

Our intern pastor, Uriah, preached a very encouraging series from 2 Peter, including 2 Peter 1:1 where Peter strengthened his readers by reminding them that they have *a like precious faith* just as valuable to God as Peter's own apostolic faith (2 Peter 1:1). The lowliest of saints has an equal standing (by grace through faith) with the mighty apostle! The small letter of Jude also emphasizes Church's mandate to possess and protect her precious faith. May the Lord embolden us to "contend for the faith" and to stand in the love of God in the face of all what false teaching or persecution.

Mon/Tues: Read 2 Peter 1:1-3 and Jude 1-3**Kept By the Trinity**

Peter reassures his readers of the precious gift of faith given to each believer; so in like manner Jude seeks to impress on us the *everlasting value* of this precious faith by reminding us of its fundamental source in the electing work of God. He greets his readers with the first of many triads in the book of Jude: "To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for (or by) Jesus Christ."

Jude's threefold description of God's work in claiming us for Himself is a beautiful amplification of what Peter writes when he greets his readers as "God's elect" (1 Peter 1:1). To be elect means three things, according to Jude 1:

- 1) That we have been sovereignly and effectually called by the Spirit of God
- 2) That God the Father placed His sovereign love upon us from before the foundation of the world
- 3) That God the Son by His shepherding care for us on earth "keeps us"

Let's focus on this idea of being "kept" by Jesus Christ. The Greek verb in verse 1 means to be preserved and kept. Jesus prays in John 17:15 that the Father would *not* take His church from the world, but that He would "keep" His disciples from the evil one. There is our verb. A similar idea is found in the beginning of Jude's doxology in Jude 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

Two different verbs for "keeping" are used by Jude, and it is clear that he has in mind Christ's vigilance in watching over us. The four soldiers assigned to guard Peter in Acts 12 were to carefully keep watch over him, "keeping watch through the night," like the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks in Luke 2:8. Through such rich examples, we grasp God's total commitment to His flock through that "great Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 13:20). Truly, "He who watches over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Psalm 121).

Meditate and Pray: Think about the implications of such watch-care. The question is a simple and challenging one: Can we endure the increase of wickedness in the world and in the church without despairing? Can we be as fearless as Jude was? Can we look at the tares in the midst of the wheat of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13) and yet be confident that God's gift of faith to and in the church will be preserved and will even grow?

The answer to that question lies in the doctrine of the Trinitarian involvement of God in guarding and keeping His church. Let us not grow weary in well-doing, knowing that God consistently builds His church in the midst of a hostile world, even allowing false teachers within the church, by calling sinners into a relationship of being “beloved by the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.” Sing about God’s preserving and persevering grace in *Trinity Hymnal* # 463:

1 A debtor to mercy alone,
of covenant mercy I sing;
nor fear, with thy righteousness on,
my person and offering to bring.
The terrors of law and of God
with me can have nothing to do;
my Savior's obedience and blood
hide all my transgressions from view.

2 The work which his goodness began,
the arm of his strength will complete;
his promise is yea and amen,
and never was forfeited yet.
Things future, nor things that are now,
nor all things below or above,
can make him his purpose forgo,
or sever my soul from his love.

3 My name from the palms of his hands
eternity will not erase;
impressed on his heart it remains,
in marks of indelible grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
as sure as the earnest is giv'n;
more happy, but not more secure,
the glorified spirits in heav'n.

Wednesday: Read Jude 1-4 and 2 Peter 2:1

Drawn Closer to our Savior

Just as Peter warns the church in his day that there would be false teachers who would arise among believers, so Jude has to change the purpose of his writing:

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. 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.

Think of it! The New Testament church was blest by mighty apostolic leadership and teaching. They were privileged to hear from the lips of men like Jude, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus and brother of the James, but there was nevertheless a real vulnerability to heed lying speech and to be persuaded by ungodly and insidious false teaching. How could that be? Why would God allow His church to be so vulnerable?

God will not give His church ironclad weapons of apostolic doctrine or valiant church leadership *if such doctrine or lion-like leader creates a church* reliant on its *own* ability to preserve itself. It is only in living, daily

dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, being joined to Him by a living faith that *expresses* itself in daily reliance *not on human wisdom* but on Christ's living presence and promises – only then is the church safe.

So then, God sovereignly allowed false teachers within and threat of persecution from without in the days of the book of Jude – in order to drive the church to her knees, crying “Abba Father.” As our Westminster Confession of Faith (V:V) puts it, describing why God at times “leaves the church to her own devices” (with my emphasis):

The most wise, righteous, and gracious God, doth oftentimes leave for a season His own children to manifold temptations and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, *that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself*, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

Meditate and Pray: Ask the Lord to grant you, your family and your church an increasing dependence on the Lord for your daily existence, so that we might all learn the truth for the persecuted and suffering church: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word” (Psalm 119:67).

Thurs/Fri/Sat: Read Jude 1-5 & Romans 5:1-5

The Apple of His Eye

Jude was compelled to change the direction of his letter in order to warn about the danger of false teaching and false practice. He was rightly concerned; those who bring false doctrine into the church and *erode the sanctifying power of the truth* by their immoral example are extremely toxic, even tainting and tempting God's elect. Was this not what Jesus warned against? “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24).

No, of course Christians cannot lose their salvation. This is what we stressed earlier in this week's notes – being “kept” by the Lord Jesus gives us eternal security. But there is no other biblical language to express the threat of the false teachers in Jude without mentioning our Lord's words: “Deceiving, if it were possible, even the elect.” Good parents will not let their children fall into the deadly hot-springs off the wooden walkways at Yellowstone National Park, but the warning-signs are nevertheless correct: “Danger. Death Resulting for Those Who Fall In.” Just so with God's Word: it warns us off deadly danger in order to awaken us to flee for refuge to our Lord. What is it, in particular, that provides us with the safety we need against such dangers as these false teachers? The answer is found both in biblical history and in Jude 1:1.

First, Jude reminds his readers in (verse 5) that the Lord was the One who rescued them from Egypt. How did that take place? What motivated the Lord to claim His people out of Egyptian slavery? It was his electing love. Remember Moses' song, declaring the reality of electing love:

But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.
He found him in a desert land and in the howling waste of the wilderness;
he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.
Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young,
spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,

the Lord alone guided him, no foreign god was with him.
 He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field,
 and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.
 Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs,
 rams of Bashan and goats, with the very finest of the wheat—
 and you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape.
 Deuteronomy 32:9-14

Do you see the electing love of God? The Lord “found” His people, encircling them with His care, and setting His love upon him, so that they became the “apple of His eye.” That is what Jude has in mind. The love of God is what motivates His particularity in choosing those whom He will give His Son (John 6:37) to be His Son’s bride, the church.

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that into the heart of every believer He pours His love through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Sing about this electing love, using the following hymns:

1 'Tis not that I did choose thee,
 for, Lord, that could not be;
 this heart would still refuse thee,
 hadst thou not chosen me.
 Thou from the sin that stained me
 hast cleansed and set me free;
 of old thou hast ordained me,
 that I should live to thee.

2 'Twas sov'reign mercy called me
 and taught my op'ning mind;
 the world had else enthralled me,
 to heav'nly glories blind.
 My heart owns none before thee,
 for thy rich grace I thirst;
 this knowing, if I love thee,
 thou must have loved me first.

(# 471, *Trinity Hymnal*)

1 How sweet and awesome is the place
 with Christ within the doors,
 while everlasting love displays
 the choicest of her stores.

2 While all our hearts and all our songs
 join to admire the feast,
 each of us cries, with thankful tongue,
 "Lord, why was I a guest?"

3 "Why was I made to hear your voice,
 and enter while there's room,
 when thousands make a wretched choice,
 and rather starve than come?"

4 'Twas the same love that spread the feast
 that sweetly drew us in;
 else we had still refused to taste,
 and perished in our sin.

(# 469 *Trinity Hymnal*)