

James Philip Bible Readings

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The Book of Jude

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The Book of Jude

Many scholars believe that Jude, the brother of James, was the brother of our Lord (see Matt 13:55). Both he and his brother must have become disciples of our Lord after His Resurrection, for we are told in John 7:5 that during His earthly ministry they did not believe in Him.

The design of his epistle is to guard the Christian Church against false teachers and dangerous doctrines. In this it resembles 2 Peter. Indeed 2 Peter 2 and Jude are so closely alike that it seems very possible that either Peter made use of Jude's writing, or Jude made use of Peter's.

1) 1:1

It is particularly heartening, at the beginning of an epistle which warns us of the deadly dangers facing the Church in the latter days, to be assured of God's love and power towards us. 'Sanctified' should certainly read 'beloved', and the sentence might worthily be translated, "to them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ". It is as if Jude were saying, 'There is much to cause disquiet and concern, for these are perilous times in which we live but over against these things, and in the gathering darkness, you must remember the things that cannot be shaken, the eternal verities of the gospel'. It is certainly true that the assurance that we are called of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, affords a safe and secure anchorage from which no tempest can ever dislodge us, and the knowledge that He loves us, when it really gets home to our hearts with grace and power, must surely sweeten every bitter cup. But what of this, that we should be 'kept for Jesus Christ'? The thought is of our ultimate destiny. We are chosen, called, saved, sanctified, and prepared, not merely for heaven but for Him. Not for nothing do the Scriptures describe that glorious consummation as a bridal feast, for the Church is to be His holy bride. And if an earthly bride, waiting with eager longing for her great day, can think of little else, how much more shall we, when we really understand that we are being kept - for Him!

2) 1:2

It is significant that in view of the somber warnings about apostasy Jude should use the word 'multiplied' in relation to the blessings he prays for his readers. And we are sure that he has rightly interpreted the heart of God in this. For is it not in the darkest hours of the soul, when we pass through the most excruciating experience, that God almost overwhelms us in the tenderness of His dealings with us. Mercy has been defined as 'divine pity expressing itself in help for the needy'. How wonderfully and exquisitely tender He is in the time of trouble! It almost passes comprehension that He Who is so high and holy, the Father of an infinite majesty, should be so gentle and kind - and yet not, for is it not His very majesty that makes Him so? Only the truly strong and great can be truly tender. Tenderness is a mark of nobility, not of weakness. Now if mercy be multiplied to us, peace will surely garrison our hearts, for it is not possible for the divine pity to minister thus to us in vain. And in that peace, we shall be able to enjoy the fellowship of love which it is His delight to bestow upon His children. This is how believers are sustained and kept in dark days. In every desert there are wells of water and palm trees for weary pilgrims.

3) 1:3

Jude indicates here the burden on his heart. It seems that at first he had intended to write about 'the common salvation', but was constrained to write in defence of the faith. "We must earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints". The word translated 'earnestly contend' is a strong one and, translated literally would mean 'to agonise upon', and it surely indicates something of the costliness of being faithful to the gospel in days of declension and infidelity. It is never easy to stand out against the prevailing errors of the time, and today is no exception. There are those who strongly oppose and criticise individuals or groups of Christians who protest against the many departures from the teachings of Scripture and dismiss them contemptuously as 'the lunatic fringe' of the Church. To them it is 'bad form' and slightly embarrassing for criticism to be levelled against any actions or activities or teaching on such 'old-fashioned' grounds as that they are contrary to Scripture. But if such cannot see that they are imperilling the whole structure of the faith, there are some who do, and they feel that if they remained silent, the very stones would cry out in protest. It is of this that Jude speaks here. God requires that error be challenged in His Name and fulfil this requirement we must, however unpopular it may make us.

4) 1:4

This is why the faith must be upheld and defended. False teachers, with their false doctrines, have surreptitiously crept into the Church and will wreak havoc until their evil influence is counteracted. This is always the way with error, it insinuates itself into the Church, almost imperceptibly, and generally has done a good deal of damage before it is well detected. And withal, it is often much later that the implications are really seen.

Jude, like Peter, indicates the connection between wrong doctrine and evil living, emphasising once more how essential true thinking is for the moral health of the Church. And what is true of the Church in general is also only too true of the individual in particular. Error does not advertise its coming to the soul. It sidles in, and breeds inward and secret infidelity for long before it becomes evident to others. Dr James Denney, one of the greatest of our Scottish teachers, once said, "How many are there whose minds have been secretly loosened from what once seemed convictions, who have been intellectually estranged from the gospel, who would create a sensation if they stood up in the midst of Christian worship and revealed their whole thoughts about God and Christ, about Church and Bible, about prayer and sacraments?" These are the sentiments that Jude is expressing here. Well might we set a watch on our own hearts.

5) 1:5

Jude now turns to the Old Testament Scriptures to remind us that falling away is not a new thing, but has happened again and again in history. Here he instances the experience of Israel as a people who were saved out of Egypt, then, because of their belief, destroyed. What can this mean? Not that a saved people can ever subsequently be lost but that a saved people, through sin, may be disciplined by God, the discipline being in this case death. The solemn warning that Jude gives here is that if true believers become apostate God may cut them off by death. This is in accord with the teaching of other epistles in the New Testament. In 1 John 5:16 we find the words, "There is a sin unto death". In I Cor 11:29,30, Paul explicitly states that those who committed sacrilege at the Lord's Supper were visited with weakness, sickness and even death; in Corinth the believer who committed gross and un-nameable sin was, by the authority of the Church, delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor 5:5). And what are we to say of Ananias and Sapphira, if not that they were judged by God for their sin in swift, summary fashion (Acts 5)? Well might the writer to the Hebrews say, "Our God is a consuming fire". The modern temper is decidedly averse to admitting the possibility of such severe discipline, but it has been known for prominent Christians to be cut off consequent upon making heretical pronouncements in public and deceiving the people. God is not mocked and He always has the last word.

6) 1:6

Next, Jude turns to the angels that sinned, as illustrating God's summary judgment upon apostasy. The fact that both the preceding (5) and the following (7) illustrations are taken from the Old Testament Scriptures leads us to suppose that this one is also taken therefrom. If so, the reference must certainly be to Genesis 6, where the 'sons of God' are to be understood as the angels who 'kept not their first estate'. What nameless horror can this refer to? It is the 'demonising' of humanity. The natural explanation is that these angels 'entered into' humanity (remember we are told that the devil entered into Judas Iscariot). We know that paganism is full of stories of gods marrying humans and having children of the unnatural union. We rightly regard these stories as myth and legend, but how did such stories come about? How could people create such fantastic ideas? Well, what if, once, it really happened? It is the testimony of Scripture that it did, and that God summarily punished them perhaps in the judgment of the Flood which also punished an apostate world.

Jude's point in using this particular illustration may well be that if angels who had lived so near to God were not spared, how much less could men lean upon the fact that they had once walked with God. O that we might realise that to have once walked with God is a poor, poor foundation to build upon for eternity. It is he that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

7) 1:7

If it be thought that Jude is too extreme in his illustrations, we should remember our Lord's words about the last days. "Remember Lot's wife", He said, and indicated that at the end conditions would be just like those in the days of Lot. Jude is simply interpreting and applying the teaching of Jesus. Nor is he alone in this. The Apostle Paul does likewise, and the real force of Jude's words are brought out when we lay alongside them Paul's statements in Rom 1:24,26,28 - "God gave them up to uncleanness". Sin begins with our departure from God, it ends with God's departure from us, and, in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, they went so far in their sin that they reached the point of no return, when there was nothing left for them but judgment. This, says Jude, is set forth for an example, to remind us of the grim possibilities that follow straying from the truth. Sin always gets out of hand, and we may never know just how far it will lead us. This much is always true, that it leads us much further than we intended to go. Well might John in his epistle say, "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." The only safeguard against drifting into such a disastrous position is to determine, so far as lies in us, not to sin at all!

8) 1:8-9

Some commentators think that we have in 8 a summary of the previous three verses. The people of Sodom defiled the flesh (7), the angels despised dominion (6), the Israelites railed and murmured against Moses and Aaron, their leaders. What is particularly concerning Jude, however, is the attitude of those who 'despise dominion and speak evil of dignities' as we can see from his reference in 9 to the fact that even the archangel Michael does not presume to take such an attitude. It is sadly true that such people often exist in a fellowship. They conceive it to be their calling in life to 'put everybody else right'; they are argumentative, strong-willed and stubborn, often with a bitter and hard spirit that infects everything it comes in contact with. Not for them the lowly place of submission or the position of the learner; they have nothing to learn, nor do they recognise any to be above them, for they are always right in their own estimation, and are impatient of any view but their own. And they speak evil of God's appointed servants (forgetting Paul's attitude towards even a renegade high-priest in Acts 23:4,5)! And all this, in the delusion that they are being more spiritual than anyone else, and being as they term it, faithful, forgetting that being faithful and being thoroughly objectionable are not the same in the sight of God or man, and that contending for the faith is not to be identified with being contentious. This, according to Jude, is something associated with the apostacy of the last days, and betokens that something terrible has gone wrong in such a life. Beloved, beware of the censorious, pharisaic spirit. It brings a blight wherever it appears!

9) **1:9**

This is a fascinating verse, and merits some further thought. Michael the archangel appears in Scripture as the guardian angel of Israel, Gods people, as we see in Dan 10:21, 12:1. He is mentioned in the New Testament here, and in Rev 12:7. We have for long thought that the doctrine of angels has been neglected by the church, and relegated to the level of Sunday School legendary lore. Nothing could be more misleading. Nothing is written in Scripture in vain, but for our learning. Is it not heartening to know that Satan, who is a spiritual being, is not allowed his own way in the affairs of men, but is opposed and challenged in heavenly places by good angels, ministering spirits sent forth by our Lord, who contend with Him on our behalf, and dispute his right to harm us.

The reference to 'the body of Moses' is shrouded in mystery. There is no reference to it in the Old Testament . The burial of Moses (Deut 34:6) was unusual in that God Himself undertook it, and an old tradition among the Jews states that Michael was the appointed guardian of his grave. According to another tradition, Michael was charged with the burial of Moses, and Satan opposed him, bringing an accusation against him relative to the murder of the Egyptian, in consequence of which he was unworthy of such an honourable burial. This last certainly fits in with what we learn of Satan's activities against the saints in Rev 12:10 as the accuser of the brethren. We are not, however, in a position to say what the verse means or refers to, it is one of the things that have been hid from our eyes and we must be content with that. The real point to note is that even Michael did not speak evilly against Satan, because, fallen angel though he was, he once was a prince with God (as Lucifer, son of the morning). How much more then ought we mortals determine to "speak evil of no man" (Tit 3:2), remembering that even in their rebellion against God, men do not cease to be destined for Him.

10) 1:10

Jude's thought here is exactly summed up in our proverb, 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread'. These men do not understand spiritual realities but they can rail at them. This is a sadly true characteristic of the apostate - and there are none so bitter against the truth as those who have departed from it. The renegade who has abandoned the position he once held is always more hardened and more contemptuous than a man who has never walked in the light and truth of God. One has to think of the patronising attitude adopted by former evangelicals towards those who still hold conservative views of the Scriptures to realise how subtly and how sadly this evil spirit blinds men and makes them insensible to the truth. "We used to believe as you do", they say, "but have outgrown that stage". It is passing sad - and very frightening -when men 'outgrow' the truth, when 'advancement' means believing less, not more, of the truth. All that the Scriptures teach confirms us in the view that we ought to beware of such men. How can they be true who have departed from truth?

ii) 1:11

Jude turns once again to the Old Testament for material to illustrate his point. 'The way of Cain' may refer to his failure to recognise that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. This seems to be the explanation of why Abel's offering was accepted and his not (see Genesis 4 and Hebrews 11:4). To walk in the way of Cain is to turn aside from the biblical message of acceptance through the blood of the cross and to reject God's way of salvation. (See also Heb 11:29). "The error of Balaam" is to sacrifice eternal riches for temporal gain. A man, says Jesus, may gain the whole world but lose his own soul. Paul may well teach that the love of money is the root of all evil, it was certainly the cause of Balaam's downfall. Here again we see how much further sin may lead a man than he realises, for the full extent of Balaam's evil work is indicated in Rev 2:14 in the terrible snare he brought upon Israel. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death...James 1:15). "The gainsaying of Core" refers to the revolt organised by Korah against Moses, man of God (Numbers 16). This also illustrates the spirit of apostasy - the unwillingness to submit to the authority of God-appointed leaders. God has His own way, now as then, of vindicating those whom He has set over His work. These things are written for our learning, says Paul, and there is much food for thought in this verse of wide application!

12) 1:12-13

We could find no more helpful comment on these verses than the following lines from a recent commentary on Jude which has greatly helped in the preparation of these Notes. It is by S Maxwell Coder, and published by the Moody Press, Chicago:

"Five other characteristics of apostasy are illustrated. Hidden rocks (as one version translates 'spots') tells of its unseen danger; waterless clouds, its false promise; autumnal trees, its barren profession; raging waves, its wasted effort; wandering stars; its aimless course. In the same order are five statements suggesting the selfishness, the helplessness, the fruitlessness, the shamefulness, and the hopelessness of apostates.

"In reading this list, one is reminded, by way of contrast, of the Lord Whom these men deny. He is the Rock of our salvation; they are hidden rocks threatening shipwreck to the faith. He comes with clouds to refresh His people forever; these are clouds which do not even bring temporary blessing. He is a tree of life; these are trees of death. He leads beside still waters; these are like the restless, troubled sea. He is the bright and morning Star, heralding the coming day; these are wandering stars, presaging a night of eternal darkness."

13) 1:14-15

The reference to Enoch seems to have been taken from the apocryphal book of Enoch. This does not of course mean that it is not authentic or inspired, for both Jude and the writer of the aforesaid book may have quoted from a common tradition not elsewhere recorded in Scripture, just as Paul can quote a saying of Jesus not recorded in the gospels (Acts 20:35). The important thing to note is that the coming of the Lord to judge in righteousness has from the earliest times been a central and fundamental truth of the gospel. We have before pointed out that apart from the doctrine of the Second Coming the gospel does not really make sense, and the fact that as far back as Enoch's time it was seen to be integral to the purposes of God substantiates this. The belief in the coming of the Lord does much to explain the beauty and fragrance of Enoch's walk with God (Gen 5:21-24). Everywhere in the Scriptures, both in Old and New Testaments, the thought of that coming is held out as an incentive and inspiration to holy living. To live in the light of eternity and the coming day of God is the surest way of promoting the work of sanctification in our hearts. As John says (1 John 3:3), "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure".

14) 1:16

Jude is probably still thinking of the Old Testament illustrations he has already mentioned in 11. It was Korah and his associates who murmured against Moses. What we need to learn is that murmuring arises from a murmuring spirit, and one readily sees what havoc this can cause in a fellowship. It is the particular temptation of groups that have advanced beyond the elementary in Christian experience. We heard recently of one who took it upon himself to criticise and oppose a man of God who is faithfully and painstakingly expounding the Scriptures to the building up and nourishing of souls, and to spread disaffection among the members of the fellowship. Men who fall victim to such undermining of the Lord's work should realise that it is not deep spirituality that is activating them but an evil spirit intent upon working harm in them and in the fellowship. The scriptural warning to them is, "Touch not the Lord's anointed".

The phrase "holding men's persons in admiration because of advantage" is translated in the RSV as "flattering people to gain advantage" and speaks of one of the most contemptuous of all human activities. There is nothing so shabby and mean and nauseating as the spirit of flattery because its motives are always of the lowest. This should not be confused with true and sincere praise and commendation, which is a Christian grace, and commanded by the Word - "Honour where honour is due" - nor should abhorrence of flattery hinder the worthy bestowal of that praise as occasion offers, for to receive genuine praise is a humbling thing. It is the motive that matters. Flattery is given with some hidden motive of advantage in view, and puts a man up because his is (willingly) blind to that motive. Those who are most deserving of praise are generally severe enough critics of themselves to be able to 'see through' flattery and despise it.

15) 1:17-19

The one great and adequate safeguard against the errors and dangers of false teachers is the word of truth. "Remember the words spoken", cries Jude, and this still remains the only real way for the baneful effects of heresy to be counteracted. This is in line with Paul's teaching. In Acts 20:29 he warns the Ephesians of the danger of grievous wolves entering in among them, not sparing the flock, and goes on, in 32, to commend them to God and to the word of His grace. In 2 Timothy 3 he speaks of perilous times to come, and proceeds in 14 to exhort Timothy to continue in the things he has learned from the inspired Scriptures. And we may recall how the Psalmist in Psalm 119 repeatedly emphasises the power of God's Word to cleanse from sin (9), to keep from sin (11), to give understanding (98,99), to guide and direct (105). In the light of this it is clear that what is of primary importance in any time of spiritual declension is not any spectacular demonstration but the recovery of the Word of God. It is here that real hope lies for the Church and the nation. We have been seeing in our studies in 1 Samuel that renewal came in Israel when the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And, given a band of men whose hearts God has touched and who have received His Word, we may yet see a turning of the tide in our time.

We wonder whether there is a connection in Jude's thought here between those who have despised the Word (18) and the description he gives of them as "having not the Spirit" (19). It is certainly true -and it will have to be seen to be true - that God gives His spirit to those who honour His Word in a way that He does not to those who have reservations about it. We think this deserves more attention from theologians than it often has received.

16) 1:20

Jude brings his epistle to a close with an exhortation that fittingly amplifies what he has already said in 17. Here is the antidote to apostacy, indeed the words in 20 and 21 seem to link with the great doxology in 24,25, which affirms the possibility of being kept from falling. Here, so to speak, we have the prescription for a life of victory even in the darkest days and in face of the greatest pressures.

We are, says Jude, to build up ourselves on our most holy faith. This must be a first priority in Christian life, and is everywhere emphasised in Scripture. It is what Peter stresses in his second epistle when he exhorts us to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, etc. It is what he brings before us in his first epistle, when he says we are to 'desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby'. It is Paul's theme in Ephesians 4 where he lays upon us the duty of growing up in Christ. The setting of Jude's words in the midst of such grim warnings makes us see all the more clearly the need for maturity of Christian character. One commentator suggests that the thought in the word is not so much that of increasing and completing an edifice as of strengthening its foundations, and it is obvious that no real strength of character can ever issue in a life that has an unsure foundation. It needs to be seen that there is no other safeguard against wrong doctrine and serious error than that here advocated. This is a very timely word for today, when doctrinal standards tend to be regarded as interesting curiosities of no significance, and decisions often made without notice being taken of the doctrinal issues involved in them. The severest critics of our forefathers could scarcely charge them with thinking doctrinal issues irrelevant to the life and welfare of the Church. It has been left to the 20th century to produce churchmen who seem to think that not being doctrinally and theologically minded is something to be proud of. In other days in Scotland they would have been ashamed of this and have tried to hide it. Times have apparently changed!

17) 1:20

Jude's second injunction is to maintain a life of prayer - 'praying in the Holy Ghost'. This is an expression not used elsewhere in the New Testament except in Ephesians 6:18 in a slightly different form, but its meaning is evidenced in many places, and nowhere more graphically than in Acts 4:23-31, in that wonderful prayer-meeting of the early Church when, in time of crisis the saints brought the situation to the throne of grace; "and when they had prayed, the place was shaken..and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost". We cannot say whether Jude has in mind the need for private prayer in the individual or corporate prayer in the fellowship, but this is surely a word that might well include both. A church praying in the Holy Ghost is an awesome thought and would prove, as in Acts, to be terrible as an army with banners. The prayer meeting has for long enough been out of fashion in the life of the Church, but the signs are not wanting that, here and there throughout Scotland, God is gathering together groups of men and women whose hearts He has touched and is moving them to pray in the Holy Ghost for the renewal of spiritual life in the land. Who can tell what this may not yet mean in our time. Martin Luther once said that the prayers of the saints are the decrees of God beginning to work". We should remember for our encouragement the thrilling story in Acts 12 of Peter's imprisonment and subsequent miraculous release through the power of prayer. Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). It was little wonder that his chains fell off! Which thing is an allegory - many kinds of chains will fall off in Scotland when the Church begins to pray in the Holy Ghost.

18) 1:21

What Jude has in mind in the first part of this verse is not our love for God, but His love for us, and his meaning is truly paraphrased if we take him to mean that we are to keep ourselves, as the hymn puts it, "in the conscious calm enjoyment of the Saviour's love". This thought touches the deeps of human experience for it is only in the knowledge of the love God has for us that we can ever have real and lasting security. To be saved by grace means that we who once were far off, who had no home and no true anchorage, are now at last brought into a family where we belong, and where we matter to God. It is in the measure that we realise this that we enter into the deep and settled peace of God. And to remain there is to have access to resources that are more than sufficient to offset all the pressures that perilous times may bring upon our souls. That is why Jude is so concerned to exhort us to 'keep ourselves' there. Jesus said, "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love". To keep ourselves in the love of God is therefore not a question of feelings or emotion, but of obedience. It is in our power, whatever crisis may come upon the world, to be constantly in the love of God, if only we will obey His voice. Obedience is not only the touchstone of all progress in the Christian life, it is our only safe course. All other ways lead to disaster.

19) 1:21

Finally, Jude bids us "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life". Once more as in 14,15 (see Note on 14,15) the prospect of our Lord's return (to which this phrase certainly refers) is shown to be an anchorage to those who look for Him. It is the practical value of the doctrine of Christ's coming that needs to be appreciated. There is nothing that is more calculated to bring peace and detachment to our hearts than a true realisation of all that it implies. This is what Paul means in Romans 8:24,25 when he says, 'we are saved in hope'. It is the assurance that, whatever trials we may pass through, however severe the pressures upon us, however grave the dangers that beset us from error and heresy, they will have an end shortly when He comes to reign, and that evil does not have the last word in the world. The victory of God has already been won, and all that is wanting is its final manifestation and consummation. Not only so; the best is yet to be for us as individuals. Mercy is multiplied to us in our conversion and growth in grace as we saw in 2, but there awaits us a glorious consummation greater than all our imagining and almost beyond belief, in which the inconsolable ache, as C.S. Lewis describes it, in our hearts, that divine nostalgia, the homesickness of our souls, will at last be satisfied and the wound be healed. The leaves of the tree of life will be for the healing of the nations of the redeemed! To know this, as a blessed certainty to come - it may be sooner than we think! - is to put the ills of this present life, which are, relatively, but for a moment, in their proper perspective and to become detached from them. They may hurt, but they cannot harm us. For they are simply introductory, a kind of preface to the main theme; they are not what the real story is about. That is one of the glad surprises God has in store for them that love Him. And it will surely be worth waiting for!

20) 1:22-23

From future prospect Jude now turns to present duty, and in the light of the coming day of Christ he lays upon us the burden of those that are yet outside the kingdom. The Greek text distinguishes three classes here, not two, and should be translated thus: on some have mercy, who are in doubt, or wavering; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Jude shows a sensitive distinction between different kinds of unconverted folks and advocates different treatment in each case. There are those who have real doubts, who are wavering on the borderline of true faith. How kind and patient Jude would have us be to them! There are those - is Jude thinking of Lot and his family here? - perhaps so immersed in sin that their conversion can be described only in terms of brands being plucked out of the burning. And, thank God, there are many for whom this is what conversion has meant. Others, says Jude -and we can almost hear his bated breath - save with fear. What he appears to mean is not so much that they are in worse condition than others, but that the particular nature of their sins constitutes a danger to us as we try to reach them. It is true, that we must as believers 'get alongside' men in their sin, but what if 'getting alongside' them is like to prove deadly dangerous to our own moral welfare? Well might Paul say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall". How wise the scriptural teaching is, and how careful in the fine distinctions it makes! There is much in these two verses that we can learn to our profit with regard to personal work.

21) 1:24 25

And now, at the last, a wonderful doxology, filled with glad promise and glorious hope. We may be sure that there is significance in the fact that this epistle which has had such solemn and frightening things to teach us both begins and ends with such positive and ringing assurances - as if to say, "The times are perilous and the dangers are great, but be of good cheer, for God is greater than all, and His eternal love and grace encompass you on every side". Let us concentrate particularly today on the words "He is able to keep you from falling". Sublime statement, in its simplicity and grandeur! Are we taking it in? What can it mean? What can it not mean! For it tells us not only that there is no need for us to fall, but also that there is no excuse when we do, for He is able! The word translated 'from falling' literally means 'not stumbling', and the phrase indicates that God has power to keep us in a state of not stumbling, and the picture it conjures up in our minds is of a man going through rough and difficult paths, where there is much to hinder and impede his progress, with a sure and steady step, overcoming every obstacle and hazard in his way. That is what God is able to do for us. Well might Jude ascribe glory and majesty, dominion and power to such a God.

22) 1:24 25

But there is more to follow. Not only is God able to keep us from falling, but also to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. It was almost an impertinence to comment on such words, but in all reverence we must try. Jude's thought here is breath-taking. It is as if Jude were saying that one moment, we shall be confronting the perils and dangers and hazards of this mortal life, battling and wrestling with the powers of darkness, enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and the next, as in the twinkling of an eye, we shall suddenly be clothed upon with immortality, saved to sin no more, and presented to Christ not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and brought to share the majesty of His glory. What a transition! Does it not fill our hearts with a thrilling excitement to think that the costly disciplines and lonely agonies that make up our earthly discipleship may at any moment, and without any warning, be transformed into everlasting splendours the like of which we can scarcely conceive, let alone understand. Jude does what he can with mere words, and speaks of 'exceeding joy', but we shall use new kinds of words altogether to describe the torrents and cascades of new joy that shall engulf us then. Isaiah once caught a glimpse of this in olden times, and wrote, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him", as if to say, "We knew it would be wonderful, glorious-beyond our highest imaginings, but this ! It is unspeakable in the fierceness of its ecstasy and the exquisite wonder of its fulfilment, and even to think of it now, dull and unimaginative as our spirits are, is to sense something of the glory breaking into our souls. Jude began his epistle by reminding us that we were being kept for Jesus Christ, and we thought we had seen something of the wonder of that blessed reality. But that it should mean this...., this - presented before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy... Gloryglory....glory. Amen and Amen!