

INTRODUCTION:

I am sure that in a group even of this size, that there are many wandering thoughts.

- And in a place like this, as we are assembled together for worship, there is one thought that all of us will have in common at least once as we are here together, and that is: All of us will be thinking about God—even if only for a brief moment.
- And as we are here for worship, hopefully all of us at one point will pause to consider whether we have the proper understanding of the nature and identity of God.
- Perhaps there are some here this morning who are questioning—who may be wondering if there really is a God.
- Others may be pretty sure that there is not a God, but you were talked into coming here by your parents or by a good friend.
- Others are sure that there is a God, but perhaps you are worried whether God really cares about what is going on down here, and that He is perhaps more of a “hands-off” God.
- Perhaps others believe in God but look at God merely as a disciplinarian—a supreme being who is ready and eager to punish us for the smallest offense—and so there are some who may be cringing in the presence of God.

This morning, I’d like for us to go back and consider the last two verses of the book of **Jude**, because in the life of Jude, he went through at least two very distinct stages in his understanding of God.

- We know from **Mark 3**, for example, that as a half-brother of Jesus, Jude was most likely among the Lord’s own brothers who thought that He was crazy and tried to take Him away.
- In the opening verses of **John 7**, we find that the Lord’s brothers were openly ridiculing Him, because they did not believe that He was who He said He was.
- And yet by the time we get to **Acts 1**, following the resurrection, a change had taken place, because in **Acts 1:14**, we find that Mary, the Lord’s mother, was gathered together with His brothers in Jerusalem.
- The Bible tells us that they were praying and were waiting for what was about to happen.

Jude, then, can empathize with those of us here this morning who have gone through times of questioning or doubting God.

- And certainly a proper understanding of the nature of God is so important because of the lives that we are living.
- Hopefully we are all just happy people, and if so, that is great.
- But for the rest of us, we are facing challenges that we cannot get through without a proper understanding of God.
- Just in this small group, some of us might be facing an incurable illness.
- Others are facing unemployment. Others are facing family struggles.
- Others are facing challenges with children. Others are facing the challenge of retirement.
- Others are facing financial catastrophe. Others are facing the challenge of work, where there is simply not enough time to keep up with the onslaught of various responsibilities.
- Whatever the case may be, we need to ask ourselves: What does God have to offer?

Up to this point in the book, Jude has dealt with a serious challenge that was facing those who read his letter for the very first time.

- He intended to write to them about “**our common salvation**,” and yet out of necessity, he had to

change his topic at the very last moment and encourage them to “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*”

He warned about ungodly men who had silently crept into the congregation and were wreaking havoc among the saints.

- He had to remind the church that it had happened before, it was happening then, and that it would always happen.
- But Jude reminded those who were faithful that God could deal with it.
- We should briefly consider the first real command in the book; Jude told his readers to “*remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- They were to recognize the threat, they were to make sure that they themselves were strong, and then they were to take action.
- Depending on the situation, they were to have mercy on those who were merely doubting, they were to snatch some out of the fire, and with others they were to have mercy with fear—realizing the danger of false teachers who were turning the grace of God into a license to sin.

Up to this point, then, the short book of **Jude** has been (in some ways) rather discouraging.

- And so for that reason, after identifying the threat, after giving a warning, and after telling them what to do about it, the Lord’s little brother now gets ready to close his short note by leaving his first readers in the hands of the only One who could keep them safe.

We are reminded this morning that all false teaching is a direct attack on the truth we are about to read, and all truth depends on the truth that is contained in the last two verses.

- Because in the last two verses, Jude finally gets back to the positive topic that he hoped to write about in the first place—it all boils down to our common salvation, and the proper understanding of the nature of God.
- Who is God? And why should we care?
- And how does God help us in our problems? What does God have to offer?

With that in mind, I’d like for us to look together at the last **two verses** in the New Testament book of **Jude**...

24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

In this short statement, Jude gives us several brief but important ideas concerning the power of God—some ideas that will hopefully give us strength in our daily struggles.

I. First of all, we notice in the opening words of **verse 24, that GOD IS ABLE TO KEEP US FROM STUMBLING.**

After studying the first 23 verses of this book, we know why they might have been a little bit concerned about this!—Jude had put them on notice.

- He had warned them over and over about the danger of false teaching.
- And here at the end they are hopefully at least a little bit worried.
- Hopefully, like all of us, they understood that none of us are truly safe from the danger of falling away.
- And so with those concerns in mind, Jude goes back to the side of comfort, and he reminds them

that God is able to keep us from stumbling.

The idea of God being able is an idea that pops up several times throughout the Bible.

- We remember the situation back in **Daniel 3**, where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship the idol and were threatened by the king.
- The king gave them one more chance to bow down and then said that they would be thrown in a fiery furnace.
- The young men gave a courageous response in **Daniel 3:17-18**.
- In the shadow of the blazing furnace, the young men said, “...*our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.*”
- We know how that story ends. The young men are thrown into the furnace.
- The fire is so hot that those who throw them in are killed.
- But the young men survive and are actually joined in the fire by a fourth being—believed by many to be the pre-incarnate Son of God.
- And when the three men come out of the fire, we learn just a few verses later, that the people, “...*saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.*”
- They didn’t even smell like smoke! Our God is able to deliver!

Over in the New Testament, Paul referred (in **Romans 16:25**) to God, “...*who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ....*”

- In **Ephesians 3:20**, Paul referred again to God, “...*who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.*”
- The ability of God to keep us from stumbling, therefore, is consistent with His eternal nature.
- In the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and even today, God has always been able.

And in particular, God is able to keep us “*from falling.*”

- We remember what it was like as children to always be falling.
- Sometimes it seems like we get back to that stage somehow.
- But as children, our parents tried to keep us from falling.
- Over the last twelve months in this congregation, how many different fingers have you seen Lola and Olivia hanging on to as they have been learning how to walk?
- How many different times have you seen them walking up the ramp to the fellowship hall and thought to yourself that their going to fall?
- At first, I remember both the Randals and the Howes discouraging their daughter from going up that ramp and trying to protect them from having a fall.
- Of course, now they just run up and down it like it is nothing to them any more.

For those of us that have children that are older now, do you remember when your children were learning to ride a bike?

- Do you remember running along side that bike while giving instructions and just praying that when you let go, your child is able keep balance and not tip over?
- We don’t want our kids to skin up their knees and elbows and we don’t want them to take a tumble and bump their heads.
- But guess what? No matter how much we try to protect our children, we will not always be able to make sure that our children never fall.
- But God is able! God works the night shift. God is available 24/7.

- God is available even on the weekends.
- And so if we fall as Christians, it will not be due to any lack of effort or any lack of ability on God's part.

We remember what Peter wrote in **2 Peter 1:10**, where he said, *“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.”*

- And so we rely on God, but at the same time it appears that we also have something to do with it.

Many years ago, I knew a man who did a lot of mountain climbing in the ice and snow, and this man explained how they kept from falling.

- Apparently they would tie themselves together with a long rope.
- If anyone started to fall, he would yell out, **“Falling!”**
- And almost by instinct everyone else on the line would immediately slam an axe down into the ice as hard as he could. And the idea was that if everyone else could be anchored that the one who fell could be held up by the others.
- It seems to me that God has done this to us in the church!
- He can keep us from falling, and one part of His plan is that we rely on our brothers and sisters for support and encouragement.

II. **As we keep on looking at **verse 24**, we find not only that God is able to keep us from falling, but we also find that GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE US STAND IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS GLORY BLAMELESS WITH GREAT JOY.**

What really gets me here is just the idea that we can actually stand in the presence of God.

- My own personal dream of going to heaven involves seeing heaven at a distance and walking up a long narrow path.
- As I get closer to the city, Jesus is coming down the path with open arms, and I fall down at His feet singing, **“Is it for me, dear Savior? Thy glory and Thy rest? For me so weak and sinful? Oh, shall I be so blessed? Oh Savior my Redeemer! What can I but adore and magnify and praise Thee, and love Thee evermore!”**
- In light of what the Lord has done, it is hard to imagine standing up in the presence of Jesus.
- And certainly as we look back at the Scriptures, most people do not end up standing in the presence of God.
- In **Exodus 33**, for example, Moses wanted to see the glory of God, but God made Moses take some precautions, because as God put it in **Exodus 33:20**, *“You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”*
- God then put Moses in the cleft of the rock, covered Moses with His hand, and allowed Moses to see His backside as He passed by.

We remember Isaiah's vision in **Isaiah 6**. Isaiah, *“...saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.”*

- Isaiah's reaction is found in **Isaiah 6:5**, *“Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’”*
- Isaiah reacted to seeing the Lord in terror—he was unworthy.

In the New Testament, we think of Paul who saw Jesus in a vision on the road to Damascus in **Acts 9**, “*As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.’ The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*”

- Saul, therefore, saw the Lord and was driven to his knees in blindness and went for three days without eating or drinking.

We can think about John in the book of **Revelation**.

- In **Revelation 1:17**, John says, “*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man....*”
- When people met God, therefore, they were terrified—they fell down, they trembled, they went blind, they went for days without eating or drinking—but Jude tells us in **verse 24** that God is able to make us stand in His presence!
- What a blessing it is just to imagine what that would be like—to stand in the presence of God!
- We notice in **verse 24** that our standing will be due to the power of God.
- By ourselves, we have no right to stand in God’s presence, but God is able to make us stand.
- And as we stand there, Jude says that we will be blameless.

Being blameless before God is the goal of Christian living.

- We remember what Paul wrote to the church in Philippi in **Philippians 2:14-15**.
- Paul said, “*Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.*”
- All of us may succeed or fail to various degrees, but when this life is over, we will be able to stand in God’s presence—blameless with great joy.

This joy is referred to in **Zephaniah 3:17**, where the prophet says, “*The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.*”

- Perhaps some of you have heard these words, “**If God had a refrigerator your picture would be on it, and if God had a wallet your picture would be in it.**” How true that is!

There is a time coming when we will be able to stand in the presence of God blameless with great joy.

III. As we come to **verse 25, we find a third aspect of the nature of God as we find that GOD IS THE ONLY GOD—OUR SAVIOR—AND FOR THAT REASON IS THE ONLY ONE WORTHY OF PRAISE.**

And so in a sense we finally get back to Jude’s original subject as he gets back to our “**common salvation.**”

- The one thing we have in common as Christians is God, our Savior.
- God became our Savior through Jesus Christ.
- And in response to this truth, Jude gives us four statements of praise to God.

First of all, he praises God by describing him with the word “**glory.**”

- The word refers to God’s splendor, His majestic presence.

- The equivalent word in Hebrew refers to weightiness.
- At the church where I grew up, the communion trays were very heavy.
- They were made out of heavy polished chrome or something, and first-time visitors would sometimes almost drop them, not expecting the weight.
- Ours here at Salem are made out of a much lighter metal, however, God is like those communion trays where I grew up. He is the real deal.
- God is weighty, He is real and not hollow, He is valuable.

Secondly, Jude uses the word “*majesty*.” The word describes God’s status as a King—the greatness of God.

- Thirdly, Jude uses the word “*dominion*.”
- He refers to God’s rule or strength—His exercise of power and control over the world.
- And finally, Jude uses the word “*authority*.”
- He refers here to God’s power and God’s right to command—the fact that God has jurisdiction over the world.

And we notice that all of these qualities are true, “...*before all time and now and forever. Amen.*”

- God is not limited by time, as we are.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

This morning, we started out with the question: What does God have to offer?

- As we face the struggles of daily life, who is God? And why should we care?
- The people who read this book for the first time—they were concerned about false teachers coming in and wreaking havoc in the congregation.
- And after all the warnings, Jude gives a word of encouragement that should comfort all of us—no matter what happens.

* God is able to keep us from stumbling.

* There is a day coming when He will make us stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.

* And in the meantime, we realize that He is our only God and Savior, and that He alone is worthy of praise.

As we close this morning’s lesson, I’d like to issue a challenge for the coming week.

- If at all possible, I’d like to ask that each of us take just five minutes every day to think about the nature of God—to just concentrate on who God is and what God has to offer.
- Again, all of us here this morning are facing our own very personal challenges, but the one thing we have in common is God, and my prayer is that all of us will pause in some of those struggles to stop and remember who God really is.

Above all, God is our Savior. He sent Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sins.

- We take advantage of that sacrifice by turning away from sin, by confessing the name of Christ, and then by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins.
- If you have any questions, please ask, and we’d be glad to sit down with you this afternoon so that we can look at the Scriptures together.
- However, if you already know what you need to do, and if you are ready to obey the gospel, you can let us know about that decision by coming to the front as we sing the next song.
- Let’s stand and sing...