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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Once Saved, Always Saved,

TRANSCRIPT

or the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints - I: Biblical Evidence”

Let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we commit this hour to Thee, and we ask Thy blessing upon us again in the study of the Scriptures. Enable us to understand. Enable us, Lord, to learn to think for ourselves theologically. Enable us to ponder the Scriptures under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And enable us to become independent in our study of the Scriptures. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is “Once Saved, Always Saved, or the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.” And we want to begin of the consideration of the biblical evidence.

Now, if it is necessary, we will take more than two times on this subject, and I have a hunch that it will be necessary because I'm not going to hurry through it. I had originally planned to just take two nights, one on the biblical evidence, and then we would consider the objections that have been raised of a Scripture of character against this doctrine. But we will consider the objections, but if it takes us two times to consider the

biblical evidence and also the logical evidence, we will go ahead and do it. So in other words, we’re in no hurry. At least, I’m in no hurry. So if we take more than two times, I’m not going to be upset.

Let’s turn for our Scripture reading to John chapter 10, and let’s read verses 27, 28, 29, and 30. John 10: 27 through 30. These verses are probably the most impressive evidence for the doctrine of eternal security or the perseverance of the saints. And I think it is proper that we begin by reading them. Jesus said,

“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.”

The doctrine of eternal security is the name that is commonly given to the doctrine of the eternal character of our spiritual life. The term “eternal security” has the disadvantage of not being really a Scriptural term. And, consequently, while that does not necessarily mean that it is not the teaching of Scripture for we do not have the term Trinity in the Bible and yet that is clearly the teaching of the Bible. Still it is perhaps better to call it the doctrine of eternal life. This, at least, is positive and biblical, and we should have no question about the term. So it is probably correct for us to say this is the doctrine of eternal life.

Now, this doctrine, as you know, has historically been one of the five points of Calvinism. It was set forth in Calvinism in answer to some propositions that were set forth by the remonstrance.

Now, this is a systematic theology class, and so I’m just introducing you a little bit here and there to some of the things that what we should discuss in systematic theology.

And one of the things that you should be familiar with is the controversy that has arisen over the various doctrines of the Bible down through the years.

Now, the remonstrance were the followers of Jacobus Arminius from whom we get the term Arminianism. And in Arminius was a Calvinistic theologian, but he began to have some questions about Calvinism. And in 1610, in Holland, he presented some postulates, there were five of them, in which he questioned some of the traditional doctrines of Calvinism.

For example, Arminius and his followers said that they believed, first, man is depraved but not totally. Second, God elects on the basis of foreseen faith or foreseen unbelief. In other words, he looks down through the years and he sees who will believe and who will not believe, and he basis his election upon that foreknowledge. And that foreknowledge is treated in a human way. Now, we have talked about this, and you know that I disagree with that and others too disagree with it.

Third, Arminius believed that Christ died for all men and not simply for the one's whom the Father gave to the Son.

Fourth, he believed that divine grace may be resisted. In other words, our salvation ultimately came down to our faith or our free will. And finally the perseverance of the regenerate is not clearly taught, he said. We need to study that a little more fully.

Now, others feel that he denied the perseverance of the saints, but we need not discuss it in detail. The Calvinists, of which Arminius had been one -- the Calvinists answered this at the Senate of Dort. Arminius was a Dutch theologian, and he set forth his views, the remonstrance did, in Holland in 1610. And so in the senate of Dort, which was convened in 1618 and '19 the Dutch theologians took up the question of Arminianism and the claims of the remonstrance. And out of this senate of Dort there grew the famous five points of Calvinism.

Now, the five points of Calvinism were never intended to be an expression of all that Calvinists taught. It was simply that these five points were the answer to the

remonstrance. That is, they were answers which the Calvinists gave to points at issue. But in these particular five points, there were summed up a great deal of the important difference between the two systems and, consequently, the five points of Calvinism have come down through the century since that time to represent practically the total doctrine of the Calvinists. Now, that, of course, is not true to the facts but still that is the popular belief.

The five points of Calvinism have frequently been represented pneumonically because it is easy to remember TULIP. And everybody in theological seminary, if they ever study the five points of Calvinism -- it is unfortunate as many of our seminaries they do not even study these things, but in order to learn them theological students are very inventive. And they like some way in which they can compress the information into something that they could remember easily and by this pneumonic device of TULIP, they were able to set forth the five points of Calvinism very effectively because each one of these letters expresses the beginning of one of the doctrines. For example, the T stands for total depravity. It is in contrast to Arminianism and its belief that man was depraved but not totally.

The Calvinists believe in Unconditional election. Election that is not contingent upon God's foreseeing who would believe and who would not believe. The Arminians contended that is no choice at all -- the Calvinists contended that is no choice at all. It was really man's choice and not God's choice if we believe that God chooses on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief. Then the L stands for limited atonement. That is, the saving work of Jesus Christ had in mind as its design those whom God had unconditionally elected.

Now, the Calvinists did not deny that the atonement of Jesus Christ was sufficient for all. They simply said ordinarily that it was efficient for those who believe. And it was efficient for those whom God had elected.

Now, I’d like to say a little bit about this because I feel that in our evangelical circles that we never really get a chance to think some of these things through for ourselves. And we are presented with only one viewpoint. It’s very much like listening to the TV or the radio.

Now, I’m mad usually at all TV commentators. All of them irritate me from all of the spectrum. There isn’t much of a spectrum. From whatever spectrum there is, I’m always angry at them because they never tell us out of what philosophy they speak. And, of course, we are exposed constantly to the views of certain men who represent certain philosophies. And TV commentators never really suggest to the people of the United States that certain men speak out of a certain philosophy. And their views have no more relevance to my belief than their philosophy does. We’re not given a chance really. And the average person in this country just listens to what he hears on the radio or TV, and he just believes it. He doesn’t really realize often that a man’s philosophy is the determinative thing. And, unfortunately, in evangelicalism we are not given a chance often to ponder some of the other sides of the truth. And I think in this case we have one, and you should learn to think for yourself.

Now, I’m going to read something from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who was one of the great preachers of the last generation perhaps the greatest, I’ve even heard it said that Spurgeon was the greatest preacher of modern times. I know that he is one of the greatest, but he was also an outstanding Calvinist. He was a Baptist. They don’t always go together, Baptists and Calvinists, but in his case they did. And Mr. Spurgeon has some very good words about limited atonement. And I want read these words to you because I think we are inclined to say, when we hear the term “limited atonement” well that couldn’t be there couldn’t be any truth to that. But then we read some of the great students of Holy Scripture and discover that they believed in a doctrine similar to this, we often wonder how they could when they studied the Bible. Well, I think you will at least understand after I read the statement from Mr. Spurgeon that it is possible for a man to be

in his right senses and to believe that Jesus Christ came with the purpose in mind of dying for those whom God had given to him.

Now, listen to Mr. Spurgeon. Now, you are aware that there are different theories of redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminians holds that Christ, when he died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person. And they teach that Christ's death does not, in itself, secure beyond doubt the salvation of any one man living. In other words, Christ died for all men, and whoever believes is saved. That's what the Arminian believes. He did not die for any one particular person.

They believed that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, and that by doing something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life. Consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and specialty in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in hell as for Peter who mounted to heaven. They believed that for those who are consigned to eternal fire there was as true and real a redemption made as for those who stand before the throne most high.

Now, we, he says he puts this in -- this is put in this particular citation as capital to others. Now, WE believe no such thing. We hold that Christ when he died had an object in view. And that object will most assuredly and beyond a doubt be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. Let me read that again. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If anyone asks us, what did Christ design to do by his death, we answer that question by asking him another. What has Christ done or what will Christ do by his death? For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love is the measure of the design of it. In other words, the ones who are redeemed express the design of the atonement, the effects of it or the design of it

because, of course, God’s purposes cannot fail. Let’s go back to Mr. Spurgeon. He says it better than I, “We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God should be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement can in anyway whatever be missed. We hold we are not afraid to say what we believe, that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving a multitude which no man can number. And we believe that as a result of this every person for whom he died must, beyond a shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin and stand washed in blood before the Father’s throne.”

Now, you’ll notice that Mr. Spurgeon says that he died for a multitude which no man can number. The greatness of Christ’s redemption may be measured by the extent of the design of it. He gave his life a ransom for many. We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men or all men would be saved.

Now, I reply to this is that on the other hand our opponents limit it. We do not. The Arminians say that Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by that. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say no, certainly not. He died for all men, but he did not die to secure the salvation of all men. We ask them the next question. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer no. They are obliged to admit this if they are consistent. He died for all but for no one in particular. They say no Christ has died that any man may be saved if and then follow certain conditions of salvation.

Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon. When you say we limit Christ’s death, we say, no, my dear sir, it is you that do it. We say Christ so died that infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number. Who through Christ’s death not only may be saved but are saved must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your

atonement. You may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it. Therefore, I think for us to speak of limited atonement is not really true to the fact unless we say limited to those for whom Christ died. Most who accept the Calvinistic view rather like the expression particular redemption. That is, Jesus Christ came to die for those whom God gave to him. He came to die for particular people, and so they believe in particular redemption.

Now, the fourth point of Calvinism was irresistible grace. And I have suggested that I am not completely happy with the term “irresistible” because I think that infallible might be better since we are not to believe that God forces a man to be saved. He constrains, but he does not force. And if irresistible suggest the idea of forcing, I think it is wrong. But nevertheless, that is the common term by which this fourth point is known, irresistible grace. And the fifth point was the perseverance of the saints. Perseverance of the saints. And we are tonight to consider the perseverance of the saints. Mr. Spurgeon had a word about this, too. He said it is not so much the perseverance of the saints but the perseverance of the savior. And the Professor Berkoff, who is one of the leading reformed theologians of the present -- of this present 20th Century, he is now dead, has said it is strictly speaking not man but God who perseveres or as the colored folks say, I’m sometimes up and sometimes down but still my soul am heavenly bound.

Now, this then is one of the five points of Calvinism, the fifth to be exact. Now, we must properly distinguish the doctrine of assurance which we talked about last week from the doctrine of security or eternal life. The one has to do with the assurance of salvation. The other has to do with security. And to make them more related to one another, I think we can say the doctrine of assurance has to do with our assurance of salvation now, whereas the doctrine of eternal life or the doctrine of eternal security has to do with our assurance of our salvation now and forever.

In other words, if I believe in assurance I believe that I am saved now. If I believe in security, I believe that I am saved now and forever. As you can see these two

doctrines are related but the second is much broader than the first. For example, John Wesley, who was an Arminian a great man but an Arminian, John Wesley believed very strongly in the doctrine of assurance. He believed a man could know he was saved now. And, furthermore, he believed that most who were sure they were saved now would be saved now and forever but he did acknowledge the possibility theoretically of someone apostatizing from the faith and losing salvation that they once possessed. And so he denied the perseverance of the saints. He was an Arminian on that point, but he believed in assurance. And he very strongly believed in it. And if you have read any of Wesley's sermons, and I recommend that you do, you will notice that he has sermons on assurance -- some of the best on assurance, but he just did not feel that we could be sure now and forever. Mr. Wesley, of course, did not believe that he could lose his salvation. He believed that it was others who might lose their salvation, which is often the view of those who believe in assurance but don't believe in security.

Now, I think before we look at our outline, it is important that we do one more thing. We need to correctly define the doctrine of eternal security or the doctrine of eternal life. And I want to do this first negatively and then positively. In other words, I want to say what it is not and then try to say what it is because this doctrine is very, very much misunderstood among our Christians.

Now, negatively, the doctrine of eternal security is not the teaching that the believer is saved no matter what his practice is. That is not the teaching of eternal security. Unfortunately, there are Christians who have heard that they are eternally secure who have gone around and have made statements that really come up to this: if we believe in Jesus Christ we are saved no matter what we do.

Now, there is a sense in which, of course, that could be said, but it's a very dangerous thing and, frankly, I think it's contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. The first place it overlooks our new nature for when we believe in Jesus Christ we are given a new nature. Therefore, we cannot live the same old life. It also overlooks the fact of

family discipline. God will not let us when we have believed in Christ continue to live the same kind of life. He has a way of disciplining us. If you had been my child, you would have known that I had a way of disciplining and would not allow my children to live in a certain way. Perhaps I was not as much of a disciplinarian as I should have been, and perhaps they do not know live the kinds of lives that they should live, but they knew that there was a certain kind of life that was expected of them. And if they got out of that particular sphere, they knew that Daddy was going to have to say something to them. And I used to bring them into my studies so often that Daddy -- that my son used to say frequently to other friends that, Daddy always when he wants to talk to you brings you into his study, and that's when he really talks to you. And one time something happened, and he said I'll bet you that what Daddy did was to bring that person into his study and talk to him, the other member of the family.

And of course, this overlooks the doctrine of rewards because in the New Testament we are told that if we believe in Jesus Christ we become a member of the family of God, and if through the faithfulness of God to us in our response to the ministry of the Spirit we are fruitful, then we are to receive rewards. And consequently, the doctrine of eternal security is not the teaching that the believer is saved no matter what his practice is. So do not say that if you believe in Jesus Christ, you should be saved no matter what you do.

Positively -- oh, before I go on I want to tell you a little story. This is a true story about a man who was converted in Scotland, and it illustrates these points. I have a friend who's now with the Lord, but he was an evangelist particularly among children. And he told about a friend of his who had been saved in Scotland. He was a banker, and he was saved in just a simple little church that everybody in the community knew to be a church that preached some of these old-fashioned Calvinistic doctrines. And when he was saved some of his banker friends saw him and he told them about his experience, and they said ah now you believe once saved always saved, don't you?

He said, “Yes.”

And they said, “Then you can believe that you can do what you like.”

He said, “Yes, I do. But I’ve got different likes now.” And everyone who has truly believed has different likes now.

Now, positively the doctrine of eternal security is this. God secures in grace the salvation of true believers keeping them from sinning as a practice and from apostasy. Let me say it again. God secures in grace the salvation of true believers keeping them from sinning as a practice and from apostasy. He preserves and we -- because he preserves, we persevere. Jonathan Edwards said -- and he was one of the greatest of Calvinists. I’ve quoted this to you a number of times. -- “The sure proof of election is that one holds out until the end.” And so he preserves, we persevere. And if we are true believers, we shall persevere.

Now, as John puts it in 1 John chapter 2 in verse 19, he says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” he is speaking about some who were denying the faith.

“They went out from us but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.”

I’ve often wondered who was responsible when the King James Version was translated for those words no doubt probably some Arminian. He’d been reading Dutch theology and someone had put Arminius’ writings in his hand because you notice in 1610 that the remonstrance put forward their views, and in 1611 that the King James Version was translated. And so the words “no doubt” are inserted. You will notice that they are in italics. They’re not in the original text. What John said really said was this,

"They went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be manifest that they were not all of us."

So what John is saying is some have left the company of the faithful. They went out. Why? Because they really weren't of us. They really didn't have the same life that we had. They weren't of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. And so when a man has believed truly in Jesus Christ, he will continue. He will continue. If you see a man who says I have believed in Jesus Christ and he doesn't continue, that is evidence that he has not really believed in Jesus Christ, no matter how loud the protestation. He has not been a true believer if he does not continue. So he perseveres. We persevere.

Now, the doctrine then is that God secures in grace the salvation of true believers keeping them from sinning as a practice and from apostasy. That's the doctrine of eternal security.

Now, we want to look at the defense of the doctrine biblically. And by biblical I mean specific statements of Scripture. We are also going to argue the case logically, and then we're going to turn to objections both of the logical and scripture of character. Capital A, the believer is secure because of the purpose of the Father. And let's turn to Romans chapter 8 in verse 28 through 30. Romans chapter 8, verse 28 through verse 30.

Now, Paul says,

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Now, I think you can see from this statement which Paul has made here that he has a purpose, God’s purpose. Look at verse 28,

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Now, what is his purpose? Well, his purpose is unfolded in the next two verses.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

So God foreknew certain people. Now, notice it does not say that he foreknew what they would do. It’s he foreknew what he would do for them. All the difference in the world between the common Arminian view that God looked down through the years and saw what we would do and then decided he would choose us after we had already chosen him. He would give the stamp of approval upon our choice. But it is whom he foreknew, not what, whom he foreknew. Certain people he entered into intimate relationship with. In his sovereign purpose, whom he foreknew, he took those whom he foreknew he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son. And so we move from God’s eternal foreknowledge of us, his intimate, personal, intimate relationship of choice onto likeness to Jesus Christ. That’s his great purpose.

Now, he tells us how he worked it out in verse 30,

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”

Now, the calling is what? Now, you are theologians now. It’s what? No, it’s not election. That had already taken place. Calling. Before we are saved or after? Right. Before. What else do we call it? Efficacious grace, right. So whom he predestinated, them he also called. Notice it’s before justification. And then he said, “and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified” -- declared righteous -- “and whom he justified, them he (shall) glorified.” No. Glorify? Well, we’re not glorified yet.

Now, Dee is a half-glorified pretty little girl like that, but the rest of us, I surely am not. Why does the apostle put it in the past tense? There’s only one explanation. He was a Hebrew. They were in the habit of writing of future events as if they were completed. Can you take up a Hebrew grammar, and you will discover the perfect of certainty or the perfect the prophetic perfect. And it is an attempt to explain this fact of Hebrew prophecy that often things that are in the future are looked at as if they’ve already taken place, and that’s why Paul writes this. “And whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Because it’s so sure to come to pass.

And remember Dr. Chafer used to like to say to us at Dallas Seminary now men -- notice how Paul puts this. He says for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. Well, are those foreknown the same as those that were predestinated? Yes. “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called,” he would say, men is the them, the same as the whom. He would say yes. Was anyone lost in the process? No. “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called,” not one is lost in the process. “And whom he called, them he also justified,” is anyone lost in the process? No. “And whom he justified, them (them) he also glorified.” Is anyone lost in the process? No.

So from God’s purpose from beginning to end no one is lost. No one is lost. Those who were foreknown, those who were called, those who were predestinated, those who were justified, those who were glorified are the same company of people. No one’s left out, and there’s no intruder. When they get to heaven, no angel is going to come up

and say, how did you get in here? Nor is any angel going to say where is so and so? You see from beginning to end is the purpose of God. That’s why we’re secure. This is his purpose. You think God’s purposes can fail? Is he like a man who can plan to do something and have his purposes forestall? No, he’s not that kind of a god. He’s a sovereign God. As Paul says in Ephesians 1, he works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

Now, I know you’re thinking, well, that’s we know about Romans, but does it say that anywhere else? Well, let’s turn over to 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 9. 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 9, the Apostle Paul says. For those of you who are still looking, it’s page 1279 in my text. This is the old Scofield Edition, King James Version. 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 9 Paul says,

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace” that I think we could paraphrase his gracious purpose. “given us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”

There it is. His purpose. Well, let’s turn back to John chapter 6, verse 39. John chapter 6, verse 39. Jesus said,

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me” Notice “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I shall lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

You see from God’s side, we are given and not one shall be lost. Did you see that? Not one shall be lost. Not one. Not you. Not one but each one shall come through

faith. As we have seen previously, it is God who gives the faith. It is God who sets apart by efficacious grace, brings us to faith in order that his purposes may be accomplished.

Now, we could talk about this for the rest of the night and all tomorrow but we cannot spend that much time on it.

Capital B the believer is secure because of the power of the Father. Let’s turn over to 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 5. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 5. God’s infinite power at work for our safety is probably best seen in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 5. Listen verse 3 Peter says,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

And I liked what Gardener Michael said last night around the Lord’s table. He got up and he said that this inheritance is not like the Dow Jones’ averages. It does not fade away. And I’m sure there were some in the audience that entered very sympathetically into what he said. Our inheritance is not like our securities which one-day make us feel rich but then a few weeks later make us feel poor. This is something that does not fade away. And then in verse 5 Peter says,

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Now, notice those words “who are kept.” Now, if you read that in the Greek text it is most interesting. In fact, it is a lot stronger because you can, in the Greek text, tell the tense of the words so easily but in the Greek text it is who are constantly being guarded. This is the word of a garrison, a soldier, who guards. Who are constantly being

guarded by the power of God? Think of that. Those who have believed in Jesus Christ have been begotten again unto living hope by the resurrection of the dead, and they are constantly guarded or garrisoned by the power of God. Listen, my dear friends. It is by the power of God.

Now, do you think any inferior power is able to take you from the power of God when he is guarding you? Now, I feel that Peter had in his mind the Passover night when he wrote this because he is a great student of Exodus. In a few moments he will talk about the precious blood of Christ as of the lamb without spot and blemish. And the picture that he has before his mind is that Israelites in the house in the land of Egypt with the blood on the doorposts put there by faith and the destroying angel is coming down the streets of Egypt looking for the blood on the doorposts. And remember that God said, When I see the blood I will pass over you.

Now, remember, I have said this to people who've been here for a long time and I know this is probably repetitious but some of you have not. That word Passover does not mean I will skip your house and go on to the next. I pointed out to you from the book of Isaiah that that word used for Passover in Exodus 12 is a word that is used of birds that flutter over their nests. It means to hover over to protect. And so when we read when I see the blood I will pass over you, God means that when the blood is placed on the doorposts and the destroying angel comes down the streets of Egypt, he goes into every house or attempts to go into every house to slay the first born. He doesn't pay any attention to the blood, but God does. And God is over the house that has the blood hovering over it, passing over it to prevent the destroying angel an inferior power from entering and taking the life of the first born. And so that is the picture that Peter has in mind. Who are being kept by the power of God? We are like the Israelites first born in the house with the blood on the doorposts put there by faith, and God garrisons us a battle. Who's going to take us? No one. No one. No one is greater than God. And our salvation is related to the power of the Father.

Now, I think that should make it very plain that our salvation is an eternal life. But you say what about faith? It says who are kept the power of God through faith. We got to keep on believing. Now, of course, there is a sense in which that is true because God preserves us in faith, but the faith that is referred to here is the initial faith, initial faith. When we look off to the cross and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that faith secures our future. And so we are being constantly kept through the faith that we exercised when we believed in the Lord Jesus and symbolically put the blood on the doorposts of our hearts. Just as in Egypt, the blood on the doorposts was put there by faith. They believed the word of God. And so the destroying angel was unable to overcome the power of God as he turned to take the first-born. That's a great truth, isn't it? You know I'm not feeling too good tonight. I was going to cancel the question time afterwards, and I still am, but I'm getting to feel a good bit better as I'm talk about these doctrines here now. [Laughter]

I think one of the other illustrations that undoubtedly Peter had in mind was his walking on the water. And you remember when Jesus walked on the water and the disciples' thought that they saw a ghost, and Jesus said, Fear not. It is I. Be not afraid. And Peter said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come onto thee on the water. And Jesus said, Come. And Peter clambered out of the boat. And in the midst of that storm with the lightening and the thunder and the waves that were one moment high, another low, Peter walked out on the water, and he walked right into the very presence of our Lord. He was so close, that all Jesus had to do when he began to sink was to reach out his hand.

And remember Peter when he got into the presence of the Lord, the text says when he saw the winds were boisterous -- the wind and waves were boisterous he began to sing. In other words, the faith that had as he kept his eyes upon the Lord Jesus wavered, and he began to sink. And the next verse says and Jesus said, Too bad, Peter. You took your eyes off of me, so long. [Laughter] No. The text doesn't say that at all. Of course, it doesn't say that. What does it say? Peter began to sink, and Jesus reached out

his hand and took him. And that’s the text that is used back in the epistle to the Hebrews to explain how God, through Jesus Christ, has come down not to lay hold of angels but to lay hold of us in order to save us. It’s a word that means to take hold of with a view to helping. And mind you Peter’s unbelief did not cause him to lose his life. His unbelief was simply an occasion for our Lord to manifest his great keeping power.

Although the strain and stress of life my thread of faith may break the cable of his faithfulness no storm can ever shake. You remember Jesus also said in the twenty-second chapter in the thirty-second verse of the book of Luke. He said Peter, or Simon I think,

“Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. Why do you think Jesus is so busy at the right hand of the Father now? Why he’s praying for all of us whose faith waivers and fails. And that’s why if we are of the ones whom the Father has given to the Son, we shall surely be in heaven someday because his faithfulness cannot fail.

Now, I think I have time to give an exposition of one more of these wonderful reasons why we can believe in eternal life. The believer is secure because of the promise of the Son. And that is our passage in John chapter 10, verse 27 through verse 30. So let’s turn to John 10, and we will try to expound this. And if I were to expound it accurately, we should wind up singing the Hallelujah chorus. This is a great text.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them (my sheep, my sheep -- I give unto them) eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

Now, this is a promise. It is not a proviso. It is not a condition. Jesus said,

“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.”

Some read it like this, “I give unto them six months’ life. I give unto them one year’s life. I give unto them ten years’ life. I give unto them a century of life. I give unto them a thousand years of life, a millennium. Listen, Jesus said, I give unto them eternal life, eternal life.

Now, we know in the study of the Bible that eternal life is not only life that is never ending, for even the unsaved have life that never ends, but eternal life is never-ending life in the knowledge of God. In the seventeenth chapter, he said this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. So I give unto them eternal life is never-ending life in the knowledge of God. I give unto them eternal life, not six months’ life, not a century of life, not a millennium of life, not a millennia of life, not life until I sin, not life until I apostatize, not life until my faith fails. I give unto them eternal life. And just to show you that that is precisely what our Lord means, notice the next clause, and they shall never, never perish.

Now, my dear friend if it were possible for us to point to one person who had genuinely believed in Jesus Christ and lost his salvation, Jesus Christ’s word would be proven false. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Oh, but one has perished. He said they shall never perish, never, never.

Now, in the Greek, it’s even stronger than that. The Greek has a way of expressing a strong emphatic negation. It’s called the subjunctive of emphatic negation in which they use two little particles, *oo mae*. These are two negatives with the subjunctive. *Oo* is a negative which is used for no or not under certain circumstances and *mae* is used under other circumstances. And when you use both of them with the subjunctive in an

expression like this, it's the strongest way in Greek you have of saying something negative. That's what used here. They shall by no means ever perish. We could render it. They shall by no means ever, never by no means ever. You get the point? Perish.

Now, not only that neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. You know, we want to try to find out all of the angles and so we like to nitpick at the Bible.

When I was preaching in American Kesick in New Jersey many years ago on falling from grace, I was trying to expound Galatians chapter 5 in verse 4. And at the conclusion of the message, a lady came up and asked me a question. She asked very much from the heart. She said, "Dr. Johnson, I've heard what you've said about falling from grace. And I must say I agree with it." But she said, "Many point to the any man of John 10:28 and say that Satan can pluck us out of his hand because it says I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish and neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. But does not prevent Satan from doing this."

Well, my first response was to say but we are kept by the power of God. And Satan or the destroying angel or Satan himself cannot take us from the hand of the power of God. But then I had my Greek testament with me. I don't like to go anywhere without that. I would feel undressed if I were to speak to an audience and didn't have my Greek and Hebrew at hand. So I said, Let's see what the Greek has to say. I had been expounding Galatians, and so I had not noticed I had not looked at the text in John 10. I knew the text, and I did not notice as I looked -- I mean I had not remembered as I now can look at this text that that word man is in italics which, of course, indicates that that is supplied by the translators. But I took my Greek Testament and opened it up to John chapter 10 in verse 28 and, rather triumphantly, I must say with perhaps a little bit of pride, I said to her now the Greeks says something a little different. It says, And I give to them eternal life and they shall by no means ever perish nor shall any one. And the word that is used in verse 28 is the pronoun *tis*, the indefinite pronoun which includes any man and any person, no matter who he may be. It includes Satan. No one, including Satan,

shall pluck them out of my hand. Well, the text goes on to say -- I must stop after this -- my father which gave the me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Now, isn't that interesting? We are in the savior's hand in verse 28. And in verse 29 we are in the Father's hand. Now, I don't know how to illustrate this. I know that Ms. Rankin who teaches children -- she's the greatest teacher of children I know. She probably has a more beautiful way to illustrate this than I have because this is just perfect for teaching children. But, you know, if you have a very valuable document it is possible for you to take it to the bank and to give it to the custody of the bank. And it's relatively safe. But if it's so valuable that you want to be sure that no one touches it, you not only put it in the bank but you put it in the vault of the bank so that you have a double security. That's what we have.

We're in the Son's hand. We're in the Father's hand. It's as if, you see, you were to put something in this hand representing the Son and it were to be held this way. We are in the Son's hand and then also we are in the Father's hand. So it is as if we have a double protection. We are in the Son's hand. We are in the Father's hand. How much safer do we have to be? How stronger can Jesus put it than this? We are in the Father's hand, and we are in our shepherd's hand. My sheep hear my voice.

That unbeliever and a simple woman were debating eternal security, and she appealed to John 10:28 and 29 pointing out that she was in her Father's hand.

The unbeliever said, "Yes, but suppose you slip through the fingers."

She said, "I could never do that. Paul says, 'Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. Hallelujah I'm one of the fingers.'" [Laughter]

So you see that is precisely what has happened. It is not only that I am in Christ's hand but I have become part of him. I am in the body of Christ. He's the head. I'm a member. And so I have a triple protection. I am part of the fingers in the Son, in the Father.

G. C. Berkhouwer, one of the Dutch theologians one of the greatest, he's living today said it is not a matter of chance that when the Canons of Dort, he refers to the Dort, when the Canons of Dort defend the perseverance of the saints they speak of Christ the shepherd of the sheep. There's no more adequate way to confess this doctrine, and that's true. We are the sheep. He is the shepherd. We shall never be lost. There's never been a shepherd like Jesus of Nazareth. If you want a shepherd, he's the greatest of all shepherds. And when you are his sheep, you have his everlasting, eternal, all-powerful care guaranteed by his work. And so I believe in the doctrine of eternal life. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these wonderful truths. And we pray, Lord, that we shall not just rejoice in our position but enable us out of the sense of assurance that we have to go forth with the sense of thy presence and thy power in our lives and share this with others. What a great doctrine we have to proclaim. Help us, Lord, to be guided by the Holy Spirit to the other sheep which Jesus has that are not yet in the fold.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.