

THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS; OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH.

NO. 2120

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“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.”-John 10:27-30.

OUR Savior did not hesitate to preach the deeper doctrines of the gospel to the most miscellaneous assembly. When he began to preach where he was brought up, they all gathered with admiration about him, until he preached the doctrine of election; and then, straightway, they were so maddened that they would have destroyed him. They could not bear to hear of the widows of Israel passed by, and the woman of Sarepta chosen; nor of a heathen leper healed, while the many lepers of their own race were left to die. Election seems to heat the blood and fire the wrath of many. Not that they care to be chosen of God themselves; but, like the dog in the manger, they would keep other people out of the privilege. Not even to prevent these displays of bad temper did our Lord keep back the discriminating truths of the Word. Here, when addressing the Jews, he did

not hesitate to speak, even to a rude rabble, concerning that glorious doctrine. He says, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." He does not lower the standard of doctrine; but he holds his ground, and carries the war into the enemy's camp. The notion that certain truths are not fit to be preached to a general assembly, but are to be kept for the special gathering of the saints, is, I believe, horribly mischievous. Christ has not commanded us to keep a part of our teaching *sub rosa*; reserved from the common folk, and set aside for the priests alone. He is for openly proclaiming all truth. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." There is no truth that we need be ashamed of, and there is no truth that will do any harm. We grant you that every truth can be twisted; but even this would be a less evil than the concealment of it. Whatever the doctrine may be, ungodly men can pervert it according to their own lusts; and if we have to stop preaching a doctrine because of the possibility of perverting it, we shall never preach anything at all, for every truth may be perverted, and made to be the mother of infinite mischief. Our Savior did not teach his disciples to keep certain things for the instructed few who were able to receive them; but he bade us publish all the great truths, since they are necessary for conviction, for conversion, for edification, for sanctification, and for the perfecting of the people of God. Even to his brutish opponents he exhibited but little reserve. He flashed in the faces of his adversaries this grand, but humbling truth, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." Your unbelief is just an evidence that you were not chosen, that you have not been called by the Spirit of God, and that you are still in your sins.

The Jews had said to him, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." They professed that they wanted to know more certainly concerning him. This was a vain pretense, for he had told them all they needed to know, and they had not believed him. Therefore he answered them to a large degree by making them know more about themselves. Sometimes the point in which a man is deficient is not as to the gospel, but as to his own need of it. He may know all of Christ that is needful for his salvation, but he may not know enough about himself and his own lost condition; and therefore he is not in the way in which Christ becomes precious to him, because he is ignorant of his deep and terrible need. So the Savior began to talk to them, not so much about himself as about his people, and what they were to be. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

I pray God, the Holy Ghost, to bless the word to many, that they may learn more about the work of Christ in their hearts, and more about their need of it, and thus may be led to seek Jesus, and find him to-night as their Savior and their Shepherd.

There are two things in my text which will suffice for our meditation. First, here is a description given of the Lord's people. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." And then, secondly, there is a privilege secured to them, namely, their everlasting, unquestionable safety. "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."

I. First, and all that I can say will be but little, considering the largeness of the subject, let us notice THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. They are first described by a specialty of possession: "My sheep." All men are not sheep, for some are foxes, or ravening wolves, and others are compared to dogs and lions. All persons who might be called sheep are not Christ's sheep. All do not belong to his flock. All are not gathered into his fold. There is a speciality of possession. There may be many sheep, but the Savior speaks of "My sheep," those whom he chose of old, those who were given him of the Father, those who have been bought with his blood, redeemed from among men, and in due time have been ransomed by his power, for he has bought them back from the hand of the enemy, and therefore claims them to be his own. "The Lord's portion is his people." Other lords have their portion, and Christ takes his portion. His people are the lot of his inheritance. He speaks of "my sheep" as a peculiar heritage, whom, as a shepherd, he claims for his own. Of these he is the sole Owner. He is not merely their Keeper, but their Possessor. We read of the hireling shepherd, "whose own the sheep are not"; but in the case of our good Shepherd, "he putteth forth his own sheep."

There is a speciality of character about them. They are "my sheep." They are dependent, timid, trembling, obedient, teachable; they are made sheep by his own Spirit. They have received a nature which is not that of the doggish world, nor that of the swinish multitude, nor that of the wolfish persecutor; but that of men indwelt of the Spirit of God, who are therefore clean, gentle, loving, gracious. He calls them "My sheep," for they have a special relation to himself: they are like Jesus. Being his sheep, he has

become their Guardian as well as their Proprietor, and they look up to him as such. They are sheep to him, and he is a shepherd to them.

We may judge ourselves to-night by considering whether towards Christ we are his sheep. Do we acknowledge ourselves as belonging to him, spirit, soul, and body? Do we regard ourselves as being, in relation to him, no wiser, no stronger, than sheep to a shepherd? I know some who are certainly no sheep of Christ's flock, for they will be led by nobody in heaven, or on earth; but must have their own sweet way. They are critics of the Bible, not disciples of it. They might be very good dogs, but they are very queer sheep. They would make very respectable wolves, for they are great in destructive criticism; but they certainly are not sheep; and their temper and spirit are such that they would disdain the character, if they understood it. "What! to go where I am led? To lie down where I am bidden to lie down? Not to choose my own way? Just to see nothing, and know nothing; but to have my eyes in his head, and my wisdom in his mind? To be shepherded by another mind than my own? Is it so? Am I to be nothing but a sheep to the Lord Jesus?" Yes, it is even so; and hence the modern wise man is indignant, and proudly repudiates the character of a sheep. As for us, we accept all that the name implies. O brethren, we can play the man before other people, but when we come before our Lord, as the sheep is a mere animal in comparison with its shepherd, we feel ourselves to be less than that. How often have we cried with David, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee"! O my Lord, in thy presence I sink as low as low can be, and thou becomest very high, yea, all in all to me, the Shepherd of my weak, vacillating, trembling spirit! There is a speciality, then, about these people in the description. I have only time to hint at it.

A chief mark of Christ's people is attention. "My sheep hear." They can hear, because they have had spiritual ears given them. Once the Shepherd might have spoken all day long, and they would not have heard him; but it is not so now. Even from the cross our Lord's plaintive cries were all unheard by them; but now he has given them spiritual capacity and perception, and they can hear, and they do hear what his dying love would make them know and understand. Their Lord has spoken to them. They have heard his voice, and have known it to be his; they still hear it, and they distinguish between his voice and other voices. "A stranger will they not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers." They now so hear that voice as to hear it in a true way; and joyfully to own it by obeying it.

Do you not say, sometimes, to a child that is disobedient, “Did you not hear me speak, child?” So Christ may say to many who hear with the outward ear, but who will not yield obedience, that they have not heard him; for indeed they have not hearkened with the inner ear. Their ear does not reach down to their heart; and thus, for spiritual purposes, it is no ear at all. It is an awful thing when the ear is a closed-up passage, shut against the voice of the Savior. You can tell the sheep of Christ by their being marked in the ear. “My sheep hear my voice.” They may not hear a good deal that other people hear; they may even be glad to be deaf to it. There are many calls exceedingly musical to carnal ears, which have no charms for them. They try to be deaf to some voices from which they could gather nothing but temptation; but they hear Christ’s voice. They are all there when he speaks: their soul sits at the door to hear his softest whisper. They try to hear: they charge themselves to take heed that they lose no sound from heaven. They do hear; but they long to hear yet more completely, and to be more obedient to that voice which rings through the chambers of their soul. Oh, what a hearing we have sometimes given to Christ! I have heard him with my body, my soul, my spirit; at least, I have thought so; but whether in the body, or out of the body, I could not tell. If in the body, every pore has been an ear for my Lord’s sweet voice. As though my blood were tingling from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, so has my spirit been wholly and entirely affected by the charming tones of the voice of the Well-beloved, Oh, that he would speak to-night! Can you not hear him? Beloved, is he not now calling us? Do you not rejoice to hear him?

*No music’s like his charming voice,
Nor half so sweet can be.*

So, you see, a noteworthy speciality of the elect ones lies in their attention to Jesus, their Shepherd. He calls in vain to others; but his sheep hear his voice.

Another mark of the Lord’s people is intimacy. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.” “I know them.” Yes, the Lord discerns them. He singles them out, for “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” Sometimes we do not know them; but he says, “I know them.” In cloudy times they do not know themselves; but he says, “I know them.” When a child of God does not know whether he is a child of God or not, his Father knows his own children, and the great Shepherd knows his own sheep. His is a discernment which never fails. The hypocrite cannot get into the true fold

of Christ. He may get into the visible fold; but not into the real spiritual fold of Christ; for Christ does not know him, and bids him depart. This is the very seal upon the foundation—"The Lord knoweth them that are his." His eyes discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not; his is a knowledge of quick and certain discernment.

But this might make us tremble if we did not know that the expression, "I know them," means a knowledge of approbation. "I know them," says the Shepherd; "I take a delight in them. I know their secret sighs and mournings. I hear their private prayers. I know their praises in the silence of their hearts. I know their consecration, and their aspirations after perfect service. I know their longings and their lovings. I know how they delight in me. I know how they trust my promise. I know how they look to my atoning blood. I know how in their inmost souls they rejoice in my name. I know them, and approve their secret thoughts." O sweet word, understood in that sense! And this is one part of the character of the Lord's people—that he did foreknow them in his sovereign grace; and now he personally knows them by taking a delight in them.

This divine complacency leads to a very intense observation of them. "He knoweth the way that I take." "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." He has an eye upon them, and marks their paths. His ears are open to their cry, and he hears their petitions. Though there be all the world for his omniscience to consider, yet he looks upon each one of his saints as much as if there were only that one person in the universe, Oh, to think of this! "I know them," sounds like music in this sense. He that knows the stars, and knows the infinite multitude of living creatures in the universe, has a special and peculiar knowledge of his own chosen. "I know them," says he; and he intends thereby an intense observation. Now, beloved, just try a little here, to see whether you come into this number—"I know them." Does the Lord know you as his own? Has he had personal intercourse with you, and you with him? Or will he have to say to you at the last, "I never knew you"? Why, some of you have made him know you! You have gone to him in such trials, and in such troubles, and you have cried to him in such bitterness and anguish, that, if he asks your name, you can say-

*“Once a sinner near despair
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard, and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me!”*

When thou didst help me in great need, when thou didst pass by my great sin, then didst thou know me, O my Lord! “Dost thou ask me who I am? Ah, my Lord! thou knowest my name.” Just as some men know right well the importunate beggar who is often at their door, so does the Lord for certain know some of you, for you go every day begging at his gate, and you receive a constant alms at his hand. Besides that, you go every day thanking him for the mercies you receive. He knows your name: the name of one who is drowned in debt to his infinite bounty. He can never forget your groans and cries; and day by day your praises are a memorial to him. By his love, and pity, and compassion, he is sure to remember you. Sooner can a woman forget her sucking-child than your God forget you.

Well, here are things well worth the noting-speciality, attention, and intimacy. Are these yours?

But here is one more: actual obedience. How does he put it? “I know them, and they follow me.” All the Lord’s sheep are marked in the foot, as well as in the ear. The foot and ear-mark must be in every sheep of the Lord’s flock. “They follow me.” That is to say, they openly avow him as their Shepherd. Other shepherds come, and other sheep go after them; but these sheep know the Lord Jesus, and they follow him. He alone is their Leader. They are not ashamed to own it. They take up the cross, and follow the Cross-bearer, and they bear his name.

More than that, they practically carry out their open avowal, and they follow him in daily life, copying his example. They not only say, “He is my Leader,” but they follow him. Christ’s sheep try to follow in the track that the Shepherd marks for them. Christ’s people are never so happy as when they can put down their feet where Christ put his feet down. The very marks that he has left by his bleeding footsteps we would desire to follow, all the day, and every day. Beloved, look you carefully to this! Do what Jesus did, according to your measure and power. This is what the people of God try to do. If you do not endeavor to be like Christ, you are not his sheep; for of his sheep it is true, “I know them, and they follow me.”

And this is personally operative upon them. I could not tell you exactly in English words, but the Greek word gives here a kind of personality to the whole company. "My sheep hear my voice," that is, the whole of the flock of God. "I know them," that is, again, the whole flock of them, altogether. But, "they follow me," is in the plural number. It is as though it said, "They, each one, follow me." We, who are the Lord's chosen, hear en masse, and the Lord knows the whole church, for, as a whole, it is redeemed by Christ; but we individually follow-each one for himself, through grace. We each one follow him. "They follow me." I like that singular personal pronoun. It is not written, "They follow my commandments," though they do. It is not said, "They follow the route that I have mapped for them," though they do that. But, "they follow me," distinctly. In their individual personality they follow their Lord in his individual personality. They have recognized himself above his words, above his ways, and even above his salvation. "They follow me," saith he. This is a grand mark of a Christian, not merely a life of morality, a life of integrity, a life of holiness, but a life of all these in connection with Christ. They follow him, not holiness, nor morality, nor integrity, apart from Christ, but they follow their Lord. A good life is good in any man. We cannot speak evil of virtue, even when we find it in the ordinary moralist; but this is not the complete mark of Christ's sheep. The virtues of Christ's sheep are in connection with himself. The Christian is holy, and all that, but that is because he follows his perfect Master, and keeps close to him. This is one of the peculiar and unfailing marks of the child of God.

I have run through, very briefly, the description, and I now leave you to meditate upon it when you are alone. This description of the sheep of Christ is worthy of reading, marking, and inwardly digesting.

II. But my main object to-night is to show you THE GREAT PRIVILEGE HERE CONFERRED ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Christ has secured to them the priceless boon of eternal security in him. No sheep of Christ shall ever be lost. None that he has purchased with his blood, and made to be his own, shall ever wander away so as to perish at last. This is the doctrine of the verses now before us. At any rate, if I wanted to express that doctrine, I could not find words in which I could set it forth more definitely, or more completely, than is done by the words before me.

The security of the people of God lies, first of all, in the character of the life which they have received. Listen to this: "And I give unto them

ETERNAL LIFE.” All the spiritual life which all the sheep in the flock now possess has been given to them by their Shepherd. Never was there another flock of which this could be said. No shepherd but this one can give life to his sheep; but he gave them all the true life that they have. Nay, stop: he not only gave them life, but he sustains that life by a constant gift. Observe, it is not written, “I gave to them eternal life,” but “I give unto them eternal life.” They are always living by virtue of the life which he is always giving. They are constantly receiving life from him, according to that assurance, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” What he always gives they must always receive, and therefore it cannot cease.

Notice the nature of that life. “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” Now, you all know what “eternal” means: or say, rather, none of you can form an idea of eternity which can grasp all its length of endurance. Only this, you know it has no end, and cannot therefore close. If anybody said that he had eternal life and lost it, he would be flatly contradicting himself. It could not be eternal, or else he must still have it. If it is eternal, it is eternal, and there is no end to it; and there is an end of further argument about it. If the life that Christ gives us, when we are born again, can die, it is not “eternal” life, or else words have ceased to have any meaning at all. In its nature, as being the work of the Holy Spirit, and an emanation from God, the life bestowed in regeneration is an undying one. Has not the Holy Ghost described us as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”? The life of God imparted by the Holy Ghost must live for ever. As the gift is continuous, and it is always being given, and as it is in itself eternal life, it must always exist.

But, principally, I dwell upon the glorious character of the Giver. “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” The life that Christ gives is not that poor, paltry life which lasts the professor for about three weeks, and then dwindles down, and dies out; or, say, three months, and then the revival is over, and the convert is spun out and done for, and has to begin again. Such is the religious life which is excited by men; but it is not so with the life which comes from God. I said that the false convert begins again, though how he begins again I know not, because I read in Scripture of people being born again; but I have never read of their being born again, and again, and again, and again. I am told that some of our religionists have had their people converted and born again more times than they can count; and I heard that a woman had been born again twelve times down at

a certain meeting; but he who stated the fact said shrewdly that he feared it was not done well the last time. No, I do not think it will ever be done well in that way. He that is born again, according to Scripture, has received eternal life; and this is the only life worth receiving. I would not preach my very soul away in order to proclaim such a twopenny, trumpery, temporary salvation as that; but to preach the Lord Jesus as giving eternal life is worth living for and dying for. I tell you, sirs, it is this that brought me to Christ. While I was yet young, and thinking over matters, I saw young lads that were brought up with me, excellent in character, who left their homes to be apprenticed, and after a while the temptations of the world overcame them, and they went astray, and had no religion at all. But when I read that Christ gave his sheep eternal life, I looked at it as a kind of moral life insurance for my soul, and I came to Christ, and trusted him to keep me to the end. I shall suffer a grievous disappointment if I ever find out that the life of God in me is not eternal, and that the new birth does not assure final perseverance. I did not go up to the booking-office, and take a ticket for a quarter of the distance to heaven; but I took my ticket all the way through. I trust, nay, I know, that according to my faith, so will it be unto me. I am very glad to have my through-ticket with me, and I believe that unless the train of Almighty grace smashes up-which it never will-I shall get through to the Celestial terminus as surely as ever divine power can draw me there; for so it is written, "I give unto my sheep eternal life."

Now, depend upon it, it is what you hold out to people that has much to do with how they behave themselves afterwards. Tell them that if they believe in Christ, they are going to get, not eternal life, but life for a little while-life for as long as they take good care of it, and I fear it will prove to be so. It may do them good to get the poor little change you offer them; but as surely as they are converted to a temporary life, they will die out before long. You told them that they would. You did not propose any more to them. But when you propose to them this-"Here is everlasting life to be had by believing in Christ. It is not temporary, but eternal life"-why, then they grip it as such. They believe in Christ for that, and according to their faith it is unto them; and the Lord and Giver of life is glorified in giving to them this great and splendid gift, the gift of all gifts. "I give unto my sheep eternal life."

I do not know in what other way to preach from this text than the one in which I am preaching from it. Somebody says, "Oh, that is Calvinism!" I do not care what it is. It is Scriptural. I have this inspired Book before me,

and I cannot see any meaning in the words before me, if they do not mean that those who have received life from the Lord Jesus have an endless inheritance. I cannot make them mean anything else. "I give unto my sheep eternal life," must mean that believers are eternally secure. "It is dangerous doctrine," cries one. I have not found it dangerous, and I have tried it these many years. I conceive that it would be far more dangerous to tell people that they could be truly converted, and yet the work of grace would end in six months, and then they could come back again, and begin again, and do so as many times as they liked; whereas the Word of God tells them that if they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Men may fall and be restored; but if they fall away utterly, there remains no other work which can be done for them. If this everlasting life could die, the Holy Ghost would have done his best, and nothing more would remain to be done. If it were so that this salt which is good should lose its savor, wherewith could it be salted? See what a gulf opens before you; and do not look for a work which will not endure every possible strain. Oh, that you may get this eternal life!

So we take a step farther. The children of God are safe, again, not only because of the life they receive, but because of the inner dangers which are averted. Take the next sentence—"And they shall never perish." They have a tendency to spiritual sickness, but their Shepherd will doctor them so that they shall never perish. They are sheep, and have a tendency to wander; but their Shepherd shall keep them so that they shall never perish. Time tries them, and they grow old, and the novelty of religion wears off; but they shall never perish. Think what you will of them, "they shall never perish," for so the promise stands.

The first statement, "I give unto them eternal life," is as broad as well can be, and this is broader still—"they shall never perish." The rule has absolutely no exception. The whole of them shall be preserved. Let them live to be as old as Methuselah, they shall never perish, whatever temptation may assail them. They may be tried, and troubled, and broken down, so that they may be hardly able to live; but they shall never perish. "Never" is a long day; but it is not longer than grace will last. Blessed be God, this grand promise stands fast—"They shall never perish."

Now we must go a step farther. We have no time to urge these arguments at any great length. They are safe, next, by outer injuries being prevented. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Many will pluck at

them, but none shall pluck them away. The devil will give many a horrible pluck and pull, to get them away; but out of the great Shepherd's hand he shall never take them. Their old companions, and the memory of their old sins will come, and pluck at them very hard, and very cunningly; but the Savior says, "None shall pluck them out of my hand." So, first, here is their security: they are in his hand; that is, in his possession, and he grasps them, as a man holds a thing in his hand, and says, "It is mine." Neither shall any take them away from being under his protection. Never shall they be plucked away from Christ. When he says this, he pledges his honor to preserve them, for if it could be that one were plucked out of his hand, then would the devils in hell rejoice, and say, "He could not keep them. He said that he would, but he could not. We have managed to pluck this one, or that one, out of the pierced hand of their Redeemer." But such a horrible exultation shall never be heard throughout the ages of eternity. "They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

Some one wickedly said, "They may get out of his hand themselves." But how can this be true, when the first sentence is, "They shall never perish"? Treat Scripture honestly and candidly, and you will admit that the promise "they shall never perish" shuts out the idea of perishing by going out of the Lord's hand by their own act and deed. "They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Who is to loosen the clasp of that hand which was pierced with the nail for me? My Lord Jesus bought me too dearly ever to let me go. He loves me so well that his whole omnipotence will work with that hand, and unless there is something greater than Godhead, I cannot be plucked away from that dear, fast-holding grip.

Now, to make quite sure about it, and to pile on the comfort, the Savior goes on to add the care and power of God himself. Our Lord says, "My Father, which gave them me." The saints of God are safe, because the Father gave them to his Son. He did not give him a transitory inheritance. He did not bestow on him a something which he might, after all, lose. Will the Lord Christ lose what his Father gave him? You know how people say, "Oh, I hope that, if a burglar takes anything from my house, he will not take that cup, which is an heirloom. My father gave it to me." If a man had to defend his property, he would be sure to take care of that which was a very special gift, given in his honor, as a memorial of a great work. So is it with our Lord Jesus: he values that which his Father gave him. I delight in the thought. I picture my blessed Lord looking at each one of his believing

people, and saying, "My Father gave you to me." That poor woman, that struggling young man, that decrepit old lady, that man who is half-starved, but who loves his Lord-Jesus says of each one, "My Father gave this soul to me." He cannot lose what his Father gave him. He would die again sooner than he would lose them. His death has made their salvation safe beyond all jeopardy. He laid down his life for the sheep. The lion came, and leaped into the fold; but the Shepherd met the lion; yea, he received him on his naked breast, and held him there. It was a terrible tug. The Shepherd sweat great drops of blood as he held the monster; but he rent him, and he hurled him to the earth, and said, "It is finished:" and it was finished. He has so saved all his flock until now that we are sure that he will never lose one of those whom his Father committed to his trust. "My Father gave them me."

Then he goes on to say that his people are kept by the Father's power; for he says, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Beloved, although God gave us to Christ, he did not cease to care for us himself! Our sweet text last Sunday night I must bring to your memory. I could not fully preach from it, but the text was enough without a sermon: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." We tried to show you how we were none the less the Father's because we were the Son's, and none the less the Son's because we belonged to the Father. So here Jesus in effect says. "My Father gave you to me; yet he takes care of you none the less, but all the more. Because he is determined that what he gave to me shall be mine, the Lord will put forth his wisdom and power to preserve you."

Let me by a symbol illustrate the latter words of the text. There lie the children of God in the hand of Christ. Do you see that fast closed hand? They are safe enough there. Jesus says, "No man shall be able to pluck them out of my hand." But see the Father, he puts his hand over the hand of Jesus! There, now: you are inside two hands, "And no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Oh, the serene security of those who hear the voice of Christ, and whom he calls his sheep! A double-handed force keeps them safe against all ill. Pluck away, Satan! You will never pluck them away from the hand of Jesus, and the hand of his Father! "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" It is impossible to be done.

And then the Savior finishes all by saying that, while he has spoken of the Father and himself as two-and two they are as persons-yet in their divine essence they are but one. He says, "I and my Father are one;" and especially one in love to his people. "The Father himself loveth you," even as he loves his Son; and, while you read the love of Christ in his death, you must read the Father's love quite as much in that great sacrifice. It is true of our Lord Jesus that-"He loved the church, and gave himself for it;" but it is equally true of the Father- "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son." They are one in an infinite love to all those who, called according to the divine purpose, are following Christ, and hearing his voice. I fall back with great joy upon this blessed conviction-that he will not suffer those to perish who have received eternal life at his hands. Of course, if you have only taken temporary life-if you only believe in that-you will get no more than you believe. Your gift will be measured by your faith. But if you say, "I gave myself up to Christ that he might be Alpha and Omega to me; and I wholly trust myself to him without reserve, throughout all my life, to save me," he will do it; for "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

You are safe in Christ's hand. Know it, and feel the joy of it. "Oh," says one, "but if I thought so, I should run into sin!" I am sorry for you: things act very strangely upon you. Nothing binds me to my Lord like a strong belief in his changeless love. "Oh, but it would be far safer to tell your hearers that they may be overcome by sin, and perish!" I will not tell them what I do not believe. I will not dishonor my Lord by a falsehood. Shall I come home to your house, and tell your children that, if they do wrong, you will cut their heads off; or that, if they disobey you, they will cease to be your children. If I were to propound that doctrine, your children would grow angry at such a slander upon their father. They would say, "No, we know better than that!" Far rather would I say to them, "My dear children, your father loves you; he will love you without end, therefore do not grieve him." Under such doctrine true children will say, "We love our ever-loving father. We will not disobey him. We will endeavor to walk in his ways."

***"Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."***

Our loving Lord will not cast away those to whom he is bound by marriage-bonds.

“Well, but suppose we sin.” He will chasten us, and restore us “If I believed that doctrine, I should live as I like,” says one. Then you are not one of his sheep, for his sheep love holiness, and will not love iniquity. The change wrought by the new birth is such that a man will not return to his old ways of sin and folly. This is the doctrine; and how can you make it to be an indulgence to sin? True saints never turn the grace of God into licentiousness, but the very mention of eternal love leads them to careful obedience.

One thing I must say at the end. Some ministers preach a gospel with a very wide door to it, but there is nothing to be had when you get within. I am sometimes told that I make my door a little too narrow. It is not true, for I preach the gospel to every creature under heaven, with all my might; but if the door be narrow, there is something worth having when you enter by it. Even if the way be narrow, if you once get in, you have got in, and you have found eternal life, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Christ’s hands. Sinner, come and have an eternal blessing! It is worth having. Come and have it! If thou believest, thou shalt assuredly be saved. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” saved from sin so as never to go back and live in it again; so saved as to be made holy; so saved as to be preserved in holiness. Holiness shall be the set of the main current of thy life, until, made perfectly holy, thou shalt dwell with God above. Into his hands let us commit our spirits to-night, and we may rest assured that they shall be safe eternally. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR READERS,-On this, the final sermon of the year, permit your friend and servant to wish to you all, in the highest sense, a happy New Year. There is not space to do more than say from my retreat-I pray you be mindful of me in your prayers.

Yours, at the end of thirty-five volumes, most gratefully,
C. H. SPURGEON.

END OF VOLUME 35.