

What a comfort to *know* from Scripture the truth of God's powerful control of our lives. The Shorter Catechism puts it this way:

Q. 11. *What are God's works of providence?* A. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.

Also, let's hear God's providential attention to even the smallest and most unnoticed parts of our lives in questions 26 and 27 the Heidelberg Catechism:

Q 26. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them, and who still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence, is, for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father. In Him I trust so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul and will also turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow. He is able to do so as almighty God, and willing also as a faithful Father.

27. Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. God's providence is His almighty and ever present power, whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come not by chance but by His fatherly hand.

Such a firm hold by faith on the Lord as the One in control of all things, and such a lowly spirit by which we humbly accept each challenge and disappointment as "from His fatherly hand," means much to Jude as he writes his painful epistle warning against threats to the church from false teaching. Let's look for signs of the calm confidence which Jude expressed by faith to help us to stand our ground for the sake of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Mon/Tues: Read Matt. 8:23-27; Jude 5-7 & 10-13

Universal Knowledge, Universal Control

As we read the eyewitness account of the Lord preserving His disciples by governing the storm and bringing the wind and waves under His control with a sovereign rebuke, we are reassured of the extent of God's providence on display through His Son's power even over the wild, fallen world of nature. Such Divine power over the waves is once again called for in the face of the threat of false teachers whom Jude describes as "waterless clouds, wild waves of the sea" (Jude 12-13).

Jude piles on many different metaphors from nature and biblical history to describe how dangerous these false teachers are. These apostates threaten the church through tempestuous, uncontrollable, angry, and violent attitudes and actions (verses 12-13). From Jude's graphic scenes we can know that when we face the tempest of sin, conflict, and Satanically-inspired false teaching in the church Christ knows how to handle such "wild waves of the sea," even in the church.

Remember, for example, how Jesus expresses His trust in God's providence amid the storm, by His *sleeping the sleep of holy, confident faith*. In other words, even in the storm, Jesus Christ takes our place in obedience to His Father's will – even to the point of His own exhaustion in the boat! This is one reason why He falls asleep – because of His tireless healing, teaching, and saving of sinners – so much so that in Mark's version of the account (Mark 4:36) the disciples have to rescue Him from the crowds, taking Him in the boat “just as He was,” that is, without food, drink or any preparation. Our Savior then shows us the cost of His exhausting ministry by falling asleep immediately in the back of the boat.

The everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who never becomes weary (Isa. 40:28), the Lord the Keeper of Israel who never sleeps (Psa. 121:3), experienced both as the man Jesus. His firsthand experience of human weakness and limitations should be a source of endless encouragement to those who rely on Him (Heb. 2:17-18).
Let's Study Luke, Douglas Milne

But Christ's exhausted sleep had not one iota of the despair or overwhelm which, unfortunately, often drives us to our beds. It is Jesus' faith and poise in the face of the threat of the storm that we must notice. He slept *because He trusted* in His Father's control – even of seemingly uncontrollable waves.

In the same way, Jude urges us to “contend for the faith” (Jude 3). He is saying, in the first place, that we are to rest in the Lord's sovereign will. Exhausted as He was in the back of the boat, Jesus was confident that His Father would not let the waves swamp His sovereign purposes for the church. So He slept. We are to have the same confidence that the Lord will show His power in *our* storms by ensuring that *we* won't drown. Listen to the confidence of Jude's doxology, in several translations:

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, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (ESV)

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, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (NASB)

And to Him who is able to guard you not stumbling, and to set [you] in the presence of His glory unblemished, in gladness, to the only wise God our Saviour, [is] glory and greatness, power and authority, both now and to all the ages! Amen. (Young's Literal Translation)

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (NIV)

Weds/Thurs/Fri: Read Jude 1-7 & 2 Peter 1:1-7**Sanctified, Once and Ongoing**

Jude sketches out a sharp contrast: the security in God's purposes of we who are "sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called ..." in the foreground, and the looming cliff of judgment that awaits the enemies of the Gospel. Those who "long ago were designated for condemnation" are thus detailed:

- Plagued by unbelief ending in destruction, like Israel in the wilderness (Jude 5)
- Awaiting the final judgment like the angels in the days of Noah who are now kept in hell (Jude 6, compared with 1 Peter 3:19-20 & 1 Peter 4:6)
- Now consigned to the fire because of their immorality and violence, like Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7)

We see, then, how important it is for us to heed the warning that "without holiness, no one will see the Lord."

Our security is rooted in a quiet, trusting confidence in Jesus' Lordship, resting in the Lord who is able to "keep us from stumbling" (Jude 24). We must have patience with the deep waters of God's sanctifying work in our lives (Jude 1). We are set apart, called, kept, and preserved by the Lord Jesus – but always that position of security is tied to God's sanctifying work in our lives. This concept of sanctification in Jude 1 must therefore be our focus.

God the Father in the first place sanctifies His elect children by setting them apart for His saving purposes. He brings them out from under the judgment of guilty sinners to stand by faith on Jesus Christ. This foundational work is sometimes called "positional sanctification."

We read of this, for example, in the book of Hebrews, where, after describing Christ's saving work as superior to the Old Testament priesthood, the writer declares the resulting salvation for all forgiven sinners in Christ:

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will **we have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:8-10

But the sanctifying work alluded to in Jude 1 is also progressive, or life-long. God, in other words, in giving new life (or "regenerating" every believer into the new life of the Spirit) transforms us in a life-long process. John Calvin described it as "denial of ourselves, mortification of our flesh, and meditation on the heavenly life."

We read of this “progressive sanctification” in 2 Peter:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

2 Peter 1:3-7

Here we learn that since God has once-and-for-all set us apart to be recipients of all the power and grace needed to grow up into a full, godly Christian life that matches our Christian profession (2 Peter 1:3-4), we can therefore “make every effort” to *grow into* an increasing Christian experience of holiness, in terms of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love (2 Peter 1:5-7). Thus, the whole Christian life is to be characterized by the repentance (which John Calvin says is *proof* that we are regenerate) that breaks down our old sin nature and conforms us more and more into the image of Christ.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about both this once-for-all, Fatherly work of sanctification and also its ongoing nature, using *Trinity Hymnal* # 491.

Take me, O my Father, take me;
take me, save me, through thy Son;
that which thou wouldst have me, make me,
let thy will in me be done.
Long from thee my footsteps straying,
thorny proved the way I trod;
weary come I now, and praying,
take me to thy love, my God.

Fruitless years with grief recalling,
humbly I confess my sin;
at thy feet, O Father, falling,
to thy household take me in.
Freely now to thee I proffer
this relenting heart of mine;
freely life and soul I offer,
gift unworthy love like thine.

Sat/Sun: Read Jude 1-7 & 2 Peter 1:1-2

Every letter of the New Testament contains some form of apostolic greeting and concluding blessing. In these opening words, God’s servants, Jude and Peter, convey to us the very grace, mercy, peace, and love which comes from God alone and rests on those who are the objects of His electing grace. These words are not mere polite greetings or prayerful wishes for God’s goodness to be showered upon those reading the Apostles’ letters. They are powerful tools, blessing God’s people. Here is how our *OPC Directory of Worship* puts it:

A salutation is the greeting from God to his people who have gathered to worship him. It is fittingly pronounced immediately before or after the call to worship.

Jude’s salutation, “May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you,” conveys to us all of the essential Divine provisions that we will ever need to face the calamities of Christ’s church in evil days. In the same way, Peter greets the suffering church to which he writes with very similar words, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

Jude focuses on *God's heart and manner toward sinners*; namely, the *mercy* which goes out from God when He sees the misery caused by our sin, the peace He sends in spite of every contrary wind. And the ultimate reality of God's love is that unconditional foundation at the bottom of God's plan of salvation.

But the point is clear: God promises to give us on a daily basis the full supply of whatever saving graces we will need to face temptation, sinful failure and heartbreak. Jude promises us that these will be "multiplied to us." And what is the result of such a daily multiplication of all the saving grace, mercy and love that we will need?

Meditate and Pray: Let's end this week on a high note of God's peace. Jude promises that God's peace will be ours – a point most helpfully illustrated by J.I. Packer's illustration from Jn 20:19-21.

When Jesus came to His disciples in the upper room at evening on His resurrection day, He said, "Peace be unto you; and when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side" (John 20:19). Why did He do that? Not just to establish His identity, but to remind them of the propitiatory death on the cross whereby He had made peace with His Father for them. Having suffered in their place, as their substitute, to make peace for them, He now came in His risen power to bring that peace to them. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." It is here, in the recognition that, whereas we are by nature at odds with God, and God with us, Jesus has "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). In such true knowledge (of the results of the Cross) the peace of God begins.

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 177