

took the water in their hands hastily. All except the 300 were sent back.

Observe—1. To undertake nothing in our own strength.

2. To draw back from nothing to which we are called by God.

3. To doubt of nothing wherein God promises His aid.

4. To take the glory of nothing which God may do by us.

April 3rd, 1864.

THE LOST SHEEP.

Read *Luke xv. 1-10.*

Connection.—Christ had left the Pharisee's house, chap. xiv., and many publicans and sinners who could not get near Christ while He was there now crowded to hear Him. Though the Pharisees openly showed their contempt of such, He welcomed them, and told these parables to assure these despised ones that to God they were exceeding precious. It was Sabbath, all would be disengaged from work.

I. Why Christ so spoke, ver. 1, 2.

Publicans and sinners. The publicans were the most degraded of the Jews; none but such would consent to act as tax-gatherers to the Romans. Attracted by Christ's kindness, they never showed such enmity to Him as the Pharisees did, chap. xiv. 1.—*Deal with them.* In Eastern countries this was and is the token of close friendship, Psalm xli. 9.

II. The lost sheep, ver. 2-7.

Christ answered the murmurers: He was always ready to shelter his disciples from rude assault.

The wilderness. As the pasture lands of Jordan were wide and wild, the flocks were exposed to many dangers, 1 Sam. xvii. 34. A sheep is a stupid and defenceless creature, unable to preserve itself without man's care, and when it wanders, it never can of itself return again to the fold. Every shepherd knows this, and readily leaves his whole flock to rescue a wandering one from certain death.—If he finds it, its recovery gives him more joy than the possession of all the rest.

So Christ said, there is more joy in heaven when one wandering sinner is brought back to his God, than over the hosts of heaven who have never sinned. Probably by *just persons who need no repentance*, Christ meant to point to the Pharisees, and such as they who thought they needed no repentance.

III. The lost piece of silver, ver. 8-10.

Women in the East frequently wear coins as ornaments strung round their turbans.—These coins were generally presents, and, of course, any of these being lost would be diligently sought. *Light a candle.* Many of the houses of the poor are without windows. *She calleth her friends.* In both cases the

tendency of joy to diffuse itself is brought out. *In the presence of the angels*—meaning among the angels.

APPLICATION.

1. *Despise no one.* Despise none for their poverty, their weakness, their ignorance, or even for their sin. The Pharisees did so; men often so do; Christians often do so.—God "despises not any," Job xxxvi. 5.—Christ never did. "The woman who was a sinner." The dying thief. He knows how precious the soul of the vilest is!

2. *Christ's love for the lost!* How wonderful! He is the good Shepherd, John 1. He left heaven, and all those who never sinned, to seek the poor wandering sinners of earth. As the mother cares most for the sick child; as David sorrowed most over Absalom; so God mourns over this lost world. Christ came to the lost, Luke xix. 10. He is the friend of sinners. If you are lost, He came to save you.

3. *Are you "a sinner that repenteth?"* Have you repented and left your sins? Has Christ found you, and brought you back to God? He has long sought you. He knows what a repenting sinner escapes, and what he gains. Your repentance—not your wealth, not a crown—would make heaven rejoice.

4. *How different earth and heaven!*—Men care not for your soul—care not whether you repent. Angels, Jesus, and God, watch for your soul, pity you, and wait anxiously for your repentance. Heaven would be happier this night if you were to repent! So they rejoiced over Paul. "Behold he prayeth," 2 Chron. xxiv. 27. So God rejoiceth over Nineveh. Go to God this night as did the publican, Luke xviii. 13.

5. *Do you share in the angels' joy?* Are you glad when a bad boy or girl becomes good? Or are you like Cain, who did not care for his brother? If you are like the angels in this you will be good yourself; you will try to make others good, and you will at last go where the angels are, John i. 41; 2 Cor. v. 14; John xx. 21. But if not, then you will be the companion of Cain, the devil, and his angels, Isa. xiv. 9-10.

SUBORDINATE LESSONS.

1. The value of the soul—it is exceeding precious, though now dimmed and tarnished by sin, Lam. iv. 1.

2. How utterly we are lost! Like sheep, Psalm cxix. 176. Like lost silver, it lies where it falls.

3. Do you act as if you "needed no repentance?"—oh, your case is almost hopeless—you are so "dead in sin" as to be "past feeling."—*Edinburgh S. S. Lessons.*