

All We Need Is Love?

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory 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.

(Jude 24-25)

Strong winds of change were in the air the decade before I was born. All over the culture, signs were posted marking a supposed new age. Several significant Supreme Court decisions were decidedly anti-religious and had a huge impact on public life, especially in education. Protestors organized scores of marches against an “immoral” war. An influx of hallucinogenic drugs (and dare I say demonic activity) took over the minds of young people. And the language of the culture as expressed in popular music and art took on a new tone unheard in American history.

It is fair to say that we went from a nation steeped in Christian sentimentality and ruled by law, and became a nation that set its face strongly against God and

objective truth. This is not to say that we were a “Christian nation” before this, because that kind of language is a confusion of kingdoms. But it is to say that the basic ethos of the culture prior to this time in our history was basically positive towards many aspects of the Christian religion. To put it another way, it was culturally acceptable to be a Christian as the word has historically been defined. It was taboo in most segments of the population to be Muslim or Wiccan or Zoroastrian.

Perhaps no song captures this change more poignantly than the **Beatle’s** “**All We Need Is Love.**” You say to me, “Huh? How does that mark any change?” But just listen. You see, people do not generally replace the truth of God for a lie unless that lie deceives them by appearing to them to be good. **Satan masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14).** And what sentiment could be better or more acceptable than just “love.” This godless form of love was expressed later by one of those Beatles in the musically pleasing, but lyrically satanic song: **Imagine.**

“Imagine there’s no heaven... no hell below us... no religion too. Imagine all the people living life in peace.” You see, religion suddenly became the *enemy* of peace and love. All we need is love, love apart from God, and his only Son Jesus Christ. “The Greatest love of all is easy to achieve. Learning to love *yourself*, it is the greatest love of all.” That is the humanist manifesto so beautifully sung by **Whitney Houston**. This is the mantra of our age: Peace and love apart from God, or at least apart from the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Beloved, you must not be seduced by the sentimentality of our age. There must be more; but not in the places the world tries to find it. One singer laments, “Think about it, there must be higher love. Without it, life is wasted time.” But where does he look? “Down in the heart or hidden in the stars above. Look inside your heart, I’ll look inside mine.” If Christianity, if *you*, are going to survive in this dark hard world, you are going to have to find the real Higher Love. But not by looking to yourself, your heart, or in the material world. That is “looking for love in all the wrong places,” to tip my hat to **Waylon Jennings**, who knows the problem, but can’t find the

right solution in his song either. All you will find in these places is sin, darkness, and things that are passing away.

You are going to have to look to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. You are going to have to come to understand and remember who this God is, what he is like, how he has revealed himself, and what he has done in the world of rebels. The Reformation had a term for what I am talking about this morning. They called it *Soli Deo Gloria*: To God alone be the glory. This idea of this phrase is that to look for love, peace, hope, joy, fulfillment, satisfaction, contentment, forgiveness, or eternal life in anything other than the only God is to break the first commandment not to have any idols. If we could recapture anything from our past in our day, I believe it would best to start here, with God himself.

It is meaningful that this is the last Lord's Day of the year, and we are concluding Jude's letter which ends in one of the greatest doxologies in the Bible. Jude concludes his letter with a doxology. What better way to end another year that God has given to us than with this as our theme? "Doxology" comes from two Greek

words: *doxa* meaning glory or praise, and *logos* meaning a speaking. A doxology is a praising of God. It is a speaking of his glory.

Why would someone end a letter filled with so many commands and warnings with a doxology? How impractical! Why not end the letter—as so many sermons today end—with some kind of gentle exhortation to go out and do what you have been told? It is because the Biblical writers understand that God is the only source for obeying and upholding the obligations that He has put upon men and women. No law or commandment, no matter how kindly it is delivered, no matter how persuasively it is argued, no matter how beautifully it is perceived is able to provide the power needed to obey it. And it is the *doers* of the law who will be justified in God's site, not merely those who *hear* it (Rom 2:13).

This is where contemporary Christianity has been derailed. In turning our religion into a soft, supple, gentle, and tender works-based religion (rather than the harsh, abrasive, legalism of fundamentalism that we have

rebelled against), we have forgotten that God alone—through the gospel of his Son—gives that power through the Holy Spirit he has sent to dwell in our hearts. And now many Christians believe that the Beatles were Christians, because our view of God is that he is simply love. Love is all you need.

But look at what this God has done, and you will forever turn from your trust in the law to trust in the Lawgiver. You will **put your faith where it rightly belongs**. You will perceive true love, love in all of its beauty. And you will never again be satisfied looking for love in your own heart or in a companion or in money or fame or power. You will only desire to seek it in the Fountain of the Triune God who is love.

In **vs. 24** Jude celebrates the activity of God on behalf of his people. It is the prayerful part of the doxology. He tells you two things.

First, **God is able to keep you from stumbling**. The word “stumbling” is a *hapax legomenon*. That is, it only appears

here in the Scripture.¹ But the *idea* of the word is very common in the Bible. Stumbling is sometimes associated with the law. James, Jude's brother, says, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet *stumbles* at just one point, is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10). He also says, "We all *stumble* in many ways" (3:2). Regarding faithlessness, Paul writes of the Jews, "Did they *stumble* to as to fall beyond recovery?" (Rom 11:11). But God did not give them grace so that a large number of Gentiles might be saved! And this was to make Israel jealous, so that some of them might be saved.

Stumbling so as to fall away is among the most pressing warnings that you can heed. Especially in light of the fact that God often sets wicked feet upon slippery places. And Jude's prayer is that you may have hope from God's grace. But the backdrop of grace in Jude 24 only makes sense in light of God's power to judge. Listen to Deuteronomy and you will see a God that makes criminals even more angry, "Vengeance is mine, and

¹ In all of ancient biblical-related literature, it only occurs elsewhere in 3 Macc 6:39, "The Lord of all most gloriously revealed his mercy and rescued them all together and unharmed." "Unharmed" is the word.

recompense, for the time when their foot shall *slip*; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly” (Deut 32:35). This is why the wicked hate God. Psalm 35:6 says, “Let their way be dark and *slippery*, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them!” Here, in this Psalm, we see Jesus pursuing the wicked like Joshua would have pursued the Canaanites. “Truly you set them in *slippery* places; you make them fall to ruin” (Ps 73:18). By putting them in slippery places, God is the cause of stumbling of wicked people. But you need to understand how this works, if the good news of Jude 24 is to have any place in your heart.

God is not himself evil (we will see what he is in vs. 25), nor is his setting a foot upon a slippery place an evil thing to do. This is because the slippery place he sets people’s feet upon is the wet smooth stone of the 10 Commandments. But there is nothing wrong with the commandments of God. Indeed, they are *holy, righteous, and good!* (Rom 7:12). The problem comes when people try to run upon that soggy rock. Their feet slip, because they themselves are wicked and are unable to be

righteous like God. When a person thinks that his law-keeping will uphold him, he falls to utter ruin.

But God is able to keep you from stumbling. What a glorious note this is! The Psalmist celebrates the salvation of God this way, “You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip” (Ps 18:36). This “wide place” is the gospel of Jesus Christ wherein God takes the law of stone out from under your feet and puts it into your heart. Jeremiah foresaw this, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33). You no longer have to run upon it to win the race.

Now, by faith through grace, a new rock is set under your feet. Upon this rock you stand rather than run. “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer” (Ps 18:2). “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame” (Isa 8:14). This is why we preach Christ, because there is no other name under heaven by which you may be saved.

Yet, this Christ is also a “stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense” (1 Pet 2:8). It is possible for you to be like Israel, who was “unmindful of the Rock that bore them, and who forgot the God who gave them birth” (Deut 32:18). They drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:4).

But God is able to keep you from stumbling. Do not fall over the stumbling stone, but stand. The Scripture says, “He puts the law of God in your heart, and thus your steps do not slip” (Ps 37:31). And he is able to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. This is the second part of vs. 24 that tells you about what God does for his people.

What does it mean to *present you blameless*? Contrary to John Lennon who wants peace without God or another atheist who acts morally and condemns people like Hitler (with no justifiable explanation for why he does either thing), Jude means that there will be an accounting for every person’s actions in the afterlife. Judgment is unavoidable in a world where morality really does exist. If there is right and wrong, then right

behavior will be rewarded and wrong behavior will be judged. So, when he says that God is able to present you blameless, **Jude refers to the Judgment Day** when all people will have to stand before God in his Royal courtroom. To “present” you is literally to *stand* before the presence of God as defendant will stand before the judge and jury when the verdict is pronounced.

But **God is able to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy!** So many people wish they could have that kind of hope when they die. And they can. But **How?** By God not counting your sins against you. **And how does this occur?** By justifying you by faith through grace. When a person trusts in Christ alone as the only hope of salvation, then God credits the righteousness of Jesus to that person’s account so that they may be declared “not guilty,” thus presented blameless on Judgment Day! **Christ supplies the moral purity we lack in ourselves.**

Has any human mind ever birthed a thought like that on its own? Do those who by nature continually seek to justify themselves by their own good behavior hatch

ideas like this? Of course not! They are much too busy trying to justify themselves! This good news does not have a human origin, for it runs contrary to everything about us. But God has revealed this plan to you because He so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). This is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and gave himself to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

This idea instills great joy in the heart of one who truly believes it, because it is the world's only true hopeful message. When we recently visited Israel, several of us noticed how joyless the people of that land were. Of course, they are constantly at war with enemies on all sides. Of course, they are a people that have had to forge a nation in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. But more than this, these people as a whole have rejected their own Messiah, and all of the Jewish Christians of that land will agree with me. It was grievous to see all of these Orthodox Jews superstitiously and hypocritically going to the temple mount, to the wailing wall, to look for the coming Messiah when their ancestors in the faith

(the Pharisees) already put him to death. They are joyless because of their unbelief! Why should they have joy when they have forsaken the glory of the LORD? They have been pricked by the Rose of Sharon? They have stubbed their toe on the stumbling stone.

But you, beloved, are not like that. For Christ has shone his light into your heart. He has made you new creations, given you new desires, fed you with the bread of life, and living water. So you should not be as people who have no joy, yet many of you act as if you have no reason to be joyful. You have let your hearts be troubled by finances, spouses, children, presidential elections, speeding tickets, by everything that is passing away! But Holy Scripture says that on that day you will be presented in heaven with great joy, because God will make you stand blameless in his presence when the judgment is pronounced.

Therefore, you need to consider this God who has done all of these things for you in history and in your own life. This is the purpose of vs. 25 (and it is the purpose of the covenant renewal ceremony, where together we are

encouraged and taught about our very good God), and it is how Jude ends his powerful little letter. “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.”

First, the Scripture repeatedly asserts that **there is only one God**. “To the *only* God,” it says here. “Here O Israel, the LORD you God, the LORD is one” (Deut 6:4). There are no other Gods besides the one God. Now, sadly, many people today are diluted into thinking that just because three religions are monotheistic, that they therefore all worship the same god. But that is like saying that because 3 men are all married to one woman that they are all married to the same woman. It is absurd.

There is only one God, and he has revealed himself very specifically, through one man: The God-man Jesus Christ. Notice how Jude relates God and Jesus. “To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” You can take this phrase two ways. 1. It can mean that **you praise God the savior through Jesus Christ.** In this instance, Jesus is the only means by which your praise is

acceptable to God. This gives Jesus a unique status. He alone is able to make your worship praiseworthy. Surely, this points to his divinity, something we have seen repeated time and again in this letter.

2. The other way to take it is that **God only saves people through Jesus Christ, and for this he is to be praised.** In this instance, salvation is only found by coming to the Son of God. Of course, both of these ideas are found in other Scriptures, and so we do not need to decide which one may have been in Jude's mind when he wrote this.

What is important is to see **the unique place that Jesus has above all other names.** If you are to consider God, you cannot consider him rightly or worship him properly apart from his only begotten Son! He is greater than the angels. He is greater than the prophets. He is greater than gods, he is greater than Muhammad or the Buddha or the Dali Lama or Barrack Obama or any of the messianic figures that take center stage in the false religions of the world. This is because Jesus alone is God as it says in **Titus 2:13**, **“Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

This God is given the title of Savior. You must contemplate your salvation! And this is the ultimate practical implication to derive from this doxology. For God is the savior of any who will trust in his Son. God saves us from our sins. He saves us from ourselves. He saves us from the corruptible world that is passing away. He saves us from our suffering, pain, worry, and trouble. He saves us from the power of Satan and the dominion of darkness. He saves us from the hot flames of hell. He saves us to life, joy, peace, and a kingdom that is imperishable, so that we may forever praise and worship, work and glorify God both now and for all time.

God saves us in his wisdom, and so some scribe in the early days added the word that God is the only “wise” God, probably taking the idea from the doxology at the end of Romans. But the ESV’s reading is preferable to the KJV here, because the manuscript evidence overwhelmingly supports that this was a scribal addition not originally penned by Jude, even though it is of course a truth that God is wise.

And now the doxology begins to ascribe praise to God for his many attributes. And this is the most fitting way to end the book and the most fitting way to end the year—by praising the God who saves us through Jesus Christ. **To him is all the glory, majesty, dominion, and authority.** This is what God is like.

If you want to grow in your walk with God, then you need to worship this God for who he is and what he is like. This is the end for which you were created. It is the ultimate command for the Christian to obey. **To God alone be the glory: Soli Deo Gloria.** **What is glory?** There are many words to describe it. Glory is **splendor** and **grandeur**. Glory is **power**, as in what a king has over his kingdom. Glory is **brightness** and **brilliance**. God dwells in unapproachable light. Glory is **heavy** and **weighty**. God is substantial, not ethereal and fluffy. That word which you hear today is able to smash a rock into pieces!

Glory is the one attribute that is common in almost every biblical doxology. Because glory is a weightiness, it points to the respect, reverence, and honor that is due to God, something sorely lacking in many churches in our

day. Glory is the best word to describe God's exalted position and high status. **Gene Green** asks a good question. "How can one recognize God's 'honor' and then pervert his ways, as the heretics have done in vs. 4?"² It is because they do not understand God's glory. To obey God you must understand his glory.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This is why Moses could not see God's glory, but only his backside. This is why God reveals his radiance to people by hiding it in the hidden flesh of Jesus Christ.

I'm not really sure that people today understand this. I'm not really sure that I understand it. Many of our contemporary Christian songs invoke the glory of God. We sing about wishing to see it face to face, about calling fire down from heaven, about feeling the power of God. But we ascribe glory to God only by recognizing that we can't see it face to face without stumbling and falling altogether. That is why you must fix your eyes upon Jesus, and praise God through him.

² Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, p. 135.

To God also belongs **majesty**. “Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?” (Ex 15:11). One person describes majesty as **God’s awful transcendence**. It is a term used only of God in early Christian literature, and so it is an attribute that belongs uniquely to God. Majesty refers to God’s greatness and preeminence. God is overwhelmingly grand, enthroned on high above the mighty cherubim in a house that **Enoch** said was so full of splendor and magnificence that he could not even describe it (1 En 14:16). Yet for all of its glory, Isaiah said that merely the train of his robe filled the temple. This is how great and mighty God is.

“These two attributes of God—glory and majesty—place in high relief the importance of not turning away from the One who holds the most honorable position. They frame the entire letter. To dishonor such a one would be unconscionable.”³ This is how the gospel serves as the power to help you keep the law, to not be seduced by false teachers, or demons, wealth, or power, or anything else that would cause you to turn from the

³ Green, 136.

living God. When you know who God is, it is unthinkable to sin against him. When we do sin, it is because we have forgotten what we once knew. **But God is able to keep you from stumbling.**

Because, to God also belongs **dominion** and **authority**. The word “dominion” can also be translated as “might” or “power.” God has demonstrated his power in creation, by making things that are out of things that were not. He has demonstrated his power in history, by judging the world in a flood or by bringing his people out of slavery with his powerful right arm. He has demonstrated his power in bringing a king to reign in the kingdom. And he has demonstrated his power by electing you to salvation, and then seeing that his plan would come to completion by giving you faith to believe in Jesus.

And to Jesus belongs all dominion and **authority**, now that he has risen from the dead. But it also takes authority to command respect and praise. God has the authority to act in power, because he is the creator and sustainer, the judge and the savior of the universe.

All four of these attributes belongs to God—always. You do not give them to him by your praise, but your praise acknowledges that they rightly belong to him. For God has had all glory, majesty, dominion, and authority **before all time, now, and forevermore**. This is the kind of a phrase also given to Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. God is before all things. Before he created the angels, glory and majesty were his. Though Satan and men try to usurp his authority, even now, all belongs rightfully to him. In the future, God will vindicate his great name and demonstrate to all in a final glorious moment that he alone is glorious, majestic, powerful, and the final authority on all matters.

And even now, God has shown this to be true. **Jude ends his letter with that great word that even my 1 year old knows: Amen.** Amen means “yes!” It is an affirmation that we make when we agree with something that has been said. Amen! Yes! God is who he says he is. God has done what he says he has done. You are the recipients of his gracious working in history.

And so there are some responses that you should have when considering Jude's letter and his doxology. **First**, you must come to recognize that your life's purpose is to give praise to God. A doxology is not merely a formality that needs to go at the end of a letter or the end of a worship service. It reflects the very purpose of life: to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

We employ a doxology each week so as to give you a final great word about God, and to put a note of praise upon your lips as you leave the service. But these doxologies must **never be taken by you as mere lip service**. You need to consider that which is said with sobriety and joy. God has given you amazing grace to overcome the world.

True worship of God then leads you to obey his commandments. In an ironic way, when you are told that God does everything for you, even keeping you from stumbling and presenting you blameless before the throne on judgment day, **this actually provides the power to observe the commandments**. This is also the grace of God. So, when you hear the doxology or the

gospel of Christ, you must reflect upon that salvation which you so happily enjoy. And you must think about this God who has done all of these things for you. And you must desire to obey him out of thankfulness.

Finally, the most fundamental aspect of law-keeping is to **worship God yourself**. This is the end for which you were created. Jude has done this in his letter. We have done this today. We will do it more in the Supper to come. Will you continue this as you walk out of the service this week, into a brand new year in which many joys and many sorrows will surely come your way? Will you praise God and worship him simply because this is the deepest longing of your heart?