

Safety

By James McConkey

Book Messages by James H. McConkey

Prayer
The Surrendered Life
The Three-Fold Secret of the Holy Spirit
The Way of Victory
The Book of Revelation
The End of the Age

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SAFETY

*"My sheep...shall never perish."
John 10:27-28*

To be saved is to be safe. To lead a man from one burning room into another which would soon itself be on fire; to drag a man from the brink of one precipice only to let him wander to the edge of another; to snatch him from in front of one railroad train only to replace him upon the same track — in no such case could you well be said to have saved such a man. Neither does God save in that way. For when God saves a man He makes him safe. He makes him His own sheep. He says he shall never perish. With Him sonship and safety are true and inseparable yolk-fellows.

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*The Sons of God are safe because
they are in Christ.*

At the first birth men are united to the first Adam. But at the second birth, God's sons are united to the second Adam, Jesus Christ. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus." (I Cor. 1:30). By all kinds of metaphors and figures does God seek to show the closeness of this union, and the safety of it. We are united to Christ as stones in a living temple. (1 Peter 2:5). To tear us away would be to mar the temple of God, in which He dwells, "which temple we are." We are united to Christ as members of His

body. (I Cor. 12:27). To wrench us away would be to dismember the mystical body of Christ Himself. We are united to Christ in resurrection (Col. 3:1). To be taken away would be to be torn from our position in the heavens, to which we are now risen with Him. Yea, still closer, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." (I Cor. 6:17). How close must be the union which makes us one spirit with Him! Yet Christ clearly tells us that as the Father is in Him so also is He in us (John 17:23). Thus we are bound up in the same bundle of life with our Lord Himself. And He tells us plainly that because He lives we shall live also. But He says, "I am alive forevermore" (Rev. 1:18). Hence it is that the life we who are joined to Him possess is always called "eternal life." It is, like His, a forevermore life. Not a life we can have today and lose tomorrow, but an everlasting life, the "Life of the ages," as the word means.

*The Sons of God are safe because
God's seal is upon them.*

*"In whom having also believed, ye were sealed
with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13,
RV)*

In olden days the seal was a mark of ownership. God's mark of ownership is His own Holy Spirit. "Because ye are sons He hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Gal. 4:6). No man can counterfeit it. None can obliterate it. A man may be a

member of a church, and be deceived. He may be a professor and not belong to God. But when that spirit of God's Son comes into him, then he is God's own. That seal marks him as the property of God. That seal makes him safe as such.

We were standing by the shore of a great river. The spring freshet was on. The logging season was at its height. Away up in the mountains thousands of logs had been set adrift by the lumbermen. All these had first been stamped with the the owner's initials. Every log so sealed was protected by the laws of the state. No man, save the owner, dare take it, under penalty. But sometimes, in the busy rush of the lumbermen, a log was missed in the stamping, and launched into the river without the usual seal. These were called "prize logs." They could be taken at will by whoever found them adrift in the river. Thousands of logs were floating past us in the swift current. In the midst of them were a couple of men in a boat, on the watch for "prize" logs. Time after time we watched them row up to logs, and then turn away. They dared not touch them. They were sealed with the magic initials of the owner. Presently we espied a log approaching them. It was seemingly of poor quality. A long black line of decay ran from the end toward the center. "Surely here is a prize log," we found ourselves saying. The watchers evidently thought the same, for they at once rowed rapidly up to it. But after a hasty glance, almost as quickly did they row away. They dared not touch it. It was indeed of poor quality. **But it had the seal.**

That river-pirate, Satan, is ever on the alert against us who are God's sons. He would gladly take us as his prizes, if he could. Often does he whisper in our ears: "Your life is not what it ought to be. You are not reaching your own ideal, much less God's. You are a poor sort of a Christian, after all. You will never hold out. You will be lost yet." But the hiss of the serpent is in all this. It is flat falsehood. He is simply trying to destroy our peace by leading us to scan our own poor lives instead of resting in God's seal of ownership. Meet his onset by remembering this. However holy a life God wants us to live, yet it is the **presence of the seal** which keeps us safe from Satan's ravening clutch. Once that we are sealed, God, who hath begun the good work within us, undertakes to lead us on and up until the life is worthy of the holy seal with which He has sealed us.

* * * *

The sons of God are safe because the Holy spirit within them is the earnest, or pledge, of an abiding salvation.

For not only is the Spirit a seal—the mark of God's ownership — but He is also in the same passage called an "earnest" of our inheritance. And what is an "earnest"? It is the clod of earth, or the key which is handed over to the purchaser of a property to assure him that full and final possession will certainly follow. It is the owner's guarantee to the

buyer that the property cannot possibly be lost, but will surely be his. So the Spirit is not an isolated gift which is ours today and lost tomorrow. But He is the pledge of an abiding salvation. He is God's fore-pledge that salvation in Christ is lasting, and assured, until it is complete and consummated. That which is begun with the gift of the spirit shall continue to be yours until it is completed by the glorification of the body. Nothing can break in upon it to rob you of it. He is called the "first fruits" (Rom. 8:23). The full harvest is sure to follow. He is called here the "earnest" of our inheritance *until* the redemption of the purchased possession," which, as the passage in Romans shows, is clearly the redemption, or glorification, of the body. Mark that word *until*. It is like this: A banker leaves his banking room at three o'clock Saturday afternoon. When he leaves he puts all his treasures in his safety vault, and sets his time lock until nine o'clock Monday morning. Not only is the vault sealed, but it is sealed until that particular hour. And its gold, and silver and jewels, are kept secure until that time. No one can come at them before. So it is with the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is a sealing until the redemption of the body. When God stamps it upon us, His treasures, it is His pledge that we shall not only be secure all through this life, but until the resurrection glory, until the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord is consummated. It would be a break of faith on the part of the seller if the earnest, when once given, did not make the property secure to the

purchaser. But God does not so break faith. "He abideth faithful." His seal cannot be broken, but is a seal which will abide until the day of glory.

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*The sons of God are safe because
they are in God's grasp.*

"My sheep shall never perish."

*"Neither shall any man pluck
them out of My hand."*

*"No man is able to pluck them
out of My Father's hand."*

John 10:27-29

But some one says: "I understand all this. I know I am safe so long as I hold on. But suppose I let go. Suppose my grasp on God breaks. Then I shall be lost." But God does not put it that way. He does not make our security depend upon our grasp upon *Him*, but *His* grasp upon us. And so long as that holds, His sons are secure.

There is a little child on shipboard with her father. A heavy sea is rolling. The child is walking the deck, tightly grasping the hand of the father. A every lurch of the ship she clings the more. All the while her heart is full of fear lest her grasp break and she be hurled over into the angry sea. For she knows the weakness of her own childish grasp. By and by her father speaks a strange word. "My child **let go** of my hand entirely, and let **me** hold your

hand." At once the request is obeyed. The child lets go. The father takes hold. And now they stroll the deck as aforetime. But there is this notable difference: *The safety of the child now depends not upon her own weak grasp upon her father's hand, but upon his strong grasp upon hers.* And, as the outcome of this, all fear has fled from the heart of the child and she is kept in perfect peace.

And this is the exact picture the Word of God gives of our safety. We see Christ hold up His hand, the hand of love, the hand pierced for us. And then He says: "*No man shall pluck them out of My hand.*" And then another hand goes up. It is the hand of the Father, the hand which created us, and forever cares for us. And we hear Him say again: "*No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.*" And still he goes on, to clinch it all. "I and my Father are one." Then the hand that was wounded for him and the hand that created him close in one omnipotent grasp upon the weak but trusting believer, and all the power of the pit cannot tear him from that grasp. Wherefore the safety of the child of God depends upon the omnipotent grasp of God. But the **peace** or **anxiety** of that child depends upon his own attitude of soul toward this truth. Trusting God's grasp robs him of all anxiety. Trusting his own robs him of all peace.

*The Sons of God are safe by the will of God.
God has given us unto Christ.*

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." says the Holy Spirit through Paul,

in the wondrous eleventh of Romans. Of what is he speaking? Of the restoration of the Jews as a nation, to God's favor. Even though they are "enemies of the gospel" yet they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes." For the sake of their fathers, the patriarchs, and His promises made to them, God has covenanted to restore this people. That is His will. That is His calling, for them. And He will certainly carry it out. For He never repents of His gifts and calling. But there is another gift and calling we sometimes forget. It is the gift of ourselves. God's sons to Jesus Christ, by God the Father (John 17:6). "The men which Thou gavest me out of the world." What blessed words! It is gift by the will of God. It is a gift that shall never be recalled. To these Christ manifested God's name (v. 6). For these He prays (v. 9). It was these whom he kept (v. 12). All that the Father gives Him, He keeps. None shall be lost. Then listen to His wondrous words about them.

*Christ wills that all whom the Father
hath given Him be with Him.*

God willed—and there was light. God willed—and there was a firmament in the midst of the waters. God willed and Pharaoh must needs let His people go. God willed—and the sea opened. God willed—and the walls of Jericho fell into ruins. Christ willed—and the lepers were cleansed. Christ willed—and the blind saw. Christ willed and the dead came to life. Nothing can withstand the omnipotent "I WILL" of God the Father and

God the Son. It is more than "I wish." It is the calling into action that same mighty will that brought the universe into being. And so Jesus wills that we who are His shall be with Him where He is, in the heavenlies. Can any power in earth or perdition thwart that will when once it has gone forth? Nay, we are safe. We are sure to be with Him because He himself has willed it so to be. The Son has not only gone into the glory, but He wills that His own be in the glory with Him.

*God's sons are safe by God's plain word.
"My sheep shall never perish." John 10:28*

There is a rule of legal interpretation like this. Where a clear statement is made in a document no subsequent obscure statement shall be permitted to set it aside. Thus, if a clause in a will gives all a man's property to a certain heir, no subsequent clause which seems to give a part of the same property to another, shall stand. The certain must not give place to the uncertain. The plain shall not yield to the doubtful. This principle applies with equal force to the interpretation of the Word of God, and to the especial truth we are considering. Thus Christ says, clearly and explicitly, "My sheep shall never perish." No obscure statements can be allowed to gainsay this plain one concerning the security of His own children. Therefore, when texts are cited capable of a two-fold interpretation, we must accept not the one which clashes, but the one which agrees with this already proclaimed truth. Take, for example, Paul's assertion concerning the "cast-

away" (I Cor. 9:27). It is urged that he feared he himself might be lost. But the word does not refer to salvation, but to service. It is not "lest I myself be lost," but "*lest I myself be disapproved.*" No man was surer of salvation than Paul. The marvelous climax of the eighth chapter of Romans makes that clear. But no man had a more intense, passionate longing to attain to God's highest call for his own life, and to meet God's perfect approval for the same. This was the "prize" for which he was pressing forward. This was the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To enter into God's highest life-plan in Christ Jesus for himself, that was Paul's supreme aim, even as it should be of every other son of God. His solicitude was not that he might drop out of the kingdom, but that he might not fill the loftiest possible place in it for which God had designed him, and thus be "disapproved."

To the same effect is the passage in John 15, where we are told a man may be "cast forth as a branch." This, too, seems to imperil the believer's safety. Yet the whole passage relates to fruit-bearing, not salvation. The emphasis is on the clause "as a branch." It teaches that the lack of abiding may cut one off from fruit-bearing. And often do we see Christians set aside as prolific fruit-bearers, because they refuse to fulfill God's condition of the same. Yet it is not for us to say that they are lost. For in so saying we make the conditions of fruit-bearing and of salvation to be identical. But, sad as lack of fruitage is, 1 Corinthians 3:15 seems to make plain that one may suffer in

this regard and yet be saved.

And again the passages in Hebrews, chapters six and ten, are oft quoted to the unrest of the believer. Yet they are confessedly difficult of interpretation. And the ninth verse of the sixth chapter seems clearly to indicate that the persons referred to previously were not among those who possessed salvation. In these, and in other references often cited, the rule given above seems to have clear application, namely, that the certain shall not give way to the uncertain and obscure. And in the face of all such difficult passages, the child of God may rest fully and quietly in his Lord's clear and explicit statement: "*My sheep shall never perish.*"

*The sons of God are safe because
they are in God's love.*

*"Having loved His own...He loved them unto
the end." — John 13:1*

Every man with the spirit of his Master loves the lost world. However unlovable people may be in themselves, he loves their souls. As he beholds their blindness, their sorrows, their wanderings, their hopelessness, his heart is filled with compassion for those who are as sheep not having a shepherd. He would do anything possible to win them to his Lord. He really loves them. But there are others for whom He has a special and tender love above all else. They are those whom God has given him as his own. The sweet-faced little one who clings about his neck — is his own. The gray-haired father and mother who so tenderly nourished him all through life are

— his own. The wife whom God has made dearer to him than his own life, is — his own. The stalwart son, the fair-haired daughter of whom he is so proud are — his own. How he loves his own! He would gladly lay down his own life at any moment to save theirs. Nor does he have the slightest thought of ever ceasing to love them. Nay, as the years fleet by his love grows more intense, grows to be a deathless love. He is sure he will love them to the very end.

And so it is with the love of Jesus. He loved the word as none else ever did. He came down from heaven to seek it. He gave His life for it. But what a special and tender love does He show forth to us who are God's sons. We are **His own**. We are the most precious treasures the Father has given Him. We are His jewels. We are His house. We are His bride. We are the very members of His body. He loved us before the foundation of the world. He loves us even as the Father loves Him. Having once loved, He is going to love us to the end.

A famous evangelist was wont to tell this story. He was preaching abroad. While there, he was a guest of a Christian nobleman. One evening he was walking in the beautiful grounds of his host, mediating upon his message for the evening. Suddenly he was startled by the appearance of a hawk in swift pursuit of a skylark. The frightened bird darted hither and thither among the trees with cries of terror. The swift hawk was steadily gaining upon its helpless prey, bent upon its life. Presently

the bird espied the evangelist, who was standing a silent and interested watcher. At once every instinct of timidity toward man forsook it. Turning quickly, it flew straight into his bosom. There it nestled with wild beating heart, while the evangelist sheltered it from its baffled foe. "Do you think," said he, "that for one instant I would have given up to its enemy this helpless bird which had sought refuge on my heart? Nay, I would have suffered myself the stroke of its foe rather than have delivered it up to death."

A relentless foe is pursuing us. He is bent upon the ruin of our souls. We are weak and helpless before him. But we have taken refuge in the bosom of Christ. He is clasping us to His heart of love. Will He ever yield us up? Nay, for we are His own. And once having loved His own, He will love us unto the end. Unto the end of our failures and infirmities — unto the end of our oft-times coldness — unto the end of wanderings from the pathway of His guidance — unto the end of our misunderstanding of His own purposes of grace in our lives — unto the end of all our shortcomings, and our fragmentary doing of His own perfect will — unto the end of all this and more — He loves us, and will forever hold us in His heart of tender compassion.

For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

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