

It was very unreasonable to be displeased with Christ for receiving sinners. Where should a physician be if not among the sick? Do the whole need him? Should they that he whole murmur at him because he is where he is needed and busy doing the right kind of work? Had their hearts been right with God they would have been glad to see the application of the balm of Gilead to the wounded spirit, and the great and good physician of souls surrounded with the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, and those who were covered all over with the leprosy of sin. "And he spake this parable unto them saying, What man of you having one hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." The parable is truly beautiful, and transparent.

The grand truth which it teaches, is divine love to the lost. God's seeking love; or if you will the love of the Divine Man. The Lord Jesus Christ, the good shepherd came to seek the lost, to save the lost. He came to seek the lost wanderer from the fold of God, and when the shepherd finds the lost sheep, he does not drag it, or drive it home, but he lays it on his shoulder rejoicing and carries it home. Jesus not only rejoices over lost sinners when he finds them and brings them back to God, he calls upon "his friends and neighbours," all right minded, right hearted beings, to rejoice with him.

As might be expected various interpretations have been given and various opinions entertained respecting the *ninety and nine*, who are represented in the parable as left in the wilderness and who are said to be righteous persons needing no repentance.

Some have supposed that the *ninety and nine* represent the angels, and that there is more joy in heaven over one redeemed sinner than over ninety and nine angels who never fell.

Others fancy that the *ninety and nine* represent the company of the faithful, and that the one who has gone astray represents the *backslider*. That there is joy over the safety of the faithful every one knows, and that when a blacksliding believers returns it is a matter of joy, great joy, no christian can doubt for a moment, but the reading of the parable does not naturally suggest this idea.