

THE TRUE SHEEP

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning, December 22nd, 1861

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD

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“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” Matthew 25:33

YOU will perceive that our text comes at once upon that eternal distinction there is between the saved and the lost. There is no middle course; either we are horn of God, or we are not; either we are still under sin, or we are not. To come to a simple division of the subject, it will stand thus, that *to be on Christ's right hand is to be vitally right with God*; second, *to be doctrinally right with God*; and third, *to be practically right with God*; and then, fourth, *we shall see such persons are ultimately right with God*. I think this is fairly intended, that to be on Christ's right hand now, to be rightly placed now, is to be right with God in all the four respects that I have hinted. I will try and point out these infinitely important matters as clearly as I possibly can.

First, then, that *we must be right with God vitally*. And nothing is clearer, than that all by nature are wrong with God; all have gone astray and turned everyone to his own way. Let us see, then, as the people are here called sheep, we will take what the Savior says to help us out with this matter of being right with God. First, then, in order to be right with God, Jesus Christ must become our way of access to God; according to his own words; he says, “I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” Now this implies, in the first place, a consciousness of our lost condition. “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Then it is a salvation door. There must therefore be a consciousness of being lost. This is one of the greatest privileges we can have, to know our lost condition. You will perceive, in the day in which we live there is a great deal said by ministers, and so far, so good, against outward sins; but they appear to me to dwell so upon the branches as to neglect the root. Now the root of the matter stands thus, that in the fall of man all became lost; that is where we became lost. It is no use to talk now about being lost in the future; we are lost in the past, for “By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” and all men, by their fall in Adam, are under sin; and under the law, and are, as far as anything the creature can do, lost, helpless, utterly helpless; and yet, unto this, they are blind. Arid if you ask what is to evidence this helpless state, this lost condition, nothing can make us conscious of it but a conviction of what our hearts are. This is the truth that Saul of Tarsus never learnt until the Lord took him in hand; he had no consciousness whatever that his heart was what it was; and as though he would challenge Infinite Purity itself almost to call in question the excellency of his character, because he was blameless according to the ceremonial

law, conformed to that, and there he was blameless, and because he was blameless thus before men, he thought he was blameless before God. But when the law entered, "You shall not covet," and he was taught to see and feel that every irregular desire, every wrong thought, was sin, and when he was made sensible that out of the heart proceed evils innumerable; he was made to know that as evils innumerable proceed out of the heart, they must be there, in order to proceed out of it; and so he says the law wrought in him all manner of concupiscence. Here it is then, a sinner is brought to see he is lost. He says, "What shall I do?" Jesus says, "I am the door; by me if any man come in." Now I will try, laying aside the pastoral simile for a moment, and just open up that delightful truth, that Christ is the door. Let us, I say, for a moment lay aside the pastoral simile, and take up that of the priestly, under the Old Testament age we will suppose a sinner, which of course was the case sometimes, thus convinced of his state; he says, How am I to have access to God? Then he is at once directed to the sacrifice, and to the high priest, and to the mercy-seat, by that sacrifice and by that high priest. So that the high priest by the sacrifice, the high priest by the spotlessness of his person, for the high priest was to be perfect physically, as a type of the dear Savior, who was perfect in every sense, the high priest was to enter into the holy of holies, with the blood of the sacrifice, and by the precious stones on his breastplate there to represent the people. Now hereby the sinner would have access to God. Just so it is now, my hearer; the gospel meets us with an atonement for sin, with a sacrifice for sin; Jesus Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and this Jesus Christ is in heaven; he has entered into the presence of God, there to appear for us, there to make intercession. So that we are to come to God by this sacrifice. And as the high priest was to represent the people by the precious stones on his breastplate, so Jesus Christ represents the people by what his sacrifice has made them. And here is a mercy-seat. I need not remind you of the blessing that came upon the people in this way; a word upon that presently. Now, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." So that his sacrifice saves us from sin, puts an end to that sin; his sacrifice saves us from wrath, puts an end to that wrath; his sacrifice saves us from the curse, there shall be no more curses; that sacrifice saves us from hell, there is no more hell, not with the saints of God. Now, in order to be right with God, we must be thus brought to Christ, and by him to enter into access to God. And I hope I shall be able presently to show that clearly, that we must not only be right with God, but we must be right with Christ, and right with God. I shall have two points this morning to try to make as clear as I can, because it is not enough for you to be seemingly right with Christ; you may be seemingly right with Christ, and wrong with God the Father; and you may be seemingly right with God the Father, and wrong with Christ. But, in order to be at Christ's right hand, and consequently at God's right hand, you must be right with both, both with Christ and with the Father. This will, I think, show itself as we go along presently into some of the other parts of the subject before us.

Now then, let us here stop for a moment. How is it with us? Have we been brought to feel that we are poor, lost sinners, brought to know what our hearts are, and that there is no way of escape but the Lord Jesus Christ, and is he to us the open door? for I think the dear Savior refers to himself when he says, "Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it," as John says, "Behold a door opened in heaven." Every earthly door must close; the door of human life must by-and-bye close; but the door of heaven will never close, except to shut you in when you are there; the door of life will never close, the door of salvation will never close.

"The door of your mercy stands open all day,
For the poor and the needy who knock by the way;

No sinner shall ever be empty sent back,
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus' sake.”

Here, then, is the first step of being right with God. Now the second thing in order to be right with God is, that you must also receive the testimony given of Christ; that while the hireling flees from the wolf or the bear, Jesus Christ is that Good Shepherd that never fled from the sheep. The sheep were given to him, and he stayed by them. Though sin came against him he would not leave them; though Satan came against him he would not leave them; and though men, like wild beasts, gaped and roared against Christ, and sharpened their teeth against Christ, yet he would not leave the sheep; he faithfully abode by the truth, and thereby abode by the sheep. And can you say that you have been able to set your seal to the dear Savior's words concerning himself? They have often been sweet to me. The words are these: “I am the *good* Shepherd.” I have often said, So you are, Lord; that is a truth, Lord; a vital truth, a living truth, an infinite truth, an infallible truth, an everlasting truth; my soul knows it right well; you are the *good* Shepherd, you have abode by the sheep. “I lay down my life for the sheep.” If you can drink it in, and set your seal to that, then you are right with God, and if you are right with God, for without this faith in his dear Son it is impossible to please God; if you are right with God, God is right with you; and if matters be right there, everything else, in spite of sin and Satan, must ultimately come right; and so you must appear at last, standing on the ground of right, rejoicing in right, and singing aloud of God's righteousness. But thirdly, there is not only this entering in by the door, and receiving the testimony of Christ's faithfulness, but there is, third, an endearment to be realized in order to be right with God. The dear Savior says, “Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again; no man takes it from me;” this we rejoice in; “but I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again;” nor am I doing it by my own authority as man, for “this commandment have I received of my Father. Therefore, does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” I have often said, and I just repeat it, that there is an adverb of manner implied but not expressed, and it may read thus: “Therefore does my Father love me, because I so lay down my life that I might take it again;” that I lay it down after that manner that I might take it again.

Now, what was the manner of his death? what was the manner of his laying down his life in order that he might take it again? Let us take his own words. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to do what he could do, but he came into the world to do what God willed him to do; and therefore he said, “The work which you gave me to do;” and the Old Testament clearly shows that the work given to Christ was to finish transgression, make an end of sin, bring in eternal righteousness, confirm prophecy, and that he might be anointed with all that oil of joy and glory into which he is now entered. Now he so laid down his life as to do this, as to achieve this, as to finish this work that was given him to do; and this is the way that he endears himself. And what, then, is the endearment to you? Is it the thought that there is not a spot against you, not a fault against you? your sins may be as so many thunderbolts, or as so many fiery serpents eating into your very souls, and coiling round you to all eternity; that there is not one fault against you, not a spot, not a shadow of a spot, not a rebuke, nor reproof, nor blame, nor anything of the sort, nothing but love and nothing but kindness? Now if you enter into the endearing power of Christ's atonement, this is another evidence of being right with God. First, you see there must be a consciousness of our lost condition, and then the earnest seeking of God's salvation; second, there must be the reception of the testimony of the goodness of Christ as the Shepherd that stood by the sheep; and third, a

realizing of the endearment of his death; if that will not make us love Christ, I know not what will; if that will not make us love God, I know not what will; and if this will not make us dwell together in unity as brethren, I know not what will; and if it be not by his death that the truth of God becomes as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descends upon the mountains of Zion, I know not what will; and if in this way Jehovah does not give eternal life, I neither know of any other way, nor desire to know any other way, for "He that believes on him has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." This is the way to God's right hand, to Christ's right hand. It is precious faith that does it all; it is the blessed Spirit persuading us, and convincing us of our need of these things, and then revealing to us these things as the remedy which our God has provided.

But fourth, there must be a recognition of the Savior's voice, so as to follow him, and only him; not to follow a stranger, but to follow him, and only him. And I think, in this fourth part of the subdivisions of my sermon, it will be important that I should try to point out what we are to understand by his voice. Now the Greek word *phones*, rendered *voice*, as some of the learned have well observed, may, with equal propriety, be rendered *sound*; and if we take it to mean his sound, then we get some scriptures to help us to understand precisely what the meaning of this sound is. It means, in the first place, the order of that kingdom which he has founded. I will go, in order to make this clear, what it is to hear his voice and follow him, and him only, I will go to the 89th Psalm, and there we shall get a definition of this matter. You recollect these beautiful words, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne; mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Now let us come back again to the words I have quoted, and we shall get at precisely what is meant there by the sound of the Savior's voice. First, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne." The throne here of course means the mediatorial throne of Christ, and justice there means the perfect mediation of Christ; Christ's work was a work of righteousness; so that the throne, the mediatorial throne of Christ, is founded in his obedient life, and in his atoning death, in the 89th Psalm called justice, "Justice is the habitation of your throne." His throne dwells in justice, his throne dwells in righteousness. And now mark that beautiful scripture implied indeed in the 89th Psalm, that "God is just," by the work of Christ, "and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Now Jesus thus reigns by his righteousness; as Isaiah beautifully observes, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness;" and this king thus becomes our hiding-place. Here, then, is one part of the sound, justice and judgment; judgment comes next, because, by the perfect work of Christ, God gives judgment in favor of a poor sinner. The Lord shall judge his people with the judgment of justification. So, first Christ works out a righteousness, and then God passes judgment upon the people according to that righteousness; he judges them by his dear Son. You recollect that lovely scripture in one of the Psalms, "Gather my saints together unto me," those that are brought to God's right hand in the way I have this morning described; "those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Here it is, you see; here the judgment is given in their favor. "Come, you blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." "Mercy and truth shall go before your face." Just look at those four. First, there is righteousness; second, judgment in favor of the people; third, there is mercy to bear with them and to heal them, commiserate them, forgive them, sympathize with them, swallow up their sins and supply all their wants; and then it is all brought up at last by truth, mercy and truth; truth comes in and says justice shall have its right, the judgment God has given shall stand; mercy shall have its objects, truth comes in last. And we need the righteousness of Christ, and the judgment of God in our favor by that righteousness, and we need the mercy, and we need the truth, because without justice then where are the honors of justice? without Christ's righteousness, and without God giving judgment

in our favor, where would be that right that the Savior aimed at and that he gained, namely, our eternal spotlessness before God? And without mercy where should we be, with all the sins and miseries we have? And without truth there would be no certainty. Now in the next verse in that Psalm this order of things, this righteousness, judgment in the believer's favor, mercy infinite, mercy boundless, mercy unutterable, truth infallible, are in the next verse called a joyful sound. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound;" that know the sound of this, that understand what it is; for it is a certain sound, there is a certainty in the righteousness, there is a certainty in the judgment, for once he justifies, he justifies forever; there is a certainty in the mercy, there is a certainty in the truth, and it may well be called a joyful sound: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk" by that righteousness, and that judgment given in their favor, and by that mercy and by that truth, "they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name," for this is his name, God's name is in Christ, and there is no other name given in which we can be saved, but the name of Jesus; "In your name shall they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness;" here comes in Christ's righteousness again, "in your righteousness shall they be exalted." Now this is the Shepherd's voice. Now a stranger they will not follow. If a man comes and talks to you as though Christ's righteousness was not complete, you will not follow that man. If a man comes and speaks to you as though God would ever give judgment against those for whom Christ died, you will not follow him. If a man comes and speaks to you as though you were not that poor, guilty, filthy, miserable, wretched, wounded, bruised, sin-smitten, sin-ruined, crippled, helpless worm that you feel yourself to be, and that you do not need this mercy, you will turn away from such a man as being a stranger to soul bitterness, a stranger to soul trouble, to the downward work, to real sinner-ship, and therefore a stranger to real mercy; if a man comes to you and tells you there is no certainty in God's truth, that his covenant may fail, his covenant may fall to pieces, and that the covenant sealed by the blood of the Mediator is no more certain than the covenant that was sealed by the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, if a man came and thus spoke to you, you would turn away from him; you see he is a stranger to God's covenant, a stranger to the truth. But the dear Redeemer declares that a stranger they will not follow but will flee from him; and though they are called bigots, narrow-minded, various evil names, yet they have the sanction of Heaven to fly from error and cleave to the truth as it is in Jesus. Here, then, my hearer, is the Shepherd's voice; a stranger's voice they will not follow. That is the way to be right with God. I had intended to have taken up the sound of the jubilee, or freedom, as another illustration of the Shepherd's voice, but I forbear.

Now the fifth department I notice is, that we must be right not only with Christ, but with God the Father; in a word, we must believe in election, or else our knowledge of Christ is not right; we are not right with God. We must believe in the infallible certainty of the eternal salvation of all for whom Christ died; we must believe in the impossibility of one being lost that God has included in his covenant: I will prove this presently. If we are not brought to believe that, then we are not right with Christ, nor right with God the Father. Now, said the Savior to those who were not his sheep, "My sheep hear my voice;" you therefore hear it not because you are not my sheep, "My sheep hear my voice;" that voice of perfection I have hinted at; "and they follow me." If the truth go down in public estimation, they will go down with it; if the truth rise, they will rise with it; if the truth become unpopular, they will share in that obscurity; if the truth become popular, you will always find them on the side of truth; the sheep of truth, the people of God.

Now I came to the point of being right with the Father and the Son, right with both. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck thorn out of my hand." Yes, that is Jesus Christ's doctrine, but does God the Father talk like that? is God the Father of that mind? Because if God the Father be the author of this doctrine, then I see how it ends; that we must, after all, be what is called high Calvinists. Mark the language, "My Father, which gave them me", not the good creatures that gave themselves, mark that, but "My Father, which gave them to me," gave them because he would, "is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." What in? Why, in this eternal welfare of the sheep. "I give unto them eternal life I and my Father are one in that; "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;" I and my Father are one in that. Are you one with it? or, are you joining with the world, and calling it dangerous doctrine, calling it this, and calling it that? Ah, my hearer, if you are, and you die in enmity to this order of things, you will be found on his left hand, not among the sheep, but among the goats. You may put yourself among the wise now, and among the sheep now; you may put yourself among Christians now, you may call yourself a Christian now; but unless you are right with God when you die, you cannot be right with God at the judgment day; as we commonly say, As death leaves us, judgment will be sure to find us; "He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unjust, let him be unjust still." Then, if it be our happy, happy lot to be convinced of our state, and brought into this real acquaintance with the blest Redeemer as the door of salvation, as the faithful Shepherd, as the Shepherd that endears himself, and endears the blessed God, as the Shepherd whose voice we ever wish to follow in contrast with any and every other, and to flee from strangers; and as the Shepherd who is one with the Father, and the Father one with him in this eternal welfare of the sheep; if this be our happy lot, what gratitude should we feel to the God who has thus favored us. People say, Oh, do you think a loving God would leave so many to perish? this, and that, and the other. My hearer, we have no right to think without his word; his holy word tells us what he has done, what he does do, what he will do; and we are to forsake our own thoughts; we are not to do our own pleasure in these matters, nor are we to speak our own words; we must give up the whole, and know that while we are in a state of nature our thoughts are not his thoughts, and his ways are not our ways; as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways. Happy, thrice happy, the man the neck of whose pride is broken, and who is brought down to the feet of the blessed Redeemer, and thus reconciled to God; in a word, made right with God. Blessed, then, are they that live in the Lord, and consequently blessed are they that die in the Lord.

Then they are right *practically*. Now there are two classes here. The one was on the tip-toe to heaven; the one was saying to himself, Well, I have given a great deal of my goods to feed the poor; I have been very charitable; I don't know what I haven't done; no man has given more than I have, and therefore, there is not the slightest danger but I shall enter heaven; because, if I am not to go to heaven in part at least for my good doings, and if my good doings have not anything to do with it, then what is the use of them? For the pride of the natural man stands thus, If I can't have salvation for good works, I won't do any good works; that is the language of the carnal man, I won't do them; I will not give anybody anything. But unto these very persons the Savior says. "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered, and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you a hungered, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto you?" Well, you never did to the least of these my

brethren. Ah, what, those high doctrine people, Lord? We always hated them, we confess; and if we gave them anything, it was just out of charity, not because we liked them or their religion; we always reckoned those doctrines very dangerous, and the people dangerous, and certainly never gave them anything. But then we have to your cause. Almost everything is called his cause now. Popery is called his cause; Mahometanism his cause; and the Greek Church called Christ's cause: all sorts of systems now called his cause. But now, mark, these persons thought a great deal of their works, expected the favor of the king; but the Savior knew they always hated the real people of God; the carnal mind can't like them; therefore, "Depart from me, you cursed." You have always contended for the law in opposition to the real gospel, and now you may have the law; you have always contended for works as conditions of salvation, and now you may have your works, and you are damned to eternity with them and by them; you have always contended for free-will in opposition to free grace, and now you may have your free-will; you have always contended for creature importance, and now you may have it and go. "Depart from me, you cursed." My hearer, that is a solemn representation. *The motive is the great thing*, "He that gives a cup of cold water," but then he must do it in the way I shall presently describe, or else it is not acceptable to the Lord; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So, if a man give me everything he has to give, if he hates my religion, it shall be set down to his account as an act of kindness, but not as an act of faith; because he has no faith in my religion, and in my Jesus Christ, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment," or punishment that lasts forever. Some tell us the punishment will not last forever, but they entirely fail to bring any scripture that shows us the terminus of the punishment. They acknowledge there will be a resurrection of the unjust, as well as the just, and that the unjust will be cast into hell, but, say they, it is only to suffer for a time, and then end. Show me the scripture. Where is there a scripture? When it is said they are cast into the lake, if that declaration were followed up with another, namely, they are cast into the lake until they cease to be, then I could believe it; but when I read of the punishment being everlasting, that is, lasting forever, as for their quibbling at the original words, that amounts to nothing at all; we all know that a word's meaning depends not upon the letters of which the word is composed, but upon the subject to which it belongs, and upon the connection in which it stands; and therefore, for myself, I can find no terminus to that punishment. The law breathes eternal indignation, and therefore it is a sentence that sends them away forever and forever; not from being, but from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

But let us look at those who are practically right. He turns to the righteous, mark that, the right. How were they right? By their reconciliation to the Lord, justified by faith, without the works of the law; conformed to God's order of things; the righteous. Why, Lord, when saw we you under these circumstances? We have done nothing; we have been poor sinners all our days, Lord, living upon the bounties of your mercy; and your holy Word spoke truth, "The just man falls seven times a day." Lord, how infinitely short we have fallen in gratitude to you for your mercies! It is true we have perhaps walked in your way, out of love to your dear name, but our doings are not worth naming. "Verily I say unto you, In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren." Well, Lord, I did that because I loved your children. Though I feared I was not one of them myself, yet I felt a liking to them. It is true, Lord, I did love the little ones; and when I heard the Pharisees talk about their goodness and doings, I felt my own heart so different, that these Pharisaic, free-will people, seemed to have a spirit quite contrary to my own. I did not feel at home among them; but when I found out the poor, the houseless, the homeless, and the friendless, they fell in with the tidings of the fast that was made, and they came in, and I felt a love to them. Well,

then, as you did it in faith and in love, and in the name of a disciple, and as you did it out of love to the truth, and to me, why, that is a proof of your belonging to me. And so, then, the others are not damned for their not doing what they did not do, but their non-doing; their not possessing this brotherly love was a proof they did not belong to the family. On the other hand, those who are saved are not saved because they did these things, but their doing these things proved the reality of their brotherly love; and if they love the brethren, that is an evidence laid down in the Word of God that they are passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation. So, then, those who are sent away are not sent away because they did not do these things, but they're not doing them is a proof they do not belong to the family; and the others do not enter heaven because they did these things, but their doing these things was an evidence they belonged to the family. And thus, we must take evidences for evidences, but not turn evidences into conditions. If we turn evidences into conditions, then we set aside the order of eternal salvation. The righteous never dreamt of turning their evidences into conditions, for they said, "When saw we you all this?" So, you see the difference. In those who are lost, there is a spirit of self-gratulation upon their own doings, take notice of that. "We have done so-and-so," though they never had, out of any real love to the truth of God. On the other hand, in those who are saved, there is a spirit of renunciation. "When saw we you? We don't think we have done anything." And much as we have been favored to do here, at the Surrey Tabernacle, in a way of kindness to the poor, we think nothing of it when we set it by the side of what the Lord has done. For instance, if we were to spiritualize these words, and apply them in another way, namely, as expressive of the mercy of God toward us, as expressive of the kindness of the Savior toward us; we were hungry, he has given us that meat that endures unto everlasting life; we were thirsty, he has given us that water that shall be in us a well of water springing up to everlasting life; we were strangers, but he received us all the same for that; we were strangers to ourselves, and strangers to God, but now he reckons us no more foreigners or strangers, but like children at home. And we were naked, he clothed us; we were sick, he has healed us; we were in prison, he has brought us out.

"You have redeemed our souls with blood,
Has set the prisoners free."

And he did this out of love to us; and what we do, let us do it in love to the truth, in love to the brethren, in love to him who has loved us.

Thus, then, the sheep are those who are vitally right with God; doctrinally right with God; practically right with God; and, consequently, shall be finally right with God. So wrong can ever creep in there. No; sin is finished and finished forever; and while the lost shall go away into everlasting punishment, these, the righteous justified by faith, shall enter into life eternal, there to dwell forever. Amen and Amen.

In a few days will be published, an Address delivered at the Surrey Tabernacle, on Monday evening, December 23rd, the day of the Funeral of the late Prince Consort.