

THE GOOD SHEPHERD ... and a wonderful promise
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(JOHN 10: 27-29)

The shepherds and their flocks had come to the river, and while the men sat discussing their various problems, their fleecy charges jostled each other around the sparkling water. Eventually the calls of the shepherd echoed across the countryside, and immediately each flock obediently followed its master. Westerners find it hard to believe that a shepherd's voice can attract sheep from a surging collection of animals at a river bank, but such is the way of the East. The disciples probably smiled when their Master said, " I am the good Shepherd. . . . 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." There is reason to believe that this was one of the Lord's greatest messages.

God's Great Grace

It is almost incomprehensible that sinners should be able to obtain a place among the followers of Christ. It has been said that a sheep is the only animal incapable of finding its way home. There may be exceptions to this rule, but it is undeniable that the innate characteristic of sheep is to wander. Perhaps Isaiah had this in mind when he said, "All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). Yet the entire scene is changed when affection born of knowledge links the sheep with a shepherd. Instead of straying, the sheep are drawn irresistibly after the one who cares for them. Such is the power of grace. Straying sinners are united to the Good Shepherd by the bonds of love, and His voice is sufficient to attract them from places of danger. He said, " My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me."

God's Great Grip

"And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." We do well to remember that eternal life is eternal life. When a man becomes a child of God, he becomes one for ever. If the priceless treasure only lasts one month, it can hardly be eternal. A son may decide to change his name, but nothing can alter the fact that he remains the child of his parent. The father may be very grieved with the actions of his son, but nothing can change affinity of nature. Thus God's transmission of life to the soul is something accomplished eternally. We may lose our grip on God, but He never loses His grip on us. " No man can pluck them out of my Father's hand." And if any further evidence were needed to justify this statement, then 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5 would be sufficient. There Paul speaks of the worst backslider known to the Church. His sin was inexcusable and unprecedented. His evil influence had been so spread abroad that the apostle could not pray for his restoration. In so many words, Paul said, Let him die ; then men will forget what has happened." ". . . deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This poor prodigal was as much his Father's son when he was filthy in the far country as when he was clean at home. Alas, he had lost everything except his soul!

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God's Great Glory

God has never broken a covenant promise. His honor is at stake in the strict observance of every undertaking. Charles Haddon Spurgeon is reputed to have said, " If there were one soul in bell upon whom were the marks of the precious blood of Christ, all heaven would be away to the rescue." The doctrines of eternal security do not provide license for sin. The reality of individual salvation is expressed in loyalty to Christ. If a man loves the Lord, he will endeavor to keep His commandments. The new birth entails more than conformity@, to Church law ; it is far more than identification with any particular body of worshippers. It is union with Christ. No man can be united to Christ, and not wish to follow Him fully. "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." Such people are safe in the keeping of God, and can never be lost!

My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase:
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.

And I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given
More happy, but not more secure,
When glorified with Him in heaven.

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