

A Preservation for a Presentation

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Date: 11 September 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] We'll begin our worship now singing in Psalm 138. Psalm 138, that's in the Sing Sam's version on page 179. I'm going to sing the whole psalm, the verses through to verse 8. The tune is Wareham.

I'll praise you, Lord, with all my heart. Before the gods I'll sing your praise. I'll bow towards your holy place and bless your holy name always. Psalm 138, we stand to sing these verses. We'll sing the whole psalm.

Amen. I'll praise you for your faithfulness.

And for your calm and love, O Lord. For over all days you have praised your holy name and faithful word.

The very day I called to you, you gave an answer to my plea.

[2 : 07] You made me whole within myself. With you resolved, you strengthened me.

O Lord, let all the kings give praise. When from your mouth they hear your word.

Let them make strong the ways of God. For praise the glory of the Lord.

People shall receive licence and glory of the Lord. O the Lord of Threats on High, the lowly person he protects. Where does the brown and daughty one, he knows afar of country jests.

[3 : 38] On who I mourn, the troubled heart, your tender care preserves my life.

You raised your hand against my foes, your right hand saves me from their strife.

The Lord will certainly fulfill, for me the purpose he commands.

Your lovely church forevermore, we share the words of your own hands.

Let us now pray. We'll call upon the Lord's name in prayer. Amen. Almighty and gracious God, we give thanks for these great facts about you and about your attributes and your works.

[5 : 11] And we give thanks, O Lord, that they are available to us through your Word, and also that they are true for us each day. And we thank you tonight, Lord, that we come to worship you once again, the God of whom we have been singing.

The God who is our Creator and our Savior, the God who made all things for his own glory, and who has purposed all things that come to pass, and that will come to pass between now and the end of the age.

We thank you, Lord, tonight for all that makes you glorious. And even though we cannot but comprehend such a small part of what makes you glorious, yet, Lord, we say Amen to the doxologies of your Word, where down through the ages your church has attributed praise to you, and where we come to great exclamations of praise in your Word itself.

Lord, our God, we pray that you would help us to take them up for ourselves and apply them in our own experience. We thank you tonight that we are privileged once again to be in your presence, privileged to lift up our voices in praise to you, privileged to be able to speak directly with you, our Father in heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we know our privilege also, Lord, of having your Word and hearing your Word expounded and read, and coming to depend upon your Holy Spirit to direct us into these avenues of your Word, where your own truth is brought to us.

[6 : 49] Lord, we thank you tonight that our privilege, while it is greater than we can possibly put into words, nevertheless, we value it and prize it. Lord, we pray that you would always enable us to present that privilege to the world around us by the way that we live, by the ways in which we commend the Lord Jesus Christ to that world around us.

We thank you, Lord, for the ability that your Spirit brings to us, for the way that you bring to us, O Lord, that spiritual energy, the spiritual energy that we know brought us from death to life, the Spirit, Lord, that we ourselves seek tonight, that the God who is able to do exceeding abundantly above

what we are able to ask or think, through the power that works in your people, will indeed be at work in us this evening.

And we give thanks that that is the same power in which you inhabit and in which you empower your people, the same power that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

We thank you, Lord, for the reality of that especially, for it is through his death and resurrection from the dead, his ascension to glory for all that is in himself as the Savior of his people, that we are able to approach you tonight.

And we take delight, O Lord, in all his sufficiency. We take delight in presenting him to you in our praises as the one by whom we come into your presence and the one who has brought to us such a wonderful salvation.

[8 : 30] Oh, bless us, we pray here, even though it is something we are so used to, most of us, at least here, Lord, find it a regular practice on our part to come together to worship you, to come before you, to sing your praises and call upon your name.

Oh, help us never to take it for granted. Help us always to prize it as a privilege. And grant that even tonight, Lord, we may once again know the need we have of that refreshing power of your Holy Spirit to reach us once again and to work within our hearts.

We pray that as we lift up our minds to you, O Lord, that you'd once again enlighten us through your truth of these great facts concerning yourself. And we thank you that they are brought before us in your Word as facts that are constantly true, facts that will unchangeably, are unchangeably true and will remain facts throughout eternity.

For you are God and there is none like you. And we come, O Lord, to exclaim in our praises that that is the case. And we give thanks for the way in which you have brought yourself near to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For he, as we know, became human and entered into our experiences and was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. And therefore, he is able to bring us that support and comfort and guidance through his own experience and through the very fact of his being God that we find uniquely in himself.

[10 : 08] Lord, we ask all, as we worship you tonight in his name, and we give thanks that we do so waiting upon you, waiting that you would speak to us once again from your Word.

Lord, bless us here in all our activities as a congregation. Lord, we thank you for every encouragement that we can look back on, for every way in which you have blessed your cause here down through the years and for the way you continue to uphold it, for the way that you enable us, O Lord, to engage in the work of the Gospel.

Bless every activity that takes place in support of the Gospel. We ask, O Lord, that amongst our young people and our children and our infants, that you'd be pleased, O Lord, to show your great power, your blessing upon these young lives.

We pray for them as they spend their lives in this world and face the difficulties and challenges of that age we belong to. O gracious God, look after them, we pray, as we commit them again to your care and keeping.

And we give thanks that we can anticipate by faith that they will be raised up not only in the church of God, but in the faith of their fathers and mothers and grandparents.

[11 : 25] We ask that this would be indeed their own desire, that they would come to follow in the ways of Christ. Remember us, Lord, at this time, we pray as a nation, at this very significant, historic time in our experience.

And as we do give thanks, O Lord, for our Queen, who is now taken from the scene of time and served so well down through these many years of our life.

We do thank you, Lord, as we recollect all that she was to the nation and indeed all that she was to the world and to the leaders of the world for the example that she set of dedication and of commitment.

And for the example she also set of trust in God and of the way in which she so readily spoke of you, even in her public addresses. And Lord, we pray that our nation will indeed by your blessing now come to recollect and take note once again of these precious things.

And we thank you tonight for all that she has been and was down through the years of her life and reign. We pray now for King Charles as he takes on the rulership of the nation.

[12 : 43] Bless him, we pray. Bless his companion in life. Bless his family. Bless him in all his responsibilities. Help us always to pray for him. Lord, whatever we may think of him, whatever we

may have said in the past of him, grant, Lord, that we may never cease to bring him before your throne of grace.

And we pray that he himself will rule in the same manner in which his mother ruled. And that he will come to himself take up and practice those many qualities of her life.

And especially that he will not be ashamed to own you as his God or to commend you to those over whom he bears rule. and we ask that your blessing will be with them each day.

Bless our parliament. Bless them, Lord, as they are elected to high office. Help them also to realize that it is by your will that they rule, that it is to you that they are answerable, and that you have given them so many advantages to us as a nation in your word of truth and in the history that we encapsulate as a people.

Lord, help them, we pray, to build upon that precious heritage and to do so in a way that would seek to protect and enhance the faith of the nation as it is predominantly a Christian nation and a Protestant nation.

[14:12] Yet, Lord, we give thanks for the diversity of gifts and for the freedom we have for even those who are of a different persuasion to be able to practice their own beliefs and their own way of life.

And yet, we pray that as a nation we be led by your truth and by your spirit. We ask your blessing now for those of our number tonight who are ill and those who can't be with us through other ailments.

We ask that you bless them. Bless those who continue to mourn the passing of loved ones.

Remember them, Lord, with your compassion and comfort and draw near to them. Grant that all who have various anxieties and various things that cause them anxiety in life.

Bless them. Give them in their minds to know the peace and the calming influence of your spirit.

Hear us now, we pray, and pardon our sin. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Once again, we're going to praise God from the Psalms. This time we're singing in Psalm 61. 61 in the Scottish Psalter, page 293 on the tune of Salzburg.

[15:22] We're singing verses 1 to 5. O God, give ear unto my cry, unto my prayer attend. From the utmost corner of the land my cry to thee I'll send.

What time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity do thou me lead unto the rock that higher is than I. Psalm 61, verses 1 to 5.

Amen. O God, give ear unto my cry, unto my prayer attend.

From the utmost corner of the land my cry to thee I send.

O time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity to the mercy to the mercy and to the rock that higher is now nigh.

[16:58] for thou must form my refuge be, a shelter by thy power, and for defense against my foes the must be a strong time.

Within life's other life you'll lie forever will abide and under cover all thy wings with confidence behind.

For thou it thy rest that I did worst would that I impart from hath lost that I did me oh ma jazz Let us turn to read now from God's Word in the letter of Jude.

The letter of Jude, just one chapter, of course, of this book. So we'll read through the whole of that chapter. Second last book in the Bible, the letter of Jude from the beginning.

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved, and God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

[19:21] Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about your common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus who saved a people out of the land of Egypt afterwards destroyed those who did not believe, and the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner, these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, the Lord rebuke you.

[20 : 50] But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them, for they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, looking after themselves, waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousand of his holy ones to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness, that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit.

[22 : 30] But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Pray 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.

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. 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. 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. Amen. We pray once again that God will bless his word to us. We're going to sing once again in Psalm 124. In the Singed Psalms Version, Psalm 124.

That's on page 170. The tune this time is Old 124th. If God the Lord had not been on our side, let Israel say, had not the Lord been near when foes attacked us, filling us with fear?

[23 : 47] And when the wrath against us reached its height, alive we had been swallowed in their spite. The whole of that short psalm, if God the Lord had not been on our side.

If God the Lord had not been on our side, let Israel say, had not the Lord been near.

When foes attacked us, filling us with fear. And when the wrath against us reached its height, alive we had been swallowed in their spite.

We would have been then well up by the flood. Over our heads the torrent would have gone.

But waters would have carried us along. But praise the Lord, for he has set us free.

[25 : 32] And does not lift us to their cruelty. We are escaped just as a captured bird.

Out of the power it has been set free. The scale is cut.

The scale is cut. We are at liberty. Our head may save.

The name of God the Lord. Who made the earth and heaven is by his word.

Well, let's turn for a short time this evening to Jude. The letter of Jude and verse 24. These two verses to the end of the letter. Amen.

[26 : 45] 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. 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. Well, just as the case is with this doxology which we use to describe these passages that ascribe praise and glory to God, many of the doxologies of Scripture are really packed with wonderful theology, wonderful truth.

Let me just point out one or two of those just as an example. Ephesians 3 verses 20 to 21. Now unto him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work in us, to him be glory in the church and in Jesus Christ throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Or take another example from Hebrews. This is to the Hebrews in chapter 13 near the end of the letter there. Hebrews 13 at verse 20.

Now may the God of peace be brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

[28 : 25] Amen. Amen. And this one we have in Jude is very similar in the way that it is packed full of great truths, particularly about God himself. And as we find in this doxology, two things especially that we need to focus on briefly tonight.

First of all, there's praise to God for who he is. You might say what he does as well. But what he does flows from who he is and what he is like.

Him who is able to keep you from stumbling. This great God, the only God, our Savior, to him be glory, majesty, and so on.

And what he does, what's emphasized there as God's activity, actually flows from God's attributes of what God is like, who he is. It's who he is that lies behind everything he does.

Every aspect of our experience of God and salvation flows from what God has revealed as true of himself. And it suits very much the context of this very short letter, doesn't it?

[29 : 36] Because he talks here about him who is able to keep you from stumbling. He's ascribing praise to God as he describes him that way. And that fits the context of the letter so well, as indeed you would expect, because it's a letter that talks very solemnly of defections, of defections from the truth, of people who are antagonistic to God, people who have gone away into the way of error, all of these things that we read as we read through this book.

So, to be kept amongst defection is really the primary emphasis throughout this letter. It describes all of these different people in different ages of the world.

But it also comes back to this, him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

So, that's the context of the letter. And that amongst all the defection that he speaks of, he is ascribing praise to God as the one who is able to keep them, these believers, from joining any defection and from falling away or from stumbling so that they end up actually being lost.

Well, praise to God, to God for who he is, and there are a number of things there. And then praise to God for his activity in preserving his people and keeping them, but also with a view to presenting them blameless before the presence of his glory.

[31 : 12] These are the two main points this evening. Praise to God for who he is, and praise to this God for his activity.

Now, you notice he's saying here, unto him who is able to keep us, to the only God, our Savior. And what he mentions there, the two great truths about God as he describes God, who he is, who is he? Well, he is the only God. He is the only God, is what he's emphasizing. To the only God be this praise and glory and majesty, dominion and authority.

And that, of course, was crucial for the likes of the Old Testament prophets and indeed for the New Testament apostles as well as others throughout the ages of the church.

Why was it important to them? Well, it's important because, as Paul emphasizes, and as the Old Testament emphasized as well, think of the likes of Exodus 15. That's the praise song of Israel having been delivered, having come through the Red Sea, having seen the destruction of the Egyptians.

[32 : 20] What do they do? They sing a song of praise. And in the middle of that song of praise, it's all about praise to God, of course, for his deliverance. But they're describing, God is described in that as the one who is himself, who is a God like unto him, glorious in holiness, awesome in praises, doing wonders.

And so often, throughout these ascriptions of praise, both in the Old Testament and the New, you'll find this emphasis, who is a God like you? Isaiah chapter 40, there's the same thing again, of course, and Isaiah is very dynamic, as you know, against idolatry, against ascribing deity, ascribing

worship or praise to anyone but to God himself.

And as he comes in chapter 40, to speak of comfort to his people, and describing the foolishness of idolatry, you remember what he says there in verse 25 onwards, where he says, To whom then will you compare me, says the Holy One?

Lift up your eyes and see who created these. He who brings out their hosts by number. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord?

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, but his understanding is unsearchable.

[33 : 50] Such a tremendously powerful contrast to these idols that Israel had gone after, the idols of the pagans around them, that they had imported into their practice and gone after.

And Isaiah, like the other prophets, really comes to emphasize the uniqueness of God, the one God, the only God.

That is Paul's starting point as well in Acts 17, isn't it, when he came to present that great sermon in the Areopagus in Athens, just out with Athens, the city of Athens.

He was crammed full of idols. As Paul walked through Athens, we're told that this is what he saw.

This is really what hit him at heart, all of these idols, this massive idolatry.

And he came across an altar to the unknown God, inscribed to the unknown God, where these Athenians in their idolatry had left this one altar without ascribing the name of any God to it.

[34 : 54] And they were just saying, well, we think there may be another God, and just in case there is, we'll ascribe this altar to him, the unknown God. That was Paul's starting point.

That was where he started to draw their mind to the only God. And not only to the only God, but to the only God who came, as this passage in Jude says, to reveal himself as the Savior of his people. He drew their minds away from the idolatry that they were so involved with, that they were so taken up with, to the God who sent his Son into the world, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many of us, I'm sure, have learned the Shorter Catechism in our Sunday school days or in our youth. That's still a very good practice. Shorter Catechism is an admirable summary of Bible doctrine.

If you know your Shorter Catechism well, then you're well on the way to being almost an accomplished theologian. At least you'll know the main doctrines of the Bible.

[36 : 04] Not only that, but you'll know the way that they connect together. I remember question five of the Catechism, I'm sure. Are there more gods than one? The answer is very simply, there is but one only, the living and true God.

That's what Jude is here saying. And to him, the only God, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority.

You know, our evangelism actually proceeds on that basis. I know we're living, and you know we're living in days when it's not very desirable, for many people at least, of different persuasions, to actually try and convert people from what they believe if it's different to what the Bible itself sets out. Whether that is our duty under God, it's our privilege under God, our evangelism proceeds on the fact there is but one God who calls all of us to repentance.

Whether we are Christians, whether we are Muslims, whether we belong to any other faith or religion in the world, the one God is the only God who calls us tonight to himself through the gospel.

[37 : 25] That's such a critical part of our presentation of the gospel that we never give a hint of there being other than this only, this one God.

God, unto him, the only God, the unique God, God himself, to him be praised. But he then says, the only God, our Savior, to him be praised.

And you see, the ability that Paul is here ascribing to God, the able to keep you from stumbling, we'll come to that in a minute. We're just looking just now at God, who he is and what he's like and who he is.

Well, he's the only God, but he's also the Savior, our Savior, the saving God, the redeeming God.

And the keeping of God of his people is inseparably connected to God saving his people.

He keeps those he saves. He doesn't save in a way that's potentially towards heaven.

[38 : 32] He doesn't save in such a way that that salvation is actually in any sort of doubt from God's perspective, from God's view of it, from God's application of it, from God's side of the issue.

God, our Savior. He doesn't save potentially. He doesn't save partially. He doesn't save conjointly with anyone else.

He is the Savior. And that's one of the glories of the gospel, that God, the Savior, is presented to sinners who need that Savior, who don't need to go out with God himself to find a Savior, who calls people to himself for them to be saved.

1 Peter, you remember, chapter 1, speaks about the inheritance that God's people have been called to, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, that is kept in heaven for you. Who are those for whom that inheritance is kept? Well, he goes on immediately to say, kept for you who are being kept through faith.

[39 : 50] That's what he's saying. God's keeping of his people is with regard to an inheritance that's being kept for them in heaven.

Their security as God himself sets it out in himself and through Jesus Christ, that security is theirs in this world as they travel through it, but it's with a view to being finally in that inheritance that's kept. He is the only God. He is the only God. He is the only God, our Savior. Do you not praise him tonight for that very fact?

That there is no other God but God? Is your worship not focused tonight on the fact that this only God is the Savior?

Indeed, your Savior surely? Is he your Savior? Have you come to acknowledge him and accept him and bow to him and receive him as the Savior that he is in the gospel?

[40 : 54] Well, that's what God here is like. Who he is, he is the only God. He is our Savior. A lot more we could say about that and widen it out, but I want to go on, secondly, to look at praising God for what he does or for his activity.

And that, you can say, is preservation, the keeping of his people, but also presentation. See, again, it's to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

He's keeping them with a view to presenting them ultimately blameless before himself. Their security in God himself is so that they will be with God for all eternity.

A wonderful breadth of teaching and wonderful theological breadth there is in such a doxology as this. Here is, first of all, the preservation.

Now unto him who is able to keep you from stumbling. And that ability is something that the New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, of course, so much emphasizes for us.

[42 : 00] Go back again to the first passage I mentioned earlier in Ephesians chapter 3. Now unto him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work in us.

He is able. He has that ability to keep you from stumbling, to keep you from falling away, to keep you from joining those who have defected from the faith.

And there is a combination here in these verses of three words which really together emphasize this aspect of God's ability. There is the word able itself.

There is the word dominion in the next verse, verse 25. And there is the word authority. There is the power. And there is the dominion, the strength. And there is the authority.

See, God doesn't just keep his people. God doesn't just rule over them. God doesn't rule over the universe. It's not simply that he rules over the universe and does all that he does.

[43 : 02] He has the right to do so. He has the authority to do so. And this God, the only God, this God our Savior, is the God who has all the right to do what he does.

All that right, whether it's to judge, whether it's to bring salvation, whether it's in fact the right to rule, the right to keep, the right to judge, the right to save, the right to condemn.

It's all under his authority. It's an authority that belongs to him as God, the only God, the glorious God, the great God, the saving God.

And he says, who is able to keep you from stumbling, from falling or from defecting. Again, in the context, as we said, of the letter, you have to understand that word in that context.

False teaching, seductive ways of, the seductive ways of false teaching, the seductive ways of using human sinful appetites in order to draw people away.

[44 : 07] It's mentioning there, Balaam, it's mentioning things from the Old Testament where you find the people of Israel defecting and being led astray. Well, there's God, he says, to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, from going on that path, from actually being led away by those who are in error.

Now, you remember what Jesus said to Peter in Luke chapter 22, because what Jude is saying here really implies our own inability to keep ourselves from falling.

And that we need the strength of God, the strength of God, the ability of God, that we need that in order to keep us, to guard us, to make us walk safely from day to day.

Well, you remember Jesus said to Peter in Luke chapter 22, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. He's talking there about the whole body of the disciples. He's set his sights on you, Jesus is saying to Peter, so that he might sift you, that he might scatter you and cause such damage among you. He's really lifting the curtain, the veil over eternity, Jesus himself knowing what that was, what it was like there.

[45 : 33] But he's saying, but I prayed for you. I prayed for you. It's not just a present tense, although Jesus, of course, constantly was praying for his disciples, but the way it's put there means the matter is complete by Christ himself.

He's done it. But it's there, nothing needs to be added to it. I prayed for you that your faith does not fail. And when you are recovered, when you're strengthened, when you're recovered or turned round again, thinking ahead to his lapse of denying the Lord, strengthen your brethren.

There's so much in that itself too, but without being led down a tangent, that's what he said to Peter, Satan's desire, but I prayed for you.

See, we need the strength of God. We need the moral suasion of Christ's intercession. He intercedes for his people. And as you trust in him, as you've given your life over to him, as you believe in him and go on believing in him, so you're under the provisions of that intercession of Jesus at the throne of God, remembering you, constantly keeping you in view by his power, by his moral suasion and intercession.

And yet remember this too. In 1 Peter, that same passage, in 1 Peter, where you find him saying about the inheritance kept for you who are being kept by the power of God, but then he says through faith.

[47 : 11] You're kept by the power of God through faith. It's not as if there's nothing at all of an activity on our own part. It's not an activity that actually in some way brings about a deserving of God's keeping.

It's not that we're acting conjointly in power in the sense in which God is keeping us. But it's not without faith. It's not without our trusting in the Lord.

It's not without our believing in the biblical sense of it. And so it's through faith that we are kept by the power of God through faith.

The power of God is the enabling. Through faith is the channel, if you like, or the conduit through which the power of God is at work.

He is able to keep you from falling. Let me ask this question. Where is your confidence tonight that you will be in heaven at last?

[48 : 11] Where is your confidence as you look into eternity? On what are you relying? Are you relying on your own strength? Are you like Peter was himself at one time saying, Well, whoever else Lord denies you, that will never be me.

But the Lord soon showed him you cannot rely on your own ability, Peter, to stop yourself from stumbling because you're going to give way. You need the power of Jesus.

You need to be under the intercession of Jesus. You need to have this Christ for yourself centrally, foundationally, basically in your life. And if you haven't tonight given your life over to Jesus, if you haven't positively responded to the wonderful invitation of the gospel to come to Him, that you might have peace of mind and that you might have that safety and security in Him, well, tonight here is again your opportunity, you see.

Isn't that why we're here? So that we will know that God is our God, our Savior too, yours and mine, and to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling.

But then you see it's to keep you from stumbling with a view to presenting you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy.

[49 : 35] God keeps His people during the course of His own purpose. And His own purpose and the end He has in view in their preservation is His presentation of them before His own or in the presence of His own glory with great joy.

Why does He keep His people in this? What's His purpose? What's the end in view? It's that He will present them to Himself, that He will present them in the presence of His own glory with great joy.

And it's God who is the subject of all these verbs. He is able to keep you. He is keeping you with a view to presenting you blameless before the presence of His glory.

And the idea of presenting there is the same as you have in Ephesians chapter 5 of the church, of God's people. The church there pictured as the bride of Christ in order that she finally be presented before God Himself spotless, without any defect.

God is sanctifying her throughout the course of their life in this world. In order to present them, to present her as His bride, finally blameless and spotless before Himself.

[50 : 53] And that's what He's saying here as well, to display these people that He has kept in this world, so that they be presented, that they be established, that they be set out by a right that God has given them as His people, as His children, to actually appear before Him blameless or faultless.

And faultless is a word that's again used of the Lord Jesus Christ in 1 Peter 1 and verse 19. The Lamb that is spotless, the blood of the spotless Lamb of God by which we are saved.

And that word, of course, means that we come to be examined, just as Jesus was examined, and examined not just by the likes of Herod, who found no fault in Him, examined by the religious authorities at the time, who couldn't find any fault in Him.

Remember, He was examined by God too. He needed to fit the requirements of God Himself, to be Himself the spotless Lamb who would bear the sin of His people.

And that's something that is built into the very idea that you have here, to present you blameless, to present you after examination, after judgment, blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy.

[52 : 28] Faultless, blameless. It's, you know, if you go to, I don't know if it's still there or not, I presume it is, the Cateness Glass Factory, just outside of Perth, where they produce all these wonderful glass objects.

You can go in there, or used to be able to at least, and go and see them manufacturing them. You can see the person taking the blob of glass on the end of a long rod, sticking it into the oven, heating it up, taking it out, shaping it, and then putting it into a bucket of water, and shaping it again back into the oven.

It goes, out it comes. He changes the shape of it, perhaps. He's got an end in view, you see. He knows exactly what he wants to do with it. He knows what it should look like at the end of the process.

So he puts it through all of these different processes. And then when he's finished, that part of it goes to somebody else, and that person applies some sort of substance to it to make it shiny and perfectly smooth.

But at the end of it all, it goes into the workshop. From the workshop, rather, it goes into the showroom. That's really the process that God takes His people through.

[53 : 39] This world is the workshop. This is where we have all of the experiences that hone and that develop us into the kind of people that God ultimately intends us to be.

This is God's own work of sanctification. This is where He actually brings us through all of the different experiences we need to go through as He sees our need. And whatever they are, sometimes they're the most joyous things.

Sometimes they're the most bitter, the most painful, the most challenging. But they all fit together in the workshop. They all fit together in God's way of developing the lives of His people.

Because He has an end in view. And that end in view is the showroom. I read sometime of another place similar to the Cateness Glass Factory, where there was a sign as you went in towards the place where these precious objects were made.

And the sign said, Workshop downstairs, showroom upstairs. You could go down to see the workshop, but then to see the finished objects shining brilliantly in the lights of the showroom, you had to go upstairs to see that.

[54 : 54] That's how it is with God. This is the workshop. This is where He's busy sanctifying His people, cutting bits off their lives that He knows they need to have cut off.

Things that they experience which are difficult, but it's in order to actually prepare them for this, for the presence of His glory with great joy. It's very difficult sometimes to think of the trials and afflictions of this life as beneficial.

It's easy enough to stand in a pulpit relatively and say this is what the Bible teaches. But many of you will know how difficult it is at that moment of affliction, in the moment of the trial, in the heat of the trial, to say, I know that this is for my good, therefore I'm happy with it.

It doesn't work like that. It pains you. It bewilders you sometimes. Sometimes you ask the questions, What's happening, Lord? Why is this the case? Or in the way of the psalmist, How long will you forget me, Lord?

Shall it be forever? Honest, searching questions that God does not deny us. But at the end of the day, it's all God's own work.

[56 : 11] It's God's own sanctifying process that He puts us through. And at the end of the day, it is indeed a great privilege to be in the hands of God, the expert craftsman, the one who takes the ugly blob of sinful glass that we are and through various processes shapes it into that final glorious vessel in heaven that along with all the other glorified ones will shine forevermore to His praise.

And there will be, I believe, a note in the praises of heaven on the part of all His people, a note of thanksgiving for what they went through in the workshop below.

It's then we'll understand it as we cannot understand it now. But it's so important that it is He who is able to keep us, that He's keeping us with a view to presenting us blameless, faultless, pure before the presence of His glory with great joy.

And these words, the presence of His glory, are words that are used only of God in the Bible. And they're used of God in the Bible not very often, but it's a word that is always accompanied such as it is here with a word meaning blamelessness or perfection.

Blameless and this presence of God go together. And it means right in the presence of God. It doesn't mean somewhere on the fringes where you can hardly see things, where God really can hardly be noticed by you.

[57 : 57] He's talking about this final state of God's people of heaven. He's saying, this is what God has in view for His people. This is why He is keeping you. This is why you've got His protective care.

This is why you're going through the sanctifying process of this world. Because He has in view presenting you to Himself, presenting you blameless before the presence of His glory.

Right there in His presence. as near as you can get to God, as you are in Christ. And that's what He's saying is the destiny of God's people.

And He's saying, with great joy. With great joy. It's a word again in the New Testament which means, just as it's described there and translated there, great joy, exultant joy.

Not a tiny fragment of joy, but great joy. In fact, it's used even in describing for God's people something of what they experience in this life. Remember, again, 1 Peter, where he talks there about being in heaviness through various temptations.

[59 : 14] Again, where he's describing their current situation. and speaking there of how they presently rejoice, even though that is their present situation.

Let me remind you of what he says. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has caused us to be born again to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this, you rejoice. He's not saying you will rejoice. He's talking there to a people that He's writing to in this first letter of Peter. They're suffering.

They're being persecuted. They're really in pain. But He's saying you rejoice. You are rejoicing. You have this great exaltation. How can that possibly be?

Well, it's rejoicing, He says, with joy that is unspeakable, joy that is so that what He's saying there, being guarded through faith.

[60 : 21] In this, you rejoice though you have been grieved by various temptations. And the rejoicing you have is you rejoice though you don't see Christ now you believe in Him.

And believing, you rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. You see, the joy that God's people have in this world, even in this world, it's not a joy that's just a frothy thing that then disappears, the first puff of temptation that comes along.

It's actually a joy that belongs to their eternity. It's a joy that belongs to heaven even though it's not yet perfect by any means as it will be in heaven.

Because it's the joy of the saved. It's the joy of the redeemed. It's the joy of God's kept people. It's the joy of people who have hope that this is the outcome of their journey through life.

You rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. And of course, you see, in Revelation itself, the last two chapters, and I'm just about finished with this, where he's saying about heaven, what he

saw, the new heaven and the new earth.

[61 : 32] And behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. He himself will be with them as their God. You see, the presence of his glory. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. The same in the next chapter, the final chapter of the Bible. They will see his face. His name will be in their foreheads.

Night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever.

You see, heaven is described by what is not there so that we can appreciate something of what it must be like. There's no crying, no pain, no source of sorrow, no death, nothing at all as characterizes the pains and trials of this life.

joy. And that's the joy that's begun in your heart as you're a Christian tonight in Christ. That joy has begun.

[62 : 39] And not all the waves and the billows of your afflictions throughout this life can actually destroy that joy. Sometimes it may not be obvious to yourself, but in principle that is what it is.

And God is keeping you so that He will present you to Himself, that He present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy to the only wise God, to the only God our Savior, be this glory and majesty, dominion and authority before all time, now and forever.

But then there are a few more words we've just left out deliberately. the words, through Jesus Christ, O Lord. And they're crucial in the whole context of the verses.

To Him be praise and glory and majesty and dominion and authority through Jesus Christ, O Lord. Because you see, Jesus is absolutely central to the worship of His people, to the worship of heaven, to the ascriptions of praise given to God.

through Jesus Christ, because of Him, through Him, on account of Him. And tonight, I hope that you can say that that is true in your own personal experience and life as well.

[64 : 04] That it is praise to this God through Jesus Christ for you. that He is your Savior too.

And that as He is your Savior, so you have this great hope in Him that not death, not the devil, not anything in this world can deprive you of.

Let's pray. Gracious God, we give thanks tonight that you are the only God, that you are the Savior of your people, and that in your salvation you place your people securely with a view to presenting them to yourself at last, where there will be no pain and no need of temptation or trial, and where they will reign with their Lord forever and ever.

We thank you, Lord, for that great prospect and for the fact that it is real to your people. It is not something that we have invented ourselves, O Lord.

It is something that comes through the grace of your Spirit to be planted in our hearts. Bless us, each one, we pray, with that faith, with that hope that would look forward at last to being presented in the presence of your glory with great joy.

[65 : 22] For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 121, 121. Tune is The Base of Harris, that's in page 416.

1-2-1 in the Scottish Psalter. I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whence doth come my aid, my safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth have made. Through to the end of the Psalm, the Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve preserve thee from all ill.

Henceforth, thy going out and in God keep forever will. Psalm 121, in conclusion. I to the hills will lift my eyes, from whence doth come my name.

my safety cometh come, from the Lord, who heaven and earth have made.

Thy fruit till not let's die nor will this number that he keeps.

[67 : 01] Behold thee, God, this Israel, his whose springs be.

The Lord is not wanderin', the Lord I show The Lord shall keep thy soul.

The Lord shall bless the earth, thee from all ill, and forth thy holy night and in God keep forever will.

Amen. I'll go to the main door after the benediction. Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and authority, now and evermore.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.