

Contend for the Faith

Jesus Presents Believers to God

Jude 24b-25

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Jesus Presents Believers to God

Scripture

Today we conclude our series of sermons in the Letter of Jude. The Letter of Jude deals with the subject of false teaching, which, as I have said many times before, is the greatest danger to the Church of Jesus Christ today.

As we study Jude 24b-25 today, we will see that Jesus presents believers to God. Let's read Jude 24-25, although we will study only verse 24b-25 today:

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 Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24)

Introduction

In 1610, just one year after the death of James Arminius (a Dutch Seminary professor) *five articles of faith* based on his teachings were drawn up by his followers. The Arminians, as his followers came to be called, presented these five doctrines to the State of Holland in the form of a "Remonstrance" (i.e., a protest). The Arminian party insisted that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism (the official expression of the doctrinal position of the Churches of Holland) be changed to conform to the doctrinal views contained in the Remonstrance. The Arminians objected to those doctrines upheld in both the Catechism and the Confession relating to divine sovereignty, human inability, unconditional election or predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. It was in connection with these matters that they wanted the official standards of the

Church of Holland revised.

A national Synod was called to meet in the city of Dort in Holland in 1618 for the purpose of examining the views contained in the Remonstrance in light of Scripture. The Great Synod was convened by the States-General of Holland on November 13, 1618. There were 84 members and 18 secular commissioners. Included were 27 delegates from Germany, the Palatinate, Switzerland, and England. There were 154 sessions held over a period of seven months that the Synod met to consider these matters, the last of which was held on May 9, 1619.

The Synod compared the “five points” presented in the Remonstrance with the teaching of Scripture. Upon close examination they were unable to reconcile the teaching of the Remonstrance with the teaching of Scripture, and so they unanimously rejected the “five points” of the Remonstrance. However, the Synod did not believe that a mere rejection of the views of the Remonstrance was sufficient. They believed that it was important to set out the true biblical teaching that had been called into question. They did this by embodying the biblical position in five chapters, which have ever since come to be known as “the five points of Calvinism.” The name *Calvinism* was derived from the great French reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), who had done so much in expounding and defending these biblical views.¹

The five points of Calvinism were organized into an acronym called TULIP by a theological student who was trying to devise a way to help him remember what the five points of Calvinism were. So, the five points of Calvinism, represented by the acronym TULIP, are as follows:

1. **Total depravity.** Both because of original sin and their own acts of sin, all mankind, excepting Christ, in their natural state are thoroughly corrupt and completely evil, though they are restrained from living out their corrupt-

¹ David N. Steele & Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), 13-15.

ness in its fullness by the instrumentalities of God's common grace. Accordingly they are completely incapable of saving themselves.

2. **Unconditional election**. Before the creation of the world, out of his mere free grace and love, God elected many undeserving sinners to complete and final salvation without any foresight of faith or good works or any other thing in them as conditions or causes which moved him to choose them. That is to say, the ground of their election is not in them but in him.
3. **Limited atonement**. Christ died efficaciously, that is, truly savingly, only for the elect, although the infinite sufficiency of his atonement and the divine summons to all to repent and trust in Christ provide the warrant for the universal proclamation of the gospel to all men. I personally prefer the terms "definite atonement," "particular atonement," or "efficacious atonement" over "limited atonement," both because of possible misunderstanding of the word "limited" and because every evangelical "limits" the atonement either in its design (the Calvinist) or in its power to accomplish its purpose (the Arminian).
4. **Irresistible grace**. This doctrine does not mean that the non-elect will find God's grace irresistible; indeed, God's saving grace is not even extended to them. Nor does it mean that the elect will find God's saving grace irresistible the very first time it is extended to them, for even the elect may resist his overtures toward them for a time. What it does mean is that the elect are incapable of resisting forever God's gracious overtures toward them. At his appointed time, God draws the elect, one by one, to himself by removing their hostility and opposition to him and his Christ, making them willing to embrace his Son.

5. **Perseverance of the saints.** The elect are eternally secure in Christ, who preserves his own and enables them to persevere in him unto the end. Those professing Christians who have apostasized from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1), as John states, “went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 John 2:19).²

All of the doctrines of salvation are precious to the children of God. But surely the perseverance of the saints is the sweetest of them all. We would not be able to enjoy our salvation if we did not believe that it would last forever.

If the Scriptures taught that it was possible to lose our salvation, imagine how we would worry about whether or not we would finally make it safely to heaven. Giving up everything to follow Christ would hardly seem worth the cost if all could be lost in the end. However, because of the doctrine of the preservation of the saints, we are assured that Jesus one day will present all true believers to God.

This is what Jude teaches in the final two verses of his letter. But, first, let’s review what we have covered so far.

Review

Jude began to write this marvelous letter to believers to encourage them with the wonderful truths “about our common salvation” (v. 3a). However, he “found it necessary to write appealing to [the believers] to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3b).

Why? Because word had reached Jude that false teachers had “crept in unnoticed.” They perverted the grace of God into sensual-

² Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1124-1126.

ity and denied the deity of Jesus by their character, their conduct, and their creed (v. 4).

Jude said that God's attitude toward false teachers was displayed in implacable judgment. He pointed to God's attitude in his judgment of unbelieving individuals, rebellious angels, and sinful communities (vv. 5-7).

Jude then gave a description of false teachers. He said that false teachers were immoral (they "defile the flesh," v. 8a), insubordinate (they "reject authority," v. 8b), and irreverent (they "blaspheme the glorious ones," vv. 8c-10).

Further, Jude said that false teachers disobeyed God (v. 11a), they influenced others to disobey God (v. 11b), and they led a full rebellion against God (v. 11c).

He compared false teachers to five natural phenomena: hidden reefs (v. 12a), waterless clouds (v. 12b), fruitless autumn trees (v. 12c), wild sea waves (v. 13a), and wandering stars (v. 13b).

Jude noted that false teaching existed in ancient times (vv. 14-15), it exists in the present (v. 16), and it will exist in the future (vv. 17-19).

As Jude began to draw his letter to a close he said that believers avoid false teaching by growing spiritually in doctrine, prayer, obedience, and hope (vv. 20-21). And believers help others avoid false teaching by reaching out to the confused, the convinced and the committed (vv. 22-23).

Finally, Jude closed his letter with a glorious exclamation of praise. His doxology contained two beautiful truths: first, Jesus preserves believers from stumbling (v. 24a) and, second, Jesus presents believers to God (vv. 24b-25).

Lesson

In our lesson today, we want to see what Jude said about how Jesus presents believers to God. This is a wonderful conclusion to a marvelous letter.

I. Jude's Description of Believers (24b)

First, let's look at Jude's description of believers.

Jude said in verse 24b, “. . . **and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.**”

The Greek word translated as “**to present**” (*histemi*) means “to put, to place, to set, to make stand, to be there.” The word may imply “a standing position, but what is in focus is not the stance but the location.”³

And what is the location? It is **before the presence of his glory**. In other words, it is in the very presence of God himself.

Now, the Scriptures describe the reaction of several people who appeared in **the presence of God's glory**. What was their reaction?

- Isaiah pronounced a curse upon himself (Isaiah 6:5)
- Ezekiel fell over like a dead person (Ezekiel 1:28)
- Peter, James, and John experienced debilitating fear on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5-7; Luke 9:32-34)
- The apostle John fainted as one who was dead when he saw the vision of the risen and glorified Christ (Revelation 1:17)

Why did these men react in this way? Why did they fall to the ground? Why were they overwhelmed? The reason is that each man was overwhelmed by his utter unworthiness to stand in the presence of God. Each man saw the absolute glory and purity and holiness of God, and also saw his own sin and depravity and unholiness before God.

Why will believers not fall down overwhelmed in the presence of God? The reason is that Jesus will present believers **blameless** to God. Revelation 21:27 makes it clear that unrepentant sinners will never enter heaven: “But nothing unclean will ever enter [heaven], nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 726-727.

only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

The Greek word for **blameless** (*anomos*) means “without fault, faultless, perfect.”⁴ Of course, believers are still sinful. And so in what sense are we **blameless**? We are **blameless** in a *legal* sense. Our sins have been imputed to Christ, and his righteousness has been imputed to us. And so when God looks at us, he does not see our sin but he sees the perfect righteousness of Christ. It is in that sense that we are able to stand **blameless before the presence of his glory**.

And so, believers will know nothing of the fear and trauma that characterized Isaiah, Ezekiel, Peter, James, and John when they were in the presence of God. Instead, we will experience **great joy** when we stand in the presence of God. In fact, that joy will be with us every moment of every second of every minute of every hour of every day for all eternity. We will know unspeakable joy because we will be in the presence of God forever and ever. This is how the apostle John describes our being in heaven in Revelation 22:3-5, “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

II. Jude's Description of God (25)

And second, let's look at Jude's description of God.

Jude said in verse 25, “**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.**”

The eternal state of believers is to be with **the only God** forever and ever. And this is possible only **through** the finished work of **Jesus Christ our Lord**. Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience

⁴ *Ibid.*, 745.

to God. And then he suffered and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. By his perfect sacrifice he has enabled believers to stand in the presence of the glory of God.

Jude then describes God with four ascriptions of praise. *First, Jude ascribes glory to God. Glory* means to speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor—“to praise, to glorify, praise.”⁵ So, with respect to God, **glory** summarizes all the divine attributes in their powerful radiance (cf. Exodus 33:22).

Second, Jude ascribes majesty to God. Majesty has to do with a state of greatness or importance—“prominence, greatness, importance.”⁶ **Majesty** signifies the absolute reign of the Father (cf. Hebrews 1:3; 8:1) and the Son (cf. 2 Peter 1:16).

Third, Jude ascribes dominion to God. Dominion refers to the power to rule or control—“power, might.”⁷ **Dominion** refers to the extent of God’s might and active rule over all (cf. Psalm 66:7).

And fourth, Jude ascribes authority to God. Authority refers to the right to control or govern over—“authority to rule, right to control.”⁸ **Authority** denotes Christ’s supreme right and privilege to do as he wills (cf. Acts 2:33-35; Philippians 2:9-11).

This divine supremacy over everything in the universe encompasses all eternity (cf. Revelation 1:8): **before all time** (eternity past), **now** (the present age), and **forever** (eternity future).

Because God is all powerful, and because his glorious name is at stake, God’s promise to preserve believers and one day to present us blameless before his throne can be trusted without reservation. To doubt the reality of that promise is to doubt God himself. But to embrace it is to find ceaseless joy and never-ending comfort.

In the words of Charles Spurgeon:

When I heard it said that the Lord would keep His people right to the end, —that Christ had said, “My sheep hear My voice,

⁵ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 735.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 680.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 475.

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and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand,” I must confess that the doctrine of the final preservation of the saints was a bait that my soul could not resist. I thought it was a sort of life insurance—an insurance of my character, an insurance of my soul, an insurance of my eternal destiny. I knew that I could not keep myself, but if Christ promised to keep me, then I should be safe for ever; and I longed and prayed to find Christ, because I knew that, if I found Him, He would not give me a temporary and trumpery salvation, such as some preach, but eternal life which could never be lost, the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever, for no one and nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”^{9 10}

Conclusion

The first question and answer in the Heidelberg Catechism begins in this way:

Question—“What is your only comfort in life and death?”

Answer—“That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. . . .”

This is a glorious truth for the believer. We belong to Jesus. And we do not simply belong to him now. We belong to him now and for eternity.

Norman Clayton wrote a wonderful hymn that captured this truth so well. The hymn is titled, “Now I Belong to Jesus”:

Jesus my Lord will love me forever,
from Him no pow’r of evil can sever;
He gave His life to ransom my soul—
Now I belong to Him!

⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, from “Danger, Safety, Gratitude,” sermon no. 3,074, preached January 8, 1874, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* [reprint, Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1978], 54:24.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2005), 213.

Once I was lost in sin's degradation;
Jesus came down to bring me salvation,
lifted me up from sorrow and shame—
Now I belong to Him!

Joy floods my soul, for Jesus has saved me,
freed me from sin that long had enslaved me;
His precious blood He gave to redeem—
Now I belong to Him!

Chorus:

Now I belong to Jesus; Jesus belongs to me—
Not for the years of time alone, but for eternity.¹¹

One day you and I will die. For those who don't know Jesus savingly, it will be a terrible moment.

But for those who do know Jesus savingly, it will be a glorious moment. For, as Jude says, Jesus will **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.**

¹¹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990), 186.

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*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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PRAAYER:

O Lord our God, thank you for the wonderful truths that Jude wrote about in this short but marvelous letter. Help us always to be on our guard against false teaching.

And help us also always to look forward with great anticipation to that day when we will be presented to you blameless and with great joy.

And all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

To you who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.