

time—spending them on frivolous if not sinful pursuits. All these should be devoted to God—should be employed in his service, or in subordination to his glory—but it is not so. God is perhaps the farthest from our thoughts—the least, or not at all, in our affections; and his glory is the remotest from our consideration and our pursuit. And what is the effect? Why, that we are reduced to beggary, to spiritual beggary: we have nothing: we are poor and miserable, and wretched, and naked. We are poor in respect of spiritual joy, spiritual happiness, spiritual endowments, the graces of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. In all these respects we are poor, destitute, in want.—We are an hungered. We have not the bread of life to eat: we feed on husks. Our occupations, or pursuits, are the most servile and mean compared with what should engage immortal powers, and what should employ the children of God. We are fain to betake ourselves to these for promoting our happiness—for want of all nobler occupations and pursuits. Our minds must have something to occupy them: we must have some resource of pleasure or happiness. If we cannot get it in one way we must get it in another: if we cannot get it in holiness we must get it in sin: if we do not get it from God we must get it away from him. And the farther that any one goes in sin he is willing to go farther still: he becomes more willing to submit to any thing: he descends farther and farther: he sinks like the prodigal, till at last he counts nothing too mean that he may feed his soul with the husks of this world's pleasure.—Every sinner is held forth under the figure of the prodigal. It is but husks after all that this world confer—that any thing short of loving, obeying, God, affords. True happiness, the true food of the soul, the true occupation of immortal spirits, is the favor, the love, the service of God. Any thing else will not satisfy—any thing else is a servile occupation.

Such is our state as sinners, let us now look at our recovery from it. We are like sheep going astray, let us now look at the mode of our restoration] by the shepherd and bishop of our souls: we are like the lost piece of money, let us see how it is found: we are like the prodigal son, let us see how he returns to his father's house.

“What man of you having a 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?”

The way, then, by which the lost sheep is restored, is by the shepherd leaving the rest of the flock and seeking the wanderer till he find it. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine in safety, and goes after the hundredth—the one lost sheep. He is anxious to restore it, to save it from perishing, to bring it back to the fold. He goes forth, therefore, prepared to encounter every danger, and hardship and fatigue, in order to recover the wanderer. He traverses the mountains and the valleys, he wanders over the desert. He heeds not the blast, or the lurking foe, or the long, long, distance he has to travel: he pursues his search, till at last he sees the solitary wanderer, scared by a thousand terrors, perhaps crouching under the storm, and wasted with hunger, and all but dead: he sees it, and he lays it on his shoulder rejoicing, and he carries it to its long lost companions, and to the fold from whence it had strayed. Such is the picture, the tender picture which Christ himself draws of what he has done for sinners. He is the good shepherd that left heaven, the safe members of the flock there, the ninety and nine, that had never strayed, and that were in the fold, safe, and happy. He left them and came down to save man, fallen man—to recover that one wanderer—that one race which had fallen from their integrity, and to bring them back to God. He came into this earth, and did all that was necessary to recover us from sin and from death. He undertook all the toil, and hardship and trial of this enterprise. Here the analogy ceases.—The good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep. The analogy is useful only thus far, to shew that we were lost, and that Christ came to seek and to save us. He left heaven and came into the waste howling wilderness of this world. He invested himself with the mantle of the shepherd; he became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He became the substitute of sinners, to suffer and die in their room, to endure the wrath of God on their account, to offer himself a ransom for many. He died that we might live: he encountered God's wrath that we might be delivered from it. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and thus we are rescued from the penalty due to sin.