

SPECIAL ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK REVIEWS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS CHRIST AND THE DOCTRINE CALLED "REFORMED."

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"I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." John x: 11.

"I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." Ver. 14.

Reader: It is the Lord Himself who speaks and He speaks as the Saviour of His people whom He calls His sheep. Assuming you to be one of His flock, which you are, if you are a Christian at all, in the true sense of that word, let us inquire further of Him and ask what He does for us the great Shepherd of the sheep; and let Him speak for Himself.

I. ELECTION. First: Observe that the sheep are His property. "His own sheep," v. 3: "His own sheep," v. 4. He is not like the hireling "whose own the sheep are not," and he has other sheep not of the Hebrew fold.

How came you to be His? By gift from the Father. "My Father gave them me," v. 29. "Thine they were," (addressing the Father, John 17:6) "and thou gavest them me," Ver. 9. "I pray for them which thou hast given me" In John 6: 37, He teaches, saying: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," and in Ver. 39, "This is the Father's will, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing."

Observe, You were given first; your coming to the Saviour followed after in consequence. You were not given to the Shepherd as the result of your believing in him, but contrariwise, having been given as one of His sheep you came—believed. So He accounts for the want of faith on the part of the rejectors of His day (John 10:26) "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, etc."

But it would seem this gift was conditioned. That is, you were given to the Son that He might redeem and save you. So, "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "I lay down my life for the sheep." "Therefore doth my Father love me." "I lay it down of myself." "This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:11, 15, 17, 18). And the condition of this eternal covenant He thus fulfills in time. But, reader, what is all this to you of practical religion? Consider; it means that before the world was, the infinite God of love and mercy saw you born into a world of sin and consequent misery and woe, that He loved you,—you; and set His heart upon you to save you; to which end he sent His Son; and that is why you are one of His Sheep to-day.

II. THE MEANS OF GRACE. But a mere purpose to save you did not bring you or any into the world in a saved state. Sheep you were, by virtue of the Father's choice; but you came into the world as a lost sheep. And so the gracious purpose of God towards you and all His lost sheep may be aptly expressed in the words of His avowed purpose in behalf of His ancient Israel. (Ezek. 34: 11, 12). "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among the sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." To this great work of grace the good Shepherd has set Himself. First, in His own person. He came for the gathering together of His lost sheep. "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to

save that which was lost." "I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." This He said, signifying what death He should die. So the text: "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." It is not wrong to say that in this mission of seeking that which was lost, He died a martyr. "For none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed, nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through, ere He found the sheep that was lost." The mistake is in thinking that His death was nothing more than martyrdom. "He gave His life a ransom for many." "He hath anointed he to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Having ascended up on high and therefore no longer searching in His own Person, He still gathers in His lost sheep by His Holy Spirit through His appointed means of grace. To His apostles toward the close of His ministry, He said (John 15:16) "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." And His last word in parting from them was (Mark 16:15) "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8. So then He is gathering in, or searching out His lost sheep by the preaching of the Gospel, accompanied by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit whom He has sent to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. To which we may add, the working of His gracious providence. How did your conversion come about? Something in a certain sermon preached by your pastor in an ordinary diet of worship impressed itself upon your mind with peculiar force? Strange to say, no one else apparently saw anything exceptional in the sermon that day; neither was there. But somehow it opened your eyes to see your need of a Saviour as you never had done before. And soon you found Him, and found yourself a changed man. Or, it may not have been under a sermon. It may have been the striking in upon your thoughts, you knew not how, of some word of Scripture; a passing remark made by some Christian neighbor; perhaps a spell of serious illness by which God threw you on your back that you might be compelled to think, and to "look up"; or, perhaps, you cannot tell how or when it came about. Your passing from death into life may have been as gentle as "the waking of a sleeping infant by its mother's kiss." However, it came about you know now that the Lord is yours and you are His; and that it was not that you went seeking Him, but that He sought you, and you say "by the grace of God, I am what I am." Or, like the Glasgow girl during the revival under McCoil of the Wynd Church, who, when among the inquirers was asked: "Have you come to Jesus?" answered "No, Sir, He fetched me." Is there a true convert who cannot say with the same fulness of heart as the apostle, "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me." There are diverse experiences, because "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same spirit that worketh all in all." And this, if you please, is what has been called Particular Redemption.

But, it may be said, did not Christ die for all? Yes, truly; "He is the

Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."—the sheep. In the preaching of the Gospel, the Arminian has nothing to offer the world of sinners that the Presbyterian has not. In this covenant of grace God "freely offers to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved." But the Presbyterian preacher has more than the Arminian, in that He has a confidence as strong as the eternal purpose of God can make it, that he will not preach in vain; for through this instrumentality all that the Father hath given him shall come to Jesus.

But conversion is not sufficient to fit us for the presence and society of God, and the glorified saints. Without holiness, we are told, no man can see the Lord. There is a great difference between the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and righteousness wrought into our nature and manifested in our lives. This is called

III. SANCTIFICATION, and it is rightly said to be the work of the Holy Spirit. But it is part of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He does not only search His sheep and seek them till He finds them, but He afterwards tends them from the thief and the wolf. He does not begin the good work in us and leave it incomplete. Neither does He throw us on our own resources. So "He leadeth them out"—educates us—in the paths of righteousness, instructing us by His Word and Spirit; also by His own example, for "when he putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them." So that we have not only His example, but His sympathy and support in the conflict with temptation. We are never tried without feeling that He has gone before us through our afflictions, and in the worst and darkest we look up and overcome, saying, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." So He through the Spirit provides for the fulfillment of His prayer; "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through Thy truth."

And this pastoral care He will exercise toward all His sheep until every one has been brought safe to glory. This is called the doctrine of

IV. "THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS." The expression is not intended to imply that the believer perseveres in his state of grace through any virtue of his own; but it means that God having purposed to save any soul from sin and death, He carries out this as He does all His purposes to completion. This was the assurance Paul had concerning God's people when he wrote "I am confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is maintained by some that a soul may be truly converted and, as it is said, be in a state of grace, so that if death took him while in that frame he would go straight to heaven; but such a one may, and some doubtless do afterwards, through carelessness, in unguarded periods, falling to use the grace God has given them and improve it, fall away from their faith and ultimately perish. What does the good Shepherd say about this? 10:27 "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and they shall never perish. Neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand, I and My Father are one." Also John 6:39: "And