

**Sermon Series: - By Grace You Have Been Saved**  
**Sermon Title and Text - Perseverance of the Saints: He Will Hold You Fast - Jude**

**Sermon Points:**

*Introduction: How in this world can we endure? (Jude 3-19)*

- 1. Loved, Called, and Kept by God (vv.1-2)**
- 2. Keep Yourselves in the Love of God (vv.20-21)**
- 3. Blood-Bought Love Keeps Others (vv.22-23)**

*Conclusion: We Will endure because God is able to keep us (vv.24-25)*

*To the One who is able to keep you from stumbling and to cause you to stand before the face of his glory blameless in exhilaration. To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time and now and unto all the ages.*

-----

**Corporate Prayer:**

*Father you have bought us with the blood of your Son. You have promised to keep us from throwing away our faith in the midst of the broken world. Father, help us remember that you are able to keep us. And Father, help us keep ourselves and others by deepening our faith and dependence in you.*

-----

*Introduction: How in this world can we endure? (Jude 3-19)*

**This message this morning feels weighty to me. Not in a bad way. Just in an important way. This morning we'll be looking at the little book of Jude and talking about the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.**

**We all know what the word perseverance means. It means you keep going. You don't give up. You don't throw in the towel. You don't walk away. You finish the task.**

**And the Bible teaches us very clearly that if we don't persevere in our faith until the end of our lives then we won't be with God someday. Let me read you a couple verses to show you that:**

*If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us. (2 Timothy 2:12)*

*And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Mark 13:13)*

**So, clearly, unless we persevere in our faith to the end, we won't be saved. That's the first side of perseverance. Now, let me tell you why this message feels heavy. Throughout the New Testament, the two things that seem to send people running away from Jesus most often are suffering and sin. And this world is filled to the brim with suffering and sin.**

**Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes. Chronic, physical pain. Relational pain. Financial difficulty. Disability. Disease. Children walking away from Jesus. Failed adoptions. Hard marriages. And perhaps all of these same things happening to the people around you or close to you.**

**Sometimes these things feel like such punches to our reality and punches to our comfort and punches to our joy that we just want to throw in the towel. We wake up and the beauty of Jesus is hazy if we're seeing him at all. The love of God is cold and distant if we feel it at all. The power of the Spirit feels tiny if we feel it at all.**

**And we could very easily like the Rich Young ruler, walk away from Jesus, because what he's asking is just too hard. I would like to follow you Jesus, but not there.**

But, when we're really honest, the thing that threatens to undo us most, and the thing that threatens to undo us in the midst of that suffering is our own sinful hearts. And what's particularly heavy about the book of Jude is that Jude actually changed the letter he was going to write because people *in the church* had been drawn away by their sin. People that claimed to be Christians.

Now, here we sit in church and I wonder if some of the sins listed in Jude could describe us here at Sojourners. Let me just list the things Jude points out in verses 3-19:

- They pervert the grace of God and therefore deny Jesus. This means that they are making excuses for their sin by saying that because there is grace there sin is not a big deal. Have you ever justified your sin like that? Deep down?
- They were sexually immoral, caught up in sexual sin.
- They were eager to reject authority of God as taught by the church they were in. They had better ideas.
- They were like Cain in that they were often selfish and therefore jealous, often frustrated that God wasn't being fair, and therefore often angry and holding grudges against others.
- They loved money and enjoyed personal gain. You can see this in your own heart when you begin to store up for yourself and generosity goes down. You hoard instead of help. Or when money gets tight you feel extremely fearful.
- They were grumblers, showing they didn't trust God's providence.
- They followed sinful desires instead of God's word which would help them desire Jesus.
- They boasted often and wanted people to think highly of them or less of others.
- They showed favoritism. They would be nicer to some folks than others for reasons that had nothing to do with Jesus but with their own interests.

And so, if we find ourselves suffering and with these sins springing up in our hearts, how do we persevere?

Well the second side of this doctrine of perseverance of the saints is that all who have truly believed in Jesus *will* persevere to the end. So, this doctrine is heavy, because we must persevere to the end. And this doctrine is glorious, because in it we learn that we have a God bigger than our sin and suffering who will help us persevere to the end if we have truly trusted Jesus.

Loved, Called, and Kept by God (vv.1-2)

So, how do we persevere to the end through sin and suffering? Look at Jude vv. 1-2:

*To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept in Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*

If you've been with us for this series, you'll notice some of these terms. First, notice that Jude is writing these verses to the "called ones." What does he mean when he says that? Let's remember quickly where we've been in this series.

God chose us in love before the foundation of the world, God called us with an irresistible call to trust Jesus, God made our dead hearts alive so that we could see Jesus as our beautiful Savior instead of a boring historical figure, God granted us faith to trust him with our new hearts, God declared us innocent in his courtroom, he put all of our sin on Jesus and gave us all of the righteousness of Jesus perfect life, God adopted us as his children and loves us because he wants to not because he has to, and God put his Spirit into our hearts to continue to help us fight sin and turn to Jesus. That's what it means to be called.

It means God called you in such a way that he would have you. He would not leave it up to chance. You are his.

**And then there is something that's not real obvious in English but shows up in the original language. The word for "beloved" and the word for "kept" are both in the perfect tense. Now, what that tense means is that something happened and was completed in the past that has results that continue into the present.**

**That means that if you have trusted in Jesus you have already been loved by God at the cross of Christ and those results continue into the present. You ARE loved because you have been loved. And you have already been kept IN Jesus when you trusted him by faith and those results continue into the present. You ARE kept because you have been kept.**

**In the midst of your suffering and your sin feel the reality that you are loved by God because of Jesus. Feel the reality that the reason you are sitting here today STILL a Christian today is that you have been kept in Jesus by faith through the Spirit dwelling inside of you. In other words the whole Triune God has been working to save and sustain you from before the world existed.**

**Hear me clearly when I say that the ultimate reason you will persevere to the end is that God will keep you by his grace.**

**If the Spirit is in you right now, if you've truly believed that Christ died for your sins and that is your greatest treasure, then I pray right now, deep inside your soul the Spirit is crying, "Abba, Father." And you are experiencing it as, "Yes, Father, I belong to you. This suffering has been hard but I cannot leave you because you're holding onto me. Yes, Jesus, your words are hard and I am caught in my sin and feel close to giving up, but I cannot leave you, where else would I go? You have the words of eternal life. And, Spirit, sometimes I wish you weren't there so I could just give up and not have this internal struggle with sin, but I know you won't go. Thank you for helping me see Jesus as beautiful and my sin as ugly."**

**O, Called Christian, you have been loved and you are loved completely right now by God. And you have been kept in Jesus and you are kept in Jesus safely right now by the Spirit dwelling inside you. You will make it because God will keep keeping you because he loves you more than you can imagine right now and has since before the world began. (give a minute)**

**Keep Yourselves in the Love of God (vv.20-21)**

**So, that's verses 1-2, and then verses 3-19 Jude lists the horrible, sinful situation of some people falling away. So, what will he say next about this sinful situation to these Christians kept by God? Look at verses 20-21:**

*But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, **keep yourselves in the love of God**, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.*

**He gives one command and then two ways to do it. Do you see that? The command is "keep yourselves in the love of God." And then he gives two ways to keep the command.**

**But, before we dive into that, can I point out for those of you who are feeling distant from God this morning from sin or suffering that he again reminds them in verse 20 that they are loved as their very identity. It is their name. They are "beloved." They are loved by God. It is who they are. And it is flowing from that identity that he gives them this command to keep themselves in that love. So, remind yourself now again that you are loved.**

**Ok, so beloved Christian, you have been kept in Jesus and will be. But now, your command is to keep yourself in the love of God. When should they carry this out? Look at the end of verse 21: "waiting for the mercy of God to come and lead them home to eternal life." They carry out this command the whole time they wait for God to lead them home to eternal life. In other words, this is the Christian life.**

**And Jude gives them two ways: "building upon their most holy faith and praying in the Spirit."**

**First, we build ourselves up upon our faith. The foundation of this work is our faith. And the cornerstone of our faith is in Jesus. So, what does it mean to build ourselves up in our faith to keep ourselves in the love of God? I think it means to be desperate and diligent to know Jesus deeper. We need to keep building, keep seeing more of his beauty and more of the depth of his sacrifice for our sin as the God-man. We need to see**

more of his authority in our life as good and right to be obeyed (1 John 5). We need to have the Spirit open our eyes to see Jesus more and more and be transformed into his image (2 Cor. 3). And if we see Jesus and are more in love with him and obedient to him and transformed to be like him, we will be standing in the love of God. God loves his Son with a perfect love. We are loved by God with the same love that he has for his Son (John 17). And as we know Jesus, love him, obey him, and become like him we are participating in that love by the Spirit of God.

And can I just be real boring for a minute and tell you where we do these things? How do we build ourselves up to know Jesus? Two obvious ways throughout the New Testament: open the book that is devoted to pointing to him. And be with God's people who will build you up. You want to build yourself up to know and love Jesus more? Open the book about Christ and be with the body of Christ.

And then, it says, secondly, that we "pray in the Holy Spirit." Now, we know this is not some kind of special prayer, because Paul tells the Ephesians to pray at all times in the Spirit for all things in Ephesians 6. So, what does it mean? I think it means to not pray in the flesh. The flesh is always opposite of the Spirit. If you pray and find yourself praying things that just the normal old you would pray without the thought of God, it may not be the Spirit. If you find yourself struggling with a deep longing for God's help and God's will in prayer, that is probably the Spirit. There will be in-between times where the Spirit is warring with the flesh. But, the more you are with God's people where God's Spirit promise to build up through different gifts, and the more you are in God's word that the Spirit wrote, the more confident you can be that you will pray in the Spirit.

And as you pray to God in the Spirit and he helps you direct your prayers and talk to the Father through the blood of the Son and hear from God that same way, the cry of Abba, Father will confirm that you are in the love of God and you will get help from God to know, love, obey, and be transformed to be like Jesus by the Spirit as you pray.

So, beloved Christian, kept by God, keep yourselves more and more deeply experiencing that love by word, fellowship, and prayer, and then wait for his mercy to come and bring you home. His mercy will come. He will help you. He loves you. He will keep you. He will keep you through your keeping. Part of his keeping of you is leading you to do these things that keep you. That's what God does in the hearts of those he is keeping. So, right now, ask God to work his keeping power in your heart by his Spirit to cause you to open the Bible, fellowship with other believers, and pray so that you keep yourselves in a deep experience of his love that transcends your sin and suffering.

#### **Blood-Bought Love Keeps Others (vv.22-23)**

Let's look at one more thing in this text before we get to our application. Look at verses 22-23:

*And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.*

As those who are waiting for mercy that will lead us to eternal life and as those who receive that mercy as God sustains as we read and pray and gather, we are eager to extend that mercy to others.

Those who are loved by God, love others who are loved by God. We truly are a blood-bought family. And the blood of Christ doesn't just pay for God's love for us, but also pays for our love for each other. So that we are eager to get messy and help each other.

We are eager to meet and talk and spend time helping someone work through their doubts of sin and suffering. We are eager to get messy and go to dangerous places where we see people playing with fire. We are willing to say the hard thing because we love them. And we are even willing to go to place that are fearful because evil seems to be winning and the garments are stained and ugly and broken and full of sin, being careful to build ourselves up first so that we're strong, but then humbly and boldly going in the strength God supplies to the hardest people and places to love them.

But, let me ask us two questions right now. Are we building ourselves up in the love of God and experiencing his love and mercy deep enough that we want to overflow to others or are we mainly focused on how hard

other people are and how hard it is to go there and how other people have failed us? God loved us while we were yet sinners, he didn't wait for us to be safe.

And second, are we honest enough with each other about our struggles and sins and fears that we can move into those places? Do we open our lives up and ask for help? Do we know people well enough to know when they're struggling? Should we? Or is some vague familiarity enough? Do we even love each other enough that we'd consider putting ourselves in harm's way near a fire for the sake of Christ?

Blood-bought love of believers is one of the ways God pours out his keeping love to those that belong to him.

In other words, God ultimately does all the keeping of those that belong to him, but he does it through causing us to keep ourselves, so that if we are not keeping ourselves and keeping each other, we may find out that we do not belong to him.

And if we do belong to him, we may find resistance from our sinful hearts, but we will find a desire to keep ourselves and help keep each other because the Spirit of love has been purchased by the blood of Jesus and lives inside of us to empower us to keep ourselves and overflow to others.

*Application: We Will endure because God is able to keep us (vv.24-25)*

Let me just read these final two verses in the book and let them settle in for a moment with the translation I provided you there:

*To the One who is able to keep you from stumbling and to cause you to stand before the face of his glory blameless in exhilaration.*

If right now, you feel rising in your soul or stirring in your soul, even with some resistance by the Spirit, a desire to know Jesus more, know your brothers and sisters here more, a desire to go deep in the word and prayer, those desires are part of how God is keeping you in this moment by the Spirit.

And if that is you, then hear this clearly: **HE. IS. ABLE.** He is able to keep you from stumbling away from faith in Jesus. He is bigger than your sin and your suffering. They don't compare. And he who began a good work in you will be faithful to bring it to completion. Because he is able, you will stand before the face of his glory one day spotless from sin because of Jesus and in exhilaration. Can you imagine that moment of exhilaration?

You kept me! No sin clings to me. Jesus saved me. His blood washed me. And here I am before beauty and glory I could not have imagined on earth. Here I am with you Father, forever! Your power kept me! You had the authority to keep me! You brought me to your word by the Spirit. You stirred me up to pray by the Spirit! And then you kept me in your love by causing me to do things that would keep me! All by your power. All because of the blood of Jesus. All in the power of the Spirit. All planned before time ever began.

And, can you imagine looking around and seeing each other there and the exhilaration it will be to be around the throne together one day, knowing we got messy and God used broken sinners to help other broken sinners trust Jesus just one more day by the Spirit? God, your power purchased me and then your Spirit that lived inside of me helped me to know, love, obey, and be transformed to be like Jesus more so that I could, by your Spirit help others know, love, obey, and be transformed to be like Jesus more. What will we say in that moment of exhilaration?

*To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time and now and unto all the ages.*