

SHORT  
EXPOSITORY READINGS  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

A SELECTION DESIGNED FOR  
Family Reading, Mothers' Meetings, and  
District Visitors.

BY THE  
RIGHT REV. JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,  
LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.  
*Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels" etc.*

LONDON: WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,  
12, PATERNOSTER ROW.  
IPSWICH : WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

1882.

XLI.

CHRIST THE DOOR.

JOHN X. 1-9.

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber,*

*“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

*“To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

*“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

*“And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

*“This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them,*

*“Then said Jesus unto them again. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep,*

*“All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

*“I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture,”*

THE true sense of the “door” must be sought in our Lord’s own interpretation. It is Christ Himself who is “the door.” The true shepherd of souls is he who enters the ministry with a single eye to Christ, desiring to glorify Christ, doing all in the strength of Christ, preaching Christ’s doctrine, walking in Christ’s steps, and labouring to bring men and women to Christ. The false shepherd of souls is he who enters the ministerial office with little or no thought about Christ, from worldly and self-exalting motives, but from no desire to exalt Jesus, and the great salvation that is in Him. Christ, in one word, is the grand touchstone of the minister of religion. The man who makes much of Christ is a pastor after God’s own heart, whom God delights to honour. The minister who makes little of Christ is one whom God regards as an imposter,—as one who has climbed up to his holy office not by the door, but by “some other way.”

We have in these verses, a *most instructive picture of Christ Himself*. He utters one of those golden sayings which ought to be dear to all true Christians. They apply to people as well as to ministers. “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

We are all by nature separate and far off from God. Sin, like a great barrier-wall, rises between us and our Maker. The sense of guilt makes us afraid of Him. The sense of His holiness, keeps us at a distance from Him. Born with a heart at enmity with God, we become more

and more alienated from Him by practice, the longer we live. The very first questions in religion that must be answered, are these: “How can I draw near to God? How can I be justified? How can a sinner like me be reconciled to my Maker?”

The Lord Jesus Christ has provided an answer to these mighty questions. By His sacrifice for us on the cross, He has opened a way through the great barrier, and provided pardon and peace for sinners. He has “suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” He has opened a way into the holiest, through His blood, by which we may draw near to God with boldness, and approach God without fear. And now He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. In the highest sense He is “the door.” No one can “come to the Father” but by Him.

Let us take heed that we use this door, and do not merely stand outside looking at it. It is a door free and open to the chief of sinners:—“If any man enter in by it, he shall be saved.” It is a door within which we shall find a full and constant supply for every want of our souls. We shall find that we can “go in and out,” and enjoy liberty and peace. The day comes when this door will be shut for ever, and men shall strive to enter in, but not be able. Then let us make sure work of our own salvation. Let us not stand tarrying without, and halting between two opinions. Let us enter in and be saved.

The grand secret of knowing God is to draw near to Him through Jesus Christ. Approached from this side,

there is nothing that need make us afraid. Viewed from this stand-point, God is the sinner's friend. God, out of Christ, may well fill us with alarm. How shall we dare to look at so high and holy a Being?—God in Christ is full of mercy, grace, and peace. His law's demands are satisfied. His holiness need not make us afraid. Christ, in one word, is the way and door, by which we must ever draw nigh to the Father. If we know Christ, we shall know the Father. It is His own word,—“No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” (John xiv. 6.) Ignorance of Christ is the root of ignorance of God. Wrong at the starting-point, the whole sum of a man's religion is full of error.

XLII.

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN X. 10–18.

*“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

*“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

*“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*

*“The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

*“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: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

*“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. This commandment have I received of my Father.”*

THESE verses show us *one of the principal offices which Jesus Christ fills for true Christians*. Twice over our Lord uses an expression which, to an Eastern hearer, would be singularly full of meaning. Twice over He says emphatically, “I am the Good Shepherd?” It is a saying rich in consolation and instruction.

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 wants 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, as

Jacob did the flock of Laban; 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 for evermore, because the Good Shepherd died for them. This is indeed a love that passeth knowledge! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv. 13.)

Let us only take heed that this office of Christ is not set before us in vain. It will profit us nothing at the last day that Jesus was a Shepherd, if, during our lifetime, we never heard His voice and followed Him.

These verses show us, lastly, that *when Christ died, He died of His own voluntary free will*. He uses a remarkable expression to teach this: "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."

The plain truth is, that our Lord submitted to death of His own free will, because He knew that His death was the only way of making atonement for man's sins. He poured out His soul unto death with all the desire of His heart, because He had determined to pay our debt to God, and redeem us from hell. For the joy set before Him He

willingly endured the cross, and laid down His life, in order that we, through His death, might have eternal life. His death was not the death of a martyr, who sinks at last overwhelmed by enemies, but the death of a triumphant conqueror, who knows that even in dying He wins for Himself and His people a kingdom and a crown of glory.

Let us lean back our souls on these mighty truths, and be thankful. A willing Saviour, a loving Saviour, a Saviour who came specially into the world to bring life to man, is just the Saviour that we need. If we hear His voice, repent and believe, He is our own.

XLIII.

CHRIST'S FLOCK.

JOHN X. 27-29.

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,*

*“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

*“My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”*

WE should notice in these verses, *the name which Christ gives to true Christians*. He uses a figurative expression which, like all His language, is full of deep meaning. He calls them, “My sheep.”

The word “sheep,” no doubt, points to something in the character and ways of true Christians. It would be easy to show that weakness, helplessness, harmlessness, usefulness, are all points of resemblance between the sheep and the believer. But the leading idea in our Lord's mind was the entire dependence of the sheep upon its shepherd. Just as sheep hear the voice of their own shepherd and follow him, so do believers follow Christ. By faith they listen to His call. By faith they submit themselves to His guidance. By faith they lean on Him, and commit their souls implicitly to His direction. The ways of a shepherd and his

sheep are a most useful illustration of the relation between Christ and the true Christian.

The expression, "My sheep," points to the close connection that exists between Christ and believers. They are His by gift from the Father, His by purchase, His by calling and choice, and His by their own consent and heart-submission. In the highest sense they are Christ's property; and just as a man feels a special interest in that which he has bought at a great price and made his own, so does the Lord Jesus feel a peculiar interest in His people.

Expressions like these should be carefully treasured up in the memories of true Christians. They will be found cheering and heart-strengthening in days of trial. The world may see no beauty in the ways of a godly man, and may often pour contempt on him. But he who knows that he is one of Christ's sheep has no cause to be ashamed. He has within him a "well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 14.)

We should notice, also, *the vast privileges which the Lord Jesus Christ bestows on true Christians*. He uses words about them of singular richness and strength. "I know them.—I give unto them eternal life.—They shall never perish,—neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This sentence is like the cluster of grapes which came from Eschol. A stronger form of speech perhaps can hardly be found in the whole range of the Bible.

Christ "knows" His people with a special knowledge of approbation, interest, and affection. By the world

around them they are comparatively unknown, uncared for, or despised. But they are never forgotten or overlooked by Christ.

Christ “gives” His people “eternal life.” He bestows on them freely a right and title to heaven, pardoning their many sins, and clothing them with a perfect righteousness. Money, and health, and worldly prosperity He often wisely withholds from them. But He never fails to give them grace, peace, and glory.

Christ declares that His people “shall never perish.” Weak as they are, they shall all be saved. Not one of them shall be lost and cast away: not one of them shall miss heaven. If they err, they shall be brought back: if they fall, they shall be raised. The enemies of their souls may be strong and mighty, but their Saviour is mightier; and none shall pluck them out of their Saviour’s hands.

A promise like this deserves the closest attention. If words mean anything, it contains that great doctrine, the perseverance, or continuance in grace, of true believers. That doctrine is literally hated by worldly people. No doubt, like every other truth of Scripture, it is liable to be abused. But the words of Christ are too plain to be evaded. He has said it, and He will make it good: “My sheep shall never perish.”

Whatever men may please to say against this doctrine, it is one which God’s children ought to hold fast, and defend with all their might. To all who feel within them the workings of the Holy Spirit, it is a doctrine full of

encouragement and consolation. Once inside the ark, they shall never be cast out. Once converted and joined to Christ, they shall never be cut off from His mystical body. Hypocrites and false professors shall doubtless make shipwreck for ever, unless they repent. But true “sheep” shall never be confounded. Christ has said it, and Christ cannot lie: “They shall never perish.”

Would we get the benefit of this glorious promise? Let us take care that we belong to Christ’s flock. Let us hear His voice and follow Him. The man who, under a real sense of sin, flees to Christ and trusts in Him, is one of those who shall never be plucked out of Christ’s hand.