

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Saint's Guarantee

Scripture: Jude 24-25

Code: 65-15

Well finally tonight we bring our study of the little epistle of Jude to its conclusion. And you can now turn in the Scripture to the last two verses of Jude's epistle. Jude, you remember, is not one of the Twelve but was in fact a child of Joseph and Mary and therefore a half-brother of Jesus Himself. And Jude was used by God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to write this important epistle. And the conclusion of the letter is in some ways the high point of all of it. Let me read the final two verses.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord are glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen."

If I ask you, what is the most important truth in the whole realm of salvation, what would you say? In the amazing and in the profound and blessed and gracious mix of doctrine that make up soteriology or the theme of salvation, which doctrine is most crucial? Which element of God's saving promise is most encouraging, most satisfying, most attractive and most comforting?

Now, of course, all the doctrines of salvation are necessary and all the doctrines of salvation are precious. But one of them stands out as the most attractive of all, the most valuable of all. And I don't know if you've ever endeavored to make such a distinction. I've been testing that question on a few people over the last week and I have never received the right answer. And some of them very knowledgeable. It isn't because they don't know the right answer, it's because they've never really thought about which is the most important of the doctrines of salvation.

Well without holding you in unnecessary suspense, I will tell you. It is the doctrine of eternal security, otherwise known as and perhaps more accurately known as the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. It is that biblical truth that says once you're saved, you're saved forever. Or to put it in the negative sense, if you have received eternal life, you can never lose it. I'm not diminishing the glories of the doctrine of justification. I'm not diminishing the glories of the doctrine of regeneration. I'm not diminishing the glories of the doctrine of conversion, or adoption, or reconciliation, or redemption, or ransom. But I'll tell you this, all those doctrines would be to some degree diminished if salvation was not forever. Take that doctrine away and all those other doctrines are depreciated. Take that doctrine away and all consummate joy, confidence, assurance, rest, comfort and hope is significantly downgraded and justifiably replaced with doubt, fear, anxiety and worry. And in the light of the call to

salvation being so demanding, so all-consuming, as we were reminded again this morning, in light of the fact that our Lord has told us we must confess Him as Lord, and that means absolute and total self-denial, cross bearing and obedient submission to His will, the demand is so great that He Himself says there are few people who desire to do that. He Himself says it is hard to find the truth and hard to accept the truth and hard to believe the truth. It was He Himself who said you must count the cost. And in the end, the people who do come into the kingdom, in a sense, seize it by force in an act of aggression because they are so terrified by the alternative which is eternal judgment.

In view of the fact that the call to salvation is so demanding, so all-consuming that it involves the total commitment of everything I have to Christ, it is an abandonment, as we've been saying, it is the end of me and I yield up everything to Christ. I come empty handed, as the song says, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling. Having given up all to be forgiven, having given up all to be rescued from hell, having given up all to receive the promise of heaven, only to be told that this deal comes without a guarantee? You're asking a lot out of me. You mean to tell me that I give myself up totally to You to be my Lord and Master You might not keep me? You might not hold on to me? There isn't any guarantee? That really makes it even more difficult if not almost impossible to make this level of commitment. You mean, You're asking me to give up everything to commit myself to you with no guarantee?. Now that is really huge. You're telling me there's no assurance that I'm going to make it to heaven?

And I'll tell you this. If the Lord can't hold on to me, what hope is there? If salvation isn't God's work, then I'm not going to get there. Do you understand that? If it's not His work and He doesn't hold me, and He doesn't keep me, and He doesn't preserve me, I won't make it. If God doesn't save me, I can't save myself. If He doesn't sanctify me, I can't sanctify myself. And if He doesn't glorify me, I can't glorify myself. If He doesn't keep me, I can't keep myself. I'm not good enough to save myself and I'm certainly not good enough to keep myself. I will never be worthy of salvation. I wasn't in the past, I'm not now.

Let me put it another way. If you could lose your salvation, you would. You understand that? If you could, you would. If it's possible, it will happen. It has to be. If any part of my eternal salvation depends upon my power and ability and commitment and righteousness, I won't get there. Think about Adam. Adam who had no sinful tendencies, Adam living in a perfect world wouldn't know sin. No sin at all. Adam with no sin at all and no sinful tendencies inside couldn't keep himself in a right relationship of obedience and love to God. How would we think we could in a fallen world with fallen natures? And the more mature you are as a Christian, the more spiritually minded you are, the more righteous you are, the more sanctified you are, the more wretched you know you are, right? The Apostle Paul in Romans 7, "O wretched man that I am," that's the statement of a very mature Christian.

Young people ask me all the time, "Will I ever get victory over sin?" Sure...sure. But it's good news, bad news. As you mature you'll sin less and feel worse because with the decrease of sin comes an increase of holiness and with an increase of holiness comes a greater hatred of sin and you sin less and hate it more. You have no capacity to save yourself ever in this life and you have no capacity to keep yourself saved either. You're still fallen, I'm still fallen. I still have unredeemed human flesh. Sin is still in me. I'm prone to sin, I'm prone to doubt. I'm prone to unbelief. I'm prone to rebellion. I'm prone to pride. Frankly, I fall to those things, as we all do, and all kinds of accusations could be successfully brought against me. Satan could go to God's throne and lay out a formidable and increasingly longer list of the sins of John MacArthur. And the longer I live, the longer the list gets. All kinds of accusations could be brought against me by God Himself who knows everything. All kinds of accusations could be brought against me by Christ. All kinds of accusations could be brought against me by the Holy Spirit who lives within me. And all kinds of accusations could be drawn out on a list that are brought to my attention by my own conscience. And frankly, the accumulated list would be horrific and so would yours. For every one of us there is a staggering list of indictments. There is a staggering list of disqualifications. We continue to violate God's Law. We continue to be, to one degree or another, idolatrous. We continue to be wicked. And believe me, the list is sufficient to condemn us all. How could we ever keep our own salvation? The thought is absolutely ridiculous.

And so I say, if I could lose my salvation, I would. And so would you. God would have any reason and every reason to reject me. Satan would have more than enough accusation to bring against me. And people in my life through all these years could rehearse sins that they know of. And even if I thought I hadn't slipped back across some imaginary line into a non-saved condition, how do I know where that line is, huh? And then if you ask me to give up my whole life to Christ and tell me I have to hang on by the fingernails, that doesn't sound like a very attractive offer to me. At best I could play games with myself and I could say, "Well, you're not as bad as he is, you're not as bad as she is, you're certainly not as bad as that group over there and those people over there." And then what do you get into? Self...what?...self-righteousness. I can always find people worse than I am, that's easy. And if I can't find people that I know are worse than I am, I can certainly find people that I think are worse than I am.

You see, at best I have to live some kind of deception, some kind of illusion about who I really am and I can't honestly go to Romans 7 and I can't honestly say there's something in me that's evil as well as there's something in me that's righteous and there's this war going on and I'm a wretched man. I can't honestly say that. But at the same time I have to say I'm hoping to be good enough to hang on to my salvation. Consequently I'm prone to self-righteousness and spiritual pride which is the very opposite of the truest and purest Christian virtues which is absolute and total humility. I'll tell you this, if I...if I have to keep myself saved by anything that I do, I will live my whole life under a cloud of fear, real fear because I can't do it. And I'll tell you this, if you think you can, if you think it's up to you to hang on to keep yourself saved, you have a deficient view of depravity. You don't really understand depravity.

And that's why, by the way, in the Arminian theology system where they believe you can lose your salvation, they also have a warped view of human depravity. They think people are better than they really are. You have to if you're responsible to hang on.

So you're deceived about your sinfulness and you're deceived about your righteousness. Spurgeon said, "No man can keep himself, he'll surely fail. If left to ourselves, we'll go to hell. Only Jesus can save us from our sins."

So, I submit to you this, that the most important element of salvation doctrine, the one doctrine that matters most in the end is the guarantee that this covenant of salvation is forever and that it's not up to me, it's up to Him. To me, that is THE most important element of the gift of eternal life, this in a word, its permanence.

Now this isn't a minor issue. This isn't a sort of, you know, intramural debate where it's sort of optional, you can believe it or not, believe it doesn't really have a lot of implications. Oh yes it does. This doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, that is to say the true saints persevere to the end, being eternally secured by the Father, this doctrine is tied inseparably to the doctrine of election. If He chose you to eternal life, then He'll get you there. It is tied inseparably to the doctrine of justification. If He covered you with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and if in fact Jesus Christ paid in full the penalty for your sins, then never could any sin that you commit be held against you and therefore there would be no basis on which to ever take your salvation away since all your sins have been paid for in full. It is tied inseparably to the work of the Holy Spirit by whom you are sealed in the process of sanctification. It is tied to the great doctrine of glorification by which God has intended having elected you in eternity past to then call you and then justify you and bring you to glory and lose no one on the path. If you can lose your salvation, the purpose of God is thwarted, the power of God is diminished, the plan of God is contingent. You have to redefine election. You have to redefine justification. You have to redefine sanctification. You have to redefine glorification. It turns the whole thing on its head. And like so many matters in life, what seals the deal is the guarantee, right?

I mean, you're that way in this world, aren't you? You buy something, you say, "Well what's the guarantee?" And somebody says, "There's no guarantee, it might not work tomorrow." Or you go in to purchase something of significance, like a house or whatever, you say, "Well we're going to sign a contract, aren't we? So we know what the deal..."

"Oh, there's no guarantee, I might come back and take this house in three days, you have no guarantee." Well you're not about to engage in that kind of commitment.

I mean, it's just a simple thing to understand that what seals the deal is the guarantee, and that's true in salvation. Yet it is so sad and tragic and misleading the vast numbers of professing Christians live with the notion, the crazy notion that they can and may forfeit their salvation and end up in hell if they

don't hang on. So the question is simply this, can one who has been forgiven, justified, regenerated, converted, redeemed, ransomed lose the blessing that came through that saving work? Go backwards in reverse and forfeit heaven?

The benediction in Jude answers the question. Let me go back to it. "Not to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless 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."

You know, whenever you come to a doxology like this, you're almost tempted not to explain it but just to say it. He is able, He is able to keep you, He is able to keep you from stumbling, to keep you so that one day He will make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy. And therefore, to the One who is able to do this, the only God our Savior who through Jesus Christ our Lord does that, be glory, majesty, dominion, authority before all time now and forevermore amen. And all the glory goes to Him because all the keeping is His, right? If I hold on myself, then the glory goes to me. This devastates that erroneous view.

This is a doxology. This is praise to the only God, the only Savior who through Jesus Christ our Lord is to receive all the honor, all the glory, all the majesty, all the dominion, and all the authority forever because He is the One who is able to keep us and make us stand in His presence.

Doxology, by the way, is *doxa* and *logos*, *logos* meaning word, *doxa* meaning praise. It's a word of praise, a praise word. Scripture is filled with them, with doxologies. Each of the five books of Psalms, the 150 Psalms are divided into five books, at the end of each of the five books is a doxology, chapter 41 verse 13, chapter 72 verses 18 and 19, chapter 89 verse 52, chapter 106 verse 48 and the entire 150th Psalm is a doxology that closes the book. So the songbook of the redeemed was punctuated, climaxed in responses of praise for God's glorious work among His people. Angels sang a doxology at Christ's birth, it's recorded in Luke chapter 2. People gave a doxology at Christ's arrival in the city of Jerusalem when they hailed Him as Messiah in Luke 19. The New Testament is filled with doxologies. And none of them ever deal with mundane matters. They always deal with salvation. They always deal only with that which is eternally marvelous. They are words of grateful praise to God for saving sinners. And doxology, dear ones, is a foretaste of heaven. That's what we're going to spend forever doing, declaring doxology. They are outbursts of praise in contemplation of the greatness of our salvation.

In Galatians chapter 1, this is a typical kind of glorious doxology, though brief. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory forevermore, amen." You find this kind of spontaneous Holy Spirit energized doxology all through the

New Testament, these kinds of outbursts. I love the one at the end of the epistle to the Romans where in verse 25 Paul says in chapter 16, "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that has been kept secret for long ages but is now manifest and by the Scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the eternal God has been made known to all the nations leading to obedience of faith, to the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever, amen." And that's how Paul doxologizes the end of the great Roman letter.

In writing his wonderful first epistle to Timothy, Paul says in chapter 1 verse 17, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." And what's he saying that for? Where is it coming from? "Because I, the chief of sinners, foremost of all, found mercy." Doxology comes in response to the saving work of God and it recognizes that it's all His work and He receives all the credit, all the honor, all the glory. Paul writes as he closes out his life, the last few strokes of his pen, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom." Paul knew he was secure. "The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed whether committed by others or even himself, "And will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom, to Him be the glory forever and ever, amen." Doxology.

And Jude does the same thing, back to our text. This is a doxology. This is a doxology that calms our fears and fuels our hopes. This is a doxology that gives us joy. Now before we look particularly at the doxology, for just a few moments, a reminder of the flow of the book for those of you who haven't been with us.

Jude, our Lord's half-brother, wrote to call us to the war against false teachers, apostates. "Certain persons...verse 4 says...who crept in unnoticed," crept into the church, they're like reefs under the surface hidden in the church, he says down in verse 12. And they are ungodly and licentious and they deny the Lordship of Christ. These are apostates and false teachers imbedded in the church. And Jude then goes on to give us the history of these kinds of apostates. He characterizes them for us as well. And after this long description of apostates running all the way down to verse 17, he says, "But you...but you." How you going to defend yourself in a time of apostasy? How you going to protect yourself? How you going to fight for the truth? How you going to engage in the long war against the truth?

First of all, he says in verses 17 to 19, "Remember...remember the words spoken beforehand by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." They said in the last times there would be mockers following after their own godly lusts. Remember this, it was said that they would come. Don't be surprised, it was prophesied many times. So when you're caught in a time of apostasy and that's all times, and you begin to wonder how things could begin to go so wrong and how the church could go so bad and how it could defect and pervert itself from the truth, remember this is no surprise, this is what was

prophesied.

And then the second thing...first, remember, and then remain. "Build yourself up on your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." Remain in the place of blessing, remain faithful to spiritual growth, spiritual communion, spiritual obedience and hold out your spiritual hope.

Thirdly he says, reach, verses 22 and 23. "Have mercy on some who are doubting, save others snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." This is...this is important. We remember that the Lord promised us this would happen. We remain in the place of blessing. And we reach out to the people in danger, the people who are being captivated by the apostates and the false teachers.

The first category is those who are the confused. They doubt, they're not sure. The second is the convinced, those that are already in the fire and we have to reach in and snatch them out. And finally, the committed, those that are defiled by those evil lies.

The last responsibility we have in the world in this great war for the truth is to rescue people out of apostasy, rescue people out of heresy, rescue people out of false religious systems. And it's dangerous work. You can get singed snatching people out of the fire. Remember the leaven of the Pharisees, false teaching has a powerful influence. You can even in rescuing people get yourself in a polluted situation, like picking up filthy underwear, is Jude's language here. That's dangerous to get close to this stuff.

And that poses the final question, really. If this apostasy is so dangerous and so deadly, if this false teaching is so potentially polluting and harmful, is it possible that we could lose our salvation? Because if it is, I'm not sure I want to get close to that stuff. I'm not sure if this could cost me my eternal salvation that I ever want to get close to anybody who's polluted. And so the fourth is the word rest. Remember the Lord said it would be this way, remain in the place of blessing, reach out to those in danger, and rest in Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.

Now this whole epistle was about people who fell, and angels who fell. And now after he's gone through all of this history of the Israelites that fell and the Sodomites who fell, and the angels that fell and the false teachers that fell and the victims of the false teachers that fell and he now says, "Go out and reach these people." And in the minds of the readers there would be this thought, "Well what if we did that, we might fall too, we might fall victim to that lie and we might find ourselves fallen out of salvation."

Could I fail? Could I apostatize? Could I reject the truth? Could I be so polluted and stained by the false teachers I'm trying to reach that I abandon the faith? If I get near them even for evangelism sake will I be okay? Will I remain in God's love? Can I avoid defilement?

And the epistle ends with a statement of assurance. And Jude says there are two things you must know, He is able to keep you and make you stand in the presence of His glory. That's really all I want to know. Can He keep me and can He get me there in the presence of His glory? And Jude says not only can He do that, but He will.

So two points, tonight, two critical things the Lord is able to do, preserve us and present us....preserve us and present us. The One who chose us and saved us will keep us. Let's look at that idea of preserving us in verse 24. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling," just that phrase. "To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling."

Now what that says is He is able to keep us from stumbling. He's able to do it. I read that and I say, "Okay, I'm glad for that but that asks another question, or poses another question in my mind. Does He want to preserve us?" I'm glad that He's able, does He want to? And the answer to that, of course, is He wants to. He's holy. He hates sin. He could not want us to lose our salvation. That would be to want evil for His children. God can't want evil at all for anyone ever. He couldn't want us to turn. He couldn't want us to defect. He couldn't want us to be lost in sin. If He did, then He would be less than holy. So the obvious answer to the question, does He want us to be kept to the end, is yes and all we need to know is, is He able? And that's why it says what it says. "To Him who is able."

Turn to 2 Peter 3:9. Reinforcing this great truth, 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise." You know, the Lord promised that He was going to come and take His people to glory and all of that, and, you know, believers at the time of Peter were wondering when it was going to happen. And Peter says, "Well, you know, don't be too anxious with the Lord, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. God doesn't watch the clock and doesn't watch the calendar like you do." Because He hasn't come and hasn't fulfilled that promise doesn't mean He's slack, doesn't mean He's indifferent. But He is patient. Now watch this, He's patient toward you...He's patient toward you.

Who is he talking to? Who is the "you"? Well the believers, the brethren, as they are called by Peter. He's patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish but for all to come to repentance. It's very important to understand this verse. Why does the Lord tarry? Why doesn't He come? Why does history keep going on? Why does redemptive history keep going on?

I'll tell you why. It's not because God is a slacker. It's not because God won't fulfill His promise. He is being patient toward His people, toward you and not wishing for any of His people to perish but for all of His people to come to repentance. Some people think that this means He wants the whole world to

come to repentance. No. That can't be possible because this is in a context of judgment. Verse 7 says, "There's a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." The reason the Lord tarries is not for the ungodly that are going to be destroyed, but it is for His own who have been elect from before the foundation of the world to be gathered in. And redemptive history will continue to go on until all who were chosen have been called and justified. And when the chosen of all been justified, then will come the end. God is not willing that any of His own perish, but that all come to repentance. There His own by election and because He chose them, they will come to repentance and faith and salvation and glorification.

In John chapter 6 we have another passage which is very important in this matter, John chapter 6 verse 37. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," He's talking here about the people that the Father gives the Son, that is the Father has chosen them before the foundation of the world, to give them to the Son, all people that are saved throughout all redemptive history are love gifts from the Father to the Son. They constitute the bride that the Father has sought and is seeking for His Son. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," so history has to keep going and keep going and keep going till the people that God chose before the foundation of the world are born and justified, that has to continue.

People say, "Why doesn't the Lord come? The world's so bad, why doesn't the Lord come? Why doesn't He stop the sin?" Because all the elect are not yet in. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and the one who comes to Me, I'll certainly not cast out." Well of course not, he's a gift from the Father, she's a gift from the Father.

And verse 39, "This is the will of Him who sent Me...listen to this, this is so powerful...of all that He has given Me, I lose none, but raise him up on the last day." The Father chooses, the Father gives to the Son, and the Son keeps and the Son raises on the last day. Nobody falls through the cracks. And verse 40, "This is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Everyone who has a true vision of Christ and believes in Him will receive eternal life and be raised on the last day.

Down in verse 44 He says it another way. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him on the last day." Everyone the Father chooses He gives to the Son, everyone He gives to the Son sees the Son, believes in the Son. Everyone who believes in the Son as a gift to the Father, the Son receives, everyone the Son receives the Son keeps, everyone the Son keeps He raises at the last day.

The question then is not about God's willingness. It's not about God's purpose. We know He is willing and we know He has purposed to save all the elect. The only question is, is He able? In 1 Timothy 2 it says, "He desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth," that is all who are His.

We know He desires them all to come to eternal life, the question is, is He able? Jude answers it, "Now to Him who is able..." He is able. He is the only God our Savior and if He doesn't save us, we aren't going to save ourselves. He is able.

You know, that is such a great thought. He is able, *dunameno* from which we get dynamite. He is able. Back in Daniel, they said, "Our God is able to deliver us." He is able. And the New Testament is loaded with testimonies to the power of God. Listen to 2 Corinthians 9:8, "God is able to make all grace abound to you." Wow! So that where sin abounds, grace does...what?...much more abound. He is able to supply all the grace that is needed to cover every sin. Ephesians 3:20, "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever amen." And here's another doxology right in the middle of a letter by Paul and he bursts into doxology because he comprehends that He is able. He is able.

Well, this is repeated again and again. I'm thinking of verse 7 of Hebrews 5, speaking of Christ, "In the days of His flesh He offered up both prayers and supplications." That's the garden prayer. "With loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death." And there you have Jesus expressing confidence that God the Father could save Him from the horrific experience He was about to have as the sin bearer receiving the full fury of God's wrath. And Hebrews 7:25, "He is able to save...I love it...forever those who draw near to God through Him since He always live to make intercession for them."

There's no question about His ability, He is able...He is able. It is dangerous to live in this apostate environment today in which we live. Apostasy is on the increase. We're exposed to more lies and more deception than any generation in history because of media. And here we are with all this endless list of heresies and apostasies called to rescue people out of these systems. I mean, basically the whole world is religious. If you're going to do any evangelism, you're going to get close to somebody who is in an evil system. And the question is...should we draw back in fear and not evangelize for fear that somehow we might get burned reaching to snatch somebody out of the fire? Or we might get polluted by grabbing someone deep in filth? No. If you're a true believer, you are in no danger of fatal corruption, you are in no danger of damnation. Our God is able. Humanly speaking, the path to heaven is dangerous. It's filled with stumbling blocks. It's filled with temptations. It's filled with sins and iniquities and transgressions. It's filled with demons and Satan. But in another sense, the path to heaven is absolutely safe not because I'm able but because He's able. I'm weak, ignorant, disobedient, selfish, sinful, rebellious. And believe me, every enemy there is waits to ambush me and you too. I have no fear. I rest not in my own ability to somehow outfox the devil, or overpower my own flesh, I rest in His power. "Now to Him who is able to keep you, keep"...*phulasso* Greek, to guard, it's a military word, to guard or watch over, different than the word keep used back in verse 21 which means to hold or possess. He is able to guard us, He stands guard over us, He's at His post, we are

in safe custody while under assault, that's what that word means. "So as to keep us from *apostatos(?)*, falling, apostasy. It's the only place in the whole Bible where that word is used. He keeps us from apostasy. You can't fall away because He keeps you from becoming an apostate.

How does He do it? By the gift of a permanent faith, a new heart and the indwelling Holy Spirit. He hangs on to us. Now we know this because of so many testimonies in Scripture. I go back to one that is very familiar to us in the tenth chapter of John's gospel and verse 28. "I gave eternal life to them and they shall never perish." Does that seem to say it? "And no one shall snatch them out of My hand, Jesus said, My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." I won't let go. The Father won't let go. And no one is powerful to force us to release anyone. That's why Philippians 1:6 says, "He that begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He who started it will finish it. Nobody falls through the cracks. Apostates in Israel fell. Apostate angels fell. Apostates in Sodom and Gomorrah fell. Apostates in the church fell. But true believers are kept...kept. Our Lord has the will and He has the power to preserve us.

Secondly, to present us...this is just incredible. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy." "To make you stand" actually in the Greek is to set you, to set you or to present you. Right now we stand in grace, Romans 5:1 to 4, but then we'll stand in glory. This is the opposite of falling, this is standing. This is enduring to the end. This is the perseverance of the saints. True believers have been given a faith that endures. "And He who keeps us will set us in the presence of His glory."

Notice 1 John 2, back up a couple of pages into 1 John 2:19, and this is a very important verse because, you say, "I know people who went to church and I know people who confessed Christ and they're no longer around and now they deny Him." Here's what explains that. "They went out from us, they were not really of us, if they had been of us they would have remained with us. But they went in order that it might be shown that they all are not all of us." When somebody leaves and apostasizes, falls away, abandons the faith, they never were real. Ah, verse 20, "But you, you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I haven't written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you do know it." And verse 23 says, "Whoever denies the Son doesn't have the Father. The one who confesses the Son has the Father." If you ever truly confessed the Son, you will always confess the Son. If you ever truly believe in the Son, you will always believe in the Son and the Father. When somebody falls away, it's because they never were of us.

But the statement here is not about standing on earth. Being kept has to do with earth, standing has to do with heaven...standing in the presence of His glory. All this means is He keeps us here and takes us there. This is astonishing grace, really astonishing. Whenever you read in the Bible about somebody who was in the presence of God, it's a horrific traumatic experience, right? Isaiah

pronounces a curse on himself. Ezekiel falls over like a dead person. Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration fall over in a semi-coma. John in the book of Revelation sees the vision of Christ and he's like a dead person, just absolutely scared out of their wits so that they faint. Whenever anybody is in the presence of God in Scripture, it is a frightening experience because they know they're sinful.

I heard some fool on television the other night talking about...talking about his meeting with God and talking flippantly and foolishly, irresponsibly about all kinds of inane and idiotic matters. He's...he never stood in the presence of the glory of God. That's just a lie and a deception. Any true believer who ever stood in the presence of God in this life, in this flesh, in this unredeemed human condition would fall over in absolute terror knowing himself to be sinful. But some day we will stand in the presence of His glory...what's the next word?...what is it?...blameless. And instead of fear, there will be great...what?...joy. Instead of fear, there will be great joy.

Anybody ever standing in the presence of God was traumatized, terrified. That is a place where no sinner can stand. And the book of Revelation makes it very clear. Chapter 21 and verse 27, "Nothing unclean, no one who practices abomination, lying, shall ever come into the heavenly city." Chapter 22 verse 15 says, "Inside are the washed, outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying," those kind of people don't come into the presence of God. And what...what Christian is going to say, "You know, I've kept myself saved and I deserve to stand in His presence?" What kind of a ridiculous idea is that? I am regularly pained by people who claim to have seen God, gone to haven, had visions of God, heard personally from God. What shallowness, what folly to think you can go in and out of heaven's holy presence in this earthly form? You couldn't get near God in God's heaven in this earthly form. To stand in His holy, glorious presence, you have to be *amomos*, without blame, pure. You have to be as holy as Christ is. Anybody who says they went to heaven is lying to you unless they died and then if they did, they can't tell you they went there.

The word *amomos* means faultless...faultless. The word was originally used to apply to sacrifices, Hebrews 9:14, to purity in a number of places in the New Testament. Right now we are not blameless, we are treated as if we were blameless because Christ bore our sins and we've been given His righteousness. And God treats Christ on the cross as if He lived our lives so He can treat us as if we lived His. But we are not now worthy to enter into heaven. That's why we have to be transformed, we have to lose this body of flesh and go into God's presence and receive a new body. But that will happen. We will not just be there alive, survivors. We will not just be free from guilt and sin, we will be holy...we will be blameless...we will be faultless...we will not only not violate God's Law, we will keep every bit of it all the time forever. It is not just that we will be there in the absence of sin, but we will be there in the presence of holiness. We will not only not be capable of doing evil, we will be only capable of doing right. We will have every power and every passion emancipated from evil

and devoted only to holiness. And we'll be there with our heads lifted up, blameless before God. And instead of fear and trauma and panic and fainting, we'll be overwhelmed with joy...joy forever, joy forever.

Joy defines heaven. Zephaniah 3 verse 17 tells us another aspect of heavenly joy. "The Lord your God will rejoice over you with joy, He will joy over you with singing." Isn't that great? Not only are we going to sing praise to God, He's going to sing praise concerning us. And Jesus went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him. And what's that joy going to be? Fellowship with us. He's going to rejoice over us. God's going to rejoice over us and we're going to rejoice over the Lord and over the Father. Spurgeon wrote, "I think that's the most wonderful text in the whole Bible. God Himself singing? I can imagine when the world was made, the morning stars sang together, shouting for joy. But God didn't sing. He said it was very good, that's all. There was no song. But when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, the joy of the eternal Father shall swell so high that God will burst into infinite song." Nothing can ever change that, absolutely nothing can ever change that. As Romans 8 points out, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God. No one can ever condemn us. No one can ever lay any charge to God's elect. Nothing can ever happen that doesn't turn out to our good because whomever the Lord chose, He called, justified, glorified."

Well, rest, dear Christian, and join the celebration of verse 25. "To the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time...that's past...now...that's present...and forever...that's the future...amen, so let it be." All credit goes to the only God. There's only one. The only God who is our Savior. The only God who is our Savior through Jesus Christ. The only God who is our Savior through Jesus Christ who is our Lord. To Him be all glory, majesty, dominion and authority. None left for anyone else including us. We are there because He kept us. He preserved us and He presented us.

Listen, the value of salvation is in the guarantee, folks. Listen to what Spurgeon wrote. I'll close with this. "And when I heard it said that the Lord would keep His people right to the end, when I heard it said that Christ said, 'My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.' When I heard that said, I must confess...says Spurgeon...that the doctrine of the final preservation of the saints was the bait that my soul could not resist. It was sort of life insurance, an insurance of my character, an insurance of my soul, an insurance of my eternal destiny. I knew I couldn't keep myself but if Christ promised to keep me, then I would be safe forever and I longed and I prayed to find Christ because I knew that if I found Him, He would not give me a temporary salvation as some preach. But eternal life which could never be lost, the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever for no one and nothing could ever separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And it was that great doctrine that brought Spurgeon to salvation.

What's the point of it if there's no guarantee? But there is. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, it is to You, the only God, our Savior, a God who is by nature a Savior, to whom we come through Jesus Christ our Lord, it is to You that all glory, meaning adoration, praise and worship, all majesty, that means elevated position, all dominion, that means sovereign rule, all authority, that means freedom to act belong before all time, now and forever. We give You all the glory and all the praise and we say amen, amen, amen, let it be, let it be, let it be. And if this were not true, all our praise for our salvation would be a prop for our fears, all our praise and adoration and songs of worship would be some kind of mental game to feel good and override our fears, but it is true, You will keep us and You will present us in Your holy presence faultless with great joy. It is in that confident expression that our worship is rendered to You and we praise You in Your Son's name. Amen.

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