



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
March 2, 2014

JOHN 10:22-42

John Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege of marriage. I know that there are some folks here who come with their mates and we're grateful for that. There are others who have mates that don't attend here. Lord, I pray that you would make each of those marriages strong, that you would be working in them and teaching each of the partners how to live more sanctified lives in that relationship. Lord, we look forward to what you're going to do in our lives. We know that marriage is one of those places where you grow us, develop us. So thank you for what you do. We ask your blessing on that. And now, Lord, as we open your word we ask that you would speak to us and teach us from it. In Jesus' name, amen.

Open your Bibles please with me to John 10:22. That's where we're going to pick it up. Now today I'm going to share with you some – well, the Bible calls it meat, as opposed to milk. I'm going to share with you some advanced thinking, some theological information that may be a challenge for you to grasp. But this is one of those deeper truths of the faith that I think will be helpful for you.

We're going to talk about the sovereignty of God a little bit as we move forward here. A little bit difficult, I think, for us to understand it, so I'll try to explain it to you, not because it comes out of some theological textbook, not because it comes from a seminary somewhere, but because it comes from God's word.

Our passage today touches on the sovereignty of God, so I'm going to elaborate on that so that you can try to understand it a little bit more and maybe apply it in your own life.

Let's start right at verse 22 where we left off last week. John 10:22: *Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem (that's Hanukkah). It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade.*

The Feast of Dedication is this feast of Hanukkah. Now we don't see the Hanukkah mentioned in the Torah, the Old Testament. We don't see it mentioned in the laws as one of the feasts because the events that started the whole Feast of Hanukkah took place after Malachi in the Old Testament and before Matthew of the New Testament. There was 400 silent years in there.

During that time, there was a tumultuous period of history in the Jewish lifestyle. The Syrians came in, they took over Jerusalem, and the Maccabees and they led a revolt for the Jewish people and forced the Syrians out of Jerusalem. It was a very powerful battle for them to be able to do

this, a lot of gorilla warfare that they did, but they got the Syrians out of there. It was just an amazing thing.

But in the midst of that, there wasn't enough oil to supply the Menorah that was always supplied – 24/7 the Menorah had flames on all the little candelabra. There wasn't enough oil to feed it and it looked like they had less than a day's worth of oil left and they couldn't get any oil. They were in the middle of all this battle and doing all these things they were doing and they couldn't get any oil.

What happened was those flames on that menorah burned for eight days. It was such a miracle that the people decided to create a remembrance, a feast. They called it a Feast of Dedication – we're dedicating ourselves to God because of what He's done for us, the way He's cared for us, a miracle that He's done for us. And so we don't hear about it much in the Christian circles. It's certainly a feast that's celebrated in the wintertime for the Jewish people.

It's marked in the gospel of John here as the time when Jesus was in Jerusalem. *Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade.*

When he says Solomon's Colonnade, he's speaking of the portion around the temple. The business side of the temple was in the middle, but the edges around the temple (you will see in this model of the temple) there are these porches and you can see they're covered. One of them is called Solomon's Colonnade and people, teachers would be here. They'd be teaching their students. A lot of the religious education was here. They would just share the news. They would talk here, they would hang out in the temple area. But it says here that Jesus was in the temple area.

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."*

What they're saying is, "Would you make it clear again?" Now He's already told them plainly. Just for your reference, if you want to look these verses up, we have the fact that Jesus has told them that He's God in John 5:27, John 5:46, John 6:51, John 8:56. We know that it's clear because they took up stones to kill Him in those passages. And so Jesus has already said that. But they're saying, "Would you make it clear for us?"

Jesus' response is an important one. This is where we're going to enter into this particular teaching that I want to share with you today.

Verse 25 says, *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. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."*

Now the important theological question here has to do with this. Here's the question: Do people believe because they're sheep? Or are they sheep because they believe? I'm going to say it again. I want you to follow me here. You're going to have to stay with me because there's a lot of stuff

here. We're going a little bit deep here. Are people sheep because they believe or do they believe because they are sheep? That's the question we want to ask. He's saying in the passage, *you do not believe because you are not my sheep.*

It's going to lead us into this very important theological question that draws us to two planks that are taught in scripture. We want to walk across both planks in our lives. We emphasize one without the other, we get distracted, and we start missing the truth. We have to know both of them. One of the truths is that God is in control and the other one is that people, man, has a choice. Those are the two planks that we're working on. They seem to be contradictory. They seem to be logical for us to grab them both at the same time, but both are taught in the Bible.

I want to emphasize that just for a moment. If we look at the side where it says God is in control, we see several verses that support that. In John 6:44 who comes to Christ? It says, "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.*" Who, according to that verse, is responsible for salvation? It's God's initiative. I want you to see it there. That's what it says.

In Ephesians 1:4 he says, *He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.* Who's responsible for the choosing there? It's God. I want you to see it right out of scripture. God's responsible. God is in control.

Now once we look at those verses and we start understanding how God is in control, what we're not saying is God is here reacting to all the situations in life. He's got the master plan and anything that happens He's got a solution for. That's not what we're saying when we're saying God is in control. When we say God is in control, we're saying that God has a decree, God has established everything from the beginning, that everything is fixed. That may make you feel pretty uncomfortable for a moment, but I want to explain that to you.

But first I just want to emphasize a little bit more. It is already determined who is going to get saved, what actions will take place today, when the storm is coming through our area. All of this is already set up. What you do when you leave here is already established – what's going to happen to you. It's God's decree and it's combined with what we call predestination, the foreknowledge of God.

Now if you only believed in God's sovereignty or His decree, you would drift into error. You would drift into a fatalistic mindset. Why should I try? Why should I witness to anyone if it's already set already? Why should I pray if God has already established everything already? If things are fixed, certain, and decided, what should I do? It makes me feel like I'm a robot or a puppet. Right? Those are good questions and they would be viable questions if we didn't understand the other part.

But the Bible also teaches the second part that somehow He wraps into His sovereignty in a way that we don't understand this idea of choice. That we make choices and those choices have an affect, they have a result. We can't understand how the two go together, but God takes them and somehow brings human choice and puts it into this whole process so that we are responsible agents for our own decision-making.

If we look at some passages that describe this, you'll see in Romans 10:9-10 it says, *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* Who's responsible for the salvation process according to this verse? We are. Right? *For with your heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.* Who's responsible for the salvation? We are. Okay?

I want you to see both of these are taught in the scriptures. When it comes to salvation, who's responsible for the person who gets saved? God is. We emphasize God's sovereignty. When he emphasizes man's responsibility, we see that man is responsible.

When it comes to prayer, we say, "Well, why should I pray?" 1 Timothy 2:1 says, *I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.* Why are we praying? Because God commanded it, yes, but also because God uses our prayers to accomplish His work. I have the privilege to pray for something and watch God work in the midst of that. How God ties that into His sovereignty, I don't know.

As soon as you think you've figured this out, then you haven't. It's like looking at two sides of a coin at the same time. You just can't see them both.

Another verse that emphasizes the responsibility of man: *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.* Who's responsible here? We are to give ourselves to the Lord. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

When you study the scriptures, both of these ideas are in play. Both of these principles exist. Again, I'm not taking this out of a psychological textbook or a theological resource. I'm not taking this from a seminary classroom, we're looking at God's word and trying to understand what He says. We start looking at these two things together and they become illogical. It's hard to put them together. The most important thing we can do is recognize that God teaches both of them and we live practically in the midst of them.

I look at it this way: If I could understand everything about God, I'd be God. I can't understand everything about God. My brain is finite.

In order to create the world, God first had to create time. He's outside the envelope of time. He created time and then He created space, and then He created a world to be in the midst of that. And I think I can understand God? I can't even think outside of time! God is outside of time and somehow He puts His sovereignty, His fixed plan is to decree together with the responsibility of each person in a way that I cannot understand. And that's okay with me because I can't understand God and it reminds me that God is bigger than who I am. He's not something that I can control. But it's best for me not to comprehend these things, but to understand each one of them enough to put them into practice in my own life.

So that when it comes to dealing with anxiety, I want to really trust the Lord knowing that He's got a plan. That He's got things worked out. I want to rely on that. I want to also emphasize that my free will that I want to trust Him in the midst of that. So I want to emphasize both of these things at the same time.

If I start emphasizing the free will of man, which is what I think we emphasize more often because we're familiar with that. We see, we do something, and there's an effect to it. So we kind of emphasize the responsibility of man a lot. But if we overemphasize that without God's sovereignty, we can feel pretty anxious about life. Because what am I going to do about this certain problem? But if I can turn my heart over to the Lord, recognizing that Jesus is in control that side of things, then amazing things can happen. What I want to do is I want to put both of these ideas together in order to understand Him.

When it comes to this passage, He's saying to the people, "*You do not believe because you are not my sheep.*" That's what He's saying to them. He's emphasizing the fact that God chooses people and you're not one of those. Now He's going to come along later and He's going to talk about repent, you guys. He's talking about repentance as well because they should have the responsibility to change their hearts. We have to look at both of these ideas and see what He is saying.

As I try to apply this, it has some practical applications for me. For example, I try not to use the word 'luck.' Because I don't believe in fate. I don't say, "Good luck," to someone. We usually say "good luck" because we want to wish them well. But I think even saying "good luck" implies that there is some kind of fate going on in that "I hope things work out for you." What I'd rather say is "be blessed." Or that "God blessed me" by doing this. Not I had good luck when something happened in my life.

I want to keep my life pure because that's my responsibility. God's in control, but He's called me to live a life of purity and I want to do that. I recognize that God is in control, so I want to rely on His leadership. I want to be praying a lot, I want to be seeking His will, I want to fit into what He's doing.

So don't get hung up on this, practice it. That's the best thing to do. If you try to understand it, you're going to get stuck somewhere. If you don't try to understand it all, understand what the Bible's saying about it, but then trust God in both sides and try to live that and then you'll be okay.

When you start studying this subject, you start asking questions. Can a person lose their salvation? See, if I think about it from a human perspective – well if I chose God, then I can choose out of God. And therefore, yes, I could lose my salvation. But if I think of God chose me before the creation of the world, well then how could I lose my salvation.

It's that question about losing your salvation that now Jesus addresses in verse 28. We're back to John 10. *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

Now is eternal life according to that verse? No. It's not earned. It's given. Who's responsible for keeping this person's salvation secure? The person's in the hand of God. The hand of Jesus he's mentioning there.

Look at the next verse, verse 29. *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*"

So he says they can't snatch Him out of my hand, they can't snatch Him out of the Father's hand. Who's holding the person's salvation? Is it the person? They sin and therefore they fall out of His hand? No. He's securely holding them.

So you might ask the question what about the person who seems to have a viable faith but now they're not living that at all, they seem to have rejected that? What do we do with that? I'd say there's probably two options at least. One is that the person may not have been a Christian in the first place or maybe they're a disobedient child of God trying to live a life away from God. The reality here is that no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. There's this sense of God's protection and it describes the caring nature of God.

I spent some time this week just pondering the hands of Jesus in the gospel. What do those hands do? Because it seems to me as I look at the hands here, they represent some kind of a protection in the hand of Jesus or the hand of God.

Here are some other verses that describe the hand of Jesus or God. We watch (well, I don't, but you probably don't either), but it said that the average person watches 250-300 commercials a day. That's a lot of commercials. And most of them we forget, but every once in a while one comes along that kind of sticks in your mind.

I'm going to give you a phrase from a commercial, see if you can give me the rest of the phrase. "You're in good hands." Ah see, we remember that. Every once in a while we do remember a commercial, right?

I would say that we're not just in good hands; we're in God's hands. And it's not because we have this insurance policy, it's because an assurance policy. We are assured of that salvation that God has given. No one can snatch us out of the hand of God because we are assured that salvation that He provides for us.

So if you're here today and you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want you to know that once you make that decision to accept Christ and you're a part of His family, He holds you in His hands. You can't say, "Well today I'm not saved because I sinned." No. You may sin and need to get right with God, but God is holding you there. He is protecting you. He's guarding you in the midst of that.

Let's read verse 29 again. *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*"

When I started looking at some of the things that talk about the hands of God or the hands of Jesus, I may be stuck with Jesus here. Matthew 14:31. Interesting story. Peter gets out of the boat, falls in the water. It says, *Jesus reached out his hand and pulled him up*. Now Peter is a heavy guy. I mean, here's Jesus practicing His lifting, His curls, and pulling Peter right out of the water.

I'm thinking, "Wow. Those are the rescuing hands of God. I need those every once in a while. God, rescue me! I'm in trouble here. I need help."

Mark 10:16 – He took those same hands and He *placed* them on children *and blessed them*. Those are the gentle hands of God. I need those gentle hands of God placed on me regularly just to bless me.

Luke 4:40: *At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them*. Those are the healing hands of God. I need the healing hands of Jesus on me, to heal me and to care for me. It's a beautiful picture to see what God does in this healing process. I enjoy looking at that.

Let's go on to verse 31. *Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"*

"Let me get this straight now. What are you stoning me for? Was it because I fed the five thousand? Or was it because I healed the crippled man? Or was it because I helped the blind man to see. Why is that you are trying to kill me?"

Notice their response in verse 33. *"We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

Don't let anybody tell you that Jesus claimed to be God. Just read the gospel of John. Over and over again His listeners knew what He meant when He made this claim.

Jesus answered them – now I've got to explain this answer because I think it's a little bit confusing. Verse 34 says, *Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?' If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?"*

The word 'god' in the Old Testament is the word *elohim*.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The word *God* there is the word *Elohim*.

When the Law was given by God to Moses, the word *elohim* is used to refer to people. Here's an example of one of the verses where the word *elohim* is used to describe a person. He says, *Then a master must take him before the judges*. That's the word *elohim*. And *he shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life*. He's

going to take him before the judges, the *elohim*. So the word *elohim* is used to describe authority that has been given by God to a person in the law.

This is just one of many times that the word is used in the law. So a person who is given this authority was considered an *elohim* or called a god by that point. And they knew this was not to be confused with God as the person who God is, they just knew it was a person who was called god in the sense that they were an authoritative person. That's what He's referring to.

Now I'm going to go back and read it to you because Jesus is giving them a theological argument from the text of the Bible. It says, *Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?' If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside— what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?"*

Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 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."

So what Jesus is saying here is that why do you have such a hard time with the fact that I'm calling myself God? I'm God's Son. I'm the one sent from God. That's what He means by *God's Son* is the very fact that He was sent from God. "Don't believe me just because I say it, believe me because you see the works," He's saying. And when you do that and you believe, then you will *understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father*.

As we are talking to people who are not yet believers, they are wrestling with the fact should I come to Christ or not? One of the things they want to see and they should see is the work of God in the world. So when I'm praying for someone who has not yet accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, I pray, "Lord, would you help them see your power. Recognize that. Lord, as they call on you and ask you for something, would you grant their request?"

Now we can't imagine that God is going to do what anybody says. But I pray that God will reveal His power to someone, to do things in amazing ways so that they'll see that Jesus is God. Like in this passage, they'll see that He is God's Son. That there's a power that God has that they need in their life, and they'll be motivated to trust God and recognize that Jesus and the Father are one. They'll accept Jesus into their life. They'll have that God-filled life. It's just a powerful thing. That's what we're praying for in the midst of that. Jesus is talking about it now in these verses.

Look at their response in verse 39. *Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. Then 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." And in that place many believed in Jesus.*

This is a map of modern Israel and you can see the Gaza strip. You read about these places in the news or hear about them in the news. You can see the west bank is outlined there in the purple. That's what we're talking about when we talk about the areas on the news. But this map is also

helpful because it illustrates for us simply where Jesus was and where He went. Do you see Jerusalem there? Right next to Jerusalem (we don't see it on this map) is the city of Bethany. Jerusalem is there and that's where this incident is taking place.

In the winter during this Feast of Dedication it's cold up there. It's cool in the wintertime. The average temperature in Jerusalem (it's 2,500 feet above sea level) gets down to the 40s. That's cool for that part of the world. So it's cool up in Jerusalem. Every once in awhile it snows, but not very often.

He's going to go over here across the Jordan. The Jordan is on the right hand side, but that river that runs from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea, that's the Jordan River and on the other side is the Jordan. That's where John the Baptist was baptizing regularly.

So Jesus goes over there for a little while. A warmer area, enjoying that warmth, but also just ministering to people. People had a sense of warmth in their own hearts and they responded to the Lord in the midst of that.

Do you see that? Verse 42: *And in that place many believed in Jesus.* Many people responded. There's a responsiveness that exists in people's hearts when they're ready to receive the gospel. God is drawing them.

You may be here today not knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and I want you to know it's not all up to you. God is working and He's brought you here for a purpose because He's drawing you to Himself. This is an opportunity for you to respond to Him because you have responsibility. Your responsibility is to come before God and to say, "Yes. I want you, God, to run my life. I want you to control me." And then you have a personal responsibility to do that, at the same time recognizing that God has designed everything in your life up to this point. He has designed every step, everything that's happened to you. You may think, "That terrible thing too?" God allowed everything that happened. It's all part of His plan and He's taking you in a particular place.

Is that okay with you? See, I think that sometimes we get pretty upset about the way our lives are right now. We don't like the way our lives are right now. Can we allow God to work today in the midst of where we are today and respond to that in the difficulties of our lives? Or do we have to have it fixed somehow. God's only working when it's fixed. No. God is working all the time and He brings us to this place.

So if you're here today and you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you want to make that decision today. You want to say, "Yes. I want to respond. God, I see you have been working in my life. I didn't realize that before. Now I see it. I want you to control me. I want you to run my life. I want to be the person that you want me to be. I want to do my part. I want to be living a holy life. I want to be responding to you. I want to live the life that you've called me to live."

That's what's going on and that's what it says in verse 42 – *And in that place many believed in Jesus.* Wow. That's powerful. We've seen over and over again *people believe in Jesus.* The next

chapter, chapter 11, we're going to see people in believe in Jesus. They're going to see something amazing happen and they go, "Whoa." Now some of them are going to be like the religious leaders and they're going to pick up stones to kill Him. So there's this choice that people make. There's a choice where to reject God or there's a choice to receive God. That choice is before each one of us.

I want to take you into chapter 11 just to introduce you to the chapter and then next week we're going to develop chapter 11 a little bit more. Because in chapter 11 He's going to raise Lazarus from the dead. It's a real fun story. Whenever you've got a mummy coming out of a tomb, it's an interesting story. So we're going to read all about that next week when we go forward.

But I want you to see in verse 1 it says, *Now a man named Lazarus was sick.* This is not the same Lazarus that's in the story in Luke 16 that there was a rich man Lazarus and Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man went to hell and Jesus was illustrating this point. That's not the same Lazarus. This is a different guy that we're going to learn about. And this is the seventh sign that John gives (this is how I want to end today) and I want you to see how that sign fits into the story for us in the gospel of John.

There are seven signs that are mentioned in John's gospel. These are the ones that are there: turning the water into wine, healing the nobleman's son, healing the man that was crippled for thirty-eight years, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking of Jesus on the water, the healing of the blind man, and raising Lazarus from the dead. Those are the seven different signs that He did.

I want you to see why John chooses seven. There are lots more than seven, but He chooses seven and He describes why in John 20:30-31. *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may life in his name.*

Next week we're going to see how Jesus raises a man from being dead (I'm talking about stinky dead) to life. We'll see that. It's going to be a fun story next week. Stinky dead to life. That's what's going to happen.

I want you to know that God will do the same thing in your life. He'll move you from stinky dead to life. God offers a very special life for us and He draws us to that. Our job is to respond and to trust Him.

I trust today that as you consider this story it'll be fuel for you as you share the gospel with other people because I know you go around to people that you work with and they smell bad. They're stinky dead and you know it and you wish that they would have life. And so you can share the gospel with them with confidence because God is drawing people to Himself. Who knows that maybe your testimony in that situation, your comment that you make to that person may be just what's needed for that person to open their eyes and say, "Oh wow. God's been working in my life all these years. I want to accept Him in my life."

It's great to watch God work. We have a privilege to be a part of that process. When we pray, when we witness, when we serve the Lord, God does some amazing things. Amen?

Alright. We're going to sing a song now and as we do if God is speaking to your heart and you need some prayer, there are some prayer counselors that are going to be on the side. I want to encourage you to think about what God is doing and respond to Him in the midst of that. The worship time is an opportunity to respond. It's the response of our hearts to the Lord and allowing Him to work. So you'll want to take some time and ask God to do that in your own heart and trust Him and respond to Him in the midst of that.