

## THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE FOOLISH SHEPHERD

A Sermon Preached on Thursday Evening, April 29, at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester

"And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces." Zech. 11:15, 16

We find the prophets of the Old Testament continually directed by the Holy Ghost to sustain typical characters and to perform typical acts. Thus, the prophet Hosea was commanded "to take unto him a wife of whoredoms," **Ho 1:2**, by which we are not, I think, to understand that he was to marry a woman living in that state, but a reformed character who had been living an abandoned life. So Jeremiah was directed to make bonds and yokes, and put them upon his neck **Jer 27:2**. This was a typical representation that the nations to whom the yokes were sent were to submit themselves to the king of Babylon. In a similar manner the prophet Zechariah in the text is commanded to sustain a typical character, and that of a kind the very contrary to what he really was. He was "to take unto him the instruments of a foolish shepherd," as a typical representation of such a character as should be raised up in the land, that by these visible and significant emblems a more lively and effectual representation might be given than could be expressed in words. He was not to **become** a foolish shepherd, but to **represent** one, and stand forth publicly before the people as a visible emblem of such.

But we may remark that he seems already in this chapter to have before sustained two typical characters, one that of a good shepherd, and the other that of Christ. That he was typical of the latter is most evident from what we read, verses 12, 13, "And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." This prophecy was fulfilled when Judas Iscariot betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver, and on his agony of remorse and casting them down in the temple, the potter's field was bought therewith. And that we may understand the literal meaning of the prophet's being valued at that price, we may remark that it was the customary value of a slave, and thus shadows forth, not only that Jesus was sold at the price of a slave, but that the prophet, in his character of a good shepherd, which he seems to have sustained as a representative of Christ, was estimated by the people at "the goodly price" of a slave—apt representation of the value usually put upon the services of one who labours in word and doctrine.

But we find that the prophet, before he was commanded to take unto him the instruments of a foolish shepherd, had taken two staves, each of which he had broken. It would seem that this was also a typical representation of a certain work which must be done, in order to a wise shepherd's being known as such by the poor of the flock. His first staff was "**Beauty**," which seems to me to represent figuratively the beauty of creature holiness. This staff, on which hundreds of false shepherds lean, and by which they seek to rule their flocks, he was to break asunder, typical of the breaking up of all creature beauty and fleshly holiness. And this staff was to be **visibly** broken, to show that a minister

must stand up, not in creature holiness, with sanctified visage and demure tongue, as if he in the pulpit were a saint, and the people before him were sinners, but to stand before them a ruined wretch, without help or strength, wisdom or righteousness, save in the blood and love of the Lamb. His staff "**Beauty**" must be broken before their eyes, that they may see in his heart a copy of their own, equally vile, equally base, equally deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and so shivered and shattered in his hands, that he can neither lean on it himself for support, nor rule them with it as a rod. Then the poor of the flock that waited upon him for profit and instruction, knew that it was the word of the Lord in his mouth. Man's total ruin and the Mediator's complete salvation, the thorough wreck of creature holiness, and the perfection of the Saviour's righteousness, filth, corruption, and pollution stamped upon every thought, word, and action of the sinner; and atonement, pardon, and reconciliation, stamped upon every thought, word, and work of the incarnate Son of God, was a ministry that well suited the flock of slaughter, whom the prophet was commissioned to feed. Having been slaughtered in their own consciences, the poor of the flock knew that it was the word of the Lord.

The other staff which he took, and which also he cut asunder, was named "**Bands**," or "Binders" margin, and signified, spiritually, **the breaking up of false union**. For we read, "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." Judah stood fast with the Lord, when Israel, under King Jeroboam, departed, and worshipped the golden calves that were set up in Bethel and in Dan, **1Ki 12:28,29**. Therefore we read, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints," **Ho 11:12**. And again, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet not let Judah

offend," **Ho 4:15**. The staff, then, "Bands" or "Binders," typically represents false union, unholy brotherhood, unscriptural confederacy, a mingling together of sheep and goats in one pen; a heaping up of wheat and chaff on the same floor; a joining together of faithful Judah with idolatrous Israel, on the footing of similarity of sentiments, doctrines, and ordinances, without union of spirit from Divine teaching. Here, then, is a staff which false shepherds rule their flocks by, on the sole ground of Calvinism, or baptism, or church membership, or "our faith and order," or any other human cement to unite, if possible, living stones and dead stones into one building. But this cement must be broken, "for the" living "stone shall cry out of the wall," pressed down by the dead blocking-course above, and "the" living "beam out of the timber shall answer it," **Hab 2:11**, from its place amid the rotten rafters, and the cry of the one and the echo of the other shall be, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." When, then, this staff of unholy brotherhood is broken, and no union is allowed or recognised, but that which is based upon the Spirit's work in the soul, then the poor of the flock feed together as the flock of slaughter, and know that it is the word of the Lord.

But I feel I have wandered somewhat from the text, and therefore I return to it without farther preface. The command addressed to the prophet was, "to take unto him **yet** the instruments of a foolish shepherd." There is, I think, much meaning contained in the word "**yet**," that is, "again," "once more," and I gather from it, that the staves, "Beauty" and "Bands," were also instruments of a foolish shepherd; but he was "yet," once more, still further, to take other such instruments so as to manifest more visibly and strikingly what a foolish shepherd is. By "foolish," I understand "ungodly," "unregenerate," as the word is used in other scriptures, that is, destitute of heavenly imparted wisdom,

and therefore in God's account a fool. "The **fool** hath said in his heart, there is no God." "**Fools** die for want of wisdom." "For we ourselves also were sometimes" **that is, in times past "foolish**, disobedient, deceived," &c., **Tit 3:3**. We are, therefore, forbidden to call a brother "**fool**," that is, to pronounce him unregenerate, and cut him off as destitute of spiritual life. The "foolish shepherd" is, therefore, a natural man lifted up by education, pride, covetousness, or presumption, into a pulpit, and devoid of spiritual illumination and heavenly wisdom. He has certain instruments which the prophet was to take as emblems of his character. What they were the Holy Ghost has not here informed us, but as we may gather them from other parts of Scripture, I shall take the liberty to put them into his hand.

The first instrument and badge of this foolish shepherd, then, shall be a mask. The instrument itself, perhaps, might not be known to the Jews, though well known to the Greeks and Romans; but the thing which it represents, viz., deceit and imposture, was as old as the times of Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians, who withstood Moses, **2Ti 3:8**, flourished mightily at the court of Ahab, in the days of honest Micaiah, **2Ch 18:5**, and sadly plagued poor Jeremiah, **Jeremiah 28:10,11 Jer 29:26,27**. Paul speaks of this when he said, "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,**" **2Co 11:13**. So we read, that the prophets shall no more "wear a rough garment to deceive," **Zec 13:4**. To wear a mask is to play a false part, to assume a fictitious character, to be a stage-player, for in ancient times the actors never appeared but in masks, the features of which imitated the persons whom they represented. Thus this foolish shepherd makes the pulpit his stage, his holy countenance being his mask, and his false zeal, loud speech, and impassioned rant

his wardrobe; and thus, by craft and cunning, he entangles the simple in his net.

The next instrument which I shall put into his hand shall be a **sceptre**—the badge of authority and power, to show that he is "a lord over God's heritage," **1Pe 5:3**, and "rules the flock with force and cruelty," **Eze 34:4**. The third instrument shall be a **pair of sharp shears**, for we read that "they clothe themselves with the wool," **Eze 34:3**, and of course he must have something to get the wool off with. Not that the minister is not to have an honourable and sufficient maintenance, for "who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof, or, who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?." **1Co 9:7**. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." But to receive what is voluntarily given is a different thing from clipping off as much wool as possible, or cutting so close as to fetch blood, and take off a bit of the skin. His fourth instrument shall be a long whip, that shall reach to every corner of the pen, to flog all that stir up the enmity of his carnal mind, by what he calls a discontented spirit, and by having imbibed what he terms Antinomian and dangerous principles. Woe to all that will not bow down to his authority, or submit themselves to his instruction. Thus to offend his dignity will bring the long whip upon the transgressor's shoulders. As the apostle says, "Ye suffer if a man **that is, a minister** bring you into bondage, if **a man smite you on the face**," **2Co 11:20**. So "Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, smote Micaiah on the cheek," **1Ki 22:24**; and thus, though protected by law and moral decency from being now smitten "with the fist of wickedness," the exercised children of God still have to suffer from "the scourge of the tongue." His fifth and last instrument shall be **a bow and a quiver full of arrows**, to reach those at a distance who are beyond the lash of the whip. The arrow is for those at a distance, the

whip for those that are near; the latter is plied within the chapel walls, the former is aimed at those who are without them. These arrows are bitter words, as the Scriptures speak, "who wet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect; suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not," **Ps 64:3,4**. And again, "they bend their tongues like their bow for lies;" "their tongue is an arrow shot out," **Jer 9:3,8**. And against whom are these arrows chiefly aimed? At the tried, tempted, and exercised; at those who are sighing and mourning over guilt and corruption; at those who are harassed with many doubts and fears; at those who tremble at God's word, and at times are almost consumed with terrors. All who contend for the power of vital godliness, who "have changes," **Ps 55:19**, who cannot do without a feeling religion, who cannot rest upon doctrines and the letter of truth without the experience of them, and who boldly show their colours as standing in the ranks of vital, spiritual, experimental truth, especially if they be standard-bearers, must expect to be marks for those envenomed arrows.

Thus far for "**the instruments** of the foolish shepherd," the badges and insignia of his office, the emblems and visible signs by which he is at once to be recognised. But we will now come to his character which the Holy Ghost has here drawn; and as we learn much by contraries, it will afford us an opportunity of seeing from the contrast what the wise shepherd is. The blessed Spirit has given four **negative** and two **positive** marks, that is, he has described four things which the foolish shepherd does not, and two things which he does. The wise shepherd, therefore, will be his exact contrary; and there will be four things which he does, and two things which he does not. These four things are, that the foolish shepherd "does not visit those that be cut off, does

not seek the young one, does not heal that that is broken, does not feed that that standeth still." The two things that he does are, "he eats the flesh of the fat"—"and tears their claws in pieces."

The Lord says, "I will raise up a shepherd," that is, He will in his providence, and as an act of his judicial displeasure, raise up such a one as shall be a model and pattern of what a foolish shepherd is. Thus we read, "I will choose their delusions," **Isa 66:4**; and "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie," **2Th 2:11**. As an act of judicial displeasure, in order to punish the people who turned their ears away from the true prophets, the Lord would send them one of a different stamp.

1. Now, the first thing said of this foolish shepherd is, that "he shall not visit those that be cut off." Who are these characters here said to be "cut off?" They are the same whose mournful complaint we hear, **Eze 37:11**, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts." That is, they are such as by a work of the law in their consciences are cut off from all creature righteousness, all false refuges, all deceitful hopes and rotten props, from finding any good in self, or resting on the testimony of man. We read, **Ro 11:24**, of the branch being cut out of the wild olive tree, and being grafted into the good olive tree, which is a striking figure of the way in which a vessel of mercy is cut off from the original stock, and grafted into Christ by way of manifested union. The law working wrath, guilt, condemnation, and fear, is the knife in the hands of the heavenly husbandman that cuts the scion clean out and clean off from the original stock; and before this bleeding branch can be inserted into the good olive tree, it must lie upon the ground with all its native sap oozing and draining away. So must a soul lie helpless and often well nigh hopeless, until



the heavenly husbandman takes up this bleeding branch, and inserts it into Christ, by way of manifested union. Then it "partakes of the root and fatness of the olive-tree," spiritual grafting differing from natural grafting in this, that in natural grafting the fruitful scion is inserted into the wild stock, but in spiritual grafting the wild scion is inserted into the fruitful stock. But in both this grand truth holds that there are two distinct and successive processes, the entire disunion from the old stock, and the entire union with the new.

But the margin gives another rendering, "those that be hidden." The people of God are a hidden people. They are, therefore, called, **Ps 83:3**, God's "hidden ones;" that is, not merely hidden in his hand from eternity, and hidden in the secret of his presence from the pride of man, **Ps 31:20**, but hidden from general view and observation. They are not those who blaze forth in a false glare of sparkling profession, nor rush presumptuously forward to take the topmost room, but through a deep sense of spiritual poverty, need, guilt, and pollution, are fain to hide themselves from all but a heart-searching God. Thus they "hide the word of God in their heart," **Ps 119:11**; and the word of God is in them like the leaven in the three measures of meal, **Mt 13:33**, hid from the general eye, but working powerfully in secret. These cut off, or hidden ones, then, the foolish shepherd "does not visit." I do not understand by this word "visit," a going about from house to house. The old Geneva translation reads, "shall not look for." In these visits, so called, there is often much more gossip and slander than unction and power, more unprofitable conversation than speech seasoned with salt, and we often separate more burdened than benefited. The figure is clearly taken from a shepherd taking his rounds through the fold, and examining each sheep as they are there collected together. The sheep are not scattered one in one field and one in another, but gathered into one fold, so

as to be all in one place under his eye. He visits them, then, when he goes through the fold, and stops to examine with particular attention every one that needs his care. So, spiritually, the pastor best visits his flock when they are all assembled before him, and he takes a view of them from the pulpit, as looking up to him for food and instruction. He visits the cut off when he comes down to their exercises, trials, and temptations, when he does not pass them by, but drops such words of encouragement and consolation as are suitable to their case. But this the foolish shepherd does not. He may, indeed, be most diligent in what is called visiting from house to house, and may fly about on wings of false zeal, or run through a weekly round of religious tea-drinkings, and after all, be only one of those who "creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins." But he never visits from the pulpit those that are cut off in their feelings from eternal life. Nay, he only shoots at and wounds such. "Away with your doubts and fears. Don't stand poring over your corruptions. Look to Jesus, take food at his word, lay hold of the promises. Religion is not gloom and melancholy, but joy and peace." Thus the foolish shepherd wounds and lacerates tender consciences, instead of binding them up. But the wise shepherd finds out, and visits such by describing the feelings of a cut off soul, be, himself, having experimentally passed through it; and by tracing out his experience and removing his stumbling-stones, is often blessed to his deliverance, or at least to his consolation. My congregation lies so widely scattered, some at twelve and fourteen miles distance, that what with that, and what with my weak health, I could not possibly visit all my spiritual hearers personally, but the desire of my heart is to visit them from the pulpit, by going round to the cases of all and each.

**"Neither shall seek the young one."** This is the second black mark with which the Holy Ghost has stamped a foolish

shepherd. This "young one" is, doubtless, one of the "newborn babes" spoken of, **1Pe 2:2**, who are said to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." The distinctive mark of these is, that they "have tasted that the Lord is gracious." They are not such as are fully delivered into gospel liberty. They have **tasted**, not fully drunk; have had a crumb and a drop, but not been brought to the banquet and the fountain. The foolish shepherd, then, does not seek "the young one." With him it is all presumptuous confidence and unwavering assurance, and he that does not stand upon this high mountain, he believes to have no standing at all. The early bloom of faith, hope, and love, when the green buds push into leaf and flower, the spring-time of the soul, like the present smiling season, when all is bright and flourishing, the days of our spiritual youth, when the secret of God was upon our tabernacle, when there was a spirit of prayer, and an appetite for the word, and a zeal for God's glory, and a pure affection to his family,—of this sweet, though usually short season, the foolish shepherd knows nothing. He leaped into full assurance at once, and became a man without passing through the stages of infancy and youth. Thus this "young one" he never seeks. He knows nothing of his feelings, and, therefore, cannot describe his case. He has no milk for such babes, nor can he condescend to those of such low estate. But the wise shepherd seeks out such. He knows just where they are; both their hopes and their fears, their standing and their dangers. Thus, as he goes his rounds through his flock, he seeks to trace out the work of grace in such, neither damping their hopes, nor pushing them beyond their real standing, strengthening all their spiritual encouragements, and yet not thrusting them presumptuously forward; keeping them among the lambs, and not sorting them out among the sturdy rams and travailing ewes. He will seek to warn such against trifling with convictions, being lifted up with pride, giving heed to

every plausible professor, being entangled in the snares of Satan, and the lusts of the flesh, running here and there with their comforts, till they have all dribbled away; and, as a tender nursing father, he will counsel and instruct them to the utmost of his ability of all the dangers and difficulties that beset their path.

The third **positive** dark mark against this foolish shepherd is, that he does not **heal that that is broken**. I think that we have in these different characters mentioned in the verse successive steps of experience. We have, first, **the cut off**, that is, those who are under a sentence of guilt and condemnation; then "**the young one**;" those that, by some sweet discovery of his love, have tasted that the Lord is gracious: and now we come to "**the broken**;" these seem to represent those that have lost their first love, that have inwardly backslidden from their God, that have become entangled in some snare spread for their feet, that have been drawn aside into worldliness, carnality, and pride, and so have swerved from the simplicity of the gospel, from the fervour of their warm affections, from the sincerity of filial obedience, and from their submissive yielding themselves up to be moulded as clay by the hands of the heavenly potter. Thus, their affections, hopes, and desires, their simplicity and godly sincerity, their spiritual comeliness and uprightness, seem marred and defaced. Their vigorous health is broken; and they, instead of being sprightly lambs cropping the tenderest foliage, and bounding up and down the fold, have become sickly and diseased. They are now where Job describes himself to be—"My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart" **Job 17:11**. Thus, their **purposes** of living to God's glory, of loving him with pure affection, of walking with him in communion, of serving him with pure obedience, are all broken and defaced. Their "**judgment, too, is broken**," as is said of Ephraim, **Ho 5:11**. Not that

they doubt the truth and reality of the doctrines of grace, but their judgments respecting themselves, where they are in the divine life, their own state before God, the reality of their own experience, the certainty of their own salvation—in these deep soul-matters they are broken in any judgment which they can form concerning themselves. In a word, all their religion seems broken up, and they themselves broken down. Now, this broken sheep the foolish shepherd never instrumentally heals. He knows neither the disease nor the suitable remedy. **His** judgment has never been broken, for, knowing the truth clearly in the letter, no confusion takes place in his head, the seat of all his religion. His arms are not broken, for he can always take God at his word; his legs are not broken, for he can run when and where he will, though God has never sent him; his back is not broken, for he still stands upright, and has never put his mouth in the dust; and his heart is not broken, for the hammer of God's word has never yet fallen upon that rock, **Jer 23:29**. Thus, he can never instrumentally heal that that is broken. But the wise shepherd has been more or less taught these lessons by painful experience. He has been broken as a vessel in which God seemed to have no pleasure, and been in some measure bound up. Therefore he can bring suitable remedies for the broken of the flock. The atoning blood of the Saviour, the tender compassions of his bosom, his glorious justifying righteousness, the freeness of grace super-abounding over the aboundings of sin, the unchangeableness of God's mercy and love—these, and similar remedies, the wise shepherd brings before the broken of the flock, and when divinely applied they heal his wounds.

But we come to the fourth thing which the foolish shepherd does not. "He feedeth not that **that standeth still**." Some of the Lord's quickened family are reduced to such straits in soul experience, as to be able to move neither forward nor

backward. They dare not go forward, lest they rush into presumption; they dare not fall backward, lest they tumble headlong into despair. Nor dare they turn to the right hand nor to the left, lest they swerve from the king's highway. Thus they are forced to stand still, not from cowardice, not from sloth, not from unwillingness, but from sheer inability to move. They are **cast**, and cannot get upon their legs. Now to this sheep food is to be brought. He is not to be kicked up as lazy, nor struck with the crook as stubborn, nor thrown over the hurdles as dead, but he is to be "fed." Nor are docks, nettles, and thistles to be brought to him, but as Agur prayed, "food, **convenient** for him," that is, food suitable to his state and condition. The tenderest herbage, and the softest and clearest water is to be brought to him, not that trodden down and fouled with the feet of the fat and the strong, **Eze 34:18**, but "the latter growth" **that is, the spring crop, the Hebrews beginning the year in the autumn**, "after the king's mowings," **Am 7:1**. But the foolish shepherd has no food for him that standeth still. If the sheep cannot get its own living, he will not bring food to what he calls "a lazy Antinomian," though he has no eyes to distinguish sickness from sloth, spiritual inability from carnal unwillingness, and the standing still through godly fear from death in sin.

Such are the four **negative** marks of a foolish shepherd—that is, the things which he does **not** do. But there are added by the Holy Ghost two **positive** marks, that is, there are two things which he **does** do. "He shall eat the flesh of the fat," that is, he shall not take that which comes, that which is offered him, but he must go through the flock, and select the fattest for his own eating. The priest's joints were the breast and the shoulder. **Ex 29:27,28**, not the leg and the loin. He was to have good food, and enough food, but not the fattest and best joint of the whole. The word of God sanctions an

honourable and competent maintenance for a minister, but it is to be freely and voluntarily given. But the foolish shepherd manifests a grasping, covetous, insatiable spirit. He seeks not the flock but the fleece, and he will sacrifice truth, mangle the gospel, and preach to please professors, with the sole end of filling his own pocket. To take thankfully what is given freely is one thing; to be dissatisfied with what is given, and be clamorous for more, is another. To eat the flesh is allowable, to grasp after the flesh of the fat is discreditable; to feed the flock as a shepherd, and eat of the milk thereof, **1Co 9:7**, is honourable; to feed the flock as a grazer is disgraceful. "And shall tear their claws in pieces." This is the second positive mark of a foolish shepherd. Sheep, then, have claws! Aye, surely, and some of us have been sorely scratched by them. And these claws, too, they will sometimes exercise upon the shepherd. When, then, the foolish shepherd feels the scratch of these claws, he puts forth all his strength, and tears them in pieces. He does not rule with kindness and gentleness; he does not guide them with the sweet constraints of love and affection, but first starves the living family, and then if they do but scratch him with their claws, he rends them in pieces. Their **claws** are the objects of his attack—that is, he lays hold of any expressions of theirs which have been directed against him, any severe remarks made upon him, any complaints of his ministry, any doubts of his Christianity, any objections to his Arminianism, any censures of his conduct. These claws have scratched him, and wounded his pride and consequence. He must, therefore, retaliate; and these claws he will lay hold of, seizing every word that has been said against him or his ministry, and rend them in pieces, as manifesting, he says, a bitter and unchristian spirit. A wise shepherd will not act thus. He will not return blow for blow, nor stripe for stripe. If scratched by the claws of some of his sheep, he will rather bear it in silence than make divisions and contentions, and

rend the flock asunder. He will not take up every harsh thing said against himself or his ministry, nor be jealous of his own honour and dignity, bringing forward into the pulpit his own cause and glory instead of the cause of God and the glory of Christ; but will be more or less actuated by the spirit of Him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.

We see, then, drawn by the pen of the Holy Ghost, the marks of the foolish and wise shepherd. Keep them in your eye. You are commanded to try the spirits whether they be of God. You are to be the judges of every minister who comes as an ambassador from the Lord. Examine him well, scan his features carefully, weigh him accurately. God has given you his portrait—compare the man and his likeness. Has he, then, the marks for or against? Does he visit the cut off, does he seek the young one, does he heal the broken, does he feed that that standeth still? If he does not agree with these four essentials, he is a foolish shepherd, be he what he may.

Again, does "he eat the flesh of the fat, and rend their claws in pieces?" Is he covetous and contentious; grasping and quarrelsome; a flatterer of the rich, and an oppressor of the poor; a Demas and a Diotrephes? Then is he a foolish shepherd, be he in the church or in the chapel, in robes of priestly dignity, or ungowned plainness. Never mind his holy countenance and solemn demeanour, his grey hairs and silvery tongue; these are but the rough garment to deceive. Watch his ministry and his actions. Look at him in the pulpit and out of it. Turn him about and look at both sides, the negative marks and the positive, what he is not, and what he is.

My friends, I have spoken these things this evening as a disinterested person, not with a view to exalt myself, for I assure you, I am often tried as to my call to the ministry,



though not without, at times, both inward and outward testimonies, nor to aim at any particular minister or ministers. You are placed in peculiar circumstances from the want of a stated minister, and being so much in the habit of hearing different supplies at this and other chapels.

I have sought, then, to lay before you the features of a wise and foolish shepherd, as drawn by the blessed Spirit. Try by them all whom you hear. Let not pretensions suffice. Examine their credentials; put them into the scales; watch their words; and, above all, look narrowly at their spirit. And if they come not up to, or vary from the marks of a wise shepherd; still more, if they tally precisely with the character here given of a foolish shepherd, unceremoniously reject them. God has not sent them; and in rejecting them you act by his authority, and walk in obedience to his word. May he give us eyes to see, hands to act, and feet to walk, in strict accordance with his own unerring testimony.