

Prayer - Jude 24, 25, Part 2

by A.W. Pink

Christ preserves His people by spiritual power, through the effectual operations of His grace, and will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Preservation of the Saints"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes in his sermon on Jude 24-25 that God preserves true believers from falling into apostasy, highlighting that this preservation is not automatic for all who profess faith, as seen in Judas Iscariot. He explains that genuine believers actively seek to obey God's commands and maintain their faith through prayer and devotion, relying on Christ's power to keep them from sin. Pink underscores the importance of faith as the means of preservation, asserting that Christ's divine ability and willingness to protect His people is rooted in His covenant obligations. The sermon concludes with a doxology praising the 'only wise God our Saviour,' affirming His eternal dominion and power. Pink's message encourages believers to trust in God's grace and to actively engage in their spiritual growth.

Transcript

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling." In further consideration of the connection of this prayer, the following question is crucial: who are the ones that the Lord Jesus thus preserves? Not everyone who professes to believe and to be a follower of His, as is clear from the case of Judas Iscariot, is preserved by God from apostasy. Then whom does He preserve? Without doubt God preserves those who make a genuine effort to obey the exhortations found in verses 20-23, which were discussed at the end of the preceding chapter. These true believers, so far from being content with their present knowledge and spiritual attainments, sincerely endeavor to continue building up themselves on their most holy faith. These true lovers of God, so far from being indifferent to the state of their hearts, jealously watch their affections, in order that their love toward God might be preserved in a pure, healthy, and vigorous condition by regular exercise in acts of devotion and obedience. These true saints, so far from taking pleasure in flirting with the world and indulging their carnal lusts, have their hearts engaged in "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." These true disciples pray fervently for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the performance of all their duties, and are deeply solicitous about the welfare of their brothers and sisters in Christ. Such are the ones who will, despite all their weakness and frailties, be preserved by the power and grace of God from apostasy.

Two Principles of Interpretation Necessary for Understanding This Prayer

It is of vital importance to a sound knowledge of Scripture that we observe the order in which truth is therein set forth. For example, we find David saying, "Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." This he said before praying the following prayer: "Uphold me according unto Thy word" (Ps. 119:115, 116). There would have been no sincerity in praying for God to support him unless he had already resolved to obey the Divine precepts. It is horrible mockery for anyone to ask God to sustain him in a course of self-will. First must come a holy purposing and resolution on our part, and then the seeking of enabling grace. It is of equal importance to a right understanding of Scripture that we take special care not to separate what God has joined together by detaching a sentence from its qualifying context. We often read the quotation, "My sheep shall never perish." While that is substantially correct, those are not the precise words Christ used. This is what He actually said: "My sheep hear [heed!] my voice, and I know [approve] them, and they follow Me [contrary to their natural inclinations]: And I give unto them eternal life; and they [the heedful and obedient ones] shall never perish" (John 10:27, 28, brackets and ital. mine).

Faith Is the Instrumental Means of Our Preservation

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling." In these words we discover the first great reason behind the Apostle Jude's prayer, namely, the Divine ability to preserve the saints from apostasy. The discerning reader will perceive in the above remarks that the question of how Christ preserves His people has been anticipated and answered. He does so in a manner very different from that in which He keeps the planets in their courses, which He does by physical energy. Christ preserves His own by spiritual power, by the effectual operations of His grace within their souls. Christ preserves His people not in a course of reckless self-pleasing, but in one of self-denial. He preserves them by moving them to heed His warnings, to practice His precepts, and to follow the example that He has left them. He preserves them by enabling them to persevere in faith and holiness. We who are His are "kept by the power of God through faith (1 Peter 1:5, ital. mine), and faith has respect to His commandments (Ps. 119:66; Heb. 11:8) as well as to His promises. Christ indeed is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2), yet we are the ones who must exercise that faith and not He. Yet, by the Holy Spirit, He is working in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Just as faith is the instrumental means by which we are justified before God, our perseverance in faith is the instrumental means by which Christ preserves us until His coming (1 Thess. 5:23; Jude 1).

After exhorting the saints as to their duties (vv. 20-23), Jude then intimates to whom they must look for their enablement and for blessing upon their endeavors: "unto him that is able to keep you from falling." His readers must place the whole of their dependence for preservation on the Lord Jesus. He does not say this in order to check their industry, but rather to encourage their hope of success. It is a great relief to faith to know that "God is able to make him [us] stand" (Rom. 14:4). John Gill begins his comments on Jude 24 by saying, "The people of God are liable to fall into temptation, into sin, into errors... and even into final and total apostasy, were it not for Divine power." Yea, they are painfully sensible both of their evil proclivities and their frailty, and therefore do they frequently cry to the Lord, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually" (Ps. 119:117). As they read of Adam in a state of innocency being unable to keep himself from falling, and likewise the angels in heaven, they know full well that imperfect and sinful creatures such as they are cannot keep themselves. The way to heaven is a narrow one, and there are precipices on either side. There are foes within and without seeking my destruction, and I have no more strength of my own than poor Peter had when he was put to the test by a maid.

Metaphors Describing the Inherent Weakness of Christians Are Meant to Direct Our Faith to God

Almost every figure used in the Bible to describe a child of God emphasizes his weakness and helplessness: a sheep, a branch of the vine, a bruised reed, smoking flax. It is only as we experientially discover our weakness that we learn to prize more highly the One who is able to keep us from falling. Is one of my readers tremblingly saying, "I fear that I too may perish in the wilderness"? Not so, if your prayer be sincere when you cry, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. 17:5). Christ is able to protect you, because His power is limitless and His grace boundless. What strength this should give the wearied warrior! David comforted himself therewith when he declared, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Ps. 23:4). There is a twofold safeguarding of the elect spoken of in this Epistle: the one before regeneration, and the other after. In the opening verse of Jude they are spoken of as "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." They were set apart to salvation by the Father in His eternal decree (2 Thess. 2:13), and "preserved" before they were effectually called. A wonderful and blessed fact is that! Even while wandering from the fold, yea, even while they were despising the Shepherd of their souls, His love watched over them (Jer. 31:3) and His power delivered them from an untimely grave. Death cannot seize an elect sinner until he has been born again!

Christ Does Not Raise Our Hopes Merely to Dash Them

What has just been pointed out should make it very evident that there is no question whatever about the Lord's willingness to preserve His people. if He has kept them from natural death while in a state of unregeneracy, much more will He deliver them from spiritual death now that He has made them new creatures (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10). if Christ were not willing to "make all grace abound" toward His people (2 Cor. 9:8), to "keep that which I [they] have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12, brackets mine), to "succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18), and to "save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25), He most certainly would not tantalize them by affirming in each passage that He is able to do these things. When Christ asked the two blind men, who besought Him to have mercy upon them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (Matt. 9:28), He was not raising a doubt in their minds as to His readiness to give them sight; but He was evoking their faith, as the next verse makes evident. The words "unto him that is able to keep you from falling" is a general expression including not only His might and willingness, but His goodness and munificence, which He has already brought, and shall continue to bring, to bear for the preservation of His people.

Christ Is Bound by Covenant Obligation to Preserve His People from Total, Final Apostasy

It is indeed true that the power of Christ is far greater than what He actually exercises, for His power is infinite. Were He so disposed, He could keep His people altogether from sin; but for wise and holy reasons He does not. As His forerunner John the Baptist declared to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9), so Christ could have commanded a legion of angels to deliver Him from His enemies (Matthew 26:53), but He would not. The exercise of His power was and is regulated by God's eternal purpose; He puts it forth only so far as He has stipulated to do so by covenant engagement. Thus the words "unto him that is able to keep you from falling" have reference not to every kind of falling, but from falling prey to the fatal errors of those "ungodly men" mentioned in verse 4, from being led astray by the sophistries and examples of heretical teachers. As the Shepherd of God's sheep, Christ has received a charge to preserve them: not from straying, but from destruction. It is the gross sins spoken of in the context, when joined with obstinacy and impenitence, from which Christ delivers His people. These are "presumptuous sins" (Ps. 19:13), which, if one continues in impenitent, are

unpardonable sins (just like suicide). In other words, it is from total and final apostasy that Christ keeps all His own.

As an almighty Savior, Christ has been charged with the work of preserving His people. They were given to Him by the Father with that end in view. He is in every way qualified for the task considering both His Deity and His humanity (Heb. 2:18). All authority has been given to Him in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). He is as willing as He is competent, for it is the Father's will that He should lose none of His people (John 6:39), and therein He delights. He has a personal interest in them, for He has bought them for Himself. He is accountable for their custody. He therefore preserves them from being devoured by sin. No feeble Savior is ours, but rather One that is clothed with omnipotence. That was made manifest even during the days of His humiliation, when He cast out demons, healed the sick, and stilled the tempest by His authoritative fiat. It was evidenced when by a single utterance He caused those who came to arrest Him to fall backward to the ground (John 18:6). It was supremely demonstrated in His personal victory over death and the grave. That same almighty power is exercised in ordering all the affairs of His people, and in continually directing their wills and actions throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Of His vineyard He declares, "I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day (Isa. 27:3).

The Glorious Reception with Which Christ Receives and Presents the Redeemed

"And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Here is the second reason that prompted this outburst of adoration. Christ not only protects His people here, but has provided for their felicity hereafter. Such is His grace and power that He makes good to them all that God has purposed and promised. The presentation of His people to Himself is both individual and corporate. The former is at death, when He takes the believer to Himself. Inexpressibly blessed is this: upon its dismissal from the body the spirit of the believer is conducted into the immediate presence of God, and the Savior Himself admits it into heaven and presents it before the throne. The disembodied spirit, rid of all corruption and defilement, is received by Christ to the glory of God. He will set that redeemed spirit of a justified sinner made perfect (Heb. 12:23) before Himself with great complacency of heart, so that it will reflect His own perfections. He will advance it to the highest honor, fill it with glory, express to it the uttermost of His love, and behold it with delight. Christ receives each blood-washed spirit at death to His everlasting embraces, and presents it before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Our present passage also looks forward to the time when Christ will publicly present His people corporately to Himself, when the Head and Savior who "loved the church, and gave himself for it" will "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25, 27). This shall be the certain and triumphant result of His love, as it shall be the consummation of our redemption. The Greek word for present (No. 2476 in Strong and Thayer; cf. present, 3936, in Eph. 5:27) can be used in the sense to set alongside of. Having cleansed the Church from all her natural pollution and prepared and adorned her for her destined place as the companion of His glory, He will, formally, and officially, take her to Himself. This jubilant declaration shall go forth: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him [God]: for the marriage of the Lamb is come" (Rev. 19:7, brackets mine). Christ will have made the Church comely with His own perfections, and she will be full of beauty and splendor, like a bride adorned for her husband. He will then say, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Solomon 4:7). She shall be "all glorious within: her clothing is [shall be] of wrought gold." Of her it is said, "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty" (Ps. 45:11, 13, brackets mine), and He shall be forever the satisfying Portion of her joy.

The Scriptures also indicate that on the resurrection morn Christ shall also present the Church to His Father (2 Cor. 4:14), and shall say exultantly, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. 2:13; cf. Gen. 33:5; Isa. 8:18). Not one shall be lost (John 6:39, 40; 10:27-30; 17:12, 24)! And all shall be perfectly conformed to His holy image (Rom. 8:29). He will present us before God for His inspection, acceptance, and approbation. Says Albert Barnes,

He will present us in the court of heaven, before the throne of the eternal Father, as His ransomed people, as recovered from the ruins of the fall, as saved by the merits of His blood. They shall not only be raised from the dead by Him, but publicly and solemnly presented to God as His, as recovered to His service and as having a title in the covenant of grace to the blessedness of heaven.

It is Christ taking His place before God as the triumphant Mediator, owning the "children" as God's gift to Him, confessing His oneness with them, and delighting in the fruits of His work. He presents them "faultless": justified, sanctified, glorified. The manner in which He does so will be "with exceeding joy," for He shall then "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). In Jude 15 we learn of the doom awaiting the apostates; here we behold the bliss appointed to the redeemed. They shall forever shine in Christ's righteousness, and He shall find His complacency in the Church as the partner of His blessedness.

A Doxology of Grand Ascription Directed to a Divine Person of Infinite Perfections

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." We come to a consideration of the nature and Object of this prayer. It is a doxology, an expression of praise; and though it is brief, the Divine verities upon which it focuses are immense. Seeing that the Lord is arrayed with glory and beauty (Job 40:10), we should continually ascribe these excellencies to Him (Ex. 15:11; 1 Chron. 29:11). The saints are to publish and proclaim the perfections of their God: "Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious" (Ps. 66:2). This is what the apostles did, and we should emulate them. Here He is adored for His wisdom. There is something here that may present a difficulty to young theologians who have learned to distinguish between the incommunicable attributes of God, such as His infinitude and immutability, and His communicable attributes, such as mercy, wisdom, and so forth. Seeing that God has endowed some of His creatures with wisdom, how can He be said to be "only wise"? First, He is superlatively wise. His wisdom is so vastly superior to that of men and angels that their creaturely wisdom is foolishness by comparison. Secondly, He is essentially wise. God's wisdom is not a quality separate from Himself as ours is. There are many men who are far from being wise men; but God would not be God if He were not omniscient, being naturally endowed with all knowledge and Himself the very Fountainhead of all wisdom. Thirdly, He is originally wise, Without derivation. All wisdom is from God, because He possesses all wisdom in Himself. All the true wisdom of creatures is but a ray from His light.

The glorious Object of this doxology is none other than the Mediator of the covenant of grace. The reasons for so honoring Him are the omnipotence and omniscience that He possesses, which are gloriously displayed in His saving of the Church. In view of what is predicated of Him in verse 24, there should not be the slightest doubt in our minds that "the only wise God" of verse 25 is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is His particular province as the Shepherd to preserve His Church from destruction and to present it in glory to the Father. Furthermore, the added epithet, "God our Saviour," confirms the matter. Here absolute Deity is ascribed to Him: "the only wise God," as it also is in Titus 2:13 (where the Greek text would more accurately and literally be rendered, "the great God and Saviour of us, Jesus Christ"), 2 Peter 1:1 (where the Greek should be translated, "of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ,"

witness the marginal notes of the KJV and ASV), and many other places. Christ the Son is "the only wise God," though not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit. Probably He is here designated as such in designed contrast with the false and foolish "gods" of the heretical corruptors mentioned in the context. I might add that by comparison to the sovereign triune God of Holy Writ, who is most gloriously represented in the God-man Jesus the Christ (who now reigns as the absolute Lord of the universe), the fictitious God of the Unitarians, of twentieth-century Modernists, and of most Arminians is also foolish and puerile.

Christ's Unique Fitness for the Work Assigned to Him

It is the strength and sufficiency of Christ for all the concerns of His redemptive mediation that is here magnified. He is adored as the One who will triumphantly complete the work given Him to do, a work that no mere creature, no, not even an archangel, could accomplish. None but One who is both God and man could act as Mediator. None but a Divine Person could offer an adequate satisfaction to Divine justice. None but one possessed of infinite merit could provide a sacrifice of infinite value. None but God could preserve sheep in the midst of wolves. In Proverbs 8, especially verses 12, 13, 31, and 32, Christ is denominated "wisdom," and is heard speaking as a distinct Person. He was heralded as the "Wonderful Counsellor" (Isa. 9:6). He designated Himself "wisdom" in Luke 7:35. He is expressly called "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). His wisdom appears in His creating all things (John 1:3), in His governing and maintaining all things (Heb. 1:3), and in that the Father "hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

The consummate wisdom of Christ was manifested during the days of His flesh. He opened to men the secrets of God (Matthew 13:11), He declared, "The Son can do nothing of himself [which in the light of the context following means that He does nothing independently of the Father's will], but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19, 30 brackets and ital. mine). Christ thereby affirmed an equality of competency between Himself and His Father. He "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:25). Those who heard Him teach "were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matthew 13:54). Christ's unique wisdom appeared in answering and silencing His enemies. "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46), testified those sent to arrest Him. He so confounded His critics that at the end Matthew testified, "neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matthew 22:46). Since, therefore, He is endowed with omniscience, let us find no fault with any of His dealings with us. Let us rather take to Him all our problems; let us confide absolutely in Him, putting ourselves and all our affairs into His hands.

The Highest Praise Is Due the Lord Christ

Since He is "the only wise God our Saviour"--the sole, sufficient, and successful Savior--let us laud Him as such. As those in heaven cast their crowns before the Lamb and extol His peerless perfections, so should we who are still upon earth. Since Christ subjected Himself to such unspeakable dishonor and abasement for our sakes, yea, enduring suffering to death itself, and that the death of the cross, how readily and heartily should we honor and magnify Him, crying with the apostle, "Unto him be glory and majesty, dominion and power"! Glory is the displaying of excellence in such a way that gains approbation from all who behold it. Here the word signifies the high honor and esteem that is due to Christ because of His perfections, whereby He infinitely surpasses all creatures and things. Majesty refers to His exalted dignity and Divine greatness that make Him to be honored and preferred beyond all His creatures, having received a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9). Dominion is that absolute rule or ownership that is

gained by conquest and maintained by strength or might superior to that of all rivals. This the God-man exercises in such a way that "none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35). He has already crushed the head of Satan, His most powerful enemy (Gen. 3:15), and thrown his evil kingdom into chaos. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them" in His death on the cross (Col. 2:15). Power here means that authority to rule which is derived from legal right. Because Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8, 9), God the Father has exalted Him to the place of universal authority and rule (Matthew 28:18) where He now reigns as "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). This universal rule Christ earned as a legal right by His perfect obedience as the second Adam (Gen. 1:26-28). As the God-man, Christ not only merits authority and dominion over the earth with all of its creatures but also over the entire universe that He Himself created.

King Jesus Reigns Both Now and Forever

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Note well the two words set in italics. Radically different was the inspired concept of Jude from that of so many "students of prophecy" who postpone Christ's reign to some future "millennial" era. It is both the present and the endless dignities of the Mediator that are here in view. He has already been "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9). Majesty is His today, for He is exalted "Far above all principality, and power," for God "hath [not "will"!]" put all things under his feet" (Eph. 1:2 1, 22, ital. and brackets mine). Dominion is also exercised by Him now, and in the strength by which He obtained dominion He is presently "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). Even now the Lord Jesus is seated upon the throne of David (Acts 2:29-35), "angels and authorities and powers being made [having been] made subject unto him." (1 Peter 3:22). So shall He reign, not merely for a thousand years, but forever. Amen. Thus does Jude conclude the most solemn of all Epistles with this paeon of holy exultation over the present and eternal glory of the Lamb.

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