**BROOKS BY THE TRAVELLER'S WAY - ADDRESSES BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**07. THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"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 10:27,28*

In these words there are disclosed to us some of the gracious attributes of the Heavenly Shepherd, and some of the prominent characteristics of His sheep. Let our meditation seek to gather fruit from the contemplation of both.

"My sheep hear My voice." They have the gift of spiritual discernment. All voices do not sound alike to them. They can distinguish the still small voice, even amid the Babel and clamour of the world. They can catch the tones of their own Shepherd amid the loud shoutings of many aliens. They have the gracious faculty of being able to sort the messages which assail their ears. In whatever direction they turn, they can hear the call of the Shepherd.

**(1)** The voice of yesterday. "My sheep hear My voice." The disciples of the Master can interpret the voice that calls to them from the days of the past. "I heard behind me a great voice." They gather instruction from the voice that speaks in this commanding tone. History is full of expression; it abounds in teaching. In song and wail, in psalm and warning, the disciples can hear the voice of the Lord.

The "days that have been" yield their instruction to the days that are, and the instinct of to-day is refined and chastened by the fight and failures and victories of yesterday. The present gains in riches by the witness of the past.

**(2)** The voice of to-day. "To-day if ye will hear His voice." The Lord's own people catch the sound of their Master's voice in the seemingly silent circumstances of to-day. They discern His voice in what other men regard only as a dumb drift. They hear the new message in the new conditions. "New occasions teach new duties." The disciple discerns the duty, and in it he hears the still small voice of his God.

**(3)** The voice of to-morrow. "My sheep hear My voice." "I heard a voice from heaven say, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." The disciple hears that alluring and inspiring call. When he applies an eager ear at the door of a stern futurity, he hears the soothing and calming word, "Blessed." The voice that peals to him from the unknown drives away all his fears.

"Far, far away like bells at evening pealing,

The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,

And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,

Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee."

"And they follow Me." The sheep not only discern the voice of the Shepherd, they respond to His call, and follow in glad obedience. What at first may be. a choice, becomes at last an instinct. The sound of the voice prompts the heart to obedience. The soul leaps to the call. There is a beautiful passage in the Book of Revelation which may be appropriately quoted here. "I heard a voice from heaven, as a voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Who are these triumphant ones in the heavenly place? "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Then they are "following" still! They began their companionship where we have still ours. They accompanied Him "through the green pastures," and "by the still waters," and through the perilous ways of the weird and darksome vale. They took up their cross daily, and now they follow Him still where the hard road and the threatening gorge are quite unknown. They are perfecting in larger spaces the character which began to be formed in the narrower ways of time. The gift of discernment and the spirit of obedience are two of the primary characteristics of the disciples of Christ.

"I know them." Here is the reciprocal discernment. The Master recognises His own. He never mistakes one for another. He knows our idiosyncrasies. He knows my "make-up," my peculiar individuality, my special conditions. He does not deal with us as though we were all alike. "He calleth His own sheep by name." He watches each life as though it presented a unique and separate problem. His recognition means more than perception. It implies sympathy. He not only knows; He feels. He responds to the need which He discerns. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

"I give unto them eternal life." How this Gospel abounds in messages concerning life, and in declarations which proclaim the Master as the Fountain of Life! "In Him was life." "The Son hath life in Himself." "I am the Bread of Life." "I am the Life." And what His lips proclaimed, His life confirmed. Everything He did was characterised by an abounding life. What an expression of intense and abounding life is to be found in phrases like these: "Get thee behind Me, Satan"; "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." What an inexhaustible wealth of affection is to be found in an expression as this: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And now there comes an inspiring promise that this Fountain of Life is willing and waiting to impart it into the wills and minds and hearts of His children. He will give unto us "eternal life"--life which is characterised not so much by quantity as to duration, but by quality, rendering us partakers of His own divine nature.

"They shall never perish." They shall be made indestructible. The far country shall never get hold of them again to waste their treasure. Their power shall never be impaired. They shall be kept in health. They shall never be "lost." They shall become ever more and more alive. Everything that is worthy shall be increasingly quickened and enriched.

"No one shall pluck them out of My hand." They shall not be snatched into destruction. They shall not be victims of any sudden emergency. They shall never be taken "off their guard." What a wonderful promise, and yet a promise of which we may all reap the gracious fulfilment. We often excuse our moral lapses by declaring that we were taken unawares. "The wolf catcheth them." It need not be. We may be always secure if we are willing to be kept. Resting in our Saviour's hands we may be quite inviolable. If we have to cling to Him with our frail and fragile fingers, we shall drop away from sheer exhaustion in the cold and stormy day. But if we are resting in the hollow of His hands, with His fingers closed over us, what shall make us afraid?

And what is the foundation of all these gracious experiences? The answer is to be found in the very first word of our text. "My sheep." Can that word be used of me? Am I willing to be His? Have I yielded myself to be His property? Can I say, "I am not my own?" Do I admit the Master's claim? If the claim be admitted, then all the gracious issues, which we have been contemplating, will become assuredly ours.

"To Thee, Thou bleeding Lamb,

I all things owe;

All that I have and am,

And all I know.

All that I have is now no longer mine,

And I am not mine own; Lord, I am thine."