Kept?

"To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ." (Jude 1, ESV)

Jude is a beautiful little book about a horrible subject.

In only twenty-five verses, Jude writes about apostasy, false teachers, rebellion, judgment, unbelief, fallen angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah. He warns about those who have crept unnoticed into the church and those who have abandoned the truth.

Yet before Jude says anything about those who have fallen away, he says something remarkable about those to whom he is writing.

They are kept.

The Greek word translated *"kept"* is a perfect passive participle. They have been kept and remain kept. They are the recipients of the action. Someone else is doing the keeping.

God is keeping them.

That little word becomes particularly beautiful when we reach the other end of Jude's letter:

"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." (Jude 24, ESV)

Kept at the beginning.

Kept at the end.

Between those two assurances lies Jude's dreadful description of apostasy. It is almost as though the letter is fastened together at both ends. The middle describes those who abandon the truth, but the believer stands within the keeping power of God.

And Jude is hardly alone.

Jesus prayed for those whom the Father had given Him: *"Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me."* (John 17:11, ESV) Earlier He had declared, *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."* (John 10:28, ESV)

Eternal life is not probationary life. Christ does not give His sheep temporary life, conditional upon His never becoming disappointed with them. He gives eternal life, and He says they will never perish.

Paul carries the same assurance into Romans 8. Those whom God foreknew He predestined; those He predestined He called; those He called He justified; and those He justified He glorified. The chain is not broken somewhere between justification and glory. Paul then asks what can separate God's children from the love of Christ and concludes that nothing in all creation *"will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:39, ESV).

Peter describes believers *"who by God's power are being guarded through faith"* (1 Peter 1:5, ESV).

The security of the believer therefore does not finally rest upon the strength of our grip upon Christ. If it did, there would be little security at all. We stumble. We struggle with sin. Our faith sometimes seems strong and sometimes painfully weak.

But the hand holding us does not weaken.

That does not make perseverance unnecessary. Jude himself tells believers, *"keep yourselves in the love of God"* (Jude 21, ESV). We believe, obey, pray, and persevere. Yet beneath our perseverance stands something infinitely greater than our determination.

God preserves His own.

And His keeping has a destination. He is able *"to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy."*

Perhaps there are days when the question troubles us: Will my faith endure? Will I make it all the way home?

Jude begins his answer with one word.

Kept.

And before he closes his letter, he points us again to the One who is able to keep us.

The middle of the story may sometimes frighten us.

But God holds both ends.

Just a thought.

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