

Keeping Yourself or Being Kept?

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's role in our salvation and the necessity of keeping ourselves in His love to experience His blessings.

Duration: 26:30

Scripture: Romans 5:8, Romans 14:4, Ephesians 3:20, Jude 1:1-24

Topics: "Sanctification", "Gods Love"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Jude, focusing on the themes of being sanctified and preserved in Jesus Christ, the importance of keeping oneself in the love of God, and the contrast between the teachings of Buddha and Jesus Christ. It emphasizes God's part in preserving us and our part in responding to His promises through faith. The message highlights the need to accept God's love graciously and to position ourselves to receive His blessings.

Transcript

Well, we've come to the next of the last book of the Bible, the book of Jude. Tonight we'll be studying the book of Jude, all one chapter, and next week we begin the exciting journey into the book of Revelation. This morning I'd like to draw your attention to three verses here in the book of Jude.

Verse one, he introduces himself as Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James. He is writing to those that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called, preserved in Jesus Christ. In verse 24, in his benediction, he said, Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

And then back up in verse 21, keep yourselves in the love of God. Throughout the Bible, there are given to us many rich and precious promises. And in each promise, there is God's part and our part.

God's part always seems to be first, but then there is that response, our part, to the promises. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That's God's part.

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Whosoever believeth in him is our part, and then God's part again, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Peter, as he opened his little letter, said, Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an

inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, fading not away, reserved in heaven for you who are being kept by the power of God.

That's all God's part. All of this is what God has done for you. Our part through faith, kept by the power of God through faith, just believing that God will do what he said he is going to do, trusting God to do that which he has promised to do, simple believing.

Here again in Jude, we see first of all God's part in verse 1, where he talks about us being sanctified by God and preserved in our Lord Jesus Christ. Some people are hesitant to embrace Christianity because of the high standards, high standards that as you look at them, we admire them. We say, yes, this is the way a person ought to live.

Yes, if everybody lived by these standards, it would be a wonderful world, surely far different from the world in which we live if we all followed the standards that are laid out for us by Jesus Christ. And seeing the ideal, admiring the ideal and desiring the ideal, we often say, I'm going to follow those standards. But it isn't long until we find our inability to keep those standards and we get discouraged and we think, well, nobody can keep that standard of living and people have a tendency of giving up and thus they sort of walk away from Christianity because they feel that they just are not capable of living by the standards that it sets.

It's very frustrating to see the ideal and to admire the ideal, but to realize that I'm not capable of attaining the ideal. In the Old Testament, we have the story of Hannah. She was the mother of Samuel.

She had been barren and she was praying to the Lord that God would give to her a son, promising that if he did, he would give the son back to God all the days of his life. God honored her prayer. God gave her a son and after she had weaned him, she brought him to the tabernacle to present him to the Lord that he might serve the Lord being raised there in the tabernacle with the high priest.

As she brought her son to dedicate him to the Lord, in her prayer she said, God will keep the feet of his saints and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. That is, we just don't have the capacity in ourselves and of ourselves to prevail. There are great similarities in the teachings of Buddha with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Buddha taught, don't do to others what you don't want done to you. Sounds very much like what Jesus taught when he said, and whatsoever you desire that men do to you, do you likewise also unto them, or do unto others as you would have them to do unto you, called the golden rule. Very similar.

Buddha taught that evil and most human misery comes from the desire of material things and that if you can lose the desire for anything material, including food, that you will arrive at nirvana, that peaceful, blissful state. Jesus taught that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things that he possesses, but that nirvana is attained when you lose your life for his sake. That's when you really find it.

Buddha taught that the life of the spirit was far superior to the life of the flesh. Jesus taught that the life of the spirit was superior to the life of the flesh. Buddha pointed to the path of peace.

Jesus said, I am the path, the truth, and the life, and no man can come to the Father but by me. So herein lies the basic difference. Buddha made no provision for your past sins.

He only pointed to the path, and he said that it would bring you to nirvana, but you don't have the power to attain, to walk that path. It's like saying nirvana is at the top of the Himalayas, and if you can just scale to the top of the Himalayas and take a deep breath, you'll find the bliss and the peace of nirvana. And so you stand there looking up at that peak, and you think, oh, if I could only be at the top of that peak and take that deep breath and find the peace and the bliss and the contentment.

But you have no climbing gear. You have no oxygen tanks. You have no equipment to climb the mountain, and so you just feel frustrated because you desire the ideal.

You long for it, but you realize it's out of reach. You can't make it, and thus the teaching of Buddha ultimately ends in frustration, always trying to attain but never quite making it. Where Jesus, he died to pay the penalty for our sins, and he points to the path to heaven, and then he declares, you can't walk it alone.

You can't walk it unaided. Therefore, I will come and I will dwell in you, and in that day you will know that I am in the Father, the Father is in me, and I am in you. And I will pray the Father, and he will give to you another comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the world cannot receive, because it doesn't see him, neither knows him, but you know him, for he dwells with you, and he shall be in you.

And you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me. So not only does he point to the ideal, and acknowledge that you can't achieve it yourself, but promises that he will indwell you, and through his indwelling presence and power, you will be capable of attaining and achieving the ideal. Thus, Buddhism ends in frustration, whereas Christianity ends in great contentment and fulfillment, as you experience the power of God's transformation within you.

Paul, after he had prayed to the Lord three times, for this, what he called, thorn in the flesh, when God finally answered Paul's prayer, he did not answer it as he had prayed, that God would remove it, but God answered it with a promise. My grace is sufficient for you. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness.

So Paul said, therefore, I glory in my weakness, that the power of God might be manifested in my life. Jude closes this little letter, declaring, Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. He is able to keep you from falling.

I have fallen too many times to have confidence in my ability to keep myself from falling. Paul declared that he had no confidence in his flesh. And if you see a man who is confident in his flesh, you see a man who is about ready to fall.

As the scripture said, pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Though I am not able to keep myself from falling, he is able to keep me from falling. As we sang this morning in the opening hymn, the third stanza, Stand up, stand up for Jesus.

Stand in his strength alone. For the arm of flesh will fail you. You dare not trust your own.

Paul, writing to the Romans, asked, Who are you who judges another man's servant? Before his own master he either stands or falls. And yea, he shall be held up, for God is able to make him to stand. So, though I am preserved in Jesus Christ, and he is able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of his glory, Jude gives this interesting exhortation in verse 21.

He said, Keep yourself in the love of God. What could he possibly mean if I am being preserved by Jesus Christ, and he is able to keep me from falling and to present me faultless, what does he mean, keep yourself in the love of Christ? Does he mean that I am to keep myself so sweet, so kind, so generous, so forgiving and so pure, that when God sees me he just can't help but love me, my precious little sweet self. I hope not, because I'd be in big trouble.

What does he mean, keep yourself in the love of God? When did God start loving you? When you raised your hand, went forward and said the sinner's prayer, did God say, oh isn't that sweet, I think I'll love them now. The Bible tells us that God commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. God's love for you has always existed, but he cannot always display or demonstrate that love to you, because many times our lives are inconsistent with the holiness of God, so that he cannot do the things for us that he desires to do, in order to show how much he does love us.

So when Jude said, keep yourself in the love of God, he is just saying keep yourself in that place, where God who loves you, can continually demonstrate to you that love, by doing for you those wonderful things, for giving to you those things he desires to give, and just to demonstrate to you day by day, just how much he does love you. Years ago when I first graduated from Bible college, and went out into the ministry, I was not yet then married, had not yet met Kay, and so some invitations were given to me to come back to Missouri, back into the Ozarks, and there minister in some of the small little churches back there. And so I drove cross country, and got back there into the Ozarks, and met some of the sweetest, most genuine people that I'd ever known.

I grew up in California, and so many people here are false, you know, they just live close to Hollywood, and they all are putting on an act, and they're not really genuine and real, but back there I met the salt of the earth, these real people, farmers and all back there in Missouri. I held a meeting in a little church in Rum Branch, Missouri. You'll never find it on the map, I'm sure, but there's a sweet little church there, and at night you could only see one farmhouse from the church, the rest was just farmland, but in the evening these cars would be driving into the church parking lot from all over, and we would be ministering to them at night.

They have a different hymnal in the church back there, it's called the Stamps Back Church, it's shaped notes and different songs than what we sing. And so I was fascinated by their hymnal and by the songs that they sang back there. I would leaf through the hymnal and read the titles of the songs and then read the lyrics of the songs and found them reflecting the people, just good, honest, down-home, plain people.

I can remember one of the songs in the hymnal was Tell Her Now, She Can't Read Her Tombstone When She's Dead. Now that's practical, that's good. Don't blubber at her service and say what a wonderful wife she was, tell her now! She can't appreciate it when she's dead, let her know now! What a great thing for relationship, marriage and all, tell her now! There was another song that stuck in my mind and it was I'm Under the Spout Where the Glory Comes Out.

Again, practical and good. That's basically what Jude is saying to you when he said keep yourself in the love of God. He is saying keep under the spout where the glory comes out.

Keep yourself in that place where God can do for you what he is longing and desiring to do for you because he loves you so much. Keep yourself there in the love of God. I need to learn to consent to be loved.

To know that God does love me and to receive that love and the grace of God gracefully. I find that I am so clumsy when God does manifest his love and does bless me so much. I am so clumsy in accepting the blessings of God.

I want to somehow prove that I'm worthy of it. Oh Lord, I thank you and now I'm going to and sort of cheapen just this gift of God's grace and love by trying to show him that I do really deserve it when I know I don't. But to receive grace gracefully it's a real thing to learn.

To just accept the blessings of God. To just accept the love of God. And to just enjoy really the power of Jesus Christ working in my life and blessing me beyond measure.

My ability to contain. How can I keep myself in the love of God? That I might be a recipient of these blessings of God. Well you'll have to wait till tonight.

We've run out of time. And so tonight we'll be taking the full book of Jude in which he gives to you the rules of keeping yourself in the love of God. How to do it.

And that we will discover tonight. So if you want blessings beyond your ability and capacity to contain I look forward to seeing you tonight as we continue this message on keeping yourself in the love of God. Father we thank you for the blessings of your love.

Lord we thank you for that which you have done in pouring out upon us these wonderful rich blessings. And Lord we pray that you will help us that we might keep ourselves in that place where you can do those things that you desire to do because of your love. We do thank you Lord for your keeping power.

That we are preserved in Christ Jesus. We thank you Lord that you are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. And that you are able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before your presence with exceeding joy.

And now Lord help us that we might just keep ourselves in that place of blessing. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today. Whatever the need might be our God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. And know this, he wants to.

God is wanting to help you today. God is wanting to manifest his love to you in the riches that he wants to bestow upon you of just grace and love and mercy and peace and joy. Give God an opportunity.

And I would encourage you today if there is a need in your life, a pressing need come on forward. These men are here to minister to you to pray for you that you might experience God's love and God's blessings in your life today. That you might just keep yourself in the love of God.

The Lord bless thee. And keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee.

And be gracious unto thee. And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee.

And give thee peace.

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