

Thieves and robbers

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

John 10:1

Although very useful for finding passages and aiding mutual study, sometimes the chapter divisions in our Bibles may obscure important contextual connections if we are not careful. Such is the case with this introduction to an important parabolic teaching of Jesus. We must look to the end of chapter nine to observe the main recipients of this teaching. Jesus is continuing to address the question of the Pharisees who had asked Him, "Are we blind also?", to which He replied, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." These Pharisees were members of the group that had just cast out of the synagogue the man who was born blind, whom Jesus had healed on the sabbath. They had cast him out after he had made the logical deduction that if Jesus could heal his blindness that He must be of God. Yet, while this simple man could draw such an obvious conclusion, the self-deceived Pharisees remained blind to the truth of His identity, as well as to the way into the kingdom of God.

Just as thieves remain blind to the illegitimacy of their approach to obtain material possessions, the Pharisees were blind to the illegitimacy of their concocted schemes for the attainment of righteousness. They had reduced the supreme law of God, which was designed to bring men to realize their utter inability to keep it and to seek Christ's righteousness by faith (Galatians 3:24), to a system of rules and traditions through which they thought they could attain righteousness before God (Romans 10:3). As a result, they were trying to climb into the sheepfold of God's flock by some other way, instead of submitting themselves to the righteousness of Christ, who had repeatedly demonstrated who He was.

And with whom do you identify, dear reader? Are you proudly going about to establish your own righteousness through your own system of works, rituals, and deeds, blind like the Pharisees to the true door of the sheep (John 10:7, 9)? Or will you, like the man born blind with his sight now restored, enter in by the only true door, recognizing that there is no other way into righteousness? Allow His glorious light to remove your blindness today, through the power of the perfect risen Christ to make you whole, through the gift of His righteousness imparted to your soul (Philippians 3:9).