

Doxology

Jude 24-25

I hope you understand what I mean when I say that the Christian life is all about doxology! The meaning of life, the purpose for the existence of life, is to give praise to God. Doxology. The Greek word “doxa” refers to God’s glory. And “logos” means word, so a doxology is a word of glory, a word about the glory of God! A word, obviously, of praise to the glory of God.

Above all else, that is our purpose in life. Cutting through all the other duties and responsibilities of God’s word, cutting through all the other joys and struggles of life, that is to be the definition of our lives: a word of praise to the glory of God. Perhaps the most comprehensive summary of that doxology is found at the end of Romans 11, the conclusion to the Apostle Paul’s exposition of Christian faith and doctrine. There are eleven chapters in Romans to describe the doctrinal and theological content of the gospel, and all of it ends with these words of doxology,

Rom. 11:36 “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

Those words summarize everything else. They summarize everything that can be said about the promises of the gospel. “To him be glory forever. Amen.”

We sing each week a brief hymn entitled “doxology”, too, don’t we? “Praise God from whom all blessings flow...” Actually, that is but one verse of a longer hymn, written in the 17th century by an Anglican Bishop. But there are other doxologies in Scripture as well, such as,

Eph. 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...”

Or, 1 Peter 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

A word of praise. A word of glory.

This morning, we come to another doxology, another word of glory. This one is rather extensive, with some detailed descriptions about God and his work, all worthy of our praise. And this is important as we end our study of this book of Jude, because it is a book filled with warnings. Warnings about those who have crept in unnoticed, seeking the harm of the church by perverting “the grace of our God into lewdness.” The book is a warning about those who “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” And ultimately, for them “the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.”

And so we are “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” In the midst of that, you need to watch yourselves, “building yourselves up in your most holy faith and prayer in the Holy Spirit.” You must “keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” And perhaps, all of that seems just too difficult, too daunting a task. Too dangerous a proposition. You feel doomed to fail, for the danger is simply too great. Indeed, perhaps you have already failed. You have stumbled, maybe often. You know that you aren’t blameless, and you grieve your sins as you seek to repent of them.

Or perhaps your soul is overconfident, thinking yourself able to

stand in your own strength. Perhaps you think your perseverance in the faith is a matter of your own ability, or you act as if you believe that. Perhaps you think you are succeeding, but deep down, you still know the danger of falling, the danger of stumbling into sin.

In that context, we come this morning to a word of glory! An encouraging word of glory. A doxology of praise, intended to give you the very encouragement you need, the very strength you may feel that you lack. Because this word of praise to God focuses upon what God does for us as his people. Specifically, his preservation. Thus we give,

I. PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS WORK OF PRESERVATION.

Specifically, v.24

Go back to the very beginning of this book, verse 1. Jude writes “those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept [or preserved] for Jesus Christ.” Kept, preserved. Guarded carefully and faithfully. Kept safe from harm. The root idea is preservation! It is the same in 1 Peter 1, where Peter identifies “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” And then he says of you, you Christians, you are those,

1 Peter 1:5 “...who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Kept. Preserved! Here in Jude the Greek word emphasizes the guards, and the position of safety which the guards provide. You are protected! Or, to be more accurate with our text, you praise God because he is able to protect you. The word of praise is this, “to him who is able to keep you.”

And Jude explains that protection even further, with such

encouragement to us who feel our own frailties and weakness. For the word of praise is given “to him who is able to keep you from stumbling.”

A. God keeps you from stumbling.

Stumbling is easy to understand, isn't it? We all do it a lot. We are always prone to stumbling. We are easily tripped up, easily caught in the traps that are set out for us.

Stumbling surely refers to stumbling into sin, falling into sin. It surely refers to our propensity to give in to sin, to indulge the sin that so easily besets us. And stumbling also refers to the traps and deceits that others put in our paths, ultimately referring even to the wiles of the devil, who is always set on tripping us up as often and as fully as he is able to do.

So we sing praise to the God who is able to keep you from stumbling.

What is it that causes you to stumble? What is the besetting sin that afflicts you? What is the weakness or the temptation to which you are most prone? Where have you stumbled in the past? Where do you fear you will continue to stumble? Those are all very humbling questions, aren't they? Perhaps they are discouraging questions, because you immediately know the answer!

So here is the encouragement! Here is the word of praise. God “is able to keep you from stumbling.” It isn't a matter of your own strength. It isn't a matter of your own ability. You aren't abandoned or left alone to struggle. You aren't given a specific measure of performance which you must accomplish before you can come to God and believe yourself to be acceptable.

No, beloved, God keeps you from stumbling. That's his protection. That's his preservation. Paul says this when he writes to the Philippians,

Phil.1:6 "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace."

God began a good work in you. God will finish it! That's our word of praise of his glory. And we see the result of that work of God as well. He keeps you, he preserves you, with a goal and purpose in mind,

v.24 "...to present you blameless before the presence of his glory."

Just think of that!

B. God presents you blameless.

Blameless. Faultless, without fault.

Let me give you a sense of the importance of that word. In the Old Testament, there are many descriptions of the sacrifices that had to be without blemish, without defect. Just one example, of many that are possible, the passover lamb.

Ex. 12:3 "Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, 6 and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. 7 "Then they

shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it."

A lamb without blemish! A perfect sacrifice. And, of course, in reality, there is only one such sacrifice. Jesus. Jesus himself is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices. Thus we read,

1 Peter 1:18 "...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

Heb. 9:13 "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Jesus was without blemish. His sacrifice of himself was without blemish. And it is he who blesses us with that same status. He makes us to be without blemish! That is his work, and so when Paul writes in Ephesians 5 about husbands and wives, but says, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church," he also gives this description,

Eph. 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

Jesus is the husband. We, the church, are his bride. And Jesus presents us to himself without blemish, without spot or wrinkle, as a bride is presented to her husband on her wedding

day, beautifully adorned in the splendor of her glory. And that is the prophetic vision even in the Old Testament,

Is. 61:10 “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

That glory of the beauty of a bride without blemish is also the prophetic expectation of the future, according to,

Rev. 21:2 “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Beloved, the blessing, the doxology of the gospel is this, that God will present you blameless before the presence of his glory! That is your hope. That is your confidence. At the great wedding supper of the lamb, you and I as Christians are the bride, beautifully adorned. And Jesus is the bridegroom.

Despite your sin. Despite your failure. God will present you blameless. And you will be able to stand in the glory of his presence, and live! You will be able to stand in the glory of his presence, and be found acceptable.

Let me give you a sense of how pervasive this idea is in the New Testament, by reading several cross references that refer to this very same blessing.

1 Thes. 3:11 “Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, 12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”

1 Thes. 5:23 “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

Col. 1:21 “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.”

Phil. 1:9 “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

And even to that church in Corinth, so beset with the troubles of division and discord, God grants this encouragement.

1 Cor. 1:7 “...so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God would sustain even them! Even the Corinthians. Paul goes on to write a letter full of rebuke and correction, but he begins with the encouragement that God would hold them “guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This isn't just some less-important secondary point, but it lies at the very heart of the encouragements of the gospel. This is our hope, our hope of life. And this can be your expectation of the final judgment, that God himself will present you holy and blameless before himself.

Again, beloved, that's a doxology! That's a word of praise to the glory of God, that God would do such a thing! For we do not have anything close to blamelessness in and of ourselves. Rather, we, ourselves, have plenty of blemishes. We are left simply to confess our sins, such as we read in,

Ps. 51:1 "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin."

We are left simply to plead guilty!

Ps. 51:3 "For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge."

But that's not where the gospel leaves us! And the dangers of this world, even all the wiles and schemes of Satan himself, don't leave us without hope. Because the hope is not in us! The hope is in God who has granted us these unimaginable blessings! Our hope is in the God who "has caused us to be born again to a living hope," "according to his great mercy!" Our hope is in the God who has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

That's why your life is to be a doxology. That's how your life can be a doxology! Because God has promised these blessings. And God will accomplish these blessings. Though your sin might be ever before you, God "is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory." So we sing that as a doxology. We sing a word of glory "to him who able" to do just that! A word of glory to him who will do just that!

And God will do it that so that you might have "great joy."

v.24

Part and parcel of this doxology is the experience of joy.

C. God establishes you in joy.

And this is no superficial joy, but rather an exultation in the anticipation of eternal glory. One commentator writes this, "The noun exultation ...[has] special eschatological overtones denoting the jubilation of God's chosen people at the his revelation at the End." In other words, the joy of heaven! The joy of eternal glory!

In the words of another writer, this word translated 'great joy' is "a word particularly used of exultation at the heavenly banquet...It is essentially a word that belongs to heaven."

So, after all the pressures of contending for the faith in a licentious age and permissive church, this doxology envisions you as God's people "standing before God like perfect sacrifices in his heavenly sanctuary, in self-offering to the glory of God amidst the joyous jubilation of the redeemed."

I have decided to preach this sermon in two parts, and to focus on verse 25 next week, with praise to God for his personal glory, in order to keep the focus today upon that expectation of joy as you stand before God in the last day. And I will be the first to admit, there are many circumstances of this life that simply defy that whole sense of confidence and joy. There are all sorts of ways in which Satan attacks, ways in which he causes harm, ways in which the struggles and sufferings of this world can greatly diminish or even destroy that sense of great joy. All sorts of fiery trials. And this world, this age, in and of itself, offers no hope and no joy.

The Scriptures, therefore, turn our attention to the glory of the

age to come as the source of our joy now!

1 Peter 4:12 “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

So it is that your great joy is the expectation that you shall be presented “faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,” “when his glory is revealed.” Even as you endure fiery trials here and now.

So what is your greatest source of joy? If it is going to be real, it must be that expectation of what God has promised. You will stand before God, in Christ, not as guilty, not in the expectation of judgment. But blameless. Without spot or blemish. You, beloved, you who love God, you who love Jesus, you will stand “faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

And how can you have that confidence? How can you have that joy? God himself will keep you from stumbling. And God himself will present you. God himself will be your escort. He will vouch for you. He will cover you with his own glory. And there will be the certain experience of your joy!

Therefore, here and now, we can still sing Jude’s doxology, “to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,” to him “be glory, majesty, dominion, and power.”

To him be the glory, because Jesus gave himself up for his church,

Eph. 5:26 “...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to

Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

That hope, beloved, is to be your joy. And that joy is to be your doxology. And that doxology is to be your life.

Rom. 11:36 “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”