

“I Can’t Hear You...!” – John 10:22-42

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John 10:22-42 Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. 24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. 26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 "I and My Father are one." 31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" 33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"?' 35 "If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36 "do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? 37 "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 "but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." 39 Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. 40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. 41 Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." 42 And many believed in Him there.

One day in a conversation with an associate, Napoleon Bonaparte posed the question “**who was Jesus?**” Receiving no reply, Napoleon said the following: “*Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him.... I think I understand something of human nature; and I tell you, all these were men, and I am a man: none else is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than man.... I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me.... but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts.... Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man toward the unseen, that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others to satisfy; He asks for that which a philosopher may seek in vain at the hands of his friends, or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother. He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally; and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. All who sincerely believe in Him, experience that remarkable, supernatural love toward Him. This phenomenon is accountable; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. This is it, which strikes me most; I have often thought of it. This is which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ.*”

The last few chapters of John have been a wild ride. The words of Christ have been both inspiring, and for some of us, *no doubt troubling*. Repeatedly He has challenged not only our Christian commitment and our resolve, but literally our very salvation. Yes...*our very eternal standing even as we were physically sitting in church!* Jesus certainly wasn't the last to suggest that many of those who think we are sheep are not sheep at all, and that many have indeed attempted to "climb into the sheepfold" in some other manner than using the door who is Christ Himself. Such handling of this issue is rare to say the least, especially to deal with it in **our** day...one where the greater church seems overtly bent upon making people feel good about themselves and secure in their religious position. We hear things like "Our church just loves people..." which essentially is saying, in light of this subject, that Jesus Himself did **not** love them by bringing it up?

Spurgeon once was quoted saying "*Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter.*" He said elsewhere that "*It is of no use for any of you to try to be soul-winners if you are not bearing fruit in your own lives. How can you serve the Lord with your lips if you do not serve Him with your lives? How can you preach His gospel with your tongues, when with hands, feet, and heart you are preaching the devil's gospel, and setting up an antichrist by your practical unholiness?*"

Paul the apostle was 'first out of the gate' to carry this torch, but history is full of great servants of God who were bold enough...*albeit politically incorrect enough*, to challenge people in their comfortable religious positions. If someone claims to love me, I personally would **want** them to call me out on this matter when I consider what is at stake. If we bristle when we are so confronted, we have to acknowledge that our very defensiveness is a balking 'tell' as to the state of our hearts. People who are sure about their position in Christ don't feel the necessity or the impulse to brace themselves against such enquiry, not to mention lash out against the messenger.

However, these boys had already tried to kill Jesus once herein, simply because they didn't like what He was saying. They again in this passage pick up rocks to stone him to death, because Jesus would have the audacity to suggest that they weren't God's favorite kids and that in fact maybe they weren't part of the family at all. I can't help but wonder how His words *and mine* have been received here and in our day over the past few weeks. One of the sure signs of a hard heart and closed ears is the repeated asking of the same question over and over again, despite having been given the answer. Albert Einstein said that the very definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." But when we don't *really* want to hear the answer or further we don't really *like* the answer we are getting, then we are left with nothing to do except **ask again**, or punch the speaker in the nose, or run away and rake him over the coals on an anonymous Facebook page and Google review!

These guys ask Jesus *yet again*, "**So...are you really the Messiah?**" Jesus had stated clearly on more than one occasion that He was the long-awaited Messiah, and those are just the times we have record of. It was not some sort of secret He was holding back except for a few close friends. NO, this was public knowledge! He told the woman at the well, He told the blind man that was healed, he acknowledged it to his apostles when Peter said "You are the **Messiah**, the Son of the living God," He said so to the high priest when He was questioned, and repeatedly allowed people to worship Him and call Him "Son of David" which is a Messianic title. Thus He told these guys that He *already told them* that He was the Messiah. Despite all that He had already told them, these guys just kept asking, and sadly they are asking still. If you were to do a simply Google search of "*did Jesus claim to be the Messiah?*" you would be inundated with pages of egghead debates asking the same question in 2017.

Jesus not only relies upon his confession to these men before Him as a testimony, but he relies on...*are you sitting down for this...His **works*** to prove who He is! Oh the horror! Our works...our actions and living serve to reflect who we really are spiritually? Yes! And like His testimony herein, Jesus said so repeatedly but we are still asking that question over and over also and dancing around the answer *because we just simply don't want to hear it*. So is 'good works' an adequate stand-alone barometer of one's salvation status? **No**. Lots of people can do good stuff. Does it make us saved or change our position with God? **No**. We are saved by Christ, live by Christ, and will enter eternity and be kept forever *by CHRIST*. However, all of that is not the end of the story! Because our lifestyle and works **do indeed** speak into the judgment that we are called to make concerning ourselves and others when it comes to faith. They do not **AFFECT** who we are, but they do **reflect** who we are! Look what Jesus Himself said:

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but the one who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before others, **so that they may see your good works** and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

John 14:15 “If you love me, **you will keep my commandments.**”

Luke 9:23 “And he said to all, If anyone would come after me, **let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.**”

John 3:19-21 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.**”

And all of that doesn’t begin to exhaust the totality of scripture on this subject:

Jeremiah 17:10 “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man **according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.**”

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, **but they deny him by their works.** They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works,** which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

James 2:26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also **faith apart from works is dead.**

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. **You are serving the Lord Christ.**

James 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and **fails to do it, for him it is sin.**

All of scripture records verse after verse after verse to drive home that same concept, and yet so many want to still stand back and disregard all of it while clutching the concept of ‘grace’ and a “Jesus does it all” philosophy in their white knuckled fist...claiming anyone who would have a high regard for service and right living as cultic and legalistic. Perhaps Jesus would be as likely to be stoned today as when He walked this earth? Jesus clearly is saying that even if you don’t believe His words, you cannot deny His works. **Can you Christian say the same?** The fact that these men could not “hear Him” confirm that they were not His sheep, and the same applies today!

We must note that these verses clearly state also that Jesus *gives* us eternal life. We can’t earn it. We will never deserve it. It is a free gift that comes to us when He calls us and we respond and follow. But many of us see salvation as a certificate that we hang on the wall like professional credentials instead of a *place...a state of being*. And because He is the Good Shepherd, we are safe ***in that place***. We will not perish...we will not be stolen away. Oh, what a beautiful promise of security that is!

Yet again... *in the vein of not hearing*, we fail to acknowledge that we can however walk away from the shepherd and the other sheep and when the enemy takes us down we wonder what happened! And we can go so far as to actually *blame* the shepherd...questioning how *He* could have let such a thing happen! We are quick to stand on the promises of Christ, and slow to obey His directives as to ***our*** part. Jesus is heading fast to John 15, where He states clearly that He is vine and we are the branches and that we *must abide* or we are fruitless and ultimately “gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.” Over and over in that chapter He calls us to stay put...stay with the flock...stay connected to the vine. And He declared judgment and pain for the one who will not hear His words.

One of the tasks of the shepherd is to keep sheep away from poisonous plants. There are plants like Lantana that can be attractive to sheep, and a good shepherd will be aware of such. Yet sheep can be stubborn and persistent, and will eat it if they can. I found it ironic the list of behavioral symptoms of sheep poisoning. Signs of such include “standing alone, away from the flock or herd, acting confused, holding head down, and refusing to eat.” Ahhh...*you mean like one such in a human flock?* The sheep is safe if it stays with the Shepherd and hears Him and heads His direction. But to claim that one is safe under any circumstances...no matter what we do or how we live...is unscriptural and foolish.

I have heard plenty of folks claim Paul's words in Philippians 1:6 saying... *"He who has begun a good work in (them) will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."* Amen! But that is not a promise that will manifest in a life of one that is not really a sheep, nor will it guard one from foolish acts of rebellion on the part of one who is! To claim such a position without our personal participation and obedience is a rejection of scripture! If only we would *read on!* For just a couple of verses later Paul also says that his prayer was that *"... you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation — the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ — for this will bring much glory and praise to God."* (Philippians 1:9-11). If verse 6 is a promise despite our actions to the contrary, then why verses 9-11? Why in fact, the rest of the New Testament at all? Once I say the sinners prayer you can poke me with a fork, because I'm done! No...I have to continue to hear the shepherd, and when I do not, I prove I am not a sheep at all.

Now any time such a premise is preached, we must be careful to make clear that remaining in His arms is not primarily a matter of human effort, but rather a Holy Spirit indwelling and a love for Him along with His love for us. But the point is, He will not force us if we are not wanting and willing! Scripture clearly states that our departure from His voice...a rejection of His voice, places us firmly in the category of the lost. Never are we insinuating that we will walk in perfection, or that a stumble on our part negates our club membership. But when I am purposely unwilling to hear the Shepherd direct me...not just console and encourage me, then I am not a sheep!

Many of us insist on eating the poisonous plants and there is going to be a price to pay. I cannot say what...perhaps just pain of poison. But the fact we are unwilling to hear His words over and over stated to us should gravely concern us! Often we will reject what we know is right and return again and again to the poisonous plants. These men would simply not hear it! Their ears were covered. Jesus was doing a great work in their midst and communicating plainly, but they just wouldn't hear it. They were there with Him, but wouldn't hear. They practiced religious lifestyle but wouldn't hear it. They went to church, but wouldn't hear it.

He told them to witness the fruit of His life...that such testifies as to who and what He was. But like the children's game of 'telephone', what they were hearing wasn't His voice any longer. Passed from person to person, what they were hearing was only part of the original and a muddled message at best! It is easy to love the *promises* of God...like music to our ears, and still actually reject His directives lived out. Certainly many have heard the pulpit messages from this church via internet, radio or TV, but upon coming here with the intent of participating, they are quite quickly disillusioned and deterred because we aim our works to reflect those words and that is a much different thing than just listening to the music. I mean, I can hear the song, but can I sing it? Ahhh...a much different scenario! Obedience alone says I hear you...

Ryle renders our passage as follows: *"If I do the works of my Father, then, though you may not be convinced by what I say, be convinced by what I do. Though ye resist the evidence of my words, yield to the evidence of my works. In this way learn to know and believe that I and My Father are indeed one, He in Me and I in Him, and that in claiming to be His Son, I speak no blasphemy."*

Do we hear His life speaking? Do others hear *our* lives speak?

God told Ezekiel this: *"Son of man, your people talk about you in their houses and whisper about you at the doors. They say to each other, 'Come on, let's go hear the prophet tell us what the LORD is saying!' So my people come pretending to be sincere and sit before you. They listen to your words, but they have no intention of doing what you say. Their mouths are full of lustful words, and their hearts seek only after money. You are very entertaining to them, like someone who sings love songs with a beautiful voice or plays fine music on an instrument. They hear what you say, but they don't act on it! But when all these terrible things happen to them — as they certainly will — then they will know a prophet has been among them."* (Ezekiel 33:30-33)