

THE LAMBS AND THEIR SHEPHERD

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“He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom.”
Isaiah 40:11.

THE people of God are most fitly compared to sheep. The excellencies of their moral and spiritual character furnish one side of the picture, for like sheep they are gentle in their lives and are well accepted, whether living or dying, as a sacrifice unto God. Their frailties and weaknesses complete the likeness, for they are prone to wander—full of wants, powerless in self-defense, and not able to escape from their enemies by rapid flight. No creature has less power to take care of itself than sheep. Even the tiny ant with its foresight can provide for the evil day, but this poor creature must be tended by man or else perish. Such are the people of God—timid, weak, defenseless—unable to provide for themselves and compelled to depend for everything upon Him whose name is, “That great Shepherd of the sheep.”

As the people of God individually are comparable to sheep, so the Church as a whole finds a very fit representative in a flock. A flock is a multitude. Diversities of character, of state, of age, of condition are always to be found in a flock. Yet, while a multitude, it is but one. One in *association*—they journey or lie down together—in the same pasture they rest. They are led beside the same still waters. They are one in *nature*—they are equally sheep and, however much they may differ, their diversity is not half so great as their agreement. Two Believers may greatly differ. But only let me be assured that they are both sheep of the Lord’s pasture, and I will find ten points of likeness for one of difference.

They are one, moreover, in *property*—they are the property of one Owner, being bought with one price in one great transaction, when their one great Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. The saints are intimately and truly united. Even now they are *secretly* one in their absent Head but they shall soon be *visibly* one in their glorious Lord when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. Then He shall place the sheep at His right hand forever. In all flocks, unless they are cursed by barrenness, there will be lambs and these will make up a very important part of the community.

In all healthy Churches, those Believers who are comparable to lambs make up the major part. And though in our own we have many strong ones who are fit to lead the way and not a few competent to bear the burden well, yet the majority, I suppose, are the little ones of the flock. Mr. Ready-to-Halt, on his crutches, is the commander of quite a regiment, distinguished as Mr. Fearing, Mr. Little-Faith, Mr. Feeble-Mind, Miss Much-Afraid and the like, who are slender in knowledge, shallow in experience, and weak in faith. It is, therefore, with great delight we find our gracious Lord executing the office of Shepherd in a peculiarly tender manner towards the lambs.

Special need has here its own appropriate promise—great weakness is met by great consolation. The best place is found for those in the worst circumstances, and the most loving care bestowed on those most exposed to danger. “He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom.”

First, let us *describe the lambs*. Secondly, let us *express our fears about them*. Thirdly, let us *rejoice in the tenderness of the great Shepherd over them*. And, fourthly, let us *hear that great Shepherd’s voice*.

I. First LET ME ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE THE LAMBS. Our first word concerning them is that *they are truly sheep*. They are not sheep in maturity, but they are sheep to a certainty. Leave them to their good Shepherd’s care. Let them continue to lie down in the green pastures and feed beside the still waters, and they will become as fully developed as yonder ewes of the flock. It is true that not a bone in them is of full size, nor a muscle of full strength. Still, who shall dare to exclude them from the fold?

The newborn convert is possessed of the true nature and life of faith, even as the life of a babe is the same life as that which is found in perfection in the full grown man. Every member is there, but it is in miniature. The vital processes are the same, although upon a smaller scale. Indeed, the whole man is in the child and so the whole life of God is in the fee-

blest Believer. If you will mark the signs of a sheep, you shall see them more or less distinctly in every one of the lambs. The sheep of God are *harmless*, “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” They can bear, but they cannot revenge. They have neither power nor will to hurt others.

They would sooner be cheated a thousand times than wrong their fellow men. They may sometimes be “wise as serpents”—they are commanded to be so. But then they blend with this the obedience to the precept, “Be you harmless as doves.” If I see any man injuring his fellows—tearing, rending, fighting, quarrelling—if I see him blustering and proud, I discern at once that he is no sheep of God. For this is the mark of the Lord’s people—that they, when reviled, revile not again—but have put on as the elect of God, a heart of compassion, kindness and long-suffering. You will find this holy non-resistance of evil even more in the lambs than in some of the sheep, for worldly influences frequently wear off this beautiful bloom from older professors.

The sheep goes further than the non-inflicting of evil, it *bears evil without complaint*. They are led to the slaughter and they are silent. They are thrown down by the shearer, but they are dumb. There is nothing revolting in the sight of the slaughter of a lamb even by our ordinary butchery, for the gentle creature is so passive and silent that with scarcely a struggle its life oozes forth from it. Long before the knife is at their throats, the swine awaken all the neighborhood, fitly teaching us how rebellious are the wicked under their trials and how horribly they are afraid of death.

But in the case of the lamb there is so little to shock or disgust, that the most delicate might have stood in the tabernacle of old and seen the multitudes of lambs slaughtered without feeling any other emotion than a hallowed awe at the sinfulness of sin and the value of the Atonement by which it is put away. The extraordinary patience of the sheep is seen in God’s people when they joyously endure a weight of affliction and pass through the valley of death with composure. Whether it is to the knife of death or to the shears of his persecutors, the faithful is alike patient and the lambs of the flock partake of the same endurance.

Sheep, again, are *clean* creatures—clean in their feeding—carrion never tempts them—clean in their habits. The sow may revel in her wallowing in the mire, but sheep love the green pastures. And if it dirties itself it is not easy till it has cleaned itself as best it may. So God’s people are holy. Be specially mindful of holiness, my beloved Friends, for when men begin to despise holiness, they lose one of the most prominent marks of a child of God. Now the lambs may not have all the excellencies of the sheep, but they quite as earnestly pant after holiness. Their daily prayer is—

*“Teach me to run in Your commands,
It is a delightful road.
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God.”*

They pant to be perfect in their obedience to God, and sigh and cry when they find, by daily experience, that the flesh lusts for evil and that the tendency of the heart is to go astray. Furthermore the sheep is *guileless*. You see the lion creeping through the thicket full of cunning. But sheep have none. “Poor, simple sheep,” we say. And God’s people are a simple people. Like Nathaniel of old, we may say of them, “Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.” Those who are crafty and cunning betray but very little of the spirit of Jesus. Jesus was no dupe for knaves, but at the same time, a fool was safe in His hands.

And so with the Christian, he is not to be so foolish as to be the prey of every deceiver, but he is to be so generous that the most foolish shall never be wronged, or have advantage taken of them by him. The lambs bear this character as well as the sheep—they, too, know no guile. Again, sheep are *tractable*. When a man tames a lion so that he may sport with it, he gets the name of lion-tamer. Nobody is renowned for taming a sheep, for it has a tractable disposition. And so all the elect of God, when they have been renewed by Divine Grace, have an obedient and yielding spirit. They are willing to follow their great Protector at His will. “Not my will, but Yours be done,” is the constant bleat of every sheep and every lamb of the flock when it is in a right state of heart. The lambs, then, are truly sheep in all the essential points.

Do not forget, dear Friends, that the lambs are *truly* CHRIST’S *sheep*. They are as dearly bought with His blood. They are as surely objects of His care. They are as manifestly illustrations of His power. They shall as certainly be proofs of His faithfulness, as the strongest of the flock. When you look upon a child of God who has only known his Lord for the last few days, you must not despise him, for he is as dear to the Savior’s heart as the most advanced Believer. He was as much loved in all eternity as you were, and will be as much loved in the eternity to come as you can be.

Well, but if they are truly sheep and truly Christ's sheep, why are they lambs? And in what way are they distinguished? Some of them are lambs *for age*, though not all. For there are some young Christians who are full grown, and there are others very aged who remain to be lambs, still. Growth in Divine Grace does not coincide with progress in human stature. Many men are seventy years old and are, nevertheless, little children in Grace. And, on the other hand, there are a few who at twenty are as solid and profound and spiritual as veterans of eighty. It is not a man's *age* alone, yet for the most part the young in years are also *children* in the Divine family.

The distinguishing mark lies rather in spiritual deficiencies—they are but children in *knowledge*. Many in the Church do not as yet understand the loftier doctrines of Revelation. They know Christ. They know themselves, somewhat, but they cannot “comprehend with all saints, what are the lengths and breadths.” As yet they have not taken a high degree in Christ's school. They sit at His feet with Mary, but they have not come to lean their heads upon His bosom with John. Some doctrines greatly puzzle them. They are the subjects of many doubts and fears under which they would not suffer if they knew more. They are easily put out by those who oppose themselves against the Word of God because they are not established in what they know. They have not yet come to know the arguments which prove a doctrine. They believe, but scarcely know *why* they believe—and in this respect they are but lambs of the flock.

They are immature also in *experience*. They know that they have an evil heart, but they have not *felt* all its evil yet—they know not the plague within as they will when God permits the fountains of the great deep to be broken up. Their heavy trials are yet to come. They have not yet felt the foot of Satan upon their necks in the valley of humiliation, nor trod the dark places of the Valley of Death. They have not tried and proved this wicked world—they are consequently too trustful of men. They have not yet proved the promises of God and their veracity. They have not as yet passed through the deep waters supported by an Almighty arm.

They have not forded the floods of flame, protected by Omnipotent love. They are shallow in the inner life, their experience is only up to their ankles. They have not learned to swim in the stream. Their little boats keep near the shore. They have not passed the great and deep sea. They are raw recruits in the army and have not yet seen the garments rolled in blood. So are they lambs in *tenderness of feeling*. They are too susceptible, and therefore acutely feel the unkindness of the world. If anyone speaks evil of them, they fret over it. If their conduct is misconstrued by the wicked, they are greatly troubled.

They have sleepless nights as the results of a slander which stronger saints would smile at. They have not as yet acquired that hardness to which the Christian soldier attains by enduring hardness. Young Believers cry out where advanced Believers would hardly wince. An ounce is more to them than a pound to the strong man. They cannot bear the brunt of the battle or the storm—they need seasoning for the strife. They are lambs for tenderness.

Then, again, they are *timid and trembling*, and dare not courageously proclaim themselves at all times on the Lord's side. To give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear is a great trial to them. Coming before the Church was a very blessed lesson to them—it braced their nerves and exercised their courage. They need a few more such exercises, for they are still very retiring and love most the rear of the army. They can hardly pray in public. If they were asked to say a few words even to five or six children in a Sunday school class, they would quake for fear. It will be some time before they can be compared to lions for boldness. They have need of more Divine Grace lest they fail to avow their Lord in the hour of persecution. They are poor timid lambs still.

Perhaps, too, they are subject to melancholy, to doubts and fears and distresses of mind. They cannot mount up as on the wings of eagles, but their wings are so broken that they lie on the ground and flutter. They are the subjects of very great questioning. They sing that hymn which just expresses the groanings of doubting babes—

*“It is a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”*

When any trial assails them, how difficult it is for them! When a temptation assaults them, they do not yield to it, but it gives them very grievous pain and costs them many struggles. They cannot even think of meeting Apollyon without feeling the blood fly from their cheeks for very fright.

I might continue thus to describe the various weaknesses and infirmities of the lambs, but I must stop. Suffice it to say that everything which is wanted to make them perfect Christians they already have. But they have it as yet in an im-

mature and undeveloped state. Everything is there. But it is feeble. Their faith is yet a sapling and not a tree. Their love is a spark, not a fire. Their hope is a fledgling and not a full grown bird. In all respects they are immature—weak eyes, hands hanging down, feeble knees and stammering tongue—all show their need of more Grace.

I will give you a picture of some of them, to bring them more before your mind. There is one dear lamb—a boy of thirteen or fourteen. A pious mother has made that child the object of her constant prayers. He comes to a Sunday school class. He sits in the Tabernacle—it always gives me great joy to see so many lads and children come here—and I frequently notice that many of them are as attentive during the preaching of the Word as any of the elder folks. Well, the Lord blesses the Word to that child while but thirteen or fourteen. You know we have had the happiness of receiving several such into our Church.

Now, as you look upon that curly-headed young soldier, you cannot but think of all the trouble which may befall him and temptations that may assail him. I am sure there are neither mothers nor fathers in the whole Tabernacle who do not feel the tears welling up into their eyes. We begin to pray, “Lord, keep that lamb. Preserve it safely.” We think—I am afraid there is a little self-conceit about it—that a child is more in danger than we are. And our heart is moved to anxious prayer for it. What more melting sight than a child baptized into Jesus upon profession of its faith? May many such lambs be found among us!

Picture another. There are many such here, and thank God there is a dear mother in connection with this Church who nurses and nourishes them. I refer to the case of a young woman—father and mother are ungodly. She is out in a situation. She works and honorably toils. The Grace of God has entered her heart and there is something inexpressibly beautiful about her young piety—for she has had to forsake fond associations for Christ’s sake. In the workroom they point at her as a religious girl—they give her a name of scorn. She bears it—she bears it cheerfully. But when we think of how she has to suffer every day, we may well be anxious. Perhaps there is poverty mingled with her other trials. And poverty has its temptations and some of these are of the severest character.

When we see these young women, and young men, too, thus exposed to perilous persecutions and cruel mockings, we number them with the lambs and our heart is very anxious for them. We are glad to see them brought into the fold, but we rejoice with trembling. These are our jewels. These are the sheaves that we reap in our Master’s fields. But when we recollect the temptations to which they are exposed, we look with pity upon these poor tempted ones and thank our loving Jesus that there is a promise on purpose for them.

I might single out too, as another specimen, yonder aged woman. She has lived for seventy years without God and without Christ, knowing nothing beyond a formal religion—bearing “a name to live”—but being truly “dead.” And now, at last, in her old age, when the body is tottering and the faculties feeble, she has found Christ and she has come forward to be baptized. It has been our joy to receive some into Church fellowship who have passed the threescore years and ten allotted to human life and have gone trembling down into the baptismal pool in obedience to their Lord.

Seeing their infirmities and the fact that much of the intellect is weakened—the eyes have become dim so that they cannot read, and the memory has become frail so that sermons do not profit them as they do younger persons—we look upon these as lambs, needing as they do so much of the gathering arm and the nourishing bosom of the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls.

Shall I pause to describe one other? You know her well. She is a member of the Church, but she thinks she ought not to be in her fit of grief. She even writes to the pastor to tell him that she wishes he would put her out, for she is not a Christian. And yet, in a few days, she retracts the note and begs him to forget it. She very seldom can read her title clear—in fact, she never did but once or twice—and that was on very bright sunshiny days when her soul was exceedingly glad. She is like Mrs. Much-Afraid in the castle—Giant Despair has shut her up in one of his dark dungeons and frequently uses the crab-tree cudgel upon her until she has grown a sorrowful creature, indeed. We have a few Brothers and Sisters of the same spirit. They go limping and halting. We number these, too, among the lambs of the flock.

I have given a too lengthy description, but you will not fail, from this time on, very readily to recognize the lambs. You will see that in all Christian Churches they make up a large proportion.

II. Let us come then, in the second place, to EXPRESS OUR FEARS CONCERNING THESE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK. We are afraid for them, *because of the howling wolves there are about*. Some of us can bear to be laughed at. We have grown so used to it that it has become the atmosphere which we breathe. But we do pity these new beginners. We

know the cruel mockings, which if they break not the bones, yet often break the heart—and we are afraid lest these lambs should turn back, lest they should say, “I cannot endure this,” and so seek the warm side of the hedge and forsake their Lord and Master.

Yet more, we are afraid of another order of wolves—*the wolves in sheep’s clothing*—those hypocrites, who by their bad living cause the poor lambs to stumble and make them think that surely, religion must be a deception and a lie. And those other wolves—*doctrinal wolves*—full of all manner of error. We have them always prowling round our Churches. There is the Antinomian, too glad to get hold of any young lamb he can seduce with his fawning pretences to love a Free Grace Gospel and the freewill wolf, which drags some away from the Truth of God. And wolves of all sorts that are continually trying to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.

We are afraid for these young ones, knowing how easily they are carried about by every wind of doctrine. We are equally alarmed, too, because of their association with *the goats*. There is *another* flock in the world—the devil’s flock. It is not easy for a Christian man to associate with the world without feeling the influence of it. We are afraid for some of the young ones, when they have to mingle in their work and in their family associations with the baser sort. The worst form of ill association is an ungodly marriage. I do not know anything that gives me more satisfaction than to see our Brothers and Sisters, who have walked in the faith of God, united in marriage—the husband and the wife both fearing and loving God.

It is a delightful spectacle and is the best means of building up the Church with a generation which shall fear the Lord. But a very fruitful source of ruin to Church members is that of a young man or a young woman choosing an ungodly partner in life. They never can expect God’s blessing upon it. They tell you, sometimes, they hope to be the means of their friend’s conversion. They have no right to hope such a thing. It so seldom occurs. The much more likely thing is that the ungodly one will drag the other down to his level than that the godly one shall pull the other up.

We are fearful, I say, for the lambs—for we have marked some of them that were as earnest as they well could be and apparently as loving to their Lord and Master—but another love came across their path and where are they now? Perhaps the House of God sees them no longer and the theater or the ball room is now their delight. When we think of some cases of this kind that have occurred we do tremble for the lambs. And we lift up our hearts in prayer to God for them, that they may be kept, as kept they will be, if they are truly the Lord’s.

Then we are jealous over the lambs, *because of the old lion*. We have some of us had to meet him face to face, and I do assure you I had sooner suffer any temptation that the world or the flesh can bring than to be tempted of the devil. For when Apollyon meets Christian in the valley, it is no child’s play. A man needs to be the master of every heavenly weapon to get the victory there. Better to go twenty miles round, over hedge and ditch, than to have one conflict with Satan. There is nothing gained by it. Even should we overcome, we shall be wounded and to our dying day will bear the scars of the terrible conflict.

I can now remember one or two instances in which I have had to stand foot to foot with that arch-Fiend. And though my soul has held her own through Divine Grace, I look back upon those days of trial with sorrow still, for there were blasphemous thoughts injected which I never can forget. They were fiery darts thrown at me, and though the barbed shafts have been drawn out, the wounds are still there. Would God it had been possible to have gone that road without contending with the Fiend! We are afraid for you, young Lambs, when we think of the lion.

We are even more concerned *when we think of the bear*. A flattering world hugs tightly. The lion tears and rends and rages—but the world—when it takes to loving, speaks, oh, so gently! And puts the thing so nicely! It loves the Christian—so it says. It is fashionable to be religious. It is a creditable thing to be a professor and then the world says, “Come to my arms. I love you. Come and be one with me and be a Christian, too! Be not so Puritanical as to thrust me away.” We are more afraid of the hugs of the bear than of the teeth of the lion.

When we put all these dangers together, we add to them the fact that lambs are subject to the same diseases which are incident to all sheep. They, too, get the foot-rot of weariness in the ways of God. They begin to be slothful and sluggish in the cause of God. They, too, suffer from coldness of heart, have a tendency to wander and catch the stiff neck of pride. Dear Lambs of the flock! Those who have to see after you and are God’s under-shepherds may well offer no apology when they say they tremble for you and put up earnest prayers on your behalf!

III. In the third place, let us REJOICE IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD. “He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom.” *Who* is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? *Who* is He that cares so tenderly for lambs? Listen! These are the words of Isaiah—“Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hands and His arms shall rule for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” So, then, it is the Lord Jehovah who comes forth to bless His people in this fashion!

What condescension is here! The Lord God, the Eternal and Infinite, acts the part of a Shepherd. But let us read on. The words which follow the text may well astound you, when you see how our great God stoops from His loftiness to carry lambs in His bosom. “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and meted out Heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor has taught him?...Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing.”

And yet this same God who does all these things gathers lambs in His arms and carries them in His bosom! I am sure we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite love of God in stooping to consider us. Alas, that such condescension should be so unregarded! Remember, I pray you, that infinite power engages to protect you, that inimitable affection sets itself on you, that wisdom which cannot err watches for your good, and that which never can be turned aside pledges itself to bless you. Why, that God should provide for such creatures as we are is some condescension! That He should think of them with a Father’s heart is marvelous.

“What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?” That He should carry man, no, the *weakest* of such men, the lambs among this flock—that He should carry them in His arms! What shall I say to this? I will be silent on a theme which needs a more eloquent tongue than mine. Blessed be the name of such a gracious God. Brethren, rejoice in this tender Shepherd. Be confident, be grateful, be joyful, be thankful, be of good cheer evermore, for He it is that carries you is Jesus Christ!

But *why? Why* does He carry lambs in His bosom? First, because *He has a tender heart and any weakness at once melts Him*. If He sees a lamb He stops as you would do if you are gentle of spirit. If He hears your sigh, your groan, or marks your ignorance or your feebleness—the very tenderness of His mind, even if there were nothing else—would constrain Him to look upon you. But more, *it is His office* to consider the weak. For this it is that He was made a faithful High Priest—that He might have compassion on the ignorant. For this it is that He became the Mediator. He were nothing if He had not this—I mean to say that His office would be a mere sinecure, but a nominal thing, if there were no weak and feeble ones for Him to care for.

Remember, too, that *He was a Lamb* Himself once. What a mysterious fact! If a man could have been a lamb and known a lamb’s weakness, how would he sympathize with it! Our Jesus was and is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He knows what strong temptations mean for He has felt the same. Do you enquire for more reasons why He carries them in His bosom? *He purchased them with blood*. He sees the marks of His passion upon each of them, and therefore He prizes them and will not suffer them to perish. *They are His property*. He is their Proprietor. Another man’s lamb He might not so carefully carry. But His own lamb, the gift of His Father, the purchase of His blood, the heritage of His reward—He must and will care for that.

Moreover, remember, *He is responsible for that lamb*. At Jacob’s hand Laban required all the sheep. And at Jesus’ hand every elect one will be required at the last. He is the Surety of the Everlasting Covenant, and He is bound by Covenant engagements to bring the many sons home to Glory and not to suffer one whom His Father has given Him to perish by the way. Nor will He fail in His Covenant, my Beloved. He will be true to His pledge and say at the last, “Here am I, and the flock committed to My care.”

Moreover, *they are all a part of His Glory*. This flock will be as the jewels of His crown. If He lost one of them He would lose a part of His fullness, a part of His reward of His soul’s travail. Therefore will He never turn away His eyes from them, or His hands from doing them good, but He will preserve them to the end.

But *what* does He say He will do? He says, “He will *carry* them.” How does He do that—how does Jesus carry weak saints? Sometimes He carries them by *not permitting them to endure much trouble*. “He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.” He takes them up in the arms of Providence and carries them where there is no trouble. At other times they are carried in His arms by having some tender, *loving person* to take care of them. He carries them instrumentally. As Chris-

tians and the other women had Mr. Great-Heart to kill the giants for them, so many saints are carried in the bosom of Christ Jesus by the loving care of some godly relative, or friend, or pastor.

At other times, such lambs are carried by having an *unusual degree of love* given them, and consequently a large amount of joy, so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep, they have great sweetness in what they do know. They may have but little to feed on, but that little is great from its nutritive power, and they have strong digestive powers given them by which they may even suck honey out of a rock, and oil out of a flinty rock. The little becomes much. The barley loaves and few small fishes are sufficient for the thousands of their necessities.

Sometimes He carries them by giving them a *very simple faith*. Their faith may not be very strong, but it is very simple. And after all, I do not know whether I would not almost as soon have a *simple* faith as a strong faith, if the two could be divided. That simple faith which takes the promise just as it stands—may not comprehend its meaning fully—yet it believes it and runs straight to Jesus with every trouble. That is very beautiful in a child. The child has no great extent of knowledge and is not strong enough to defend itself, but what does it say when mistreated in the street? “I will tell Father.” And so simple souls will go and tell their Father. They run to their big Brother, the great Savior. And so the simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence and they are carried in Jesus’ bosom.

But to close this point. *How does He carry them?* He carries them in *His bosom*—not on His back. That is how He carries *stray* sheep—He flings them over His shoulders rejoicing, but *they* do not rejoice, mind you. They will not rejoice, for they have wandered. They must be made to feel the weight of the crook and they must pray, “Make the bones which you have broken to rejoice.” But, “He carries *the lambs in His bosom*.” Here is put forth, Brothers and Sisters, *boundless affection*. Could He put them in His bosom if He did not love them much? Where does the Father place the Son? He is in the bosom of the Father. Where did Abraham carry Lazarus? In his bosom. Where did Naomi bear her young grandson Obed? He was in her bosom. Where did the man in the parable put his little ewe lamb? In his bosom. Christ is boundless in His affection.

Then there is *tender nearness*. How near to a man is that which is in His bosom! Here you see the Lord Jesus Christ does not put His people at a distance from Himself so that He has to stretch out His hands for them, but He keeps them near. He needs not stretch out His hands at all. So near are they that they could not possibly be nearer. Then it is a *hallowed familiarity*. Lambs, when put into the bosom, having no intellect, cannot therefore learn anything. But the lambs of Christ’s flock, whenever they ride in Christ’s bosom, talk with Him. They tell Him all their secrets and He tells them His. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And He will show them His Covenant.”

Oh, there are some precious love passages between Christ and His weak ones when they are snugly housed in His bosom! It is almost profanity to talk of the union and communion, the fellowship and converse, the delightful interchange of everything that is sweet and loving between Christ and His chosen ones in His bosom! And then, dear Friends, you must not fail to remember that there is *perfect safety*. The dear ones in His bosom—what can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first. How can they get the lamb out of the Shepherd’s arms? Must they not cut off the Shepherd’s arms before they can hurt the lamb? Must they not smite Him through His body before they can kill the creature whom He embraces?

How safe are you, O weak Believers! You are borne up on eagles’ wings. The shot must pierce the parent bird before it can reach you. The devil must destroy your Shepherd before he can slay you. Here is comfort! Oh, what a soft place to ride! How warm! Oh, how the warmth of the Shepherd’s heart cheers His lambs! The warmth of Jesus and the delightful comfort of His Presence shall be enjoyed by you—the very weakest of you in answer to the supplications we put up for you—and as a result of your faith in Jesus.

I do not know what you think after reading this promise, but I think I should like to be a lamb again. Some of us have outgrown our times of doubts, and fearfulness, and so on. We have to take the *work* of a shepherd. I love to be a shepherd under my Master. But there is many a time I envy you. I would delight to sit in the pew and hear a sermon instead of preaching, sometimes—to be fed—instead of feeding you. Some of you have grown to be strong men and are engaged in looking after others. You now look back, not with sorrow, exactly, but with some regret upon the sweetness of your young days—when you were so little in Israel—but were so daintily fed, so wondrously cared for.

You remember what the shepherds did with Mr. Great-Heart and all the company when they came to the Delectable Mountains. The shepherds said, “Come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, come in, Mr. Fearing, come in, Mrs. Much-Afraid.” *But*

they never said, “Come in, Mr. Great-Heart.” We look after the feeble. As to you that are strong, we know you will take the comforts to yourselves. Ah, but the strongest sometimes get very weak. And those that do exploits for God at times feel as if they could creep into a mouse-hole and hide their heads anywhere among the very feeblest of the Lord’s people if they could but enjoy the comforts which He is pleased to give them.

IV. And now, to conclude, LET US HEAR THE SHEPHERD’S VOICE. If you are the lambs, hear the Shepherd’s voice which says, “*Follow Me.*” You that are weak and feeble and young in the Divine life, keep close to Jesus. Imitate the example of Caleb, of whom we spoke a Sunday or two ago, and follow the Lord fully. Be obedient to all His commands and let His faintest wish be your Law. Keeping close to Jesus, you shall realize the sweetness of the text.

To you that are not lambs, and as yet are not brought openly into His fold, hear His words, “*Come unto Me.*” That gentle Shepherd who condescends to carry the lambs may well entice you to Himself. Come, guilty Souls, and flee away to Him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. No domineering Lord commands you to crouch as a slave at His feet. The generous Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” By His love and by His pity, by His deep compassion and His infinite love, I beseech you, come to Him!

Then, too, those of us who are His sheep, let us hear the Shepherd’s voice, saying, “*Feed My lambs.*” If at any time we have offended, and like Peter, backslidden, let this be the token of our love—this the seal by which we show to Him how true is our repentance—let us feed the lambs. O matrons and strong men—mothers in Israel and princes in our host—look well to your sons and daughters! See well to your little ones! Train them up for Jesus! Where you see the Divine spark, blow them with your warm breath. Watch for the feeble.

“Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably” unto the tender ones. Lay yourselves out, Beloved, to do good to these weak ones. Spend and be spent. Bear their burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ. And the Lord accept and bless you all, whether sheep or lambs, for His dear sake. Amen.

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