



JOHN 10:22-42 (PART 1)

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”
(verses 27-30)

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This is one of those passages that lands right in the centre of a debate in which Christians have engaged down the years. When we are saved by Christ, are we secure in that salvation, or can we lose it? Is there cause for worry?

There are many scriptures which could be marshalled on both sides of this issue, and all of them have crucial things to teach us, rightly understood. Some of them stretch us intensely in faith and obedience. But these particular verses, spoken by Jesus as our Good Shepherd, speak as powerfully as any to the very heart of the question.

Jesus tells us here that he will never let us go. If we are his sheep, having received the salvation he has won for us by laying down his own life, then we can be assured he is hanging on to us securely – indeed, for all eternity. That’s what he says. He’ll never let us go. Not only so, but the Father himself has us in his hand, and nothing can snatch us away. That’s secure indeed.

I think of the security of my own kids (way back when), jumping off the adventure playground into my outstretched arms. Their joy and excitement and simple trust as they launched off that platform, trusting my arms to catch and hold them, is an enduring picture for me of the confidence Jesus wants me to have in him right now.

This confidence is rooted in relationship with the Lord himself. The phrase “*my sheep*” resonates with connection and belonging. From the sheep’s point of view, this comes about through faith in Jesus, by which we take up our dwelling in his word, being set free in the process, and receiving permanent status as a child of the household (John 8:31-36). From the shepherd’s point of view, it comes about by the fact he has laid down his life for us.

The result is that we are given an outright gift. It comes from the Shepherd’s hand. It is purchased by his own costly sacrifice. The gift is life – for all eternity. Such a gift, we could never purchase. It’s one we could never earn. It can only ever be received. But since he himself has given it, there’s no cause to doubt its authenticity.

It also comes with a specific guarantee, “*they shall never perish*” (verse 28), which runs parallel with the statement we looked at earlier: “*no one can snatch them out of my hand.*”

All of this is meant to make us profoundly secure. Not cocky, but secure. Indeed, if we find ourselves slipping into continuing disobedience and rebellion, we might well question whether we actually knew the Shepherd or not. But as we dwell in his word and follow his voice, we have the assurance that we are securely upheld in his powerful hand.

Even when we falter. Even when we stumble. As David himself says: “*he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust*” (Psalm 103:14). Which is to say, he knows that we are sheep.

Lord Jesus, praise you for your costly sacrifice. You have rescued me for all eternity. Thank you that I am held safely in your strong and faithful hand.

Father, thank you that your hand secures my future, also, holding me fast.

Holy Spirit, come fill me afresh, that I might live in faithfulness and obedience, listening attentively for the Shepherd's voice.

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Reflect:

Pause several times during the day (set an alarm if you need to) and give thanks that you are held securely in Jesus' hand. Give thanks that you are held securely in the Father's hand. Ask the Spirit to bring these truths home.