

The True and False Sheperd

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The sermon highlights the contrast between the false shepherd, who does not enter through the door of Christ, and the true shepherd, who is Christ himself, who entered through the door of his own blood to obtain eternal redemption for us.

Scripture: John 10:1

Topics: "Discernment in Faith", "True Shepherd vs. False Shepherd"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the distinction between the true and false shepherds, illustrating that false shepherds, like the Pharisees and Antichrist, do not enter through Christ, the door, and instead seek to steal, kill, and destroy. He warns of the dangers posed by the world and false teachers, who are influenced by Satan and lead the flock astray. In contrast, the true shepherd, Jesus Christ, knows His sheep, calls them by name, and leads them with love, having laid down His life for them. M'Cheyne encourages believers to follow Christ, who goes before them in all trials, assuring them of His presence and guidance. He concludes by urging the congregation to discern whether they are truly following Christ or being led by strangers.

Transcript

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:

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.'

The true shepherd. 'But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.'

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?

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 sheep-fold. 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 sheep-fold, 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.

The marks 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 sheep-fold, 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 sheep-fold; 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.

But farther, let us observe 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:

'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.

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.

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.

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