

## 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 will snatch them out of my hand.”*

In today’s passage, Jesus teaches us that he is the Son of God who can give us eternal life. To receive eternal life, we must believe in Jesus and follow him, as sheep trust and follow their good shepherd. May God help us to personally accept Jesus the Son of God who can give us eternal life!

### I. PEOPLE IN SUSPENSE (22-24)

Look at verses 22-23. *“Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.”* The Feast of Dedication was also called the Feast of Lights, during which a candle was lighted each day for eight days. When the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes<sup>1</sup> invaded Judea and desecrated the temple, the worship at the temple was interrupted for three years. Around 167 B.C., Judas Maccabeus reclaimed the temple by driving out the Syrians and overthrowing the statue erected by the invaders. Since then the Jews celebrated the Feast of Dedication, also known as Hanukkah. Now Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. Suddenly the religious leaders approached him. Look at verse 24. *The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”* They asked Jesus, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Why did they say this? Were they eager to find out who Jesus was so that they could accept him as the Messiah and the Savior?

They claimed that Jesus was keeping them in suspense. What does it mean to be in “suspense”? It is a state of apprehension arising from uncertainty. One is kept in suspense if he or she has the feeling that something unexpected would happen. People are kept in suspense by horror and crime movies or games like the Super Bowl or the NCAA basketball championship. The Jews felt suspense when they saw the great miracles of Jesus and, at the same time, they realized that their leaders were plotting to kill Jesus.

We are living in a time of suspense. Sports and entertainment business has become huge. Millions of people watch exciting football games and reality shows every week. Suspense involves excitement, uncertain results and danger. In this passage, John observes the mental state of the Jews by recording their question, “How long will you keep us in suspense?” They said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” They said this not because they wanted to accept the Christ into their hearts. Given the thickening plot

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<sup>1</sup> Antiochus IV, the king of Syria who reigned 175-163 B. C. He defiled the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by sacrificing swine on the altar and by setting himself up as a god to be worshiped.

to kill Jesus, they felt suspense. The religious leaders were afraid that Jesus' popularity would eclipse their own power. Other Jews thought that it was an exciting drama to watch. In fact, it wasn't lack of information that kept them in suspense. It was lack of their faith in Jesus that kept them in suspense. Jesus taught them that he was the gate through which his sheep could enter the kingdom of God. More importantly, God was showing them miraculous signs through Jesus to teach them who he was. It was to help them to put their faith in Jesus. But many only enjoyed the spectacle, like spectators in a stadium. They enjoyed watching God's work on the sidelines rather than believing and committing their lives to the Messiah.

Likewise, when we are not committed to Jesus, we cannot but live in suspense. People often become apprehensive about their uncertain future. Some students worry about their future after graduation. Some people worry about their marriage. Some people worry about their health. We live in an age of anxiety. Some people become dependent on alcohol and other substance. How can we overcome anxiety and the feeling of suspense? Jesus has a clear answer for us.

## II. "I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE" (25-30)

Look at verses 25-26. *Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep."* In fact, Jesus did not keep them in suspense. He worked many miracles so that they could see the Son of God. Jesus also taught them truths about the kingdom of God. But they did not listen to him. They would not believe. They did not believe even after witnessing the miracles of Jesus with their eyes. Jesus says that they did not believe because they were not his sheep. Good sheep would listen to their shepherd. The miracles were not intended to satisfy their curiosity or to entertain them. Jesus performed the miracles in order to help them to see that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. His miracles showed that he is the good shepherd. The Bible refers Jesus' miracles as "miraculous signs." Why? It is because his miracles were more than demonstration of his power. It was a sign that proved that Jesus is the Son of God and the good shepherd.

In our study of John's gospel, we have studied several miraculous signs of Jesus recorded by John. In his first miracle, Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (2:1-11). It was a miraculous sign. He changed the wash water into first-class wine. This was a sign that Jesus came to change useless sinners into blessed servants of God. Jesus can forgive our sins and transform us into men and women of God. In Jesus, a sinner can become a new creation! (2Co 5:17)

Once a crowd of 5,000 people came to Jesus, interrupting his planned retreat with his disciples (6:1-15). The disciples were very unhappy. But Jesus had great compassion toward the crowd. When he knew that they were hungry, he wanted to feed all of them. Of course, Jesus did not have any money to feed the 5,000 people. Out of his shepherd's heart, he asked his disciples where they could find bread to feed the hungry crowd. When Andrew brought five loaves and two fish, Jesus blessed his faith and fed the crowd until they were fully satisfied. This was a sign that showed Jesus is the good

shepherd. Only the Son of God can have such great compassion for a demanding crowd of 5,000 people.

Another time Jesus saw an invalid man who had been lying on a mat for 38 years (5:1-15). He was smelly and ugly. No one wanted to even look at him. But Jesus had compassion toward him and wanted to heal him. Jesus commanded, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (5:8). This was a sign that showed his great shepherd's heart for a helpless and hopeless person.

Jesus also helped a man born blind (9:1-7). When the disciples saw this pathetic man begging in a street corner, they became fatalistic, and asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (9:2) But Jesus had compassion toward the man. He 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). Then his eyes were opened. This was not a miracle to entertain people. It was a sign which showed that Jesus is the Son of God, for no one had ever opened the eyes of a man born blind before.

Look at what Jesus said in verses 25-26. *"I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep."* Tragically, the Jews ignored the spiritual significance of the miracles. Jesus had performed many signs so that they might believe in him. But the Jews viewed his miracles only as entertainment. Right after seeing the wonderful miracle of his feeding 5,000, they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" (Jn 6:30)

Jesus grieved over the unbelief of the Jews, the chosen people of God. Jesus had shown them many miracles so that they could see that he is the Christ. But they refused to accept him as their Savior. They did not listen to him. They did not follow him as their shepherd. As a result, they had no peace of God in their hearts; instead, they were in suspense. Jesus still loved them. He really wanted them to follow him as their shepherd. Look at verse 27, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."* There are many things we must learn. Knowledge is power. We must read many books and study hard to become knowledgeable persons. However, the most important knowledge we can ever have is to know Jesus personally as our shepherd. We must have a heart to hear the voice of Jesus the good shepherd and follow him.

When Jesus becomes our good shepherd, we have peace in our hearts. We don't have to live in suspense. We don't have to live in anxiety, despite many problems we face. Why and how is this true? Let us read verse 28, our key verse together. *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."* This is a wonderful promise for all of us who follow him as his sheep. Jesus gave this promise of eternal life to the Jews. In fact, this promise is offered to everyone who believes in Jesus. This is a sure hope that no one in this world can snatch away from us. Not even Satan can snatch us from his hand. Many early Christians willingly suffered for the Lord because of this hope. We may suffer in this world when we try to obey the word of God, but we believe that our labor in the Lord is not in vain because of this hope.

Do you have the assurance of eternal life? Are you absolutely sure what will happen to your soul when you die? In our society of instant gratification, eternal life does not seem to attract much attention, especially among young people. But we should pay attention. Why? Ask yourself this question: What is the most important thing for us? Of course, it is our life. Not just life in this world, which is temporary. We must pay attention to eternal life. Jesus says in Mark 8:35-38, *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”* Without eternal life, a person cannot but become fatalistic. Without eternal life, the only thing people value is the fleeting pleasures of this world which often give them a bitter aftertaste. St. Paul observed this and said, *“If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’”* (1Co 15:32). Sadly, many young people waste away their lives by indulging in pleasure-seeking activities as if there is no tomorrow.

On the other hand, those who have eternal life can live a life in the world as holy pilgrims. When we have a living hope in heaven, we have a new value system based on this hope. We do not work only for ourselves, but we work hard for the glory of God. We listen to Jesus our shepherd who says, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”* (Mk 8:34). We love God, our family, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. The hope of eternal life is a source of joy in our lives.

How does Jesus give us eternal life? What did he have to do in order to give us eternal life? What did he have to sacrifice to give us this precious gift? Jesus gave his own life on the cross to give us eternal life. He had to go through extreme pains to give us healing. When we read about the Passion Week of Jesus, we cannot help but cry. Jesus had the Last Supper during which he symbolically 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, shedding his precious blood to wash away our sins (Jn 19:34).

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus said: *“the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* This was the essence of his life in this world—the life of a suffering servant. In order to understand Jesus the good shepherd who laid 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!

### III. "I DO WHAT MY FATHER DOES" (31-42)

After hearing that Jesus could give them eternal life, the Jews picked up stones to kill him. But Jesus asked them, "*I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?*" (31-32) Jesus said this out of his great shepherd's heart for the Jews. But they responded, "We are not stoning you for any of these, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (33). Jesus did not deny their charge. Instead, he declared unequivocally that he was indeed the Son of God. The Jews were afraid of saying or writing the word "God." They would not dare to call him "God." Instead, they used a symbolic word for God such as "Adonai," or "El Shaddai," which means "the Almighty." But Jesus freely called him "God." In fact, Jesus told them to call God "the Father." He taught them that God was not someone who was sitting far away, but God is a person who is like a loving father. Jesus also reminded them that the word "God" was already used in the Old Testament. Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6. This verse refers the judges of Israel as "gods" as they were acting as the agents of God. So if mere men were called gods without blasphemy because they were doing God's work, why should they accuse him of blasphemy for calling himself God's Son, because he was actually sent by God himself and he was doing the very work of God? So Jesus asked them, "*Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?*" (36).

Jesus continued, "*Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, 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. There he stayed and many people came to him. They said, "*Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true*" (40-41). And in that place many believed in Jesus. Most Jews did not believe in Jesus, even though Jesus had done great work of God to prove that he is the Son of God and the Messiah. But Jesus was greatly comforted by those who believed in him and remained in his love. Thank God that there are always some remnants in God's ministry. This is the characteristic of the work of God. Many refuse to hear the word of God. But there are always remnants who are willing to listen to the Lord and live an obedient life of faith.

In today's passage, we learned that the miracles of Jesus showed that he is the Son of God who came to this world to give us eternal life. We learn that we should not live in suspense as mere spectators of God's work. We must carefully consider how important it is for us to have eternal life. May God help us believe in Jesus so that we may have eternal life!