

Jude 24 - 25

(Readings: 1st Peter 1:3-2:3; Jude 1-25)

Keeping It Up!

We have come full circle in Jude's letter. From beginning this letter with the clear ascription who the true God is and what He does, the Lord's half-brother ends it with the same.

But we may also say here that what Jude ends with is much more of the same! After having taken us to the depths plunged by those set against the Lord, and so picturing the evil of he who is the arch-enemy of their God, there could be no greater height described!

That's why the title for this sermon, 'Keeping It Up' is not at all about what we do but all about the One we look to! That's truly keeping it up!

And where do we find more divinely inspired words to help us do that than these two verses which end Jude's letter? This wonderful doxology has been a tremendous comfort not only to those who first heard them in the first century but to countless believers in the two thousand years since then!

As a doxology this is praise to God for who He is and what He's done. It is how we begin divine worship and it is how we end it. God's people are looking up! How much doesn't this put our position here below in the right place? When all is said and done it can only be about what He has said and done! In the words of a first aspect to our text this morning, **WE LOOK TO HIM WHO BRINGS US THROUGH.**

We Look to Him Who Brings Us Through

This is what verse 24 outlines for us. While verse 23 has spoken of the work we must be completely committed to here below – the rescue of men and women from the stinking morass of this world's misery, there is now a different focus. From the horizontal we turn now to the vertical! And what a different sight that is!

We see that straight away with the first phrase. "To him who is able to keep" Jude declares. And how different isn't that to all that we are?

This is the most confident affirmation of God's care. This is the spirit of Paul in 2nd Timothy 1 verse 12. For there he likewise declares, "I am ... convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."

That doesn't mean Jude isn't aware of the danger of falling into temptation. This doesn't mean we won't be attacked by sin. Rather, Jude tells us to put our trust in almighty God. He lifts us up above all that we don't have here below and puts us in the divine perspective.

And that is through what we ourselves here must do. This is what the apostle Peter meant when he writes in his 2nd letter chapter 1 verse 10 that we must be all the more eager to make our calling and election sure.

Notice here the reference to be kept from falling. Literally this would be translated, "keep you from being tripped." And it's "being tripped" which refers to us spiritually. This is about being kept away from falling into sin and so you're kept from falling away from God. After that vivid series of human failings and terrible falls from grace Jude has just told, we are told of the only way we get through.

The apostate despises the Word of God, and so he stumbles and trips and falls. The true child of God, however, even though he turns away from the means of grace, is safe.

This is what David experienced in his own lifetime. As he says in Psalm 37 verse 24 of the believer, "though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand."

Like an earthly father is thrilled when his little child takes hold of his hand and walks with him, so God delights to watch over us. He's always looking out for you. He's not going to let you self-destruct. He's working out everything in your life so that you'll keep coming

back to the straight and the narrow. Doesn't David in his most well-known psalm speak of his soul being restored again?

And then Jude lifts us higher still! He next speaks of the Lord presenting us before His glorious presence. Here we can be in no doubt that this speaks of God the Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The word "present" tells us of someone being in the position of being able to take us before a powerful potentate. It describes being introduced to that ruler, and for that you certainly need to have been invited.

But especially it pictures for us such a sudden and dramatic transformation! From the possibility of present stumbling we're instantly transferred to God in His glory. One moment we're concerned with our earthly pilgrimage and the rough road we often find ourselves travelling. The next moment that's all past, and we're with our blessed Lord, surrounded by glory!

Dear friend, doesn't that change your perspective right now? Beyond your next faltering step there could be your eternal home in the skies!

Much as this might be a thought far from where you are now, it is what will happen. And it is able to happen because you will then be "without fault." In other words, you will be free from any stain or blemish that's found in this world below. You will be completely clean and dressed in the most pure robes.

This is the scene Paul painted in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. There in the verses 26 and 27, he speaks of Christ loving the Church and giving Himself up for her "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish." In other words, the Lord will make her "holy and blameless."

Both Jude and Paul describe the fulfilment of Christ's prayer in John 17:24. For there the Lord prayed: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

The word Jude and Paul use, which is translated "without fault," or "without blemish," is the same word another apostle, Peter, uses in his first letter, chapter 1 verse 19. There Jesus Christ is described as "a lamb without blemish or defect." So it's only by being made right with God, through faith in Him, that you will get in to meet Christ as the Mighty and most Marvellous King!

Then, at that time when the imperfections of this life are gone forever, there must be "joy". I mean, there cannot be anything of all that misery we know now, can there? In the words John received by vision in Revelation 21:4, "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away."

We read of this great joy also in 1st Peter chapter 1. There in verse 6 it speaks of having some of that joy now, as we anticipate what is yet to come. As verse 8 goes on, even though we haven't yet seen our Lord, we are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

So imagine how much more that will be in heaven itself! This is what Revelation 19 describes so wonderfully. There a huge multitude cries out together, "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."

There is no fear there! You'll experience only the greatest joy at being then in God's presence.

Verse 24 so much shows that WE LOOK TO HIM WHO BRINGS US THROUGH. And verse 25 brings out that WE PRAISE HIM WHO'S COME TO ME & YOU.

We Praise Him Who's Come to Me & You

Here we come to the second part of Jude's exquisite doxology. And how much doesn't this continue in that doxological vein? "To the only God our Saviour," this final verse begins. This is an echo of earlier doxologies. Right back in Deuteronomy 6:4 Moses declares to Israel, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." And in the New Testament there are other examples of this too. One is found in Romans 16 verse 27. There Paul ends his letter declaring, "to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ!"

The adjective "only" is often used in doxologies. It tells us that those who truly praise God praise Him alone and no other. In fact, they praise God as the One who has brought them into the place of praising Him for all He is! He is "the only God our Saviour"!

And doesn't Jude clearly pronounce those distinctive attributes that make God, God? He has all the "glory, majesty, power, and authority."

"Glory" is that which is essential to God's being. This tells us of His splendour.

This is the radiance which shines. The story of the angels appearing to the shepherds tells us that in Luke 2.

This is also the radiance that blinds. What happened to Paul on the road to Damascus testified to this.

And, then, this is the radiance which can't be withstood by the unglorified human race.

Revelation 15:8 is clear about this in describing the smoke of the divine Presence protecting them from God.

"Majesty" stresses His position. This is a word only found here and in Hebrews 1:3 and 8:1. And all three occurrences are clear that this is the incomparable and indescribable regal presence of the Ruler of the Universe.

There can be some confusion with the next two words, though. Different Bible versions translate this using the same word for either Greek word. So you have the New International Version translating these two words as "power and authority," while the New King James is "dominion and power."

This indicates the original Greek words are similar in meaning. Yet there is still a difference between them. The word translated as "power" or "dominion" describes the control that God has over this world. This is His world; it's in His hands.

Hebrews 1:3 also is relevant here as it speaks of the Lord "sustaining all things by his powerful word." In Psalm 103:19 we hear that God's "kingdom rules over all." So God has the ability to carry out His sovereign will.

And then there is the word translated as "authority" in the NIV and "power" in the NKJV.

This comes from the Greek word meaning the fact that God has the absolute right to do as He wills. He has the ability to do anything whatsoever.

Wasn't this exactly what we hear in Christ's august utterance in the Great Commission?

There in Matthew 28:18 He declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." God the Father gave His Son all authority.

What a description these four words are! Yet when we try as much as we can to say something about them, we simply cannot define or explain them. Our human words are so inadequate to describe them! So how much don't we depend on the Holy Spirit helping us to take this all in? That's the unexplainable God-given ability which helps us to understand. This is the believer's heart-felt response which David cried out in 1st Chronicles 29. There in verse 11 he says, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

Then the words "through Jesus Christ our Lord" cry out the One through whom we see all this personally. It was God's eternal radiance which was made clear in Jesus Christ. It was God's majesty which showed in His kingly greatness which suffers without complaint. It was

God's control which is shown in Christ's Lordship. And it was God's ability to do anything which we see in the Jesus who is able to meet the needs of man.

In Jesus Christ God's eternal qualities are unveiled. It's to Him we must come one day.

Indeed, He Himself will bring us.

Dear friend, it's all been written about! When Jude ends by saying, "before all ages, now and forevermore!" the Lord is declaring that before the stars were set in place, and throughout the ages which have ever been, and despite whatever the future might bring, He is the King!

These four attributes which say everything about Him will always apply to Him! As Hebrews 13 verse 8 says of our Lord and Saviour, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

David Wheaton sums it up well about these four qualities. He says, "These qualities have always been His and always will be, for they are the qualities of eternity which in His love He has introduced into the world of space and time which He has created."

So what could you possibly say to all this? What response does your believing soul have to such a vision of the Almighty God?

There is only one word to end our song of praise to the mighty and marvellous One. Only one word could possibly wrap up the Christian's reaction to all this!

It is the word that ends this letter. It is the word that is found throughout Scripture and in Jewish and Christian custom throughout many centuries ending such doxologies. What else could it be but the word, "Amen"?

For truly it is so. That's what "Amen" translated is. In other words, Jude says, 'What I have written is true; these are faithful words.'

Dear friend, did you ever doubt them? So why not go out and live believing them? Then you are truly praising Him!