

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

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PREFATORY NOTE

ALTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years’* ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,

Archdeacon of Warrington.

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st*, 1900.

The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900.
[Bishop Ryle died a few months later.]

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

“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.”
JOHN x. 27, 28.

ABOUT the first part of this text, beloved, I spoke to you this morning. I told you then that this passage contains two things—first the character of true Christians, and secondly their privileges—first what they are to their Saviour, and secondly what their Saviour is to them.

Let me, then, remind you what the text says of their character. We found on examination that God’s children, His real believing people, are compared to sheep, because they are gentle, quiet, harmless and inoffensive; because they are useful and do good to all around them; because they love to be together, and dislike separation; and lastly because they are very helpless and wandering and liable to stray.

We next found that Jesus calls them “My sheep,” as if they were His peculiar property; “Mine,” He would have us know, by election, “Mine “by purchase, and “Mine “by adoption. We found in the third place that Christ’s sheep hear His voice, they listen humbly to His teaching, they take His word for their rule and guide. Lastly we found that they follow Him, they walk in the narrow path He has marked out, they do not refuse because it is sometimes steep and narrow, but wherever the line of duty lies they go forward without doubting.

It only remains for us now to consider the other part of my text, which respects the *blessings* and *privileges* which Jesus the Good Shepherd bestows upon His people. The Lord grant that none of you may take to yourselves promises which do not belong to you,—that none may take liberty from God’s exceeding mercy to continue sleeping in sin. Glorious and comfortable things are written in this passage, but remember they are given to Christ’s flock only. I fence it out against all that are unbelieving and impenitent and profane. I warn you plainly, except you will hear the voice of Christ and follow Him, you have no right or portion in this blessed fountain of consolations.

Hear now what Jesus says of His believing people: “I know them. . . . I give unto them eternal life; they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

Before we look into the meaning of these words more closely, I wish to answer two questions which may arise in the minds of some before me. Of whom is the Lord Jesus speaking? Are we to suppose He only has in view patriarchs and prophets and apostles—men like Abraham and David and Job and Daniel, men who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteous-

ness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, worked signs and miracles, and shed their blood for the kingdom of God's sake? Are these the sort of persons who alone can take comfort from those blessed words—"I know them . . . they shall never perish?" Is every one else to go on doubting to his life's end? God forbid that I should tell you so! it were doing Satan's work to preach such doctrine. This text may become the property of the worst of sinners, if he only will: scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, publicans and harlots, drunkards and fornicators, murderers, thieves and adulterers, liars and blasphemers. worldly-minded and covetous ones,—all and each of them may lay firm hold on this text, and inherit its precious treasures, if they will only hear Christ's voice and follow Him. It is for all who repent and believe the Gospel. It is for all who mourn over their past sins with a true godly sorrow, and flee to the Lord Jesus Christ with faith and prayer as their only hope, their all-sufficient Saviour, their all in all. There is not one single man or woman of whom it shall not be written in the Lamb's book of life, "This is one known of God, this is an heir of eternal life, this is a man or a woman that is never to perish, never to be plucked out of the Lord's hand," if you will only give up your sins and take Christ Jesus for your Shepherd and Redeemer. Your repentance may seem very faint, your faith may appear weak as water, but if there be so much as a grain of mustard seed, if there be enough to lead you a penitent to the foot of the cross, you shall find yourself one day numbered with the saints in glory everlasting.

The other question I wish to answer is this: why did the Lord Jesus Christ give us this full and complete promise? Because He knew that true Christians would always be a very doubting, fearful, faint-hearted generation, always ready to believe they shall not be saved, always afraid they shall never see the New Jerusalem, because of the inbred corruption which they find continually in their hearts. He saw they would require the strong wine of assurance like this, and so He has provided this and like texts, as a reviving cordial to cheer and enliven their hearts, whenever they feel desponding and feeble-minded and ready to halt, in their pilgrimage through this weary world.

We will now look narrowly into the parts of this promise. First, says the Lord Jesus Christ of His sheep who hear His voice and follow Him—"I know them." I know their number, their names, their particular characters, their besetting sins, their troubles, their trials, their temptations, their doubts, their prayers, their private meditations. I know everything about every one of them. Think what a comfortable saying that is! The *world* knows nothing about Christ's sheep; to be sure, the world remarks there are a few people, here one and there one, who live differently to others, who seem to be more serious in their deportment, who appear to be taken up with some important

consideration or other; but the world only wonders they can be so particular about little sins, and when their ways run counter to the world, the world is vastly offended. But as for their fear of sin, and their carefulness about souls, the world neither knows nor understands what they are about; the secret springs of their conduct are all hidden.

Again, a Christian's *friends* do often know him not. They may possibly respect him and allow him to hold on his way unopposed—though this, alas! is not always the case—but as for his pleasures and his pains, his constant warfare with the flesh, the world and the devil, his dread of falling into temptation, his delight in all means of grace, they can neither explain nor comprehend it. There is a something hidden in his character of which they know nothing.

Be ye comforted, all you who are tried and buffeted with difficulties in your way towards heaven, difficulties from without and difficulties from within, difficulties abroad and difficulties at home, grief for your own sins and grief for the sins of others. The Good Shepherd Jesus knows you well, though you may not think it. You never shed a secret tear over your own corruption, you never breathed a single prayer for forgiveness and helping grace, you never made a single struggle against wickedness, which He did not remark and note down in the book of His remembrance. You need not fear His not understanding your wants, you need not be afraid your prayers are too poor and unlearned to be attended to. He knows your particular necessities far better than you do yourselves, and your humble supplications are no sooner offered up than heard. You may sometimes sigh and mourn for want of Christian brethren, you may sometimes lament that you have not more around you with whom you might take sweet converse about salvation; but remember there is a Good Shepherd, who is ever about your path and about your bed, His eyes are on all your movements, and no husband, brother, father, mother, sister, friend, could take more tender interest in your soul's welfare than He does. If you transgress He will grieve, but He will chasten and bring you back; if you bear good fruit, He will rejoice and give more grace; if you sorrow He will bind up your broken heart and pour in balm; He is ever watching and observing and listening; none so humble and lowly but He is acquainted with all their ways.

And does not Jesus know the men of this world, the faithless and ungodly? Unquestionably He does. He knows their proceedings; there is not a single sin they have committed but will appear written down in full in the great book; but He only knows them as His enemies—as careless, thoughtless ones, who will not take the trouble to hear His voice and follow Him—and in the last day, when all shall stand before Him, He will say, "I know you not. You would not seek to know me on earth, and I know nothing of you in heaven; depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and

his angels." No doubt there will be many a Balaam there, many a barren fig-tree, many a foolish virgin, many a fruitless vine, many a loud-talking hypocrite, who will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us: have we not taught in Thy name, and in Thy name quoted many texts, and in Thy name made a great profession?" but still the answer will be, "I never knew you . . . depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

Oh, what a blessed and comfortable thing to be known of Christ, known and marked as His friends, His relations, His dear children, His beloved family, His purchased possession! Here we are often cast down, often discouraged, often persecuted, often spoken against, often misunderstood,—but let us take courage, our Lord and Master knows all. A day shall come when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face—a day when we shall know even as we are now known; for the union between us and our Redeemer, which we so often feel disposed to doubt, shall then be clearly seen, and we shall no more go out to battle.

II. What is the next part of my text? The Lord Jesus says of His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life." What is the portion which Jesus gives His people? "ETERNAL LIFE"—a perfect, never-ending happiness for that which is the most important part of a man, his immortal soul. They shall not be hurt of the second death, which alone is to be really feared. What greater things could our Lord bestow upon His people? Health and riches and honour and pleasures, houses and lands, and wives and children, what are they? how long do they last?—it is but threescore years and ten, and we must leave them all, and six paces of the vilest earth is room enough for us. Naked came we into the world, and naked must we return unto the dust, and carry nothing with us. Where is the difference between the rich and the poor in death? They both go unto one and the same place; the worm feeds sweetly on them both; it is but a short time, and you would not be able to distinguish between their bones. But if the poor man sleeps in Jesus, while the rich man dies in his sins, oh, what a mighty gulf then is between them! The rich will take up his abode in that fire which is never quenched; the poor will awake to find he has an everlasting treasure in heaven, even eternal life. Eternal life! compared to which this world's concerns, weighty and important as they seem, are like a drop of water. Wonderful indeed that men should disquiet themselves about the things of earth, and sweat and toil after a little more gold and silver, and spend their strength upon these frail, sickly bodies of ours, to get enjoyment for them, and yet remain careless and dead and frozen about the life of that precious talent the soul!

But about eternal life? "I," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "do give it to my people." Who says this? He says it who bought and paid the full price. He who has in His hands the keys of death and hell. He who opens and no man shuts, He who shuts and no man opens. He says it who is the Amen, the

faithful and true Witness, who is not a man that He should lie, who never breaks His promise. He says it who has a right to say it, for He came down to do His Father's will and die in our stead to obtain redemption for us, and when He declares "I give eternal life," death and hell must be silent, none can gainsay Him.

"I give," He declares, "eternal life." He does not speak after the fashion of the world. This world is cold, and calculating and heartless. There is little giving,—it is all bargaining and selling and paying what is the value of things. Blessed be God, the Lord Jesus does not deal with sinners as they deal with each other. He gives eternal life *freely*, and of grace, and for nothing, without money and without price. He does not give it because we are worthy or deserving, nor yet because we shall show ourselves worthy and deserving, but He gives it as a free gift, because He loves us and has set His affection upon us.

Consider with yourselves how glorious that doctrine is; how thoroughly it takes away all excuse from the impenitent: pardon and forgiveness are here unconditionally bestowed. We are not told that we must pay off so much every day, and then shall be saved—that would drive us to doubt and despair—but if a man will only hear Christ's voice and follow Him, "Behold" says Jesus, "I give unto him eternal life, there remaineth no condemnation for him."

III. The third promise in my text is as follows: Jesus says of His sheep, "They shall never perish,"—they shall never be finally cast away, if they have once been sealed and numbered in my flock. They may have many a slip and many a fall, they may experience many a shortcoming and many a backsliding, but they shall never be lost eternally, they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Where are those fearful Christians, who will have it they may be Christ's sheep and yet come short at last? behold the assurance of Him who cannot lie,—"they shall never perish."

Yes; true Christians shall never perish! Is not that great work begun within their hearts by the Holy Ghost? has not the power of God Himself been employed in converting them from darkness to light? and shall we dare say that God will take in hand the smallest thing, and yet leave it unfinished and not bring it to perfection? Have they not been born again of incorruptible seed, and shall this seed be choked and bear no fruit? Have they not been made by grace new creatures, and is it possible that grace can have raised them to newness of life in vain? Where in the whole world can you find a work which the Lord has attempted, and yet been obliged to give up and leave all incomplete? Then far be it from us to suppose that a true believer can ever be cast away! If man had any share in his conversion one might reasonably doubt; but it is not so, it is the work of God, and what He does

shall always be brought to perfection. The building which the Holy Ghost has founded shall never be suffered to decay, it shall never be left half finished, and the top stone shall certainly be one day laid on with shouting.

True Christians shall never perish. Are they not Christ's special property, the servants of His house, the members of His family, the children of His adoption? Then surely He will never let them be overthrown, He will watch them as tenderly as we watch over our own flesh and blood. He will guard them as we guard our valuable and precious possessions. He will cherish them as we cherish that which is most dear to our hearts. He never would have laid down His life for their sakes if He had intended to give them up.

"Never perish"! Kings of the earth and mighty men shall depart and be no more seen; thrones and dominions and principalities, rich men and honourable men shall be swept into the tomb, but the humblest Christian cottager shall never see death everlasting, and when the heavens shall pass away as a scroll, and earth with all its fair clothing shall be burned up, that man shall be found to have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. That man may be poor in this world and lightly esteemed, but I see in him one who shall be a glorious saint, when those who perchance had more of this life's good things shall be in torment. I am confident that nothing shall ever separate him from the love of Christ. He may have his doubts, but I know he is provided for, he shall never be lost.

IV. There remains one thing more. Jesus adds, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." There is assurance upon assurance, that none may have an excuse for doubting. There is always something plucking at Christ's sheep: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, the devil, and the world are ever striving hard to destroy them, but they shall not succeed. Think you the devil will give up his kingdom without a mighty struggle? Oh no, he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He wars a constant warfare with all who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, but the word of God is pledged that he shall never prevail. Not all the powers of darkness shall avail to quench one single spark of real gospel faith.

And now, beloved, in conclusion, let me speak a word of exhortation to all among you who hear Christ's voice and follow Him. O that the Spirit may come down among you, and add to your number a hundredfold! Are ye indeed Christ's sheep? Can you feel within yourselves the working of His blessed Spirit, mortifying the works of the flesh and drawing up your minds to heavenly things? have you the witness in yourselves that you have gone through a real spiritual change, that you hate the sins which once you loved, and love the things which once you despised? have you good reason to believe that you have indeed put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man with the lamb-like nature of your blessed Master? Then, oh, re-

joyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory; pray that you may not stand still, but go on from grace to grace and strength to strength; pray that you may bear much spiritual fruit, for thus is your Father glorified, and then will you make your own calling and election sure to yourselves.

Are ye indeed Christ's sheep? *Then beware of ever trusting to yourselves*; nothing offends the Good Shepherd more than to see the members of His flock, forgetting that in Him alone is all their safety, and glorying in their own attainments and performances. Think not of your weak endeavours. Think not to say, "I do very little, and therefore have very little hope,—by-and-by I trust I shall do much, and then I shall have much hope"; your best performances and attempts towards heaven are in themselves but broken reeds, and can bear no weight; they are precious as evidences of spiritual life, but they cannot justify. Think only of your Saviour Jesus Christ, trust Him entirely, love Him affectionately, look to Him continually: as long as you lean on Him you are strong and none can touch you. Without Him and in your own might you are weak and unstable as water.

Are ye indeed Christ's sheep? *Then beware of wandering from the pasture He has provided*. The devil and the old Adam would often persuade you there is no need for this diligence in using means of grace: "Surely," they will say, "you are not such a babe but you can leave these fields for a short season; surely you need not keep so closely in your Shepherd's sight." Christian, take heed and beware of the charmer, charm he never so wisely: diligent private prayer, diligent Scripture searching, diligent gospel hearing,—these are the pastures in which Jesus feeds His flock, and if you turn aside, if you become slack in using them, be sure your soul will soon starve for want of its accustomed nourishment, and you will return to the fold weak and lame and lean and diseased.

Once more, and I have done. Are ye indeed Christ's sheep? *then be sure you will have many a trial*; where indeed would be the value of a Saviour, if there were not enemies to be saved from? Yes! you will have many a trial. Satan has great wrath with all who have escaped his snares, and he will bring every engine to bear against your peace. He will start many a doubt within your mind, he will stir up many a vile and blasphemous imagination within the chambers of your heart, many a horrid thought you once would have believed impossible; but still remember those words, "never perish." Yes! you will have many a trial: when did the world ever patronise and encourage a true Christian? Oh no, the world will mock and despise, and laugh and frighten, and misrepresent you, and spread false reports, and throw traps in your way, and if it dares it will persecute you; and then there is the flesh, sleepy and drowsy and fond of excuses, always trying to make you believe you have more difficulties than anybody else, deceitful, treacherous, needing constant watchfulness; but still the world and the flesh can never turn

you back, except you are a graceless traitor; remember those blessed words “never perish.” Christian, you may be perplexed, but you never need despair. You may be persecuted but you are not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. You may have tribulation, but you shall not have condemnation. You shall be saved from your enemies and from the hand of all that hate you. Fear none of these things which ye shall suffer; be faithful unto death, and your Good Shepherd shall give you a crown of life. Verily He is gone before to prepare a place for those whom He knows, and where He is in glory there they shall be also.

“For I am persuaded,” says Paul, “that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”