

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SALVATION BEING ETERNAL— POSITIVE REASONS

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Last evening we saw a number of things that God has already done. When we were saved, God gave us His Holy Spirit as the seal. It is not that the Holy Spirit seals a seal upon us, but that the Holy Spirit is a seal upon us; the Holy Spirit is the seal of God upon us. This seal will remain until the day of redemption. Therefore, not one Christian can lose his salvation. Tonight we shall continue to see that the Holy Spirit is not merely the seal given to us by God, but also the pledge given to us by God to assure us of our eternal inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the proof of our receiving the inheritance.

Here we see that there are two aspects to the Holy Spirit in us. On the one hand, God puts His Holy Spirit in us as the seal to prove that we belong to God; on the other hand, God puts His Holy Spirit in us as the pledge, that we may know that whatever God will give us is guaranteed. One can see that these two aspects are different. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit causes God to know that we belong to Him. On the other hand, His Holy Spirit causes us to know that we belong to Him. We have already seen the Holy Spirit as the seal; now, we want to see the Holy Spirit as the pledge.

Let us read Ephesians 1:14, which says, "Who is the pledge of our inheritance." When we believed in the Lord Jesus, God promised us that He would give us the incorruptible inheritance in the heavens. How do we know that God would not change His mind and take it back? We know that God will not withhold it from us because He gave the Holy Spirit to us as a proof or pledge. The word "pledge" in the original language means a deposit. Originally, I should pay someone twenty thousand dollars, but I first pay him two hundred as a deposit. A deposit means giving someone a little today and a large sum in the future. Have you ever paid or received a deposit when you bought or sold something? When you rented a house, did you ever pay a deposit? Originally, one should pay thirty dollars a month to the landlord, but he first pays five dollars as a deposit for the house. When he gives the five dollars, he is saying to the landlord that the other twenty-five dollars will definitely come. God said that He will give you the incorruptible inheritance in the heavens. How do we know that we will definitely obtain that inheritance in the future? How do we know that we will not lose it? This is because the Holy Spirit has been given to us. The Holy Spirit is the earnest money, the collateral, the pledge, and the token deposit given to us by God. When God gives us the Holy Spirit, He is telling us that all the inheritance in the heavens will be ours in the future.

If a person were to lose his salvation after his believing in the Lord Jesus, what would he do with God's collateral? For instance, I have a house which rents for fifty dollars a month. A brother comes to rent it by first putting down five dollars. This is short of forty-five dollars. He says that the forty-five dollars will surely be given to me. If after a while he does not give me the forty-five dollars, what should I do? I would confiscate his five dollars. However, God cannot do this.

First, the promise God has given us cannot fail. Even if God had not given us the deposit, as long as He has spoken, He will fulfill it. Even if God does not give us a pledge or a deposit, when He says that He will give us an inheritance, He will surely keep His word. Because our mind is full of legality, God gave us the Holy Spirit as the proof for us to know that God has given us the deposit. Since we have the deposit, will He not give us the inheritance?

There is a wonderful portion in the Old Testament. Genesis 24 shows us the old servant of Abraham seeking a wife for Isaac. The servant brought with him a lot of riches and precious things from Abraham's house. After he had settled with Rebecca concerning her marriage to Isaac, he gave all these things to Rebecca as engagement gifts. On the one hand, the old servant gave her all these, such as what was on her nose, fingers, head, neck, and hand, to adorn her. On the other hand, all these things were an indication to Rebecca that they were only a little token, that eventually all of Isaac's possessions would be hers.

After we are saved, due to our unbelief, we may think that God did not have the intention to save us. We wonder what would happen if salvation were merely God's toy for us, which, after a few years or a few decades, may be lost and we may become lost again. God is concerned that there may be doubts in our heart. He puts the Holy Spirit within us as the proof to assure us that He will definitely give us the inheritance. My friends, when we look at the Holy Spirit within us, we will realize that we definitely will obtain the eternal inheritance. If God is not going to give us the future inheritance, why did He give us the Holy Spirit? If God is not going to give us the future inheritance, the pledge of the Holy Spirit is meaningless. Our salvation cannot be lost, because the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the pledge. As long as this Holy Spirit is with us, we are saved. The Bible says that He will be with us until the day of redemption. Therefore, we can say assuredly and with concrete proof that we will obtain the future inheritance.

THE BELIEVERS BEING THE GIFTS GIVEN BY GOD TO THE LORD JESUS

Seventh, there is another reason why we will not lose our salvation. In the Bible we see that a relationship exists between the Lord Jesus and God, and a relationship exists between the Lord and us. Many Christians have not clearly seen the relationship between God, the Lord Jesus, and us sinners. Therefore, they misunderstand and think that they can lose their salvation. There is a wonderful word in the Bible that says we Christians, the saved sinners, are the gifts given by God to the Lord Jesus (John 17:6). The Father is here, and the Son is also here. The Father gave the saved ones as gifts to the Lord Jesus. If God has given us as gifts to the Lord Jesus, is there the possibility for us to lose our salvation? We have to consider the matter from two angles.

First, God gave us to the Lord Jesus as a gift. If we were to perish and lose our salvation, if our salvation were not eternal, God's giving us to the Lord Jesus would become a joke on the Lord. This is like a mother giving soap bubbles to her son. Have you ever played with soap bubbles? One dips a tube into soapy water, blows on the tube, and out come the bubbles. We know that those bubbles will disappear in a few minutes. But when the son sees it, he will be thrilled; he will think that the ball is great fun. He does not know that it will break after a little while.

If God were not omniscient, it might be possible for us to perish because God would not know whether our salvation would be temporary or permanent. But God is omniscient; He knows whether we will be saved eternally or temporarily. If God were not omniscient, it could be possible that He would give us as a soap bubble to the Lord Jesus. But if God is omniscient, He would know that after three or five years, that bubble would break. If He were to do that, He would simply be giving air to the Lord Jesus; He would not be giving a gift to Him. God is an eternal God; whatever He does is eternal. If God gives us as a gift to the Lord Jesus, He cannot regard that as a token favor only.

Second, for God to do this would cause a problem to the Lord Jesus also. Suppose God gave us to the Lord Jesus, but three or five years later we perished and lost our salvation. To us, we would have lost it. But whose fault would it be that we lost it? You could blame the gift given by God for being corruptible. But you could also blame the Lord Jesus for not being able to take care of it. Many times people have sent me some very good gifts. When I was away from home, I lost one of them, or damaged them. Either I can blame the gift for being poor, or I can blame myself for being careless in keeping it. God told the Lord Jesus that He gave those people to Him. What would happen if one day those people were to become lost? We cannot blame only God for giving the Lord Jesus a token favor, but we have to also blame the Lord Jesus for not being able to keep those whom God had given Him.

In John 17:6, the Lord Jesus said to the Father, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." All the saved Christians are given and awarded by God to the Lord Jesus. Verse 9 says, "I ask concerning them; I do not ask concerning the world." The Lord Jesus did not pray for the world, but "concerning those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours." Hence, we Christians are the gifts given by God to the Lord Jesus. Verse 12 says, "When I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given to Me, and I guarded them; and not one of them perished, except the son of perdition." In the Lord's prayer, He said that He kept every one of those whom God had given Him. There was only one son of perdition. He was Judas. Judas never believed; from the beginning he was the son of the enemy and was never saved. The Lord Jesus said that except for Judas, not one of the ones God had given Him perished.

My friends, you have to know that God has already given you to the Lord Jesus; He has already given you away. This is like a girl being given in marriage. When we were saved, God had given us to the Lord Jesus already. Therefore, all those whom God has given to the Lord Jesus, who have believed in the Lord Jesus, will be kept by the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus said, "I kept them in Your name, which You have given to Me." How could a Christian lose his salvation again? After God has given you to the Lord Jesus, how could you vanish away? The Bible says that not one of those whom God has given to the Lord Jesus would perish.

God has given so many of us to the Lord Jesus. Think about it: After God has given all of us to the Lord Jesus, could we perish again after three or five years, simply because we are not good? You should listen to what the Lord Jesus said in 6:37: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and him who comes to Me I shall by no means cast out." Why did you believe in the Lord Jesus? Why did you come to Him? You came to the Lord Jesus and received Him because God gave you to the Lord Jesus. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." In other words, all

those who come to the Lord are given to Him by the Father. The only reason that you come to the Lord Jesus, that you receive Him as Lord, that you trust in His redemptive work and in His resurrection as your proof of justification, is that God has given you to the Lord Jesus. In heaven God gave you to the Lord Jesus, and on earth you believed in Him and came to Him. God gave you over so that you would come to the Lord Jesus. What does it say after this? "Him who comes to Me I shall by no means cast out." There is no way for us to lose our salvation because God has already given us to the Lord Jesus.

This is not all. There is another portion in the Bible, John 10:29, which says, "My Father, who has given them to Me." Who are the sheep of the Lord Jesus? We are the sheep. In the Gospel of John, we are shown numerous times that we are the gift given to the Lord Jesus by God. God cannot give us away as a token favor that has no substance to it, and the Lord Jesus cannot simply throw us away after He has received us. Do not think that our salvation is a small thing. Since we are not saved by doing this or that, neither can we be unsaved by doing this or that.

I thank God that formerly I was a sinner. I, Watchman Nee, was not asking to be saved. I rejected and opposed Him. But unexpectedly, God brought me through and caused me to accept the word which I had formerly rejected. God took me and gave me to the Lord Jesus. Once I was given, I no longer had any way to escape. When God gave me to the Lord, I received Him as the Savior. From that day on, I was in the Lord's hands. Since we have been given by God and received by the Lord Jesus, how can we escape? If it were we working by ourselves, and if it were we trying and striving to save ourselves, a little negligence or carelessness and we would be through. But we must realize that it is God who has given us to the Lord Jesus and who has saved us.

Let me give you a somewhat imperfect illustration. We know that recently Szechuan had a very severe famine. I read many reports concerning it. Children two years old, who could not even talk yet, were stretching forth their little hands to beg. They begged for food and clothing and maintained their livelihood through begging on the street; they had no other way to go on. Suppose there was a rich person who had plenty of food and clothing at home. If I delivered one of these children over to such a person, in reference to the material things, the child could be said to be saved. Once I give the child over, he is saved. In the same way, we the sinners were dead in sin and perishing. But as soon as God gave us over to the Lord Jesus, we were saved. To be saved means to be given over by God. While we were dead in sin and were waiting for judgment under condemnation, God gave us over. As a result we are saved. This has nothing to do with you. Since God has received you, He could not forsake you again. You were a lost person. You had neither food nor clothing. God gave you to the Lord Jesus, and He received you. How could you be cast out again now? There is no way it can be done. God has given, and the Lord Jesus has received. The Lord said that whoever comes to Him will not be forsaken. Whoever is given to Him by God will not be forsaken by Him. Hence, there is no way for such a one to perish. If you were able to perish, it would mean that God would not be consistent. God has already given over; and the Lord Jesus has already received. How can you perish? It would be a miracle if it were again possible for you to perish. I can say to God, "God, I thank You. I was a sinner; I was dead in sin. While I was yet a sinner, I had no desire to be saved. But You gave me over, and the

Lord Jesus has received me. Once You have given me over, and He has received me, I cannot help but be saved."

The Lord Jesus said, "Him who comes to Me I shall by no means cast out." The phrase "by no means" in the original language is very emphatic. It means regardless of anything. "By no means" is a strong expression, but because of our familiarity with the words, we do not pay so much attention to it. It means regardless of any reason, the Lord will not forsake us. There is absolutely not a single Christian whom He has forsaken. We are saved because of the Lord Jesus; we can continue in our salvation and be preserved in our salvation also because of the Lord Jesus. If we think that salvation is of the Lord but that preservation is of ourselves, we will discover that no one can preserve himself for even a single day. I am putting aside man; I am putting down man, but I am exalting the Savior. Everything is accomplished by Him. This is a gift; it is a present. We will never be forsaken.

THE LORD JESUS BEING OUR HIGH PRIEST

Now we come to the eighth point. It is precious to know from the Bible that the Lord Jesus is our offering, but it is more precious to know that He is our High Priest. Many times I asked the brothers and sisters in various places what we would do if the Lord Jesus were not our Savior. Many said that we would be hopeless. If the Lord Jesus were not our Savior, we would be through; there would be no way for us to be saved. Then I asked what would happen if the Lord Jesus were not our High Priest. Many said that this would not make much difference. They think that it would not make much difference if the Lord Jesus were our High Priest or not. We have to know that there is not such a thing. We can keep our salvation only because the Lord Jesus is our High Priest before God. There is no need to mention the former sins or yesterday's sins. The sins that we have committed today alone are enough to cause us to perish. We can continue being saved only because the Lord Jesus is praying for us. The intercession of the Lord Jesus keeps us being saved. Hebrews 7:25 says, "Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him." Why can He do this? "Since He lives always to intercede for them." The Bible clearly tells us that the Lord Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him. Some people may tell us that we may lose our salvation or that we may still perish. If this were the case, where would you put the prayer of the Lord Jesus? God says that the Lord Jesus lives always to intercede for us. He continues to live to intercede for us.

Who can comprehend all the effectiveness of the intercession of the Lord Jesus for us? If we have a friend who is not saved and we pray for him, God can save him. How much more can the Lord Jesus, who is always before God interceding for us, keep us saved forever! Suppose you have a friend who fell away after believing in Jesus. You prayed for him and wrote letters to him with the hope that he would be a good Christian again. God heard your prayers. After a few years, he was revived. Now would not the continuing, eternal, and lasting prayer of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is always before Him, be much more effective? Because the Lord Jesus is the perpetually living High Priest who intercedes for us before God, surely we will be saved by Him to the uttermost.

I am very happy about one thing. Others may forget to pray for me, but I am still a person being prayed for. Man can give up praying for me, but I am still a person being prayed for, because the Lord Jesus always prays for me. I have One who is the High Priest before God. Although man may forget, He never forgets. He lives perpetually as the High Priest to intercede for us.

The Lord Jesus told us that His prayer is for all those who believe; it is for all those who belong to Him. It is not for those in the world. John 17, which we have just read, is quite clear. Verse 9 says, "I ask concerning them; I do not ask concerning the world." "Them" refers to those given to Him by the Father, as mentioned in the previous verses. "I do not ask concerning the world, but concerning those whom You have given Me." Here we see the scope of the Lord's prayer; it is for those who believe in Him and not for the world. There is another matter which we can mention here in passing. The Father is related to the world; and the Son is related to the church. The New Testament never says that Christ loves the world; one only sees that God loves the world. On the other hand, one sees that Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her. The realm of the Father is the world, and the realm of the Son is the church. He said that He did not pray for the world. The effect of His work causes the world to be saved; yet His prayer, His priesthood, is only for Christians. It is not for outsiders.

He prays for us. What is the purpose of His praying for us? He prays for God to keep and protect us so that we can be like Him, so that we can be separated from the world, and so that we can be one. Regardless how strong the world is, how severe the temptations of Satan are, or how intense man's flesh is, the prayer of the Lord Jesus constitutes all the strength; He is able to keep us. If God were not a God who listens to prayer, nothing would happen. But God is One who listens to prayer. In John 11 the Lord Jesus said, "Father, I thank You...You always hear Me." If God continues to listen to prayer, it will be impossible for us not to be saved. Friends, before you could perish, you would first have to escape from the prayer of the Lord Jesus. The prayer of the Lord Jesus is the guardrail of hell. If you want to go to hell, you need to jump over this guardrail. If you cannot push away the prayer of the Lord Jesus, and if you cannot get rid of the guardrail of prayer, you have no way to perish. Thank God that the prayer of the Lord Jesus is trustworthy.

Let me cite a very clear example. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, Peter once said very proudly to the Lord, "Everyone can deny You, but I will never deny You." Afterwards, Peter failed. The Lord Jesus told him in advance, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has asked to have you all to sift you as wheat. But I have made petition concerning you that your faith would not fail; and you, once you have turned again, establish your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32). Because of this word, Peter was able to rise up again after he failed. Not only was he able to rise up, but he was able to help many others. Many people have risen up even today because of Peter. Peter's turning again was not out of himself. It was the power of the Lord's prayer that was holding him all the time. Later, when he remembered the Lord's word, he wept and repented. All this came about by the power of the Lord's prayer. God listens to the Lord's prayer.

The Lord Jesus never prayed for Judas, because Judas was a perishing one from the beginning; he was not saved. From the first day, he was a perishing one. He never believed in the Lord Jesus; he never acknowledged the Lord Jesus as Lord. He merely called Him Master. Judas was a perishing one. The Lord Jesus could not pray for him. But Peter was a saved person; he was

definitely saved at the latest by the time of Matthew 16, when he confessed the Lord Jesus as the Son of the living God.

We should not trust in our own prayer. Rather, we should trust in the prayer of the Lord Jesus. It is not a matter of us praying fervently every day. The question is not how many times we have prayed in the last few days. We need to remember that regardless of how many times we pray, nothing will be effected. It is not our prayer that keeps us saved to the end; it is the prayer of the Lord Jesus that can keep us saved to the end. I do not know how many of us here tonight believe in the power of the prayer of the Lord Jesus. Can you entrust yourself without reservation to the prayer of the Lord Jesus? You may think that Satan's temptations are severe, the world's temptations are strong, the fleshly desires are intense, and Satan's attacks are heavy. I cannot agree with your word. If we look at ourselves, oftentimes we will feel like saying we are finished. After a few more temptations from Satan, we think that our flesh will be out of strength. Many times we feel discouraged and are unable to continue in prayer. At such times, we need to look to the Lord Jesus. He is our High Priest. We have to lift our head and look to Him. We should say, "I cannot make it. I cannot even pray. Yet I will trust in Him. He is my High Priest; He can save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him because He lives always to intercede for us." We have to rely on Him. Since we have such a High Priest interceding for us, would it be possible for us to lose our salvation?

GOD BEING THE ONE WHO KEEPS US

I am not saying that we should forget about the difficult passages in the Bible. We will address those passages in the next message. But there are many positive things which are undeniable. Not only do we have the prayer of the Lord Jesus and the functioning of the Lord Jesus as our High Priest; the Bible records many other items besides. Our salvation does not depend merely on our believing, but it also depends on the keeping power of God. It is not we who are keeping ourselves, but the power of God that is keeping us. We are kept by the same condition that enabled us to be saved. The condition for receiving is the condition for keeping. It is impossible to have one condition for receiving and another condition for keeping. By grace we received God's salvation; by grace we also enjoy God's preservation. If we say that salvation is by grace but preservation is by works, we have never read the book of Galatians.

We have studied the books of Romans and Galatians many times. Romans talks specifically about sinners; Galatians talks specifically about believers. Romans says that man cannot be justified by works, and Galatians says that man cannot keep his justification by works. Romans tells us that sinners cannot trust in works; Galatians tells us that believers cannot trust in works. Romans tells us that the sinners' justification before God has nothing to do with the law and works; Galatians tells us that the believers' preservation by grace likewise has nothing to do with the law. Having begun by the Spirit, should we be perfected by the flesh? Having begun by faith, should we be perfected by the law? Hence, Romans is for unbelievers and speaks from the angle of unbelievers. Galatians is for believers and speaks from the angle of believers. If the receiving of grace before God is free, the keeping of salvation before God must also be free. The Bible shows us quite clearly that it is God rather than we ourselves who keeps us.

First Peter 1:5 says, "Who are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time." The last step of salvation is redemption at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Salvation can be divided into three stages. The salvation spoken of here refers to our redemption at the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Through faith we are being guarded by the power of God unto redemption. Are we the ones who hold fast to God, or is God the One who holds fast to us? Is it we who keep ourselves, or are we kept by God? The Bible says that it is God who keeps us. The guarding by the power of God implies that if I were to become lost, the responsibility would not be mine, but God's. I speak reverently, that if we were to be lost, more responsibility would fall on God than on us. However, we should not have any thought at all that Christians can be loose. We will talk about this issue in the next few messages. The problem today is salvation. Salvation is altogether something to do with God.

Suppose I leave a seal with Brother Ma because I have to take care of some matters. If Brother Ma loses my seal, whose responsibility is that, mine or Brother Ma's? It is true that I am partly wrong for trusting in Brother Ma; but the direct responsibility lies with Brother Ma because I have entrusted my seal to him. If I handed myself over to God, and later I were to lose my salvation, indeed I would have made a mistake in trusting God. But the mistake would be directly with God. It would be God who would be wrong. We are preserved because of the power of God. Those who do not know God may say that the power of God would be inadequate to keep us. But all who know God have to bow down and say, "We who are being guarded by the power of God through faith will definitely receive the salvation ready to be revealed at the last time." Peter was quite sure that we will receive it. No matter what happens, we will be fully saved.

Why will we be fully saved? Second Timothy 1:12 says, "For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit unto that day." Whatever Paul had deposited in the Lord, the Lord would guard unto the day He returns. Therefore, we are saved all the way until that day. Many times I consider what would happen if one day I, Watchman Nee, were to go to hell. My perdition would not be a big thing. However, for God's glory to suffer loss would be a big thing. For me to go to hell and perish would not matter very much, but the loss of God's glory would matter a great deal. My perdition would not be that important. But if I were to perish, God would surely not be glorified; His glory would surely be damaged, because it would indicate that God does not guard well. If I were to perish, that would be because God did not keep me well. On account of God's glory, all those who know God and His keeping power would say that there is no way for them to lose God's salvation. Hallelujah! We have no way to lose it. The Word of God is more than clear in this respect.

Concerning the verses on keeping, the one I like the most is Jude 24-25a. It is more peculiar than any of the other verses. It tells us what the name of God is. The name of God is "Him who is able to guard you from stumbling and to set you before His glory without blemish in exultation, to the only God our Savior." What is God's name? God's name is the One who is able to guard us from stumbling; God's name is the One who is able to set us before His glory without blemish in exultation; God's name is the One who is the only God our Savior. This is our God. What is it to not stumble? It does not say that God will keep us from falling, but that He will keep us from stumbling. To fall is to lie down on the ground. But to stumble is only to make a slip. He says that God can keep

us from slipping. Not only can God keep us from falling, but He can keep us from slipping.

No teaching in the Bible can have the sinners as its starting point; all teachings must have the Lord Jesus as the starting point. It would be terrible if sinners were taken as the starting point; but if the Lord Jesus is taken as the starting point, things will be clear. If we take the sinners as the starting point, the problem of sin will become obscure to us. There will be many things that we will not consider as sins. Many filthy matters will be regarded as clean; many matters that are weak will be considered as very strong; many shameful things will be considered as glorious. Even after we have become a Christian, we still consider many sinful things as glorious. With those who know God, there are still many sins which have not been judged. There are still many sins that a Christian considers as glorious. If a believer is unclear concerning the matter of sin, how much more will a sinner be unclear? There are many sins that God has already judged in the Lord Jesus, but that were not manifested as sins to us when we were sinners. Only after we believed in the Lord Jesus have we become clear that those were sins. When we were sinners, we were not clear; only after we believed in the Lord Jesus were we clear. However, even Christians are not trustworthy; there are still many things which they do not see. Concerning the losing of one's salvation, if we consider the matter from man's viewpoint, we will never see anything. If we consider the truths of the Bible from our own viewpoint, everything will become confusing. We may think that one thing is greater than others. It is only when we consider things from the Lord's viewpoint that we will be clear. The question is not whether one is able to keep his salvation. The question is whether or not the Lord Jesus is able to guard his salvation.

The proper view is one which stems from the Lord Jesus. If it is up to us to keep our salvation, we may not even be able to keep it for two hours, much less two days. But if it is the Lord Jesus who does the keeping, even if a righteous person were to stumble seven times a day, he would still be able to get up. It is not we who are able, but God who is able. If we turn towards ourselves, our eyes will be in the wrong direction. The Bible tells us that we should look away unto Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith. The keeping power is the Lord's and not ours. We can trust in God because it is God who keeps us.

The question today is: What method is God using to keep us? Today we have given our life to God. But how will God keep us until the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus? There is no other way but for God to hide our life together with the Lord's life in Him (Col. 3:3). As I read this verse, I am so overjoyed that I could laugh out loud. Nothing can be better than this verse. I do not know if many Christians know how good this verse is. It is impossible to lose the life that God gave to us, because our life and that of the Lord are already hidden in God.

I remember when I was still an unbeliever, as a student, once I finished writing something very important. I told my schoolmate that it was a very important matter and that I would not sell it even for five thousand dollars. I had to go out for a while, and I asked him to keep it safely for me. I gave him that sheet of paper and left. When I came back, I asked him for the paper. He said that he could not give it to me, because after I had said that it was so important, he soaked it in water and swallowed it into his stomach. He patted his stomach and assured me that the paper was there and that it would never be lost. That day I did not know whether to laugh or to cry about it. That sheet of paper was in his stomach; it would never be lost. But neither would it ever

be taken out. It was indeed very secure. What God has done today is something more secure. God has hidden our life together with that of Christ in Himself. Where can we find it now? How could we lose it again? God's life to us could only be lost if God Himself were lost. Thank God that God will never be lost. As a result, the life He put within a Christian can never be lost either. The life of a Christian is securely kept; it is kept in God.

THE PROMISES OF GOD

Besides the nine points covered already, there is still another point. Of the nine points that have been covered, none can be overthrown by you, or even by God. No method or way can overthrow them. Once a person is saved through God's grace, no longer can anyone cast him away. But the Lord Jesus considered this as not good enough; He was concerned that we would doubt His work. For this reason, He gave us promises to purposely show us that we will not be lost. We all remember John 10. This portion of the Scripture shows us clearly what our destiny hinges on. Our destiny does not hinge on ourselves; rather, it hinges on the Lord Jesus and the Father.

John 10:28-30 says, "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one." The word of the Lord here cannot be clearer: "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever." These words alone are adequate. Here the Lord speaks in such a solemn and definite way that we shall "by no means perish forever." It is just like saying that we shall not be cast away forever, as mentioned earlier. It is also like saying that we will not come into judgment, but have passed out of death into life, as mentioned in John 5:24. These are all absolute words: "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever." God is an eternal God. Those who do not know God do not know what God has done. If a man knows God, he knows that whatever God does is eternal. God does not ever do anything temporary. God never changes from one time to the next. What God has done is done once for all. God will not change after two days. Once God has done something, it is done forever. God will not save you today and cast you into hell tomorrow. He will not save you again the following day and cast you into hell again the day after that. If that were the case, the book of life would not look very nice; there would be deletions and corrections here and there. God is eternal. What He gives to us is eternal life. That is why we can never perish. We need to see that whatever God does is eternal. God will never change after a while. Man can change at will, but God cannot change at will. Once He saves us, we are saved eternally; never again could we be in danger of perishing.

What proof do we have of this matter? "No one shall snatch them out of My hand." The words "no one" in the original text have the meaning of "not any created thing." The Lord says that none of the created things can snatch us out of His hand. "I am a good shepherd; I gave life to My sheep, and My sheep shall never perish." As the Father has given the Lord the sheep, no created thing can snatch them out of the Father's hand. John 10:28 speaks of the Lord's shepherding. Verse 29 makes a turn and mentions the Father. Verse 29 says, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand." The hand mentioned in verse 28 is the Shepherd's hand, and the hand mentioned in verse 29 is the Father's hand. Who is the Father? He says that the Father is greater than all. All things are

included in this "all." All the created things, all the angels, all the evil spirits, all the human beings, all the created things in the world, including you and me, are included in this "all." The Lord says that the Father is greater than all. No one can snatch us from His hand. He has a big hand that keeps His sheep. How can they ever be lost again? Only one that is greater than the One who is greater than all could possibly snatch us away.

Some may say, "True, others cannot snatch us away, but I myself can go out." For one to say this proves that his mind is fallen. He does not know God's Word, and he does not know himself. After a person is saved, if he were to perish, would it be because he himself wants to perish? Or would it be because of the temptation of the world, the seduction of the enemy, and the attack of Satan? For a Christian to perish would mean that lust can snatch man from God's hand; it would mean that the devil and the world can snatch man from God's hand. Man does not go to hell because he wants to go to hell; even sinners themselves do not want to go to hell, not to mention Christians. It is clear that man is dead in sin because of the evil spirits' binding work. Everyone in the world is possessed by demons. All the sinners have demons working in them. If the believers can be snatched from the Father's hand, then the evil spirits are greater than the Father of all creation. Here is a sheep in the hand of the Father of all. If nothing is greater than the Father of all, there is no possibility that this sheep can be snatched away. Moreover, it is impossible even for us to escape ourselves, because even we are part of the all things. The Lord Jesus said, "My Father is greater than all." You cannot put yourself outside of the all things.

Thank God that verse 28 shows us the hand of the Lord Jesus and verse 29 shows us the hand of the Father. Verse 28 tells us about the hand of the Shepherd. This is not a matter of law, nor a matter of curse, nor a matter of mercy, but a matter of the keeping by the Lord's hand. Verse 29 says that the Father's hand is greater and more powerful than all. We should consider ourselves securely held by two hands: the Father's hand and the Shepherd's hand.

Not long after I believed in the Lord, Brother Leland Wang and I went to listen to a message in Jiang Wan. The preacher said that we Christians should be fervent. We should preach the gospel and serve the Lord; otherwise, we would be dropped. After the message, I asked Brother Wang, "When do you think you will be dropped?" He said, "I am afraid that I will be dropped tonight." I said, "Yes, I am afraid that I will also be dropped. If I am dropped, I will go to hell." I further said, "If we can be dropped, what is the use of exhorting people to believe in Jesus any longer?" He agreed, saying, "I cannot even eat tonight." I said that not only would we not be able to eat, but we would not even be able to sleep that night. Those in the world do not know the danger of eternal death; they can still eat and sleep. We know the peril of eternal death; we know that we are like chaff before the wind. How can we not worry? This was my story before I knew about this aspect of the truth.

Thank God that it is my Father who keeps the salvation for me. It is my Lord who keeps my salvation for me. Therefore, I know that I am very secure. Twelve years ago, I was in Southeast Asia. Once I rode a bicycle through a big forest on my way to preach the gospel. In the forest, I saw a big mother monkey carrying many little monkeys stacked up one upon another on her back. They were like the human pyramid seen in acrobatic shows. The mother monkey carrying the little ones was running amid the trees. Every so often, she had to jump from one tree to another with a long distance in between. The mother monkey would jump and grab onto a branch of

another tree. After swinging over a little, all the little monkeys on her back would fall onto the ground. The mother monkey would then jump down and let the little ones climb up and pile themselves onto her back again. On that day I watched them there for about two or three hours. They were very intriguing to me.

About two months ago, I was in Kunming. There was a Mr. Lin there who had a cat in his house. That cat gave birth to three kittens. One day I went to Mr. Lin's house, and neither Mr. or Mrs. Lin were there. So I went to see the cats. I played with them and used my hand to pet them. The mother cat took the kittens in her mouth and ran away. None of the kittens were dropped. God's saving of us is not like the mother monkey bearing the little monkeys; we do not have to hold onto Him like the little monkeys holding onto their mother with their strength. If that were the case, and if the branches were a bit softer, a few swings and we would be dropped. God's saving of us is like the cat holding the kittens in its mouth. No matter how He runs, we will not be dropped. This is the keeping of God. If you want to hold on to God, it is too strenuous. In three to five years, or even much sooner, you would be dropped. We thank God that it is God who is holding us.

Finally, let us read Romans 8. Last night we read chapter eight, verse 30. We saw five rings. There is no difference in importance in these five rings. We saw that all those who were justified will be glorified. The glorification here in the original language is in the past tense. God is an eternal God. From God's viewpoint, all those who are justified have already been glorified. Maybe, on your side, you still have to wait for a thousand years for your glorification, but on God's side, in His purpose and His plan, it has already become history. Therefore, He says, "And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified." God has already glorified them, and they have already been glorified. Hallelujah! The history has already been written. How can it be wrong? Your future history has already been written, and there is no way for you to change it. Since God has completed the writing of your future history and the future events, He has determined to accomplish it for you.

Because of this, the beginning of verse 31 says, "What then shall we say to these things?" If all the justified ones will be glorified, "What then shall we say?" We shall say nothing. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" God has already made up His mind. How can man be against it? "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" Here God is asking, even shouting to the whole world, "Who shall?" Paul asks "who" four times. "Who can be against us?" "Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones?" "Who is he that condemns?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul knew that there is no possibility for any of these things.

Paul did not say, "Who shall cause us not to love Christ?" We often do not love Christ. Oftentimes our love is shaken because it is drawn off by the world. We may not love Christ, but who can cause Christ not to love us? Whether tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword, all of these cannot separate us from the love of Christ.

Verse 37 says, "But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us." It is not through our loving the Lord, but through the Lord loving us. If it is through our loving Him, we are hopeless. If it is through our Lord loving us, then "in all these things we more than conquer....For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This shows us clearly and definitely that once God has given us salvation, it is ours eternally. No one can overthrow this fact. These words are too high, too broad, and too profound.

May God show us that whatever God does, He does it thoroughly. God is the Alpha and the Omega. He never stops until the work is completed.