

“WHOSE GOODNESS FAILS NEVER”

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A SERMON

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*“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”
John 10:11.*

THESE words were spoken when our Lord was among His own people. Perhaps as you hear them there comes a whisper in your soul, “I wonder whether that is true now? If the Lord Jesus in His flesh was here at this moment, in the midst of us, and if He said, ‘I am the good shepherd,’ we might find it easy to believe it; but He has gone. What assurance have we that it is the same now, when He is no longer among us?” I answer, “Dear brethren, we know it is true because Jesus Christ is ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever;’ that in itself were enough, but we have the added assurance that in this place He meant to say it was so, for, if you notice, He was evidently looking to the future when He said, ‘I am,’ seeing that He added, ‘The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep,’ when as yet He had not done it. There was an interval between the time when He said these words and the laying down of His life upon the cross. As He went on further in His discourse and said, ‘Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd,’ He was looking to the future you see. He spoke of Himself, I was almost going to say, in momentary unconsciousness of His deity, without meaning, perhaps, to speak as God, He says, ‘*I Am;*’ using the very name of Jehovah and speaking of the future as though it were present. It was as if He had said, ‘I am the good shepherd, and I am going to gather in the wandering people that, as yet, are not of My flock;’ so that, evidently, the meaning and force of the ‘*I am,*’ runs right on till He has gathered in all the other sheep that were not, when He spoke the word, included in His fold. Yes, He means you to understand that He is speaking the same words as much to you, brothers and sisters, as to Peter and James and John. To you He is saying, ‘I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.’”

First, let us look at our great Master’s claim, “I am the good shepherd.” Then we shall observe the proof of it. That, though it had not been completed when He uttered these words at the first, is complete now—“He gives His life for the sheep.” When we have talked rapidly on these two points, let us try and chew the cud, and see if there is not something to be found here of very practical use to us. On these communion nights the time is very short: therefore I must try to speak without many words upon any one point.

I. First, then, I say, let us look at CHRIST’S CLAIM, “I am the good shepherd.” He means us to understand three things. It is as if He said, “I am a shepherd,” and then, “I am a *good* shepherd,” and, last of all, “I am *the* good shepherd”—that good shepherd who is spoken of in the Old Testament.

“I am a shepherd,” He says first; that is to say, *He stands in the same relationship to His people as a shepherd does to his flock.* He owns His people: every one of them belong to Him. He prizes them because they are His—sets a value upon each of them. He takes care of them, remembering them both night and day, His heart is never off them; and because of His inward love there is an outward goodness which He constantly extends to them. He protects them from the wolf: He guards them from a thousand dangers: He sees to the supply of all their wants. He guides them in the right way: He brings them back when they wander: He strengthens them when they are weak: He carries them when they are too feeble to go. He sees that they are a weak flock, and a silly flock, and a wandering flock: therefore is He their strength, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all. No creature, perhaps, has more diseases than a sheep, except a man. No creature is more dependent upon another and higher creature than a sheep is, for it seems only half itself till it is under the care of man. And none of us, brethren, can be said to be less dependent than the sheep are, for we are not true men till we get near to Christ. We are without life and without strength,

till we find life and strength in Him. As a sheep would be sure to wander, and, wandering, would be very likely to wander into a desert—would be sure not to better itself—would be certain in the end to come to nothing—so is it with us. Without Him who is our Shepherd we would wander farther and farther into misery and sin, and our ruin would be certain. We are more dependent upon Christ than sheep are upon the shepherd. You see, then, why Christ says, “I am a shepherd.” Towards His own people whom He has redeemed with precious blood He stands in the position of a proprietor, a leader and guide, a father, a King, all of which may be condensed into this one word—a Shepherd.

But He is not only a Shepherd, He is a good shepherd, for *what He does He does well*. Never does He neglect His flock; not one ever perished because He forgot it. Since He never forgets, not one ever perished at all. He is a good shepherd, because all that ought to be done—all that can be done—all that may be wished to be done towards His sheep—He does. Never shepherd so intensely threw His heart into His calling as Christ throws His heart and soul into the sacred calling of the shepherd of Israel. He gives for His people all that He has, yes, He gives Himself. His power is their defense: He lifts up His hand and says, “I give to My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” His wisdom is their guidance: His love is their perpetual shield: His infinity is their storehouse: His omniscience is their protection. Human and divine are You, O Christ, in Your person, but the human and the divine are both alike for Your people. You have a thousand of offices, and You do exercise them all on the behalf of Your own flock. Oh, Christ is a good shepherd, indeed; He is skilled as well as zealous in the art of shepherding. He knows all the diseases of the flock, for He Himself has felt all their griefs and woes. He has studied human nature—oh, how long! He knows it by a personal experience, and therefore knows it in such a way as it can be known only by Himself. He is a good shepherd. Was there ever imagined one that could be like to Him?

But then He says, “I am the good shepherd;” emphasis is to be laid upon the fact that *He is supreme and sufficient for all the needs of His people*. There have been other shepherds appointed by Him that have, in their measure, been good; but He is *the* shepherd—the great shepherd of the sheep. He it is of whom we read that when the chief shepherd shall appear then shall we also appear with Him in glory. None of us are *the* shepherd. We have to take our little share of the work beneath His eye, and do it for His sake, though never to our own satisfaction. It will be a joy to us, indeed, if He shall be satisfied with us, and say, “Well done.” But all the under shepherds in the world put together are poor things compared with *the* head shepherd of the sheep. He is the good shepherd of the sheep—preeminently good—good beyond all that are good. The Shepherd of the shepherds, as well as the Shepherd of the sheep: Good, because the whole company of the faithful, if they have any good in themselves, received it from Him. “I am *the* good shepherd.”

Now that being the meaning of the words let us see Christ’s claim in this chapter. Observe how He works it out. He says, if you notice the verse that comes before the text, “The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” See, then, He is our good shepherd *because He gives life to His sheep*. No shepherd can say about his flock what Christ says about His. “I have given all these sheep of Mine the life that they have.” What a good shepherd must He be!” They were dead: dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel’s vision,” He says, “but I have given them life.” Listen to this, you that are the sheep of His pasture: you have spiritual life, but He gave it to you. Lift up your eyes and bless Him that ever your heart ever came to know what repentance is, and what faith is, and what prayer is, and what praise is, for now that you live unto God, you see that it was He that quickened you. To your shepherd you owe everything. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. It is He that made us, He that new-made us, and not we ourselves. Do you notice how He adds, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” So, beloved, if you now feel cold and dead, I ask you not to look to yourself, or to the pasture in which you are at the moment, or to the under shepherd who seeks to care for you, but to Him, the chief and choice Shepherd. He gave you life at first and He will give you more of it, that you may have it abundantly. If there is any one of you whose heart is leaping for joy because the love of God is shed abroad within you by the Holy Spirit—brother, you have got all that from Him. Bless Him for it. If, on the other hand, another one is mourning because he feels the life within him to be so feeble—dear friend, you may have it strengthened by Him who gave it at the first. All the praise and glory must be to your good shepherd, who is indeed

good because the very life of His flock is His gift, and their increase in life is worked by His sovereign power. Oh, how good You are, dear Lord, Author and Source of our very being!

Our Lord shows us His good shepherdry further on, when He says, “He that is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flock; and the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep.” So see, secondly, the good shepherd is good *because He cares for the life which He has Himself bestowed*. First He gives it; and then He protects it. The wolf is always around about the fold. When we do not hear him howling, yet we know that he is seeking to find an entrance somewhere. When he gets in, it is said that he comes to kill and to destroy; and what can poor sheep do against a wolf if the shepherd is away? And what would you and I do against Satan in the world and in the temptations of the flesh, if Christ were away? We would soon fall a prey to the wicked adversary. But our good Master cares for us.

You know that precious word, “I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”? Though the simile is changed, the meaning is the same. Our Savior—our blessed shepherd—by night, though the frost is upon Him, watches His flock; and by day, though the sun lights on Him with its fervent heat, He watches still. His very life seems to be nothing to Him in comparison with the protection of His people. Oh brethren what battles our shepherd has had with the wolf for us! I need not go into the story of our glorious David’s prowess, even for the little lambs of His flock. But He may say truly to His Father, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear” because they came and “took the lamb out of the flock.” Jesus takes even the feeblest from between the teeth of the foe, and will not suffer one to perish, because He cares for us. You know the meaning of caring for us, do you not? Well, I do not think that I can explain it except by asking you to think of what it is to care for your children. That is how the Lord Jesus cares for you. As for the children, poor little dears, they cannot take care of themselves; nor can you, though you try hard to do it; but as your little children leave their cares with you, and you care for them, you may leave your cares with your Shepherd. It is a very comprehensive thought. Your care springs out of your love, and that love makes you think of the welfare of your family. But your care is not all thinking; you are actively engaged for them too, and before they even know their wants, you supply them. In fact, they hardly know they have any wants because you never leave them long enough unsupplied to let them discover that they need anything. You meet all their need by caring for them. Even so does Jesus the good shepherd care for His people. He gives them life, and increases that life, cares for that life, and protects it from all harm.

But just read on, and you will see still further what a good shepherd He is. “I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.” That is to say, “As much as I and My Father know each other, so do I and My people know each other.” He is the good shepherd *because He lives among His sheep*, He treats them as His children and so cares for them that He actually has communion with them. Sheep understand a good deal of what the shepherd says. There is a shepherd’s language which you and I do not understand, but the sheep do. They know his whistle: they know his frown: they know the motion of his hand. He has a language which he speaks to them. When Jesus Christ says, “I know My sheep,” it means not only that He knows who are His and who are not, but that He knows all about each one. He knows your trouble at this instant, dear friend—your infirmity, your sin, your sorrow. He knows you a great deal better than you know yourself; and He sums you up, and understands you much better than the dearest friend you have besides. He never misunderstands you—He knows you so thoroughly. Oh, it is a wonderful word that—one of those great deeps into which I drop my plumb line but cannot find the bottom—“I know My sheep.” It means that He owns them. He so knows them that in the presence of God and of the holy angels, He will say, “Yes, that is My sheep.” What, that one with the torn wool? That one with the lame foot? That one with a split ear? There is not much beauty in any of them. Yet the shepherd will not be ashamed of even the least. “It is Mine,” He says, “and though it is not beautiful to any besides, it is beautiful to Me, for I bought it with My blood, and I have fought the lion on its behalf, and therefore very dear it is to My soul.” He knows His sheep. A man can scarcely enter into the feeling of a sheep, can he? And yet, Jesus Christ, though He is God, makes a stoop of condescension and enters into the feeling of the poorest and

the most ignorant—yes, and the most sinful—of all His children. Bone of their bone does He become, so intimate is His union with them.

But then He says, “I am known of Mine.” Now we might think that a sheep cannot know much about the shepherd, but they do. They get to love him. Among the eastern flocks there are, often, sheep that are peculiarly attached to the shepherd. They always follow at his heels, they never seem to care so much for the pasture as they do for him, they are always first, and, I may add, generally fattest, for they that keep nearest to him are pretty sure to get the sweetest bits of grass. And so, in the church of God, there are some that keep near the shepherd, and that know Him well. And all His people know something of Him. What a condescension this is—that the good shepherd so comes and lives among His people that He not merely knows them, but teaches them to know Him. Blessed be His name for this! Try whether you cannot drink in the glorious meaning of this deep mystery.

But yet farther—and to close this point—our Lord is a good shepherd *because He gathers all His sheep*. Read the 16th verse. “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” While His eye was on the Jews His heart was on the Gentiles too. He is a shepherd who is not content with the ninety-nine, but when He counts the flock over and knows there ought to be a hundred, His heart begins to care for the lost one, and He folds the ninety-nine, and lets them rest; but, as for Himself, He gets away upon the mountain’s bleak side, that He may find the lost one. Ah, my Lord, You are a good shepherd, indeed—a much better shepherd than any among Your church—or Your workers—are. We often forget the wandering one. We get a church together; perhaps the building full; and we have too little missionary enterprise to look after the masses that are in ignorance. We see England bathed in the light of the gospel, and feel but little zeal for sending the Word to the distant heathen lands. It ought not so to be. It is not so with Christ, for if He has an elect one, be he where he may, He knows him, and His eye is on him, and He must bring him in. I wonder whether there is someone here tonight that He must bring in. You did not think when you came in to the Tabernacle that Christ was seeking you, but, perhaps, My Lord Jesus has bought you with His precious blood, and His Father gave you to Him from before the foundations of the world, and perhaps He brought you here that you may know this, and come to Him tonight. Thus says the Lord, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.” Come, poor wanderer: come to the Good Shepherd’s feet, and lay yourself down all helpless and forlorn; He will put you on His shoulders, and carry you back rejoicing. Is He not a good shepherd, giving life, sustaining life, defending life, knowing life, teaching life to know Him, and going after poor wanderers to bring them to Himself? That is Christ’s claim.

II. Now I can say but very little, in the second place, about CHRIST’S PROOF OF HIS CLAIM, for I have already proved it. “I am the good shepherd,” He says. “The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Christ has given His life for us many times over. If I read the text without referring it to the one act of His death, it seems to me to be very full of meaning. *In heaven He gave His life for them*. He had a life in heaven, such as we may guess at from a distance, but can never fully understand. He dwelt as God inhabiting the praises of eternity; but you know He gave up that life for us. He laid aside—

*“That most divine array,
And wrapped His godhead in a veil
Of our inferior clay.”*

To leave the harps and hymns of heaven for the sorrows and sins of earth was giving up His life for His sheep.

When He was here, you know, *while He lived on earth He gave His life for the sheep*, for every moment of that life was spent for them. There was a connection between His private life in the carpenter’s shop and their salvation—an intimate connection; but in the public life what did He strain all His powers for but for this—that He might seek and save that which was lost? For His people, were those prayers on the cold mountain side at night! For His people, those earnest pleadings in the midst of the crowd by day! For them the weary journeys! For them the hunger and the thirst! For them the homelessness which forbade Him to have a place where to lay His head! He gave His life up to them as long as He was here.

Then *one dark night did He give His life for His sheep* in the sense, I doubt not, intended here. On that dread night—you know it—that night to be remembered, for it was the night of God’s passover, the shepherd went round His flock, and the sheep were sleeping; but there came the wolf; and the shepherd knew his snarl. The sheep all startled at the howling, were scattered; they forsook the shepherd and fled. That night He had enough to do to meet the wolf, and He stood at the fold to watch the sheep, and let them all go in safety; and then He confronted the grim monster who leaped into the fold thirsty for the blood of the sheep, but the shepherd caught him on his breast, and then came a desperate struggle between the two. The shepherd did bleed and sweat, did bleed and sweat, and bleed again. Great drops of blood fell to the ground, but He held the monster fast and firm. Our great shepherd was wounded in His head, in His shoulders, in His hand, in His feet, and one awful fang tore open His side, but He held the wolf—held him till He had slain him! Then, dashing down his body to the ground and putting His foot upon him, He shouted, “It is finished;” but in the same moment the great shepherd fell. In slaying our foe He had Himself been slain; but scarcely had the shepherd touched the earth than, as if reanimated, up He sprang again, and said, “I lay down My life that I might take it again; therefore does My Father love Me because I lay down My life for the sheep.” You know that story and need not that I tell it you at any length. But, oh, love Him! Love Him! Kiss the wounds. Worship this blessed shepherd who has conquered your foe and delivered you from the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, and set you safely forever in His fold! “The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

He is giving His life still. The life that is in the man Christ Jesus He is always giving for us. It is for us He lives, and because He lives we live also. He lives to plead for us. He lives to represent us in heaven. He lives to rule providence for us. He lives to prepare our mansions for us, where we are going. He lives that He may come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Truly the good shepherd has proved His claim: “He gives His life for the sheep.”

III. Now let us finish by trying to GET SOME JUICE OUT OF THESE THINGS, as I hope indeed that we have done as we have gone along.

First, dear friends, if the good shepherd gives life, *let us try and get life abundantly.* Sometimes I wish I could leave off preaching any sermons, and do as I have seen the sergeant do when he is drilling a lot of men. He only says a word, “First position,” and they take up the position. “Second position,” and they take up that position. He has not a lot of eloquent talk, but he just tells them what to do. Now then, try if you can take up your position. More life is to be had. Breathe the prayer, “Good shepherd, You have given me life: give it me more abundantly. May I know You more, love You more, trust You more, serve You more, and be more like You. Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your word.”

That will do: go on. Take another position. If He is the good shepherd, *let us feel like sheep who have a good shepherd.* How do they feel? I do not think I know a sight that is more peaceable and happy than that of flocks at eventide when they have been gathered into a good pasture, or are among some prolific root crop folded. They have eaten as much as they can, and they lie down on the grass to rest. No care enters their woolly heads. They have nothing to fret about. They might have, if they could worry about the future as some of us do. Will there be turnips enough tomorrow? When there is dry weather, will there be grass enough? There is that butcher: when will he come? If they could understand me, I could suggest no end of cares and doubts and fears to sheep; but it does not enter into their constitution. I wish it did not enter into yours and mine. The shepherd cares for the sheep. Dear brother, dear sister, will Jesus Christ care for you? I have heard of men that have kept sheep and cattle that have let them starve. You do not often hear of such things, for self-interest leads men to cherish their sheep; but I never heard of Christ neglecting any part of His flock. Come, then, let us feel quite quiet in His care. May the Lord help us to be so! Away with your doubts and fears and cares. There, begone, begone, all of it. What is the use of it? It never gave me any pasture. O care and anxiety and fretfulness, you did never feed me, nor strengthen me, nor help me. You have worried me and weakened me, but you have done nothing else. Begone! As for us, brethren, if Christ is our shepherd, let us begin to say, “I shall not want; He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still water: He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me: Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” That is a happy religion, is

it not? But it is a very important thing that all Christians should be happy. The enjoyments of believers lie very near their holiness. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Now, sheep, do not begin behaving like dogs, but try and be such sheep as you ought to be with such a shepherd.

Next, *let us be His own*. Jesus Christ says of the hireling, “whose own the sheep are not, for he leaves the sheep,” and in that He implies that when He tends the sheep that they are His own. Come, then, let us be His own. Brother, sister, have you ever given yourself up wholly to Christ—altogether to Christ? I am afraid we sing a great many things that are not true. I have heard you say—

***“Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love My God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all.”***

I leave it to your own conscience whether you get anywhere near that—anywhere near it at all. We say that we belong to Christ, and we are not our own, but bought with a price. Do we live as if it were true? Come, let us take up the position now of being altogether Christ’s own sheep. If the sheep could speak it would say, “There is not a fragment of wool on my back that belongs to me: there is no part of me that is my own. I belong to my shepherd, and I am glad to have it so.” You belong to Christ as absolutely as that.

The next thought to take up is, *let us try to know more of Him*. He says, “I know My sheep and am known of Mine.” Let us then know Him better. You know how you come to know a man by getting into his company, by hearing his words, by marking his actions, by telling him your secrets, and letting him tell you his secrets. Come and know Christ in this fashion. Let your head be on His bosom, and your whole self come into communion with His blessed self. Ask for that grace tonight while you are around the table. Say, “Good Master, You know me. Let me know You. Oh, let my communion with You be as nearly as possible equal to that which You have with Your Father, and Your Father with You, that we may be one together.”

The next and last is, *let us love Him more*. Did you notice how He says in the 17th verse, “Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again.” Let us make another verse, and say, “Therefore do My people love Me because I lay down My life.” Jesus did not say that, but let us make it true. Oh, how we ought to love our dear and ever-blessed Lord! Do you feel love stirring in your bosom? Perhaps you say, “I wish I did feel it more.” I am glad you say that. I think that is often as far as we can get. I do not, I cannot love You, O Lord, as I ought—

***“Yet I love You and adore—
Oh for grace to love You more!”***

I am persuaded that the man who loves Christ best is just the man who is most discontented with his own love. When a man lives wholly for Christ, he is the very man who still looks for something yet beyond and desires to serve Christ still better. Now, indulge your love tonight. Sit still and meditate on His love—enjoy His love. Say to yourself—

***“I am so glad that Jesus loves me!
Even me!”***

And then add, “I am so glad that I can say that I love Him. He knows all things, and He knows that I love Him.” Just let those two seas meet. “Seas,” did I say? I must not say that. Let the brooklet of your love to Him flow into the mighty ocean of His love to you, and so let them blend and join. I have seen the Thames flowing on in its majestic course toward the sea, and every here and there a little rill drops into view for a while, but the meadows stretch between. The mighty river and the brooklet go side by side, but as they flow on, at last they melt into one. So let my poor soul’s love tonight flow in the same course with the great love of Jesus, till at last it melts into His and life becomes, “Not I,” but “Christ in me;” and my soul be forever content.

Now I have done, but I hope the Lord Jesus has not done. We are going to hold the communion service, and there are many of you that are going away, and going away rightly, too, because you could not come to the table of the Lord without being hypocrites. You know that you do not love Jesus, and have not trusted in Him. As you go away I pray the good shepherd to go after you, and before you reach your houses tonight I do pray that He may get such a grip of you, with that strong but tender hand of His, that He may never let you go till He brings you also into His fold, if not here, yet somewhere else; for, I am sure, that

in this house He has other sheep which are not yet of His fold, whom He must bring that there may be one flock and one shepherd. May He bring you in tonight, for His mercy's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23; ISAIAH 40:9-11; EZEKIEL 34:11-25.

We shall view Christ in the office of a shepherd and the first passage we read sets before us faith proving Christ in that office—accepting Him, trusting Him, following Him.

Psalm 23 Verses 1-2. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.*

Can you say that for yourself, dear friend? There is the sweetness of it. The words in themselves are noble, but it is the experiential acquaintance with their meaning which is the real honey of life. If you can use these words, and lay the emphasis upon the personal pronoun, you are one of the happiest out of heaven.

3-6. *He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

There is the believer realizing Christ in that gracious office as the shepherd of His people. Now let us see how our glorious Shepherd is set forth in prophecy.

Isaiah 40 Verses 9-11. *O Zion that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lamb with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

This office of Christ makes glad the hearts of those who have to preach it. To lift up our voice and to proclaim to others the good tidings is grateful service. It is the joy of the church that Jesus, the Lord God Almighty, is strong for the defense of His people, and at the same time tender towards their infirmities. Let us rejoice and be glad in Him.

Now let us hear what our Shepherd says by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel. After He has been complaining of the hireling shepherds—the false ones who sought the fleece and not the flock, who did not feed the sheep nor care for them, nor had any tenderness toward them; He goes on to show what He will do for His own.

Ezekiel 34 Verses 11, 12. *For thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

What a glorious promise! Christ's elect run here and there, in the darkness of their ignorance, into sin of every kind, but He will find every one of them out. There is no jungle so thick but Christ will track His own through it; there are no bogs of sin so dangerous but Christ will traverse them and find every lamb of His flock. And if through your backslidings, O people of God, you have wandered far from Him, yet He perceives you with that eye which sees in the dark as well as in the light; and He will follow after you and bring you back. Blessed be His name!

13-15. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there they shall lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.*

A beautiful image of that peace of mind, that complete repose, that perfect content, that sweet satisfaction, that divine fullness, which is the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers when they are gathered to Christ.

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

It is a sweet thing, then, to be one of the needy ones of the flock because you see all the promises run that way; but, if we feel ourselves to be very strong and great, we are in a dangerous state, for then there is no promise for us. The only word concerning us is—“I will destroy the fat and the strong.”

17, 18. *And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?*

Truly there are some vain-glorious Christians who not only will not receive the gospel, themselves, but actually find fault with it, insinuate doubts into the minds of others, and prevent the simple-minded people of God feeding on the pasture which the Lord provides for them. See one of the evils of being great and strong in your own esteem; you are pretty sure to despise the very pasture which was quite good enough for you when you were weaker and feebler. That very truth of Jesus Christ which was marrow and fatness to you, when you were hungry, comes to be despised as the manna was by the children of Israel when they called it “light bread,” there is no savor in it that you should desire it. Blessed, blessed hunger that makes the word of God to be always sweet!

19-25. *And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.*

What perfect assurance for Christ’s flock when, in the very place where the wolf once ranged, they shall be able to lie down and sleep in perfect safety. Happy people, with all their weaknesses, who have divine strength to be their protection. O my soul, seek no other strength than this, but learn the apostle’s logic and his true Christian philosophy so that, like him, trusting in the Mighty Shepherd, you will be able to say “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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