

# Lambs Among Wolves

By

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Chapter 8

## The Supreme Goal of Life

SOME PEOPLE seem to have the idea that the chief object of becoming a Christian is to make sure of getting to heaven. That is a rather narrow view. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. In their physical, mental, and spiritual nature they bore a likeness to their Creator. Through disobedience that likeness was marred and well-nigh obliterated. Logically, then, salvation would be the restoration of the divine image, bringing men back to purity and holiness and communion with their Creator. Here we find the main object of Christianity.

In this process of restoration, however, we cannot be passive, merely submitting to an arbitrary act of God. His plan is that we choose to be restored and co-operate with Him with all our will and energies in developing a Christlike character.

Though we are fallen, sinful creatures, God loves us and has set before us His glorious plan to re-create us in His image and to make us fit to share in the indescribable joy and happiness of eternal life in His kingdom. The Bible says, "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Psalm 100:3.

When God says, "It is he that hath made us," we may assume that He refers to creation, or we may feel that when we are born again and become His children, He has made us anew. Both views are correct. But it would also be well for us to consider that we are in the *process of being made* here in this life; consequently, it is of the greatest importance for us to study and understand God's plan so that we can co-operate intelligently with Him.

Let us think just a moment about our first study—how we come into this world with a fallen, sinful, wolf nature. Then, the first thing that Jesus must do in the work of restoration is to take these selfish, sinful wolves and make them lambs. And we know very well that this is not something we can do for ourselves; only God can re-create a wolf and make it a lamb. After performing this wonderful miracle of transformation from a wolf to a lamb, He tells us that we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Then Jesus the great Shepherd says, "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." Luke 10:3. At *first* thought this seems shocking. Just imagine looking out into the woods and seeing a pack of ugly, vicious wolves and a little innocent lamb walking into their midst. Your astonishment deepens when you realize that the shepherd who loves the lamb sent it out. Jesus has done this with His lambs, and He has a reason: There are wolves to be won.

Jesus gives His loving invitation, "Follow me," and then He says, "I will make you fishers of men." There is the great goal set before His followers, the supreme goal of the Christian life. It is true that the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31. But could anyone truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and not obey Him? Many have been deceived on this point; they have been told that good works are not necessary in the Christian life. But they forget that the Bible also says, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead." James 2:17, 18. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10.

The Bible says we are not saved *by* good works but *for* good works, and without good works there is no evidence of salvation. "For we are God's own handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works which He has pre-destined us to practise." Ephesians 2:10, Weymouth's Translation. This is also made clear in the statement, "Man is to be saved by faith, not by works; yet his faith must be shown by his works."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 279.

Let me illustrate the meaning of the expression "We are his workmanship." While traveling in many lands, often among people whose language I could not understand, I experienced real homesickness. Many times I looked down the street of a large city, saw an automobile coming, and almost involuntarily said, "Ah, there comes a Ford!" What a thrill it was, in a faraway land, to see a Ford. But what did I mean by saying, "There comes a Ford"? I meant that a man by the name of Ford manufactured autos by the millions, and they may be seen in almost any country in the world. How did I know that it was not a Buick, or a Chevrolet, or a Plymouth? It was because of the *workmanship*. Mr. Ford had a pattern, and all his cars were made after that pattern, so they were easily distinguished from any other cars.

### God's Pattern

I believe this illustrates in a way what God means when He says, "We are his workmanship." God is making something far more important than automobiles. He is making characters, citizens for His eternal kingdom. He is taking the poor, miserable, shattered wrecks that sin has made and is transforming them by His grace into new men and women. And God has a pattern; it is found in Romans 8:9: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son."

Jesus came to earth and lived such a perfect life that the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is God's purpose, moreover, that every soul redeemed from this fallen race shall develop a character after the Pattern. He tells us that we are to "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24. We are told that "those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully."—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

Let us look at the practical side of this question. What does it mean to be a Christian? According to the Word of God, it means that His image is to be restored in us; we are to become like Christ, who lived a perfect life. Is it not logical and consistent, then, to believe that a true Christian will bear a definite resemblance to Christ, that the characteristics of the life of Christ will be revealed in him and will distinguish him from one who is not a Christian?

### Characteristics of the Pattern

We can think of many beautiful qualities of Christ, such as love, patience, kindness, purity, unselfishness, which all of us should possess and cultivate. But there was one pre-eminent characteristic, which was revealed in all His ministry above everything else. It is found in two texts: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. "This is a faithful saying, and of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Timothy 1:15.

The one great purpose of Christ in coming to this world was to save the lost. He lived among men, ministering to the poor and needy, healing the sick, casting out devils, cleansing the lepers, and setting the captives free. He finally went to the cross, bearing the sins of all humanity with the one great purpose of saving the lost.

We would consider it absurd for one to say, "I am a Christian, but I do not believe in Christ." Would it not be equally inconsistent to say, "I am a Christian, but I am not interested in saving the lost"? Such a person would be taking his stand on the side of Satan; for Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matthew 12:30. If we are true Christians, we

shall constantly seek to become more like our beloved Master, and the outstanding characteristic of our lives will be our passion for souls.

### **Following the Pattern**

Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Are you a fisher of men? If you reply, No, then you must admit that you are not following Christ. It is not a matter of *trying* to win souls; it is a matter of following Christ. He is responsible for our success if we follow Him, but we need have no fear that He will fail on His part. What is He making? Fishers of men. If we are truly born again, re-created in the image of Christ, our likeness to Him will be demonstrated by our constant burden and our earnest, prayerful efforts to win souls more than in any other way. This was the experience of the Apostle Paul, who wrote:

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law. . . that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

Six times in these four verses we hear that earnest, passionate longing to save the lost. This is one of the chief evidences of genuine conversion. As soon as Andrew realized that he had found the Messiah, he hastened away to find his brother, Peter, and brought him to Christ. (John 1:40-42.) As soon as Philip accepted the invitation to follow the Master, he went after his friend Nathaniel and brought him to Christ. (John 1:43-46.) So it will always be.

### **An Impressive Lesson**

One of Jesus' beautiful and important lessons, illustrating our relation to Him, is found in the Book of John:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." John 15:1, 2, 4-6.

Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. We know that grapes grow on the branches, not on the vine, which brings us face to face with the important lesson that God's provision for the salvation of the lost is through the ministry of His people. If you and I and all the rest of God's children do not bear fruit, if we do not win souls, there will be no fruit. How can anyone who claims to be a child of God evade this solemn responsibility?

The next statement is an impressive one: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." God provides branches for the bearing of fruit. If they bear no fruit, they are worthless, and He takes them away, for they are "cumberers of the ground." It is a serious thing to make an outward profession of Christianity, to go through the forms of religious worship year after year, yet bear no fruit. It is the life flowing from the living vine out into the branches that produces the fruit. If there is no fruit, it is evidence that the branch is not abiding in the vine. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same

bringeth forth much fruit." This is the test of a genuine, living union with Christ. I know of no more solemn thought. It brings us face to face with God's plan in making us fishers of men.

### **Our Part in This Work**

We recognize that when undertaking some work of importance, our success will largely depend upon our making the best possible preparation. It is not my intention to propose a theological course for those who aspire to become ministers, but to offer some simple suggestions for those who long to win a soul but do not know how to start. One of the first conditions is set forth in the words of the Apostle Paul: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15.

Here is a positive command to *study*, given by the One who created us, yet how lightly is it regarded! How can we expect to succeed if we neglect to study? It is the Word of God that we are to study. This Word is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." Hebrews 4:12. As we present this Word, the Holy Spirit uses it to bring conviction to sinners and to lead them to repentance and conversion. Here is another helpful text regarding our preparation: "Provide yourself with an outline of the sound teaching which you have heard from my lips, and be true to the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 1:13, Weymouth's Translation.

Every Christian is commanded to study the doctrines which constitute the foundation of our faith and of God's message of salvation. It is important that we study and understand the new birth, baptism, the coming of Christ, the signs of the times, and other fundamental truths so that we shall be able to present them in a logical, attractive way. But that is not enough. We need to have an "outline" that will be clear and simple, and as far as possible we should memorize it so as to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15.

To those who are not familiar with God's message for these last days, it is impressive to meet one who knows what he believes, and who can turn to the Bible and read God's answers to their questions. They are interested when they meet a person, young or old, who declares frankly, "I do not hold any doctrine which I cannot prove from the Word of God."

### **Do Not Listen to Satan**

Probably all who sincerely believe God's Word will agree, after studying these scriptures, that it is the Lord's purpose for every Christian to be a soul winner. We also need to understand that no one arouses the antagonism of Satan more than an earnest, enthusiastic fisher of men. We may expect, as we go to work determined not to give up until by the blessing of God we have won a soul, that the enemy will exert all his power to discourage and defeat us.

Someday the name of a person will come to your mind, and you will be impressed that you should make an effort to win him to Christ. But immediately another voice will tell you that the person would not be interested, or would resent your efforts, or that someone else would be received more favorably. Many excuses will be suggested why you should not follow the convictions of the Spirit of God. You would do well to remember that when the Holy Spirit suggests that you work for a soul, He is getting that soul prepared for your ministry.

Some years ago in a large college church I spoke on this subject, and in the afternoon a young man came to my room. He wanted to tell me about the most thrilling experience he had ever had. He said that while he was listening to the discourse, and I was emphasizing the necessity of responding at once when the Holy Spirit suggested someone to whom we should speak, it seemed as though a voice said to him, "You ought to speak to Mr. A. after the meeting."

He said that instantly another voice seemed to say, "Oh, no, it would do no good to talk to that fellow; he is the worst young man in this town. You know he was expelled from college just a short time ago." Then he said the first voice spoke again and said, "Yes, that is just the reason why you should try to help him. He is in great need." So the young man said that the argument was going on in his mind so intensely that he did not hear any more of the sermon. But he was impressed that he must do something.

As soon as the meeting closed, he reached over and touched Mr. A. on the shoulder and said, "Come on over in this little room." In a moment they were in the little room alone, and he said, "John, I have been thinking about you. I know you have had some trouble lately, but you know I had a lot of difficulties two years ago. Then I gave my heart to the Lord, and it made such a wonderful change; things have been going fine ever since. John, I was thinking about you and wishing that you would give your heart to the Lord and find the joy and peace you have never known."

He glanced up and saw tears running down John's cheeks. They talked it over, and kneeling down, John, with deep sorrow and penitence, confessed his sins and gave his heart to the Lord. And that young man, who had obeyed the voice of the Spirit and made this kindly appeal to John, told me there in my room that it was the most thrilling experience he had ever had, and he intended to make soul winning the great business of his life.

When I hear people say they would like to be soul winners, but they have to work hard and do not have time to make the necessary preparation, I think of the experience of Thomas A. Edison in producing the phonograph. He worked on the machine for some time, improving it day by day until at last it repeated a word distinctly. With unlimited patience he toiled on, and at last the day came when it would repeat every word he spoke except the letter "S." Edison worked on that machine eighteen hours a day for seven months, or 3,780 hours to make it say "S," and it said "S." Many times since hearing of this experience, I have thought, "Oh, if those who claim to be children of God would put one half the earnestness and devotion and perseverance into the work of saving the lost, how quickly God's work might be finished and the saints be gathered home."

### **Knowledge Brings Responsibility**

Another principle we need to consider in studying this subject of soul winning is our personal responsibility. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." 1 Corinthians 9:16.

Many times I read this verse casually, thinking that it applied only to the great apostle. Then I suddenly awoke to the fact that this was not written in the Word of God for Paul any more than for me and for every other disciple of Christ. Knowledge of the gospel places upon you and me the solemn obligation to pass it on to others.

I have had many experiences which have impressed this truth deeply upon my heart. I once lived in a large city where I walked about a mile to my office every morning. On my way I passed a factory where a number of blind people were employed. I always watched them with interest as they made their way down the busy street to their shop.

I want you to imagine that one night there was a cloudburst in the mountains not far away, and a mighty torrent of water came rushing down the canyon and across the city, sweeping away the bridge which we crossed every morning. As I go to my work, I am startled to find the bridge gone and a raging river where there was usually but a small stream.

At once I think of the blind people and wonder whether they know that the bridge has been swept away. I look up and see them coming, and I feel very sorry for them because they are blind and cannot

see their danger. As they come to the end of the walk and plunge over into the angry waters, I feel thankful to the Lord that I can see. Let me ask you, Could you possibly regard me as a Christian? Do you not think that God would hold me accountable for the lives of those blind people, just as surely as though I had murdered them? They were blind. I saw them approaching the river, unconscious that the bridge was gone, and I did nothing.

Suppose I had hastened out and taken a blind man by the arm, saying, "Wait a minute, friend, there has been a cloudburst in the mountains and the bridge has been washed away, so you cannot get across." He replies, "Please attend to your own business; I can take care of myself," and he passes on and plunges down to a watery grave. I stop the next one, and the next, with the same results. I pray God to help me save these people. Then a man listens to my warning; his face turns pale, and he cries out, "What, the bridge gone! Oh, I am so glad you told me. You have saved my life, and I shall never forget you." Do you not think it worth all the effort even to save one?

### **Someday We Shall Face the Record**

I was in China and a terrible famine was raging; it was known as the "year of the great famine." It was said that 42,000,000 people were facing starvation. With a physician and two missionaries I went back in the interior into the heart of that famine-stricken territory. Nothing can ever erase from my mind those awful scenes of suffering, starvation, and death. All along the streets men, women, and children were lying. It was often difficult to distinguish the living from the dead. It is appalling to see thousands of human beings, just skin and bones, with a few rags wrapped around them, lying in the streets with no help. The stench of decaying corpses was beyond description.

We went to one section of the city where 12,500 women and children occupied a compound surrounded by a high wall. Across the road about half as many men were in another enclosure. Just imagine that you were there with us, and that we had possession of a vast building, filled with hundreds of carloads of grains, vegetables, and other foods. We talk matters over and decide that since we do not know how long the famine may last, the wise course will be to keep the storehouse securely locked and guarded so that none of the supplies can be taken. All around that great building the emaciated bodies of human beings are lying, some moaning and pleading for help, while others die in silence.

Would you pursue such a course as that? I know you would not, for you would realize that God would hold you responsible for saving the lives of as many as possible while the food lasted. Does not this illustrate what the Apostle Paul had in mind? You and I have the light of God's message for these last days. We have studied the prophecies concerning Christ's coming and have seen them fulfilled, and we know that our time to witness for Him is short. All around us are thousands who are perishing for the bread of life. We have an inexhaustible supply. We need not fear to give away the living bread, for the more we give, the more our divine Master will give to us. God has entrusted to us the last appeal to a doomed world. Though we preach the gospel, we have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon us: yea, woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel.

Jesus says to us today, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." What other ambition in this world is of importance compared with the work of saving the lost? We want to be saved and have a home in the mansions above. One of the greatest joys of the redeemed through eternal ages will be found in associating with the souls to whom it was our privilege to bring the light and knowledge of our Redeemer.

So the Master says, "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." What a thrilling commission! Noble, innocent lambs going bravely out into the enemy's territory among the fierce, ugly wolves, but surrounded with such an atmosphere of love, sympathy, and unselfish interest that the

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barriers melt away, and the wolves let us introduce them to Jesus, who transforms them into lambs. Someday soon He will gather all the lambs into the heavenly fold to share its joys forever.

"It is not the one who knows the most; nor the one who says the most; nor the one who does the most; but the one who loves the most, who wins the most."

May God help us to keep our eyes on the supreme goal.

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