

I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE

John 10:22-42

Key Verse: 10:28

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

In the last passage, 10:1-21, we learned that Jesus is the good shepherd. Jesus is the good shepherd because he lays down his life for his sheep. We also learned about the false shepherd. When the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it, the false shepherd runs away, because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep (13). Jesus is the good shepherd because God loves him and he loves God (15). And he obeys God's will to save men from their sins and lays down his life (17). Jesus the good shepherd lays down his life of his own accord, because he has authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again, according to the eternal and universal salvation plan of God (18). At his words, the Jews should have repented of their sins and had faith in Jesus the good shepherd. But many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" (20) Yet others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (21) When Jesus talked about himself as the good shepherd, the majority of people did not accept his words. But some of them had eyes to see that Jesus is the Son of God. Today Jesus teaches us why he is the Son of God. He shows many evidences through his miracles that reveal his sonship. We want to think about Jesus the Son of God who came to this world to give men eternal life.

First, the Jews who lived in suspense (22-24). Look at verses 22-23. "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade." The Feast of Dedication is the same as the Feast of Illumination or the Feast of Lights, during which a candle was lighted each day until a total of eight days was over. When Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple, the worship at the temple was interrupted for three years. Around 167 B.C., Judas Maccabeus restored the worship of God by overthrowing the statue erected by Antiochus Epiphanes. Since then the Jews celebrated the Feast of Dedication, also know as Hanukkah. Now Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. This may have been like the five covered colonnades around which many invalid people gathered in the hope of jumping into the water first and being healed of their illnesses (5:2). Jesus was mindful of invalid people and all kinds of sick people. Jesus was hoping that somehow they might be healed and also saved, by believing in him. Suddenly the Jews gathered around Jesus saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (24).

What is the meaning of "suspense"? It is a state of apprehensive uncertainty. The best example of suspense is the duel between the boy David and the Philistine champion Goliath (1Sa 17). The Philistine Goliath challenged the Israelite army to a duel. He was nine feet tall and his spear shaft was like a weaver's rod (1Sa 17:4-7). His voice was like roaring lions. His voice reverberated to the other side of the mountain and in the hearts of the entire Israelite army. On the other hand, boy David came on an errand of his father to see about his

brothers, who were in the army. He responded to the Philistine champion Goliath's challenge. The champion laughed at him because he had no arms in his hand or armor on his body. Who was going to win the duel? This is suspense. The boy David approached Goliath with his sling shot and several stones in his bag. They were in the position to fight. Both armies foresaw David's miserable death. But the boy David felled him, because a stone sank into the champion's forehead by the boy David's one sling shot.

Everybody may have seen the famous movie, "The Student Prince." The prince of Prussia was too kingly and formal to marry another country's princess. So his grandfather sent him to Heidelberg University to learn some romance. During his student life, he really liked ordinary students at Heidelberg University. But students from the aristocratic families came to know that he was the crown prince. So some of the leaders of the aristocratic student group invited him to their group. He refused. Then one of the students from an aristocratic family challenged him to a duel in fencing. There was a great suspense: Would the crown prince be killed?

There is a well-known story about the duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton. I believe that you know that story very well. There is another well-known story about suspense between Andrew Jackson and Charles Dickinson. Andrew Jackson's wife was humiliated by Dickinson. So Jackson challenged him to a duel. Jackson was a general and later became a president. We are also living in a time of suspense. There are many kinds of sports and games. Especially it is a kind of suspense to watch the Kentucky Derby to see who is going to win. It is a kind of suspense to watch an automobile race. They say that this generation is the "three S" generation: sports, sex and speed. We enjoy many kinds of sports to enjoy suspense. Many enjoy sex to experience a kind of suspense. Many enjoy high speeds. So 10,000 people in this country are killed by automobile accidents at Christmas every year. Suspense involves excitement and uncertain results and danger and cruelty. John expressed the Jews' feeling so well. They said Jesus was demon-possessed and raving mad. But when we study Jesus, he is indeed humble and lowly. The Jews saw Jesus at the temple walking around Solomon's Colonnade. They felt suspense, assuming that Jesus' popularity would eclipse their political power and authority. Not only the Jews, but all those who do not believe in God live in suspense. They are in the feeling of uncertain danger. Some students worry about whether they would get an A or a D on their report card. Some students worry about their marriage problem. Those who become alcoholics and drug addicts are all men of suspense.

Second, Jesus gives man eternal life (25-30). Look at verses 25-26. "Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.'" Jesus did not keep them in suspense. He showed them many miracles through which they could see the Son of God. Jesus also told them many things about spiritual realities in John's gospel. But they did not believe. They did not even believe the miracles that Jesus had performed in God's name. They did not believe because they were not Jesus' sheep. The miracles were not intended to amaze them. When we review the miracles in John's gospel, all the miracles were performed in order to show them the evidence that Jesus is the Son of

God and the Savior of the world. His miracles show us that he is the good shepherd. Therefore, the Bible sometimes uses the words "miracle" and "sign" interchangeably. When we scrutinize the meaning of the word "miracle," it is precisely a sign rather than a miracle; the sign that shows that Jesus is the Son of God and a good shepherd.

For example, Jesus changed the water into wine at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (2:1-11). It was a miracle. He changed foot-washing water into sweet wine. But we can say that it was a sign that Jesus came to this world to change people. In other words, Jesus came to bless all mankind and Jesus came to make men happy by saving them from their sins. Therefore, it is proper to call changing water into wine a sign rather than a miracle. Once Jesus fed 5,000 people who had invaded the place where he wanted to have a retreat with his disciples (6:1-15). The disciples were very unhappy. But Jesus had a great compassion. He learned that the crowd was hungry. So he really wanted to feed all of them. But Jesus did not have such big money to feed them. He asked Philip first and next Andrew. When Andrew brought a boy's five loaves and two fish, Jesus thanked God that many of God's flock of sheep thronged to him, and he had a compassion to feed them. Many scholars say that this is an imaginary miracle or a possible miracle. Some scholars say that the miracle is a miracle. But we can say that this is the sign which shows that Jesus is the good shepherd and that Jesus has great compassion which no one else can have. Only the Son of God can have such a great compassion for a shameless crowd of 5,000 people. Once Jesus saw a 38-year invalid man (5:1-15). Jesus learned that his laziness and fatalism made him an invalid, who sat down begging on the street for 38 years. So Jesus healed him by saying, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (5:8). This was a sign more than a miracle. It shows Jesus' great shepherd heart for a helpless and hopeless and smelly person. No one wanted to look at him.

Once Jesus was passing by on the road (9:1-7). He saw a man born blind. When the disciples saw this man, they reflected about themselves and became very fatalistic. But Jesus mixed mud with his saliva and applied it to the man's eyes and told him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam" (9:7). This was precisely a sign rather than a miracle. This was not a sign to entertain people, but a sign which shows that Jesus is the Son of God, for no one has ever opened a blind man's eyes. Therefore, Jesus said in verses 25-26, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep." How sorry Jesus was! Jesus had performed many signs so that they might believe in him. But the wicked Jews thought of his miracles as a kind of entertainment as in the circus.

Jesus grieved over the Jews, the chosen people--over their unbelief. Jesus had showed them many miracles so that they could see the miracles and realize that Jesus is the Christ. But they did not do so because they were not Jesus' sheep. Jesus was very sorry that his chosen people became the slaves of sin and Satan, and instead of feeling the peace of God, were in suspense whenever they saw Jesus. But verse 27 says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." There are many kinds of knowledge we must have. So we must read many books, study hard at school and work hard to become a specialist in one field. Even though there are many things we must know, the most important knowledge

is to have heart to hear his voice and follow his footsteps.

Look at verse 28. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." Jesus really gave the promise of eternal life even to the Jews. These days the words "eternal life" are not popular even in churches. But Jesus came to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. All men's agony comes from the fact that they do not have eternal life. Suppose men have no eternal life. Men become very fatalistic. Even St. Paul wrote in his conclusion about resurrection faith, quoting the Old Testament, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (1Co 15:32). These days men's thought world has vanished and the concept of Christianity is badly influenced by secularism and mammonism. One leader in a certain Christian organization said, "Any Christian organization which does not accommodate modern culture is a cult." What he said is understandable. America follows the system of capitalism and pragmatism. If anybody insists on fundamental Christianity, he is supposed to starve to death. So in order to eat three meals a day, this leader was justifying himself instead of being a remnant in this generation. He is not dedicated to God. He is struggling to eat three meals a day by doing the work of God. He is very fatalistic about his job as a student evangelist. It is obvious that he eats and drinks a lot, thinking that tomorrow he will die.

What is the most important thing for a man? Of course, it is his precious life. Jesus said to his disciples in Mark 8:35-38, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." To a man, eternal life is real life and everlasting life. To a man, physical life is maintaining his bag of mud by means of three meals and seven hours of sleep a day. For those who do not have eternal life, the best way of life is to eat a lot and drink a lot and get mad and enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin in order to forget about their future destiny. These kinds of people all become perverse and immoral. Finally they become animal men. Those who do not have eternal life ruin their family and their nation and the world through their perversion and immorality. In view of history, all great empires such as the Mesopotamian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Greek Empire, and the Roman Empire were ruined by revelry and perversion and immorality. Immorality seems to be fun. But it is poison to one's life.

Eternal life gives a man a living hope in the kingdom of God. Those who have eternal life live in the world as holy pilgrims. They do not work for selfish gain; they work for the glory of God, sacrificing many things, believing that when they sacrifice God will bless them and their children abundantly. Those who have eternal life realize the love of God and love their wives and others, not because they are generous, but because they have eternal life, which is the fountain of joy and life and peace and hope and eternity.

There is a faithful woman. But she was very fatalistic because she was the youngest in her family and her older sister is very strong,

while she was very mild. But by believing in Jesus, she received eternal life. Since then, she has become a woman of many smiles. She has around seven kinds of smiling styles. Please watch her very carefully to find her smiling styles. She overcame her fatalistic youngie mentality and she also realized the love of God in her heart. She treats her husband like a crown prince. She is most happy whenever she sees her husband. In addition, she cares for God's flock of sheep, sacrificing so much. It is unbelievable that such a youngie girl has been changed so much. But fact is fact. Now she is the best shepherdess among us.

How does Jesus give eternal life to men? First, Jesus gives us his life by sacrificially caring for his sheep. When we study the life of Jesus, we see that he had no house to live in (Lk 9:58). He had no financial sources to support his disciples. According to Luke 8:2, Jesus' company's financial resources were several changed women's sacrificial and prayerful support. In reality, Jesus didn't have any money or any other goods to use to care for the flock of God's sheep. But he always cared for God's flock of sheep personally and collectively. Finally, he served them with his life. When we read about Jesus' passion week, we cannot but cry. Jesus had the Last Supper in which he shared his body and blood with his disciples (Lk 22:7-23). Jesus suffered much through many trials by the Jews and by the Roman governor (Lk 22:47-23:25). Finally he was crucified on the cross and he shed his blood to wash away our transgressions (Jn 19:34). "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" sounds easy, but it summarizes the life of Jesus concisely. In order to understand Jesus the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, we must study Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:3-6 says, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Praise Jesus who suffered and died and rose again to give us eternal life. No one can snatch us out of his hand.

Third, factual evidences (31-42). After hearing that Jesus gives them eternal life, the Jews picked up stones to stone him. But Jesus again told them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" (31-32) Jesus did not say this out of his antagonism. Jesus said this out of his great shepherd heart and compassion for the Jews. Then they said to him, "We are not stoning you for any of these, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (33). Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?" (34) It was a quotation of Psalm 82:6. At that time, the Jews did not use the word "God." In order to say "God" they used a symbolic sign or called God "Adonai," or "El Shaddai," which means "the Almighty." The word "God" was rarely used. But Jesus used the word "God" so many times that they branded Jesus as a blasphemer and they picked up stones to stone him to death. So Jesus quoted the Old Testament and explained that the word "God" is already used in the Old Testament. Jesus also said, "You cannot accuse me of

blasphemy because I said I am God's Son" (36). Jesus also encouraged them, "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (37-38). The Jews should have believed him. Yet again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp (39).

Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true" (40-41). And in that place many believed in Jesus. The majority of the Jews did not believe in Jesus even though Jesus had showed them many evidences that he is the Son of God and the Savior. But Jesus was greatly comforted by those who received John the Baptist's baptism. They acknowledged that John was a man of power and spirit and that he preached the baptism of repentance yet could not perform any miracles, but that Jesus is the Son of God as John had introduced him. Thank God that there are always some remnants. This is the characteristic of Christian religion. It seems to be that everybody is a Christian and nobody is a Christian. But only the remnant who believe in Jesus who gives eternal life are real Christians.

Today we learned that Jesus performed many miracles and showed many evidences that he is the Son of God and the good shepherd. But the Jews wanted to kill him by stoning. Regardless of the Jews' persecution, Jesus had a great compassion on them and taught them that many miraculous signs from God were the evidences that he is God's Son who came to this world to give men eternal life. In this passage we learn that we should not live in suspense. We should not have the "three S" generation mentality. We must carefully think about and pray to know how important it is to have eternal life. We must believe in Jesus so that we may have eternal life and never perish.