

THE ADORATION OF ASSURANCE

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24, 25).

Our text is the closing expression of a remarkable letter. When we consider who was the writer of the letter its message is all the more important. It is the ascription to Christ of timeless glory by one who knew Him in more ways than one. Jude was His half-brother in the flesh and knew Him in the days of the home where they were brought up together. But the natural knowledge and fleshly kinship did not move him to ascribe timeless glory to his half-brother. It was when He came to know Him in the Spirit and became His servant that supernatural knowledge moved him to ascribe timeless glory to his Saviour and Lord.

This is just one of many doxologies in the Bible, all of which have some common features. Among these common features are the following: an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, a grateful acknowledgment of past mercies -- mercies that exult the heart and cause the lips to break forth into singing, and a confident acknowledgment of mercies yet to be. Past mercies are a pledge that mercies will follow to the end of life. You may rest assured that the power of God will not fail in any emergency.

To Jude, the writer of our text, it was a more blessed relation to be the servant of Jesus Christ than to be one of the half-brothers of Jesus, as it was a more blessed relation to Mary to be His trusting disciple than to be His humanly exalted mother. Jude and his brothers did not believe in Christ as Saviour until after His resurrection. When they did believe He was bigger to them than a brother. He was their Lord and they were His servants. Jude was His half-brother by the first or natural birth, but he was His servant by the second or spiritual birth.

Jude was a student of history and this Epistle is a product in part of the study of failure. While failure is not a very exhilarating subject, it is a very useful one. Jude went back to look at the Israelites, who were brought out of Egypt by a mighty hand, but soon forgot the miracle and wonder of their deliverance, and sinned grievously. Their sinful ways shocked Jude greatly. Then he lifted his eyes to the skies, and spoke of angels who sinned against heavenly privileges, and lost their first estate. His mind traveled rapidly back to earth to remember Sodom and Gomorrah, privileged above all cities, but whose people abused their opportunities and perished. He then wrote to the church members to put them on their guard against falling.

The book of Jude is filled with warnings against the dangers which confront Christians, especially the dangers from false teachers. It exhorts the Christians to keep themselves in the love of God by continuous prayer and daily growth in grace. When Christians look at the world around them, with all of its wickedness and sin, they are tempted to lose heart. When they look at themselves, with all of their faults and weaknesses, they are ready to give up in despair. But, when they look up to the eternal and omnipotent God, Who is their Saviour through Jesus Christ their Lord, they take courage and press on.

Two great words are suggested by this text.

I. Preservation.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling." "To him who is able (has the power and uses it) to keep you from stumbling and falling." The word here translated "is able" gives us our word dynamite -- power in action -- power to put across -- not essential power but expressed power. Christ has essential inward

power, but He has more. He has expressed outward power. He has ability, and He has exercised ability. When we trust Him, the ability becomes actuality.

The pathway of the Christian is not always smooth. There are stumbling stones, slippery places, and pitfalls along the way. You need not think that because you are a Christian that you will have an easy time, or that there will not be any more battles to fight. Satan is always trying to bring about the downfall of Christians. The noblest characters, the heroes of the ages are men and women with blots upon their lives. Their sins are woven into the fabric of their lives along with their deeds of merit and honor. It may be for our encouragement that the mistakes of such men as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, and others have been made a part of their public records. Whatever else may be the value of such, it reminds us that even the best men are not perfect: that their only hope is in the sustaining grace of God. One's physical life may become immune by injecting a serum for a certain disease, but his moral life does not become immune by any process known to men. His life may be soiled by sin again, even though he is a child of God.

You remember how desperately Satan tried to bring Jesus Christ down before temptation. If he didn't let Him alone, you may rest assured that he will not let you and me rest in peace. He places stumbling stones all along the way. All of us have stumbled, and some of us have fallen. Some have fallen harder, and have gone down deeper into sin than others, but all of us have stumbled.

We rejoice that we have a God Who is able and willing to catch us when we stumble, and to lift us up when we fall. That was the assurance which the psalmist had when he wrote: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." David was speaking out of his own experience when he wrote those words. He had fallen, and he had fallen hard. He had gone deep into sin, but he was not utterly cast down. He had gone down to the depths, but God had reached down His great hand of love and had lifted him up. In relating his experience David said: "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock." Thank God for love and power that lifts up His children when they fall. How hopeless we would be without that assurance!

But the words of the text promise something better than that. Jude tells us that God is not only able to lift us up when we fall, and wipe away the stains, and heal the hurt, but we rejoice more in the assurance that He is able to keep us from falling and getting hurt.

One day a company of men were telling about God's great mercy in preserving their lives when a boat on which they were crossing a lake was wrecked. The boat had gone upon a rock, and a great hole was made in its side, and it was beginning to sink. These men jumped into the water and struggled to keep from going down. After a while they were rescued. Now they were rejoicing in God's mercy that had spared them. A Christian man, who had listened to their story, said, "God did a more wonderful thing than that for me." They looked at him in astonishment. They had never heard of any narrow escape which he had had. They asked him what it was that God had done for him that was more wonderful than what He had done for them. He replied, "I crossed the lake in a boat, and it was not wrecked." God had saved those men out of a wreck, but He had done something more wonderful for this man; He had kept him from having a wreck.

When shipwreck comes to our lives, and we go upon the rocks, we rejoice that we have a God Who is able to reach down and lift us out of the wreckage and ruin. But it is a far greater cause for rejoicing that God is able to keep us from having a wreck. He is able to keep us from falling. God has saved many after they have fallen deep into sin, but He has saved many others before they had fallen so low.

It is good to be raised up from severe sickness, but it is infinitely better to be kept from getting sick. It is cause for rejoicing when our lives are spared in some terrible accident, but it is a much greater cause for rejoicing when we are kept from having an accident. Our hearts are filled with gratitude and thanksgiving when we remember that we have a God Who is able and willing to lift us up, and cleanse our lives, when we fall into sin; but it is a far greater cause for gratitude to know that we have a God Who is able and willing to keep us from stumbling and falling.

A little boy was walking with his father along a rough and slippery way. The father wanted to hold the child's hand and keep him from falling, but the boy thought that he could get along without any help. In a few minutes he slipped and fell, injuring his knee and soiling his clothes. He began to cry, and to call to his father to help him. The father came and reached down his strong hand and lifted him up and wiped away the dirt, and the two walked on hand in hand. It was good that the father was there to lift up the child when he fell, but it would have been much better if the boy had let his father take his hand in the beginning. Then he would not have fallen.

Many of us are like that boy. We break away from God, and think we can walk along the pathway of life in our own strength. But we do not go far before we slip and fall, and cry for help. We have a loving Father Who hears our cries, and reaches down His hand of love and lifts us up, and wipes away the stains. Thank God for that. But it would have been much better if we had stayed close to Him all along the way. Then we would have been kept from falling.

It was just here that Simon Peter got into trouble. He boasted to the Lord of his own sufficiency, of his own ability to stand in the hour of temptation. But it wasn't long until he was kept in sin, denying his Lord, and emphasizing his denial with curses. When he realized what he had done, he went out and wept bitterly. A little later, the risen Lord came to him in love and mercy, and restored him. How much better it would have been if he had stayed close to his Master, instead of following Him at such a great distance! Then he would not have fallen.

God uses various means to prevent His children from falling. Sometimes it is necessary for Him to lay a heavy hand upon them. There is a beautiful story concerning an Italian painter. He was working on a fresco in the lofty dome of a cathedral, standing on a platform which was more than a hundred feet from the floor. He paused to look at his work. Thinking only of his art, he kept stepping back in order to get a better view. He had reached the edge of the platform when a fellow artist saw him and realized his danger. This friend took a brushful of paint and struck it across the face of the figure on which the artist was working, thus ruining the labor of many days. The painter sprang forward with a cry of rage, and thus was saved from plunging to the floor below. In like manner, God sometimes has to spoil the plans of His children in order to keep them from falling.

It is so easy for a Christian to fall into the habit of doing wrong, and lose peace and influence. Their falling is not due to God's inability to keep them, but because they would not be kept in the right way. When others see them fall, they raise the question, "Has Christianity failed?" It has failed only in the same sense that the physician has failed, whose orders have been ignored and whose medicines remain untouched on the table. It has failed as electricity has failed, when one refuses to push the switch and make contact. It has failed as the road map has failed, when it was left in the pocket of the car and was never consulted. Many have beautiful Bibles in their homes, Bibles that tell them how to live happy, useful and victorious lives, but they refuse to open them and consult their teachings.

II. Presentation.

"And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." The day is coming when Christians are to be presented before the presence of the King eternal. Thank God, we have One Who is able to present us without blemish in that day. But how can He present us like Himself? All of us have sinned. Time and again we have fallen and stained our lives. How, then, can He present us without blemish or fault? The answer is found in the Word: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Christians are to be presented before the presence of His glory without blemish because they have been redeemed and cleansed in the blood of the Lamb.

This presentation will be "in exceeding joy." On the part of whom? It will be a joy to God the Father to see men and women redeemed from their sins and presented before Him without a blemish. It will be a joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus when the redeemed are presented before the presence of His glory without blemish. There will be joy among the angels who have been sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. But the reference in the text is primarily to the joy of those who shall be presented without blemish before the presence of His glory.

For them it will be the joy of being free from the presence and power of sin. Here on earth every turn in life's pathway has brought them face to face with the temptations of Satan. Time and again they have fallen before his subtle power, and their lives have been stained and soiled. When they shall be presented before the presence of His glory, all sin will have been left behind and every stain will have been removed.

It will be the joy of seeing their loved ones again. They have seen their loved ones come to the end of the way and disappear in the shadows of the valley. They have returned from the cemeteries to homes that are desolate and shrouded in gloom. But, on that day, the broken ties of earth will be knit together again, never more to be broken.

It will be the joy of fellowship with the saints. We find ourselves wishing that we might have seen the saints of old, and heard them tell of their wonderful experiences. On that day we shall see them and know the joy of fellowship with them.

It will be the joy of seeing their Lord. Again and again they have read the story of His blessed life on earth. As they have listened to the message of His redeeming love, their hearts have been stirred within them. They have experienced His presence and power in their lives. Again and again they have longed to see His face. On the great day of the presentation that longing will be satisfied completely. This blessed assurance should move each one of us to adoration and praise.