

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory	Pastor/Teacher
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THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S SUSTAINING GRACE

“Can you think of something you were afraid would happen this year but didn’t? Or that you were afraid would not happen but did? A hundred years ago, other *experts* predicted that by 2025:

- People would live to be 150 years old.
- There would be only three nations: the *United States of Europe*, and China.
- The Earth would utilize one common language.
- New York City would build triple- and quadruple-decked streets to accommodate its traffic.
- There would be world peace, a common world currency, and universal free trade.

And a seminary professor in Pennsylvania had the audacity to claim that people would use a pocket-sized apparatus for communications to see and hear each other without being in the same room. What a crazy idea.” So wrote James Denison over at the Denison forum talking about the *uncertainty principle* of life.”¹ Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) made this observation many years ago, “Those who confess our Lord Jesus Christ find themselves in an extremely dangerous situation these days. They readily and dependably go about things as *believers*. They are known as *the faithful* and deserve high praise in distinction from *those who fall away*.”² At the end of this very brief epistle, Jude gives us this glorious doxology that reminds us of God’s power to save to the end all those who are His. The Apostle Paul likewise underscored this same theme. In Romans 16:25 he declared, “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel.” Again in Ephesians 3:20 he wrote “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.” “Here, too,” writes Michael Green, “Jude ends his letter with heartfelt adoration to the one who is able to keep you from falling.”³

I. **KEPT FROM WHAT?** The KJV has *falling*. The NIV and ESV have *stumbling*. The Greek word is *aptaistous*, lit. sure-footed. There are two other Greek words that are also translated “to stumble.” The first is *proskoptō*, to knock against, to stumble. The second word is *skandalizō*, to ensnare, cause to fall. We get our English word *scandal* from this word. These two words are often used in a literal sense as in Matt. 4:6 and Luke 4:11 where Satan tempts Jesus with the Scriptural promise that angels would keep him from *striking* his foot against a stone. The metaphorical sense is likewise intended in texts like Matt. 7:27, with wind beating against a house, and John 11:9, 10, where Jesus speaks of a person not stumbling in daytime but tripping over something at night. In James 3:2, we are told, “For we all *stumble* in many ways.” Here the Greek word is *ptaomen*, to go astray, to slip up. Barclay helpfully observes: “There is no man in this world who does not sin in something. The word James uses means to *slip up*. ‘Life,’ said Lord Fisher, the great sailor, ‘is strewn with orange peel.’ Sin is so often not deliberate but the result of a slip up when we are off our guard. This universality of sin runs all through the Bible. *None is righteous, no not one*, quotes Paul. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:10, 23). *If we say we have no sin*, says John, *we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. (1 John 1:8). *There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins*, said the

preacher (Ecclesiastes 7:20). *There is no man, says the Jewish sage, among them that be born, but he hath dealt wickedly; and among the faithful there is none who hath not done amiss.* (2 Esdras 8:35). There is no room for pride in human life, for there is not a man upon earth who has not some blot of which to be ashamed. Even the pagan writers have the same conviction of sin. *It is the nature of man to sin both in private and in public life,* said Thucydides (3:45). *We all sin,* said Seneca, *some more grievously, some more lightly (On Clemency 1:6).*⁴ The real problem of spiritual failure, as Martin points out, “is common to all (see 2:10 with the sad verdict that by one slip all are guilty of breaking the entire law).”⁵

II. **KEPT HOW?** Our text tells us that God is *able*. This is a very common Biblical theme. In Hebrews 7:25 we read “He is *able* to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” In Philippians 3:21, Paul tells us that God is *able* to “transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.” Our text declares he will guard. The term used here is *phulassō*, which preserves the idea of protection against perils, both manifest and secret. This guarding activity is the means whereby the keeping is realized.⁶

III. **KEPT FOR WHAT?** “To present you without blemish in the presence of his glory.” Thomas Manton, that great Puritan preacher, declared, “observe, that when Christ presenteth the elect he will present them *faultless*, that is, both in respect of justification and sanctification. This was intended before the world was, Eph. 1:4, *He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be hold and without blame before him in love;* but is not accomplished till then. Now we are humbled with many infirmities and sins, but then *presented holy, unblamable, and unreprovable in his sight,* Col. 1:22. The work is undertaken by Christ, and he will carry it on till it be complete: here the wedding garments are making, but then put on.”⁷

CONCLUSION: William Jenkyns (1612-1685) was a very accomplished Puritan commentator. Thomas Manton, who I just cited, paid tribute to those whose works he has used for the enrichment of his own soul and the preparation of his expository sermons. He mentions in particular the “elaborate commentary of (his) revered brother, Mr. William Jenkyns,” and goes on to point out that this able minister of the gospel expounded the epistle of Jude so well that, for a time, he regarded the publication of his own work as unnecessary. In bringing his massive study to a close (it is 360 pages of double columns!), Jenkyns writes, “it is said he will present the saints without spot, *amōmous*, irreprehensible, unblamable, such as in whom the greatest carper, or strictest and most curious beholder, shall not be able to behold any thing amiss, no defect of what should be, or excess of what should not be. The church shall not have *spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*, no stain or scar, no freckle or deformity; nothing of stain or contagion received from others, no wrinkle, no defect of spiritual moisture, nothing which may make her seem uncomely in Christ’s eye: not only great and heinous sins, which are great botches and boils, but every least speck and wrinkle, shall be taken away. Now sin is subdued, but then it shall be rooted out. Here saints are freed from the power of it, but then from the presence of it also. He who will wipe away all tears from the eyes of his church, will undoubtedly take away all matter of mourning from her soul. Heaven would not be heaven to a saint, could any spot continue in heaven. But when sin is gone, sorrow must needs fly away: if the fountain be dried up, the streams must needs follow. Sin brought in tears, and tears shall go away with sin. Because saints shall be presented faultless, therefore with exceeding joy.”⁸

ENDNOTES

¹ James Denison, *A Seminary Professor Predicted the Cellphone a Century Ago*, <https://denisonforum.org>

² Abraham Kuyper, *Honey From The Rock: Daily Devotions From Young Kuyper* (rpt. Lexham Press, 2018), p. 453.

³ M. Green, *The Epistle of Jude: New Testament Commentaries* (Eerdmans, 1976), p. 190.

⁴ Wm. Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of James and Peter* (The Saint Andrew Press, 1976), p. 82.

⁵ R. P. Martin, *James: Word Biblical Commentary* (Word, 1988), p. 109.

⁶ D. E. Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (BJV Press, 1989), p. 294.

⁷ *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton V* (rpt. Maranatha Publications, 1973), p. 366.

⁸ Wm. Jenkyns, *Exposition of The Epistle of Jude* (rpt. James & Klock, 1976), p. 358.