



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Jude 24-25

Jude

"No Stumbling Saints"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We will finish the Book of Jude unless my voice finishes before that. But we're looking at the last two verses of the Book of Jude and it has been an enjoyable study for me, I know. Jude 24 and 25.

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, 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.

May the Lord bless our reading of His word and our time of study together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do pray Your blessings upon us as we look at these last two verses of this brief but very full book of Jude. We pray that You'd bless us as we consider Your strength, Your power, Your ability to keep us standing and present us faultless before Your presence for all eternity. That's a great comfort and encouragement, and we pray that You would instill the encouragement and the comfort that that is intended to give. That is certainly Jude's purpose. He's encouraged these believers to contend earnestly for the faith, to fight the good fight, to run the race of faith as the author of Hebrews would put it. They needed encouragement to do that and there's no greater

encouragement than Your sovereign hand upon us, that You would never let us go. We cannot slip from Your grace and mercy and You will bring us safely to the end in great glory and purity. We give You thanks for that, and that naturally, as it did with Jude, does in our hearts, issue in great praise to Your sovereignty and Your glory and Your majesty. So Lord, as we look at the last two verses of this book, teach us and encourage us and build us up in the faith. We look to You to do that. We look to You to bless us in other ways, Lord. We're physical people as we are spiritual people, and we need Your grace and mercy in the physical things of life, in terms of health and our emotional life. The circumstances of life, we feel at times we're in complete control of things, and then everything suddenly slips out of our control. That is not always a bad thing, Lord. That's a very good thing when we realize, as we should at those moments, nothing is really in our control ever. We're to be good stewards of our time in the possessions that You've given us. We're to be wise in our conduct and the choices we make. But ultimately, Lord, You open doors and You close them. You're the one that sovereignly goes before us in everything. And sometimes, those doors shut and we are dismayed by the circumstances of life. I'm sure there are some here that are experiencing that. Give them encouragement, 'cause You're in control, and You can open doors, and You can give us encouragement and rest in all that we need, and I pray that You would do that for those that are discouraged, that You'd give healing, to those who are sick and give them strength, and whatever the struggle may be, I pray that You would give them hope, hope that we have as Christians. No one has hope like we do. No one has eternal hope, but the believer in Jesus Christ, in the assurance that we have is that it will all end well. And in the meantime, it will all work out for good.

We can't understand that sometimes. And in the midst of the trial, it doesn't seem like that's going to be the case, but it is. That's Your promise. So I pray that You would encourage Your people with that. Bless us now Lord as we sing our next hymn. Prepare our hearts. Bless this special music we will

enjoy. May all of this minister to us to prepare us for a time of study and thought and worship as we look at the conclusion of this great epistle of Jude. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] In 1972, the Olympic Games were held in Munich, Germany. They are remembered mainly for the attack on the Israeli athletes by the Black September terrorist group. But I remember them also because of Jim Ryan's race, the track star from Kansas. I followed him back in those days. He ran the 1,500 meter, and Munich would be his comeback. He placed a disappointing 2nd in Mexico City in 1968. Munich would be different. Unfortunately, during a qualifying heat, he was tripped by another runner, fell, and was disqualified. It was a disappointment for his fans. It was especially a disappointment for Jim Ryan.

But you see, that happened in races like that. A runner is tripped or a runner falls and he causes other runners to stumble and fall and be disqualified from the race. That also happens in the Christian life. It happens in the race of faith, and I can imagine that some of the Christians Jude had written were worried it might happen to them with some reason.

Jude has written a disturbing letter. There were people among them who are that kind of threat. Jude has exposed them as godless men, as immoral men who are hidden reefs. They are a secret danger. They're like the danger at sea or along the coastline that causes shipwrecks and the loss of life. Jude has told them that such people were among them. He has written of people who had been wrecked, people with privilege and knowledge and opportunity who had fallen, men like Cain and Balaam and Korah. Men with privilege, but all destroyed by their unbelief.

In fact, some in their congregation had already been deeply affected by the false teachers. Others, had actually been affected by their heresy. Jude has urged believers to help them, but also counseled that they do that with great care and great caution, like one would deal with the person who was sick with

leprosy. It was all very hazardous. There were so many harmful influences around them, and clever heretics who could manipulate the truth and mock anyone who challenged them, ridiculed them in a way that could really be withering to an individual.

So who was sufficient for that? You can see how these Christians might have felt in adequate to move forward in the faith, to actually engage some of these opponents, to oppose the enemy, to take a stand. But that's what Jude told them to do. Don't retreat. That's really what he's saying in this book. Advance. And the last two verses of the letter give the reason that they could do that, the reason we can do that. We're in the same situation. We live in a world that's opposed to us and that can challenge us, and we need to be advancing in our faith and standing firm for the Lord, and we can do that not in our own strength, of course. We're not adequate for the race or the fight, but the Lord is. That's the lesson of the last two verses of the Book of Jude.

It's one of the greatest endings to any letter ever written. Certainly one of the best known doxologies in the Bible. In it, Jude assures those of whom he's written. He assures us that we won't fall, and we will finish. God, he says, is able to keep us from stumbling to our destruction and make a stand in glory. That is a strong assurance, and also an answer to one of the most troubling questions that a Christian might have: am I secure? Am I really saved? I guess most any thinking Christian has worried about that at some time or other in his or her life. It's a matter of assurance, of salvation, and the concern that a believer can lose his or her salvation. There are few things, really, that are more harmful to a full and fruitful Christian life than a lack of assurance and the fear that we may have somewhere along the line lost our salvation. It leads to all kinds of problems from joyous legalism to despair and inaction. You can imagine trying to, for example, run or compete in the Olympics knowing that you'd fall and be disqualified. You probably wouldn't run. If you did take up the race, you wouldn't take it up with much energy or confidence.

So, it is in the Christian life, this matter of assurance and the confidence that we are saved and that we certainly are saved is a very important one for us. The assurance that we have here is that we are. IF you're a believer in Jesus Christ, God has hold of you. That's the answer that's found in our text, but it's found in numerous passages as well.

Jude 24 certainly gives a great encouragement of that. "Now, to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling." It's almost an understatement. He who is able. Well, God is certainly able, and really, He is more than able. He is infinitely adequate for that task. He made that clear in Genesis chapter 18 and verse 14 in the rhetorical question that He put to Abraham. Abraham had no child, at least not the child of the promise, and he was old. He didn't see how it was possible; in fact, humanly, it was impossible. He questioned it and God said to him: is anything too difficult for the Lord?

Of course not. Nothing's too difficult for the Lord. He's omnipotent. He's all-powerful. So, keeping us in faith and causing the believer to stand is not too difficult for Him. Nothing is. Someone might object. Certainly, God is able, but He's not always willing. You can sin your way out of God's favor and become a castaway, but then what kind of encouragement would this be to Him, who is able to keep you from stumbling, if Jude meant: God is able but He may not be willing. There's no encouragement in that at all. It's not incentive to run and to fight and to advance in the faith. In fact, it's disincentive, and it's a strong disincentive if that is what Jude meant.

But clearly, that's not Jude's meaning. He is giving us encouragement here. He means God is in control, and He is both willing and able, and He will do it. He will keep all of His people from stumbling to their ruin. This is not only Jude's teaching; it's the teaching of the apostles. Paul's statement in Philippians 1:6 is just one example. He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. There's no contingency there. He's saying if He began a good work in you, and he's encouraging all of those Philippians to whom he had written. He knew God had begun a good work in

you. He' s saying, then He's going to complete it. What He begins, He finishes. He finishes well.

At the end of Romans 8, Paul calls us conquerors and assures us that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Nothing at all. He has a whole list of possibilities of things that could separate us, and his point is: nothing in this universe can separate us from God's love. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 30: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The Holy Spirit is the unbreakable seal on our hearts that guarantees we will reach final redemption.

Now, think about it for a moment. Think about it theologically. Should always think theologically. God is all-knowing, is He not? Of course He is. He's all-knowing always, from all eternity. And from eternity past, He knew all of the problems and the failures that we would have, long before we were created. In fact, He chose us before the foundation of the world. He chose us in eternity past. There was never a moment in God's existence, which is eternal. There was never a beginning to God, when you weren't in His mind. He knew the kind of life you'd live. He knew the trials that you'd face, the problems you'd have, the way you would deal with them, your failures. He chose us in spite of all of that, and simply logic tells us that He did not choose us to fail. He did not choose us unconditionally, in eternity past, only to lose us in this present life. He isn't surprised by anything that we do, or anything that happens. He loved us knowing all of our sins, and He chose us in spite of our future failures. His love is that great.

What'd we sing? Or what did Marilyn sing? It began with grace. It ends with grace. It's all of grace. That's grace. Unconditional love. It cannot be shaken. He is able to keep us from stumbling, and He will. That's a certainty.

Jude doesn't leave the encouragement there. God is not only able to keep something bad from happening. He is able to make something good happen. He will not only keep us from stumbling, but also perfect us. He is

able, Jude says, to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy. That's the end of the race and the battle for the believer in Jesus Christ. Perfection, and joy, great joy. In other words, we will all finish the race and finish winners.

Isn't that promise a little dangerous? Won't that foster neglect in our spiritual life and actually sin? After all, if we're secure in our salvation, won't we feel free to indulge in fleshly impurity? Now, who really thinks like that? No believer. Paul rejects that in Romans chapter 6 and verse 1 where he's speaking of grace and then he says: "Are we to continue in sin, that grace may increase?" That'd never be. How shall we who died to sin still live in it? A notion that a believer indulges the flesh and flagrantly sins without regret is a contradiction. It is contrary to what we are. We are new creatures with new hearts, with new attitudes. That doesn't mean we don't sin. Of course we do. We sin with a sense of guilt. We have that sense about us. We know when we fail and we grieve over that, and that leads to repentance. It should. Christians desire purity. They strive for it. That's our nature. That's the Christian life.

Jude, in fact, instructed them, instructs us in verse 21: "Keep yourselves in the love of God," and that means be obedient. Those who love the Lord, keep His commandments. That's what Jesus said in John 14 verse 15. "If you love Me, you'll keep My commandments." It doesn't mean we keep ourselves saved by our efforts. Jude has written here in verse 24 that God keeps us. He doesn't mean God keeps those who keep themselves. But those whom God keeps, and keeps, preserves for all eternity, keep themselves in His love. They obey Him, characteristically, not flawlessly, of course. We know that's not true. There's a constant struggle with the flesh, a struggle in the soul and with temptation from the world. In fact, it doesn't get easier as you grow in Christ. I think the more you grow and the more mature you become, the more you know about God and about His word, and the more you know about yourself, the more you see yourself as one stumbling not to destruction, but stumbling in sin and failing.

But that's the battle that we fight, and the battle that we fight, we fight in the soul. It never ends in this life. It's intense. We're not alone. We're encouraged throughout the New Testament to run the race. We can do that because, as I say, we are not alone. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption. He leads us constantly, according to Romans 8:14. He gives us strength. He makes us more than conquerors.

And as Jude assures us here, He will keep us and present us before His glory where we will be fully transformed, made perfect, and experience unimaginable joy, eternal joy. The fight is over. The race is won.

Now, that doesn't inspire indolence, sloth and sin. Just the opposite. It inspires energy, action, and diligence, just as it does when someone does some kindness for you. I think I mentioned that last week in our lesson, that when someone does something good for you, and you see them really take care of you and provide for you and give you some great opportunity in life, your response isn't neglect or indifference. Your response is one of deep gratitude. And so it is in the Christian life.

A Scot in the 19th century put it simply, but I think put it very well. In the New Testament, religion is grace; ethics is gratitude. Christianity is about free grace. It is about God's unconditional love for us. Love that gave His only begotten Son to save us. That's the reason we obey, and run, and fight the good fight is because of what He's done for us. And understanding that, it inspires us all the more to do that. As F.F. Bruce wrote, "Love is a more potent incentive to doing the will of God than legal regulations and fear of judgment could ever be." Jude is giving potent incentive here to run the race of faith, to engage in the spiritual battle. They were facing a very stiff and difficult enemy, and he's urging them to advance and not fall back. The incentive is: as great as the danger is, and as careful as we need to be, God is with us. He has hold of us. He will keep us from stumbling, and He'll lead us to victory.

That truth moves Jude to give praise to God in his great doxology. For all of this, our salvation, our obedience, our success, our ultimate triumph, God gets all the glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

So Jude repeats, in essence, the declaration of Deuteronomy 6:4, that there was one God and only one God, the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, and He gets all of the glory. That statement needed to be repeated in Jude's day because it was a time when people believed in many Gods. The pagan pantheons of Greece and Rome, Jupiter and Mars and Venus, Bacchus and Baal, and all of the others have long since been dismissed as myths and utterly rejected.

Polytheism isn't an issue today. At least, it's not an issue in the West. There are the parts of the world in which it still is, I know. But it's not really the issue here. We're not thinking there are many gods out there, but there's this god, too. Now, we understand that there are not that many gods. But nevertheless, we still live here in the West, in the material West, and in an environment in which other gods are worshipped. False gods that people live for and serve; they may not call them gods, but they're gods nonetheless.

I read a book about a year go on the Rothschilds. It's titled *The House of Rothschild*. The Jewish family that rose to riches in the late 1700s and dominated British and European finance throughout the 1800s. One of the poets of that day, Heinrich Heine, who was actually a friend of the family, wrote the line: "Money is the god of our time, and Rothschild is his prophet." That's the same today. The prophet may be different. It may be a Buffett or a Gates, but money is the God of our time. Money is still worshipped.

What a stupid god it is. It doesn't keep us. We desperately try to keep it, and inevitably fail. Markets are volatile. They're hard to predict. As the proverb says, "Wealth has wings. It flies away like an eagle toward the heavens." Granted, it makes life comfortable, but it can't extend life by one day. Read Psalm 139 and verse 16. "All of our days were ordained for us and

written in God's book before they ever existed." Money can't preserve us. Money can't prolong our life. More importantly, it can't rescue us from the pit. In fact, what it can do is make it much easier to perish there eternally.

Now, I'm not saying that money is not a blessing. It is. It's good to make it. And it can be used for great good. It is necessary to have in order to support a family. Money is a great tool, a great means of helping those in need. We don't despise money. We don't belittle money. It's important. It's good. But when having it or making it becomes a person's chief end, then that blessing becomes a curse. It becomes a false god. It becomes a stumbling block and it becomes a road to ruin.

There's only one God and one Savior, the Lord God, and He provides all our needs. As we trust in Him, He's faithful. As we seek His kingdom for us, He adds to us all that we need. That's what Jesus promised. Read Matthew chapter 6 and 7. It's there. Our heavenly Father cares for us more than an earthly father could, and He will provide all our needs, material, emotional, and spiritual. He'll take care of us. He'll give us the strength to fight the good fight of faith. What Jude is urging us to do here: contend earnestly for the faith. Remember, that's the reason he wrote this letter. He broke off what he had been doing and been devoting himself to write this letter, to urge them to do that, to contend earnestly for the faith. And as we do that, He will bring us safely through that fight and He'll bring us safely into His eternal kingdom.

The Lord God is our personal holy, loving God and Savior who saves the lost through the work of His eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he says. That's what Jude says. That's what he means, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus Christ is our Lord, which means that He too is God. He is Jehovah. He's Yahweh. He's God the Son. That's the very thing the false teachers rejected. That is their fundamental heresy that's mentioned back in verse 4. They deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ. He is Lord. He's Jehovah. He's Yahweh, as I said. If He is not fully God, as well as fully man, then we don't have a Savior, because no mere

man, not even an angel, could make atonement for our sins. They are of infinite weight and guilt, and we need a person of infinite value to remove them, to offer sacrifice that's sufficient for those sins, and only He could do that. So, if Jesus is not Lord, then there is no gospel, there's no salvation, there's no hope.

And there is no hope for those who deny Him as Lord because in doing that, they cut themselves off from eternal life. Eternal life is in Him. They have an eternal destiny that is not pleasant. But those who believe in Him, those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and trust in Christ, they're changed. They're changed in a moment. They're changed in that very moment. They're justified. They're not made righteous. That's not what that means. Justification speaks of a legal position that we are placed in, but we are justified at the moment of faith. We are declared righteous before God and completely accepted by Him, fully and completely at the moment of faith. That's a very practical doctrine because what it says is: you don't need to strive to gain God's acceptance. You're accepted by Him at the moment of faith fully and completely and forever. Certainly, we strive to live a life of godliness and grow in the faith, and we won't grow if we're not doing that. We don't do that to gain something from God that we don't already have. We have it all at the moment of faith. We do it out of gratitude for all that He's done for us.

That's where we are as we put our faith in Him. We are justified. We are completely accepted by Him. And then, those who do that, we who have done that have an eternal and glorious future, one of great joy. That's how Jude described it in verse 24. We stand before the Lord God "blameless with great joy."

Great joy. Now, joy, no doubt, because well, we've entered into heaven. Joy because the race is won. But the joy he's speaking of here really is no doubt due to the description that he gives of being blameless, pure, without sin. What an experience that will be. I think we get a sense of that

from Zechariah 3 when the high priest Joshua is standing before God. Zechariah sees this vision in heaven and Satan is standing beside him, remember, accusing him. And with some reason, because Joshua is clothed from head to foot in filthy garments. The Lord rebukes the devil and He removes the unclean clothes and HE dresses Joshua in clean clothes from head to foot, and He tells Joshua to walk in cleanness, to walk in obedience. That's the purity God gives the sinner, and we will have that fully in the world to come. We will be without sin, without an inclination to sin, without any guilt. We will be clean. That will be a great experience.

But the joy here is more than that because a clean condition, a holy condition really gives us the right to be with God, to be in His presence, and in the presence of His glory, and to see Him, and to see that glory, and to enter into it. That must be the joy of heaven, seeing Christ. I can't say I appreciate that as I ought to, but I know that's the case. That may be a slight illustration of that on the news. I don't know that we see it that much anymore, but you'll remember when these troops would return from Afghanistan and you see them come into the airport, and they were just joyful to be able to be reunited with their wives or their parents or their friends. That's something of the reunion that will happen when we enter into heaven. I think that's a very vague example of it, but we will enter into heaven and we will be with Christ and that will be the joy of it.

It's really something beyond our experience. It's something beyond anything we can contemplate. We've never experienced anything like that. But I know this: for the first time, we will see the Savior who did all of this for us, who delivered us from eternal hell, due to no merit of our own, but because He stood in our place, because He sought us and found us when we weren't seeking Him, and He went to that terrible judgment for us. We escaped it because of Him. We'll see Him, we'll understand that fully, and we will be full of gratitude and joy when we see Him.

All the glory goes to God, to our Triune God, to God the Father who is the only God our Savior, who planned salvation from eternity past, and who saves only through His eternal Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is of the Lord. It is of the Triune God. And so, to Him, Jude says, "be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever." From all eternity, He got the glory. He gets the glory now, whether we give it to Him or not, and He'll get the glory for all eternity to come. Amen, he says.

Jude, when you look at that, piles up the praise in a magnificent conclusion in doxology to declare that the great and all-sufficient God is the God that we have. We need to know that. He is all-sufficient. He's unlimited in His power and the scope of His power and love. Before the worlds were, before the universe existed, however long ago that may be. It is just a brief moment to the Lord God. Before it all began, He was, and He is. And the power of the universe, what is unleashed in a supernova, exploding stars, and all the power of a million suns cannot compare to the power of the Lord God. His power is before it all. It is the cause of it all. It is unlimited. And what Jude is saying here is all of that power is for you. That's the assurance that we have.

In this great statement of praise, this doxology of Jude, there's only one God, the God of Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and the prophets, the God of the apostles, the God of the Bible. He is the Triune God. He alone saves, and He keeps all whom He saves.

Is that surprising? Is that surprising to you? Is anything too difficult for the Lord? No. It's that fact that moved Jude to give this great doxology. I don't know that he penned that out, and reworked it and thought about it, and came back to it, or if this just came out spontaneously and naturally. I suspect that that's what happened. God is a personal God who seeks and saves the lost and keeps them. He's the great shepherd of the sheep who will not lose one of them. All the praise goes to Him because we are certainly prone to wander.

And left to ourselves, we will all stumble to our own destruction. Left to ourselves, we'd go headlong into that destruction.

We all have reason to wonder who's sufficient for the Christian life, who's sufficient for the Christian walk, who's sufficient for this war that we're engaged in. None of us could stand before the enemy. None of us can stand before the temptation of sin that confronts us. None of us can withstand the mockery of the enemy that belittles us. We're not sufficient for that. We're not sufficient for the challenges that are before all of us, but the Lord God is. That's where Jude is putting our confidence. It's in Him, not in ourselves. He's sufficient, and He has hold of us. So Jude praises Him, and he reminds us of His eternity, His strength, His power, His majesty, which is all working for us to keep us from stumbling and keep us secure.

Nothing gives greater joy and confidence to the Christian than knowing that He has saved us, that He's keeping us saved, and HE will, in the end, keep us safe forever. I don't think anything galvanizes action and obedience more than that, more than understanding the sovereign grace of God.

So, on that word of encouragement and praise, Jude concludes his letter. What an interesting man Jude is. He's the brother of our Lord who refused to call himself Jesus' brother. He's the brother of James, but the bondservant of Jesus Christ. We'd like to know more about Jude. I would, but this is the only letter we have from him. It is a brief letter. It's a letter that's packed full of truth, and reveals a lot about the Lord God and about ourselves, and it reveals a great deal about Jude himself. What it does tell us is he was a warrior. He was a man who fought for the faith, a man of courage, a man of insight who urges us to join him in battle, to carry on the fight for Christ. And then he gives us the confidence to do that. We will triumph, because the Lord is keeping us.

That's the promise of the Bible. It's the promise of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Israel used to sing that as the pilgrims went up to Jerusalem to worship God. In Psalm 121, one of the psalms of a sense, they

would sing, "He will not allow your foot to slip/He who keeps you will not slumber/Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep/The Lord is your keeper." That promise is for believers, and that promises is, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you are secure for all eternity.

Unbelievers have no such hope. No such assurance. In fact, the opposite is true. They are assured of falling. Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 35, "In due time, their foot will slip. The day of calamity is near." That's a terrifying statement, is it not? Their foot will slip, and the day of that, the day of their calamity is near, maybe today. Avoid that calamity. If you're here without Christ, come to Him, believe in Him. He came to save people from destruction. He died for them so that all who believe in Him would be saved.

So may God help you to believe. If you've not, and you who have believed have trusted in our Lord, rest in the assurance that we have from God's word. Fight the good fight. Run the race. You're going to triumph as you do that. May God help all of us to do that.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for sending Your Son. We thank you that He paid our ransom. And that of the only God our savior through Jesus Christ, our Lord in glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.