

Safe in Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] many years ago now, I lived in a part of Edinburgh, Leith, which is a very busy part of the city, and Andy will remember this, in Iona Street, right at the end of the street, there's a large church, and that church had a clock tower, and every hour that clock chimed, you know, one, two, three, whatever, but during the week, during the day, you never heard the clock, because the noise of the street and the people going to and from, the only time that you would ever hear the clock was if you were up late at night or up early in the morning, and then the street noise was quite quiet, and you would hear, you know, 12 or 1 or 2 or 3, whatever the hour was, and I think that is a helpful picture, that in the world today, there is much noise, there are many voices that are competing for our attention, and sometimes the voice of Jesus is crowded out, sometimes even though he's speaking, we're not hearing, there are too many voices, too much noise, too much volume, but he's constantly speaking, just like that clock, every hour, chimes the hour, even if you don't know it is, and with you this morning, I'd like to look at John's chapter 10, because if we needed a reminder, John chapter 10 is a reminder that life is tough, that life is unpredictable, that there are dangers, that there are pitfalls, and that the Christian life is tough, because if the experience of our Lord Jesus was difficult, and he was perfect, and he was the son of God, and he had all power, wisdom, glory, and majesty, and might, if his earthly journey was difficult, we should expect likewise, that our earthly journey is difficult, and just a simple survey of the chapter, as we read it together, we're told that there are thieves and robbers, there are those that want to deceive us, there are those who want to harm us, not everyone has our best interest at heart, there are different voices vying for our attention, there's the voice of the good shepherd, and he has our interest at heart, but there are strangers, there are thieves, there are robbers, and they want to distract us, they want to divert us, they want to confuse us, or confound us, we're told that there is one who is called simply the thief, not only are there thieves and robbers, but there's the thief, the enemy, and often in the Bible you have this triad, this trio of enemies for the Christian, you have the world, the world that is going in a different direction than God, you have the flesh, your own desires that often war against the spirit, and then you have the devil, the thief, and he has a clear agenda, the thief, he comes only to steal and to kill and destroy, he might offer the world, but he never delivers, he might offer pleasure, he might offer joy, he might offer satisfaction, but he never ever delivers, and then we go on and you'll see that there are wolves, that there are dangers, that there is division, in verse 19 we're told there was again a division among the Jews because of these words, in verse 31, we're told that the Jews picked up stones again to stone him, so life is tough, the Christian life is tough, and to say otherwise is just to make believe or to pretend, but Jesus speaks in the midst of this difficult life, Jesus guides us, Jesus speaks to us, he comes to comfort us, he comes to lead us, he comes to show us the way in the midst of this difficult life, in the midst of these dangers, in the midst of this division, and he's speaking to us today, but the question is, are you listening, are you hearing his voice

amongst the many other voices that are vying for your attention, what will other people say, what might other people think, what about my family, what about my friends, what about, now it's quite understandable that you know, you take into account the key people in your lives, but I hope in this morning hour that we share together, that we could listen to what he has to say, what he has to say about life, but what he also has to say about what comes next, because there is a next, that this life is not all there is, there is another chapter, and that another chapter, another chapter can be such a better chapter than this one, because the Bible tells us that that next chapter, that chapter where we are with God in glory forever and ever, there is no danger there, there is no division there, there are no wolves there, there are no thieves there, there are no robbers there, and the thief, he's not there at all, so let's listen together to hear what Jesus has to say, and when we come to John chapter 10, Jesus tells us that he's come to give us two great gifts, two great blessings, and you

might be familiar with the language of blessing or the language of benefit, in the shorter catechism, question 36, the question that is asked, what are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end. So the Christian life is full of blessing, the Christian life is full of benefit, but before we get to the benefits, and before we get to the blessings, I was reading from Sinclair Ferguson, who is a very wise man, a preacher, and a pastor, and a teacher, and he put it this way, he said the first thing to remember, of course, is that we must never separate the benefits, regeneration, justification, sanctification, from the benefactor, Jesus Christ. He says the Christians who are most focused on their own spirituality may give the impression of being the most spiritual, but from the New Testament's point of view, those who have almost forgotten about their own spirituality, because their focus is so exclusively on their union with Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished are those who are growing and exhibiting fruitfulness. Historically speaking, he says, whenever the piety of a particular group is focused on our spirituality, that piety will eventually exhaust itself on its own resources. Only where our piety forgets about ourself and focuses on Jesus Christ will our piety be nourished by ongoing resources that the Spirit brings to us from the source of all true piety, our Lord Jesus Christ. So if we focus on the benefits, if we focus on the Christian life, if we focus on our spirituality, you might make it so far. You might persevere so long. You might have a certain store or a certain resource, but I tell you what, if the Christian life is down to you, if the Christian life is down to me, we're not going to make it. We're not going to persevere. We're not going to make it to the end because we simply lack the resources. But if our focus this morning is on the one who gives the gifts, the one who provides the benefits, the one who is the source of all the blessings, and if we realize that our safety and our security and our finishing the race comes down to him, then we have a whole nother picture. We have a whole nother picture that can comfort us in the midst of these trials and these challenges. So we come now to John chapter 10, and Jesus himself is the benefactor. And before we look at the two gifts he gives, let's look at the two descriptions that he gives of himself. In verse 7, he says, truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. He's the gate. He's the door. If you don't get that in verse 9, he'll say it in verse 7, he'll say it again in verse 9, I am the door. So Jesus is the way that you and I can enter in. He's the way that we can enter into a new relationship. We can enter into that place of safety or blessing, to that pasture that sustains us and that place that gives us comfort and security. He's the door that opens and we can come in. He is that source of salvation alone that we can have in this world. I am the gate, says Jesus. He says, everyone else, thieves and robbers, he says, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. That's his word. That's his promise. That's his guarantee.

And you notice that that guarantee is unconditional. Well, there is a condition if you enter in. But he doesn't say, if you enter in and your faith is strong. If you enter in and your knowledge is deep.

[10:11] If you enter in and, no. If you enter in, you will be saved. You will be secure. You will find pasture. Why? Because he provides it. He guarantees it. He assures it. He is the foundation of our lives.

He is the beginning. He is the middle. And he is the end. We never start with Jesus and move to something or someone else. We start. We continue. We finish with him. It's all about him. It's not really about us. I mean, we're important. We're a part of the picture. But he is the key. He's the door. We enter in through the door. He then goes to describe himself in verse 11. And in verse 14, he says, I am the good shepherd. And he says that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. This is who he is. And this is what he does. The door opens. Salvation provided. The good shepherd. Life laid down. Why? So that we can live. Who he is. What he does. I am, as Jesus says, the good shepherd.

Verse 14, I know my own and my own know me. We know the words of Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. And this language of shepherd and sheep runs throughout the scriptures. David could say, the Lord is my shepherd. And Jesus picks up that shepherd language and says, I am the good shepherd.

You've seen bad shepherds. You've seen bad examples of leadership. You've seen those that don't care about the sheep. They're just hired men. You, when danger comes, they go. Why? They don't own the sheep.

[12 : 03] They don't care about the sheep. But not me. Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd. And he says it and he shows it. And you see, this is the gospel. The gospel is not just a list of propositional statements concerning Jesus. But the gospel is the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of people just like us.

It's who he is. It's what he has done. It's in time and in place. It's his life. It's his death. It's his resurrection. And we have safety and security because of who he is, because of what he has done, and because of what he then gives to us as his people. He owns the sheep. He's not a hired hand. He cares for the sheep. He doesn't run away. He speaks and he wants us to listen. He gathers and he wants us to be part of this fold. And you notice in each of these cases, the verbs that he uses, he is the subject. He is the good shepherd. He lays down his life. He's the subject of the verb.

We are the object of his blessing. So yes, the Christian life involves effort. And the Christian life involves response. And the Christian life involves us, absolutely. But first and foremost, the life of the believer involves him. What he does, what he says, what he promises, and what he provides. So you might think to yourself, I'm not yet a Christian. The Christian life looks difficult, and the preacher just told me it's difficult. So if this is a difficult life, and I don't feel that I have the strength, or the wisdom, or the background, or the knowledge, then it's too difficult for me. And the answer to that, of course, is yes, it is too difficult for you. It's not too difficult for him. Because Jesus can change you. He can change your heart. He can change your life.

[14 : 06] When you're weak, he gives you strength. When you're foolish, he gives you wisdom. You see, are you able to trust that he says what he means, and he means what he says? You see, Jesus doesn't have much to say to the wise. He has plenty to say to the foolish. Jesus doesn't have much to say to the strong, but he has plenty to say to the weak. Jesus doesn't have much to say to the healthy, but he has a lot to say to the sick. And Jesus doesn't have much to say to the righteous, but he has plenty to say to sinners. And I think maybe in this gathering this morning, that we can identify with those words, the foolish, and the weak, and the sinner, and the sick.

That can characterize us. So if he's speaking to people like that, he's speaking to people like us. So he's the gate, he's the good shepherd, and the benefits that he comes to give are very simple. In verse 10, he says, you know what the thief does? The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. He says, I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly. So you see, the devil makes great promises, but never delivers. Jesus says, if you want life to the full, I'll give you life to the full. If you want life, you want your cup overflowing. That's what it means when the Lord is your shepherd. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. So you have that imagery of Psalm 23, where the cup overflows, but the joy and the celebration lasts forever. So Jesus says, I'm going to give you two things here. As the good shepherd, as the gate, I'm going to give you abundant life, verse 10. And then he goes on to say in verse 28, I'm going to give you eternal life. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. So if you are not yet a Christian, let me explain to you what you're missing. Let me explain to you what is on offer, and ask whether there is a better offer out there. Jesus is saying you can have life that is full. You can have life that never ends.

I can't think of a better offer than that. Now you might not think it's true. You might not think it's possible. You might not think it's for you. But I'd be curious to know if there is a better offer on the table. I'd be curious to know if there is a better alternative that the world can offer, or a better alternative that we can offer, or a better alternative that the devil can offer.

[16 : 45] Jesus says, you want life? I'll give it to you. And not only, not life that's small, not life that's limited, and not life that's measly, but I tell you what, I'm going to give you life that's overflowing.

I'm going to give you life that's complete, and I'm going to give you life that never ends. So those are the benefits. Those are the gifts that he gives not to some, not to some select few, not to some elite. But those are the gifts that he gives to all of his people. Those are the gifts that he gives to the newest convert. Those are the gifts that he provides to the oldest saint. You see, he just showers these gifts. He just loves to bless his people. He just loves to give, and give, and give.

He comes to give life that's full. He comes to give life that's eternal. But notice the terms and the conditions. Because you say to yourself, that sounds too good to be true. If you're saying that I can have this, can I keep it? Can I hold on to it? Maybe I'll let it go. Maybe I'll lose it. Maybe I'll fall. Maybe I'll stumble. Maybe I'll fail. And you know what? You probably will. You probably will stumble. You probably will fall. You probably will fail. If not now, then eventually. But notice the terms and the conditions. In verse 27, my sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. So there's a

relationship here. There's a relationship here between the shepherd and the sheep. The sheep hear. The sheep know, and the sheep follow. They hear his voice. They know him. He knows them, and they follow him.

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. Is your Christian life ultimately founded upon the strength of your faith? Is your Christian walk ultimately founded upon the depth of your knowledge? Is your Christian life ultimately based upon the foundation of your commitment to Jesus Christ? If that is the case, we have got a very shaky foundation. We have a very uncertain future. Because Jesus says that this is his promise, that this is his guarantee, and he says he's staking his reputation on this. He's guaranteeing that no one will take you out of his hand. And if we didn't get that, he says, my father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one will snatch them out of my father's hand. I and the father are one.

[19 : 38] R.C. Sproul, great Bible teacher and preacher, passed away last year. We often talk about perseverance, that this is one of the cornerstones of our reformed faith, that the saints of God persevere to the end.

We make it to the end. But when you use a word like perseverance, it tends to make you think that the perseverance is yours, the effort is yours, the determination is yours, and the sort of the grit of keeping going that comes down to you. But R.C. Sproul helpfully said this. He said, I think this little catchphrase, perseverance of the saints, is dangerously misleading.

It suggests that the perseverance is something that we do, perhaps in and of ourselves. I believe that saints do persevere in faith, and that those who have been effectually called by God have been reborn by the power of the mercies of God. The only reason, however, they persevere not because they are so diligent in making use of the mercies of God. The only reason we can give, why any of us can continue on in the faith is because we have been preserved. So I prefer the term the preservation of the saints, because the process by which we are kept in a state of grace is something that is accomplished by God. My confidence in my preservation is not in my ability to persevere.

My confidence rests in the power of Christ to sustain me with his grace and by his power of his intercession. He is going to bring us safely home. So he comes to give life abundant. He comes to give life eternal. And he says that he will keep you. He will sustain you. He will secure you. And he will hold you. So the question is not so much how strong is your hold on Jesus, but how strong is Jesus' hold on you? You might think my grip is quite weak. You might think I'm literally hanging by a thread, spiritually speaking. And that might be the case. You might be here this morning as a Christian, and if you're honest with yourself and honest with God, you might say, I find that I'm almost hanging on by a thread. But the Bible is telling us that it's not how strong your grip is that matters.

How strong is Jesus' grip on you? Is he holding you? Is he keeping you? And is his grip powerful? Because if his grip is powerful, he won't let you go. If his grip is powerful, he won't let you down.

[22 : 24] If his grip is powerful, he won't let you stray or wander. He will hold you, he will keep you, and he will bring you back. So oftentimes in life we have choices, and you do have a choice.

Many people today have faith, but the object of their faith is something weak. They might have a strong faith, but they have a strong faith in a weak savior. Their weak savior might be themselves. Their weak savior might be a world religion or a world philosophy. So it's not the measure of faith really that matters, but it's the object of faith. So this morning, if you have a weak faith in a strong savior, you're in a much better position than somebody that has a strong faith in a weak savior, or in no savior at all. You see, how strong your faith is, how deep your knowledge is, how broad your commitment is, those are important questions. But who's the object of your faith? What is the foundation of your faith? Is it you or is it him? Because if it's him, you're safe. If it's him, you're secure. Because the Bible tells us that God gives us his word, and his word, as Jesus himself said, cannot be broken. You will not be the only exception to John 28 to 30. You will not be the one that he lets go. You will not be the one that he lets down. You will not be the one that he loses hold of. So there's the power of God, the promise of God's word, and the strength of God's commitment. He's staking his reputation on his word and on his truth. Is Jesus able to save? And is Jesus able to sustain? The answer is absolutely, because of who he is, and because of what he has done. He's a powerful savior. The gospel is a powerful message of salvation for weak people. The message of salvation for poor people. A message of salvation for failed people, fragile people, and flawed people. You see, the gospel has no fragility. The gospel has no flaw. The gospel has no weakness.

But it comes to people like us who are filled with flaws, filled with fragility, and filled with weakness. And I believe that there are many people today who look upon the gospel and say, I wish that could be me, but I could never do it.

And the answer is, you're absolutely right, but I'm asking you this morning to consider, can he do it? Can Jesus do this? Can he do what he's saying? Does he provide what he's offering? And does he guarantee your safety and your security? Because you place yourself in his hands, and you're safe. [25 : 18] You place yourself in God's hands, the Father's hands, and you're secure. That's the guarantee that God's word gives us. The benefactor is Jesus. The benefits are life and eternal life. And we can be the beneficiaries. The Son of God, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, he came into this world for people just like us. The same hopes, the same fears, the same regrets, the same desires, the same problems, the same hurts, the same troubles. You and I, we know what life is like. Jesus says, let me tell you what life can be like. Let me tell you what eternal life looks like. And let me tell you that this is what I have for you. I want to close with maybe an unusual illustration, but in 1980, November the 25th, 1980, was one of the most significant boxing matches of the 20th century. I don't know if you like boxing, but I like boxing. The two combatants were an American and a Panamanian. The American was called

Sugar Ray Leonard. The Panamanian was called Roberto Duran. It was a tough fight. It was the eighth round, and at the very last seconds of the eighth round, Roberto Duran turned to the referee, and he spoke two words, spoke two words in Spanish. He just turned to the referee and said, no mas, no more. I've had enough. I can't go on. I can't finish the round. I can't finish the fight. And I think if I'm honest, and maybe if you're honest today, sometimes we feel like that. I can't take anymore. I'm too tired.

It's too tough. It's too long. It's too hard. Life is too tough. The Christian life is too tough. Sometimes I just want to give up. Sometimes you just want to throw the towel in. Sometimes you just want to say no more. Now, that boxing match ended. One was victorious and one was defeated.

But let me tell you this, that the Christian life, there's never a defeat, ultimately. We never throw the towel in. Why? Because we have one who is already victorious. We have one who is already all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise. And I want to leave you, we haven't looked at any other verses today and any other chapters, but I'd like just to turn with me for a moment to chapter 13 of Hebrews, a remarkable promise that complements what we've been looking at. Hebrews 13 at verse 5.

Keep your life free from the love of money, the author says. Be content with what you have, for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher in London in the 19th century, he preached a sermon on this text and he had the title, Never, Never, Never, Never, Never. And he said to his audience, an audience of 6,000 people that was gathered in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he said, you'll be well aware that the English does not do justice to the text, to the original text. He said, in the original Greek, there are five negatives.

[28 : 36] Now, we can't replicate that in English, but he said, if you want a free rendering of this text, he says, I will never, never leave you. I will never, never forsake you. Never, never, never forsake you. He says, in Greek, the negatives amplify each other. And what this means is that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, one thing can never happen, that he leaves you. One thing that can never happen, he forsakes you. He stakes his word, he stakes his reputation, he stakes all upon this fact that he will hold you, that he will keep you, that he will never leave you, that he will never forsake you. Even if you say no more, he says, I will keep them, I will protect them, I will preserve them, I will hold them. So if today you're a follower of Jesus and the going is tough, look to him because he's strong. If you're a follower of Jesus today and you feel you've let him down, you've let him down badly, you look to him as the one who is the good shepherd who's already laid down his life, the one who is already there guiding and guarding you. And if you're not yet a Christian, you're thinking, I would love to be part of this.

I would love to have what you're offering, but there's no way I could keep it going. There's no way I can keep it up. Let me ask you this. Do you think that Jesus Christ can save you?

Because if you think that Jesus Christ can save you, he can surely sustain you. He can surely hold you and he can certainly keep you until the end because he is a strong savior. We're weak people. He is a wise savior. We're foolish people. He has all resources, all power, and ultimately when we are in his hands, we are in the safest and most secure place in the world. He will never let us go. We will never, ever be forsaken. Never, ever, never left because that's his word. That's his promise

and that's his truth. So may God bless his word to each of our hearts.