a little bit. And they are interested particularly in the supernatural. They are particularly concerned about things which are unusual. And if you can produce something manufacture something in relation to Christ that seems to be different they are the ones that come and say, Well I do not know about this.

Almost thou persuadest me. There are the curious. These that are intrigued by the fact that one could make such claims as Christ makes, and do such things as He is reputed to have done. Therefore in your witness you will expect to find people like that today that are curious, that are sympathetic to a degree, that are interested in some measure, and they are at least prepared to consider themselves as followers of His. To this degree, that they want to learn more. They are anxious, especially if you can give them something that is supernatural.

Now I will have to turn back in order to complete this picture to the 6th Chapter. We will find there a portion with which we are familiar, because reference has been made to it in the past. Here in the 6th Chapter of John there is another group of people that have responded to Christ. In a certain way, that is. They have gathered up (in vs 13) 12 baskets with the fragments of the 5 barley loaves. And when those men who had seen the miracle which Jesus did were aware of the implications they said, This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world.

When Jesus would therefore perceive that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone. Now there is another group of people that we will have to see in relation to Christ. These are that company that are filled with amazement at what He has done, and at the kind of a person that He is, and they want to make Him a king, and so they manufacture a throne, they manufacture a kingdom, and they put Christ on it, and so they call Him King.

But the distinguishing thing is this: They fail to recognize that He has been made a king, failed to recognize that God made Him to be a prince and a savior. They fail to recognize that a child was born, a Son was given, and that the government might be upon His shoulder. They do not see Him as He is. They make Him something in their own image and in their own likeness. They want to manufacture Christ to their own specifications so they will use the name Christ. They will talk about His deity.

Talk about His sovereignty, talk about His kingship. Oh, there is a lot of nice things they will say. They will become enthusiastic about it. But you see it is not the Christ that God presented that they are serving. It is the one they have manufactured... Out of the raw material of what has been presented. Now we will have to see the course of such. I think it is given to us quite clearly here. The day following (vs 22), when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one where into his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, -- that He had gone away alone -- they came to Him, and when they found him, Jesus, they said, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? (in vs 25) He said, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.

Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? You notice now? They saw Him yesterday, and they responded to Him, reacted to what they had seen. They were going to take Him by force, make Him a king, and now instead of recognizing that He had a plan and that they were at His feet, they are saying to Him, Now what shall we do that we might work the works of God.

Our Lord Jesus understood their hearts and knew exactly what was there. He said, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. Now we will have to say here, Well didn't they believe? But you understand that words change their meanings across the centuries, and this word believe has changed its meaning greatly. To us today it is almost synonymous to, Assent to, To consent to, Recognize the truth of. But in the days of the King James translators, when they used the word, it was nearer to the Greek meaning, nearer to the significance of the text. And it had the strength of, Be or act, or live in accordance with. And so really

what He said was, This is the work of God. To bring your life in a total abandonment to, and live in accordance with His Son whom He has sent. Well you understand, therefore, that as Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in that monumental volume that every Christian who wants to understand the proper relationship to the Son of God does well to read, entitled,...let us see...the chapter that I refer to is Costly Grace in this "The Cost of Discipleship." And in this splendid chapter Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes perfectly clear that to believe is to obey.

And to obey is to believe. And he only believes who obeys. And he only obeys who believes. And to separate obedience and faith is to separate the coin and turn it into nothing but waste. For the coin only is valid for transfer of value when that coin is intact. And both sides are together with the imprimatur of royalty upon it, and government upon it. And so, to separate and say, Well I am going to agree with what is said, but I am going to live the way I want is to completely destroy the meaning of the word believe.

And thus when our Lord Jesus uses it here, He is using it in its fullest sense; to believe that Jesus was the Christ, to believe that He was worthy to be worshipped and a king means to bring your life in accordance with it. But you do not need to be told what to do. You have already been introduced to the One who knows what you are to do: Receive Him as He is presented, believe on Him whom the Father has given. Then they said unto Him Now what sign do you show us that we may see and believe Thee.

Again it is centering in a person. What dost Thou work? And now it begins to come to the issue. Our fathers ate manna in the desert. He gave them bread from Heaven, and then they said, You give us bread from Heaven like Moses did, and we will believe on you. And down to the 53rd vs, Verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at that last day.

And notice then, down in the 66th vs. From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him. We are going to expect to find, wherever Christ is heard preached, a company of people that are impressed with His words, and impressed with His work, and impressed with His character, but they have failed to understand who He is, and instead of receiving Him as He is presented, they try to manufacture Him into a king for a throne of their own making. And when they come face to face with what He said, with what He demands, then we find what is here, They went back and walked no more with Him.

So this is the 3rd class of people that are going to do as we heard this morning. - Will not, I would have gathered you, but ye would not. They would not receive Him as He was presented. They had to force Him into some pattern that they had made from imagination, tradition, something else that had been contributed to it. And if He would not fit, away with Him. They would not receive Him as He was presented. Now you say, Well these were disciples. What about believers. Do we find then that if anybody did, was said to believe, so I think it behooves us to come over here to the 8th Chapter.

This is an extremely interesting portion. We have seen that just because one is a disciple does not qualify him, just because one has thought well of Him and spoken well of Him does not qualify him. And so we come to this and we are going to discover whether or not it is possible to believe in a level and on a level, and miss this which is the distinguishing characteristic of His own people. "Then spake Jesus" (and I am reading from vs 12 of John 8) "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me (and this is the key word) shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto

him, Who art thou? And Jesus said unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spake these words, many believed on him." Do you see? We have this response now to His words. "Many believed on Him." (John 8:30) Now let us notice carefully what happens. They have now performed this function of believing. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye (here is the issue) If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed. Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

Now, and I want you to see what has happened. Here is a company of people that have believed on Him, for He spoke to those Jews which believed on Him, saying, that the evidence that you have truly believed on Me is that you will obey, for he that believes obeys, and he that obeys believes. Now let us understand this. This is what believing is. This is the function of faith, to find one worthy of it and then to obey that one.

Now notice. Notice now, Verily I say (in vs 34) Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (vs 36) If the Son therefore shall make you free, Ye shall be free indeed.

Notice in vs 37. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. He is saying this to people that believed on Him. Do you follow? Do you see the significance of it? Do you see the levels of response? Now remember what He said. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." Now what did it mean? Were they all of just open antagonism? No. There were many different responses in this, Would not.

Those that said He was foolish, hold Him to be mad, insane, one company. Those that said, Well there is something to what He says, but curiosity did not take them very far. That company of people that were His disciples and would make Him a king in their own image, the kind of a king they wanted, for the kind of a service they wanted Him to perform. And these would be disturbed by what He said and follow Him no more. There is a 4th group that have believed on Him but they have not been willing to come to the place of recognizing the true nature of believing, and the nature of true belief.

And consequently they want to kill Him. And if you would read at your leisure the rest of the 8th chapter it will appall you, it would just appall you to realize what believers of this level were capable of doing to the Son of God. Now we will come back then to John 10, because all of this is in the context of what He has said to us there. He has said it first in the 14th verse, I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine. I am the good shepherd, and know mine and am known of mine.

Literally you will see that sheep is interpolated. I am known of Mine and I know Mine. Now we have got to then recognize that there are certain distinguishing characteristics of those that are His. It is not enough to say, Believe. Because we find people who believed on Him and wanted to kill Him. It isn't enough to say they were disciples, because we found disciples that quit school, because that is all it means you know. As a learner, when they found out how they were going to have eternal life, they said, We don't want eternal life if we have to get it that way.

So they just quit school, that is all. They just dematriculated, and stopped listening. They followed Him no more. So we are going to come then to this, What does it mean to be received by Him? What does it mean to receive Him? What are the implications? Here He says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd we have already seen is the door by which if any man enter in he shall be saved, and go in and out and find pasture. He is the good shepherd which giveth His life for the sheep.

Now He is the good shepherd who knows His own. The picture is taken from an oriental experience, an oriental scene, and we find that all the sheep are scattered out on the hillside. And many times several shepherds would graze their flocks together for it would be as simple a matter to have them herded, and they were using public land. It was not private in any sense. And then the man would get ready in the evening to take his flock to his own little fold, probably made of stone with briars piled around it to keep the animals of prey out, to protect the sheep.

And he would call. And He said, My sheep hear My voice. He would just give His characteristic call, and this particular call would be known by His flock, and as He called His own heard, and His own followed Him. And strangely enough, all were sheep, but they were not the sheep of one shepherd. And so as the shepherd would stand up on the hillside in the direction of his fold he would give this characteristic call. And I have had friends there in Palestine that have told me they have seen this happen currently, still

taking place in some of the rural areas. And as the call would be given, these that were

the sheep of the shepherd, one by one, would each head in the direction of the voice they heard, and assemble around the shepherd. Now He said, My sheep hear My voice. They know Me. Something has happened. There has been some transmission of life, a communication we have in common, so when I speak they know. Then of course He says, I know my own. I know My own. Theoretically the sheep might... someone might just be carried away and sort of dull of hearing and forget what voice he heard and start out with the sheep.

But it is not only that the shepherd... the sheep know the shepherd, it is also that the shepherd knows the sheep. He knows who His own are. And consequently this is the first indication of the issue that is before us. Now we come down to the 27th verse. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. Now there have been a great many messages preached on the next verse. Oh, I have heard so many that have preached on this. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

And unconditionally eternal security is thus founded upon this verse. And neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. But I want you to know there is a condition here. Do you see it? Oh, look at it. This is certainly a comfort to the heart that no man shall pluck the sheep out of the shepherd's hand. And great consolation can come to the restful, obedient heart. But notice something else. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. They follow Me. They follow Me.

This is the characteristic distinguishing mark of ownership of His sheep. They follow Him. This is the only issue. Other shepherds, hireling servants are sent, but they know the shepherd, and they know His voice, and consequently they may hear many that are trying to imitate the shepherd's voice call from this corner and that, for the sheep are merchandisable. There is a value to them: Their wool, their tallow, and their flesh; and there are those that would like to have the sheep.

And so they try, study at night and practice in the day time to imitate the shepherd to call, but there is something missing and so the sheep do not do it. They know His voice. And they not only know it. They do not just sit back and smile smugly at one another and say, That's our shepherd. No. No. They follow. They follow. When they hear His voice, they follow. The distinguishing characteristic of His Own is that they follow. And if you take the last clause out of the 27th verse and isolate the 28th from what has preceded, you have twisted the Scripture, you have distorted the Scripture, you have wrested the Scripture to your own hurt and your own harm.

If you will take it as it is it becomes a source of great joy, great comfort, great blessing. But I want you to see that the distinguishing characteristic of His sheep is not that they sit back smugly, resting in their indifference, their callousness, their sin, their unbelief, their disobedience, and say, Thank God, I am in the shepherd's hands. I will never perish. And no one will put them out - put me out of His hand, do as I wish. No. No. Anyone that takes the 28th verse and uses it for a license to sin is absolutely twisting and wresting the Scripture to his own destruction.

We cannot so do. We must take the 27th verse and link it with the 28th. And the distinguishing characteristic of His sheep is that they know Him, they are known of Him, and they follow Him. Now how far do they follow Him? When does the sheep stop following the shepherd? Well we will say, when they cease being sheep, cease belonging to the shepherd. All such analogies fall far short. The only thing that I can say is this, that the only comfort and consolation that you can possibly, get out of the 28th verse is when your heart is fully at rest in the 27th.

For the moment that you are prepared to repudiate the 27th and say, Oh, yes, this is all right. But that is works. I do not want anything to do with that. I am just going to rest in what He has done for me. You forget that He is the one that joined the two verses together. He put them in this relationship. And He has fixed them so that what God has joined together let no man put asunder. He married them. And now they are in this way. My sheep hear My voice. All the myriad of voices saying, Lo here.

Lo there. And, go this way. Go that. My sheep hear above all the din and murmurings and shoutings and fanatical wailings, My sheep hear My voice. I remember someone said to me (not here, but in a previous ministry) Don't you think you had better do something about so and so. They seem to be wandering off. I said, Yes, we'll talk and we'll pray, but remember He has said, My sheep hear My voice. And this seems to be exciting. This seems to be satisfying. This seems to have elements of reality in it.

But if they have partaken of His life, if they have eaten of His flesh and drunk His Blood, and have passed thereby out of death into life, they will hear His voice. They will know. They will know. And so we have this consolation that when He takes us out of the devil's flock,

goats were we, and changes our nature until we become sheep of the Good Shepherd, He puts within us a capacity and a desire to hear His voice and to follow Him. Now I want to ask you. I want you to just look deeply, well, into your heart. Do you want to follow Him? Is this the desire of your heart? Is this the deepest concern of your being? to follow the Lord? "He that heareth My Words and doeth them, he it is that loveth Me." (John 14:21a) How easy it would be in the Christian life if we could just follow the Lord for say six months, get our degree, get our certificate, and then settle back and say, Well I am so glad I passed my following course, and now I can go back to just living a normal life.

It would be marvelous you know if we could have sort of what I think they have in the Service. What are these tests where they go under live ammunition and go through swamps, and so on. I have been told about them. If one could say, Well now, get an honorable discharge and you have completed the hazard course. This wouldn't be too difficult. But you know it is for real. It is not just a test. It is not just something. To follow Christ is not just to follow Him in the summer of '54, and then when Fall comes to go back to following your own career and plans.

To follow Christ is just to follow Him today and tomorrow, and next month and next year, and the following year, and every day of the following year, and it such a long tedious thing. Isn't it? When are you going to stop following? What can you come and say, I have now arrived. This is the place. When does a Christian come to the place where he says, Well I don't need to follow. I have finished following. No there will not be such a time. There won't be such a time. As long as you walk in the world you are going to be a sheep of the shepherd.

You are going to be following Him. This is the characteristic that distinguishes you as His sheep. Now, what does it mean to follow Him. This is the practical implication. Oh, there are so many things that all of us could do. If anyone has intelligence enough to succeed at anything, they have intelligence enough to succeed if it is applied properly at several things. And how many things there are that entice one. I have experienced this in school, in college and university. What a dreadful thing it was to have to make a decision.

Here was this course. Here was medicine with all the intriguing things that it presented. And here was law, and over there was business, and still another, and you are in the middle of a wheel of knowledge, and whatever decision you make you have to turn your back on all the rest. It is sort of a frustrating thing to be

able to go in almost direction from the hub of where you stand with your basic preparation. And now you have to choose, and whatever you choose is going to take you further and further away, the further you pursue it, from all the other forms of knowledge and interest.

This is one of the reasons why we have got to have Heaven, because God put into our hearts a hunger for so many things we cannot possibly fulfill on earth. I do not believe He has wasted it. I think the other 97% of the intellect God has invested in us we will be able to develop there. So cheer up. If you have been discouraged that you have to settle for one thing when there are so many things you would like to do, why, I think there will be time enough when you get home to glory.

But you see, the one thing is this that is of paramount importance, when you choose at that crucial point in your life to follow Christ, this becomes restrictive. Now listen. Every step you take with Christ, and this is the point of the message, you take away from somebody. I want to say that again. Every step of obedience is a step away from people who either did not hear His voice or did not choose to obey. Ponder it. Five people are standing together. Thus far they have all followed the Lord.

And one of them hears His voice saying, Follow Me. And he does not want to leave these other four. But now he has to choose. But don't you hear? Can't you see? Don't you see? No I don't. Well what is he going to do? Settle back and say, Well he doesn't see, and he doesn't see, and she doesn't see, and he doesn't see, so all right. It's okay. I'll stay with them. I must be wrong...no. My sheep hear My voice and they follow, not the four, but Me. They follow Me. They follow Me.

They follow Me. And my friend, every step in Christian progress that you make is a step into loneliness. Now you may find someone that has made that step elsewhere, and somebody beside you may make it at the same time, but every step that you take is away from to go into, because the eyes have to be fixed on the shepherd and not on the sheep. They follow Me. They see Me. I am the sole horizon, the limits to the top, and the limits to the side. And the length and breadth and height of their whole horizon, and they follow Me.

Do you see? This is the price of being a disciple. This is the cost of discipleship, for every step of obedience to Christ is a step into loneliness, because there will be others, husbands, wives, neighbors, friends, who will not see. Not disobedient necessarily. God just does not bring everyone the same voice at the same time. He does not say the same thing to everyone at the same time. But His sheep hear His voice.

Now my dear, this is the reason, and I speak to the youngest of you, you ought to cultivate listening to the voice of the Lord early in your Christian pilgrimage. You ought to, even in the little things begin to hear His voice, because if you get practice in the little things, when the big issue comes you will be prepared for them. And so it ought to be that there is a continuous sensitiveness to the voice of the Lord. It is going to be in your business. It is going to be with your friends.

It is going to be with your family. My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me. This is the price of discipleship. This is the cost of obedience. This is what it is going to mean to you, if you walk with the Lord. It is going to be lonely. There is only one with whom you can have fellowship, and that is the shepherd. You say, What about the other sheep? That is in passing. That is in passing, because you see the sheep are moving also, and so there may be a little time that you leave footprints side by side, but oh so much of our spiritual pilgrimage is that if we see the shepherd we have to move on alone.

What do you mean alone? Alone from family, husbands leave wives. Geography isn't important here. The social relationships are only of relative significance here. There are implications, but the thing that is of the utmost importance is that in every issue that is presented by the shepherd you have committed yourself to follow Him. Now the Lord knows His own. He knows you. He knows your heart. Thank goodness for all of us, we will not be judged by any of us. We may judge nations, but we will not have to judge each other.

Isn't that marvelous. I am surely glad of that. But one day we are going to stand before Him. Oh, you know if we can just see today how tremendously important it is for all of God's purpose and all of God's plans and all of God's economy, everything He has planned to do for you and do through you is conditioned upon your hearing His voice and following Him. And the only success that is achievable for a Christian is the success of obedience to His voice. Nothing else. My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me.

And the only thing He can say at the end of the pilgrimage is, Well done, good and faithful servant, you did what a sheep ought to do. You followed Me. Someone said, Were you ever called to Africa? And I had to say this in all honesty, I was clearly led to Africa, but the only call that I ever had was a call to follow Christ. I believe there is only one call that any Christian ever has, Come follow Me. This is your call. Have you been willing to pay the price of loneliness of following the God Shepherd?

Follow. I will follow Thee, My Lord. Follow every passing day. Let us bow in prayer. Our Father, we thank and praise Thee that Thou art God of all grace. We have such confidence in Thy character and such confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and without hesitation we can say, Lord, I will follow Thee. I will follow Thee. I know you will never lead me any place to embarrass me. You will never lead me any place to humiliate me. You will never lead me any place to hurt me. Never lead me any place beneath Your dignity or mine, never lead me any place demeaning; even if it is into the dungeon to die, it will be in transporting glory.

O Lord Jesus, we have such confidence in Thee. We have seen who Thou art, that unto us a child is born and unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon Thy shoulders, for Thy Name is Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and O Thou King of Kings and Lord of Lords, in our hearts of the increase of Thy government there shall be no end. We are set to follow Thee, wherever Thou dost lead, whatever it costs, whatever it means. Follow, I will follow Thee, my Lord.

Father, look upon us and see us thus. Should there be someone here that has never left death into life, might this be the day of beginnings, and for everyone that loves Thee, might this be the day of continuance, with a recommitment of heart and life to this which began our life and will complete it following the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us joy and blessing, and realization that this is the way to success for ourselves in joy, and for Thy Son in Glory, all He asks is that we come follow Him.

He takes the responsibility for where He leads us, and how He leads us, and into what and through what He leads us, and we have the responsibility to follow. But we proved to Thee tonight that we are Thy sheep, for Thou hast said, My sheep hear My voice, and they are known of Me, and they follow Me. Seal it to our hearts for Jesus' sake. Now let us stand for the Benediction. Let Thy grace and mercy and peace be and abide upon us, our Father. Make this a precious evening with the truth laid hold upon and lays hold upon us. Bless us. For Jesus' sake. Amen. * Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, April 15, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor. ©PRBTMI 1962

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