

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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The True and False Shepherd

“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. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them” John 10:1-6.

We learn, dear brethren, from the sixth verse, that this passage is one of considerable difficulty. How much need then have I of a fresh baptism that I may speak rightly from it; and how much need have you to have your heart opened, as was that of Lydia, that you may attend unto the things that are spoken, if you would understand them. “This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.”

Let us notice:

(1). The false shepherd. “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.”

(2). The true shepherd. “But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

(3). The character of the sheep, which I fear I will not have time to enter upon.

First of all let us meditate for a little on what is said of the false shepherd. And we shall consider: (1). Who the false shepherd is; (2). What is the mark of the false shepherd? (3). What is the object of the false shepherd?

(1). *Who the false shepherd is.* It seems evident that this chapter is a continuation of the last. Christ had been speaking of the

Pharisees — those false shepherds, and in this chapter he shows that all false shepherds that will ever be in the world enter not by the door, but climb up some other way. It is evident that he speaks of one great false shepherd, and I have no doubt that it means the great false shepherd, the god of this world, who is continually trying to climb over the wall into the sheep-fold.

Now, Satan has got three ways in which he attacks the sheepfold. The first of these is by Antichrist. We know quite well that it is Satan who gives Antichrist all his power. You will see this in 2 Thessalonians 2:8:

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.”

Compare this with the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, verses 1 and 2:

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”

Now, we know quite well that the beast is the Church of Rome; we are told that the beast sits upon seven hills; and we are told at the end of the second verse that the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. So that there is no doubt, dear brethren, but that the great enemy of the sheep the false shepherd, who comes like a lamb, but who has the paw of a bear — is Antichrist. Now, there can be no doubt but that he gets his power from Satan.

But there is another way in which Satan attacks the sheepfold, and this is by the world. All you who are the children of disobedience, are the children of the devil. Satan has two ways in which he attacks the sheep-fold by the **world**: (a). he makes the

world to frown; (b). he makes it to smile upon you.

The third way in which Satan attacks the sheep-fold is through **false teachers**. It is said that Satan entered into Judas; and it is said that Satan filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira. So no doubt he fills the heart of many who are false ministers. You will see this in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

So you see, brethren, that there are many who are the ministers of righteousness, who are the ministers of Satan. It is he that helps them over the wall.

(2). What is the mark of the false shepherd. The great mark of false shepherds is that they enter not by the door: “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” (verse 1). Christ is the door into the sheep-fold: “I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (verse 9). The mark of every false shepherd is, he is not saved himself. This is the mark of the devil; he is lost! lost! lost! Those of you who follow Satan as a master are following the one who is lost himself. And this is the mark of the Antichrist, just that he enters not in by the door. They make another way into the sheepfold; they have other mediators than the one Mediator between God and man. This is the mark of the world, they enter not in by the door. Is it a lost world? Oh, dear sheep, why do you fear the world? It will soon perish. The same is the mark of all false ministers. Ah, brethren, remember that you live in a dangerous time.

(3). But farther, what is the object of the false shepherd. “The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (verse 10). You know, dear brethren, this is Satan’s great object in the

world; it is to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. This is the object of Antichrist. This is the object of the world. This is the object of all false ministers. This is the object of your enemies, little flock, for whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Satan comes to rob God of your souls; Antichrist comes to rob God of his throne — to rob God of his laws; and the world comes to rob God of his Sabbath. So with worldly ministers in like manner, they come to rob you of your soul, of peace, of joy, of holiness. Antichrist robs you of the true way to the Father. And the world comes to rob you — that pleasant world which says, “stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant” (Proverbs 9:17). And so with worldly ministers — this is their object, to rob, to steal, and to destroy. O my brethren, be warned to flee; be warned to flee from Antichrist; be warned to flee from an ungodly world! “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go” (Proverbs 22:24); or with a covetous man thou shalt not go. And beware of worldly ministers; if your minister should be taken from you, beware of them, for they will come to destroy.

Secondly, the true shepherd (verses 2, 5).

The shepherd of the sheep is Christ himself. He says in verse 11, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep;” and in verse 14, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” And why is he called the shepherd of the sheep? Just because he died for them. The sheep were once condemned to die; he came in the character of a man and died for them. Is he not worthy, then, to be called the shepherd of the sheep? He did not flee when he saw the wolf come. He sees the sheep that is lost, and goes after it. “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Luke 15:4).

Then, let us consider what are the marks of the shepherd of the sheep:

(1). ***“He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (verse 2).*** We see that the door is Christ himself. Some of you will ask, then, “Why could Christ enter in by the door, when he

is the door himself?” But this is just the very thing he did.

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” Hebrews 9:11, 12.

He showed himself the good shepherd by his entering in by the door, that is, “by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” True, if he had remained without his taking our sins upon him, he would not need to have entered in, but he took our sins upon him.

Ah, brethren, this is the mark of every true shepherd whom Christ sends — he comes in by the door, that is, the blood of Christ. He speaks of sin, because he has seen its greatness; he speaks of pardon, because he has been forgiven; of blood, because he has felt its power. “He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” No other qualification will do. All the learning at colleges will never make a minister. All the eloquence in the world will never make a minister. Pray that Scotland may have such ministers.

(2). There is another mark here given of the true shepherd: “He calleth his own sheep by name” (verse 3). This, first of all, *shows the complete knowledge* he has of the sheep. You remember Zaccheus, when he was a stray sheep. Christ said to him when he was in the tree, “Come down; for today I must abide at thine house” (Luke 19:5). You remember Nathaniel, when a stray sheep under the fig-tree, “he saw him” (John 1:48). You remember, after his resurrection, he saw Mary, and said to her, “Mary;” and she turned herself, and said unto him, “Rabboni: which is to say, Master” (John 20:16). So it is still. Ministers do not know you; elders do not know you; but Christ knows you, and he calls his own sheep by name, and they follow him.

And this implies, also, *the love of Christ*. You know when you love one, you love their name. Christ does not only know you, but he calls you by his name. John called Bethany, “the town of Mary and her sister Martha” (John 11:1). Christ loves the names of those

for whom he died. Your names are graven on his heart, and on the palms of his hands; and this shows he changes their names. He said to Abraham, “Thy name shall no more be called Abram, but Abraham shall thy name be” (Genesis 17:5). And you remember he said of Peter, “Thy name shall be called Peter” (John 1:42), which means a stone. So it implies that they get a new name, that is, a new nature. And, when we come to the temple above, he says:

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name”
Revelation 3:12.

And you that are of the world, if you will come, you will get a new name.

(3). *Last of all, there is another character of the true shepherd here mentioned, and that is, “He goeth before them” (verse 4).* In the countries of the east, brethren, you know that the shepherd goes before the sheep, and they follow him. When he says, “Let us go to the well,” they follow him. When he says, “Let us go down into that dark valley,” they go after him. So it is with Christ. Christ never asked a sheep to go where he never went himself. He has borne all that he calls his sheep to bear. Christ went into a lower level of sorrow than you will be called to bear. Do not be alarmed then when you are called to suffer, you will not be called to go where he has not gone. Do not be afraid to put down your tender feet where he put down his. And it is still true that he goes before you.

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” Isaiah 43:2.

Do not be afraid then when Christ is before you.

Brethren, let me ask you, in conclusion, Are you following him or are you following a stranger? I do not ask you, Are you

following a godly minister? but, Are you following Christ? Do you hear his voice in the Word? Do you hear his voice in the preaching of the gospel? And do you follow him? Happy flock, follow on to know the Lord; soon shall we be where no tempting devil — where no deceiving world — where no false ministers are. There “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:16, 17). Amen.

Christ the Door

“This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 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” John 10:6-10.

Christ is the kindest of all teachers. He was speaking to a crowd of ignorant and prejudiced Jews, and yet how kindly he deals with them. He told them one parable, but they understood not. “This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were he spake unto them.” And yet, we are told, Christ spake unto them again. He hath given them a description of the true and false shepherd, and of the door into the sheepfold; but they seem to have been at a loss to know what the door meant; therefore he says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.” You see how kindly he tries to instruct them. My brethren, Christ is the same kind teacher still. Are there not many stupid and prejudiced persons here? And yet has he not given you “precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 13:28). He has broken down the bread for you.

Let us now examine this explanatory parable: (1). Christ is the door into the Church. (2). The invitation here given to enter in. (3). The promise to those that enter in.

(1). *Christ is the door into the Church.*

“I am the door.” The only way into the Church of God, either for ministers or members, is by Christ, and through faith in him. Many enter in by learning; learning is not to be despised, but yet it is not the door. There are many that have entered into the ministry, by having eminent gifts, but these are not the door. And those who enter in such a way are thieves and robbers, for they enter not in by the door. Again, many enter in by the door of worldly favour, some by the favour of the rich, some by the favour of the common people, some by the favour of the patron; but still they are thieves and robbers, for they enter not in by the door. Remember then, and never forget it, that the right way into the ministry is through Christ. None can tell of sin, but those who have felt its burden. None can tell of pardon, but those who have tasted of it. None can tell of Christ power to sanctify, but those who have holiness in their hearts. Brethren, hold such in reverence; flee from all others; they may have learning, they may have gifts, they may have the flattery of the common people, but they are thieves and robbers.

But further, there are many members who enter into the fold another way; they also are thieves and robbers. There are many who enter in by the door of knowledge — they have got acquainted with Bible knowledge, they can tell of the way of a sinner’s acceptance with God; but if you have not come into the fold by being washed in the blood of Christ, you are a thief and a robber.

Some enter into the fold by a good life. As touching the law they are like Paul, blameless. You are not a thief, you are not a swearer, you are not a drunkard, and you think you have a right to enter in — a right to sit at the Lord’s table; but Christ says it over and over again, you are a thief and a robber. Ah, brethren, remember if you are admitted into the fold on account of your morality, your outward decency, your good life, you are a thief and a robber. Brethren, there is a day coming when those who have entered into the sheepfold, not by the door, but some other way, will look back

and see their guilt when they shall enter an undone eternity.

Observe, brethren, before I leave this part of the subject, that Christ is a present entrance. Brethren, there is a time in each of your lives — or rather I should say, history — that the door of the sheepfold is open to you. “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved;” but that time will pass away. It is but a moment compared to eternity. This is a solemn truth. Brethren, if I could promise you that the door will stand open for a hundred years, yet it would still be your wisdom to enter in now; but I cannot answer for a year, I cannot answer for a month, I cannot answer for a day, I cannot answer for an hour; all that I can answer for is, it is open now — tomorrow it may be shut for ever.

(2). *Christ’s invitation here given to enter in.*

“I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved.” There are many sweet invitations to sinners in the Bible; I have often felt these words to be the sweetest. There are some invitations addressed to those who are thirsty. It is said in Isaiah, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isaiah 55: 1) Christ said on the last day, that great day of the feast, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:37). And he says, near the end of the Book of Revelation, “I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (21:6). Again, there are some invitations that are addressed to those that have a burden: “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Again, there are some that are addressed to those who are prisoners: “Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope” (Zechariah 9:12).

But this appears to me the sweetest of all, for it is said, “If any man.” It is not said, if any thirsty man, if any weary man, if any burdened man, but if any man enter in he shall be saved. I have seen some rich men’s doors, where none could enter but the rich; and where the beggar must lie at the gate. But Christ’s door is open to any man, whatever your life, whatever your character may be. Christ is not like the door of some churches, where none can enter in but the rich; Christ’s door is open to the poor: “To the poor the gospel is preached” (Matthew 11:5). Some, perhaps, can say, “I am

the most vile one in this congregation,” yet Christ says, “Enter in.” Some, perhaps, can say, “I have sinned more than all; I have sinned against a father, I have sinned against a mother, I have sinned against mercies and against judgments, against the invitations of the gospel, and against light,” yet Christ says, “Enter in.”

Observe still farther that the invitation is not to look at the door, but to enter in. There are many that hear about the door, but that is not enough; it is to enter in at it. And there are many that like to hear about the door, but yet they do not enter in. Ah, my brethren, that’s a great cheat of the devil. I am persuaded many of you will go away this day well pleased because you heard about the door, but you do not enter in. There are many that go a step farther, they look in at the door, but yet they do not enter in. I believe that many of you are often brought there; but when it comes to the point, that you must leave your idols, that you must leave your sins, you do not enter in. “By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

Again, there are some who see other people enter in, but they do not enter in themselves. You, perhaps, have seen a father, or a mother, or a neighbour enter in; you have seen a change come over them, and a peace possess their minds, and you say, “I wish I were them;” but you do not enter in. Ah! if you would be saved, you must enter in at the door; convictions will not do, tears will not do, etc. And this is the reason why so many of you are not happy; you do not enter in.

(3). *I now come to last point, and that is, the promise to those that enter in.*

“If any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture;” “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

The first part of the promise is, “They shall be saved.” Christ pledges his word for it, that those who enter in shall be saved. Those who do not enter in shall be damned. If you are not Christ’s, you are without, and “without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Revelation 22:15). But those who enter in shall be saved.

It is immediate pardon. There will be even now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. O my brethren, it is immediate pardon we offer you from the Father: "If any man enter in, he shall be saved." And then, "He shall go in and out, and find pasture." That is to say, you will have all the privileges of a sheep; it goes out to the well; it goes out to the pasture. So, if you are his, you can go in and out to find pasture. My dear brethren, there may come a time in Scotland, when there will be little pasture, when there will be no undershepherd, when the witnesses will be slain. Yet the Lord will be your shepherd, he will feed you. You shall "go in and out, and find pasture." Amen.

The Hireling and the True Shepherd

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 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. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" John 10:11-15.

In an earlier sermon we saw that the people did not understand Christ. There were two things that they did not understand. The first thing that they did not seem to understand was the door of the sheepfold; the second, who the shepherd was. And we saw last Sabbath that he explained to them what the sheepfold was (see previous sermon). And now he begins to show who the shepherd is: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

It is exceedingly interesting to know the many names by which Christ calls himself in the Bible. There are above a hundred, I think a hundred and seven. He calls himself a rose: "I am the rose of Sharon," and a lily: "I am the lily of the valley" (Song of Solomon 2:1). The reason why he has so many names is that one name would not describe him; he has so many offices that one name would not explain them; nay, all of them put together do not, for Paul said,

“Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:8).

Of all the names given, that of a shepherd is the sweetest. We understand things best by figures; so, at the beginning of this chapter, he contrasted himself with a stranger, and in these words he contrasts himself with a hireling, whose own the sheep are not.

We shall consider these two things, the hireling and the true shepherd.

The hireling (verses 12, 13).

There can be little doubt, I believe, that the hireling represents unfaithful ministers. Let us then go over the features, here laid down, of an unfaithful minister:

(1). *He is a hireling:* that is to say, the end he seeks is the hire. You know, dear friends, that a minister should be maintained. It is written in the law, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn ...” “They that preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:9, 14; 1 Timothy 5:18). But then, dear brethren, observe that this should not be the end of the ministry. The hireling here mentioned, is one who seeks the hire and not the flock. This was often complained of by the prophets. Isaiah complained of it in his day.

“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter” Isaiah 56:10, 11.

Now, this is just the hireling. Jeremiah complained of them in his day:

“For, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet, even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely” Jeremiah 6:13.

This is the hireling again. Ezekiel complained of them in his day:

“Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” Ezekiel 34:2.

Paul complained of them in his day:

“For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Philippians 2:20, 21).

Ah! brethren, this is the black mark of the hireling: “He that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth” (verse 12). But, brethren, it is not merely the seeking money that marks the hireling, but seeking our own ease, our own honour, our own fame. Pray for ministers — pray that they may not be given to covetousness.

(2). ***“Whose own the sheep are not.”*** You know, dear brethren, that faithful ministers stand in a peculiar relation to the sheep. They are called fathers — watchmen that stand on the watch tower, etc. It is a relation that outlasts death. You know, dear friends, that Paul often calls himself a father: see 1 Corinthians 4:15; Galatians 4:19; 1 Timothy 1:2; Philemon, 10th verse. Ah, friends, this shows you the union between the minister and the flock. He is a father — he begets them through the gospel. It is not so with a hireling — his own the sheep are not. God does not own him as a father. God does not own him in the conversion of souls. He cannot say as Paul said, “My dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown” (Philippians 4:1). He will not meet a crown of saved souls in the judgment. Ah! this is the mark of a hireling — a withered branch. Pray that ours may not be so.

(3). ***“The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep?”*** You know that the ministers who are sent of God, take care of the sheep. Observe the apostle Paul — what labours did he not undergo; what sufferings did he not endure! (2 Corinthians 11:23). Hear how he prayed for them:

“God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” Romans 1:9.

“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh” (Colossians 2:1).

How he cared for the sheep! And hear how he speaks to the elders at Ephesus: “Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). And observe, brethren, what tears he used to shed for them:

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears” (2 Corinthians 2:4).

“I fear lest when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned” 2 Corinthians 12:21.

And then what thanksgiving he used to offer up to God:

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy” Philippians 1:3, 4.

“For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God” 1 Thessalonians 3:9.

“I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” Ephesians 1:16.

This is the mark of a true shepherd. But a hireling cares not for the sheep, he does not and cannot weep for the sheep, he has no anguish of heart for them. Pray that we may so love Christ that we may care for the sheep.

(4). *He flees away when the wolf comes:* “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” (verse 12). The wolf is taken in Scripture to represent two things, either false ministers or heresy. “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). The grievous wolves are evidently those false teachers who bring in another gospel which is not another. See also Matthew

10:16, “Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” etc. There you see the wolves are evidently those men who bring the sheep before the councils. The time when the wolf comes is the time to mark who the true shepherd is. He stands between them when heresy comes in, or when a persecuting world stretches out its hand towards them; that is the time for the true shepherd to stand between the fold and it; but ah! the hireling flees. The time when he can get no more his own ease, his own comfort, is the time he flees. Pray that Scotland may have true shepherds; not those who care not for the sheep; not those whom God has never owned in the conversion of souls; not those who will flee in a time of heresy or persecution. Pray that the true shepherds may be known in a time of heresy or persecution, and that the day may never dawn on Scotland when it will be given over to hireling ministers.

I come now, secondly, to consider the true shepherd.

Oh! it is sweet to turn from looking at the hireling to the true shepherd: “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ...” Christ here gives us three marks of the true shepherd.

(1). *The true shepherd gives his life for the sheep.* Jacob was a good shepherd to Laban. You remember his care of the sheep; he says, “That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. ...” (Genesis 31:39, 40). But he did not give his life for the sheep.

David was a good shepherd. You remember when a lion and a bear came and took away the sheep, that he went after it and rescued it, and slew both the lion and the bear (1 Samuel 17:35). Yet David did not give his life for the sheep.

But Christ gave his life. The sentence was written against the sheep: “Thou shalt die;” Christ came between and died for them. Observe, brethren, that it was not merely temporal death that he died; but it was equal to eternal death. It was death under iniquity: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). It was a death under sin: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). And observe, it was freely done; he did it

out of free love; therefore it is always said, “He gave himself for us.” Love one another, even as Christ loved the church, “and *gave himself* for it” (Ephesians 5:25). There is one Mediator “who *gave himself* a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). Brethren, observe that Christ so loved the sheep that he gave his life. “What are these wounds in thy hands? ... These are the wounds I have received in the house of my friends” (Zechariah 13:6).

Brethren, if ever you and I get to heaven, this is what we will see, “A Lamb as it had been slain” (Revelation 5:6). Are you attracted by the sight? What are you made of, that you do not see this love? O brethren, to whom will you go if not to him? Observe what he offers –himself. “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,” that is, I am willing to give myself to you.

(2). ***“I know my sheep, as the Father knoweth me.”*** You know, brethren, how completely the Father knows his Son. He knew him from all eternity: “Then I was by him as one brought up with him, I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” (Proverbs 8:30). Brethren, so Christ knows his sheep. “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). You know, brethren, that the Father knows him with a love of delight. So Christ knows his sheep with the same love: “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee;” “As the lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters!” “My dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one of her mother” (Song of Solomon 4:7; 2:2; 6:9). Christ delights in every one of his sheep. And you know the Father knew Christ during all the time of his sufferings on earth. So Christ knows his sheep in all their temptations. And you know the Father will know Christ to all eternity. So Christ says, “I know my sheep.” Christ knows his sheep to all eternity. “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28, 29). Ah, brethren, is there any shepherd like this shepherd?

(3). ***“I am known of mine.”*** The sheep know Christ, and Christ knows the Father. Christ has a perfect acquaintance of the Father: “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee” (John 17:25), so the sheep know Christ: he manifests himself unto them. Ah, brethren, has Christ made himself known

unto you? Has he given you an understanding to know him that is true, and are you in him that is true? This is the mark of all his sheep. "I am known of mine." And this is one of the excellencies of Christ to his own. He lets fragrance forth when he passeth by, and we follow him. Brethren, has he let out his fragrance to you, and do you follow him? Are you known of him even as he is known of the Father? Amen.

The Free Obedience of Christ

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 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"
John 10:17, 18.

The death of Christ is, my friends, the most wonderful event past, present, or future in the whole universe. It is so in the eye of God — "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." There is nothing in the whole world so lovely as his Son. It is not only for his Godhead, but on account of his manhood, through which he laid down his life — "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." These words of Christ, "I lay down my life," are dearer to God than a thousand worlds.

It is the same in the eyes of the redeemed. All the redeemed love Christ, because he laid down his life. John says:

"I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain ... And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us God by thy blood" (Revelation 5:6-9).

And again they sing:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and

blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

Still, brethren, you see that it is the death of Christ that is the joy of the new Jerusalem.

And, still further, the death of Christ is the greatest wonder in hell. This was one thing which Satan did not know the meaning of — the death of Christ. Ah! Satan thought when he got Judas to betray him — that he had gained the victory; but ah! Satan hath found it out now, that Christ has triumphed over him in his cross. Ah! then, brethren, Calvary is a wonder in hell.

Tell me then, brethren, who is it in all the universe that thinks little of Christ’s laying down his life. Shall we find them in heaven? No. Shall we find them in hell? No; “they believe and tremble.” Where, then, shall we find the man that thinks little of Christ? O Christless sinner! it is you. “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). “For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). O Christless man! you little think of the death of Christ; even the devils do not think it foolishness. Sinner, do not you think there must be something wrong about the state of your mind, that sees no beauty in the death of Christ?

From these words I would notice:

- (1). The awful command here spoken of: “This commandment have I received of my Father.”
- (2). The free obedience of Christ: “I lay down my life.”
- (3). The father’s love to Christ: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.”

The awful command here spoken of, verse 18, at the end, “This commandment have I received of my Father.”

This passage shows us plainly that the death of Christ was arranged beforehand by the Father and the Son. The Father laid it upon him that he should come into the world and lay down his life. Some may say, When did God lay this command upon him? I answer, it was before the world was. “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory” (1 Corinthians 2:7). And then his

purpose in grace, before the world began, was to send his Son; so that there can be no doubt that this command was given to Christ at the beginning, when there was no sea or land, when there was neither sun nor moon. It was before the world was that the Father said, Go into the world and lay down your life.

“This commandment have I received of my Father.” Brethren, this command was not given by sinners; there was no cry, Come over and help us. The world was steeped in sin. There was a cry for vengeance rising up from earth to heaven; but there was no cry for mercy. “This commandment have I received from my Father.” The world did not desire that Christ should die. It was altogether become unprofitable, there was none that did good, no not one. All were lying under wrath.

You will notice that this is the very command we find spoken of in Psalm 40:7, 8: “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God.” Compare this with Hebrews 10:7, 10. You will notice that the “will” here spoken of in the 40th Psalm, and the command spoken of in Hebrews 10, is the very same that is spoken of in the 10th of John. My dear brethren, this lays open to you the great and amazing truth that the Father loves sinners. You know we often speak of the love of Christ; but here is a new object of love. It was the Father that sent the Son — it was the Father that provided the sacrifice.

Learn this solemn truth that the Father loves you, the Father wants you to be saved, the Father wants you to believe on the Son; the very Father who commanded Christ to lay down his life for sinners. You will notice from this that the Father is clear from the blood of all men. He does not want you to perish. “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” He is not willing that any should perish. He “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). He does not want you to perish. He commands Christ to go into the world, and lay down his life for sinners. Oh! it is true: the Father does not want you to perish. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son... God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16, 17). God the Father is as earnest in your salvation as Christ is. It was God’s part to send the

Son, and the Son's part to come and die. And as God the Son has done his part, so God the Father has done his. So that, sinners, if you perish, it is because you will not come to him, that you may have life.

The free obedience of Christ. "I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."

Brethren, there is nothing more certain than that no man can lay down his life for another. But you will observe, there were two things that made it right in Christ to lay down his life: (a). he is the Lord of all; (b). the Father gave him a commandment to lay it down. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

And you will notice from this that in laying down his life, he was not forced to do it. This is brought out in the example of Isaac. You remember that God commanded Abraham to take Isaac his son, and to go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering; but you will notice that Isaac was a young man, and his father an old man, so that, had he wanted, he could have resisted his being bound (Genesis 22:1-19). Now, brethren, this was intended to be a type of Christ. It is true that men bound him, but it is also true that he laid down his life himself. Observe, first, that no man forced it from him.

If you read the life of Christ, you will observe that he often escaped out of their hands. You remember, at Nazareth, they tried to cast him over the hill on which the city was built, but he passed through the midst of them and escaped (Luke 4:16-30). And so, brethren, he could have done this to the very end. He could have escaped that very night. When he saw them at a distance, coming down the hill with their torches, he could have fled; but he would not. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). And you will notice that when they came to the garden he said, "Whom seek ye?" and they said, "Jesus;" he said, "I am he," and they fell backward (John 18:4-6). He could have escaped then, but he would not. "He, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). And even when he was nailed to the tree, when they said to him, "Let him

come down from the cross and we will believe him” (Matthew 27:42), he could have come down, but Jesus wanted to die; this is the reason.

And, brethren, this statement is true in regard to the Father, “no man taketh it from me.” Not even the Father took it from him. The Father said, “Go into the world, and lay down your life for sinners.” And we are told in Isaiah 53:12: “He shall divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death.” And it is said in Luke 23:46: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;” he did it freely to God. So he said, “Lo, I come freely to do thy will.” It is true, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, but he put himself into the hands of divine justice.

Dear brethren, from this let us learn two things:

(a). ***The justice of this act.*** There are many persons who say that it is not just for an innocent person to die for the wicked; but this is an extraordinary case. The Father was willing to take Christ as the substitute, so it is in perfect accordance with law and justice.

(b). ***The love of Christ to sinners.*** Here is his love: “I lay down my life, no man taketh it from me,” and yet he laid it down. Christ put himself into the hands of justice. He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will.” O brethren! this is the free love of Christ. That command was written upon his heart, “Die for sinners!” “I lay down my life.” Ah! sinner, “scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7, 8). Sinner, this is the love of Christ that he came for such as you and me.

The Father’s love to Christ: “Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life.”

I do not know any word in the Bible that is more sweet to meditate on than the love of the Father to the Son. There are many things that induce the Father to love the Son. He loved him for his Godhead. But here is another reason why the Father loves the Son — he loves him for his holy manhood. “He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26). God never

saw anything so like himself. When God made Adam, he said, “It is very good;” but oh! when he saw Jesus, he saw a loveliness in him such as he never saw in any created thing.

But here is another reason why the Father loves him: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.” We are told that he grew in favour both with God and man (Luke 2:52). He was every day fulfilling a part of his holy obedience, until he came to the last, and then the Father saw obedience as he had never seen it before. Oh, brethren! it was love that was never seen before, that he should die for the lowest — for the vilest. And that appears to be another reason why Jesus died: it is, that the Father got a vent for his love to flow out to sinners: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.”

From all this, dear brethren, learn:

(a). *Though a child of God carries the cross, he may be under the love of God.* Never did God love Christ so much as when he was heaping wrath upon him — “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.” And, oh, brethren! so it often is with a saint. Often God puts a cross upon a child of God, and then takes it off, and lets us sing, “I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God” (Psalm 42:11).

(b). Learn how sinners are to come into the love of God. Dear friends, I have often pleaded with you to come into the love and peace of God; but you may say, I do not know how to come; then, listen — the Father loves you because Jesus has finished the work. Come! O believe on him, and you will be brought into the love of God! Amen.

The Marks and Blessings of Christ’s Sheep

“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one” John 10:26-30.

There is nothing more surprising to an attentive reader of the

gospel than to notice the little success Christ had in the conversion of sinners. Although he speaks with love such as never man spake with, yet for all that, Christ had to complain, just as we have, “Ye believe not.” O brethren! is it to be wondered at, then, that there are so few believers among us, when there were so few converted under Christ? We are always to expect this, then.

Observe still further that the more that Christ opened out his mind to them, they seemed to hate him the more. They said, “He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?” (John 10:20). They were pulling one another away from hearing him. Brethren, it is the same now; the more that ministers have Christ in their sermons, the more faithfully they preach, the more you will say they are mad, and have a devil. Is the servant greater than his master, or the disciple than his Lord?

Still farther, observe, when Christ pressed the truth hard upon them, they could not bear it; they were not content with disbelieving what he said, but they stoned him; and he asked this question, “Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?” (verse 31). Brethren, the same is true still; the nearer we come to your conscience — the nearer we bring the Word home to you, if you are not converted by it, no doubt you hate us. If it is not the savour of life unto life, it will be the savour of death unto death. “Am I therefore become your enemy, because, I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16). And yet, brethren, it is sweet to notice that Christ had his sheep for all that. “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.” Although it is a world of adversaries, yet there is a sheepfold.

Let us notice two things today: (1). The marks of Christ’s sheep; (2). The blessings of Christ’s sheep.

The marks of Christ’s sheep.

(1). *They know my voice.*

You know, brethren, this is the characteristic of the sheep of the east, they know the shepherd’s voice. There was once a traveller in the East who denied that they knew the voice of the shepherd, and contended that it was the clothes they knew; and to prove it, they changed clothes. The person called the sheep, and they moved not;

but when the shepherd called them, they instantly followed him. Now, this is just the way with Christ and his sheep. Christ may be disguised, but faith hears his voice.

The first time they hear his voice is the time of conversion. You remember Zacchaeus, he was up in the sycamore tree, and he might think, “Christ’s word will not reach me;” but Christ said to him, “Come down, Zacchaeus, for today I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5). The voice of the shepherd reached him. This was the first day that Zacchaeus heard the shepherd’s voice. You remember Lydia, she sat among the Grecian matrons by the riverside, and heard Paul preach. Someone opened her heart, and said, “Come away;” it was the voice of the shepherd. “The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend unto the things that were spoken” (Acts 16:14). It was the outward voice of Paul, but it was the inward voice of Christ.

Again, all that are Christ’s hear his voice in the time of duty. They hear a voice behind them saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21). They hear the voice of Christ directing them how to go. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters” (Psalm 23:1, 2). When the world are in perplexity and know not what to do, the sheep of Christ hear his voice and follow him.

And they hear his voice in the time of secret prayer. Mary sat at Jesus feet and heard his word. And when they open the Bible in secret they hear the voice of the Beloved saying, “Come unto me ... and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28); “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9); “Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

There is another hour in which they hear his voice — it is that of affliction. They hear the voice of the shepherd — they hear the voice of the rod, and say, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good” (1 Samuel 3:18).

Again, in the hour of death, when the Christless hear nothing but coming wrath, the sheep hear his voice. They hear it when they pass through the valley. “When thou passest through the waters, I

will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ..." (Isaiah 43:2). "Fear not ... I will strengthen thee., yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). "O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes" (Hosea 13:14).

Ah, brethren, do you hear the voice of Christ? Those of you who are Christless hear the voice of business or of pleasure. You hear the call of the strange woman, "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Proverbs 9:17); but ye do not hear the voice of Christ, when he says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). You shut off your ears, you believe not, because you are not of his sheep. Those of you that are Christ's are as in a solitude, and there is one voice that you hear so shrill and loud — it is the voice of Christ; he says, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). You that hear the voice of Christ, love him, and not another.

(2). They follow me.

You know this is the case in eastern countries; the sheep follow the shepherd. There are two ways the sheep follow the shepherd — when they are looking at his person, and when they hear his voice. So it is with those that are Christ's. The wounds in his side, in his hands, and in his feet, are attracting things in a believer's eye. Why do they follow him?

They follow him that they may get pardon; they follow him that they may get living water. Just as the sheep follow the shepherd to the well, or down into the valley, or beneath some shady rock, so those that are Christ's follow him.

They follow him every day; they follow him in all parts of the world. In whatever they do, they follow Christ.

They follow him in bearing his cross; they follow him in reproach. "Reproach hath broken my heart" (Psalm 69:20). Christ could say, "I was the song of the drunkard" (Psalm 69:12). So the sheep can say the same.

They follow him in his love. "Christ loved us and gave himself for us." So Christ's sheep have the same love in their hearts. If you

are Christ's you will have the same love he had. Christ died for his enemies; so you will be willing to do the same if you are Christ's.

They follow him in prayerfulness. Christ was a man of prayer. He often went out and continued all night in prayer; he could say, "I give myself to prayer" (Psalm 109:4). So it is with all the sheep of Christ — they follow him. As he had communion with the Father, so have they.

They follow him in holiness. Christ was separate from sinners, he was of a different nature from them. So will we, if we are his; we will not be of the world, even as he was not of the world.

Whom do you follow? Do you follow the world? Then ye are not of his sheep. Do you follow Christ? Are you following him? Then you are one of his sheep, and if you follow him now, you will follow him to all eternity.

The blessings of Christ's sheep.

(1). *I know them.*

The shepherd in the East knows his sheep — he knows them by appearance: "I know my sheep."

Christ knew his sheep from all eternity. We spoke of this last Sabbath. Just as he said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), so does he know us. Ah, the eternal love of Christ passeth knowledge! To think that there was never a time that he did not know them.

But "I know them" in time. The world does not know them; the world thinks that they are wolves in sheep's clothing. They give no credit to your new birth; they say, wait a while, and we will see what it will come to. The church does not know them. You remember Paul, when he came to Jerusalem, the disciples did not believe that he was a disciple. And Ananias said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:13). So it may be with you. Perhaps they will not let you into their society; but, "I know you."

And then he knows your wants: "I know them."

(2). *I give unto them eternal life.*

You know that the shepherd leads the sheep to a living well or to some gushing stream that flows between two rocks. So is it with

Christ. Observe, it is said, “I give unto them eternal life.” If you are one of Christ’s flock you will never want. “I give unto them eternal life.” What does this imply?

It implies *daily pardon*. You know when the Queen sends a pardon to any condemned criminal, she is said to give the man his life. If you are Christ’s you need daily pardon. If there is any sin separating between you and a loving God, you need it pardoned.

It implies *spiritual life*. The life that Christ gives flows through the heart. If the Holy Spirit were to leave the heart, you would lose spiritual life. Thus David says, “Take not thy Holy Spirit away from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit” (Psalm 51:11, 12). Brethren, are you daily drinking of this living water? Does it spring up within you? Ah! remember it is Christ’s gift; “I give unto them eternal life.”

(3). *They shall never perish.*

You know, brethren, that the shepherd often loses his sheep. Thus Jacob did, he sometimes lost the sheep. And you remember David sometimes lost the sheep. A lion and a bear came once and carried away one of the sheep. But there is one shepherd that never loses any. “These are they which thou hast given me, and I have kept them, and none of them is lost.” “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

Those that are Christ’s sheep have got many adversaries; there is the devil, like a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour; there is the world, gaping like strong bulls of Bashan; and then there is the old heart striving to get back to its pleasures; but you shall never perish.

It is true that you have got many tossings. Oftentimes God’s people cry to the Rock, but it hears not. Often they cry, “My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God” (Isaiah 40:27). But that word will stand. “I know them — they shall never perish.” Never did one sheep of Christ’s perish yet. Ah, it is true that there are many falls — that there are many backslidings; but they shall never perish.

There have many perished out of this place — many that seemed to be his; but Christ’s sheep shall never perish. Why can they not

perish? There are three reasons: (a). they are in “my hand;” (b). they are in “my Father’s hand;” (c). “I and my Father are one.”

(a). They are in “**my hand.**” You know what is in his hand is safe. Whose hand is stronger than his? “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Hebrews 7:25). “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

(b). They are in “**my Father’s hand.**” “My Father gave them to me;” he said, “I commit these sheep into thy hand.” Christ accepted them, and the Father draws them to him. So that there are two hands upholding the sheep, one below the other, so that if you were to fall out of one hand, you would just fall into the other.

(c). “**I and my Father are one**” — one in essence, one in power, one in purpose, one in love. If one hand was pulling the one way, and the other the other, then we do not know what might be the case; but they are both pulling the same way. Are you Christ’s? Then you will never perish. But I believe there are some here that will perish. You know I have sometimes said, if there was but one sitting in the middle of the church that should perish, then you might all gather around him, and weep over his awful state; but I believe that there are many sitting in all parts of the church that will yet perish. But if you are in Christ’s hand, you are in his Father’s hand, and he and his Father are one. Amen.

