

“Basic Biblical Beliefs Series: “The Security of the Believer”

2017: The Reflection Year Series

Scripture: John 10:27-29 (NIV)

²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^[a]; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.

Subject Question: What three eternal qualities earmark the security of the Believer according to the teaching of Jesus in John’s gospel?

Compliment answer: The Uniqueness of Position (Vs.27), The Uttermost of Possession (Vs.28), and The Unity of Protection (Vs.29).

Big Idea: The three eternal qualities that earmark the security of the Believer according to the teaching of Jesus in John’s gospel are: The Uniqueness of Position (Vs.27), The Uttermost of Possession (Vs.28), and The Unity of Protection (Vs.29).

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Homiletical Idea: “Yes, Indeed... once Saved, always Saved!”

Purpose: I want the congregation to know what Jesus teaches, not what others or for that matter, we may speculate about, concerning the eternal security of those whom He has called as His own.

Introduction: How secure is secure? Can I actually lose my salvation? Is the statement, “Once saved always saved,” true or wishful thinking? Like it or not, many of us as Christians have struggled with this question. We stumble, we fail, morally we drift, we lose our enthusiasm and every one of us can plummet in our spirituality to the point that we wonder if we are, or ever were, a real Christian—one whom God loved, or better yet, still loves and cares for. Let me assure you my beloved Brother and sister, according to the teaching of Jesus, if God has called you, converted you, and claimed you... you are and forever will be a child of His. Can we backslide? Sure. Can we like the song, *feel prone to leave the One we love...?* Sadly, Absolutely. Nonetheless, today we begin a two part sermon considering what Jesus taught in John’s Gospel concerning

His work on our behalf for our salvation, and His perspective in His ability to keep us secure in Him. Once saved, always saved? Indeed.

(I See God's Perspective...do you?)

Groundwork:

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(27, 28) The reference to those who believe not because they were not of His sheep, introduces the contrast between them and those who were, and the position of the true members of the flock is expanded in this pair of parallel clauses. One member of each pair refers to the act or state of the sheep; and the other to the act or gift of the Shepherd. The pairs proceed in a climax from the first response of the conscience which recognizes the divine voice to the eternal home which is in the Father's presence.

(1) "My sheep hear My voice," . . . "and I know them;"

(2) "And they follow Me" . . . "and I give unto them eternal life;"

(3) "And they shall never perish" . . . "neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

By reading successively the clauses placed on the left side of the page, we trace the progress of the human act and state; by reading, in the same way, the clauses on the right side of the page, we trace the progress of the divine gift; by reading each pair in the order of the text, we see how at each stage the gift is proportioned to the faculty which can receive it.

The earlier clauses are familiar to us from the preceding discourse, but some expressions will need a word of explanation.

Eternal life.—Comp. John 10:10, where the word "eternal" is added in some readings. Here the verb is in the present, "I give (am now giving) them." (Comp. John 3:15; John 5:24; John 6:47 et seq.). We cannot be too careful to observe that our Lord's thoughts of "eternal life" is never of the future only. It is a development, rather than a simply future existence. We shall live eternally, because we now live spiritually in communion with the Spirit who is Eternal.

And they shall never perish.—Comp. Notes on John 8:51; John 11:25-26. The negative is in the strongest form—“They shall by no means perish for ever.”

Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.—Better (comp. John 10:18), *and none shall pluck them . . .* The words should not be limited by the insertion of the word man. They are to be taken as including every spiritual foe; all thieves and robbers that would break into the fold; all wolves that would rend the flock; the adversary who “as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” (Comp. especially for the full thought of no separation from Christ, Romans 8:38-39.) The words “out of my hand” express alike the strength which protects, and guidance which leads, and comfort which cherishes. (See Isaiah 40:11.) Out of this hand none shall pluck. Yet we are to bear in mind that the sheep itself may wander from the shepherd’s care, and that all the fullness of these promises depends upon the human will, which is included in the first clause, “My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me.”

Benson Commentary

John 10:27-31. *My sheep hear my voice, &c.* — Our Lord still alludes to the discourse he had had before this festival. As if he had said, My sheep are those who, 1st, *Hear my voice* by faith; 2d, *Are known* (that is, approved) by me as loving me; and, 3d, *Follow me*, keep my commandments, with a believing, loving heart. And to those who, 1st, *Truly believe*, (observe three promises annexed to three conditions,) I give eternal life. He does not say, *I will give*, but *I give*. For *he that believeth, hath everlasting life*. Those whom, 2d, *I know truly to love me, shall never perish*, provided they abide in my love. 3d, Those who *follow me*, neither men nor devils can pluck out of my hand. *My Father — Who hath*, by an unchangeable decree, *given me* all that believe, love, and obey, *is greater than all* in heaven or earth, *and none is able to pluck them out of his hand. I and the Father are one* — Not by consent of will only, but by unity of power, and consequently of nature. *Are* — This word confutes Sabellius, proving the plurality of persons; *one* — This word confutes Arius, proving the unity of nature in God. Never did any prophet before, from the beginning of the world, use any one expression of himself which could possibly be so interpreted, as this and other expressions were, by all that heard our Lord speak. Indeed, his hearers were provoked to such a degree by what he now said, that they took up stones, and were going to kill him outright, imagining that he had spoken blasphemy.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

10:22-30 All who have anything to say to Christ, may find him in the temple. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves doubt. The Jews understood his meaning, but could not form his words into a full charge against him. He described the gracious disposition and happy state of his sheep; they heard and believed his word, followed him as his faithful disciples, and none of them should perish; for the Son and the Father were one. Thus he was able to defend his sheep against all their enemies, which proves that he claimed Divine power and perfection equally with the Father.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Which gave them me - See [John 6:37](#).

Is greater - Is more powerful.

Than all - Than all others - men, angels, devils. The word includes everything - everything that could attempt to pluck them away from God; in other words, it means that God is supreme. It implies, further, that God will keep them, and will so control all other beings and things that they shall be safe.

None is able - None has power to do it. In these two verses we are taught the following important truths:

1. that Christians are given by God the Father to Christ.
2. that Jesus gives to them eternal life, or procures by his death and intercession, and imparts to them by his Spirit, that religion which shall result in eternal life.
3. that both the Father and the Son are pledged to keep them so that they shall never fall away and perish. It would be impossible for any language to teach more explicitly that the saints will persevere.
4. that there is no power in man or devils to defeat the purpose of the Redeemer to save his people. We also see our safety, if we truly, humbly, cordially, and daily commit ourselves to God the Savior. In no other way can we have evidence that we are his people than by such a persevering resignation of ourselves to him, to obey his law, and to follow him through evil report or good report. If we do that we are safe. If we do not that we have no evidence of piety, and are not, cannot be safe.

Backsliding

Have you ever temporarily lapsed into unbelief and sin after you became a Christian? The condition of backsliding results from spiritual apathy or disregard for the truth of God's Word. It results in a departure from a winsome confession of faith and Biblical ethical standards. Actions are affected by our attitudes toward God and His Word.

Jesus said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Backsliding is different from apostasy, which spurns the grace of God by renouncing the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31).

When a person renounces his faith in Christ that person was never a true child of God, and never was among the elect of God (John 3:18-21, 36; 5:24-29).

On the other hand, the elect individual, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and redeemed by God has been delivered once-for-all from the bondage of sin. Backsliding is not a "fall from grace" in the sense that a Christian once saved by grace can lose his eternal life in Christ. He is God's child forever, and He has placed His life in the believing sinner.

There were times when the disciples of Jesus withdrew from fellowship with the Lord (Matt. 26:56), Peter denied Christ (26:69-75), Corinthian believers lived in sin (2 Cor. 12:20-21), the Church in Asia became lukewarm (Rev. 2:4, 14-15, 20), etc.

The people of Israel serve as an example for Christians today. We are exhorted to persevere in righteousness and doing the will of God. Israel forsook her covenant with the LORD God (Jer. 2:19; 8:5; 14:7), and demonstrated her unfaithfulness by disobeying God.

In the New Testament backsliding is viewed as an individual problem, although it is possible for churches to become backslidden, too.

Why do Christians become backslidden? The answer? We all still possess the old nature that is "corrupt through deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22; Rom. 7:13-24; 1 Cor. 3:1-3). Lack of continuous fellowship by "abiding" in Christ results in a lack of spiritual vitality and ineffective Christian service (Jn. 15:4-8). There is no other way to live the Christian life except by maintaining an intimate fellowship with our Lord. If we do not maintain that vital contact with Him we cannot sustain spiritual growth and effectively minister in His name.

Unbelief (Heb. 3:12), bitterness (12:15), love for the world (2 Tim. 4:10), love for money (1 Tim. 6:10), adherence to worldly philosophy (Col. 2:8), legalism (Gal.

3:1; 1:6; 5:7), indifference and spiritual coldness (Rev. 2:4; 3:16) are other causes for backsliding.

Backsliding grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), and it displeases our Lord (Heb. 10:38). There are natural consequences that follow this sin (Lev. 26:18-25).

How can we prevent backsliding in our spiritual life? It is essential that we “abide” in Christ (Jn. 15:4-7), remain spiritually alert (Eph. 6:18), put on the full armor of God (v. 10), be prayerful (1 Thess. 5:17), etc. Seek to love the Lord God with all your mind, heart and personal being every day.

We can thank God that He patiently perseveres with His saints. Just as we are to persevere in doing His will, we can be thankful that He has made a wonderful covenant with us in the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. The grace of perseverance is one of the great benefits of the atoning death of Jesus Christ for our sins. The solution for backsliding is found in the abiding love and mercy of our God of grace who remains faithful to His promises.

Backsliding is serious business. Martin Luther well said, “The offenses given within the church are greater than those given among the heathen because when Christians degenerate, they are more godless than the heathen.”

We have a choice. We can progress or regress in our Christian life. We have a great responsibility in how we choose to live the Christian life. God is able to strengthen and progressively sanctify the Christian if we cooperate with Him (Heb. 3:12; Phil. 3:10-16).

The promise to every backsliding Christian is to, “Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:7). Acknowledge your sin, turn from it, trust in the Lord for forgiveness and ask the Holy Spirit to take control of your mind, heart and daily life. Jesus says, “Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent” (Rev. 2:5).

It is reassuring that the Bible clearly teaches that the truly spiritual regenerate can never be lost. We are his forever children. Once his child by the new birth, always his child. However we can lose our fellowship with God and our effectiveness in Christian service. The God of all grace has provided a bar of soap; let’s use it often (1 John 1:6-10; 2:2).

<http://www.abideinchrist.com/selah/may15.html>

- A. The Uniqueness of Position (Vs.27). *²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

B. Jesus begins His Security lesson by stating the four give and take inferences that take place once a person comes to know Jesus in a real a personal way: The first has to do with Jesus opening words...

1. *My sheep... The inference for a child of God...* is they now are a Person who has accepted the new life role as Sheep: an individual who goes from having to be in charge of everything to a person who can now acknowledge that they not only need but because of Christ presence on their lives are willing to be led by another.
2. At the same time, *there is an inference about Jesus...* He now accepts His position as the Shepherd: One who is willing and with diligent responsibility takes charge, leading, caring for, protecting, and assuming accountability for His Sheep. Secondly,
 - 1) *My sheep listen to my voice; The inference for you and I is that* Praying now goes from a one-sided communication where we lay out before God an onslaught of requests, to more of a privileged and personal conversation with God, not to God... and with that openness comes an inner assurance that Jesus really is now not only listening to my heart when I pour it out to Him, but He, through His Word or circumstances or other people, now desires to communicate to me. It's no longer a silent one-sided conversation that Jesus invites His sheep to partake in as a part of His saving grace. But did you catch it? *There is also an unveiled, almost unnoticeable inference concerning Jesus Himself.*
 - 2) If we can listen to His voice then, then He must be intent on sharing in a conversation with those whom He wants to hear what He's saying. How much would our prayer life change if we were convinced that Jesus has just as much of a desire to talk to us as we have to talk to him? Just as desirous to listen to our voice and we are desirous to listen for His. Third

1. ²⁷ *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, Maybe this is the grandest of all the inferences in this passage. Could it be true that* He is no longer has to be seen as a God who simply knows about me... but now has become a friend, and mentor who knows me intimately, understands my struggles, can discern my intentions, and can see my heart. Could it be that this great Shepherd knows me through and through, all my good points... every one of my bad habits, and yet, because I belong to Him, in some way, for some reason, He still not only loves me, but believes in me and always wants the very best for me, and because of His choice is willing to stand by me day after day, month after month year after year...?
2. He knowing me is one thing, but there is an inference on His part as well... a real consideration of the give and take context her: if we are so intimately known by Him, He must be willing for you and I to little by little, step by step, get to know Him intimately as well; and as a result to know what is on his heart, to see the world through his eyes, to... could that really be true? Jesus said an interesting statement in the sermon on the mount... Matthew 7

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ What is Jesus asserting here? Think it’s a mournful admission... a heartbreaking conclusion... You can talk the talk, but when it gets right down to it, it’s not just about us & Him knowing **about** each other, it’s always been about knowing, truly knowing, intimately knowing... getting to know each other. And finally in this first verse, our final inference comes when Jesus states:

- 1) ²⁷ *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* It’s our place to follow; it’s His place to lead. It’s our task to get going; it’s His to get busy directing our steps, showing us the way. But I believe there is more to this than just the question of roles... And I believe it goes to the very heart of this

entire passage. The real question is why... why are we willing to follow, and just as important, why is He willing to be followed?

- 2) Two reasons; the first is the most obvious: Love. For God so loved the World that He gave. God loved me and I Love Christ for what He did for me. There is no greater Love than this; to lay down one's life for His friends... I get that... He has earned my love by what he did.

But there is a second consideration we often don't consider, but it's most assuredly true. You see, it's not what He did, but the character of the One who was and is willing to go to such lengths for His people that really pulls at my heart and solidifies my love and ore, my commitment to Him. I have no trouble swearing fealty (loyalty) to a King who would die for others, for me. How about you? I can only bow my head in reverence for a God who continuously gives second and third and fourth chances to people, who doesn't seem to give up on folks even when they've been tempted to given up on themselves. How about you? I bend my knee in reverence and awe and more, admiration to a Deity whose entire reason for being drips with grace and reeks of mercy... whose message to the world in each generation is not a demand for conformity but an invitation... "Come now, and let us reason together, smith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like **crimson**, they shall be as wool (Isaiah1:18)." O yes, I can swear loyalty to such a King. How about you? But, could it also be true, that this King, this Most Magnificent Monarch, in the most disproportionate of decisions, has on His part, sworn fealty (loyalty) to you and to me. O is the inference really here that if we read between the lines we find, that indeed, He has just as much an admiration of us as we have of Him? That every time

we stand up for Him on this earth, he stands up in heaven and cheers us on...? Could it be true that His heart beats a little faster when our name is mentioned? Could it be true, that yes, He weeps with heavenly longing every time we are in the midst of our own earthly sorrows? Could it be true, that He longs to see our face as much as we long to see His? And could it be true, that in Jesus' heart and in Jesus mind, heaven will only be truly heaven when you and I pass through the Eastern Gate and hear the words, well done good and faithful servant, welcome home... I've waited so long to have you here...

- C. It's hard to even consider a Christian feeling insecure about their salvation in light of what we have just considered. The Uniqueness of our Position in Him should dash any doubts for those who have been called and claimed by Him.
- D. Next week we'll explore why some people still feel insecure. Lots of reasons really. Health reasons, worries, getting older... lack of involvement, or just life at times... Understandable, but sometimes it's what we call, backsliding: losing our fellowship with God and becoming ineffective in our Christian service. And maybe that's you this morning. In closing I want to read an article from a John Piper blog, and then I want to open up the altar to those who may desire to spend some quiet time before the Lord. (Read "Backsliding")

(I See God's Perspective... I hope you do.)

- A. The Uttermost of Possession (Vs.28). *²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.* This is our second sermon in considering the teaching of Jesus when it comes to the Eternal Security of the Believer. Many of us have been affected by teaching that we probably didn't even know we were being taught. On the one side we have those who are the adherents to Arminianism... these include denominations such as American

Baptist Churches, United Methodist Church, Wesleyan Church, Pentecostal Church and Church of the Nazarene. Their basic belief concerning salvation is based more on the Human Responsibility aspect rather than on the Sovereignty of God aspect. You are responsible for your salvation. On the other side, we have the adherents to what we call Calvinism... these include denominations such as Primitive Baptist or Reformed Baptist Church, Presbyterian Church (Including PCUSA, PCA, EPC), United Church of Christ (Including many Hungarian and Germans), Reformed Churches (such as the Dutch Reformed Church), and the Protestant Reformed Church in America. Their basic belief concerning salvation is just is based more in the Sovereignty of God aspect of salvation rather than the Human responsibility aspect. God is responsible for your salvation.

ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

ACCORDING TO ARMINIANISM

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.

B. Which is all very interesting? However, No matter how or when, or where you came to Christ, the most important matter is the fact that you come to Christ... and once you have come to Him, then and only then should we consider the security of that relationship. The bottom line is what Jesus said, not Calvin, what Christ taught, not Arminius, about you and I are as His Beloved Child of Grace. In our first sermon we considered the Uniqueness of our Position. Now we consider the Uttermost of Possession.

1. Again let's look at the give and take inferences of this scripture.
²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me²⁸ I give them eternal life... He gives, we receive. He is the Giver, I am the recipient. Eternal life is not something that one can earn, buy, barter, or beg to get. It is at its core a gift to be received, a grace

that is extended. It's simply as the scripture says, given. The emphasis here is not however on the sweet by and by. As Ellicott points out:

Eternal life.—Comp. John 10:10, where the word “eternal” is added in some readings. Here the verb is in the present, “I give (am now giving) them.” (Comp. John 3:15; John 5:24; John 6:47 et seq.). We cannot be too careful to observe that our Lord's thoughts of “eternal life” is never of the future only. It is a development, rather than a simply future existence. We shall live eternally, because we now live spiritually in communion with the Spirit who is Eternal.

2. *The inference here is simple but significant...* Why would Jesus promise to give something to us and then not follow through? Listen, if he has gone through the trouble to draw you and me to Himself, change our hearts, cleanse us from our sins, grace and grant us with the Holy Spirit, provide us a church family, gift us with Spiritual gifts to be able to help others, grant us an open communication with Him, change our perspective about us and life and heaven and Hell and salvation and life, and then what... say, O I made a mistake. I really didn't mean it. The truth of the matter is the reality of the inference---If Jesus gave it—to you and to me--it's ours—he's not going to take it back. If Jesus promised it, it's a sure bet. If Jesus said it, it's settled. If you know it, say amen.
- 1) ²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; this* is a very interesting promise. It isn't a promise that we will never pass through death's door. We all experience death. Even Jesus experienced it. But here is the inference: just as death could not “hold” or keep or defeat Jesus, neither can it nor will it be able to “hold” or keep or ultimately defeat you or I. Death is a battle lost. Eternal life is the War won! For the Christian, death is simply a door, not a destination. *and they shall never perish* is more of what I would call a “Victors” promise. Death may have its day; But Jesus will have the final say.
- 2) The key however is found in either having or not having, either knowing or not knowing this eternal life... as Jesus put it, now. It's been said, born once—die twice. Born twice—die once. How then can one have this eternal life now? First there needs to be a realization and an assurance that Jesus is more than willing to give

it to you. There are basically just 4 facts that people need to know to have eternal life. 1) God loves you and has a plan for your life. 2) Your Sin has separated you from a holy God and stand in the way of you knowing God's love and plan for your life. 3) Jesus is God's only provision for your sins and died on the cross for you that you could know God's love and plan for your life. 4) We each must receive Jesus as our personal Saviour to know that our sins are forgiven and to experience Gods love and His plan for our life.

1. ***²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.***
2. **Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.**—Better (comp. John 10:18), *and none shall pluck them . . .* The words should not be limited by the insertion of the word man. They are to be taken as including every spiritual foe; all thieves and robbers that would break into the fold; all wolves that would rend the flock; the adversary who “as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” (Comp. especially for the full thought of no separation from Christ, Romans 8:38-39.) The words “out of my hand” express alike the strength which protects, and guidance which leads, and comfort which cherishes. (See Isaiah 40:11.) Out of this hand none shall pluck. Yet we are to bear in mind that the sheep itself may wander from the shepherd's care, and that all the fullness of these promises depends upon the human will, which is included in the first clause, “My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me.”

(I See God's Perspective...I hope you do)

- A. The Unity of Protection (Vs.29). ***²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^[a]; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.***

Or as the Apostle Paul put it in Romans 8...¹⁸

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love

of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”^[1]

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[2] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. And so we ask the question that we started with--Are you secure in your relationship with Him? Absolutely. Are the words once saved always saved true or wishful thinking? They indeed are the Gospel truth.

(I See God’s Perspective...I hope you do, as well)