

Jude 24 & 25

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[0 : 00] Jude, the final two verses, we read now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to resent you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. And one hesitates to some extent in preaching from these two verses, partly because in the whole book of Jude, which one could regard as perhaps somewhat gloomy and perhaps anxious and filled with danger and so on, these two verses are sort of like the feel-good verses at the end of the book.

And they're the ones which even people who don't want to dabble into the more dark and dangerous side of the content of Jude are quite happy to make a fuss about.

So one hesitates in one sense, but in another sense, these two verses do not only sum up the content of the letter itself, but they are, in my opinion, most opposite at the beginning of a new year. It is to the Lord who is able to keep us from falling that we must look as we begin any new stage in our lives and not least another new year when we know not what a day may bring forth.

[1 : 25] As I've mentioned so often in the past, every text has a context, and the context of these verses within the letter of Jude is, in the context of the letter itself, from which they are the conclusion and for which they form the conclusion, is a letter about danger.

It is the danger to the church of Jesus Christ, the danger of false brethren who would corrupt the truth of the gospel into something worldly which cannot save, and that is the great danger of the corruption that they bring in, the lasciviousness and the worldliness.

It's not just that, oh how bad, oh how terrible. It's because if that is the diluted form into which people place their trust, it is that which cannot save.

It is a rope which is about to unwind and untangle. It is a parachute that won't open. It is a life jacket made of lead. It cannot save. It is only that which is the truth in Christ Jesus which can save.

So there is the danger of false brethren. There is the danger consequently of true believers falling into sin or error. Of those who are falling away from the truth into sin or error and else ultimately falling from grace.

[2 : 46] That is why the focus in these concluding verses is upon the one who alone is able to keep you from falling.

Keep them from falling now unto him that is able to keep you from falling. From falling away, from falling into error, from falling from grace. And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. And because the focus is upon him and not upon the individual sinner or struggling Christian. But rather the concluding focus is upon the Lord. There is this note of triumph and victory in the closing verses which we have just read.

The message, the battle, the victory is all about him. And that is what gives the believer hope. That he or she is not ultimately going to be plucked out of the Lord's hand.

[3 : 54] It is what gives the trembling, anxious, hopeful one seeking the Lord. The assurance that if this is the one in whom they trust. They cannot ultimately fall away.

It is what gives hope to the currently as yet lost sinner. That there is one to whom they can go. Whether at the start of another year or any time in their lives.

If the context then of these verses is one of danger. The danger of being lost. Then it follows that the greatest and most fearful danger for any sinner.

Is that they might depart this life without Christ. Now, solemnly, tragically, it is an inevitable fact that in the course of this new calendar year.

Before 2016 draws to a close. Millions of souls worldwide will have done just that. They will have departed this life without Christ.

[4 : 57] They will have departed into a lost eternity. However, by the grace of God, there will also be millions or at the very least hundreds of thousands in this calendar year.

Who will embrace Christ. Who will receive him for the first time. And who as a result will be saved. But the greatest danger for such sinners.

All of them as yet on this first day of a new year. Those who by the end of this year will be in the camp of glory. Will be redeemed. Saved and washed in the blood.

And those who will be in a lost eternity. At the moment, here they all are. On this planet. Upon mercy's ground. And the greatest danger for them both.

Both kinds of individuals there. Is that they will depart this life without Christ. A danger which sadly, tragically, for millions will become a reality.

[5 : 58] That is the worst thing a soul can do. Is depart this life without Christ. Depart into a raging hell which will never end.

The greatest danger also for those who know of Christ. But who are not yet in Christ. Is that having scented as it were.

Like a thirsty man in the desert. The scent of water. Having the fresh breeze. A cooling breeze on his forehead. As he feels otherwise.

The heat and the power of the sun. And that he's got no hope of shelter or strength himself. When he first begins to taste the grace and mercy of God.

The greatest danger for such who know of Christ. But who are not yet in Christ. Is that they may depart this world. Not without having given diligence.

[6 : 56] To make their calling and election sure. It is as though the oasis is within reach. It's not a mirage. It's not a falsehood. It's not some kind of illusion.

It's there. Right there. But instead of pressing on. We just sit down in the desert sand. And turn our face into the dust. That is the greatest danger.

The case is those. And there are many. In this world. Who know of Christ. But who are not in Christ. Sometimes believing that intellectual assent.

Knowing about him. Perhaps having read some of his work. Knowing facts about him is enough. Oh yeah. I believe that he existed. They might say. And so they think this is believing in Christ.

But not having given diligence. To make their calling and election sure. They too. Run the danger. Of departing this world. Perhaps in this year.

[7 : 56] Without Christ. Now again. By the grace of God. As this year unfolds. There will be many. Who having tasted. And seen. That the Lord is good. Will be blessed.

By putting their trust in him. Who having felt the fresh breeze. Of his spirit. And grace. Will come in. Will reach the oasis. Will drink deeply.

Of his mercy. And grace. And have their thirst quenched. And slaked. And yet. In the ways of God's mercy. Be ever more thirsty.

And hungry for more. Which is the way of grace. As we go through this pilgrim way. We are satisfied with Jesus. And yet. Such is that satisfying.

That it's not that. That he provides less. It is rather that our appetite grows. The more we know of him. The more we desire him.

[8 : 50] The more we know him. The more we love him. And the more we love him. The more we want to know him more deeply. He satisfies us. But it causes our appetite.

Just to grow more. And more. The good news is. That oasis is bottomless. There is no limit. To the depths. Of the riches.

And the grace. Of the love of Christ. But there is a danger. To every soul. Who knows of Christ. But is not yet in Christ.

That the time may go. Before they. May close in with him. And before they. Make their calling. And election to him. The greatest danger.

Consequently. Also for the believer. Those who are already trusting. In Christ. Already committed to him. Is that they might. Fall away. And so be lost.

[9 : 45] After all. Now scripture has. Plenty of examples. Of such people. Who having put their trust. In Christ. The evidence. Of their lives. Indicated.

That actually. Maybe their trust. Wasn't as true. As everybody. Had thought it was. Ananias. And Sapphira. Simon Magus. We don't know. Whether he ended up. In some area. There. Finally repenting. Again. Or whether he departed. In that state of rebellion. We think tragically. Of Jesus Iscariot. And others. Who knew the Lord Jesus. Who trusted. In the Lord Jesus. But who fell away. It is. A danger. For every. Believer. In Christ. That they might.

Fall away. That now. We know it is true. Once saved. Always saved. But it is only. In the completion. Of our race. Here.

[10:38] That we can say. With. With complete peace. And knowledge. Yes. We are saved. But last. It is. Only a fool. Who counts his chickens.

Before their hatch. There's somebody. Once said recently. A nurse. Said recently. You know. That there is. There's no such thing. As a straightforward birth.

Except in retrospect. It's only in completion. That we see the glory. Of God's work. In our lives. Ultimately. So there is danger.

For the unconverted. Sir. There is danger. For those. Who are on the fringes. Who know of Christ. But are not yet in Christ. There is danger. Even. For the true believer. Who may yet.

Fall away. If he or she. Is not vigilant. To hold fast. When I gave all diligence. To write unto you. Of the common salvation. Verse 3.

[11:32] It was needful. For me. To write unto you. And exhort you. That he should. Hervently contend. For the faith. Which was once delivered. Unto the saints. We have to hold fast.

In it. Which is why. The focus is here. Not upon the sinner. Not upon their own strength. Or their own efforts. But upon the one. Who alone.

Can secure. The victory. Now unto him. That is able. To keep you. From falling. And to present to you. Faultless. Before the presence.

Of his glory. With exceeding joy. To the only wise God. Our saviour. Be glory and majesty. Dominion and power. Both now and ever. For there is.

Only the one saviour. As we mentioned. It's on the Lord's day. But there being only. The one God. The one saviour. Isaiah 45. Verse 21 there.

[12:27] And there is no God. A just God. And a saviour. There is none beside me. Look unto me. And be ye saved. All the ends of the earth. For I am God.

And there is. None else. It is. The Lord. Who keeps us. From falling. First Peter. Chapter 1. Verse 5. You who are kept.

By the power of God. Through faith. Unto salvation. Ready to be revealed. In the last time. Yes. We have to have the faith. But it's not our faith. That keeps us.

It is the power of God. That keeps us. You are kept. First Peter. Chapter 1. Verse 5. Kept by the power. Of God. There is God's. Ultimate sovereignty.

And there is. Our. Required. Responsibility. If we go a couple of verses. Back from verse 24. We see here. Verse 21. It says. Keep yourselves. In the love.

[13:23] Of God. Looking for the mercy. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Unto eternal life. Of course. We need mercy. Without mercy. We are lost. No. We. If it's not.

Mercy. Then has to be sacrificed. The sacrifice of our souls. Ultimately. For all eternity. But what we need. Is mercy. And how do we secure. That mercy. By being kept.

In the love of God. Now this. Keep yourselves. In the love of God. It's not to suggest. That we have the power. To save ourselves. It's only God. Who can keep us from falling. But we can nurture. And build that love. We can seek. To strengthen that love. To keep. Ourselves. In the love of God. Which will itself. Bring greater.

Desire. For obedience. It is not. Difficult. To keep. The commands. Of the Lord. When they are a delight. To us. You know. It says.

[14:18] It says. In 1 John. In chapter. Chapter 5. It says. His commandments. Are not grievous. This is the love. Of God. That we keep.

His commandments. And his commandments. Are not grievous. For whatsoever. Is born of God. Overcometh the world. And this is the victory. That overcometh the world. Even our faith. Faith and love.

Are bound up together. With hope. As Corinthians tells us. Now abide in faith. Hope. Love. Or charity. These three. The greatest of these. Is love. Is charity. Keep yourselves.

In the love. Of God. Now. That may sound. Oh well. That's a nice little cliché. It's not a cliché. The love of God. Is not. An easy thing.

To do. But it is. That which is. If you like. It's the easiest thing. To focus on. First and foremost. Instead of saying. I must keep this commandment.

[15:11] I must keep that one. I must keep that one. Focus on the love. Of the Lord. And the rest. Will flow from it. Jesus. When he was asked. In Mark's account. Of the gospel. Chapter 12.

Verse. From verse 28. One read. One of the scribes. Came and having heard them. Reasoning together. And perceiving that he had answered. And well asked him. That's asked Jesus. Which is the first. Meaning the greatest.

Commandment of all. And Jesus answered him. The first of all. The commandments is. Hear. O Israel. The Lord our God. Is one Lord. And thou shalt.

Love. The Lord thy God. With all thy heart. And with all thy soul. And with all thy mind. And with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.

He's quoting from Deuteronomy. Chapter 6. Verse 5. He says. This is the greatest commandment of all. Love. The Lord thy God. With all thy heart. And soul. And mind.

[16:06] And strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like it. Namely this. Thou shalt love thy name. But this thyself. He's quoting Leviticus. Chapter 19. Verse 18. And Matthew.

Rather. Tells us. When he recounts this incident. In Matthew 22. Verse 40. He says. On these two. Hang all the law. And the prophets. If we want to get it right.

In terms of our obedience. Then get it right first. In terms of our love. Love the Lord your God. With all your heart. And soul. And mind. And strength.

And the love of your neighbor. Will flow from that. On these. Hang all. The law. And the prophets. And also you see. When we think in terms of this.

This love. In which we are to be kept. Peter tells us how again. Going back to that verse we read. We're kept by the power of God. Through faith unto salvation. Ready to be revealed in the last time.

[17:03] Wherein ye greatly rejoice. Though now for a season. If need be in heaviness. Through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith. Being much more precious. Than a gold that perisheth.

Though it be tried with fire. Might be found unto praise. And honour and glory. At the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen. Ye love. Whom having not seen.

Ye love. In whom though now ye see him not. Yet believing ye rejoice. With joy unspeakable. And full of glory. Whom having not seen. Ye love. You see what we say here.

About love and faith. Being mixed together. Having not seen. Faith. What is faith? Faith is the substance of things hoped for. The evidence of things not seen. Whom having not seen.

Ye love. Keep yourselves in the love of God. Because it is unto him. That is able to keep you. From falling. And to present you faultless.

[18:00] Before the presence of his glory. With exceeding joy. To the only wise God. Our saviour. Be glory. Majesty. Dominion of power. Both now and ever. We will be presented. Before his throne.

We must all stand. Before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians tells us that. Chapter 5 verse 10. We must all appear. Before the judgment seat of Christ. That everyone may receive the things. Done in his body. According to that he hath done. Whether it be good or bad. Even if we are saved. Even if we are redeemed. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall be judged. According to what we have done. But we shall be justified. According to our faith. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.

You see we read these verses. And because we read them in English. We just think in terms of. We think in modern English. So we think keep you from falling. He is speaking to an individual. But part of the beauty of the authorised version.

[18:56] As I have mentioned in the past. Is that it distinguishes between singular and plural. Now Judas not say. To him who is able to keep thee from falling. Not singular.

But able to keep you. It is collective. It is plural. He is writing to a group of people. He is writing to a collective gathering. In other words. He is able to keep you all from falling. It is a plural.

There is a mutuality here. It is not just between you and the Lord as an individual. But between you collectively. And the Lord.

It is as we might say. It is the church of Jesus Christ. That is addressed here. He is able to keep you collectively. All of you together from falling.

Now we know that the Lord desires to preserve his people. His church in purity. Because that is what we read in Ephesians. Chapter 5 verse 27.

[19 : 51] Where Paul is using that analogy of the bride. And the bridegroom. He talks about Christ as the bridegroom. Saying that he might present it. That is the church. To himself.

A glorious church. Not having spot or wrinkle. Or any such thing. But that it should be holy. And without blemish. He determines to present the whole church.

To himself and to his father. In a state of purity. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling. And to present you faultless.

Before the presence of his glory. With exceeding joy. That is what he desires to do. That is what he intends to do. Is to keep his people. It is not like we have to kind of persuade God.

Or sort of wrinkle a kind of blessing out of him. Or twist his arm. Or make him want to love us. Such is the love of the Lord. He desires to keep his church.

[20 : 52] His bride. In purity. For himself. This is a mutuality. We draw strength. Yes from the Lord. But also.

We draw strength one from another. Of course we do. It is always easier to make the journey. In company than it is to make it alone. And it is always better to know.

That we have a saviour. Than to try and sort of work out. Our own route. To some kind of good eternity. Without him. We don't have any saviour with him.

Even if it was just us and the Lord. Still we read in his word. Two are better than one. Ecclesiastes chapter 4 verse 9. Two are better than one. Because they have a good reward for their labor.

For if they fall. Now what have we just been reading. Jude. He that is able to keep you from falling. If they fall. The one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him that is alone when he falleth.

[21 : 52] For he hath not another to help him up. Without Christ. We are alone indeed. Woe to him that is alone when he falleth.

For he hath not another to help him up. If we look back in the previous verse there. In Ecclesiastes. We would see in chapter 4 verse 8. There is one alone and there is not a second.

Yea he hath neither child nor brother. Yet is there no end of all his labor. Neither is his eye satisfied with riches. Neither said he for whom do I labor. And bereave my soul of good.

This is also vanity. Yea it is a sore travail. What is life in other words. With all your slog and work. And all the time you put in.

And all the effort that you make. If there is no God. If there is no Christ. If there is no Savior. Then we are effectively going through this world alone. We are alone if we are without Christ.

[22 : 50] If we fall when we are alone. Then it is woe unto us. If we exit this world alone without Christ. Woe unto us. But now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.

And to present you faultless. Before the presence of his glory. With exceeding joy. Till the only wise God. Be glory and power and majesty and dominion. And so on.

We have this mutuality in Christ. We have this blessing in Christ. This is what Peter says. Whom having not seen you love.

Whom though now ye see and not yet. Believing you rejoice. With joy unspeakable. And full of glory. We haven't seen him.

But then. As we said. That's the nature of faith. And is it not the case. As Paul writes to the Corinthians there. In 2 Corinthians 5. And verse 7.

[23 : 47] In this new year. For at any stage of our lives. As far as the Lord is concerned. We walk by faith. Not by sight.

We walk by the nature of the one in whom we trust. Not the nature of the one whom we can see. If it is down to us. We do fail.

We do corrupt that which is pure. We do make a mess of that which is already clean. You know. You can have. You can make your house all thick and span.

Paint the walls. And Hoover and polish the floors. And you can wipe down all the tiles. So that everything is absolutely pristine. And you stand at the door. And think. Oh. That's lovely. That's great.

It's all just wonderful. You take a step into it. You live there for a day. And already there will be a certain amount of mess in the surface. There will be gunk in the sink. And there will be dust beginning to appear.

[24 : 41] There will be footprints. There will be marks on the wall. There will be whatever. Not because you set out to wreck the joint. It's just what you do. By living. The pristine purity and perfection the Lord gives us.

We spoil it. By our very nature. It's what we do. It's like our bodies. They need to be washed. So you say. Well in a bath last month. I must still be clean.

In the normal way of bodies. They sweat. They get tired. They emit all manner of odors. And accumulate all manner of dirt. Just in the normal way of things.

They need to be washed on a regular basis. We need the Lord day by day by day. Throughout this coming year. If it is just about us.

We will corrupt the purity of the faith. Because man always desires that which will please him. This is one reason why you see in almost all false religions of the world.

[25 : 43] They are always focusing on what man is able to do. How man is able to placate this or that deity with this offering or this sacrifice. He makes this sacrifice.

He pays this money or this penance. And then he can go away and do whatever he likes. His heart is not changed. His soul is not renewed. His life is not transformed.

He does his outward transaction. It is not for nothing. You know. In the Old Testament prophets describe this as harlotry. A spiritual whoredom.

It is a transaction. A contract between the worshipper and their so called God. Man does his bit. He pays his price. He makes his sacrifice. He walks away.

And he carries on in his unconverted state. That is not the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. That is not the faith once delivered to the saints. It is not a transaction.

[26 : 37] A contract. It is described by the Lord as a marriage. It is for life. It changes the individuals within it. As they become molded and shaped to each other's tastes and needs and particular habits and so on.

They learn to not only live with one another. They become part of one another. It is a lifelong growing commitment. It is forever. And it changes the person.

And we become changed as we become united to Christ. We become more like him. But there is always the danger that we may fall away.

That our faith become corrupted. That we become empty like the empty clouds driven about with the winds. That we become trees that don't bear any fruit. For we are done shame as waves in the sea.

Wandering stars. But we become empty. But it is to the Lord that our conclusion is addressed here. Now unto him that is able to keep you.

[27 : 44] To keep you. Look after you. To surround you with his love. To uphold you. To protect you. To keep you from falling. To present you faultless.

Before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. It is not about us. It is about him. To the only wise God. Our saviour.

The one who saves. Be glory, majesty, dominion and power. Both now and ever. It is his glory. We are permitted to enter into it.

We are permitted to become part of it. And party to us. But it is all about him. And if it is all about him. Then we are not alone.

There is this mutuality. There is this joint. And bodily union there. We are not alone when we fall. And we all fall.

[28 : 39] We all make mistakes. We will all stumble. We will all sin. In this coming year. We undoubtedly have done so already. But you know that is the bad news. We will each and every one of us.

Continue at different stages. To sin. In this coming year. But the good news is. That there is a sacrifice for sin. There is a saviour. God our saviour.

Who alone is able to keep you from falling. This is his glory. This is the year. The day the Lord has given us.

We will rejoice and be glad in it. This isn't just a different number on a calendar. This is us. A day. A year. Nearer to the coming of the Lord.

Now is our salvation. Nearer than when we believed. It's not just 2016. It is 2016 AD.

[29 : 39] Anno Domini. The year of our Lord. Let us pray.