

Jesus got what he paid for

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[0 : 00] We're going to have the Bible reading now. I'll be reading from John chapter 10, verses 1 to 30. John 10, 1 to 30.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[1 : 03] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the father knows me and I know the father, and I lay my life down for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

[2 : 15] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I received from my father.

There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, He is a demon and is insane. Why listen to him? Others said, These are not words of the one who is oppressed by a demon.

Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? At that time, the feast of dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon.

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe.

The works that I do in my father's name bear witness about me. But you do not believe, because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

[3 : 17] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand.

I and the father are one. Good morning, everyone. For those who are visitors, my name is David. I'm one of the pastors here. We're going to be looking at John chapter 10 this morning. Sometimes you find yourself thinking you're committed to an idea, and you think you're committed to the idea because you think it's something we need, or something we want, or something we expect, or something we even demand.

But then, when we actually experience the thing that we think we're committed to in reality, we actually quickly reject it and decide we don't like it at all.

Let me give you an example. It's been happening over this past few days. So we want, we expect, we need, we demand our government keep us safe from COVID.

[4 : 35] That's their job. But when we experience that strong lead, when they exercise their jurisdiction, their power, to enforce an extended lockdown, to tell us to wear masks, to use a QR code to check into a venue, suddenly we feel the resentment rising up within us because, at the end of the day, we don't want them to use their power to control us individually.

It cramps our lifestyle. So we think we want something, but we don't really want it when we experience it. I think it's the same sort of principle when we come to thinking about God's sovereign power.

We believe that we need it, that we want it in our lives, we expect it, sometimes we even demand it. We particularly say when it comes to God's sovereign power and control in the world.

We expect God to be in control. We expect him to use his power for good in the world. But again, you see, we quickly resent that sovereign power when we experience it in our own lives.

And we quickly move to crying, that's not fair. Especially when that sovereign power impacts us in our lifestyle or in our personal life.

[6 : 09] So, for instance, it might be loss of health or the Lord bringing a circumstance to it that robs us of happiness. And we suddenly find ourselves saying, well, actually, no, I don't like God's sovereign power.

It's unfair. It's unfair. I want you to bring that thought with you this morning as we move into John chapter 10, but I'll say more about it in a little while.

Because this morning, we're continuing the series of exploring how we experience God's sovereign power in our salvation. And this morning, third in the series, we're going to be looking at Jesus as God's good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

Now, again, I want to ask you the question. We all know the phrase, God's good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. But the question I want to ask you now before we jump into the detail is, what sort of shepherd do you have in mind?

Now, theoretically, I suspect, we want, we expect, we need a strong shepherd. A shepherd who will guide us.

[7 : 31] A shepherd who is capable of protecting us. A shepherd who wants to nurture us. Nurture us into the green pastures to follow the metaphor or what the Bible would call the good life.

Isn't that what we want the shepherd to do? Well, perhaps at a theory level, but I think, again, when it comes to practicality, we actually are more likely to demand a shepherd who will actually just be happy to sit on the hillside and stay out of our lives and let us do what we want as sheep.

Let us go where we want and do what we want and think what we want, but still be there to rescue us if we get ourselves in serious trouble. By definition, I think, a shepherd must have sovereign power over his sheep if you want to follow through the picture with me.

Now, a good shepherd will exercise that sovereign power in love and mercy for the good of the sheep. But even then, we dig down into that.

What will that look like? Well, at times, it will look like the shepherd up the front. Remember, this is picture language. Shepherd out the front saying, come on, sheep, follow me. I'm going to take you to good pastures.

[8 : 58] I'm going to take you to the place where you can thrive and enjoy the good life. But at times, the shepherd will need to be behind the sheep, giving them a good prod or a good thump because they're being difficult.

They don't want to go where he knows they need to go. They want to go somewhere contrary. They want to do their own thing. And it's at that point the good shepherd becomes evident in how he masters his sheep.

So, with those two thoughts, I'm just going to leave them in your mind for a minute and you'll see hopefully how they come with us and become relevant as we move into John 10. But before we do that, I just want to recap the series thus far.

And we're saying that we really need God's sovereign grace in our lives individually if we're to be saved. Why? Because we saw two weeks ago, three weeks ago, that in our natural born state, we are spiritually dead towards God.

That is, unable and unwilling to come to God. We're actually hardwired to rebel against God. We're under God's wrath and condemnation.

[10:22] It would be a terrible plight. It is a terrible plight. Except that then, God also said in Ephesians 2 that God makes us alive in the Lord Jesus.

God, in his love and mercy, acts sovereignly to call spiritually dead sinners to new life, to new relationship with him.

and he does that, as we saw last week, both through what I call the outward call of actually hearing the gospel of Jesus and the inward call which is taking those words that we hear by the Holy Spirit and actually using those words to change us from the inside out, change our hearts, our minds, our desires, our attitudes so that we actually are able and willing to respond to Jesus and come to him. We need the sovereign power of God at work in our lives if we're to be saved.

But it's more than that. God's justice demands that guilt, the guilt of sin cannot be ignored. So not only does God need to sovereignly call us to himself because otherwise we wouldn't come, but God needs to actually do something to deal with our sin, something that we couldn't do for ourselves.

[11:47] And God does that. He acts sovereignly to deal with our sins, clearing the way, therefore, to new acceptance and relationship with him. And in Bible language, God did this through what we call the atonement or the sacrificial substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross.

The word is, another word we use is redemption. or in John chapter 10, the language is the good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

So let's jump into John 10 and explore the atonement or explore the redeeming work of Jesus under the metaphor of shepherd. I want to just ask three questions this morning to try and help us walk through this.

And the first question is if you're following and if you've got one of these coming in the door, you can follow the outline of the sermon. First question is, what was God's intent for the good shepherd? What was God's intent for the good shepherd? Well, let's have a look at some of the verses in John chapter 10. Look at verse 18. No one takes it from me, but I lay down my life of my own accord.

[13:03] I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up. Then this sentence, this charge I have received from my Father. And verse 30.

Jesus says, I and the Father are one. Jesus is willingly working in partnership with his Father and in the light of his Father's purpose and salvation, which includes the atonement, which includes redemption, the good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

Verse 9. Jesus says, I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. Jesus is the doorkeeper of heaven.

And only his died-for sheep will be allowed in. But, once they're in, then they'll find pasture.

That is, they'll be safe and secure. They'll thrive. They'll enjoy life. The good life for eternity. verses 14, 15, and 16.

[14:23] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Jesus has been given the responsibility of doing everything necessary to bring God's sheep back to himself, back to glory.

And thus far, it's entirely consistent with what we saw back last week in John chapter 6, verse 51, where Jesus said, again, a different metaphor.

He's talking about being the bread of life in the passage in chapter 6. And Jesus says, the bread that I give, sorry, the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Jesus' mission from heaven was to be God's life-giving bread to those in the world called by God.

[15:33] Now, step back from John chapter 10 or John chapter 6. This idea of Jesus being sent, Jesus on a mission, is so important to John that across his gospel, no less than 30 times does John put in the lips of Jesus or Jesus speaks and John records it is a better way of saying it, that he's been sent on a mission by the Father.

He was sent into the world and the word world there is a theological description of the world. That is, the world of rebellion and sin in opposition to God.

And he's been sent into the world to do what? To save God's sheep. Now, here's the point. The Father has a particular intent in sending Jesus into the world.

So that means Jesus has a particular mission in the world. That is, as I've already said, to do everything required to deliver or save God's guilty, condemned, helpless sheep.

Now, second question. For whom did the good shepherd lay down his life?

[17 : 00] In other words, who and what did Jesus have in mind when he died on the cross? Who and what did Jesus have in mind?

Well, John 10 gives a really clear answer. Who and what did Jesus have in mind when he died on the cross?

He had his sheep. What did he have in mind? Their actual or particular redemption. Look at the verses.

Verse 3. The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

Now, in past life, I come off a farm and I can tell you that farmers did not know their sheep by name. Nor could they care less about individual preferences of their sheep.

[18 : 05] In a big spread with a big mob, you mastered them, and you were doing well if they were within 50 or 60 of what should have been there. You just lived with losses.

That's life as a sheep farmer. But Jesus knows his sheep by name. Personal, individual, particular.

Verse 11. Sorry, he knows them and they know him and will respond to him. Verse 11. I'm the good shepherd, says Jesus.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. See how the two things are coming together?

Jesus has a particular group of people in mind that are the focus of his mission, and it is for this particular group that Jesus will lay down his life in redemption.

Verse 14 and 15. Same thing again. I'm the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

[19 : 26] again, get the impact that Jesus knows those for whom he will lay down his life as distinctly, individually, and particularly as the Father knows him, Jesus.

Verses 16, 17, and 18. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold, or this sheep pen. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. Jesus' death will be the key act of mastering God's one flock, a flock made up of Jews, Jewish sheep, and Gentile sheep.

But Jesus' death will be the mastering or the gathering of this one flock, the saving of this one flock, the collecting of specific individuals known to him, and who will in turn respond to him.

[20 : 56] Now, this flock is described in other parts of the Bible as the church, the bride of Christ, or the elect. Verses 26 and 27.

You do not believe, remember he's speaking to the Jewish religious leaders here particularly, but he's actually speaking to a bigger crowd. he says, but you do not believe because you're not part of my flock.

Again, we see the parameters and the delineations. Clearly, not all people belong to the shepherd. Clearly, the shepherd is not dying for all people.

The fact that the Jews and the Jewish religious leaders as a whole refused to believe in Jesus was confirmation that they're not part of the flock.

They're not part of his sheep. They're not the focus of his mission. 27 to 30.

[22 : 03] Jesus affirms the particularity of his intention in his forthcoming death. father and son working in an inseparable partnership of absolute sovereign power to gather the sheep, to bring them into the sheep pen, and to secure them forever.

God's intent, Jesus' mission. Friends, hopefully you don't think I've labored that too much, but I did mean to labor it.

because here's the point. The Bible never speaks of Jesus dying simply to make salvation possible. The Bible never speaks of Jesus just sort of putting it on the table and saying, well, look, here's a great opportunity for anybody who will avail themselves of it.

But you need to decide for yourselves whether you want to embrace the benefits of my death, says Jesus, or not. It's up to you. No, the Bible doesn't speak about that.

The Bible doesn't speak like that. The Bible always speaks about Jesus dying to save or secure the salvation of his sheep, his people.

[23 : 52] So, may I suggest that particular, the word particular, and I'm using a theological term now, the word particular is an important description of redemption and atonement.

So, we talk about particular redemption or particular atonement. Now, here's the practical issue here. When it comes to redemption or atonement, all Christians agree about the necessity of God's sovereign power for redemption through the atoning death of Jesus.

All Christians believe that that's necessary to deal with sin, to restore relationship with God. But apparent unity quickly vanishes because many Christians, and might I say this morning, most evangelicals, find it impossible to accept that Jesus died for a definite or particular group of sinners. Instead, they believe that Christ's sacrificial death made it possible for everyone in the world to be saved, but doesn't directly save anyone.

What's required then for the benefit for the Christ's death to be effective in the life of an individual is for that individual to decide to respond. using their own faith to embrace what Jesus has done in his death.

[25 : 32] And so I argue with you this morning, or present to you this morning, the proposal, that that is why the term particular redemption or particular atonement is a really important and indeed helpful term.

It helps us to speak with the same precision as the Bible speaks. It avoids diminishing Christ's sovereign power and salvation by thinking that Jesus died simply in the hope that some would respond and make use of that which he's put on the table for them.

that would diminish the effectiveness of Christ's death. And it also avoids diminishing Christ's sovereign power and salvation by suggesting that the quality or sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial death is somehow limited.

No, the quality of Christ's death is without limit. it is a perfect sacrifice. Well, he'll save anybody. But what's particular is God's design, God's intention in salvation.

It's that that's limited or particular to his chosen sheep. So, at this point then I need to address an objection.

[27 : 05] What about all those verses that speak of Christ's death as being for the world and for all? And I've given you three or four of the most common ones referred to in this objection.

Well, lots could be said about this and so I'm giving you a very, very summary form. Hopefully it's not a trivialized response but it is going to be a brief summary response.

And I would say this, that a careful study of these words in their context shows that the first impression of what they mean is not correct.

In context, when you read the word all or the whole world, it never means all people or the whole of humanity without exception.

Context will show that fairly easily, I believe. Now, sometimes all or the world actually means all types of people regardless of their social, political, or economic circumstances.

[28 : 21] That is, Christ died for all types of people. And those sorts of verses are sometimes emphasized against, say, that the narrow thinking of the religious Jews who thought, well, Jesus only died for Jewish people or good people.

Sometimes, all or the world emphasizes the fact that there is no limit to the power of Christ's death to forgive. And so, it's used to affirm the genuine offer of the gospel to any sinner in any circumstance, in any generation, in any part of our world.

The offer of the gospel is the same. The outward call of God is the same. And sometimes all and the world is used in a theologically defined context.

That is, it emphasizes the cosmic significance of Christ's death. sin had a cosmic significance in God's creation.

Christ's death has an equal cosmic significance in undoing the effects of sin and restoring God's creation.

[29 : 47] It's right to say that Christ's death is for the world because the world theologically represents the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom in rebellion against God. And Christ's death is powerful and significant at that same level as he reconciles the universe to himself.

Now, I just want to illustrate that touched down in 1 John chapter 2, verse 2. So, if you want to open your Bible to that, then I just want to take a couple of minutes and touch down on one of these verses.

Probably the verses that people would go to most commonly and it's the verse that most, I think, would think was a king hit to this notion of particular redemption.

1 John chapter 2, verse 2. Well, I'll read the first three verses, the first two verses. John says, My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. But also for the sins of the whole world.

[31 : 11] Now, it seems to be there that Christ dies for all people without exception. salvation. But when you look at the context of that verse, and the context is chapter 1, then quite a different perspective pops up.

As I say, chapter 1 is the context. I don't have time to get into it in detail. You can do it for yourself. John in chapter 1 is bursting with excitement about the eternal fellowship or salvation.

that is now enjoyed by those who have come to know and experience the word of life, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he's bursting with excitement, especially given that these new Christians are struggling on a daily basis with ongoing sin and failure in their lives.

Christians. And into that situation, there's been some heresies thrown in, some ways of trying to reconcile that.

And so if you look at chapter 1, you'll see in verse 6, three things, three options that people have been given by locals. Verse 6, if we say, verse 8, if we say, verse 10, if we say.

[32 : 37] So what it means in short form is that some were encouraging the Christians to play down or find a way to reduce the notion of sin so they could live comfortably and not be worried about their daily failures and sin.

And John says to them, no, no, no, that's not the way to go at all. One, it's not right, but two, it's not the way to go. What you should do, moving into chapter 2, is not try and find a way to play down your sin, but look to Jesus and play up what he's done for you in redemption.

Sin is a reality for us as we move on in our Christian life. It's a daily struggle, John's really saying. And John's urging believers not to attempt to play down the reality of ongoing sin, but to take comfort in Christ.

Totally confident that his propitiation or that word just means atoning sacrifice, has dealt with all the sins of his people, including past and future sins.

So John's just making a gospel statement of comfort and encouragement to these Christians.

Christians. And John reassures these Christians with all the warmth, the authority, and comfort of a father, speaking to them as little children.

[34 : 04] He said, look, this includes you in your daily struggle with sin. So to put it all together, John's saying this, the salvation that comes through Jesus' death is not restricted to the immediate circle of disciples who had actually seen, heard, and touched Jesus.

That's where John started his letter. He's so excited because he had seen, heard, and touched. Well, John says, well, yeah, that's true. But the benefits of Christ's death aren't restricted to that group.

Nor are they restricted to those who are Jewish and who had been converted through the apostles, something that John also speak about. Rather, says John, it is equally real for all Christians.

Any Christian, anyone who has come into union with Christ, has this assurance that the atoning death of Christ has actually dealt with their sins once for all.

Any nationality, any part of the world, any period of history has been covered. If you've come into union with Christ, you're covered by the death of Christ.

[35 : 20] Now, again, there's lots more to be said on that and those of you who may differ from me may well be thinking, no, that's not fair. But, anyway, that's an attempt to be fair in the dealing with that and I can talk to you later or you can talk to me.

Third question, and we're not far from being done now. Did the good shepherd get what he paid for? Well, go back to John chapter 10 now and look again at verses 28 to 30 and the answer, we've already read that out.

I won't read it again. The answer is obviously yes. And it has to be yes because the father in his salvation plan entrusted to Jesus a great number to be saved.

Father's intent, the son's mission. And since he sent Jesus into the world to secure their salvation and master the flock, the flock we call the church, then this is precisely what will happen.

Friends, it's inconceivable that God the father in his intent and God the son in his execution or mission, that those two would fail or that somehow or other would get out of sync with each other.

[36 : 48] Both the cost of salvation and the return on the investment, God's investment in salvation, was calculated precisely by the father. The cost was enormous.

The life is on precious son. But the return on his investment was also enormous. Every one of his guilty, spiritually dead sheep would be saved.

That is, moved from spiritual deadness to spiritual life and vitality for eternity. It must be yes.

Jesus did get what he died for because logic demands it. God's death. The doctrine of total inability, total depravity of all people, the doctrine of God's sovereign irresistible call of God's chosen sheep to life, demands the next step of God's sovereign power in our lives.

That is, particular redemption. God's determined that one dead sheep should be brought to life.

[37 : 58] God calls that sheep to life. The sin of that sheep must be dealt with in particular redemption as Jesus dies for that particular sheep.

God determines that not only, sorry, God determines not only that a great number of spiritually dead people will be made alive, but he also makes it happen. He makes it happen by the sovereign power of his Holy Spirit renewing a person from the inside out and creating those responses that would bring a person to Jesus.

And he does it by dealing with a sin that's a barrier to your renewed relationship. God's process from start to finish.

It's particular in its view going forward. It's particular in its application. It's legally binding and it's eternal in nature.

And it results in abundant life. Now friends, as usual, there's lots more that could be said and perhaps lots more that should be said.

[39 : 13] But just let me conclude the last couple of minutes by asking this question. Does it matter practically to talk about particular redemption? The answer is yes, it does.

It's enormously beneficial in the area of assurance. If you know anything of your sinful heart and realize that at one time you were dead, spiritually dead, in response or in respect of God, in terms of relationship with God, if you know that where you've come from, then it's lovely looking forward to know that your security, eternal security, is not rest on yourself and what you've done, but rest entirely on what Jesus has done for you and has done in you and continues to do in you.

And this in turn will mean that the Father and Jesus are worthy of all our praise.

So let me speak personally to you. If you're a Christian here this morning, you've already experienced God's absolute sovereignty in your salvation. The sovereign power of God took hold of you when you were spiritually dead and couldn't have cared less about God.

The renewing power of the Holy Spirit changed your heart and mind and desire so you responded to God's irresistible call to come to him for a new life and new security.

[41 : 02] And Jesus has died specifically for your sin. So your relationship with God has been restored. Now go back to my very opening point.

What's not to like about that? That's one of those things we long for. We need. We need God's sovereign power in our lives. And here when we see God's sovereign power in our life, it's such a beautiful thing.

And likewise, your friends and family and neighbors and workmates, they too are in a spiritual state of deadness towards God.

And you know what? As the Bible says, they don't even know it. They too need more than just the possibility of salvation made available to them.

They too need more than just an opportunity for salvation provided by Jesus and left conveniently on a table saying, well, look, here it is. You know, just make use of it if you want to.

[42 : 15] They need God's sovereign power to do for them and do in them exactly what he's done for you and in you.

That which they could never do for themselves. They need the good shepherd to rescue, restore, keep and lead them into green pastures.

And isn't it just wonderful to know that that's precisely the description of Jesus and precisely his intent for his sheep. Let me pray. Lord, help us not to stumble over your sovereign power.

Quite possibly, Lord, the point of stumbling for each of us is that our own sense of sovereignty gets in the way of your sovereignty.

And Lord, quite honestly, we pontificate and we cry unfair and we raise all sorts of objections from a point of view of great limitation in our understanding of your plan and your purpose and your

character.

[43 : 50] Help us, Lord, to hang on to that which you say. That you have chosen to act in a particular way in salvation in our universe for your own glory.

To show people that you're a loving, merciful and good God who wants a vast multitude to be saved. Even those who deserve nothing but condemnation.

Help us, Lord, not to trip over that as something abhorrent or unfair. But help us to see something of your beauty and your wonder and just to be amazed that you have deigned to operate in your world in this way.

And help us individually, Lord, to respond to you as the one who is all goodness, all mercy, all grace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Amen.