

God makes two kinds of promises to His children: conditional and unconditional. But He always makes it clear whether or not they are conditional or unconditional. When His promise is conditional, He uses the word *if* or its equivalent. But when His statement is unconditional, He leaves out the *if*. This statement in John is therefore an unconditional one.

But there are many who, claiming to accept the Bible as being God inspired, nevertheless insist that this is a conditional statement. They say that *if* the sheep follow they shall never perish. By what right do they add the word *if*? As *if* is neither stated nor implied by the context, it is clearly a case of tampering with God's Word and changing its meaning.

Five separate statements are made concerning Christ's sheep:

- They hear my voice.
- I know them.
- They follow me.
- I give them eternal life.
- They shall never perish.

These are five distinct things said about those who are God's sheep. Not one is conditional upon any other.

By adding the word *if* to the third statement, the fourth as well as the fifth must become conditional upon it. Thus, not only the question of perishing but also that of receiving eternal life would be conditional upon following the Lord. Then, to make the words "follow me" mean the living of a life as the Lord Jesus lived His (as some assert) makes this mean that the one who lives as He lived will thereby receive eternal life and will never perish. This is nothing less than modernism grown to full fruitage. It is salvation by works. Thus this addition of the word *if* denies salvation by grace through faith. It is a denial of the grace of God. And how dangerous it is to tamper with God's Word!

As though this light handling of God's eternal verities were not enough, it is further being taught that while no one can snatch one of Christ's own out of His hand and out of the Father's hand, it is possible for one to jump out of his own volition. By what scriptural authority is that statement made? Does the wording of the passage permit such a statement? Only two conditions could make it possible for a sheep to jump out of his own accord: (1) that he be given the freedom to do so, or (2) that he have the power to do so against the purpose of God. Are either of these possible?

The sheep belong to Christ. They are His because He, the Good Shepherd, gave His life for them. He purchased them with His own blood. And they have been given unto Him by the Father. Ownership means lordship. That which is owned has no right of will contrary to the will of the owner. It has liberty to go only within the limits granted by the owner. It is perfectly clear, then, that the Good Shepherd does not grant to any sheep who has cost Him so much to place in His own hand for safety the privilege of jumping out of it.

***God's hand is not an open hand.
It is a hand that holds.***

God's hand is not an open hand. It is a hand that holds. When a father or a mother holds the hand of a small child to lead him safely through some place of real danger, that father or mother will not let that little hand go, even though the child might try to pull away.

No, God does not grant the sheep the liberty to jump out of His hand. It would disgrace a human shepherd of sheep to say that he allowed his sheep to stray away from Him. How much more does it disgrace the Good

Shepherd to say that He allows His sheep to go away from Him?

The only question left then is this: Has the sheep the power to leap out of God's hand contrary to His will and purpose? To admit this would be to contradict Jesus' words: "My Father... is greater than all." The "all" necessarily includes the sheep. To admit it would also contradict His words, "They shall never perish." For if they did jump out they must perish.

What a perversion of God's Word it is to add the little word *if* and to limit God by saying that a sheep can jump out of God's hand!

It denies salvation by grace through faith; it denies the fact of a believer's eternal life; it makes the will of man stronger than the will of God; it discounts the keeping power of God, and it robs the believer of his assurance. And yet men who are called to be ambassadors of God to be stewards of the manifold grace of God, often very earnestly and zealously but mistakenly do that very thing.

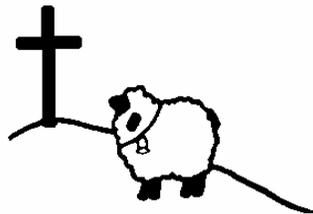
Jesus made another statement concerning Himself and His sheep. He said, "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). This statement and the one, "My sheep shall never perish," are interdependent upon

each other. They are to each other as cause and effect. The one cannot be touched without touching the other. To deny the effect—the absolute safety of the sheep—is to question the efficacy of the cause—the death of the Good Shepherd.

When Jesus says, "My sheep shall never perish," it is unconditional and final. It is to be accepted in simple faith and made the subject of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

The truth that "My sheep...shall never perish," and that "no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand," is the substance of the doctrine of eternal security of the believer.

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*Shall
Never
Perish*

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand"
(John 10:27-29).

For the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, no passage in the Bible has more assurance in it than this one has. In it is found an unconditional statement by our Lord that those who are His are His for all eternity because they are in His hand and under His care and in the Father's hand and under His care. The strength of the Father is that which guarantees this condition of safety.

There are those who are not willing to accept this simple and clear statement without modifying it. Thereby they not only lose the assurance that might come to *them*, but they rob others of that assurance which is so greatly needed by every one of God's children.