

## TO THE ONLY GOD

Open your Bible to the book of **Jude**. Periodically, a song that was inspired from scripture prompts me to examine the text in more detail. That's true of the song "TO THE ONLY GOD" that we opened our service with this morning. Verses **24-25** are often considered a doxology\_ a short declaration of praise used to open or close an assembly. The text says: <sup>24</sup>**To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—** <sup>25</sup>**to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now, and forevermore! Amen.**

True to the first of the **10** Commandments, Jude acknowledges that there is **only one true God**. Though this has been disputed for thousands of years, the issue at hand is not what others believe, but **what do you believe?** Jude makes some unique claims about this God that He worships\_ The God of the Bible, Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, Who is the creator of heaven and earth. **As we sang: "He is the One who has saved us\_ the One who possesses all glory, majesty, power and authority. He is the sovereign God, the King of kings\_ the One who reigns over everything. He is the promised hope\_ He is the Great 'I Am'.**

And Jude says that it is **this God alone Who is able to keep us from falling**. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that there's not a one of us here who hasn't fallen at some time or another. We might have merely stumbled, slipped, or tripped and fallen from a standing position. Maybe we lost our balance and fell from a chair we were standing on. On the other hand, we may have used better sense, climbing a step stool or a ladder only to find ourselves falling from there. Others have likely experienced falling from greater heights\_ from a roof or from a cliff.

Despite offerings on YouTube, **falling is no laughing matter**. Several years ago, while hiking through the forest of a state park in Ohio, I decided to show off a bit\_ demonstrating to my kids how one could climb a sapling and ride it over safely to the ground. The tree snapped and I fell about **10** feet flat on my back. It so much knocked the wind out of me that I couldn't speak for a few minutes. Meanwhile, my family thought the worst and worried how they were going to carry me out of the wilderness. Even if cellphones had been around then, I doubt we would have had a signal in that remote place. Thankfully, the only thing that was seriously hurt was my pride. Just a few weeks ago, I miss-stepped coming down the stairs at Thompson school. It was as if my leg gave out, and before I could catch myself, down I went. The fall itself didn't do so much damage as the twisting of my hamstring on the way to the floor. Man, did it hurt, but with the help of my Crossroads companions, I was eventually able to get back on my feet and hobble down the hall to work with the kids. Having said that, even after applying ice and heat that afternoon and night, the swelling was such that I was hardly able to walk without assistance for the next day or so.

A few years ago, my younger brother, Rob, fell about **25** feet from an extension ladder and suffered such severe head trauma that he never fully recovered. He bled out at the scene, but the **EMTs** resuscitated him and took him to the hospital where he remained in a coma for several days before being transferred to a nursing home. The fall left him seriously disabled and he died from complications about a year later.

So, most of us understand how serious a fall can be. We take care not to fall. Some have a great fear of falling. Yet, Jude isn't talking about physical falling. In context, he refers to something that should concern us even more. **Falling into sin**\_ especially so far that we can't get back out. He's talking about being so spiritually damaged by a fall that we are beyond recovery. In context, he warns believers to learn from their predecessors who turned their back on God and fell into ruin, some even to their deaths\_ whether Satan's angels, the residents of Sodom & Gomorrah, or those rebelling in the wilderness.

Last week, I spent considerable time on the deep truth that nothing can separate us from God's love. Yet, this doesn't mean we can't separate ourselves from Him by our willful choices or our foolish decisions. God still loves us\_ but it is possible to fall so far from Him that we don't benefit from that love. We sang about this One whose love will never end, but **Jude 21** says: **"Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."** Years ago, I found a dog outside my office. Its leash had become tangled around the pole of one of the handicapped signs. I also noticed it had one of those protective halos around its neck\_ apparently to keep it from scratching a recent wound. I approached the dog cautiously, but rather than growling, snarling, or snapping, the dog jumped for joy that I was there. A quick inspection revealed a collar with a tag that said: *"If found, call this number."* I did. The owner was elated to hear I'd found her dog and came almost immediately to pick it up. She scolded her pet, before offering to pay me a reward (*which I refused*), thanked me again, and loaded her dog in the back of her Lincoln Navigator before driving off. There was no doubt that the woman loved her dog. He had just ran away and got so ensnared that he couldn't get loose. That's what we sometimes do. Nevertheless, we don't have to.

Yet, **the One and Only God is able to keep us from doing that.** How? Well, first of all, He doesn't do it by locking us up in a pen\_ or tying us to a bedpost. He could do that, but He won't. Instead, He says, *"Listen to Me. Lean on Me. Learn from Me. I can keep you upright. Trust me here\_ and I will make you strong. I will keep you safe in my care."*

Nina will tell you one of the downsides of being a Pastor's wife, is that you'll likely be used in more than one sermon illustration. Last year, I oft referred to Nina's knee replacements. She was very concerned after her first one that she might fall. When asked why, she said, *"All I need now is a broken hip."* Yet, she was wise enough to use the walker and later the cane that were provided. She also waited on me to help her in and out of the car and up and down stairs. She let me take her arm, and walk with her\_ supporting her each step of the way. She also endured some pretty rigid discipline, working with her physical therapists **2-3** times a week, subjecting herself to some grueling exercises in order to get strong enough to stand on her own two feet. And that doesn't include the personal exercises she did with me or by herself at home. Spiritually speaking, that's what we must do with God.

Falling down a lot lately? Tripping over temptations that you said you'd sidestep or hurdle the next time they were in your path? Are you falling headlong into sin, wondering why God isn't keeping you from falling? Are you battered and bruised by your personal demons, wounded by your weaknesses\_ and hurting from your frequent falls? Are your eyes swollen from crying in despair, and your spiritual limbs worn out from trying and failing? **There is One who e is able to keep us from falling.**

Yet, **verse 21** of our text indicates that He does that by enabling us **"to be built up in the faith"** and to **"stay connected with the Holy Spirit."** You see, He invites us to let Him keep us from falling, **by leaning upon Him, listening to Him and learning to follow His lead.**

Listen. The Lord has ordained some people to act as spiritual therapists to help you be built up in the faith. **(Ephesians 4:11-16)**. Are you spending time in the Word? Are you connecting with any of the study groups? Are you reading your Bible at home? Learn to lean on the One and Only God who can keep you from falling. Are you praying continually? In Mark Batterson's book, **"IF"** he shares that if you want to hear from the Holy Spirit on any specific thing, you need to start listening to Him about everything. You won't hear His words of comfort, if you tune out His words of conviction. You won't hear His words of grace unless you also listen for His words of guidance. Have trouble praying?

Come and let us pray for you\_ and then pray with you. In time, you can learn to talk with God through His Spirit as naturally as you now do with your best friend. It is a lifeline to keep you from falling. I am afraid that we so often fall because we blindly follow our own desires instead of the Voice of the only true God.

Why would this one and only God help you back on your feet and support you along the way? **Verse 24** of our text tells us: He wants **“to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy...”** and **“to bring you to eternal life.”** This reminds me of the presentation of the Bride and Groom at the close of a wedding. God doesn't want you to crawl through life. He doesn't even want you to limp up to the pearly gates before walking the streets of gold to the throne. Nope, His plan is for you to skip and run into eternity with your head held high and your hands raised in victory. He is the One and Only God who is able to enable us to do that very thing.

As we earlier sang, **He is the Spotless Lamb, the Risen Lord, Who has cleansed us.** And as **Philippians 1:6** assures us, He will **finish the work that He started.**