

THE Door

John 10:9

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

There was a certain unbeliever who had a Christian as a friend. This Christian frequently spoke to the unbeliever about Jesus Christ and His church, but with no apparent impact. One day while riding to work together the Christian handed his friend a New Testament with the request that he take it home and read it. The unbeliever didn't promise to read it, but in courtesy he took it along home. Some days later he opened the New Testament and began reading. He read one chapter, two, three. He read one book, a second, and a third until sometime past midnight he exclaimed: "That Jesus is either the greatest braggart who ever lived or He is the Son of God as He claims."

It is true that Jesus makes some tremendous claims for Himself. For example, He says: "I am the way; I am the truth; I am the resurrection and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." In our text He makes the claim: "I am the gate (or the door)." To the unbeliever these sayings of Christ might sound like idle boasting. Not so to us Christians. We know that since Jesus Christ is the Son of God his claims are true.

I wonder how many doors you will pass through today? How many do you use in a week? There are twenty-five doors in my home. I've gone through twelve so far this morning in this church building. Some doors are important like the door to the king's palace or the door which leads to the United States gold reserves at Fort Knox. The Bible lists two hundred thirty-six doors. Among these are such important doors as the door of man's heart, the temple door, the everlasting doors. In the midst of all these important doors our Savior exclaims: "I am the gate or the door." What a tremendous claim!

A group was discussing: What's the one great thing that you hope to find in life? One said: "I want to be a success. As a boy I got a late start, my grades were poor, all the other boys could outrun me. I want to prove that I can succeed and outdo most of them." The second said: "I want a lot of money. I never had much as a kid. My wife grew up in luxury. I want to build her a palace and dress her like a queen." After some thought the third remarked: "I guess the one thing I really want to

find is happiness."

When you come right down to it isn't that what everyone wants? Isn't that what you want? The problem lies in the fact that most people don't know how or where to find it.

Some think they can find happiness in many possessions -- in things and in more things.

John had always been a bright boy. He went to college. In the city he found a beautiful and very ambitious girl. Even before they were married they bought a large brand-new house, furnished every room with gorgeous furniture, marked one car "his" another "hers." This was really living!—until the bills started coming in. Both worked hard to make the payments. Working different shifts they rarely saw each other or found any time to enjoy their precious possessions together. Before three years had passed they were divorced.

The Bible reminds us: "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Others feel they can find happiness in high position and the recognition of men. A high official in the state of Illinois was convicted of embezzling more than a million dollars. He was not what people would call a mean and evil man. He was always giving parties, picking up the bills for others, taking his friends on trips. He didn't steal because he loved money. He stole because he felt his happiness depended on others liking him.

Still others, like the Prodigal Son, feel that happiness can be found in sin, in living their own lives just as the flesh wants to live them. They talk much about freedom. What they really mean is license. Like the Prodigal Son they resent being fenced in by the regulations of their heavenly Father. They want to live by their own rules or without rules. They lie, cheat, are sexually immoral, get drunk, misuse drugs -- they follow where their own sinful flesh leads them. Their end like that of the Prodigal in the pigsty. Sex used according to the direction of God is blessed, unifying, and the source of much joy. But when abused it becomes the source of physical and mental suffering, divisions in the home, divorce, alienation from those who are most dear, and worst of all alienation from God.

Possessions, high honor, sin—all are dead ends. Contrary to public opinion, they are not the door to happiness. Christ proclaims: "I am the

door: I am the gate.”

Like the sheep in Palestine could go in and out of the sheepfold to graze or rest in safety, so Christ has become our Refuge in Whom we find rest and the source we can go out to feed on the abundance which He supplies for His people. Christ is the door to happiness.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Shall be "saved"—what a beautiful word! To be saved implies that we have been delivered from something evil. We have. We have been saved from all the evil consequences of sin. In Jesus Christ who died for our sins all our sins are forgiven. We are, therefore, saved from alienation, from separation, from fear and doubt, from the devil and his powers, even from hell itself. We are also saved FOR something—for being children of God; for fellowship with Christ; for a new life of peace, joy, service under God; for a life that's really worth living here and in eternity.

In verse ten Christ adds: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Christ is the door to happiness—not just to life, but to the abundant life. Many of you in this congregation know how true this is. Christ is your door. Through Him you go to your Father as it pleases you. It may be to confess some sin; to receive His forgiveness; to ask for power, a stronger faith, deeper peace, greater joy, or some other blessing. Through Christ you go out to your daily tasks, knowing that in all that you do you are serving Him and that every hour of the day you will be under His care and blessing.

How blessed we are. God in His grace has led us to make Christ our door. Let's use it daily—many times a day, for the oftener we use it the more happy and abundant is our life.

In my parish in Houston, Texas, I often visited a member who was in the M.D. Anderson cancer hospital. He had a roommate, with whom I was privileged to share God's Word. He stopped me as he was being discharged and said: "I want you to know how thankful I am for the cancer that brought me here. If God hadn't brought me to the hospital I might never have learned the way to heaven. All my life, I hoped to get to heaven but I didn't know the way."

This is the tragedy: people hoping for heaven, but trying the wrong doors. As Paul walked through the streets of Athens he found the streets

lined with altars to many gods. When he addressed the Athenians on Mars' hill he remarked: "I perceive that in all things you are very religious" (Acts 17:22). As one travels through India, Japan, and other eastern countries and observes their expensive temples and thousands of shrines along the roads one can still say: "I perceive that in all things you are very religious." The tragedy lies in this that not one of these religions recognizes Jesus Christ as the Savior who died for man's sin so that those who believe in Him can have everlasting life.

In America there are thousands who are religious but not Christian. The American religion might be summed up with: "I live right and do right. Therefore God will take me to heaven". What people ignore is the fact that no one lives right and does right all the time. This is precisely what the Bible calls sin and alienation from God. Even if person would always live right and do right, it wouldn't save him. St. Paul said it in Romans 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." And to the Ephesians he wrote: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Christ is the only gate or door to forgiveness, happiness, and heaven. He doesn't say: "I AM a door," as though there were others. He insists: "I am THE door"—the only one. This might come as a surprise to some who insist there are many doors or many different ways.

Christ is the door because of the cross. Because Christ carried the cross and with it all our sins and punishments He became the door of salvation. Take away the cross of Christ and He is no longer the door. The cross was laid on Christ by the design of our heavenly Father. Because of His unspeakable love for sinners He laid our sins and our crosses on Jesus.

"If anyone enters in"—that's your comfort and mine. The door is wide open. Any day, any time, we can go in. If there is anyone in this place of worship who for fear or some other reason has never gone in, I to invite you to do so now. It's a great experience! Any time you go in to the Father through Christ He will receive you, forgive your sins, empower you for a new life, make you feel good all over.

"If anyone enters in"—that's our incentive for missions. More than four billion people

scattered in many countries are still trying the wrong doors. For all these, too, Christ is the door. Ours is the privilege to inform them that the door is open and that the Father in heaven is just waiting for them to come in.

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.” Amen.

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