

TO HIM WHO IS ABLE
Jude 24-25

[READ Jude 24-25]

We've come to the end, haven't we? To be honest, I'm hesitant to preach this morning. (Some of you are breathing a sigh of relief).

Two reasons:

- 1) If Jude were a mountain, I feel like we've only just made it to base camp. There is so much yet to explore. This Doxology (vv. 24-25) drew me in in the first place. I was captivated: what was it that was so dangerous that it demanded such a reassuring, unflinching word of comfort at the end? I feel as if we've only just begun to answer that question.
- 2) There is a danger in preaching on a doxology. We risk taking away from its simple beauty and profound depth. It's hard to say more than Jude says in this sentence.¹

Despite these hesitations, here we are. My hope is that this morning, we won't add anything to what Jude says, but it will sink into the crevices of our hearts and take root. My hope is that here at the end of this letter, we would climb just high enough to look beyond – to gaze over the horizon. My hope is that we would glimpse what awaits and it would breathe fresh courage into our weary souls. And that our longing for what awaits would grow until our hearts are fixed upon it – fixed upon the day when all our longings will be met in Him.

This letter has been heavy. Jude is a good pastor. He sees a threat to his flock and he takes it seriously. It's no surprise. All of salvation history has pointed to this last time when ungodly ones would twist the gospel of Jesus Christ for selfish gain.

"Contend for the faith," Jude says, "for the judgment of those ungodly ones is certain. Build one another up in the gospel. Pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the path of God's love – the path of love-driven obedience, all the while waiting for the day when the mercy of Jesus will be all we know."

¹ Douglas Moo, *II Peter and Jude*, p. 302.

And then the radical call to show mercy to the ones the wolves have deceived, and even to the wolves themselves, albeit with caution (vv. 22-23).

Jude knows that with the heaviness and urgency of his letter, he best end with bold hope. He wants our eyes fixed not on the dangers all around but on the God who is able to keep us from those dangers – to turn our gaze upon Him who is able.

I. To Him

In this first section, we focus on Jude’s desire for his readers, including us, to turn our gaze upward – “to Him.” The word “doxology” comes from the word *doxa*, meaning “glory.” Jude knows that the more our hearts are fixed on and captivated by the glory of God, the better we will be able to hold to the gospel of Jesus Christ amidst deceptive opposition.

Early Christian doxologies divided into four parts: 1) the person praised, 2) the word of praise, 3) the indication of time, and 4) the “Amen.”²

A) Who is the Person Praised?

“Now to him who is able...(we’ll talk more about that soon)...to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord”

“to the only God” – God is the person praised. The “only” God – *monos* (“only”) - *monotheism*. This is a distinctly Jewish confession – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the only true God.³

“to the only God, *our Savior*” – traditional Jewish term for God.⁴ Psalm 79:9 – “Help us, O God of our salvation.”

² Richard Bauckham, *Jude – 2 Peter*, p. 119.

³ Bauckham, p. 123.

⁴ Bauckham, p. 123.

“through Jesus Christ our Lord” – this phrase is distinctly Christian, setting Jude’s doxology apart from its Jewish models.⁵

This is the eighth time Jude directly mentions Jesus in his short letter. Clearly, his half brother made a lasting impression on him, so much so that he calls himself a “bondservant of Jesus Christ,” who is, he says, “our only Master and Lord” (v. 4).

[Earlier, Jude mentions all three members of the Godhead]

The only God is the person being praised.

B) What is the Word of Praise?

See a list of attributes marked off by “be” – “to the only God, through our Lord Jesus Christ *be* glory, majesty, dominion, and authority...”

Many Jewish and early Christian doxologies have such a list of God’s attributes. In I Chronicles 29, David offered a doxology after offerings had been given for the building of the temple: “Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty...” (see the similarity)

- “Glory” is the most common attribute in doxologies.⁶ It is a theme in Jude’s doxology – we see it twice (“present you blameless before the presence of his glory” v. 24). It is God’s weighty presence, his very being.⁷

- “majesty” is such a core characteristic of God, it is used in place of his name in Hebrews 1: “After making purification for

⁵ Bauckham, p. 120.

⁶ Bauckham, p. 124.

⁷ Moo, p. 301. // Bauckham, p. 124.

sins, [Jesus] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” It highlights his kingly status⁸ and supreme other-ness.⁹

- “dominion” highlights his absolute power/control, and
- “authority” shows his sovereign rule over all things¹⁰

C) The indication of time?

These attributes belong to God “before all time and now and forever.”

This is the only Jewish or Christian doxology with a threefold division of time: past, present and future.¹¹

God’s glory, majesty, dominion, and authority are timeless – they cannot be marked adequately by time. He existed in radiant glory and majesty in eternity past, before time began. He exists in radiant glory and absolute dominion now, as you hear me speak. And he will always exist in glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, undiminished by time, until time itself is irrelevant.

D) The “Amen” – if we transported back to when this letter was first read to believers in Jude’s day, we would all have joined in the concluding “Amen.”¹²

These four parts: the person praised (God), the word of praise (four attributes), the three-part indication of time and the “Amen” were fairly common. But Jude sets his doxology apart by his expanded description of God:

“To Him...Who Is Able.”

II. Who Is Able

Jude ties his doxology into the themes of his letter, making his one of the longest doxologies in the New Testament.¹³

⁸ Moo, p. 301.

⁹ Bauckham, p. 124.

¹⁰ Bauckham, p. 124.

¹¹ Bauckham, p. 120.

¹² Bauckham, p. 124.

¹³ Moo, p. 302.

He starts in a unique way: “To him *who is able...*” – only two other instances in the NT:

- Romans 16:25 – “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...”
- Ephesians 3:20 – “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...”

“Him who is able” is a fitting title for God.

- The One who said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
- The God who made a nation from an elderly woman’s barren womb.
- The God who rescued his enslaved people by lamb’s blood on doorposts.
- The God who hydrated his people through a sun-scorched water-gushing rock.
- The God who caused city walls to collapse through obedient worship-walking.
- The God who preserved a runaway prophet in a fish’s gut.
- The God who felled a giant by a shepherd’s stone.
- The God who felled the giants of sin, death and Satan by a virgin-born baby.

He has always been the God who is able. But Jude gets specific:

“Now to the God who is able *to keep you from stumbling.*”

He ties back into v. 1, when he calls believers those who are “*kept* for Jesus Christ.” The verb for “keep” here is similar in meaning: lit. “to guard,” “keep safe,” “preserve,” “to ensure that something (or someone) remains intact.”^{14 15}

What is it that God will guard or keep believers from?

¹⁴ Zerwick, *Grammatical Analysis of the New Testament*, p. 741.

¹⁵ William Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 377.

“stumbling” – “losing [their] footing”¹⁶ – the word stirs up the image of falling into a moral mishap or sin and finding oneself in extreme peril.¹⁷

The Psalms are filled with images of God keeping his people’s feet from slipping:

Psalm 121:1-4

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

In the context of Jude’s letter, God keeping his people from stumbling would mean he would preserve them to the end, saving them from the deceptions of the false teachers and their magnetic immorality. He would keep them from giving up and giving in. Ultimately, he would keep them from the peril of the eternal fiery abyss.

Why would believers need to be kept and preserved until the end?
Because something awaits them.

“The one who is able to keep you from stumbling” is also able to
“present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...”

¹⁶ Danker, p. 309.

¹⁷ Danker, p. 309.

“Present” lit. “set” – stand you up. The image here is of the final Day, the day when God’s opponents will be forever judged and his beloved forever loved.

We see three things about this presentation of believers:

1) In what condition will believers be presented?

Battered and broken? No. “blameless” – “without fault,”¹⁸
“without blemish”¹⁹

The image is of a sacrificial animal presented to God. Lambs for sacrifice were to be without blemish. For the lambs, that meant physical spotlessness. For believers, that means absolute moral purity.

How can it be that God will present us blameless? I know I am far from that.

Paul tells us how in Colossians 1:21-22 – “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [Jesus] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...”

We are made acceptable sacrifices through the spotless sacrifice of Another.

2) Where will believers be presented?

“before the presence of his glory” – in the very presence of the one whose glory exceeds the limits of time.

Jesus describes this in the beatitudes: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see God*.”

3) How will believers be presented?

¹⁸ Danker, p. 21.

¹⁹ Zerwick, p. 741.

“with great joy” – the image is of a jubilant festival. All the festivals and feast days of Israel were pointing forward to this one: the festival to out-joy them all.

When we are presented before the presence of his glory with great joy, is it God’s joy at presenting us or our joy in meeting him? I think both.

How could God not rejoice? All of salvation history traces his design to rescue his people so that he can dwell with us forever. Just as the father celebrated when the prodigal son returned home, even more will God celebrate at the homecoming of his prodigal people.

And how could we not rejoice at entering the presence of God’s glory? Perhaps the well-known lyrics give us a glimpse:

Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for You Jesus or in awe of You be still? Will I stand in Your presence or to my knees, will I fall? Will I sing hallelujah? Will I be able to speak at all? I can only imagine.²⁰

But that joy seems so far away. It seems almost out of reach. There are days when I feel I cannot keep the course, cannot make it to the eternal shores without stumbling and falling and not getting up. Where are you tempted to stumble?

False teachers are like sirens. It’s tempting to avoid the cost, to avoid the pain of obedience, of living now as a living sacrifice of worship, in preparation for the final Day.

But false teachers are not the only possible source of stumbling. The world is so broken. At times, all feels dark. It feels darker lately. Covid lingers. Violence escalates. National invasions, inflation, family disintegration, a pandemic of isolation. Health crises, family dying. We could begin to believe the deceptions – that God is not good. That he is not strong. That he is not here.

²⁰ Bart Millard, *I Can Only Imagine*

Jude ends his letter with a dagger to the heart of such lies.

On the final Day, those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, he will present to himself as unblemished sacrificial offerings, made perfect through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ. On that day, there will be unparalleled joy. I know you long for that day. Can you see it, just beyond the horizon?

To him who is able.