

The Good Shepherd-Thomas Watson

The Good Shepherd by Thomas Watson

"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.

1. They wallow in sin—in their wickedness and uncleanness.
2. 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 **adouble 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.

How Christ is Better Than Any Other 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, Philipians 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.

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
(Source: https://www.gracegems.org/Watson/good_shepherd.htm)

RELATED RESOURCES ON GOOD SHEPHERD

QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the good Shepherd?"](#)

ANSWER: "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11) is the fourth of seven "I am" declarations of Jesus recorded only in John's Gospel. These "I am" proclamations point to His unique, divine identity and purpose. Immediately after declaring that He is "the door" in John 10:7, Jesus declares "I am the good shepherd." He describes Himself as not only "the shepherd" but the "good shepherd." What does this mean?

It should be understood that Jesus is "the" good shepherd, not simply "a" good shepherd, as others may be, but He is unique in character (Psalm 23; Zechariah 13:7; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4). The Greek word kalos, translated "good," describes that which is noble, wholesome, good, and beautiful, in contrast to that which is wicked, mean, foul, and unlovely. It signifies not only that which is good inwardly—character—but also that which is attractive outwardly. It is an innate goodness. Therefore, in using the phrase "the good shepherd," Jesus is referencing His inherent goodness, His righteousness, and His beauty. As shepherd of the sheep, He is the one who protects, guides, and nurtures His flock.

As He did in declaring that He is "the door of the sheep" in John 10:7, Jesus is making a contrast between Himself and the religious leaders, the Pharisees (John 10:12–13). He compares them to a "hireling" or "hired hand" who doesn't really care about the sheep. In John 10:9, Jesus speaks of thieves and robbers who sought to enter the sheepfold stealthily. In that passage the Jewish leaders (Pharisees) are contrasted with Christ, who is the Door. Here, in John 10:12, the hireling is contrasted with the true or faithful shepherd who willingly gives up his life for the sheep. He who is a "hireling" works for wages, which are his main consideration. His concern is not for the sheep but for himself. Interestingly enough, the shepherds of ancient times were not usually the owners of the flock. Nevertheless, they were expected to exercise the same care and concern the owners would. This was characteristic of a true shepherd. However, some of the hirelings thought only of themselves. As a result, when a wolf appeared—the most common threat to sheep in that day—the hireling abandoned the flock and fled, leaving the sheep to be scattered or killed (John 10:12–13).

First, to better understand the purpose of a shepherd during the times of Jesus, it is helpful to realize that sheep are utterly defenseless and totally dependent upon the shepherd. Sheep are always subject to danger and must always be under the watchful eye of the shepherd as they graze. Rushing walls of water down the valleys from sudden, heavy rainfalls may sweep them away, robbers may steal them, and wolves may attack the flock. David tells how he killed a lion and a bear while defending his father's flock as a shepherd boy (1 Samuel 17:36). Driving snow in winter, blinding dust and burning sands in summer, long, lonely hours each day—all these the shepherd patiently endures for the welfare of the flock. In fact, shepherds were frequently subjected to grave danger, sometimes even giving their lives to protect their sheep.

Likewise, Jesus gave His life on the cross as “the Good Shepherd” for his own. He who would save others, though He had the power, did not choose to save Himself. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Through His willing sacrifice, the Lord made salvation possible for all who come to Him in faith. In proclaiming that He is the Good Shepherd, Jesus speaks of “laying down” His life for His sheep (John 10:15, 17–18).

Jesus’ death was divinely appointed. It is only through Him that we receive salvation. “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own” (John 10:14). Furthermore, Jesus makes it clear that it wasn’t just for the Jews that he laid down His life, but also for the “other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). The “other sheep” clearly refers to the Gentiles. As a result, Jesus is the Good Shepherd over all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to believe upon Him (John 3:16). GotQuestions.org

The Good Shepherd - Alexander Maclaren -- Jn 10:14,15.

'I am the Good Shepherd.' Perhaps even Christ never spoke more fruitful words than these. Just think how many solitary, wearied hearts they have cheered, and what a wealth of encouragement and comfort there has been in them for all generations. The little child as it lays itself down to sleep, cries --

'Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night,'

and the old man lays himself down to die murmuring to himself, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' 'I am the Good Shepherd.' No preaching can do anything but weaken and dilute the force of such words, and yet, though in all their sweet, homely simplicity they appeal to every heart, there are great depths in them that are worth pondering, and profound thoughts that need some elucidation.

There are three points to be noticed -- First, the general force of the metaphor, and then the two specific applications of it which our Lord Himself makes.

I. First of all, then, let me say a few words as to the general application of the metaphor. The usual notion of these words confines itself to the natural meaning, and runs out into very true, but perhaps a little sentimental, considerations, laying hold of what is so plain on the very surface that I need not spend any time in speaking about it. Christ's pattern is my law; Christ's providence is my guidance and defence -- which in the present case means Christ's companionship -- is my safety, my sustenance -- which in the present case means that Christ Himself is the bread of my soul. The Good Shepherd exercises care, which absolves the sheep from care, and in the present case means that my only duty is meek following and quiet trust. 'I am the Good Shepherd' -- here is guidance, guardianship, companionship, sustenance -- all responsibility laid upon His broad shoulders, and all tenderness in His deep heart, and so for us simple obedience and quiet trust.

Another way by which we get the whole significance of this symbol is by noticing how the idea is strengthened by the word that accompanies it. Christ does not say 'I am a Shepherd,' but He says, 'I am the good Shepherd.' At first sight that word 'good' is interpreted, as I have said, in a kind of sentimental, poetic way, as expressing our Lord's tenderness and love and care; but I do not think that is the full meaning here. You find up and down this Gospel of St. John phrases such as, 'I am the true bread,' 'I am the true vine,' and the meaning of the word that is here translated 'good' is very nearly parallel with that idea. The true bread, the true vine, the true Shepherd -- which comes to this, to use modern phraseology, that Jesus Christ, in His relation to you and me, fulfils all that in figure and shadow is represented to the meditative eye by that lower relationship between the material shepherd and his sheep. That is the picture, this the reality. There is another point to be made clear, and that is, that whilst the word 'good' is perhaps a fair enough representation of that which is employed by our Lord, there is a special force and significance attached to the original, which is lost in our Bible. I do not know that it could have been preserved; but still it is necessary to state it. The expression here is the one that is generally rendered 'fair,' or 'lovely,' or 'beautiful,' and it belongs to the genius of that wonderful tongue in which the New Testament is written that it has a name for moral purity, considered as being lovely, the highest goodness, and the serenest beauty, which was what the old Greeks taught, howsoever little they may have practised it in their lives. And so here the thought is that the Shepherd stands before us, the realisation of all which that name means, set forth in such a fashion as to be infinitely lovely and perfectly fair, and to draw the admiration of any man who can appreciate that which is beautiful, and can admire that which is of good report.

There is another point still in reference to this first view of the text. Our Lord not only declares that He is the reality of which the

earthly shepherd is the shadow, and that He as such is the flawless, perfect One, but that He alone is the reality. 'I am the Good Shepherd; in Me and in Me alone is that which men need.' And that leads me to another point which must just be mentioned, that we shall not reach the full meaning of these great words without taking into account the history of the metaphor in the Old Testament. Christ gives a second edition of the figure, and we are to remember all that went before. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want'; 'Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.' These are but specimens of a continuous series of utterances in the old Revelation in which Jehovah Himself is the Shepherd of mankind; and there is also another class of passages of which I will quote one or two. 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and carry them in His arms.' 'Awake, O sword, against the Man who is my fellow; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' There were, we should remember, two streams of representation, according to the one of which God Himself was the Shepherd of Israel, and according to the other of which the Messiah was the Shepherd; and here, as I believe, Jesus lays His hand on both the one and the other, and says: 'They are Mine, and they testify of Me.' So sweet, so gracious are the words, that we lose the sense of the grandeur of them, and need to think before we are able to understand how great and immense the claim that is made here upon our faith, and that this Man stands before us and arrogates to Himself the divine prerogative witnessed from of old by psalmist and prophet, and says that for Him were meant the prophecies of ancient times that spake of a human shepherd, and asserts that all the sustenance, care, authority, command, which the emblem suggests meet in Him in perfect measure.

II. Now let us turn to the two special points which our Lord emphasises here, as being those in which His relation as the Good Shepherd is most conspicuously given. The language of my text runs: '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.' Our Western ways fail to bring out the full meaning of the emblem; but all Eastern travellers tell us what a strange bond of sympathy and loving regard, and docile recognition, springs up between the shepherd and his sheep away there in the Eastern pastures and deserts; and how he knows every one, though to a stranger's eye they are so like each other; and how even the dumb instincts and the narrow intelligence of the silly sheep recognise the shepherd, and will not be deceived by shepherd's garments worn to deceive, and will not follow the voice of a stranger.

But we must further note that Christ lays hold of the dumb instincts of the animal, as illustrating, at the one end of the scale, the relation between Him and His followers, and lays hold of the communion between the Father and the Son at the other end of the scale, as illustrating the same thing. 'I know My sheep.' That is a knowledge like the knowledge of the shepherd, a bond of close intimacy. But He does not know them by reason of looking at them and thinking about them. It is something far more blessed than that. He knows me because He loves me; He knows me because He has sympathy with me, and I know Him, if I know Him at all, by my love, and I know Him by my sympathy, and I know Him by my communion. A loveless heart does not know the Shepherd, and unless the Shepherd's heart was all love He would not know His sheep. The Shepherd's love is an individualised love. He knows His flock as a flock because He knows the units of it, and we can rest ourselves upon the personal knowledge, which is personal love and sympathy, of Jesus Christ. 'And My sheep know Me' -- not by force of intellect, not by understanding certain truths, all-important as that may be, but by having our hearts harmonised in Him, and our spirits put into sympathy and communion with Him. 'They know Me,' and rest comes with the knowledge; 'they know Me,' and in that knowing is the best answer to all doubt and fear. They are exposed to danger, but in the fold they can go quietly to rest, for they know that He is at the door watching through all dangers.

III. Turn for a moment to the last point, 'I lay down My life for the sheep.' I have said that our Western ways fail to bring out fully the element of the metaphor which refers to the kind of sympathy between the shepherd and the sheep; and our Western life also fails to bring out this other element also. Shepherds in England never have need to lay down their life for the sheep. Shepherds in Palestine often did, and sometimes do. You remember David with the lion and the bear, which is but an illustration of the reality which underlies this metaphor. So, then, in some profound way, the shepherd's death is the sheep's safety. First of all, look at that most unmistakable, emphatic -- I was going to say vehement, at any rate, intense -- expression of the absolute voluntariness of Christ's death, 'I lay down My life,' as a man might strip off a vesture. And this application of the metaphor is made all the stronger by the words which follow: '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.' We read, 'Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,' but here, somehow or other, the smiting of the Shepherd is not the scattering but the gathering of the flock. Here, somehow or other, the dead Shepherd has power to guard, to guide, to defend them. Here, somehow or other, the death of the Shepherd is the security of the sheep; and I say to you, the flock, that for every soul the entrance into the flock of God is through the door of the dying Christ, who laid down His life for the sheep, and makes them His sheep who trust in Him.

The Good Shepherd by J. C. Ryle

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me." John 10:11,14

Like a Good Shepherd, Christ knows all His believing people . . . their names, their families, their dwelling places, their circumstances, their private history,

their experience, their trials; with all these things Jesus is perfectly acquainted. There is not a thing about the least and lowest of them with which He is not familiar. The children of this world may not know Christians, and may count their lives folly; but the Good Shepherd knows them thoroughly, and, wonderful to say, though He knows them, does not despise them.

Like a Good Shepherd, Christ cares tenderly for all His believing people. He provides for all their needs in the wilderness of this world, and leads them by the right way to a city of habitation. He bears patiently with their many weaknesses and infirmities, and does not cast them off because they are wayward, erring, sick, footsore, or lame. He guards and protects them against all their enemies; and of those that the Father has given Him He will be found at last to have lost none.

Like a Good Shepherd, Christ lays down His life for the sheep. He did it once for all, when He was crucified for them. When He saw that nothing could deliver them from hell and the devil, but His blood, He willingly made His soul an offering for their sins. The merit of that death He is now presenting before the Father's throne. The sheep are saved forever, because the Good Shepherd died for them.

This is indeed a love that passes knowledge!

The infinite tenderness of Jesus! Charles Spurgeon

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd sacrifices His life for the sheep!" John 10:11

"He will carry the lambs in His bosom, holding them close to His heart!" Isaiah 40:11

Who is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? He is the Good Shepherd. Why does He carry the lambs in His bosom? Because He has a tender heart, and any weakness in His redeemed children at once melts His heart.

The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of His flock draw forth His compassion.

He is considerate of the weak of His flock. He purchased them with His blood, they are His property—He must and will care for those who cost Him so dear.

He is responsible for each lamb, bound by covenant engagements not to lose one. They are all a part of His glory and reward.

"He carries the lambs in His bosom!"

Here is boundless affection. Would He put them in His bosom if He did not love them so much?

Here is tender nearness. So near are they, that they could not possibly be nearer.

Here is hallowed familiarity. There are precious 'love passages' between Christ and His weak ones.

Here is perfect safety. In His bosom, who can hurt them? None can snatch them away from His omnipotence! They can never perish—ever!

Here is perfect rest and sweetest comfort.

Surely we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite tenderness of Jesus!

The Good Shepherd C. H. Spurgeon.

We have here —

I. THE COMPLETE CHARACTER. There is more in Jesus than you can pack away in shepherd or any other emblem. But note —

1. He sets Himself forth as a shepherd: not such as is employed in England to look after sheep a few months till they are

slaughtered. The Eastern shepherd is —

- (1) The owner or his son. His wealth consists in sheep. He has seldom much of a house, or much land. Ask him "How much are you worth?" He answers, "So many sheep." We are Christ's wealth, "the riches of the glory of His inheritance" is in the saints. The Lord's portion is His people. For their sakes He gave not only Ethiopia and Seba, but Himself.
- (2) The Caretaker. Christ is never off duty. He has constant care for His people day and night. He knows and prescribes for their every complaint.
- (3) The Provider. There is not one in the flock who knows about the selecting of pasturage. For time and eternity, body and soul, Christ supplies all our need.
- (4) The Leader.
- (5) The Defender.

2. Christ completely fills this character.

- (1) He is the Good Shepherd — neither thief nor hireling. What He does is con amore.
- (2) He is the Good Shepherd. Of others we can only say a shepherd. All the rest are shadows: He is the substance.

3. Christ rejoices in this character. He repeats it so many times here that it almost reads like the refrain of a song. And if He is so pleased to be our Shepherd, we should be pleased to be His sheep, and avail ourselves of all the privileges wrapped up in the name.

II. THE COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE.

1. Christ's knowledge of His own, "As the Father," etc. Do you know how much the Father knows the Son who is His glory, other self, yea, one with Him? Just so intimately does the Good Shepherd know His sheep.

- (1) Their number.
- (2) Their persons — age, character, hairs, constitution; and never mistakes one for another
- (3) Trials.
- (4) Sins.
- (5) This ought to be a great comfort, inasmuch as it is not cold, intellectual knowledge, but that of love. He knows you —
 - (a) By acquaintance.
 - (b) By communion.
 - (c) Sympathy. "Though He were a Son yet learned He," etc.

2. Our knowledge of the Lord, "as I know the Father." This is —

- (1) By delight.
- (2) By union.
- (3) By love.

III. THE COMPLETE SACRIFICE. These words are repeated in different forms four times (vers. 11, 15, 17, 13), and mean that —

1. He was always doing so. All the life He had He was constantly laying out for the sheep.
2. It was actively performed. He did not die merely.
3. It was voluntary.
4. It was for the sheep.

The Good Shepherd D. Moore, M. A.

John 10:11-15 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep....

The truth here is Christ's exceeding love and care for the Church. He would show that He sustained towards it a relationship beyond parallel. Not a king, however wise his rule; not a parent, however fond his care; not a friend, however great his service, for all these are kindnesses of beings of the same nature only. They suggest nothing of that condescension by which a Being of the highest order could embrace one reduced to the condition of fallen man. Hence Christ selected as the type of our lost race the most helpless of animals, and compares Himself to one of the kindest of guardians. Let us consider some of His pastoral offices in which His love is set forth.

I. HE PROVIDES FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL WANTS. This would be the first thing looked for according to the predictions (Psalm 23).

1. Pasture for the flock — enough for all; variety for each.
2. Wisdom to guide.
3. Watchfulness to tend.
4. Constraint to rule.
5. Diligence to seek out.
6. Power to restore.

II. HE PRESERVES THEM FROM FOES AND DANGERS (ver. 12). It is our lot to be sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. If our soul escapes at all it is because the snare is broken by our Deliverer. That which enables the Good Shepherd to effect our deliverance is His profound and comprehensive knowledge (ver. 14). These perils are foreseen and provided for. How many tempted ones have derived comfort from the thought that when Satan has desired to have them, he has prayed, etc. Hence the encouragement, "Fear not little flock." "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

III. HE IS DILIGENT IN RECOVERING THOSE WHO STRAY (Ezekiel 34; Isaiah 53:1). In relation to the whole human family Christ came to seek and save the lost. The whole history of the Church has been the gathering in of outcasts. He is found of them that sought Him not; and under backslidings after conversion, will He go after us again. He may leave us to eat the bitter fruits of our ways for a time, and make us contrast the misery of the wilderness with the blessedness of the fold. He, who of all the saints of God lived nearest to Him, and yet wandered furthest, said, "He restoreth my soul."

IV. HE HAS SPECIAL CARE OF THE YOUNG, whether young in years or in grace (Isaiah 40). An untended lamb is the very type of helplessness and folly. The temptations are many which beset the flock in early life from the example of companions, worldly pleasures, buoyant spirits, etc.; but for these and every spiritual danger the Good Shepherd provides. Still, there are special dangers which account for this pastoral care. The very warmth and freshness of their religious feelings render them more liable to fall. Hence the first duty enjoined on restored Peter was "Feed My lambs."

V. HE IS WITH THE FLOCK TO THE END. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," etc.

The Good Shepherd J. Brown, D. D.

John 10:11-15 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep....

These words are equivalent to —

- I. I am A Shepherd. I stand in a peculiar relation to a peculiar people, who are My sheep.
- II. I am a GOOD Shepherd. I possess the appropriate qualifications and perform the appropriate duties of the character I sustain.
- III. I am THE Shepherd — the one Shepherd — not like him of ver. 2, one of the shepherds, but the great, chief, proprietor Shepherd, whose own the sheep are — the Shepherd of shepherds as well as of sheep.
- IV. I am THE GOOD Shepherd. I possess in the most perfect degree all the qualifications that are requisite for the discharge of the numerous, varied, and difficult duties of this most exalted office.
- V. I am THAT GOOD Shepherd, i.e., the Divine Guardian foreshadowed in prophecy (Ezekiel 34:11-24), and answering in every respect to the type. Christ is all this —

1. As He secures for His peculiar people all the blessings they require.
2. As He secures these advantages to them at the greatest conceivable expense to Himself.
3. As there subsists the most endearing mutual acquaintance and intercourse between Him and His people.
4. As He cares for the happiness, so He secures the salvation of all.

The Good Shepherd F. W. Robertson, M. A.

I. THE PASTORAL CHARACTER CLAIMED BY CHRIST.

1. We shall learn nothing from the text unless we enter humbly and affectionately into its spirit. We must dismiss all Western ideas. Here the connection between shepherd and sheep is simply one of pecuniary interest; but beneath the burning skies and clear starry nights of Palestine there grows up between the man and the dumb creatures he protects, often at the peril of his life, a kind of friendship. For this is after all the true school in which love is taught; dangers and hardships mutually shared, alone in those vast solitudes the shepherd and the sheep feel a life in common. The vast interval between the man and the brute disappears, and the

single point of union is felt strongly — the love of the protector, and the love of the grateful life. Those to whom Christ spoke felt all this and more. He appealed to associations which had been familiar from childhood, and unless we try, by realizing such scenes, to feel what they felt by association, these words will only be dry and lifeless.

2. To the name shepherd Christ adds the significant word "Good" — not in the sense of benevolent, but true born, genuine, just as wine of a noble quality is good compared with the cheaper sort; and a soldier who is one in heart and not by mere profession, or for pay. This expression distinguishes the Good Shepherd from —

(1) The robbers who may guard the sheep simply for their flesh and fleece: they have not a true shepherd's heart any more than a pirate has the true sailor's heart. There were many such marauders in Palestine. David protected Nabal's flock from them. Many such nominal shepherds had Israel in by-gone years: rulers whose rule had been but kingcraft: teachers whose instruction had been but priestcraft. Government, teachership are sublime pastoral callings; but when the work is even well done for the sake of party, or place, or honour, or consistency, it is the spirit of the robber.

(2) The hirelings, who are tested by danger. A man is a hireling who does his duty for pay. He may do it in his way faithfully. The paid shepherd will not desert the sheep for a shower or a cold night. But he is not paid to risk his life against the lion or bear, and so the sheep are left to their fate. So a man may be a hired priest, or a paid demagogue, a great champion of rights paid by applause; and while popularity lasts he will be a reformer — deserting the people when danger comes. The cause of the sheep is not his.

3. Exactly the reverse is the Good Shepherd. The cause of man was His, and His only pay the cross. He might have escaped it all, and been an honoured leader by prudent time service. But this would have been the desertion of God's cause and man's.

II. THE PROOFS WHICH SUBSTANTIATE THE CLAIM.

1. I know My sheep as the Father knoweth Me, and not simply by omniscience. There is a certain mysterious tact of sympathy and antipathy by which we discover the like and unlike of ourselves in others' character. A man may hide his opinions, but not his character. There is a something in an impure heart which purity detects afar off. The truer we become, the more unerringly we know the ring of truth. Therefore Christ knows His sheep by the mystic power, always finest in the best natures, by which like detects what is like and unlike itself; and how unerringly did He read men — the enthusiastic populace, Nathanael, the rich ruler, Zacchaeus, Judas, the Pharisees! It was as if His bosom was some mysterious mirror, on which all that came near Him left a sullied or unsullied surface, detecting themselves by every breath. This Divine power must be distinguished from that cunning sagacity which men call knowingness. The worldly wise have maxims and rules; but the finer shades of character escape. Eternal judgment is nothing more than the carrying out of these words, "I know My sheep"; for their obverse is "I never knew you."

2. Christ's sheep know Him, not by some lengthened investigation, whether the shepherds dress be the identical dress, the crozier genuine — but instinctively. Truth is like light; risible in itself, not distinguished by the shadow it casts.

3. Pastoral fidelity, "I lay down My life." Here is the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice. Unitarians say He died as a martyr in attestation of His truths; but we cannot explain away the "for." This sacrificing love is paralleled by the love of the Father to the Son. Therefore that sacrifice is but a mirror of the heart of God.

The Good Shepherd - Letters of John Newton

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep! I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:11, 28

Every part of our salvation, requires the exertion of infinite wisdom and almighty power. Jesus is the Shepherd of all who believe in Him. We depend upon Him—and He gives us the effectual help which we need. He is intimately acquainted with us—and knows every thought and intent of our hearts. He has His eye always upon us. His ear is always open to us. His arm is ever stretched out for our relief. We can receive nothing—but what He bestows upon us. We can do nothing—but as He enables us. Nor can we stand a moment—but as He upholds us!

It is amazing to me—that I do not find my heart all on fire with love to Jesus—when I consider—from what misery I am redeemed; to what happiness I am called; and what a price was paid for my soul! Alas! alas! my guilt and grief are that my thoughts of Jesus are so faint, and so infrequent; and that my commendations of Him are so lamentably cold and disproportionate to what they ought to be!

Yet—if the heart is right with God, and sincerely affected with the wonders of redeeming love—our gracious High Priest, who knows

our weakness—will pity and pardon what is amiss, and accept our poor efforts!

The Lord is my Shepherd! -J.R. Miller "Bethlehem to Olivet" 1905

"The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need!" Psalm 23:1

The shepherd is a favorite Scriptural picture of the divine love and care. In the Old Testament, the twenty-third Psalm gathers the whole wonderful truth in exquisite lines, which are dear to young and old wherever the Bible is known. Then in the New Testament, when our Lord would give His friends the sweetest revealings of His heart toward them, and tell them what they are to Him, and what He would be to them—He says, "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." John 10:11

The Hebrew shepherd lives with his sheep. If they are out in the storm—he is with them. If they are exposed to danger—so is he. Just so, Christ lives with His people. He enters into closest relations with them.

The shepherd knows his sheep. He has a name for each one and calls them all by their names. Just so, Christ knows each one of His friends, and has intimate personal knowledge of each one. He knows the best in us—and also the worst. He knows our faults, our sins, our wanderings. Yet, knowing us as we are—He loves us still and never wearies of us!

The shepherd is most gentle with his sheep. He does not drive them—but goes before them and leads them. When they need rest on the way—he makes them lie down, and chooses for their resting-place, not the dusty road—but green pastures. He is especially kind to the lambs, gathers them in his arms and carries them in his bosom.

All this is an exquisite picture of the gentleness of our Good Shepherd in His care of His sheep. He is thoughtful toward the weak. He loves the lambs and makes room for them in His bosom. Whatever the need is, there is something in the heart of Christ which meets its craving and supplies its lack! "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." Isaiah 40:11

The shepherd defends his flock in all danger. Often he had to risk his own safety, even his life, in protecting his sheep. Just so, the Good Shepherd gives His life—for His sheep!

Christ's sheep are absolutely safe in His keeping. "I give unto them eternal life," He said; "and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" Then at last, He will bring His own all safely home, "and they shall become one flock—with one Shepherd!"

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [The Good Shepherd!](#) by George Everard, 1885
- [Shepherd](#) - William Law
- [The Good Shepherd](#) George Whitefield, 1714–1770
- [The Good Shepherd and His Work](#), J C Philpot, 1851