

He was dead serious. I was working as summer help at the Honda motorcycle plant in Marysville, Ohio, when during a break, a man told me he had not sinned for months. The fellow was about 35 years old, worked on the sub-assembly line, and wasn't joking about his claim. As I listened further, I understood why it was so important to him that there was no sin in his life. He believed that if a Christian sinned, that person lost his salvation. Frankly, I admired his sincerity, but I couldn't help but ask, "So you haven't sinned in all this time, not even once?" To which he replied, "No, I haven't. I've made some mistakes, but I haven't sinned."

I invite you to ask yourself a question this morning: How secure am I?

If I am a Christian, how secure is my salvation? Can a saved person ever be lost? Does the Bible teach once saved always saved? Can a person who has believed in Jesus Christ sin so much that he nullifies his salvation? Is it possible for a person to have true assurance, to know beyond doubt that when he dies, he will go to heaven to be with the Savior? Again, the question is, how secure am I?

Obviously, the question has eternal implications. It's a question that divides denominations. What's the answer to the question? There's only one person who has the authority to speak emphatically on such matters, whose credentials command our attention. The person is Jesus Christ. We cannot afford to answer this question based on man's opinion. Man's opinion doesn't matter when it comes to eternal issues. But we can trust what Jesus says. How secure am I? We don't have to wonder, for Jesus addressed that very question in John 10.

Proposition: According to Jesus' teaching in John 10:22-30, there are two categories of people in the world when it comes to security.

- I. Category #1: Those without Christ are not secure (22-26).
 - A. They didn't know Christ (22-24).
 - B. They didn't believe in Christ (25-26).
 1. They wanted a different Christ.
 2. They weren't sheep.
- II. Category #2: Those with Christ are secure (27-30).

Three perspectives of security...

 - A. What is true of a Christian (27)?
 1. He hears Jesus' words.
 2. He follows Jesus.
 - B. What is true of Jesus (28)?
 1. He knows His own.
 2. He gives eternal life to His own.
 3. He keeps His own secure.
 - C. What is true of the Father (29-30)?
 1. He has given a gift to His Son.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

2. He protects what He has given.

Implications: How can I know if I am secure?

1. If I believe in Jesus, I belong to Jesus.
2. If I belong to Jesus, I am secure.
3. If I am secure, I will follow Jesus.

I. Category #1: Those without Christ are not secure (22-26).

This morning we come to our final message in our 4-week series, "Getting to Know the Good Shepherd," in John 10. What we will learn today builds on that foundation.

The context of John 10 is one of controversy. In chapter 9, Jesus' healing of a blind beggar incensed the Jewish leaders. So in chapter 10, Jesus painted a word picture of a shepherd. His aim was to contrast Himself with those who were supposed to be the shepherds of God's people, the religious leaders, whom He likened to thieves and hirelings. He also used the allegory to give His own credentials as the Good Shepherd, and to depict the intimate relationship He has with sheep.

How did Jesus' listeners respond? The reaction was mixed (19)--some said He was demon-possessed (20), while others were intrigued by Him (21).

You'll notice a transition in v 22. The event that follows took place in the "winter," two months later. But because Jesus used the same shepherd theme, the writer, John, dovetailed the two episodes together.

Notice the setting in v 22, "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of dedication, and it was winter." This was Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem before His final visit when He came to the Cross. It was December, A.D. 29, during the feast of dedication, a Jewish holiday we know today as Hanukkah, an event designed to commemorate what happened in 165 B.C. It was then that Judas Maccabeus rescued and reconsecrated the Jewish Temple from pagan control.

V 23 gives the location, "And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." Actually, it wasn't a "porch" but a "colonnade," a roofed structure supported by pillars. The winter is the rainy season, and Jesus was walking on the east side of Herod's temple under the protection of this long, covered walkway.

This was not a formal teaching time. Jesus was walking along when a crowd engulfed him. V 24 "Then came the Jews round about him." The word means they "hemmed Him in." No doubt some in the crowd were the ones Jesus had identified two months earlier as thieves and hirelings--and they were itching to embarrass Jesus.

What was true of the religious opponents? Two things become quickly apparent.

A. They didn't know Christ (22-24).

Listen to the question they raised in v 24, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Please don't miss this. The Jewish leaders had religion. They had zeal. And they believed they were secure. They were convinced they were God's people, and that one day God would take them to paradise.

But they were wrong. Why? They didn't know Christ. And secondly...

B. They didn't believe in Christ (25-26).

That's obvious from Jesus' answer in v 25, "I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of Me."

They had seen the evidence--Jesus had given sight to the blind, cast demons out of people, calmed violent storms by a single word, restored maimed limbs, and even raised the dead. But they ignored the evidence, and refused to believe in the Savior.

You may wonder, "Why didn't Jesus answer their question? Why didn't He tell them plainly that He was the Christ, the Messiah?" First of all, He did answer their question. But it's true, He used veiled language.

His words to the Samaritan woman were straightforward. When she asked Jesus about the Messiah in John 4, Jesus replied, "I who speak to you am He (4:26)." Why then didn't Jesus use plain, clear language with the Jewish leaders? For one simple reason.

1. They wanted a different Christ.

It was a loaded question. Had Jesus given a straight answer, He would have been misunderstood. "If you are the Christ, tell us."--What they meant by the word "Christ" and what Jesus meant were two different things. When they asked if He was the "Christ," what they meant was, "Are you the political king who is going to overthrow the Romans? Are you, like Judas Maccabeus, going to get rid of the pagans, and establish the Kingdom in Israel? Are you THAT kind of Christ?" Do you see? They wanted a different Christ.

Which raises another question--Why didn't the Jewish leaders believe in Christ? They saw the evidence. Why didn't they accept Christ? It takes more than evidence to save a person dead in sin. Why didn't they believe?

2. They weren't sheep.

Jesus' words in v 26 are revealing, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Why didn't the leaders believe in Jesus? They didn't have the capacity to believe. They weren't sheep.

Robert Gromacki, in his excellent book on eternal security entitled, Salvation Is Forever, observes this about v 26, "They did not believe BECAUSE they were not His sheep. Most would read it this way: 'They were not His sheep because they did not believe.' But that is not what it says. These are elected or called sheep, the gift of the Father to the Son (76)."

Remember Nicodemus in John 3? He was a well-known Pharisee, a leader of the Jews who came to Jesus at night. He'd seen the evidence of Jesus, and in fact, was impressed with Jesus. But what did Jesus tell him? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (3:3)." Unless a person is regenerated by the Spirit, that person will remain dead in unbelief.

When it comes to security there are two categories of people. First, there are those who, like the Jewish leaders, are without Christ. They may be religious, and even zealously so, but they don't know Christ, and refuse to believe in Him. They are insecure because they are not sheep--they're without Christ.

II. Category #2: Those with Christ are secure (27-30).

Now we come to perhaps the clearest statement about security in all the Bible. Drawing on the shepherd imagery again, Jesus speaks, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one (10:27-30)."

In verses 25-26, Jesus confronted the Jews. Now, in vv 27-30, He commends His followers and explains their condition. In these verses, Jesus answers three questions related to the issue of security. Here we see the issue of security from three perspectives.

A. What is true of a Christian (27)?

Jesus highlights two characteristics of a true Christian.

1. He hears Jesus' words.

"My sheep hear My voice." By the way, this section is full of present tense verbs which signifies continual activity--lit. "My sheep are hearing." Jesus isn't talking about somebody who ONE time listened and heard Jesus' words, went forward, and made an emotional decision. No, true sheep continue to hear Jesus' words. It's priority to them.

If spending time in the Bible is a grind to you, and if hearing a sermon from the Word of God seems irrelevant to you, then you'd better ask yourself a hard question. Am I really a sheep? A true sheep loves the Shepherd's voice.

2. He follows Jesus.

"And I know them and they follow Me." Again, a present tense verb--the normal pattern in a Christian's life is to follow Jesus. Trust and obey, for there's no other way.

This is key. If I'm a Christian, and I don't follow and obey Jesus, I won't feel secure. It's that simple. More than a few Christians don't feel secure in Christ because they are not following Christ. They don't need to get saved again. They need to repent of and forsake their sin, and get in tune with the Shepherd again.

On the other hand, "feeling" secure doesn't guarantee I am secure. There is such a thing as "false security." A couple of weeks ago, I took our car to the shop. The mechanic was working on the radiator, and while fixing it, something else happened. While the engine was running, the car, which was sitting on an incline, started to sputter, and eventually died. I looked at the gas gauge, and it registered 1/8 of a tank. As it turned out, the mechanic had tested the car so long that it had run out of gas. But the gauge said there was gas in the car. The gauge was wrong. Believing the car had gas didn't make it so.

Believing I'm saved doesn't make it so. Believing in Christ does.

Which brings up a critical question. What if a person claims to be a Christian, but stops following Jesus? Is he saved? Only God knows hearts, but there are two possibilities. One, he could be a wayward sheep, a sheep that has wandered from the fold. What happens to wayward sheep? The Good Shepherd disciplines them in order to bring them back (Heb 12:6; 1 Cor 11:30-32). The other possibility is that he is an imitation sheep. What happens to imitation sheep? They face eternal judgment (Mt 7:21-23).

Can a believer lose his salvation? No--we'll see why in a moment. But the imitation sheep doesn't lose his salvation. He can't lose what he never possessed to begin with! Of him, Jesus will say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me (Mt 7:23)."

There's a second question related to the issue of security.

B. What is true of Jesus (28)?

V 28 "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." Notice three characteristics of Jesus. The first is seen in the middle of verse 27. Concerning His sheep, Jesus says, "I know them."

1. He knows His own.

Jesus has a personal, intimate relationship with those who know and follow Him.

2. He gives eternal life to His own.

That's a guarantee, according to v 28. Jesus promised a life that would know no end to all who know Him!

The same writer of this gospel penned these inspired words in 1 John 5:11-13, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

But wait. Jesus may give us the gift of eternal life, but can't a person throw away a gift? Notice the third characteristic of Jesus.

3. He keeps His own secure.

V 28b "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." He didn't say He'd save His own from sorrow, or from suffering, or even from death. He said, "And they shall never perish." The word "never" means NEVER. In the Greek, it is extremely emphatic (Gromacki, 76)--"they will NOT ever perish."

The Good Shepherd takes care of His sheep. We are always secure in His care. True, we are inclined to wander, as the hymn writer assessed, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." It may be our nature to wander, but it is His nature to keep us secure. He seeks us out when we go astray. He finds us, and brings us back to the fold (Gromacki, 77).

I've referred to well-known author, Phillip Keller, previously. Keller draws upon his experiences as a shepherd to teach biblical truth. In A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, he writes (37), "One morning at dawn I found nine of my choicest ewes, all soon to lamb, lying dead in the field where a cougar had harried the flock during the night. It was a terrible shock to a young man like myself just new to the business and unfamiliar with such attacks. From then on I slept with a .303 rifle and flashlight by my bed. At the least sound of the flock being disturbed I would leap from bed and calling my faithful collie, dash out into the night, rifle in hand, ready to protect my sheep.

"In the course of time I came to realize that nothing so quieted and reassured the sheep as to see me in the field. The presence of their master and owner and protector put them at ease as nothing else could do..."

Our security is linked to our Good Shepherd. The closer we are to the Shepherd, the more secure we feel. Underscore FEEL. If we know Christ, we are secure in Christ regardless how we feel. But many do not enjoy security because they do not make it their aim in life to be near the Shepherd.

Never forget this. The security of sheep depends not in the ability of the sheep but in the ability of the Shepherd (B.K.C.). As believers we may sin and stumble, but as the Shepherd, Jesus loses none of His sheep.

Take Peter for example. Remember what Jesus told him in Luke 22:31-32 (NIV), "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." When Peter denied Jesus, did he lose his salvation? Listen. Jesus predicted Peter would sin. He also prayed that Peter's faith wouldn't fail. Jesus keeps His own secure.

C. What is true of the Father (29-30)?

He, too, is involved in our security. In what ways? Jesus mentions two.

1. He has given a gift to His Son.

V 29 says, "My Father, who gave them to me." Notice that. How do sheep become sheep? Jesus says His Father "gave them to me." This perfect tense verb indicates this act took place in the past (Eph 1 says before creation), yet has continuing results. What the Father gives, the Son keeps!

We find the doctrine of election throughout the pages of John's gospel. Jesus said in 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." And then in 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." And 6:65, "Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." To His disciples, Jesus said this in 15:16, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

Please don't miss this. The doctrine of election is not only a biblical teaching, but it's also intricately linked to the doctrine of eternal security. God has His sheep. He knows who they are. He will not lose one of His own.

Warren Wiersbe puts it this way (332), "From the human standpoint, we become His sheep by believing; but from the divine standpoint, we believe because we are His sheep. There is a mystery here that we cannot fathom or explain, but we can accept it and rejoice." But there's more. Not only has the Father given a gift to His Son, but...

2. He protects what He has given.

Speaking of His Father, Jesus said in v 29, He "is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." This is amazing! A Christian has double protection. He is in the hand of the Son. He is also in the hand of the Father.

And lest someone might think there could be a conflict of interests, v 30 makes it clear, "I and the Father are one." The Father's purpose for the sheep, and the Son's purpose for the sheep are one and the same. They are one.

And now we come back to the question with which we began.

Implications: How can I know if I am secure?

Jesus words in John 10 make tell us. There are three unchanging truths.

- 1. If I believe in Jesus, I belong to Jesus.*
- 2. If I belong to Jesus, I am secure.*
- 3. If I am secure, I will follow Jesus.*

The Puritans used to talk about the "perseverance of the saints," a good phrase. It works two ways. Jesus perseveres in behalf of His sheep--He will lose not one. But true sheep will persevere, too--they'll follow Jesus all the way to heaven. Is this true of you?

An unknown poet wrote (in Gromacki, Salvation Is Forever, 48):

"Nearer, nearer, nearer to God
I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.

Dearer, dearer, dearer to God
I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,

I am as dear as He."