

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Doctrine ***

*** Topic: Eternal Security * Various * 5/31/26 ***

MAIN POINT

Everyone who truly accepts Christ into their life has eternal life and will not be condemned. Since it is God's grace that sustains us as Christians and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, our salvation is guaranteed, no matter what struggles we go through. Saving faith perseveres.

INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of paying a deposit for a home, and posting bail while awaiting a trial?

Both of these require an amount of money to be put down as a pledge to confirm the fact that the payer will follow through on their commitment. If, after the offer is accepted, you withdraw from the contract, or don't show up in court, you forfeit that money as a penalty. This is the imagery the Bible uses to teach us about how secure we are in Christ. God promises eternal life to us if we accept Christ, and God gives us the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing God will honor His promise. The Holy Spirit is proof of God's ownership and the guarantee that He's not going to withdraw from a covenant relationship with us in Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EPHESIANS 1:13-14

What two functions of the Holy Spirit do we receive when we are saved?

What, then, does God demonstrate about His intentions for His children when He seals us with the Holy Spirit?

In ancient Rome, the seal was the means by which a person would authenticate documents. It was the guarantee that the documents were actually written by the person and served as a mark of certainty about their contents. It also served as a warning, preventing any tampering with the document, since the seal would have to be broken to gain access to the document. When we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, it is a pledge from God that He will carry His work inside the lives of His children until it's fully completed.

The Holy Spirit is also God's deposit in us, guaranteeing that we have been adopted into God's family, and that we are eternally secure in Him. God sealed us, and God made the deposit of the Holy Spirit in us. He is faithful, and He will follow through on what He has promised.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 10:22-30

What does it mean that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are His sheep?

The Good Shepherd doesn't just take care of the sheep; He lays down His life for the sheep. Because He did, we know that Jesus loves us, and because He rose again, we know that He is powerful. Jesus went so far as saying that even if someone could overpower Him, they could not overpower the Father. We, as the children of God, sealed by the Spirit, are secure in the grip of Jesus who is secure in the grip of the Father.

How does this fit with what we've learned from Ephesians 1?

Those questioning Jesus were doing so because they weren't His sheep. Even though they had heard Jesus teach, their hearts had not been changed. That's why they were so busy questioning Him and not following Him. The sheep, on the other hand, recognize Jesus because Jesus is actually their Shepherd—the one who loves and cares for them.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do these verses teach us about our security in Christ?

- **Philippians 1:6:** God began the good work in us, and He will be faithful to complete it.
- **1 Corinthians 1:7-9:** God is faithful. He called us into fellowship with Jesus, and He will keep us firm to the end, so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:** It is God who sanctifies us. It isn't the result of our own fleshly efforts.
- **Titus 2:11-14:** God's grace teaches us to live our Christian life.
- **Jude 24:** God is the one who keeps us from stumbling.

What do these verses tell us about what it means if someone who claimed at one time to be a follower of Christ, but has since recanted and now says they no longer believe in him?

- **1 John 2:19-20:** The fact these people left gives evidence they were never truly saved.
- **2 John 9:** The fact someone gives up on the teachings of Christ indicates they do not have a relationship with God.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 6:13-20

In the verses we read previously, we see God promising that His grace will keep us firm until the end. What do these verses from Hebrews tell us about the likelihood that God will keep His promises?

Abraham was a good example because the letter was written to a group of Jewish believers. They knew the story of Abraham well, and they knew the way that God kept His promises to Abraham. God still keeps His promises because God does not change. God has promised to give eternal life to those who accept Jesus.

What lessons can we learn from Abraham in regard to the promises God has given us?

We should confidently and patiently wait for God to fulfill His promises to us.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What warnings do these verses give us about taking things too far and thinking that just because I said a prayer, I can now sin all I want and still go to heaven?

- **Matthew 7:21-23:** There will be many people at the judgement day who thought they were saved, but in reality, they weren't.
- **James 2:18-19:** Just believing in God isn't enough. Even the demons do that.
- **1 Corinthians 10:12:** If you think that you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.
- **2 Corinthians 13:5:** We need to examine ourselves, to see whether we are in the faith.
- **2 Peter 3:17:** Be careful that you don't fall from your secure position.

Part of coming to Christ is believing who He is and what He has done for us on the cross, dying for our sins and rising again from the dead. But even the demons do that, and tremble. Salvation also involves repentance, choosing to follow Christ. It involves receiving Jesus into our life (John 1:12). Falling away from our faith is an indication we never truly came to saving faith.

***Note to study leader:** 2 Peter 3:17 is a paradox. If our position is secure (and it is), you wouldn't think you'd have to be careful not to fall. And yet there the warning is. This lesson has laid out the truth that our salvation is secure in Christ, and also warnings against falling away. Exactly how these two truths fit together has split denominations and is viewed differently today by different denominations. The exact way these truths fit together is perhaps beyond our finite mind's ability to comprehend. We leave this to God to while thanking Him for our eternal security and at the same time, being careful that we don't fall.*

APPLICATION

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 JOHN 5:11-13

What do these verses tell us about who is saved and who isn't?

If we have the Son, we have life. If we don't have the Son, we don't have life.

What do they tell us about how confident we can be in our salvation?

We can know that we have eternal life!

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1, HEBREWS 3:13, AND HEBREWS 6:12

True saving faith will keep you from completely falling away from Jesus, but it won't on its own keep you from backsliding as a Christian. What do these verses tell us about what we can do to remain close to Christ and avoid drifting away from Him?

Surround ourselves with faithful Christians who will encourage us in our walk with God.

THE SAD TESTIMONY OF CHARLES TEMPLETON

Charles Templeton was an evangelist at the same time as Billy Graham. Yet you may not remember him. His faith got into trouble when he started trying to mix the clear teachings of scripture with the secular creation myths. Here is a dialogue between him and Billy Graham.

"But, Billy, it's simply not possible any longer to believe, for instance, the biblical account of creation. The world was not created over a period of days a few thousand years ago; it has evolved over millions of years. It's not a matter of speculation; it's a demonstrable fact." "I don't accept that," Billy said. "And there are reputable scholars who don't.... I believe the Genesis account of creation because it's in the Bible. I've discovered something in my ministry: When I take the Bible literally, when I proclaim it as the word of God, my preaching has power. When I stand on the platform and say, 'God says,' or 'The Bible says,' the Holy Spirit uses me. There are results. Wiser men than you or I have been arguing questions like this for centuries. I don't have the time or the intellect to examine all sides of the theological dispute, so I've decided once for all to stop questioning and accept the Bible as God's word." Templeton accused Graham of committing "intellectual suicide." Later, Templeton declared that he had become an agnostic, and later, an atheist. Afterward, he wrote a book, "Farewell to God", describing his path from evangelist to atheist.

Templeton was interviewed shortly before he died by Lee Strobel. Strobel asked "And how do you assess this Jesus?" Templeton said, "Jesus was the greatest human being who has ever lived. He was a moral genius. His ethical sense was unique.... Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus. And if I may put it this way, (his voice began to crack) I . . . miss . . . him!" After a few more awkward moments, he adamantly insisted: "Enough of that."

PRAYER

God, we thank you for our redemption through Christ's blood. We thank you that when we believed, we were marked in Christ with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until we are redeemed—to the praise of your glory. We praise You that you chose us in You before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in your sight. We praise you that in love you predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with your pleasure and will—to the praise of your glorious grace, which you have freely given us in Christ. Help us not to take advantage of your grace as an excuse to keep on sinning, but rather that we would rely on your grace to keep us from sinning. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

COMMENTARY

John 10:22-30

10:22–24. Some time later, during the Feast of Dedication which we commemorate as Hanukkah, Jesus came to Jerusalem, still the target of the Pharisees and unbelieving Jews. At the invitation of the Jews to tell us plainly if he was really the Messiah, Jesus returned again to the metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep pen and emphasized the security for those sheep who belong to the true shepherd.

In these verses John provides context with a seasonal notation, specific geographical reference, and identification of the surrounding crowd. The Feast of Dedication was also a Feast of Lights pointing to a time when Messiah would come to the temple and throw out all invaders, thereby reestablishing the kingdom. These grand visions persisted in the Israeli nation until the sack by the Romans in A.D. 70.

10:25–26. The word believe appears in both verses and indicates that the first characteristic of true sheep is that they believe in the shepherd. Jesus made faith the cardinal issue separating unbelieving Jews from the true sheep. His miracles had been done publicly and in the Father's name, but unbelievers seemed unmoved by these divine acts because you are not My sheep. To be sure, one becomes a true sheep by placing faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. But once the Holy Spirit implants that nature in us, we respond to the Shepherd because that is what sheep do.

10:27. Though only thirteen words long in the English text, this verse identifies two more signatures of the sheep: they listen to the shepherd and then they follow the shepherd. This is not new information since we found it in verse 16, but repetition emphasizes importance. True sheep listen to the shepherd; false sheep pay no attention.

This segment of John's Gospel, particularly this portion of the chapter, overflows with basic doctrine. Consider the following list:

- Union of Christ: "my sheep"
- Calling: "listen to my voice"
- Identification: "I know them"
- Sanctification: "they follow me"
- Grace: "I give"
- Security: "eternal life"
- Election: "given them to me"
- Omnipotence: "greater than all"

10:28. Yet another signature of true sheep is that they receive eternal life from the Shepherd. Surely this is one of the strongest verses in the Bible emphasizing the believer's assurance of life in heaven. In one short verse Jesus stated it three ways: I give them eternal life ... they shall never perish ... no one can snatch them out of my hand. Yet this security, this assurance that God will honor faith in the Good Shepherd should not be claimed apart from a balance of biblical responsibility.

10:29–30. Sheep know their Shepherd, know his voice, and listen to him. We follow Jesus our Shepherd, receiving eternal life from Him. We are protected by the Shepherd now. This is not just the promise of a Galilean prophet whose miracles substantiated His claim to greatness. Throughout the entire narrative of John, Jesus repeatedly referred to the Father's power. Even if the unbelieving Jews doubted His ability and authority, they could never doubt the omnipotence of the Father.

But that is precisely the point of unbelief. Since they did not accept Jesus as Messiah, they did not see Him as their Shepherd. But His response was clear: I and the Father are one. There can be no greater security, no safer shelter, no more sure salvation, and no more clear signature than this relationship to the God of the Bible through His Son the Good Shepherd. No wonder Paul could write, "Your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

Ephesians 1:13-14

1:13. In addition to all the other spiritual blessings Paul noted, he now mentioned that believers are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Beginning at Pentecost (Acts 2), this promise had become a reality. Each believer in Christ now receives the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). His presence proves we are truly His children and under His protection.

1:14. The term down payment referred to a portion of a sales price paid in advance to secure someone's legal claim to an item. The very Spirit of God in the lives of believers is only the beginning of what we receive in salvation. Paul looked to our future inheritance, the full enjoyment of eternity, when our redemption will be complete. Again the apostle noted the benefit to God from His wonderful plan. Throughout all eternity, salvation will result in the praise of His glory (1:6,12).

Hebrews 6:7-20

The writer to the Hebrews highlights the importance of examining your life, to see what kind of fruit you are bearing: either the thorns of apostasy, or the fruit of salvation. Based on these Hebrew Christians' fruit, he was confident of their salvation based on their love for Christ and faithful service in His name.

The author uses the example of Abraham to show our salvation is dependent on God's faithfulness, not ours. After Abraham waited patiently, he obtained the promise of God, and we should seize this hope because God has guaranteed His promise with an oath. And because Jesus has entered the inner sanctuary of God's presence, the Christian has a sure and firm anchor for the soul. There is not a hint of wavering in the author's voice about either God's will or the final outcome for his "dear friends."