

## They Shall Never Perish

The Lord Jesus tells us, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” He goes on to give us this wonderful promise, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27, 28). More blessed words of comfort and reassurance have never been uttered!

The security of the sheep is guaranteed by the faithfulness and omnipotence of our Good Shepherd. Since he promised that they shall never perish, we can be sure that not even one of his sheep will ever be lost. There is no stronger creature in the universe that is able to open the protecting hand of the Lord and steal away one of his own.

However some Christians think that a true believer can end up in hell for one reason or another. They reject the assurance of eternal life because they fear that it will encourage presumption and reckless living.

Such fears are not groundless. There are indeed many nominal Christians that shamefully abuse the promise of Christ. They imagine that they will go to heaven even though they live like the devil, because, they say, ‘Once saved, always saved’. On the Day of Judgement, they will discover their delusion and folly when it is too late.

The Lord’s speech is clear and we have no excuse to misunderstand him. He said clearly who are they that will never perish. The Lord does not give assurance on the basis of church affiliation, baptism or some other religious act.

Some members of the Catholic Church will be lost, just as some members in evangelical and Protestant churches. There will be many baptized people in hell, whether they had been baptized as infants or adults, by pouring or immersion. Many who made “a decision for Christ” and prayed “the sinners’ prayer” will never make it to heaven. And many who call themselves “Christians” will be disowned by Christ on that Day.

The sheep that belong to Christ’s flock are characterized by two marks, one on their ears and another on their feet. Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” These then are the characteristics of Christ’s sheep, they hear and follow the Shepherd. They heard his call to repentance and his invitation to come to him for spiritual rest. They continue to hear his Word every day, and consistently walk in obedience to his commandments in holiness and love.

We should not ask whether his sheep can ever be lost; that is an insult to the Shepherd, and a disbelief in his faithfulness and power. We should rather ask whether we are truly his sheep, that is, if we sincerely love him with all our heart. Only then we can be confident that we belong to Christ and that we have life everlasting.