

The Good Shepherd

by Thomas Watson

Jesus Christ is the blessed Shepherd of His sheep, who knows them by name, loves them, and guides them to eternal salvation.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 40:11, John 10:11-17, Philippians 2:15, Hebrews 12:25, 1 Peter 2:21

Topics: "Christ The Shepherd", "Eternal Life"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about Jesus as the good Shepherd, emphasizing His intimate knowledge of His sheep and the unique characteristics of His flock. He describes the sheep as innocent, meek, clean, useful, contented, and timorous, contrasting them with the wicked who are like goats. Watson highlights how Christ, as the Shepherd, is appointed, knows, marks, seeks, leads, governs, relieves, feeds, watches, has compassion, and prays for His sheep, showing His unmatched love and care. He explains how Christ excels other shepherds in glory, cleansing, teaching, praying, comforting, dying, blessing, guiding, governing, and securing His sheep, ultimately leading them to eternal life in paradise.

Transcript

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"I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me." John 10:14

Every line of Scripture has majesty shining in it. Jesus Christ is the very center of the gospel. If the Scripture is the field, Christ is the pearl in this field; and blessed is he who finds this pearl! The Scripture gives various descriptions of Christ. Sometimes He is called a Physician--He is the great Healer of souls. Sometimes He is called a Captain. Hebrews 2:10, "the Captain of our salvation." Here in the text He is a shepherd, "I am the good Shepherd." And this Shepherd has a flock; so it is in the text, "I know My sheep, and they know Me." These sheep are the elect company of believers; these are His redeemed sheep. First, I shall speak of the sheep, then something of the Shepherd as they relate to one another.

1. Concerning the SHEEP. "I know My sheep." The wicked are compared to goats; the saints to sheep. Christ's people are His sheep, and there are some analogies between them and sheep.

First, a sheep is an INNOCENT creature. It is not hurtful or ravenous, as other creatures are--but is very harmless and inoffensive. Just so, those sheep who belong to Christ, and are of His fold--are innocent. Philippians 2:15, "That you may be blameless," that you may be harmless. The Greek word is "without horn," or "without pushing or horning"--that you may be harmless. Christ's people walk as holily as they can, so that they may give no just offense. They would rather suffer wrong--than do wrong. Those who are set upon mischief, are not Christ's sheep but are ravenous birds of prey. Those who would spill Christian blood are none of Christ's sheep. These are wolves who have been suckled with the milk of the Romish whore. These are goats whom Christ will set at His left hand, Matthew 25:32.

Second, a sheep is noted for MEEKNESS in Scripture; it is a meek creature. Let the shearer take its wool, it does not resist. If you strike a sheep, it does not snarl or fly in your face. All Christ's sheep are meek-spirited, 2 Samuel 16:12. Though a child of God may sometimes fall into a froward fit--yet he grieves for it and weeps for his unmortified passion.

Third, a sheep is a CLEAN creature; it is neat and cleanly; it delights most in pure streams and clean pastures. Just so, Christ's sheep are clean and sanctified; holiness is the thing they pray for. Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" Though they are not perfectly holy--yet they are perfecting holiness in the fear of God. They are neat creatures, and would rather die than go through dirty, miry places. Just so, it is with Christ's sheep--they will suffer anything rather than defile their conscience. Genesis 39:9, "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?"

The wicked in Scripture are compared to swine. They wallow in sin--in their wickedness and uncleanness. They are steeped and boiled in sin. Yes--but a good Christian breathes after sanctity. A child of God may fall into sin unawares, as did David--but he does not lie in sin. He recovers himself again by repentance. A sheep may fall into the mire--but it does not lie there; it gets out again.

Fourth, a sheep is a very USEFUL creature. There is nothing about it, that is not of some use--the flesh, the fleece, the skin. Just so, all Christ's sheep, who are the sheep of His pasture, are useful. They are still doing good, they are profitable to others by their knowledge, counsel, example, prayers, and good works. They are useful in their places. The wicked are compared to wood, Ezekiel 15:3, which is good for nothing but fuel. Sinners are useless; their life is scarcely worth a prayer, nor their death scarcely worth a tear. They live to encumber the ground. But God's people are useful; they are called the excellent of the earth, Psalm 16:3. They are blessings in the places where they come.

Fifth, a sheep is a very CONTENTED creature. It will feed upon any pasture where you put it. Put sheep upon the bare common--and they are content. They feed upon the little they pick up in the fallow ground, a perfect emblem of true saints who are the sheep of Christ. Let God put them into whatever pasture He will and they are content, Philippians 4:11. They have learned in every state therewith to be content. Paul could be in need--or abound. He could be anything that God wanted him to be. He was content with that portion, whatever it was, which providence carved out to him.

You who are apt to murmur and repine at your condition, and think you never have enough, think to yourselves, "Sheep are content with their pasture; surely were I one of Christ's sheep, I would be content." You who have the least of the world, you have more than you know how to be thankful for. He who has the least bit of bread, will die in God's debt. A sheep is a contented creature.

Sixth, to name no more, a sheep is a TIMOROUS creature. It is very fearful if any danger approaches. It is easily frightened by the wolf. Thus the saints of God, who are Christ's sheep, pass the time of their

sojourning here in fear. They are--fearful of provoking God; fearful of wounding their peace; fearful of temptation; fearful they should come short of heaven through sloth, Hebrews 4:1. It is an earmark of Christ's sheep, that they are endued with the fear of God, Genesis 42:28. This is their earmark, "men fearing God". It's true, the righteous are as bold as a lion in a righteous cause--but timorous and fearful of sinful fear. And, let me tell you, happy is he who in this sense fears always. Holy fear is the best antidote against temptation. The way to be safe, is always to fear.

To make some use of this, let us all labor to be found in the number of Christ's sheep. All the world is divided into two ranks--sheep and goats. If you would be glad to be found in the day of judgment as Christ's sheep, and sit at His right hand, be much in prayer. Pray to God that He would change your nature, that He would take away your wolfish nature, your fierceness, your frowardness, and that He would transform you into His own image. Labor to be among Christ's sheep, to get into Christ's fold.

There is only one way in which you do not want to be like sheep--for sheep are apt to wander sometimes from their fold. Take heed that you do not straggle into bypaths of error and heresy. It is dangerous to wander for fear the devil, the wolf, should catch you. Don't go astray as sheep; but in other things resemble sheep in meekness, in patience, in usefulness, in willingness.

And particularly in this one thing let us labor to resemble sheep, when the shepherd's dog comes near, all the sheep flock together. Persecution should be like the shepherd's dog. It should make all Christ's sheep run together and unite. Do Papists and Formalists agree in persecuting God's people? And shall not the saints of God agree to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Love is the earmark by which Christ's sheep are known. John 13:35, "By this shall all men know you are My disciples, if you love one another." It was the harlot who said, "Let the child be divided." It is the Jesuit who says, "Let the Church of God be divided." It is Satan's great design to set his cloven foot among God's people to make division and contention among the sons of Zion. The devil's best music is discord.

Oh! Let all Christ's people, His sheep, flock together and associate in love. Those who hope to meet together in heaven should not fall out by the way. Unity is the great music in heaven. There is unity in the Trinity--and unity among saints would be a great blessing on earth. For Christians to unite is their interest and wisdom; union is their strength, union is their glory and their ornament. This was the honor of the primitive churches, all of one heart, Acts 2:1. There was but one heart among them. Let the sheep of Christ unite together. When the saints are harmoniously united, then they adorn their blessed Shepherd, the Lord Jesus. So much for the first of these, Christ's sheep.

2. Concerning the SHEPHERD. "I am the good Shepherd." This is as true an epithet as ever was given. Zechariah 13:7, "A good Shepherd." 1 Peter 2:5, "Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls." Christ is called in Scripture "the chief Shepherd of all," 1 Peter 5:4. Ministers are but shepherds under Him--to look to His flock. Christ is the chief Shepherd. So, then, the observation is this:

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ is the blessed Shepherd of His sheep.

In Scripture, Christ is called the great Shepherd and the good Shepherd. He is called the great Shepherd in Hebrews 13:20-21, and here in the text He is called the good Shepherd. Christ is the great Shepherd, since He made the sheep; and He is the good Shepherd since He saves His sheep. So, you see, He is both the great and the good Shepherd. There are many parallels and analogies between Christ and His sheep.

Some ways how the Lord Jesus RESEMBLES a shepherd.

1. A shepherd is APPOINTED to his calling. John 10:2, "The one who enters by the door--is the shepherd of the sheep." What's the meaning of that? It is that Christ is lawfully called and appointed to His keeping of the sheep.

2. A shepherd KNOWS his flock--he knows all his flock. This is in the text, "I am the good Shepherd, I know My sheep," said Christ. Christ's knowing His sheep implies a knowledge of approbation. Christ's knowing His sheep is His loving them. This is a great consolation, that Christ knows all His sheep. He knows every one of their names. John 10:3, "He calls His own sheep by name." He knows all the sighs and groans they make. Psalm 38:9, "My groaning is not hidden from You." Christ knows every tear they shed. "I have seen your tears!" 2 Kings 20:5. He bottles their tears as precious wine. Psalm 56:8, "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book." He knows all their sufferings. "I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them." Exodus 3:9. "The Lord saw the bitter suffering of everyone in Israel." 2 Kings 14:26. Christ knows all their good works, all their works of piety and charity. "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance." Revelation 2:2. "He will place the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left. Then the King will say to those on the right--Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" Matthew 25:33-34. What a comfort is this! Christ knows all His sheep by name.

3. A shepherd MARKS his sheep that he may distinguish them from other strange sheep. Just so, Jesus Christ, this blessed Shepherd, sets a double mark upon His sheep. One is the earmark of election. "I have chosen you," He said. And besides that, He has set another mark upon His sheep. He seals them by His Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. The sanctifying graces are the several badges and seals which Christ puts upon His sheep. How will this raise the saints' triumph in heaven! How will this make them bless God--that they should be marked out as sheep--when most of the world are marked as goats!

4. A shepherd SEEKS his sheep when they are lost and gone astray. Luke 15:4. That is the office of the shepherd--he seeks his sheep. Let me assure you, Christ's sheep are lost naturally. They have strayed far from the fold and are so lost--that they can never find their way home of themselves. A dog or a horse, if lost, can find the way home again--but if a sheep is lost, it can never find its way home. This is the case of all of Christ's sheep--they are so lost that they cannot find their way.

Now Jesus Christ, this blessed Shepherd, seeks His lost sheep. He left His Father's bosom. He came from heaven on purpose to seek His lost, wandering sheep. Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Zaccheus was a lost sheep, a great sinner, an extortioner. This lost sheep was found upon a sycamore tree! There Christ saw him and called him. Luke 19:5, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down!" Christ entered first into Zaccheus' heart--and then He entered into his house, "This day has salvation come to this house."

There may be some who are as yet lost sheep. They have wandered from God and have gone on in the ways of sin. But if they belong to this good Shepherd, if they belong to Christ--He will at one time or another, bring all His wandering sheep home--by converting grace.

5. A shepherd LEADS and GUIDES His sheep. And thus Christ, this blessed Shepherd, guides His people that they should not go wrong. John 10:3, "He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out." How does Christ guide His people? He guides them with His eye; His eye is never off of them--though their eye

is too much off from Him. Psalm 32:8, "You shall guide me with Your eye." That is, "The eye of Your providence shall direct me."

Again, Christ guides His people by the oracle of His holy Word. Psalm 73:24, "You shall guide me with Your counsel." And Christ guides His people by the sweet conduct of His Spirit. John 16:13, "He will guide you into all truth. When the Spirit of truth has come unto you, He will guide you into all truth." Besides, Christ appoints ministers to be guides. If Christ's sheep go out of the way, His ministers are appointed to bring them back again to the fold.

6. A shepherd GOVERNS his sheep. Christ's sheep have as much need of governing, as they do of guiding. He governs His sheep; He orders His people and brings them into a proper state. Christ's pastoral staff is a type and emblem of His governing the saints. Isaiah 9:6, "The government shall be upon His shoulder." Christ's sheep are apt sometimes to be disorderly. They are apt to slight their Shepherd, to grow wanton, to despise their pastor, to quarrel one with another. But now Jesus Christ, this blessed Shepherd, has His laws to bind them, and He has His shepherd's rod to rule them. He brings them into good order. We need as well Christ's rod to govern us--as His blood to save us.

7. A shepherd RELIEVES and FEEDS his sheep along the way. The Greek word for shepherd signifies to feed. The Lord Jesus mercifully feeds His flock. He won't let them starve. Isaiah 40:11, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." Christ feeds His people in the sanctuary. Every ordinance is a fresh pasture for the saints to feed in. Christ feeds souls with the Bread of Life. He fed them with that spiritual supper at His own table. Here is the love of Christ, the great Shepherd of souls--He provides plenty of pasture. Though some would rob Christ's sheep of their green pastures and starve them--yet Christ will feed them. As long as Christ has a spiritual flock of sheep in the world--He will rather work a miracle, than allow them not to be provided for. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd."

8. A shepherd makes it a part of his work to look after his SICK sheep. Christ's sheep are apt to be sick--some sick with pride, some sick with discontent, some sick with envy, and some sick with covetousness. Christ's sheep are apt to be sick--but He cures all His sheep so that they shall never die of their diseases. Ezekiel 34:16, "I will bind up that which is broken, I will strengthen that which is sick." Christ has those sovereign balms and ointments, which can cure the worst distemper. He has appointed the preaching of the Word to be a healer of sin-sick souls, Ezekiel 47. The Word preached is like the waters of the sanctuary, both for food and for medicine.

9. A shepherd keeps a continual WATCH over his flock--so that they are not stolen or devoured by the wolf. Just so, Christ watches over His flock by His omniscience, so that no hurt comes to His elect, so that they are not mortally infected by sin, or ensnared by temptation. Christ has His shepherd's eyes to watch His flock, and He has His shepherd's staff to beat off the wolf!

10. A shepherd has COMPASSION on his sheep. Just so, Jesus Christ has tender pity for all His elect. Isaiah 40:11, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Christ Jesus is tender with His lambs--He holds them close to His heart; and such as are weak and ready to faint--He gently leads. Oh, the pity and compassion of Christ to the elect! He is full of sympathy. The lambs never cry--but their cries go to Christ's heart! Therefore in Scripture Christ is said to be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, Hebrews 4:5. Isaiah 63:9, "In all their afflictions, He was afflicted."

Thus much, as briefly as I could, you have the analogies and parallels between Christ and the shepherd. He is the Shepherd of His flock.

How Christ is a BETTER Shepherd. In the second place, I shall show you how Christ is better than any other shepherd, and infinitely excels and transcends them, as it appears in these particulars:

1. Christ is a better Shepherd than any other--in respect of the GLORY and DIGNITY of His person. They are of the earth, earthly--but Christ is a Shepherd from heaven; He is of divine origin. He is equal with God the Father, Philippians 2:6.

2. Christ excels other shepherds--in that He CLEANSSES and PURIFIES His flock. Revelation 1:5, Christ "washes us from our sins in His own blood." While Christ's sheep are in the world, they will be apt to get spots--for the world is good for nothing but to spot. One spotted with pride, another spotted with worldliness. Oh, how the people of God deface God's image--by rubbing it against the earth! And the truth is, going too much among the goats defiles them! But Jesus Christ cleanses and purifies His flock and washes away their spots! All Christ's sheep are white and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

3. Christ excels all other shepherds--in that He has an art that no other shepherds have--He TEACHES His sheep. Other shepherds guide their sheep--but they cannot teach them. But Christ teaches all His sheep--who belong to His fold of election. He instructs them in the mysteries of salvation, and He teaches them after the most excellent manner--He teaches like God!

(1) Christ so teaches all His sheep--that He makes them willing to learn. Psalm 110:3, "They shall be a willing people." Christ not only informs the judgment--but inclines the will to embrace the truth and makes them willing to learn!

(2) Christ not only teaches the ear--but He teaches the heart! Acts 16:14, "Lydia--whose heart the Lord opened."

(3) Christ teaches His sheep not only to understand--but He teaches them to obey. Isaiah 2:3, "He will teach us of His ways, and we will go in them." So Christ teaches His sheep after the most excellent manner--He subdues them, and makes them obedient.

4. Jesus Christ is a better Shepherd than any on earth was before or after--because Christ PRAYS for His sheep! Many shepherds scarcely pray for themselves. Christ prays for all His elect sheep. John 17:9, "I will pray for them." As Christ knows every sheep by name--so Christ prays for every sheep by name. "I pray for them." And what does Christ pray for them? Why, He prays that they may not wander, that they may not tire or faint, that they may not die along the way. And this is Christ's prayer for His sheep, John 17:11, "Holy Father, keep those whom You have given Me." And this prayer of Christ's prevails with God. If we consider Christ either in His office or in His relation to God, His prayer must be prevalent. Consider Him in His office as He is a Priest; consider Him as He is in relation, as He is a Son. If God could forget Christ as a Priest--yet He could not forget Christ as His Son. John 11:42, "I know You always hear Me." And this prayer of Christ for His elect sheep is perpetual. There is not one minute wherein we can say that Christ is not praying for us. How can these sheep miscarry--when their blessed Shepherd is always watching over them and praying for them!

5. Jesus Christ is a better Shepherd than any other--in that He shows more dear affection and tender LOVE to His sheep than any shepherd in this world ever did. And no wonder Christ should thus love His

sheep. Because they are His own--He has a propriety in them. In John 10:27 He calls them "My sheep." A man may be a shepherd--and not be the owner of the flock of sheep. A hireling may take charge of the sheep when, perhaps, he never cared for the sheep, John 10:13. But Christ is the owner of the sheep. Though the pope blasphemously calls himself the Head of the Church, and lords it over Christ's flocks--yet the pope is a usurper. The Lord Jesus is the only rightful owner of His sheep. Hence it follows that Christ has such dear affection and tender love for these sheep, because they are His own.

Now, that Christ bears more love to His sheep than any other shepherd ever did, appears in these three particulars, (1) He treats His sheep with compassion; (2) He comforts His sheep; and (3) He died for His sheep. Was there ever any love parallel to this?

(1) Christ treats all His sheep with COMPASSION. I ground this upon that previously cited Scripture in Isaiah 40:11, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Christ, you see, is tender of His lambs and puts them in His bosom near His heart; and such as are faint He gently leads. Oh, the mercies of Christ to His elect sheep! That's the first point, Christ loves His sheep and treats them with compassion. His heart yearns over them.

(2) Christ not only treats His sheep with compassion--but He COMFORTS them. The people of Christ, who are His sheep--are given to trembling. Sheep are trembling, fearful creatures, and are apt to be discouraged. Now Christ comforts and revives them. Isaiah 12:1, "You comfort me." Christ comforts His people in two ways:

First, Christ comforts them in the use of His Word and His supper. In His Word--we hear Christ's voice; in His supper--we have His kiss and embraces. In the use of gospel ordinances the saints are oftentimes upon the Mount of Transfiguration. They feed upon holy manna. Christ gives them suddenly such inward revivings, as carry them above the love of life and the fear of death.

Second, Christ comforts His people, the flock of His pasture, by His Spirit, who is called the Comforter in John 14:16. The Spirit enables us to work out our adoption; and to read our names in the promises. The Spirit seals up God's love to the heart--upon which there is a current of divine joy running into the soul. Here is Christ's love to His sheep--He comforts them!

(3) Christ shows His love to His elect sheep in that He shed His blood for them! John 10:11, "I lay down My life for My sheep!" The death of the Shepherd--is the life of the sheep! Consider Christ's death in a threefold notion, it was painful; it was voluntary; and it was meritorious. In all these ways He shows His love in dying for His sheep.

First, look upon Christ's death as PAINFUL. If the torment of the body was so great, oh, what was the agony of the soul! The Lord Jesus Christ was trodden and squeezed in the winepress of His Father's wrath! The evangelists use three words worthy of observing to express Christ's agony. The text says He began to be amazed, He began to faint, and He began to be exceedingly sorrowful. He felt the equivalent of hell's torment in His soul. Though Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit, though He was supported with the Deity, though He was comforted with angels from heaven--yet for all that He sweated great drops of blood. Oh, the love of Christ in dying for His sheep! "He began to be filled with anguish and deep distress. My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death!" Matthew 26:37-38.

Second, consider Christ's death as VOLUNTARY. He parted with His life freely. It is true, Christ's death was necessary with regard to God's decree--but it was voluntary in the respect that Christ cheerfully yielded to suffering. John 10:18, "I lay down My life." The Jews could not have taken away His life if He had not laid it down. Nothing could have forced Christ to have died for His sheep--but His great love for them! Nothing could have bound Him to the cross--but the golden chain of love!

Third, consider Christ's death as MERITORIOUS. It is the inlet to all spiritual blessings. It procures for us justification of our persons, acceptance of our services, and access to the throne of grace. It procures an entrance into the most holy place--heaven, Hebrews 3:19. Behold, here is the love of Christ in laying down His life for His sheep! He has purchased glorious things for us! There was no way for the sheep to live--but by the death of the Shepherd! And for Christ Jesus to die as a malefactor, having the weight of so many sins lying upon Him--was more than if all the angels had been turned into dust!

6. Christ is a better Shepherd than any other--in that He can make all the care and pains He takes with His sheep to be successful. This, no other shepherd can do. Other shepherds may lead the sheep to water or to pasture--but they cannot make the sheep have an appetite. They cannot make the pasture nourish the sheep. But Christ, our blessed Shepherd, as He leads His sheep into the pasture, so He can cause an appetite in His sheep for their food. He can make them, by speaking a word--to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Jesus Christ provides pastures for His sheep, and He alone can bless these pastures and make them nourishing to the soul. 1 Timothy 4:6, "Nourished up in the words of faith." Christ can bless the blessed Supper. He can make the elements, through the operation of His Spirit, to be spiritual growth and nourishment in His elect sheep. Thus He is a better Shepherd--He can bless the pasture.

7. Christ is a better Shepherd than any other in the world for He is a pattern and example to all His flock. He is an example of meekness, humility, and sanctity. He is a pattern for all His flock. In this sense observe, that Christ is said to go before His sheep, John 10:34. How did He go before them? By His holy example. 1 Peter 2:21, "Leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps."

Jerome, having read the pious life of Delyan, and what an excellent end he made, said, "Delyan shall be the example I will follow." But let all the sheep of Christ say, "Jesus Christ shall be the example that we will follow and imitate." Christ's sheep go astray when they do not tread in the steps of their Shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

8. Christ Jesus is a better Shepherd than any other, and far excels them, in that He keeps His sheep so secure in His hands, that none can ever pluck them out. John 10:28, "Neither can any pluck them out of My hand." Not one of Christ's sheep was ever lost! Though a shepherd is ever so careful and vigilant--yet sometimes a sheep may go astray; or be devoured by the wolf. But not one of Christ's elect sheep was ever lost. John 17:12, "Not one of them is lost--but the son of perdition." Judas was never given to Christ--he was not a sheep but a goat! None of His sheep was ever lost.

Christ's sheep may sometimes go astray by error, and may fall into the acts of sin as did David--but Christ will find them and bring them back again--by speedy repentance. Christ's sheep may be lame and faint, and can hardly walk--but Christ cares for the weak sheep as well as the strong sheep. The bruised reed He will not break. The weakest saint alive, is so much a sheep that--he is part of his Shepherd! Christ and believers are one. The sheep cannot perish--without the Shepherd perishing likewise!

9. Christ is a better Shepherd than any other--in that He puts His sheep into a better pasture at last. He takes them out of the wilderness here, the valley of tears--and transplants them into paradise, there to

feed among the lilies! He gives them eternal life. John 10:28, "I give unto them eternal life." Christ's sheep may lose their golden fleece; men may rob them of their wool; and they may lose their lives for Christ's sake. Yes--but Christ gives them eternal life. Life is sweet--but that word "eternal" makes it far sweeter! Eternal life consists in the fruition of all good things--life, beauty, strength, joy, perfection, and eternity. Here is the excellency of our good Shepherd--He gives His sheep eternal life. He will take them out of the wilderness, where there are fiery serpents--and place them in paradise, where they shall feed among the holy cherubim!

Thus I have shown you how the Lord Jesus resembles a shepherd, and how He is a better Shepherd than any other. Give me permission now--to make some application.

USE 1. Is the Lord Jesus Christ this great Shepherd who takes such care for His flock, and is He a better Shepherd than any other? Then let us all labor to KNOW our Shepherd. Here in the text Christ says, "I know My sheep; I know them by name." Yes, and He is known by them too. Oh, let us know our blessed Shepherd. Knowing Christ is nothing else but believing in Him. In Scripture, knowledge is sometimes put for faith. Isaiah 53:11, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many." Knowledge is there put for faith. Then do we know our Shepherd, Christ, when we believe in Him.

The blind world is ignorant of Christ. John 17:25, "The world has not known Me." No? They heard Christ preach--they saw His miracles--but neither oracle nor miracle would work upon them. Christ said, "The world has not known Me." Formalists do not know Christ savingly. They have light but they lack sight--as if the sun should shine upon a blind eye. We know Christ aright when we believe in Him, when we fetch virtue from Him, and then we are transformed into His likeness. This is to know Christ. Oh, let us never rest until we know the Guardian and Shepherd of our souls--the Lord Jesus.

As our comfort lies in Christ knowing us--so it lies in our knowing Christ. Our comfort lies in Christ's knowing us with a knowledge of approbation--and also in our knowing Christ with a knowledge of apprehension. That's the first use, let us know our Shepherd. Such as do not know Christ will hear Christ say to them, "I never knew you."

USE 2. Let us not only know our Shepherd--but let us HEARKEN to the voice of our blessed Shepherd, our Lord Jesus. As soon as ever the shepherd comes into the field, the sheep know his voice. Oh, let us hear Christ's voice! John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice." Christ's voice is in the preaching of the Word. Therefore observe that Christ is said now, just now, to speak from heaven to us, Hebrews 12:25. How does He speak now from heaven, but in the preaching of the Word? Oh, then, hear Christ speak. But take heed, don't hear the voice of a stranger, John 10:5. Christ said that they would not follow a stranger. Sheep will not follow a stranger. By stranger is meant one who is heterodox and would bring strange wonders into the church and poison Christ's sheep. As you must hearken to Christ's voice, so take heed that you don't listen to the voice of a stranger.

Christ's sheep are discerning. He has given them a spirit of discerning, and they are able by their wisdom to distinguish between truth and error. They will not hear the voice of a stranger. We must hear Christ's voice--but when do we hear Christ's voice aright? We hear Christ's voice aright when we obey His voice, and never until then. In John 10, and several other places, you read of obeying the voice of Christ. When Christ speaks of self-denial, of meekness and mercifulness, we obey Him and are ambitious to obey Him. A good Christian is like the flower which opens with the sun--he opens to Christ's commands; he cordially obeys Christ. This is to hear Christ's voice.

USE 3. If Christ is the great, blessed, and good Shepherd, then let us all labor to EVIDENCE to ourselves that we belong to this Shepherd, that we are the sheep of Christ's pasture. Let us search and try whether or not we have the earmark of Christ's sheep, whether we are like sheep. A sheep is a pure and clean creature. Are we like the sheep of Christ? Are our hearts cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit? He who lies wallowing in sin--is a swine, not a sheep.

A sheep is a very useful creature. Everything in a sheep is good for something. The milk, the flesh, the fleece, everything is useful. Are we the sheep of Christ? Are we useful? We should be always doing good; this is the very end of our living, to be good and do good.

USE 4. Is Christ this blessed Shepherd better than any other shepherd? Oh, then, let us labor to LOVE and honor this blessed Shepherd! Does the Shepherd die for His sheep--and shall not the sheep love their Shepherd! Those who do not love Christ are not sheep--but goats. Give Christ, I beseech you, the best of your love, the cream of your love. The spouse gave Christ the juice of her pomegranate, her spiced wine, Song of Solomon 8:2.

Love Christ better than estate or relations. Relations may lie in our bosoms--but Christ must lie in our hearts. Our love to the Lord Jesus must be intense and ardent. We should, like seraphim, burn in a holy flame of love for Christ. If a man had three souls, as a philosopher once dreamed, they would all be too little for Christ. Let us so love Christ, and show it, by an open acknowledgment of Christ if we are called to it. This is love, to dare to own Christ, our blessed Shepherd. It is said of the chief rulers, John 12:42, that they believed on Christ but did not confess Him lest they should be put out of the synagogue. Christ will never own that faith, which will never entertain Christ. He who is ashamed of Christ--is a shame to Christ.

USE 5. I will but name it--Let us respond to all the love and cost of Christ, our blessed Shepherd. How should we respond to this cost? By holy fruitfulness. 1 Corinthians 9:7, "Who feeds a flock--and does not drink of the milk?" Christ has feasted you as His flock. Christ has feasted you with His body and blood. Oh, then, feast Him with the fruits of righteousness; be fruitful in knowledge; be fruitful in good works.

I will close all with, "Awaken, north wind--come, south wind! Blow on my garden, and spread the fragrance of its spices. Let my Lover come to His garden and eat its choicest fruits!" Song of Songs 4:16

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