

What will happen?

HN/SS 19/12/04 am

Reading: Jeremiah 31:1-17, John 10:1-30

Study: John 6:39-40

Psalms: 50:1-5, 119:49-52, 65:1-4, 65:5-7

When Jesus gave thanks for the five loaves and two fish and they were multiplied so as to feed 5000 and more, remember his concern about the leftovers. Gather them up *so that nothing is lost* he told his disciples. Some think that he had an ethical concern about waste but was that his only concern? This food, plentiful though it was, was the gift of God. It was by divine power that the loaves were multiplied and through him given to the people.

The same term is found here in verse 39 – *of all he has given me I shall lose nothing*. If Jesus was concerned about the bread that the Father had miraculously given, how much more was he concerned about the precious souls the Father had given him! The elect of God come to Jesus, and Jesus promises that he will by no means cast them out but shall preserve them unto eternal life. None shall be lost for Jesus, by the will of God and power of God, will keep them to the end.

In these verses before us we find the blessed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints – or maybe better termed the preservation of the saints. John 10:28-29 is also a key passage which teaches this truth – along with many others.

This doctrine is in complete harmony with the sovereignty of God in election. Indeed it flows from it, as this passage shows. If those whom the Father gives to Him to receive eternal life are later lost or destroyed then Jesus power to keep them in eternal life or willingness to obey the will of the Father must be questioned. Either alternative is preposterous and unthinkable. Jesus who came down from heaven to do the will of the Father and who was obedient unto death will do the will of his Father in preserving the saints.

People who think that it was by their free will alone, by their own faith, that they came to Christ, will of course struggle with this doctrine. For when testing comes and doubts assail them as they surely will, they will look to themselves, look to their ‘decision’ to follow Christ and doubt even more their salvation. Do I really believe, what if I got it wrong, is my faith too weak? They will be up and down, tossed about like a ship on the sea.

Those who know the truth of divine election as we see it taught here in this text will not look to themselves but to Christ. They will find assurance in the truth that ultimately it is not their holding on to Christ that matters but that Christ is holding on to them.

Those who would trust in their good works to merit salvation and a place in heaven can have no assurance of salvation. They have to keep the balance sheet in the positive. They have to keep up the good works and make sure their sins are atoned for regularly. Indeed the Roman Catholic church declares ‘if one says that a man once justified can sin no more, nor lose grace and that therefore he that falls and sins was never truly justified...let him be anathema.’

But of what value is such atonement. As Spurgeon said ‘Where is the efficacy of the precious blood, if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeems for a time and then suffers us to perish where is its value? If it only blots out our sin for a few weeks, and then permits that sin to return and to remain upon us, where I say is the glory of Calvary, and where is the luster of the wounds of Jesus.’

Jesus knew that he was sent by God the Father. He knew that he was doing the Father's will. He knew that he was returning to the Father. This Jesus declared that *my Father who has given them to me is greater than all* and that no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand (10:29).

Do you have such assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ? Do you know how precious you are in the sight of God? He set his love upon you in eternity. Jesus loves you so much that he died for you. As someone said ‘One of the best proofs that God's love shall have no end is that it had no beginning’.

The last day

Let us consider this time frame first before we look at what else Jesus promises the believer. The last day is a term we find four times in this chapter and it unique to John's gospel. What does it mean?

Those whom the Father gave Jesus were in the first instance his immediate band of disciples. They were with him physically – but his keeping them and protecting them was spiritual. In his prayer in the upper room he said *those who you gave me I have kept and none of them is lost – except the son of perdition, that Scripture might be fulfilled*. Lest anyone think that Jesus failed in regard to keeping Judas note that Jesus chose him to be one of the Twelve but knew from the beginning that he was ‘a devil’ (6:70).

Jesus was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. How then does he keep the elect today? He said I have *given them your word- your word is truth*. He also promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. So we are not left without the means by which Christ will preserve us until the end.

Jesus rose from the dead and is now seated with the Father in heaven. He said that he is coming again. We who live between his two comings are living in the last days. The last day therefore is when the present dispensation, the present time as we know it, comes to an end. This will be when Jesus returns.

It is the same as the day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, and the day of Jesus Christ. Paul writes with confidence that *he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Philippians 1:6). Jesus is not only the author but the finisher of your faith.

Jesus continually reminded his disciples of this day, the last day, and we would do well to focus upon it more than we do. This is the end of the race as we are told. We face many hurdles, many obstacles in this present life as Jesus well knows. Testing, temptations, trial and tribulations will come but remember you are in the hand of the great shepherd of the sheep.

Some would be critical of this doctrine of assurance thinking that it promotes carelessness or lawlessness in the life of the believer. But such thinking stems from a failure to understand the wonder of regeneration. A converted person may think like this but one who is regenerate by divine election will not. It is entirely out of place and indeed impossible in one who has been effectually called and saved by grace, who has died to sin and been raised with Christ unto newness of life. *My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.*

I will raise him up

What does Jesus mean by this? There is a sense in which we have been raised with Christ at the first resurrection. In Ephesians 2:5-6 we read that *God made us alive together with Christ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* But here in the text he means the resurrection at the last day – the time when the dead will come forth from the graves (5:28).

The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental teaching of the Bible. Christians who do not believe that the dead rise or that Christ rose from the dead have no hope. Paul says their faith is futile and they are to be pitied more than all men (I Corinthians 15:19). But Christ is risen! He is the firstfruits of those who have died. Not only is he risen but he promises to raise us up with him (II Corinthians 4:14). He promises us an eternal inheritance in heaven.

Complete and perfect salvation is what Jesus promises in the declaration that he is the bread of life sent down from heaven. What an awesome, sovereign God we have. What a perfect and powerful saviour we have. What great truths he declares here in this text. He who calls you will keep you to the end, he who justifies will glorify.

Jesus will present you for whom he died and whom he keeps – he will *present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to God our saviour who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever Amen.*

So confess with the apostle ‘I know who I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day’. I have committed to him my soul and my body and he will keep me for ever. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

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