

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD."
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE."
"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER."

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The Family Portion:

OR, WORDS OF SPIRITUAL CAUTION, COUNSEL, AND COMFORT.

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 4.

THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF OUR SOULS

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."—I PETER ii. 25.

THE people to whom these words were spoken are described in the opening words of this Epistle. They were elected of the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ, and through the abundant mercy of God, born again to a living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. This inheritance was reserved in heaven for them, and they were kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. The passage on which we propose to write tells us that at one time they were as sheep going astray, but when the Apostle wrote to them they were a people who had returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

This description of them is applicable to all the chosen, sanctified, blood-washed and regenerated people of God to-day, and it is a description upon which we do well to meditate if the words of the Apostle describe our experience.

1. *First, then consider what we were in our former state.*

The words of the Apostle are, "Ye were as sheep going astray." The words are evidently cited from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and the sixth verse; where we read, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." This is

the language of those who are convinced by the Holy Ghost that they have gone astray from God, and are walking in their own way. The Apostle Paul has such persons in mind when he says, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone *out of the way*, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. . . . Destruction and misery are in *their ways*: and *the way of peace have they not known*; there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans iii. 10-19). This description of all men, Jews and Gentiles is designed to stop every mouth from defending himself, and to demonstrate that all the world is guilty before God. Hence no flesh can justify himself in God's sight. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Hence, if any are to be saved, they need "The righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." In other words, they need the righteousness of Christ, His obedience unto death, to be imputed unto them." (See Romans iii. 24-26; v. 19; II Cor. v. 21; I Cor. i. 30).

We, too, like those to whom Peter wrote have gone astray. In fact we were astray from God when we were born and are obliged to confess that we were "shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us."

Thus we have not the smallest ground for saying, "I am not as other men are." All alike have sinned, all alike are like sheep who have gone astray, and turned everyone to his own way. We are all guilty of sin before God, and the wages of our sin is death, death temporal and death eternal. In other words, unless by the grace and abundant mercy of God we are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, eternal punishment is our portion. (See Matt. xxv. 46).

2. *Secondly, consider what we are now.*

"*Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*"

In the first place God's saved people *are now returned unto the Shepherd of their souls.*

Christ Himself is the Shepherd of the sheep. He says "I am the good shepherd." How comes it that any of the sheep can say "we have now returned unto the shepherd of our souls?" *They return because of the divine purpose.* Speaking of His sheep, Christ says "My Father, Which gave them me, is greater than all." (John x. 29). Then notice what He says of those whom the Father hath given Him. He says "All that the Father hath given Me *shall come to Me*; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Thus there is no uncertainty about Christ's sheep coming to Him: He says "they shall come," and all that come He will in no wise cast out. Here is an important and comforting truth. Christ's sheep are scattered all over the world and in many cases they are still away from Him, and gone astray. They may hear His Gospel from the lips of faithful witnesses, and yet give no evidence that they are impressed and influenced by the message. Faithful witnesses may be saddened by the indifference to Gospel truth displayed by their hearers, but Christ says "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Hence, sooner or later the hearts of faithful preachers of the Gospel shall be cheered, for Christ "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah liii. 11). The Lord's gracious purpose concerning them shall be accomplished.

In the second place the sheep shall come to Christ *because they are divinely drawn*. Christ says "No man come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me *draw* him" (John vi. 37, 44). All the given ones shall come because the Father draws them. The sinners who come to Christ, must therefore give the glory of their coming to the drawing power of their Father.

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
 And enter while there's room;
 When others make a wretched choice,
 And rather starve than come?
 "'Twas the same love that spread the feast
 That sweetly forced us in;
 Else we had still refused to taste,
 And perished in our sin."

(DR. WATTS).

In the third place, the *sheep return to the Shepherd because He brings them*.

He says, "Other sheep I have which are not of this (Jewish) fold: *them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold (flock) and one Shepherd*" (John x. 16).

Here is another precious truth. The sheep return to the Shepherd because *He brings them*. He "goes after that which is lost until He find it. And when He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders rejoicing. And when He cometh home, He calleth together His friends and His neighbours, saying unto them 'Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.' O think of the love in the Shepherd's heart which leads Him to go after one of His lost

sheep until He find it, and then says "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." Thus, dear readers, "The Son of man is come to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost." And He always effectively carries out His loving and gracious purpose. (See Luke xv. 4-6; xix. 10). Have you returned to the Shepherd of your souls? How has it come about? To any goodness or merit in you? No indeed. You have returned because of a *divine purpose*, a *divine drawing power*, a *divine bringing*, a *divine seeking and saving*. It is all of divine grace. "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

But the *sheep return to the Bishop of their souls*. Christ is the Shepherd of their souls. He is also their Bishop. As the Shepherd He went so far as to lay down His life for the sheep. He was wounded for their transgressions, He was bruised for their iniquities: the chastisement of their peace was upon Him; and with His stripes they were healed. The Lord laid on Him their iniquity, and He made His soul an offering for their sin. He Who was without sin Himself, was numbered with transgressors, and treated as a sinner, bare the sin of many, shed His blood in their stead, so that their sins might be remitted and forgiven, and so that they would be redeemed from the course they deserved. O let us never forget the Shepherd's love which enables us to say "Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Think of Him as your Bishop. The word means *Overseer*. He is One Who is always overseeing you. His eye is ever upon you, watching you. Though He has sought and saved you, you are always in danger and He is concerned for you. It concerns Him if you are tempted by the world, the flesh and the devil, and He watches or oversees you to deliver you. It concerns Him if you are passing through discomfort; and He draws near to comfort you. It concerns Him if you are faint; and He giveth power to the faint. It concerns Him when your faith is tried, and He draws near and says "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Thus you can say with confidence, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and Overseer; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. . . . Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm xxiii.). O, the mercy if we can say, "We were as sheep going astray, but we are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."

“Jesus the Shepherd is,
'Twas He that loved my soul,
'Twas He that washed me in His blood,
'Twas He that made me whole.
'Twas He that sought the lost,
That found the wandering sheep,
'Twas He that brought me to the fold,
'Tis He that still doth keep.”

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THE LORD'S SUPPER—NOT MASS!

EXTRACTS FROM CHURCH OF ENGLAND ARTICLES IN THE
AUTHORISED PRAYER BOOK.

XXVIII.—ON THE LORD'S SUPPER: Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Water) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner: and the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's Ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

XXXI.—OF THE ONE OBLATION OF CHRIST FINISHED UPON THE CROSS: The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.

RUBRIC FOR COMMUNION SERVICE.—It is hereby declared, That no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread and Wine there bodily received, or unto any corporal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored (for that were Idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians); and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one.

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Wayside Notes

"A FALLING AWAY FIRST"

"Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."—II THESSALONIANS ii. 3.

THE Apostle Paul had in the previous chapter announced to the Thessalonian saints that "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time He will "come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." The previous Epistle had assured the saints that they would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and would then "ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. iv. 17). The Lord's coming will thus be an event that will affect those who obey not the Gospel, and those to whom the Gospel has come with saving power (I Thess. i. 5, 6). The second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians opens by saying, "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind . . . as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, *except there come a falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." This seems to show clearly that the coming of the Lord will not take place until certain other events shall take place.

A falling away must first take place and the man of sin must be revealed. This man of sin (whoever he is) will be on the earth when the Lord comes, for we read that the Lord will "consume him with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming" (II Thess. ii. 8). We are aware that many excellent people believe that the Lord may come at any moment, and that there is no warrant for believing that any events are to precede His coming. Many years ago we heard of a clergyman who used often to look through the window of his house to see if there were any indications in the sky of the Lord's coming on that particular day. We would point out that in Matthew xxiv. our Lord tells His disciples of many things which would happen before His coming. He says to them, "Take heed that no man deceive you," and then proceeds to tell of many things which would

happen before His coming. There would be false Christs, and wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecutions, betrayals, false prophets, abounding iniquity or lawlessness, the love of many would wax cold, and the Gospel would be preached for a witness unto all nations, and "then the end shall come." Moreover, there would be great tribulation, false Christs and false prophets who would show great signs and wonders, "insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." Moreover, some would say of Christ, "Behold He is in the desert; behold He is in the secret chambers." Such statements, however, were not to be believed by Christ's disciples. They were not to be believed, because Christ, when He comes, will not come secretly. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." That is, His coming will be manifest as the lightning. Then the Lord goes on to say, "*Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*" (Matt. xxiv. 1-31).

Although, however, our Lord teaches us that many great and solemn events would precede His coming, and many iniquities and evils would abound before His coming, yet His coming will certainly take place. Meanwhile all the events which He has predestined to happen before His coming will certainly take place. Hence His people are to "live soberly, righteously and godly, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 12, 13). Now, we have pointed out that "a falling away," an apostasy from the truth, will come first. It will come before the Lord returns. This is what we want to emphasise in these Wayside Notes. If scripture teaches it, we ought to recognise it, and refrain from false expectations in reference to the course of events.

1. First, let us notice *that our Lord Himself teaches that a falling away from the truth will precede His coming. He says, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."* The context shows that He refers to His second coming, for He says "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke xvii. 26, 30). The sixth of Genesis shows that the days of Noah were *days of abounding sin*. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagin-