

The Blessedness of Being Christ's Sheep
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John 10:27-30
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the tenth chapter of John, John 10. We'll be looking at Verses 27-30 this morning. I want to remind you of the setting of these words of Jesus. We've learned earlier in the passage which we're going to read, we learned that it is at the *Feast of Dedication*. That is the feast that commemorates the rededication of the temple after its defilement by the Gentiles under Antiochus Epiphanies. We're also told that it is winter, that there is a chill in the air. It is interesting to ponder why John tells us that. Partly, maybe just to tell us why Jesus is teaching in Solomon's Portico, that is the porch area of the temple. Maybe it is raining, or it is windy, but perhaps he also includes that to tell us that there is definitely a chill in the response of the people to Jesus' message and ministry.

What we see as we walk with John through the life of Christ, here we are in December before His crucifixion in March/April, just three or four months before, and what we see is growing opposition, that mounting opposition, increasingly intense, rejection of His ministry. In the face of that mounting opposition and intense rejection, Jesus addresses the unbelieving multitude here in John 10. As He addresses His willful, unbelieving opponents, we're struck and surprised by what He says. We noted last time that one of the stunning elements of Jesus' response to the unbeliever is that He confronts them directly with the mysteries of divine election and particular redemption. We noted that this wasn't just to, it was certainly to glorify God and to honor Him, but it is also to humble their proud hearts, to help them see the profundity of their need. That is why God has given those things to be preached, and to be proclaimed. Even the mystery of election, "The reason you don't believe is because you are not of My sheep."

The next few statements, we're going to look at today, Verses 27-30, He continues to surprise us because we would expect that Jesus would just be done with this crowd. They are not listening, they are hardened. But what He does is He invites these spiritual ruffians into, as it were, the family room of His house to look into the inner workings of the divine family. Maybe a better, more apt way to say that is He invites them look into the sheepfold. He says, "You're not one of my sheep, but let Me now tell you about My sheep. I want to show you the glory of what it is to be one of My sheep." That is really what happens in these verses. That is the main point. In fact, the title of the message is 'The Blessedness of Being Christ's Sheep'. In a sense He says, "Look in the sheepfold, behold how happy and blessed are My

sheep.” I think here again He is reaching out to them, very much like what Paul says in Romans 11:11, where he speaks of the hardening of the Jews, and God’s work among the Gentiles. That the glory of God is among the Gentiles, that salvation has come to the Gentiles. Why? To make the Jews jealous. What He’s doing in these verses is He is trying to revoke these hardened ruffians, these people in the spiritual dark. He is trying to provoke them to jealousy, that they might want what the believer has. Here in this, even though He is exalting His glory, the glory of God’s sovereignty, the glory of election, and His plan, even in that is a gracious, merciful invitation. “Behold the blessedness of my sheep.” We’re going to note that there are five blessings, or five aspects of this blessedness, but let’s hear the text. We’ll read John 10:22-30.

John 10:22-30 ~ At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. 24 The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30 I and the Father are one.”

Let’s pray together.

Father, we ask that You might now grant us illumination, that You might enlighten our minds, and enlighten our hearts with the power of Your word, by the ministry of Your Holy Spirit. That we might see the glory of Christ and the glory of what He’s done more clearly. And that You might make us those who already are Your sheep today, to be more overjoyed and in awe at what You’ve done. And for those that are not, that You might even as You willed, provoke them to jealousy, that they might today humble themselves before You, and by Your grace, open their hearts to salvation. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

‘The Blessedness of Being Christ’s Sheep’. Jesus says, “Look at My sheep,” and there are five blessings that I want us to focus on this morning.

1) “They hear My voice.”

The first blessing is that in Verse 27, the first part, *My sheep hear My voice*, the first blessing is, “They hear My voice.” They are able to hear. This is a distinguishing mark that shows the true Christian from the false professor. The one who professes Christ but does not possess Christ. The difference is, the true sheep hear, “They hear My voice.” They’ve been granted. They have ears to hear.

I mentioned last time that there are a number of times in the New Testament that you hear this expression. Jesus, seven times in the Gospel says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Seven more times in Revelation, actually eight times total, but seven times in the letters to the churches. Remember Jesus’ letters to the churches in Revelation, each of them is punctuated near the end with this statement: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” In that is the teaching that the unregenerate heart cannot hear what God has to say, not understand. They cannot hear in truth what God has to say. It is completely consistent with what Jesus has been saying in John. Remember what He said to Nicodemus, the man who knew so much Scripture, the man who Jesus said, “You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things?” Remember one of the first things He said to Nicodemus? “Nicodemus, except you are born again you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Implicitly, “You don’t have eyes to see until you are born again.” Here we see, “You don’t have ears to hear unless you are born again.” God has to work to grant you eyes to see and ears to hear.

In fact, I want to take you back to one of the passages in Matthew where Jesus says this statement, “He who has ears to hear.” Matthew 13, turn back there, we want to look at several verses there. You have this doctrine of what regeneration does in the heart. Matthew 13:9, He has just finished telling the story, or the *Parable of the Sower*, and He ends it, punctuates it with statement, Verse 9:

Matthew 13:9-10 ~ He who has ears, let him hear.” And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

He has a private conversation now with the disciples. “Why do You speak to the multitude in parables? Why did Jesus tell the story about a man who goes out to sow, and he sows seed, and some falls on the wayside, some falls on rocky soil, some falls on thorny soil, some falls on good soil? What is this all about? Why do you speak this way?” Look at Verse 11, Jesus’ answer:

Matthew 13:11 ~ Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

The sovereignty of God.

Matthew 13:12-13 ~ For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

They see, but they don't see. They hear, but they don't hear because they cannot understand. He goes on to say:

Matthew 13:14-15 ~

In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

***‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;
YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;
15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,
WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,***

Now here you see the willfulness. The reason they don't see, it is also personal responsibility. The unbeliever doesn't want to see, he doesn't want to hear.

Matthew 13:15 ~

***OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,
HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,
AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’***

But look at this, Verse 16:

Matthew 13:16-17 ~ But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17 For truly I say to you that many prophets and

righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

That blessedness is upon us today, for we see what the prophets longed to see, and we hear, if you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you hear and see what the prophets longed to see and hear.

The Christian truly hears Jesus' voice, the word of God. And where do you hear the voice Jesus? You hear the voice of Jesus in the word of God, in the word of Christ, the book, the Bible. It doesn't mean that you have a mystical encounter and you just have all these impressions. That is not what this is talking about. The Bible is saying here in John 10 that the sheep hear His voice. And where do you hear His voice? You hear His voice in the word of Christ. This book that is all about Him from Genesis to Revelation. Remember He said to the Pharisees earlier in John 5, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have life, but these they are that testify of me." He says the whole Old Testament speaks about Me. So, where do you learn about Jesus? Where do you know Jesus? In the Bible.

But the Christian is the person who truly understands, he hears, and he really hears. That means that the word is not a book of principles to the Christian. Christianity is not just merely a way of life, over against all the other ways of life out there. The Christian understands with his heart. It is not that he accepts just the abstract ideas of the Bible, but he sees the Bible, he sees the Scripture as personal revelation. That when Scripture speaks, Jesus speaks. The commands are not a list of impersonal 'do's' and 'don'ts', a rule book, but a personal, relational, loving instruction. It is a command, not a suggestion because the shepherd doesn't just suggest, but it is personal, and it is loving, and it is intimate. So we don't just dismiss the ideas that we don't like. "I just don't like that." No, Jesus is speaking, and the Christian is the one whose disposition has been changed. He doesn't do it perfectly, he still has the old man. He finds himself rebelling at points on a daily basis, but the general direction of his heart and life is to want to put himself under the word of Christ, and increasingly, over time, he does so because he hears. When he hears, as I said, it is not an impersonal book of 'do's' and 'don'ts', there is something sweet about it. That is what David understood when he said, in Psalm 19, that "It is sweeter than the honeycomb. Your word, Your law, it is not a list and rule book, it is the sweetness of Your voice.

I remember when my grandfather was, before he died he had throat cancer, and for the last I want to say five years of his life, it was something like five years, he

never spoke. He had surgery and couldn't speak anymore, and we still spent a lot of time with him. I talked to him, I shared a lot of Scripture with him in the last months of his life, and encouraged him. He became increasingly helpless, but one of the things that I remember regretting was I just didn't hear his voice, Macky didn't get to hear his voice. There is something sweet about the human voice. The voice is intimacy. I recognize that voice. When you pick up the phone and someone says, "Hello," and you hear the, "Hello," on the other end. Nowadays, of course, we're robbed because it tells you who is on the phone. In the old days you never knew. "Hello, who is this?" You know? In some ways that is good, isn't it? You can tell the sales calls when they come in. "I know who you are. I don't want to talk to you. At least not about what you want to talk about." But there is a sweetness to His voice and the Scripture is the personal voice of Jesus. Jesus is speaking, when we hear His commands there is a sweetness about it, there is a beauty about it, there is a delight in it. This is what He is saying, "They hear My voice, just like the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, and know that voice, and distinguish that voice."

Here in John 10, He said in Verse 3:

John 10:3 ~ the sheep hear His voice,...

In Verse 16:

John 10:16 ~ I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice;

And Verse 5 though, He says:

John 10:5 ~ A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

You see the intimacy of that? They know the voice of Jesus, they hear Him, they can hear His voice among all the voices around, and the sheep, over time, are following Jesus. Now this is interesting because there are a lot of voices that claim to speak for Jesus, and the idea is that the true follower of Jesus will over time discern the errant voices, and will be following Christ. This is true of people who get saved in false churches. I mean, the Roman Catholic Church has denied the Gospel and did for centuries, but made it official in the Council of Trent in 1545, they denied the way of salvation therefore they became a false church. Yet there are Christians within, a small number, who are saved not by the fault of the church,

but by the power of God. When they are saved, and you can run into some of these people. What do you do? You encourage them to follow Jesus. Encourage them to be in the word. Be in the word without your Catholic catechism. Be in the word. Be in the word. And even if they don't come out right away, they will if they are truly His. In His time they will come out because they don't hear His voice there. They want to go where they hear His voice if they are truly His sheep. It is something that is unique and different with every person, but that is the principle, they hear His voice, and there is a sweetness about it. So the first thing, the blessedness of being one of Christ's sheep, the blessedness of being a sheep is that you hear, you hear His voice.

2) "They are known by Me."

The second thing He says, in Verse 27, is: "I know them." So the first one, "They hear My voice." The second, "They are known by Me and I know them." Here is the place where the text is more emphatic in the Greek than it comes out in the English. It is one of those places where the pronoun is added in. I've noted this a number of times, with all of the 'I AM' sayings, '*ego ami*'. Remember if you've been with us before, we've talked about how in Greek the pronoun is already there in the verb, it's supplied. The verb has number and person already in it, so it tells you the pronoun. He, she, or if it tells you, you plural, you singular, all that is in the pronoun. Here in the pronoun, I mean in the verb the pronoun is already there, but He adds in an, "And I," another, "I." Pronoun, '*ego*' is there again, it is a contracted form in this place, but it means, "And I Myself know them." That is the force. He adds the pronoun in to say, "I Myself know them. The blessing of being one of My sheep is that I Myself know the sheep." The mark of the true believer is he's known by Jesus. The blessing of a true believer is that he is known by Jesus. One of the most horrible things in the world that anyone can ever hear is those words that Jesus says He will speak to those in the last day, when He says, "Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness, I never knew you." But for the believer, He knows us.

He is picking up on the imagery. I mentioned how John, Verses 22 and following to 39, happen in December at the *Feast of Dedication*. The first 21 verses of John 10, before our present passage, happened at the *Feast of Tabernacles* in October/November, so it has been a couple of months of time that has elapsed. It is helpful to remember that in the sovereignty of God, and the providence of God, John didn't include any other events between 10:1-21, and 10:22-39. Lots of things were happening, but he didn't, and the reason he didn't is because he wants us to read the whole *Good Shepherd Discourse* together so that when Jesus comes to

these climactic statements later in the chapter, we are seeing them right after we read the other stuff. So when He says, in Verse 27, “I know them,” we have, ringing in our ears, reading it in context what He said in Verse 3 about the shepherd of the sheep.

John 10:3 ~ To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

What does it mean that He knows you? He calls you by name. In fact, one thing that I want to add too, these first four blessings, the verbs in each one of them are present tense, Greek present tense. It implies continuous, ongoing action. “They are hearing My voice.” “I am knowing them.” That is the force. “I am knowing them.” In fact, this word translated ‘know’, there are two different words translated k-n-o-w in the New Testament. Know for knowledge. The other implies an intuitive knowledge, this implies an acquired knowledge. Now that is instructive because the intuitive knowledge means that, “I have already come to know. I know it. It is settled.” But the word He uses here communicates an ongoing process of knowing. Now that is really something because God already knows everything about you, doesn’t He? He’s not learning, it’s not like He’s surprised, “Wow, I didn’t know that about Ty or Ted.” He never is surprised by that, but He uses this word to say, “But please don’t think of it the way you would think of it,” because what we think is that we get to know something, and “I already know that.” You may come to a Bible study, or to a sermon, “Well, I already know that.” “We’re going to talk about something...” “I already know this.” Well we should never be that way anyway when we come to the word of God, but we can be that way. “Oh, I know Him. I know that. Yeah, I’ve already seen that. I’ve heard that so don’t bother me with it right now.” Jesus never is like that about you. “Yeah, I already know what is going on with him, don’t bother me with that.” No, He is knowing you right now. The infinite Christ, who is omniscient, and omnipotent, and omnipresent, is knowing you at every moment of your life. He is engaged. That is what He is saying. “I am knowing them.” That is the blessing of being His sheep because you have a relationship with the Shepherd that is ongoing, personal, and intimate. You haven’t just become one of His followers. You are not just a soldier in the army. You are that, but it’s not merely that. You are one of His precious sheep that He is shepherding, and aware of, and watching, and leading, and continually brooding over so that you may progress. That is the glory of what it means to be one of His sheep. He expands, I said let’s look back at the previous passage because He puts it together for a good reason. Look at Verse 14:

John 10:14 ~ I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,

And then He says, in Verse 15:

John 10:15 ~ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father;...

Wow! “I know you like I know My Father.” How does He know His Father? Just the words of John’s Gospel, what He says in John. “You know I don’t do anything of My own. What I see the Father doing, that I do.” Jesus’ ministry, even though He is infinite, and He’s equal to God in power and glory, the nature of the Trinity is such that Jesus is submitting to the Father. The Father is sending the Son. He is submitted to the Father though they are equal in power and glory. This is the nature of the Trinity. So He says, “I live My life in such a way that I’m continually looking at the Father. Whatever He is doing, I’m doing. I’m following Him. I never take My eyes off the Father, for it is My food and My drink to do the will of Him who sent me. There is never a moment when I think, ‘Yeah, I’ve already got that, Lord. I don’t need to talk to You right now. I’m busy.’” No, He’s always looking at the Father. He says, “In the same way I love Him, that is how I love you.” He is looking at you every moment too, if you are His. Isn’t that amazing? If we know ourselves at all, we know how insignificant we are. We know how short our lives are. What would God want with us? Yet it is the nature of our redeeming God to be so intimately involved with you, He wants to know you, and you to know Him. Who would not want that? How superior is this to every other religion? These people trying to get into nothingness, and the oneness, and lose yourself in the oneness. Christianity is not like that. You don’t lose yourself, God loves you personally and calls you by name. You and I who sinned, and rebelled against Him, and hated Him. He loves and treasures like that. “My sheep hear My voice. My sheep are known by Me.”

3) “My sheep follow Me.”

Thirdly, “My sheep follow Me. They follow Me.” Verse 27:

John 10:27 ~ ... and they follow Me;

It is not just that they hear, it’s about what they do with what they hear, if they obey the word. They hear the word and they obey the word. Here again, present tense continuous action. “They are hearing My voice. They are being known by Me. They are following Me.” Jesus is our Shepherd, He is speaking to us

continually, He is knowing us. He doesn't speak and tell us things not knowing all the circumstances. He knows everything about what is going on in our lives, and He is speaking to us exactly what we need to know through His perfect word, and He is saying, "Follow Me," and He gives us grace to follow Him continually. This pictures a living and active relationship. Here the word *'follow'* means to attend to. The verb actually comes from a noun which means attendant, but the etymology actually goes back to the idea of a road. It means to be an attendant on the road, to be attending to someone on a journey. So you're on a journey, you're on the road, and you're attending to the one you're following. You're not reading your own map. You're not reading your own books about where you want to go.

Travel guides are pretty neat, aren't they? I think now you can do it online, but anyway, you're not reading your travel guide. You're not planning your trip. You're just attending to the one you're following, because to be a Christian, what is the essence of being a Christian? What is the thing that Jesus says about being a Christian? It is about making a decision, repenting and believing. Yes it is. Absolutely, but it's not just that. What did Jesus always say when He called His disciples? What is a disciple? "Come follow Me." That's the invitation. It's not, "Come make a decision for Me and live how you want to live. Come make a decision for Me, and do whatever you want to do, and go wherever you want to go." No, "Come follow Me." This means that the true follower of Christ hears and he now has a new agenda for his life. The true Christian does not go where he wants to go, but he goes where Jesus wants to go. That's the number one issue. You no longer are a leader. You're a follower, and when you're a dumb sheep like us, it's good to be a follower. We need a leader. We need a Shepherd, and we have a Shepherd that not only is willing to lead us but who loves us and knows us. "They follow Me." What a blessing.

The whole world's trying to figure out life. What's life about? Where do I go? What do I do? The answer is to follow Jesus. Know and love and follow Jesus. If you will attend to Jesus, He will take care of every step along the way. Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. That image is of the foot lamps that they used to use. They didn't have flashlights of course. They had candlelight lamps and they'd take a step, and they could see for the next step. Then they'd take the next step and they could see for the next step. That way they wouldn't step on a snake or fall off a cliff. They had to walk kind of carefully, because you had to be ready to stop, too, but you can see one step ahead. That's the way God leads, but again, the Christian life is a relationship. We are in the word relationally. "Jesus, I'm in Your word now. I want to know You. I want to follow You. I want to love You. Show me Your will for me." And He doesn't give us a map and say, "Here are today's

instructions. Do these things.” No, it’s a living relationship throughout the day, where we’re looking at Christ. We’re attending to Him. “They follow Me. They are hearing Me. They are being known by Me. They are following Me.”

4) “They are receiving eternal life from Me.”

That’s the blessedness of being a sheep. He says:

John 10:28 ~ and I give eternal life to them,...

Here again this is another place where you have that same construction. There is the pronoun there in this sentence as well. “I Myself give eternal life to them.” So this is the flow of the passage. “You do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep are hearing My voice, and I Myself am knowing them, and they are following Me, and I Myself am giving them eternal life.” It’s the present tense again. “I’m giving them.” It’s not, “I have given.” It’s not, “When they die I will give.” It is, “I am giving them eternal life.” That means they’re getting it right now. “They are possessing it right now, because I’m giving it right now, and I keep on giving it to them. I Myself give them eternal life.” The blessing of the sheep is the personal involvement of the Shepherd. “I Myself. I haven’t entrusted it to angels. Angels could have done it. I could have told them how to do it, but that’s not My nature. I Myself am involved with my sheep.”

That’s the nature of God. And what does He give us? He gives us eternal life. Let’s think about this for a moment. We need to first of all think about the fact that He gives us life. “They are receiving eternal life from Me. They’re receiving life from Me.” Life is more than existence. It doesn’t mean that you’re going to exist eternally. In fact, the reality is that every human being is going to exist eternally. Every human being will exist forever. They will either exist in life or they will exist in a perpetual state of dying. That’s the teaching of the Bible. So He doesn’t give us mere existence, but He gives us life. Listen to Spurgeon talk about what the spiritual life that we get is like. To help us understand this, he makes an analogy. Think about the different modes of existence, and as you move from existence to life and various stages, til you come to what we have now as Christians. He compares a stone to a plant, and so on. Listen to this. He says:

You will make strange confusion of God’s Word if you confuse life with existence, for they are very different things. All men will exist forever, but many will dwell in everlasting death. They will know nothing whatever of life. Life is a distinct thing altogether from existence, and implies in God’s Word something of activity and of happiness.

In the text before us it includes many things. Note the difference between the stone and the plant. The plant has vegetable life (greater than the stone). You know the difference between the animal and the plant. While the plant has vegetable life, yet it is altogether dead in the sense in which we speak of living creatures. It has not the sensations which belong to animal life. Then, again, if we turn to another and higher grade, namely, mental life, an animal is dead as far as that is concerned. It cannot enter at all into the mysterious calculations of the mind. As to the mental life, it is dead.

Now, there is a grade of life which is higher than the mental life—a higher life quite unknown to the philosopher—not put down in Plato, nor spoken of by Aristotle—but understood by the very least of the children of God. It is a phase of life called spiritual life. It is a new form of life altogether which does not belong to man naturally, but is given to him by Jesus Christ. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul and all his descendants are made like he. The second Adam is made a quickening spirit, and until we are made like the second Adam we know nothing of spiritual life.

That is that we are given a life in a whole new arena. In the same way that the animal couldn't understand the mysteries of listening to Beethoven's symphony, I couldn't either, actually, but I could do better than my dog could. In the same way that an animal couldn't understand the mysteries of that, the unbeliever cannot understand what the least of the children of God knows of knowing God. And to think about what it means, think about to be alive spiritually means that you now have—there's an energy within you for God and for the things of God, and maybe it's helpful to think of this: If you were blind and I took you to the Grand Canyon and we went to the edge of the canyon, and there looked at the panorama, and I said, "Isn't that amazing? Isn't that splendid?" and you're blind, what do you say? "It looks the same to me as Georgia does." Or if you were deaf and I took you to a Beethoven symphony, the symphony playing some work of Beethoven or Bach, and I'd say, "Wasn't that wonderful?" you couldn't hear.

So it is with the unredeemed. They don't yet see God. They don't hear Him. But the believer, the person who's been born again, the newest believer now has an ability to see the beauty and glory of God. Their eyes have been opened to see the grandeur of His glorious plan. And when someone begins to talk about it from the word, or they're reading the Bible, or they're hearing a sermon, their hearts leap

within them because they now see what they never saw before, or they now have ears to hear the beauty of Jesus' voice.

The unbeliever can know about the word of God in a technical way and may know the gospel and be able to explain those things, but his heart doesn't leap at the voice of Jesus. The beauty of it is totally unknown to them. Jesus says, "I give them life. I make them alive. I give them new birth which helps them to see the kingdom of God, which gives them the ability to hear My voice." They've been made partakers of the divine nature. That is not that we become God. No, we never become divine ourselves, but we can partake of divine things. His holiness now is beautiful, His righteousness, His goodness, we long to be better people than we were before, truly good in His eyes. We have a desire, an appetite for that because there's now life. Where there is life, there is need. There is need to grow.

That is the nature of the life that Jesus has given to the believer. He's talking to these people who are spiritually dead, and He says, "Look into My sheepfold. Look at My sheep. They hear My voice. They are known by Me. They follow Me. I am giving them life, and not only life, but eternal life, life that never ever ends. It is the life that will continue on through the ages. They will have this life and they will never lose it." That brings us to the fifth point, the fifth blessing, which is:

5) "They can never perish."

John 10:28 ~ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish;

This is emphatic as it can possibly be, and it's made even more emphatic and more emphatic as you continue reading the text. First of all, the phrase ***...they will never perish...*** contains a double negative in the Greek, and it means they will by no means ever perish. It's a double negative. They will *not not not* perish. That's the force of it. And then it's also deepened in meaning by the fact that the verb, here, when he says *perish*, the verb, here, is not a continuous Greek present, and you have four Greek presents in a row in Verse 27 and 28 to this point. Hear, know, follow, and give are all in the Greek present. Here *perish* is in the aorist tense, and the aorist tense in Greek—as I mentioned the present tense emphasizes kind of action, not time. It's not so much present time. It is that, but it's mostly kind of action, ongoing, continuous. Aorist tense is a past tense in Greek, but past time isn't the focus as much as the kind of action. The aorist tense is punctiliar, that is, a point in time. So when He says *perish*, He could have said, "They will never be perishing," but He said, "They will never perish." It's a point in time. "I'm giving them eternal life and they will never perish."

The force of it is this: In the face of all these ongoing, continuous actions, He's saying, "There will never come an instant where they could perish. They have eternal life, it's ongoing, and I'm never going to take My eye off of them for one moment so that they can perish. They are completely secure. They will never perish." You say, "Well, the believer can fall into sin." Yes. "The believer can backslide." Yes. "The believer can turn away from Christ for a period of time." Yes. "Will he perish?" No. The true believer will come back, but the point of this passage is to say if you are truly His, you can never perish. You may have doubts of your salvation even on your death bed, but if you're His, you will never perish.

That's something in your heart you've got to work out as you keep in the word of God and you keep looking for fruit. That's how you gain an assurance, but the reality is, the promise is, if your eyes have been opened and your ears have been opened to hear God and to know God and to love God, you will never ever perish. It's amazing that so many Christian denominations teach that you can lose your salvation. It's just clearly not true. Now, it is clearly true that a lot of people who think they're Christians are going to hell. Jesus said, "There will be many who say unto Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name? Did we not cast out demons in Your Name?' and He will say to them (what I said earlier, remember), 'Depart from Me you who work lawlessness. I never knew you.'" But they were never saved. He said, "I never knew you." He didn't say, "I knew you for a while and then I don't know you anymore." He says, "I never knew you, because you never truly repented and believed. You had a kind of shallow faith," that John's been dealing with throughout this Gospel. They believed in Him but they didn't really believe.

That's what John 8 was all about, John 8:31, where it says: Jesus said to those who believed in Him, "If you continue in My word, then truly are you disciples of Mine. If you continue, I'll know that you truly believe." Now, Jesus knew already, but He's saying this is the mark of how you know a true believer is he keeps on. So they may profess Christ but they don't possess Christ. If you ever possess Christ, you cannot lose Him, because as we see here, He cannot lose you. And He makes this point even more emphatic. I said that that would be strong enough there. "They will never perish," but look what He says next. "And no one will snatch them out of My hand." He wants to make this point so clear, and again, drawing on the sheep and Shepherd imagery. He's been talking about in the previous passage how there are robbers and there are thieves, there are wolves that come, there are all kinds of hazards for the sheep, all kinds of things that could lead them astray

and bring them to destruction. Jesus says, “They will never perish. No can snatch them out of My hand.”

When you come to Christ, you’re in His hand, and when you’re truly saved, you can never be unsaved. That’s what He’s saying here. Turn back to John 6:37-40, a parallel passage. Here you see unconditional election and you see perseverance of the saints. This is the doctrine we’re talking about right now, that the true saint, the one who’s really been made holy, the one who’s really been born again, will persevere to the end and cannot be lost. Look what He says in John 6:37.

John 6:37 ~ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

When you say that somebody can really fall from salvation, you’re saying a lot about Jesus Christ that you ought not to be saying. I believe there are many genuine Christians who believe that, the doctrine of Wesleyanism and Arminianism, and they are folks that love Christ that just aren’t aware that they’re inconsistency is very dishonoring to Christ as well as very hurtful to the health of Christians. But it’s dishonoring to Christ. He said, “God told Me not to lose anything. It’s the will of the Father not to lose anything,” and Jesus is going to keep the Father’s will. He’s not going to lose anything. He cannot fail, and the security of our salvation is not in our ability to follow. We are told to follow. We’re told to keep holding on. This is the antimony again.

In fact, this is why people stumble over this. When you read verses like Colossians 1:23, he says basically, I’m going to paraphrase really quickly, “You have come to know Christ. You’ve been born again if you continue firm in the faith, unmoved. You’re a Christian if you continue.” Well that actually is exactly what we’re saying. It’s not saying what the Arminians think it says. It’s not saying you can be saved and lose your salvation. No, you’re really saved if you continue. Another verse that would teach this is in John, where John says, “They went out from us.” He’s talking about people that departed. They were people that apparently believed and then they left. Why did they go? John said, “They went out from us, for they were not of us.” So the reality is that though the scripture says *if we continue* then the exhortation is ‘continue’. Hebrews 3:12-13, “Today if you hear his voice,” when he’s talking about that, he says, “While it’s still called today, keep exhorting one another. Encourage one another while it’s still called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and fall away from the living God.”

Now that almost sounds like if you just had that verse, you could be Arminian in your theology and say you could lose your salvation, but that's not all you have. You've got John 6, and John 10, and Romans 8, and all these other passages. What it's saying is that there's this antimony. The Lord says, "If you want to follow Me, you keep following," and that's His exhortation. "Keep following Me. Keep following Me. Don't fall away. Keep following Me." That's what He says to us. But then the reality is at the same time He's saying, "If I've told you to follow Me, here is your confidence—I'm holding your hand."

I mentioned the Grand Canyon a little while ago. We went some years back, and it was worth making the trip to go to the Grand Canyon to see it. We were there and I remember when I got up close to the precipice and you begin seeing the vastness of the canyon, one of the things that also hit me—I'm not really afraid of heights that bad, yet I don't love them, but I thought there really ought to be stronger fences around this thing, because if you fall, this is not going to be good. And Maggie was only like maybe 3 or 4 years old. John was about 13, and so I'm also thinking about people I've got with me here, protecting them, and holding hands. I wasn't going to let go of her especially. John, okay, he's 13 or 14, so he's okay, but Maggie, I'm going to hold her.

Now, this is a picture of what it is to walk through life. Imagine you're walking along an edge, you're walking along a mountainous path and there's real danger. I mean, if you forget what you're doing, you could fall off the side of the mountain. So your Heavenly Father says, "Keep your eye on Me. Keep following Me. Step where I step and follow Me, and you'll be fine." The command itself is like those passages say, if we continue. Encourage one another while it's still called today. He's saying, "Step in My steps," but the reality is as we step in His steps, if we start to fall, do you know what's going to happen? He's got us. There's no way He's losing us. Jesus is right there ready to catch us. In fact, what we see in this passage is He says, "No one can take them out of My hand." I said He keeps making it more emphatic. Look what He does back to John 10 in Verse 29 when He says:

John 10:29 ~ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

He says, "You're in My hand and you're in My Father's hand." How is that? I think it's like this. The Father gives His sheep to Jesus. He's using anthropomorphic language here. His hand, He doesn't really have a physical hand,

but He's using language we can understand. Look at the Father giving you to Jesus. Here He is handing you to Jesus. Jesus is receiving you from the Father's hand, and the Father's hand is around Jesus' hand around you. That's how secure you are. If you could fall from grace, you'd have to fall out of Jesus' hand and the Father's hand. There's no way that can ever happen. He has you, and He will have you, and as He said in John 6, "I promised the Father I'm going to raise them up on the last day. I'm with them and holding them til the end. There's nothing that can change that."

So this is the blessing of what it is to be a sheep. When you understand the gospel, when you understand that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, that you were dead in trespasses and sins, that apart from Him you have no hope, and you cast yourself upon Him, believing that His blood pays for your salvation, that His resurrection proves that He's a worthy and able Savior, and you place your faith in Him, you become His sheep. Now, you did that because you heard His voice. He opened your heart to hear His voice, and you now are known by Him and your desire is to follow Him. You do it imperfectly but you want to follow Him more and more over time. You are receiving eternal life and you can never perish. Jesus says, "Look at that. That's what it is to be a sheep."

Now listen, this says something about evangelism. When we encounter opposition in evangelism, Jesus was encountering opposition in evangelism, and like I said, these things if you think about it really are counterintuitive. He brings out election, and then He brings out in the face of opposition the blessedness it is to be a sheep. These people don't want to hear about that. "Let me tell you anyway." So when you're encountering people who don't want to hear about Jesus Christ, you have to be sensitive, and there are times where it's not the right moment and it's not the right time, but sometimes the worldliness of the Christian churches come to say that in evangelism the message should be this: "Hey, I'm not really that different than you, so you can be a Christian too." Have you seen that kind of flavoring? That's not the way Jesus does it.

Listen, yeah, apart from Christ, I'm no different than you. I'm equally wicked. I'm not saying this in pride, self-righteously looking down on you in your unbelief and your sin and your willful determination to go the way you want to go rather than the way Christ wants you to go, but let me tell you something. We're very different because of what Jesus Christ has done for me. I now hear His voice. I have someone guiding me. I have someone who loves me perfectly, who knows everything about me, who knows me at every moment, knows what I need, knows

what I don't need, and is looking and brooding over me. That's the relationship that I have, and I have eternal life and will have it forever.

We're to provoke the unbeliever to jealousy, but not in a prideful way. It's all of grace. I don't have it because I'm any better than you. I don't know why I have it. It's only His mercy, but I want you to have it. That's the way we take the message of Christ to the world. There's no shame. What is there to be ashamed of? We have the most precious treasure in the world. It doesn't matter that they don't see it. They don't know. That shouldn't cause us to have any lessening of our joy in it, and when we have opportunities, we need to point them out humbly, but for His sake, boldly, and then they will see. And when God opens their eyes and God opens their heart, even that kind of moment when you tell them the blessedness of being a sheep of Jesus Christ, that will be the thing God uses to open their eyes and to open their ears, and suddenly you'll be looking at someone who was dead and now is alive, who has ears to hear. That's the glory of the gospel.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we praise You for such a glorious salvation, for giving so richly to those who were so unworthy that You would lavish upon us the riches of Your grace. Father, we know it's nothing in us. It's all to the praise of Your glory. You are so amazing and wonderful. We pray, Lord, that You would grant repentance and faith even today to some in this room, that they might turn from living their life the way they want to live it, going where they want to go, and finding only more and more unhappiness and misery, and they might surrender to such a wonderful Shepherd, such a loving Savior, and they might come just saying, "Lord, I'm nothing. I know how dirty I am. I know how filthy I am. I can't do anything about it. I can't clean myself up, but I come and I give myself to You, and I trust in You." Lord, save them. Give them that grace right now. Thank You that You said You will never by any means turn away the person who comes to You. Father, we glory in Christ Jesus. Help us to be people who are so overjoyed with the wonder of what we've received that we live our lives on a daily basis out of the gratitude and the overflow of joy and happiness that You have loved us and You are loving us like You are loving us. We pray that You would be pleased to continue that great work in all of us for the praise of Your glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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