

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON – 1st January 2023 pm

“New year’s message: You will make it...”

Jude v 1- 25

Scripture references from the ESV

Jude: ¹ Jude, a servant^[a] of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for^[b] Jesus Christ:² May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

⁵ Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved^[c] a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgement of the great day—⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,^[d] serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ⁹ But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgement, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” ¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. ¹² These are hidden reefs^[e] at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved for ever. ¹⁴ It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgement on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” ¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favouritism to gain advantage.

¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ They^[f] said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰ But you,

beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,
²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment^[a] stained by the flesh.

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

As we come to the end of one year, and the start of another, it is appropriate to ask this question:

- How can we be sure that this time next year we will still be trusting in Christ, that we will remain saved and will not fall away?

The simple answer is that we will remain saved because of God who keeps.

We can find that answer in the doxology (vv24-25 above). Jude ascribes praise to God as the **God who is able to keep us**. He is able to keep us from stumbling, but what does this mean? Clearly Jude has in mind spiritual stumbling, not physical stumbling, but does he mean God is keeping us so that we **never** stumble in sin or error? Our own experience tells us that this can't be the case, since we all stumble in those areas. We might rightly call God's keeping grace into question if that was all that Jude meant.

However, Jude goes on to say that God is **able to present us blameless before his presence**. As well as looking at life now, he is also looking to the glorious day when Jesus returns, coming back as the judge of all. On that day

- the false teachers in the church (v4 above) will be exposed and judged
- the fallen angels (v6 above) will be eternally punished along with all who deny Jesus.

That day will be so fearful that sinners will call for rocks to fall on them to hide them from the presence of the judge (**Rev 6:16** see p4).

In the doxology, Jude's focus is fully on that day and he assures believers that we will be able to stand and not stumble.

Not only that, but we will stand blameless in the presence of God and we will see God's glory and rejoice!

The stumbling that God keeps us from is the stumbling that leads to falling away.

What does it mean to see God's glory? God's glory is **the visible manifestation of his presence**. Throughout history God has made his presence known, as the following examples show:

- **In the Garden of Eden:** God met with Adam in some kind of visible form, until they fell into sin and were banished, losing the privilege of being able to be in God's presence
- **On Mount Sinai:** God came down on the mountain and made his presence known in fire. The people saw smoke and the mountain shook. When God spoke, they heard the sound of thunder
- **2000 years ago, God's glory was revealed in the person of Jesus.** John writes "we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14). This was God's glory veiled in human flesh, but still God's glory made known.
- **In this age:** God's glory is something we experience spiritually. God is always present but there are times when there is a felt sense of his presence, perhaps when we are praying or when we are gathered together. Then there is a hushed sense of awe.
- **One day (the day Jude speaks of):** God's blazing glory will be revealed as his Son returns to this earth

On that day we will see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ

When we are confronted with the glory of God's presence, there are only two responses:

- a) Terror:** Adam and Eve hid from God, Israel begged Moses not to let God speak to them lest they die and sinners on the day of judgement will prefer to have rocks fall on them rather than face God's wrath. **OR**
- b) Joy:** One day we will be brought into the presence of this God before whom mountains tremble and from whom sinners run away in terror. Yet believers will be filled with greater joy than we have ever known.

How can we know joy and not terror? Jude speaks of false teachers, fallen angels and our own lusts (the world, the flesh and the Devil), all of which war against our soul.

- How can we be sure they won't pull us down to the point where we fall away?
- How can we, sinners as we are, be presented blameless to a holy God and be joyful not terrified?

Jude's answer is that **God is able to keep us**, and he is able for three reasons:

1. **Because God has saved us for this purpose.** We know we are not blameless, so how amazing it is to think that we shall be presented blameless before the presence of God. We are all guilty before God, because we have sinned many times yet Jude tells us that God has saved us through Jesus Christ. He praises God by saying: **to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ (v25 above).** God has saved us by:

- Imputing our sin to Jesus Christ and punishing him instead of us, so that we can be forgiven when we repent.
- Imputing Christ's righteousness to us so that we are blameless, just as he is.

God did all this so that we might stand in his holy presence, honouring him through our joy-filled praise for all eternity. God's purpose in our salvation is not primarily that we escape hell, but that we might be **to the praise of his glorious grace (Eph 1:6).** He will not change his mind and he will not fail.

How can we know we will make it? We will make it because God always does all he purposes to do

2. **Because God is strong to keep us saved.** Jude praises God (v25 above) for

- **His majesty:** he sits on the throne of the universe, with everything under him. He is above every other rule, including all the cosmic rulers of darkness (angels, demons and Satan)
- **His dominion:** God has absolute power to direct the universe as he wishes. No one can force his hand, and he will do what he has determined. **Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. (Psalm 115:3)**
- **His authority:** he has authority over everything he has created. We see that in the life of Jesus who stilled the storm, cast out demons and healed sickness. God providentially governs everything by his authority for his own purpose, and all that power is used by God to save you and to keep you saved. The God who called you to salvation, overcoming your hostility and reluctance in order to save you, is not weak, but strong to keep you.
 - No false teachers can deceive you into denying Christ
 - No demon can take you from his hand, no matter how much they may trouble you
 - Even our own sinful flesh, which does at times overcome us, will not ultimately cause us to fall away.

God rules with power and authority over all our enemies to make them work for our eternal good and not for our ruin.

How can we know we will make it? God saved us for this purpose and God will keep us saved.

3. Because God is committed to his own glory. This doxology is a hymn of praise to God which was given to Jude by God. **All Scripture is breathed out by God (2 Tim 3:16).** Why would God do that? God means to be glorified in the praises of his redeemed people forever. If God fails to keep us, then he will not receive the glory he is due for all eternity. Since God won't allow his glory to be tarnished, he must keep us.

How can we know we will make it? Having committed himself to us, God must bring us to himself in order to glorify his own name.

As believers, we can be sure that God will enable us to stand blameless, and fill us with joy in his presence because

- God has saved us for this purpose
- God has strength to keep us saved
- God is committed to glorifying himself through our salvation.

However, that does not mean we have nothing to do! Jude says that, in view of God's keeping us, we must:

- Contend for the faith – we have to fight
- Keep ourselves in God's love, by praying in the Spirit and having mercy on doubters

We will stand, by God's grace, as God keeps us, through reading his word, praying in the Spirit, and having fellowship together.

If we are truly saved now, we will persevere and this time next year, no matter what God brings our way in 2023,

we will be praising him wherever we are, whether it be here, somewhere else on this earth or in heaven.