



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

Five Solas

To God be the glory

Jude 1:3, 24-25

11/25/2018

Main Point

We are to contend for the faith delivered to the saints for the glory of God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the worst fall you have ever experienced?

What could have kept you from falling?

How can we keep from falling in our spiritual lives?

With any given fall in our lives, access to something or someone stable could have prevented that fall—such as a crutch, a walker, a wall, a table, or a friend. But falls are more than just physical in nature. We can fall morally and spiritually.

Brothers and sisters in Christ can help us as we walk the walk of faith. But all of these are just means through which God works to keep us from stumbling and falling away from the faith. The truth is that only God can protect us from stumbling, and we must trust in Him as the source of our stability in this life. Only then can we rightly sound the alarm and contend for the faith.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JUDE 1:24.

In the context of this letter, what do you think “stumbling” means?

Jude wrote this letter to believers to warn them about false teachers who had entered their midst but denied Jesus as their Master and Lord. To “stumble” here was to follow in the path of the false teachers and thereby deny the faith rather than contend for it. To stumble is to fall away from Jesus as Savior and Lord and to use the grace of God as a license to sin.

Why is it significant that God will make His children stand in His presence “without blemish and with great joy”?

Christians all “stumble in many ways” (Jas. 3:2), meaning we all struggle with sin. But it is by God’s grace that we struggle with sin rather than give ourselves over to sin. Having been saved from sin and death through faith in Jesus and having received the gift of the Holy Spirit to sanctify us, Christians are to keep themselves in the love of God, await God’s mercy in Jesus, and fight against sin (Jude 1:21). But it is God who does the harder work of purifying us

of sin so that we can stand in His presence—clean from sin and full of joy. Purity in life and truth is among the greatest blessings from God.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JUDE 1:25.

How is God the Father “our Savior”?

Some people in the world view God as a cosmic killjoy, Someone who is watching over His image bearers with the intent to knock them down when they get out of line. And in this vein, they view Jesus as a Savior independent of God who steps in to save us from Him, as if God were unjust. Sometimes this view of God is described as “the God of the Old Testament,” who is harsh and unrelenting, while “Jesus of the New Testament” is loving, gracious, and kind. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Our triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—saves us from sin and death. There is no question that Jesus saves us from sin and death through His crucifixion and resurrection in our place, taking upon Himself the wrath of God for us. And the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to our hearts through conviction of sin and through His daily presence, giving us wisdom and leading us to obey God’s commands. But the Father is also rightly called “our Savior”; after all, “God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God is the Savior of all who believe in Jesus as their Lord.

What should it mean for our lives that all “glory, majesty, power, and authority” belong to God?

Ascribing God all glory, majesty, power, and authority means recognizing that these have always been His throughout all of time. Christians who worship God are not giving Him something He doesn’t already have, but partaking in the purpose of God’s creation and acknowledging the reality of His existence before creation even began. That these things belong to God means they do not belong to us. We have no right to try to take glory for ourselves. We have no majesty that we should consider ourselves worthy of God’s attention. We certainly have no power with which to contend against the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. And we have no authority over our own lives that we can choose our own way without

consequence. No, we take none of these for ourselves, but worship the God who has them by nature, and that means living for His glory, bowing in humility before His majesty, trusting in His power, and submitting with willing hearts to His authority.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JUDE 1:3.

How does the doxology at the end of Jude’s letter relate to the call to contend for the faith delivered to the saints once for all?

Christians are to contend for the faith in Jesus Christ against all detractors so that people will see all glory, majesty, power, and authority reside with God our Savior. Every other “gospel” that people preach tries to take for people what rightly and only belongs to God. So we contend for the faith to hold ourselves accountable and to call others to fulfill the purpose for which they were created—to give all glory to God.

Furthermore, Christians contend for the faith, but their success is not dependent upon their own wisdom and power. It is dependent upon God’s, since He alone has all power and He is the One who can keep His children from stumbling in the ways of false teachers who deny Jesus. We are not God’s gift to humanity—Jesus alone is. We cannot contend for the faith rightly with pride in our hearts, as this makes the work about us instead of about God. The faith we contend for is not a message about ourselves, but about Jesus Christ who saved the world.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How can you contend for the faith in a way that acknowledges God’s glory, majesty, power, and authority?

How can you build yourself up in the faith, recognizing that it is God alone who keeps you from stumbling away from the faith?

What are some ways we can live in light of God's glory, majesty, power, and authority?

Pray

As a group, pray the following prayer: Father, it is by Your grace alone that we are saved from sin and death through the sacrifice of Jesus and the sanctification of Your Spirit. All glory, majesty, power, and authority belong to You. May we live for Your glory revealed to us in Jesus. By Your wisdom and power, may we contend for the faith delivered to the saints once for all. Amen.

Commentary

JUDE 1:3

3-4 Jude originally meant to write a letter about salvation to his friends, but he changed his plans when he learned about false teachers who had secretly made their way into the church. Because of the influence of false teachers he urged his readers to contend for the faith entrusted to them once for all. Contending for the faith is not just a vigorous defense of the Christian faith but an advancement of the gospel as well. These actions must be accompanied by an obedient lifestyle (cp. Jude 1 vv. 20-23). The faith...delivered once for all refers to the Christian revelation, or the body of fixed, authoritative, orthodox apostolic teaching that has been handed down to believers.

3 Jude explained the circumstances that led to his writing. He wrote so that the readers would strive for the faith that was handed down to the saints. Scholars debate the meaning of the first clause of the sentence. The difference in interpretation can be observed by contrasting the NIV with the NRSV. The NIV translates the first clause “although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share.” The NRSV renders it “while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share” (cf. also KJV, NKJV, NASB). The interpretive issue rests on our understanding of the participle *poioumenos* (“making”). Should it be understood as a concessive participle (“although” per the NIV) or as temporal (“while” per the NRSV)? What is the difference between the two interpretations? If we follow the NIV, Jude explained that he wished to write another letter about the salvation believers share. He was prevented from doing so, however, by the sudden intrusion of the opponents; and so he had to write a very different letter, one that took issue with the adversaries who had infiltrated the church. If we follow the NRSV, Jude’s attack on the opponents represents the letter about salvation that he desired to write. Jude was not hindered from writing a letter about salvation by the intrusion of the opponents because the letter we have is the very letter about salvation that he intended to write. It seems to me that the NIV is on target here. A number of arguments have been set forth in defense of both views, but most of the arguments adduced are inconclusive. What inclines me to the NIV translation are the words “I had necessity” (*anagkn eschon grapsai*—“I felt I had to write,” NIV). These words seem to indicate a change of plan, a sudden interruption of Jude’s intended course of action. The first clause seems superfluous if the reading proposed by the NRSV is correct. Jude could simply have written, “I had necessity to write to you about our common salvation, urging you to strive for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.” It is not the change in the verb tense of “write,” then, that supports the NIV reading. What supports it is the repetition of the term “write.” Confirming the interpretation presented here is the content of v. 4 since Jude explained that the intrusion of adversaries precipitated the writing of the letter.

Jude was eager to write about “the salvation we share.” Kelly argues that Jude diverged from both Paul and 1 Peter since salvation is conceived of as a present possession in Jude instead of an eschatological reality. This judgment badly misreads Jude.⁴ The very example of Israel being “saved” (*ssas*) out of Egypt demonstrates that genuine salvation involves perseverance until the end (v. 5). The exhortation to keep themselves in God’s love is given because only those who do so will experience “eternal life” on the last day (v. 21). We have already seen that the letter begins and ends with promises of preservation (vv. 1, 24–25), indicating that the “not

yet” of Christian experience informed Jude’s worldview. Finally, even Paul spoke of salvation as a present gift since the end time had invaded the present time (Eph 2:5, 8). Referring to salvation as a present possession does not nullify or contradict its eschatological character. Salvation in Jude, as in Paul, was both an end-time gift and a present reality, for the eschatological gift had invaded this present evil age.

The purpose for the letter is conveyed in the exhortation “to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” The word group from which “contend” (*epagnisthai*) comes may designate a military (John 18:36; Eph 6:12; 2 Mac 8:16) or athletic context (1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:7; Heb 12:1). The metaphor often cannot be pressed, and in such cases the word refers to a struggle or intense effort (Rom 15:30; Phil 1:30; Col 1:29; 2:1; 4:12; 1 Tim 6:12). Jude exhorted his readers to strive intensely to preserve the faith once handed down to the saints.⁶ In Sirach we find an interesting parallel, “Strive [*agnisai*] even to death for the truth and the Lord God will fight for you” (Sir 4:28, RSV).

The term “entrusted” (lit., “handed down,” *paradotheis* along with the noun *paradosis*) is commonly used for the transmission of tradition (e.g., Mark 7:13; 1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3; Gal 1:14; Col 2:8; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). Whether the tradition is laudable or lamentable must be derived from the context. Jude, obviously, used the term in a positive sense. There is also little doubt that the tradition was handed down from the apostles to “the saints,” that is, to Christian believers. That the apostles were the source of the tradition is suggested by v. 17, “Remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ” (NASB). Of course, in vv. 17–18 a specific prophecy of the apostles is communicated, but such a prediction is part of the apostolic tradition that must be guarded.

The tradition believers must strive to preserve is designated as the “faith” (*pistei*). Faith in this context does not refer to trusting God, as Paul typically used the term. In this context “faith” refers to the traditional teaching that was to be safeguarded. Even in Paul “faith” may refer to the message of the gospel (Gal 1:23; Eph 4:5; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 3:9; 4:1; 6:10, 12?, 21; 2 Tim 3:8?; 4:7?; cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8). Jude returned to the theme near the conclusion to the letter, saying believers must “build yourselves up in your most holy faith” (v. 20). Some scholars have dated Jude late and labeled it “early catholic” because they are convinced that an emphasis on doctrinal preservation smacks of later church history. Of course, this same objection is raised to call into question the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. Bauckham rightly defends the genuineness of such a statement by Jude himself, the brother of Jesus. He also rightly remarks that the focus is on the gospel rather than the detailed doctrinal formulas of later church history. And yet we must also acknowledge that the gospel itself involves doctrines that must be confessed. We have an early recognition here that the touchstone for the Christian faith is in the teaching of the apostles and that any deviation from their teaching is

unorthodox (cf. Acts 2:42; Jude 17, 20). Jude did not merely say that the faith was handed down, but the NIV rightly translates hapax to say “once for all” handed down. No supplements or corrections will be tolerated. The gospel of Jesus Christ has received its full explication through the apostles. The author of Hebrews drew a similar conclusion when he said that God has spoken definitively and conclusively through his Son in the last days (Heb 1:2). From statements like these early Christians rightly concluded that the canon of Scripture should be restricted to those early writings that explicated the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 433–436.

JUDE 1:24-25

24-25 Jude ended his letter with a doxology that served as a reminder of the divine power available to believers as they contend against heretics. He praised God because He was able to protect them from falling into the sinful practices of the false teachers and grant them entrance into His glorious presence.

JUDE 24-25 (NAC)

Many letters close with a benediction (e.g., 1 Cor 16:23–24; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Heb 13:25; 1 Pet 5:14), but Jude concludes with a doxology, which is fitting for a sermon or in a liturgical setting. The doxology reminds the readers of the heart and soul of the Christian life. All glory and majesty and power belong to God. He will be praised forever and ever by believers in Jesus Christ. In particular, Jude reminded his readers that God is able and willing to keep them from succumbing to apostasy. The false teachers threatened, but those who truly belong to the Lord will not capitulate. They will continue to be faithful until the end. Their faithfulness until the end, however, is not due to their own nobility or inner strength. It is God himself who keeps his own from falling away. He grants the ability to stand before God blameless and joyful on the last day.

24 The doxology in Jude follows a form that is common in other New Testament doxologies. (1) God, the person who deserves the praise, is addressed in the dative case (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:20; 2 Pet 3:18); (2) glory and honor are ascribed to God (Rom 16:27; Eph 3:21; 2 Pet 3:18); (3) the endless duration of God’s praise is featured (Rom 16:27; Eph 3:21; 2 Pet 3:18); and (4) a

concluding “amen” is incorporated (Rom 16:27; Eph 3:21; 2 Pet 3:18). Jude shared all four of these elements, indicating that we have a common liturgical form here. Doxologies with a different form exist elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom 11:36; Gal 1:5; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim 4:18). Jude follows the fourfold format set forth above. (1) Like Rom 16:25 and Eph 3:20, the doxology begins by referring to God as “Now to him who is able” (t de dynamen). (2) The glory ascribed to God is expanded by Jude in v. 25, where “glory, majesty, power, and authority” are ascribed to him. (3) God’s honor, majesty and power are eternal, for they are “before all ages, both now and forevermore.” We should note here the triad of past, present, and future. (4) Finally, Jude concludes with the customary “amen.”

When Jude spoke of God’s ability to keep believers from falling, he did not merely mean that believers might be kept from falling. The idea is that God will keep them from falling by his grace. The word for “keep” (phylaxai) is not the same term that has been used earlier in the letter (cf. tre, vv. 1, 6, 13, 21), but the concept is the same. The promise that God will preserve believers from apostasy does not cancel out the exhortation of v. 21, “keep yourselves in God’s love.” Ultimately, however, believers obey this admonition because God will strengthen them to do so. He gives us the grace so that we desire to keep ourselves in God’s love.

The preservation from “stumbling” (aptaistous) does not refer to sinlessness in this context. The verb “stumble” (ptai) does have that sense in James (2:10; 3:1). In Rom 11:11, however, the verb “stumble” refers to whether the Jews have stumbled irrevocably, so that they will be lost forever. Paul answered that question with an emphatic no! Peter used the verbal form of this word in reference to apostasy in 2 Pet 1:10. And that is how Jude used the adjective here. God does not promise that true believers will never sin. He promises that he will preserve us from committing apostasy, from abandoning the faith once and for all. That this is what Jude meant is confirmed by the next clause, “to present you before his glorious presence without fault.” Literally the term is “make you stand” (stsai, NRSV) instead of “to present.” Elsewhere in the New Testament the term “stand” refers to eschatological vindication at God’s throne on the last day (Rom 14:4; 1 Cor 10:12; cf. Eph 6:11, 13, 14). What Jude said is that God is the one who will keep believers from committing apostasy so that they will be able to stand before God “with great joy” on the day of the Lord. Believers experience joy, and their joy brings honor to God as their patron and protector on the last day.

On the day of the Lord believers will be “without fault” (ammous), which is translated by the NRSV as “without blemish.” The term “without blemish” is used of Old Testament sacrifices (Exod 29:1, 38; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3; Num 6:14; Ezek 43:22–23, 25), of Jesus as a perfect sacrifice (Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19), and of believers on the day of judgment (Eph 1:4; 5:27; Col 1:22).

Jude used the term in the latter sense and with the same meaning. He was not suggesting that believers will in any sense be perfect in this life. The Lord will make his own, who have not abandoned him, blameless on the last day. God will complete his saving work on that day.

25 The one who is able to keep believers from falling is identified as “the only God our Savior” here. Some manuscripts add the term “wise,” but the evidence for its inclusion is not strong, and scribes probably added it under the influence of Rom 16:27. In saying that God is the “only God,” Jude did not counteract any form of Gnosticism. He shared the common Jewish worldview that there is only one God, over against the polytheism of the Gentile world. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ usually is designated as the Savior. In some texts, however, God is said to be the Savior (Luke 1:47; 1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), which represents the Old Testament as well (e.g., Deut 32:15; Pss 24:5; 25:5; 27:9; 65:5). The idea of God being the Savior fits well in a context in which false teachers threaten the church and believers need rescue from their clutches. The verse could be construed to say “God our Savior through Jesus Christ.” Green argues that the glory could not be through Jesus Christ “before all ages,” and therefore Jude must have been ascribing glory to God “through” Jesus Christ. Comparable texts, however, suggest that Jude taught that glory, majesty, power, and authority are “through Jesus Christ” (Rom 7:25; 16:27; 2 Cor 1:20; Col 3:17; 1 Pet 4:11). An optative verb represented by “be” in the NIV might seem to be fitting, expressing a prayer wish. A prayer wish, however, does not fit with “before all ages.” Believers cannot pray that God would be glorified and honored before time began since that period of history has ended, and no human being even existed during much of the past. An indicative verb like “are” is more fitting. Glory, majesty, power, and authority always belong to God for all of history. “Glory” signifies the honor, resplendence, and beauty that is ascribed to God for his saving work. Neyrey says that glory “refers to the public reputation or fame of someone.”⁵² And he emphasizes that such glory must be “publicly expressed and acclaimed.” Since God does the protecting, saving, and preserving, he receives all the glory, acclamation, and praise. “Majesty” denotes his greatness and how worthy he is of honor given his exalted position. Kelly nicely captures its meaning with the phrase “His awful transcendence.” The idea that God is majestic hails from the Old Testament (Deut 32:3; 1 Chr 29:11; Pss 144:3, 6; 150:2; Dan 2:20; cf. Tob 13:4). “Power” and “authority” are terms that are rather close in meaning. They indicate that God is sovereign and in control. The direction of all things is in his hand (1 Tim 6:16; Rev 4:11; 5:13; 19:1). Glory, majesty, power, and authority have always belonged to God, before the world began and will be his forever and ever. This is not a prayer, which would be rendered by the term “may be,” but a fact, and so the fitting verb is “are.” Because of who God is and what he has done, the praise and power are his forever. Readers rest secure in this truth, and Jude did as well, signifying it by saying “Amen.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 490–492.