

NO ONE CAN SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND

John 10:22-42

Key Verse: 10:28

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

In today's passage Jesus teaches us that he gives eternal life and that no one can snatch us out of his hand. This is a great truth that Jesus wants us to accept. But what does it mean to have eternal life? Do I really have eternal life? Suppose I do. If I make a big mistake, can I lose eternal life? Many people have these very questions. Today let's accept Jesus' gift of eternal life with absolute assurance.

First, people in unbelieving suspense are not Jesus' sheep (22-26).

Look at verses 22-23. “Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade.” The Feast of Dedication commemorated the restoration of the temple worship around 166 B.C. after its desecration by an ungodly Syrian ruler. This Feast was a joyous celebration also known as Hannukah. At the time of Jesus, formal temple worship had been restored. However, the temple was controlled by religious leaders who did not love God or the people of Israel. That is why Jesus often confronted the Jewish leaders at the temple. Jesus fought hard to restore Bible study and prayer in the temple.

Look at verse 24. “The Jews gathered around him, saying, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’” The Jewish leaders claimed that Jesus was keeping them in suspense. They pressured Jesus to say something they could twist into a charge against him. Nevertheless, they admitted that they were in suspense. But it was not Jesus who was keeping them in suspense. Jesus had already told them plainly who he was. They were in suspense because they would not make a decision to accept the truth they saw clearly in Jesus. It was their unbelief that was keeping them in suspense. To be in suspense is not always bad; it is unbelief that is always bad. Actually, there is a lot of suspense in the life of faith. Remember when God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. What suspense! Would Abraham really go through with it? Would God really demand it of him? It took three days to reach the place God told him to go. On the way Isaac innocently asked, “Dad, the fire and wood are here, but where is the Lamb?” How would Abraham respond? Would he say, “You are the lamb, my son”? No. Abraham said, “God will provide.” Then Abraham reached the spot. He bound Isaac and placed him on the altar. Abraham took the knife, lifted it high, and was ready to slay his son. Suddenly God spoke from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham.” At the last moment God stopped him. Whew! In this way God tested Abraham to make him the father of faith. In this way God blessed Abraham abundantly.

Suspense itself is not bad. In fact, Christians can truly enjoy suspense because we know that final victory belongs to God and we have a sure hope of heaven. But those who are in suspense because of unbelief are truly miserable. They know they should accept Jesus as their personal Savior and commit their lives to him. But they hesitate. They experience fear and constant uncertainty. It is not good for one's health. They must accept Jesus and commit their lives to Jesus.

Look at verses 25-26. “Jesus answered, ‘I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.’” Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah by his words and by his miracles. Jesus said, “I am the Bread of life.” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Jesus said, “...before Abraham was born, I am.” Jesus said, “I am the gate for the sheep.” Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd.” Jesus made these declarations boldly and publicly. Whenever Jesus used the words “I am,” he alluded to Exodus 3:14, which says, “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” It was clear to the Jews that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and God himself. That is why they wanted to stone Jesus on several occasions. They knew very well what Jesus was saying.

Then there were the miracles Jesus did. Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. Jesus healed a royal official's son who was dying. Jesus healed a chronic paralytic with one word from his mouth. Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Jesus gave sight to a man born blind. These were things that only the Messiah could do. There was overwhelming evidence that Jesus was the Christ. The problem of the Jews was not lack of evidence, it was their unbelief. They deliberately suppressed the truth and decided not to believe.

Jesus says simply, “you are not my sheep.” Sheep have a responsibility to believe in Jesus and to follow him. Those who reject Jesus’ words and works are not Jesus’ sheep.

Second, Jesus gives eternal life (27-28).

Jesus could have stopped by saying, “You are not my sheep.” But Jesus went on to teach them again the beautiful relationship he has with his sheep. Look at verse 27. “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” The man born blind heard Jesus say, “...this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” He believed it, obeyed Jesus, and was healed. He displayed the work of God. Finally he worshiped the Messiah. It is a divine mystery. But Jesus’ sheep listen to his voice. He knows them and they follow him.

Then what does Jesus do for his sheep? Look at verse 28. “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” Jesus gives eternal life to his sheep. What is eternal life? A Hindu may say that eternal life is continual reincarnation, coming back from death sometimes as a pig, or a lizard, at best a cow. A Buddhist may say that eternal life is to become nothing and melt into the oneness of the universe. A Muslim may say that eternal life is endless carnal pleasure. A secular scientist may say that eternal life is perpetual existence through cryogenics. What does Jesus say? In John 17:3 Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Eternal life is to know God through Jesus Christ. We mere human beings can know God. And knowing God is to have eternal life.

We cannot say everything about knowing God in this short message. But according to the Bible there are two outstanding characteristics of God. First consider God’s love. The Bible says, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16). To know God is to know the love of God. 1 John 4:9 says, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” We begin to know the love of God when we accept Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for our sins. Romans 3:23 says, “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Sin is a spiritual disease that resides in every soul. Sin degenerates the image of God and makes us wretched. But while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God loved us so much that he sacrificed his one and only Son for us. Jesus’ holy blood cleanses our sinsick blood and restores the image of God in us. When we accept God’s love in Jesus, we begin to love Jesus. We begin to worship Jesus and to serve him with gratitude and praise. We begin to love others with the love of God. Heaven is filled with people who love God and love one another with the love of God.

Second consider God’s holiness. The Bible says that God is holy. God is perfect in moral and spiritual quality in his very nature and in everything he says and does. To know God is to know the holiness of God. It is to long for the holiness of God more than anything else. We want to be holy in our feelings, thoughts and actions. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” We cannot make ourselves holy. But God has given us the precious blood of Jesus that sanctifies us. God has given us his Holy Spirit to dwell in us and to produce his holiness in us. There is no sin in heaven. All of God’s children become as holy as our Lord Jesus Christ is holy.

Knowing God is not just knowing the characteristics of God. It is not knowing about God. It is knowing God personally through the grace of Jesus Christ. When this relationship is formed we have eternal life. This eternal life begins the moment we believe in Jesus’ words. Jesus said in John 5:24, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” Knowing that we have eternal life changes us completely. We are no longer anxious about anything. We have true peace in our hearts and joy in our souls. Jesus gives eternal life. It is not something we earn. Jesus gives it to us when we believe his word. Jesus can give eternal life because he is the author of life. John 1:4 says, “In him was life and that life was the light of men.” May God help each of us to simply accept Jesus’ gift of eternal life.

Third, no one can snatch them out of Jesus’ hand (28-30).

Look at verse 28 again. “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” Jesus says “they shall never perish.” This means that we will never lose the eternal life that Jesus gives. Of course, our bodies will get old. We experience that our hair turns gray, wrinkles appear on our faces, and our bones begin to creak. Someday our bodies will stop working. We call this “bodily death.” But for Jesus’ sheep, it is entry into the kingdom of God. In the book of Acts, Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the gospel. At the moment of death, he said, “Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Ac 7:56). The

moment of death is the time of passing into the eternal kingdom of God. Jesus promises us, “they shall never perish.” Once we receive eternal life from Jesus it is ours forever and we will never perish.

Look at verse 28 again. “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” Jesus promises that no one can snatch us out of his hand. The devil tries hard. He reminds us of our sins. He condemns us in our weaknesses. He sends persecution against us even through close family members. But no one can snatch us out of Jesus’ hand. Once we are in Jesus’ hand we are safe for eternity. We must believe this and live victoriously.

Look at verse 29. “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” Jesus’ assurance came from his Father God. God is almighty. No one can take something from him. God entrusted his sheep to Jesus. Jesus laid down his life to save them. Through Jesus they go back to the Father and no one can stop it; no one. When Jesus said this, he was well aware of the spiritual condition of his disciples. They were going to make mistakes. They would fail. Jesus did not put his confidence in them. Jesus put his confidence in God. Jesus knew that God would never fail. God would bring them to his kingdom. Jesus was sure of this, there was no doubt. No one could take them from the Father’s hand.

In verse 30 Jesus says, “I and the Father are one.” Jesus was speaking from the mind and heart of God. Jesus’ words were the very words of the Almighty God. Therefore, we can be sure of what Jesus is saying. No one can take his sheep out of the Father’s hand. God’s hand holds us until we reach the pearly gate of the kingdom of heaven.

Still, a question arises in our minds. There are many who seemed to be Jesus’ sheep, but they ran away. Most of us know people who did not continue in their faith. St. Paul also struggled with this problem. In 2 Timothy, beloved disciples, whom he had trained and coworked with, abandoned Christ for the world. But this did not shake Paul’s assurance of salvation for Jesus’ sheep. Rather, he said in 2 Timothy 2:19a, “Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his.’”

Jesus knows his sheep and he holds us in his hand. When Jesus met Simon, he said, “‘You shall be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter)” (Jn 1:42). Jesus called him by name: Peter, which means “rock.” Peter became Jesus’ sheep. Peter followed Jesus and listened to Jesus’ word. Once, many people left Jesus in a moment. But Peter did not. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68). Peter had a life relationship with Jesus through his word. Peter followed Jesus everywhere and endured many hardships to be Jesus’ disciple. Peter followed Jesus to the cross. There, Peter had a problem. In theory, he was willing to die with Jesus. But in practice he was too fearful and selfish to do so. To save himself, he denied Jesus three times. He completely failed as Jesus’ disciple. Still, Jesus held him in his hand. Jesus visited him and restored the love relationship with him. Jesus gave him a new commission to follow him as a sacrificial shepherd. Finally, Peter became the rock on which Jesus build his church. We are weak, but Jesus is strong.

Fourth, Jesus is God’s Son who saves those who believe (31-42).

Upon hearing Jesus’ words, the Jewish leaders should have rejoiced in the certainty of eternal life. With eternal life, they could solve their future security problem. They could overcome their jealousy. They could be shepherds for their people and be happy. But they did not accept Jesus’ words. They interpreted Jesus’ words as blasphemy. Nevertheless, Jesus did not give up on them. Jesus tried to help them overcome their unbelief. Look at verses 34-36. “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your Law, “I have said you are gods”? If he called them “gods” to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, “I am God’s Son.”’” Jesus wanted the religious leaders to realize that God uses human beings. And when God does so, his presence through them is to be honored. For example, God said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh” (Ex 7:1). It didn’t mean that Moses was God, but that God was working through him.

Look at verses 40-42. “Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed and many people came to him. They said, ‘Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true.’ And in that place many believed in Jesus.” How refreshing! Ordinary people didn’t need miraculous signs. When they heard the word of God through John, they simply repented of their sins. Then God opened their spiritual eyes to see the Messiah in Jesus (Lk 7:29-30).

In this passage we learn that Jesus gives us eternal life and we will never perish. No one can snatch us out of Jesus' hand. We have assurance of eternal life. So we can have peace. We can have true joy. We can do the work Jesus has given us with a sense of victory. May God give you assurance of eternal life in your soul.