



## Jude: Brief, But Assuring

*JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. (Jude 1:1-2 KJV 1900)*

Some commentaries suggest that Jude, the author of this letter was the "Juda" who is named as a brother (Half-brother) of Jesus. (Mark 6:3) Whether this relationship is factual or not, Jude does not include it in his identification of himself in the introduction of his letter. He views himself as "...the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Chasing names and family relationships in the New Testament can be quite a challenge. Over time some Bible students have gone out of their way to see how many John or James individuals they can find in Scripture. If we keep our study emphasis on the Lord, the identity of individual believers becomes quite secondary to the greater objective in learning more about our Lord.

Perhaps no other New Testament book has been subjected to the speculation that often accompanies any study of the Book of Jude. While Jude apparently quotes from the apocryphal Jewish literature that originated between the Old and New Testaments, he in no way endorses those writings as inspired. In other words, he does not suggest that they are inspired Scripture. Paul quoted from pagan Greek poets (Acts 17:28), but he clearly interpreted the line differently from the Greek philosophers with whom he debated in this context. What Paul cited was true when interpreted as Paul would have viewed the line, but the same line was errant when viewed as the Greek philosophers viewed it. We are the offspring of God (Second chapter of Genesis), but we are not the offspring of Zeus about whom the original poem was written. Few examples of right interpretation could be considered that more clearly make the point. We may read words that speak the truth, but, if we impose a false interpretation onto them, we still are in error. The truth of a passage requires faithfulness to the words of the passage and a right interpretation of those words.

Effective communication requires knowledge of and submission to known and generally accepted definitions and rules of grammar. If we hope to communicate our beliefs to others, we must use words that they and we both understand, and we must communicate those thoughts in acceptable form. On a few occasions, I have engaged people in frustrating and highly unproductive discussion, because they created words of their liking not found in any dictionary, or they used acceptable words,

but they imposed their private definition onto the words, definitions not to be found in any respected dictionary of the language.

Our study of Jude will take us to some challenging lines, but we should first anchor our minds in the over-arching assurance of the letter. In the first verse, Jude describes the first recipients of his letter, and thereby his future readers, in three powerful phrases. He describes his readers as—

1. **Sanctified by God the Father.** In the New Testament, the word "Sanctified" refers to something or someone wholly dedicated to God. In some contexts, we are charged with wholly dedicating ourselves to God. This dedication is a goal of godly exhortations, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6. Until each of us has grown in godly disciplines so that we live constantly in this lifestyle, we need to continue our striving to become more sanctified than we are today. Scripture also uses the word to refer to an act of God that in no way implies reliance on our personal conduct. Hebrews 10:10 exemplifies this exclusive act of God. Jude's words associate his thought firmly with this point, something that God fully accomplishes by His own will and act. The sanctification of which Jude writes was accomplished "...by God the Father," not by his readers avoiding the sins of the flesh.
2. **Preserved in Jesus Christ.** The same God who sanctifies every one of His beloved children also keeps them from final ruin by keeping them in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing in this verse or this word implies that those whom God so sanctifies will also "Persevere" in their godly conduct, an occasional wresting of the Bible doctrine of "Preservation." The errant idea that all of the Lord's elect people shall surely advance in their godly conduct is readily refuted by some of the leading characters of the Bible. As much as we may—and rightly so—dislike Lot as we read of his ungodly conduct in the cave (Genesis 19<sup>th</sup> chapter), Peter refers to him as a "...just man" who was daily vexed with the ungodly conduct that he observed in Sodom and Gomorrah.

(2 Peter 2:7-8) In Sodom, Lot lived up to His calling from God. In the cave, the last mention of Lot in the historical record of Genesis, Lot miserably failed. Simply stated, Lot did not persevere in godliness to the end. Solomon likewise serves as a glaring example of contradiction to this false belief of progressive believer's sanctification. Perhaps one of the most glaring examples, however, is Abraham himself. Consider the verse immediately preceding the record of his death. Does Genesis 25:6 describe the most godly, "Sanctified" era of Abraham's life? If progressive believer's sanctification is true, the verse should describe Abraham at his peak of godliness. Obviously, Abraham slipped grievously after Sarah's death, becoming one of the greatest witnesses in Scripture against progressive sanctification. In Biblical teaching, "Perseverance" (Used only one time in the King James Bible, Ephesians 6:18) is an exhortation to believers to strive to continue faithfully and consistently in their faith walk, while "Preservation" refers to God's faithful keeping of His elect securely in the grace of His Son so that, fall from their faithfulness though they may, they can never so fall as to lose their eternal standing of grace and glory to come through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude is writing to people whom he has reason to believe are "Preserved," and his letter exhorts them to continue faithfully in their conduct. We see the Biblical concepts of both divine preservation and the exhortation to godly perseverance clearly distinguished in this brief letter. The first verse, along with Verse 24 emphasizes God's exclusive keeping of His elect, while Verse 21 emphasizes an action that Jude commands his readers to take to "Keep yourselves in the love of God..." God accomplishes our keeping, our preservation, exclusively. He requires no contribution from us to ensure that safe-keeping. He commands us to keep ourselves in His way and in His love.

3. **And called.** Given that the first two terms that Jude uses deal quite directly with God's exclusive and effectual work in His chosen and beloved children, context requires that we view this term similarly. While Scripture clearly teaches that God's eternally saving grace also teaches everyone who experiences that grace to live righteously (Titus 2:12-14), constituting a clear "Call" to godliness and faith, it seems that Jude's point deals with other points of truth. In Romans 8:30, Paul makes God's calling as broad—or as limited—as His justification and glorification

of His elect children. Do not overlook that the objects of God's five-step work are all people, "whom," not events or actions of wicked men. In this context, Paul also refers to a people as "...the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28b) This context deals with God's epochal, eternal purpose for His people. Cliches characterize the eighth chapter of Romans as beginning with "...no condemnation" and ending with "...no separation." In Jude's setting, God's calling of His own seems to point us to more than our personal conduct in godliness, although this context agrees with Paul and clearly commands a godly faith-walk. (Romans 8:12)

Once Jude clearly defines his intended readers by the three distinguishing works of God that make and preserve them in that state, Jude greets his readers with tender grace. No believer's life can be more graced than when we realize the profound depth of God's mercy, peace, and love that He poured out upon us in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that blessed life shines its brightest when we learn those traits by examining the life of our Lord and use His life as the example for our personal conduct.

Often New Testament writers make their most important points near the beginning and the end of their letters. Jude follows this pattern. Notice his emphasis of the point that we see in Verse 1.

*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. (Jude 1:24)*

God's provision for the eternal joys of His beloved family is never left in question or doubt in the words of Scripture. What He deemed necessary for our final end with Him (Actually, more the beginning than end) He accomplishes and testifies in Scripture in a monergistic (God acting alone and performing all of the work Himself) manner. In Scriptures that deal with our present life and discipleship, Scripture equally reminds us that our discipleship is to be approached from the premise that both God and we work together (2 Corinthians 6:1) in a synergistic manner. Based on Jude's opening and ending emphasis, God is not only able to keep us from falling away from His eternal love and grace, but He uses that ability to ensure that we are secure through the righteous and flawless work of our Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor