

Jude 1:1
The Reasons That God is in Control
Pastor JD

KAPONO: Lord, we praise Your name. We lift up our song. Holy Spirit, lead us, Lord, guide us in these end times. With all the confusion, Lord, You're the only one that can help us see clearly, Lord. So speak to us through Your word, we pray, Lord.

We thank You, Lord, for our pastors. We thank You for this beautiful building, Lord. This is Your building that You have blessed us with, Lord. We give You all the glory and praise and honor today, and we ask these things in Your name, Jesus, we say. Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good morning and welcome. You can be seated. So glad you're here. So glad those of you joining us online are. Before we jump in, I just want to, in lieu of a mission support update, which we usually start with, I want to refer you instead to Tuesday night's message and prayer meeting. There will be a link. It is on our website. It's also on our social media platforms.

We had an amazing night Tuesday night with the Nepal Medical Mission's team testimonies. We also had an amazing testimony out of the Philippines, a direct, to the minute answer to prayer for Steve White who is there in the Philippines. So anyway, that's available, that video. And we did kind of do a little bit of an update on that.

Also, I want to thank everyone for praying for my wife, Kellie, who, as many of you know, is battling breast cancer. I hope you know that the outpouring of love is just truly overwhelming. I stand by my statement that I am the most spoiled pastor in the world, and I'm not complaining. So thank you so much for just the outpouring of love and prayer and support. You've been most gracious, most understanding, especially of me taking time off. And I know you'll continue to be should I ever have Pastor Leitu or Pastor Mac fill in for me in the days ahead when I just need to be with my wife, Kellie. So thank you for understanding, and thank you for your grace and your patience and your love.

Also, please know that we in no way have forgotten about Maui or the people of Lahaina. I am hoping, Lord willing, along with Israel, by the way, the Jews and Arabs in Israel, I'm hoping to provide updates on our ongoing mission support in those areas, particularly Maui, Lord willing, and if we're still here. So please pray for Maui and Israel and all of our mission outreaches.

All right. We start the book/postcard of Jude today. And we're going to start in verse 1, and we're going to go all the way through verse 1. And just so you know, full disclosure, we probably next week, Lord willing, and if we're still here, we're going to pick it up in verse 2 and probably go through verse 2 too. So if you're getting the impression that I'm not in any hurry, that's because I'm not in any hurry. This is an amazing book, as we're about to see.

So I'll ask you to stand if you're able. You don't have to. Where you're seated is fine, but you can follow along as I read our extensive, lengthy passage today. Verse 1, **"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ."**

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Let's pray. Father, thank You, Lord, it's at times like this that we, with just the craziness of everything that's happening in this world and in our lives, and here we are at the beginning of a very interesting new year, and already, right out of the chute, if this is any indication of what's ahead, then wow!

Lord, it's times like this where we come to a place like this and desperately need for You to settle us and focus us, refocus us, really because we're pulled in so many directions and so many things clamoring for our attention. All the competition out there that is trying to compete for our ears so we'll listen to all of those voices, which seem to be getting louder with each passing day. And Lord, today we're in this place wanting to hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit as You speak into our lives. So Lord, would You enable us to turn the volume down, really turn it off so we can hear You as You speak? So Lord, will You speak? Your servants are listening. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen and amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you about the reasons that God is in control of every aspect of our lives, especially when it seems like every aspect of our lives is totally out of control. You know, I know it's cliché, right? You know, "God's in control." I don't warm up to that when somebody, well-intentioned of course, somebody says that just, you know, flippantly, lightly, like, "You know, God's in control." I know that. I know that. It just doesn't seem like that right now because everything is just off the charts, out of control, crazy, hair on fire. I've got a couple more. I'll spare you.

[Laughter]

So we know that God is in control, right? We good so far? But do we know why? Let me say the same thing in a different way. We know that God is in control. But do we know the reasons as to why God is in control? Because knowing the "why" behind the "what" cements the "what." When I know why God is in control, it helps me tremendously in knowing that God is in control. Because — oh, that's why. And it settles me.

Now, we have a problem, and we need to resolve it before we go any further. And it's this problem of implying that God's control is meritorious. Let me explain. In other words, we — the reasons that God is in control are merited by what I do. They're predicated upon me. And then God's in control, and it's up to me as to why God is in control.

And I beg you to in no way misunderstand today's sermon to mean that there's anything we do to merit God controlling every aspect of our lives. The reasons that God controls what happens in our lives is not because of what we do or who we are. It's because of who He is and what He does, period, despite me. Could you imagine if it depended on me? Well, no, I'm not going to take control because... Yeah, look. Well, then, now God's not in control. I'm surely not in control — I like to think I'm in control. Especially if you're anything like me; I won't look at anybody. And you know who you are. You're a control freak. You want to be in control.

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We talked about this Thursday night. I won't go into it, maybe just a little bit. But you know what our greatest struggle is as Christians? We want to be in control. So we don't know because we're not in the driver's seat. And, you know, we talk about: let Jesus take the driver's seat. Listen, that implies that you're in the driver's seat. I say, Jesus, you sit in the driver's seat. I should be in the trunk because if I'm not —

[Laughter]

this — I know it's too much — but just indulge me. See, if I'm in the passenger's seat, I'm still wanting the control. Jesus is like, I got this. Don't touch the steering wheel. I'm in control of the steering wheel. Plus, if you keep doing that, we're going to have an accident.

[Laughter]

I don't need your help. I'm in control.

You know, we're like the driver's ed instructor, right? We've got the brake on the passenger side just to control the vehicle in the event that... (Chuckling) Okay, now that was way too much. But I think you got the point.

But this is the struggle we have as Christians, isn't it? Let's be honest. When we're not in control, we have to trust God who is in control. And everything in our sin nature chafes at that because we want to know, so that we can control it. And God's like, no, get in the trunk. I'm not — okay, it's the last time I'll use that one. And we will get to our text, as lengthy as it is.

So I guess what I'm hoping to accomplish in this explanation is that there's nothing we do to merit God controlling the situation in our lives. God rules overall and overrules all despite me, instead of me, and it's not predicated on me, or what I do, or who I am. It's because of who He is. So when we go through these reasons, please look at them through the lens, not of a meritorious relationship but a sovereign relationship that we have with a sovereign God.

I think I'd be grossly remiss if I didn't provide a bit of a backstory to this letter, which is short in length but certainly not strength. First, what if I told you the translators refer to the author as Jude and not Judas in order to disassociate him from Judas Iscariot? His name is Judas. Did that mess you up? That's why they used Jude for short. Nothing wrong with it. You know, sometimes we shorten people's names. We come up with some very interesting, you know, "short for". So that's what they did.

There are three Judases in the Bible, one of which is Judas Iscariot. There's another one. I think it's in Mark's gospel. In fact, the writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is very careful to say, "Judas, not Iscariot." I think it's Mark's gospel. I don't remember chapter and verse off the top of my balding head. But then the third one is this guy. This is Judas. We'll call him Jude for short. Here's another one. Now, this is all going to be germane to our understanding.

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What if I also told you that this Jude, or if you prefer Judas, and are okay with that, like James, was actually the half-brother, biological half-brother of the Savior of the world, born to Joseph and Mary after the Savior of the world. Could you imagine?

I mean, when we were going through James, it was interesting, I guess, for lack of a better word. Because we have an epistle that, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is written by the half-brother of Jesus. It's no wonder that James is the way James is. You don't walk away from reading the short Book of James going, praise the Lord! You'll walk away going, oh, God! I mean, he's like, in your face. (Punching sound) Can you blame him? Could you imagine growing up with the Savior of the world as your half-brother? Mom and Dad: Why can't you keep your room clean like your brother?

[Laughter]

Oh, because He's God incarnate, maybe?

[Laughter]

He's perfect; literally, He's perfect, without sin. That's what you're — in fact — I know I'm probably digressing. Not probably; I am digressing, but this is in Jesus' name. Interesting that His siblings did not come to a saving knowledge of Jesus, the Christ, till after the resurrection. That's why. They grew up with Him. You got to know there was some tension there. I mean, at what age? I mean, these are things that I think about, and they hurt my hair or whatever's left of it. I think about things like this, like at what age? I mean, we have the account at age 12 when Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple. And He's in there teaching, and they're going, who teaches like this? Oh, the Son of God. And they're like, well, what are you doing? Wouldn't you know that I would be about my Father's business? So Joseph and Mary had to know. We know Mary and Joseph did know when she conceived by the Holy Spirit prior to the Virgin birth.

But I'm just wondering about His siblings. He had sisters, you know, and brothers, of which Jude and James were one. I wonder at what age did they like, you know, start realizing, wait a minute. No, no way! Way! He is THE way, THE truth, THE life, THE Savior of the world. He is my half-brother. Really? Really. Of all the families, of all the tribes of all of Israel, and He is my brother? Jesus the Savior, God incarnate in the room next to me? We're sharing a bunk bed, actually. How's that one? It gets worse.

Okay, let's get back to the sermon already in progress. I wanted to provide you with these details because, again, it's going to be germane to our understanding, not just here in verse 1, but the entirety of this burning letter. And I say it that way for a reason. I mean, this is a sanctified burn. You know, fire penetrates. It's like Jeremiah talks about when he tried to quit. You know, the only problem is slaves can't quit. And he says, that's it, God, I've had it. And, you know, he says, **"But You prevailed over me because the fire of Your word burns within me."** So this is that holy fire, if you will, that is going to burn in a sanctified way. So I'm hoping, I'm praying that God, as only He can, will take just this first verse and by the Holy Spirit, change hearts and minds.

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So what follows are five heart and mind changers, if I can call them that, that all of us, myself included, need to revisit when our lives are careening out of control, which is like every day now, the reasons that God is in control.

The first one, the first part of verse 1, "I'm a servant of Jesus Christ." This is the first thing that Jude, by the Holy Spirit, writes at the beginning of this short, burning letter, "**a servant of Jesus Christ.**" Now, in the original language, it's the Greek word "dulos." Now, *dulos* is a very packed, rich word because it's not just "slave" or 'servant,' as some render it, but "bond slave."

What's a bond slave?

A bond slave is someone who, of their own volition, remains a slave because they want to. They're free to go. But here's the slave going, I don't want to go. I love my master. My master loves me. I want to continue serving him. No, but you're not a slave anymore. You're free. But no, I formed a bond with my master and my master with me. So I want to become a bond slave, a bond servant. They would mark them with their ear so you knew that slave is there of their own volition. That's a *dulos*, a bond slave. Even though they're free to go, they want to [Listen] relinquish control of their lives to their loving master in love, not force. That's what Jude is saying.

Now, you got to know this had to have been just so difficult for Jude because he grew up with his brother, who happens to now be his Savior and now his master? And of his own volition, he is willingly relinquishing control as a bond slave to Jesus Christ. Now, you know what comes packaged with that? Now He's in control. He's responsible for you. It commits the master to the bond slave as much as the bond slave to the master.

And in the Middle East culturally, if you're under the roof, in a home, you are covered, you are protected. You are responsible now for that person that is under your care, in your service unto death, by the way.

So you're taken care of. Your relinquishing control, you're submitting to, you're a servant of, a slave to your loving Master by choice. And now He's going to control and take care of everything. Because if you're out there on your own, well, you're on your own. Uh-oh! But if I'm under Your care, serving You, well, then You're going to care for me. That's one of the reasons why God's in control. I'm His bond slave. I'm His servant.

Now, this next one, can I just have a little bit of fun with this? Just let me have this, okay? Hey, listen, you've — you've had a break from me for a while, so just let me have this one. It's humility.

And now, again, don't — like I mentioned, don't make this synonymous with being meritorious. In other words, it's not God's in control only when I'm humble before Him. No, it's more like this. I want to humble myself before my Master because He is taking care of and in control of everything in my life as His bond slave. And you're submitting and humbling yourself before your Master.

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Now, how do you get that out of the second part of verse 1, Pastor? I'm glad you asked. He says, "**the brother of James.**" I totally wouldn't have done that. Verse 1 of JD Chapter 1 would read like this: JD, Pastor and brother of the Savior of the world. My latest book is available on Amazon,

[Laughter]

and here's my speaking schedule for the next six months. No, I would have — if I grew up with this — come on, you would have done the same thing. If you grew up with the Savior of the world, He was your biological half-brother, vis-à-vis Joseph, not Mary, I mean, you know, in the flesh, in His humanity, you're His half-brother — I'm sorry. I'm writing a book. I'm going on a speaking tour. I'm going to get a YouTube channel. I'm going to let everybody know who I am. And you're going to do the same.

[Laughter]

But not Jude. He says, I'm the "**brother of James.**" Wait a minute. You're the brother of James? Well, James is the brother of the Savior. That means you're the brother! I know. Just (Shushing sound) Leave it there. Because I know of my own propensity for pride.

And is it not true that we're so quick to drop names? Come on. Oh! You know so-and-so? Whoa! Yeah, and we even take it a step further. We'll pull out our phone and go, yeah, I got their number right here. Oh look! They just texted me. Whoa! No way! They? You have their number? Yeah. Wow!

Okay. I got to confess. I have to, right? I caught myself. Well, I shouldn't say it like that because then I'm — I'm proud of my humility if I do and humble about my pride. It was more like the Holy Spirit caught me. So I'm in a conversation with somebody, and they brought up a mutual friend who I happen to know who is very well known. And right just in that instant, you know how it is, right? When the Holy Spirit said, No, no, no, no, no, no, don't even think about it. Because I'm like, yeah, I'm good friends with them.

[Laughter]

Because they were name dropping. I'm thinking, hey, let's — I'm going to name drop too. Yeah, so-and-so texted me. They did? Yeah. Wow! And here's where the Holy Spirit got me and caught me. It's like, wow, you're taking pride in who you know? You know people? Huh. We say it like this: I got friends in high places. And I just pictured God going, "Excuse Me? I'm the Most High God in the Most High place." So here's where I got very convicted. And I want you to be convicted, too. So I'm starting to think about: Well, I know people. And then God's like, "Well, you know Me. I don't see you dropping My name." Oh, did that work? Tell me it did. I want you to be convicted like me because conviction loves company. I know that's a variation.

Now, how does this tie in to God being in control? Here's how. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, right? Replete throughout Scripture; we see this over and over

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again, particularly in the Proverbs, "**He resists the proud** [*He knows the proud from afar off*] **but He gives grace to the humble.**"

James, often referred to affectionately as "the New Testament Book of Proverbs," he echoes the Proverbs concerning pride. What breeds quarrels among you? Pride. What's worldly wisdom? Pride. What's godly wisdom? The wisdom from above. Pure, peaceable, gentle, humble easy to be entreated, the antithesis.

So if God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud, wouldn't it stand to reason that the humble are going to be the ones who have God controlling their lives, not resisting their lives? Did you get that? See, when I posture myself with an attitude of pride, I'm at enmity with God. I'm opposing God, and God, in turn, is resisting me. What I'm doing is I'm severing the control of a sovereign and loving God, tying the hands of God's control with the ropes of my pride. You know, there's a thing known in the Scriptures as "grieving the Holy Spirit." Think about pinching a straw. You restrict. And it's even worse; God forbid, you can quench the Holy Spirit. And the ultimate unforgivable sin is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. And that's how we do it. We basically — and the Holy Spirit is writhing because the Holy Spirit indwells us.

And when we take control from the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit does not force Himself upon us, God, the Holy Spirit, in us because He's given us free will. And we make decisions in our lives without consulting God or relinquishing control to God. And we do so to our own peril and regret. So humility.

The third one and the third part of verse 1 is because "I'm one who's been called." Now, this is the wording and of course inspired, but don't read past it. Isn't it true, again, if we're honest with ourselves, that when you start a letter or a book, you know, you — the beginning and the ending — you just kind of read past the formalities. You know, especially at the end of these epistles from the Apostle Paul, where he just says, "Send my greetings to" and you know, so-and-so sends their love, and you know, have Mark bring my cloak and the parchments, and, you know, like, why do I need to know? No, that detail is there for a reason. But we read past it like — I'm sorry for the analogy and the comparison — but you watch a movie, and then as soon as they start scrolling the credits, you're gone. Well, wait a minute. I want to see who wrote the script, the videographer. I mean, that's there for a reason. Oh, that's boring.

Not so fast. Notice he says, "**to those who have been** [the] **called.**" Does that sound a little familiar? Does it sound like a very well-known verse in Romans Chapter 8:28? I mean, we talk about controlling the outcome, working it out for the good. I mean, we know this verse inside out, upside down, back and forth. Did I miss anything? Sideways? "**For we know that God works all things together for the good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose.**"

So why the detail? Why do we need to know this? Because when you're the called according to His purpose, you're secured safely under the control of the person of Jesus Christ. You're

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the called. If you're the called, then He's in control. No, you didn't do anything to be the called. You didn't bring anything to the table of salvation. That would be works, right? That would be meritorious, correct? **"We're saved by grace through faith, not of works. It's the gift of God lest any man should boast,"** Ephesians 2:8-9. So there's nothing we can do. Isaiah says, **"Our righteousness [Our own righteousness] is as filthy rags."** And that's quite graphic in the original. I won't go there. We don't bring our righteousness to God to merit anything. We bring our sin. **"Though they be as scarlet, He makes them white as snow."** And He forgives us and cleanses us and removes that sin far from us, as far as the East is from the West.

So when you're the called according to His purpose — by the way, spoiler alert, His purpose? To conform you, make you, shape you, dare I say, control you into the image of Jesus Christ. I mean, the potter and clay comparison is profound, for lack of a better way of saying it. Jeremiah references it. I mean, He's the potter. We've written hymns about it. ♪ Have Thine own way, Lord ♪ We're the clay. He's the potter. He's making us — He's making us more like Jesus.

And by the way, the Holy Spirit — Galatians 5 — this is another thing we do, and I do it just like the next guy. **"The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, goodness, meekness, [Meekness, uh] patience,**

[Laughter]

[And then there's one more at the end] **self-control."** What? Wait. Yeah, in other words, self is under control of the Holy Spirit as the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Not a gift.

Gift is a gift. (Chuckling) Deeply profound. I'll try to do better. Gift is something you receive. Fruit is something that grows. So as we grow in grace and mature in Christ, what comes with that maturity is that we are under the control. Self is controlled. It's not self-control. That's the world. It's a controlling of self.

I think in the Prophecy Update today, I made the distinction between brainwashing and washing the brain. That's Romans 12:1-2. Don't conform to the brainwashing of the world, but have your brain washed by the water of the Word and renewed. Well, it's a similar example here because it's not self-control. It's control of self.

Another example: in the Psalms, I think it's 42 and 43, which some believe are actually one Psalm. You know, where David's like, "O my soul, why be in such despair? You will again have reason to praise the Lord." He's talking to himself. They'll institutionalize you nowadays if you're doing that. No, he's sitting himself down saying, boy, sit down. We need to have a talk. He's talking: Why are you in such despair? You're going to praise the Lord. He's telling himself that.

What's your point? I do have a point.

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It's not self-talk. It's talking to self. Just like it's not brainwashing; it's washing the brain. Just like it's not self-control; it's controlling self. Under the control of the Holy Spirit. When you're the called, you're the controlled under the Holy Spirit.

Number 4, this would seem like a firm grasp of the obvious, but Jude goes on to write that it's to those that are loved by God, the Father. I mean, okay, yeah, we — okay, we know. Next. God loves me. I know. Next. Don't do that. I did. Just don't do it. It won't end well if you just dismiss it. Yeah, I know, I know, I know, I know.

Isn't it sad that we live in a day where it's just thrown around so cheaply that when you say, "I love you," it's kind of like, yeah, I love you too. I love you more. But all someone has to do is say, you know what? I really like you. You do? Since when did the word "like" become more powerful than the word "love"? Love, sadly, has been marred and spoiled and cheapened and profaned even, brought down, made common so it no longer has, or packs the punch that it should.

Again, I'm going to go back to Romans 8:28 for just a moment. But we read past it. It's uh — we've been sort of, I'm sorry to say, desensitized to this powerful promise in Romans 8:28. Because the promise is that God is going to control the circumstances and choreograph the steps of that situation in your life that seems so out of control. And He's going to bring it in to control, His control, and He's going to take the bad that's out of control, and He's going to make good, as only He can. But it's for those like Jude echoes here, who love God, are loved by God, and the called according to God's purpose.

Did you get the love factor in there? It's: He loved me first, and then I respond. This is "agape," the word that Jude would use, by the way, "unconditional love." It's the, as one referred to it, the "anyways" love. I love you anyway. I love you regardless.

Did you know that there's nothing you can do to make God love you less? That should be very encouraging for some of us. I'll raise my hand to that because I think I do things every day. If I were God, I'd say, Yeah, no." Or like my wife sometimes will say to me, "I love you, but I don't like you right now." Sometimes I think we think God's like that. Like, you know, of course I love you, but I don't think I like you right now. No, there's nothing you could — could you imagine what a yo-yo — people don't even relate to yo-yos anymore.

[Laughter]

Wow, that was really a — where did that come from? Way back. Blast from the past. Remember Yo-yos? I'm already picturing it. I probably lost half of you. But, you know, up and down, back and forth. James talks about this too, by the way. You're back-and-forth, wishy-washy, double-minded, doubting. I don't know. Maybe. Maybe so. Maybe not. I don't know. You want to live like that? No!

Its: He loves you. Still. Anyway. Regardless. You mean even after that? Yeah. I mean, I wouldn't, but God does. Because you're loved.

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Now, if you're loved — now think about it from a parental perspective. We love our kids, right? Oh my goodness, we love our kids. In fact, I'll just speak for myself. I did not know — it's a different love, right, than husband-wife, love. It's a parental love, a familial love, storge, natural affection. You heard the expression — I hope this is okay. That baby's got a face only a mother could love.

[Laughter]

I only use that because I heard that a lot about.

[Laughter]

Anyway, I'm sorry. There's something to that, though. You love your children. You didn't know. I didn't know. Again, I'll speak for myself. I didn't know I could love that deeply until I had children. And it just opened up the eyes of my understanding to how much God loves me as His child. I'm an earthly father. I love my children that much. How much more does my Heavenly Father love me? Now with my kids? Okay, I spoil them. What?

[Laughter]

Back off. I'm going to spoil them. I love them. I'll do anything for them. And if it's within my [Watch this] control, you better believe I'm going to control the situation to protect them from harm and danger and threats. And I'm an earthly father. Why? What's the reason? Because I love them.

Notice that Jude, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is careful to say, "**Loved by God the Father.**" That changes the whole complexion of it, doesn't it? Or at least it should.

Now I realize there are those who did not have a good relationship with their earthly father, of which I was one. One of the hardest things early on in my Christian life when I gave my life to Christ, it was one of the hardest things for me to do, was to have that shift in my mind that I cannot look at my heavenly Father through the lens of my earthly father. Because my earthly father was angry at me all the time. And so I superimposed that on my heavenly Father, like I was walking around on eggshells for the first part of my Christian life, thinking, man, God's angry at me, just like my earthly father was always angry at me. No. There is no anger. There is no condemnation. There is no wrath. He took all of His anger, all of His wrath, all of His condemnation, and He put it on His only begotten Son on that cross. That's Romans 8:1, by the way.

So why do I expound so much on this? Because this love by God, the Father carries with it the idea of being sanctified. Now, that's a big word, right? Makes it sound like I went to cemetery — I mean, seminary.

[Laughter]

Sanctified means "set apart for special use." Illustration: My wife has silverware that was given to her by her mother. I mean, real silverware, just so you know. And we also have plastic utensils. Now when we have Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas dinner or whatever,

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you know, a special occasion, we don't pull out the plastic utensils. We pull out the sanctified silver because it's set apart for this occasion. It's special. It's sanctified. It's set apart. Now let's try to apply this. God loves us so much. He sets us apart. We're special.

There was a children's book that I used to read the boys when I would put them to bed, which was a monumental task sometimes, you know. And of course, my wife was always like, okay, it's bedtime. Baba is going to read you a story. Oh, I am? Is it my turn again tonight? Every night. We had a book called 'God Made You Special.' And my firstborn son, Elias, he was four at the time. He said, "God made us a pretzel."

[Laughter]

No, it's not a pretzel. That's different. (Chuckling) Anyway... I'm having a flashback. I'm back now. But God — you're so precious in His sight. You're so special in His sight. I mean, you know, He's got plastic utensils for that. But, you? No, you're special. Only for special occasions. He shines you and puts His name on you. We're going to see that in a moment.

I guess what I'm trying to do here is just help all of us, again, myself included, to understand what it means to be loved by God, the Father, what that really mean, what that entails. Can I say it like this? What that includes: that I'm loved by God, the Father. You can take a spiritual — it's a healthy pride. It's not working, is it? Not very convincing, is it? You — when I say — we say, "take pride in," that's what I mean by "healthy pride." Are we — does that work? Tell me now. I won't waste my time or your time. But it's a sanctified pride in that you can hold your head up because you're sanctified, you're loved, you're set apart, you're special, you're precious in His eyes.

How precious are our children? We call them the apple of our eye, which comes out of the Psalms. And so precious are our children to us, so loved are our children by us, what would we not do for them? And even Jesus alludes to that. You know how to give good gifts to your children. They ask you for a bread. You're not going to give them a rock. How much more your Heavenly Father?

Okay, last one, and we'll bring it in for a landing. And this is the best for last. I mean, it's a textbook case. This is big, last part of verse 1. "I'm kept by God the Son." So I'm loved by God, the Father, but I'm kept by God, the Son.

What's that saying, you know, for women? I'm a kept woman. Nowadays, you don't dare admit that. Ho! Yeah, you're a kept woman? He's keeping you all right. Barefoot and pregnant, doing dishes. That's the image, right? Because, of course, Satan wants to destroy the family unit because it's a microcosm of our relationship with God, the family of God; God, the Father, brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus, the bridegroom; us, the bride. That's why he hates your Christian marriage, by the way. That's why he's trying to destroy —

incidentally, going back to the father — That's why it is that there are no men of the house anymore. See, you smite the shepherd, you scatter the sheep. You take out the father, you destroy the whole family. Just go right to the head, the head of the family. And if there's still

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a father in the picture, which they're, I'm sorry to say, probably is not, but even if there is, he's been totally — I was going to say defanged, but that's not a good word. But for lack of a better one, you've completely defanged him. You've dethroned him from his rightful position as the God-given authority in that home. He has no say.

I don't know why I went off on that. It's not a problem for me. My wife is — well, she's a 12-cow wife. Some of you will know about that.

[Laughter]

I did not say a cow. I paid 12 cows. You know what the going rate for a wife is? One cow. I paid 12. I have a 12-cow wife. I should have not even tried that.

[Laughter]

Yeah. Oh well, just search it online and build a bridge and get over it.

But this: This seals the deal because I'm kept by God, the Son. You know what that means? I'm kept, preserved, protected, covered, and as we just talked about, set apart by Him and for Him for His purpose and all for His glory. He's keeping me. He's protecting me. Why? Because He's a keeping God. He's a blessing God. Did you know that He's a smiling God? He's a gracious God. He's an attentive God. And He's a peace-giving God.

Can I end with Numbers Chapter 6? We know it well as the Aaronic Blessing. This is when God commanded Moses to have Aaron pronounce this blessing upon the Israelites every single time they assembled at the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting, and then subsequently the Temple. God wanted them to hear this. So imagine every time you went to church, you heard this blessing pronounced upon you. So if you went to church more than once a day, you heard it more than once a day. Why did God command Moses to have Aaron pronounce this blessing upon them? Because God wanted His people to know that I want to bless you. I'm a blessing God. I'm a keeping God. I'm a smiling God. We'll come to that in a moment. And so we know it as Chapter 6 in Numbers verses 22. Don't stop at 26. I want to include 27, and you'll see why here in a moment. So let me just read it.

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, [*This is the priestly tribe*] saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: [*Verse 24*] "The Lord bless you..."

By the way, stop. I'm sorry. Don't put the word "may" in there like the jury's still out. Sure hope the Lord blesses you. May the Lord bless you. I don't know It's iffy. No, it doesn't say "may." Does it say, "may" in your Bibles? I'm not angry. Oh, I am at "may." If you're named "May," we love you. I'm not angry at you. It's not "may the Lord bless you." [No] **"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."**

I'm sorry. Okay. I've got to share it; I haven't for a while. We got new people. Just let them hear this.

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When our boys were little — since I'm using illustrations of when they were little — wow, so long ago now — I would teach them this rap song that I came up with out of Numbers. Just hear — hear me out. I wanted to pronounce this blessing on my sons. So I came up with this song. Goes like this.

♪ The Lord bless you and keep you ♪

♪ And make His face to shine upon you ♪

♪ And give you peace ♪

♪ And give you peace ♪

[Laughter]

I thought it was pretty good.

[Applause]

So here we are some 20-plus years later. They're like, "No, don't do it again!" We got it! [Laughter] You're blessing us. You're keeping us.

[Laughter]

So it worked. It stuck, you know.

Can I just real briefly make mention of this, "**make His face shine upon you**"? Because this is where, like we just talked about, we don't picture God smiling at us. I mean, again, if you're anything like me, or at least how I used to be with my Heavenly Father, I always pictured Him, not with a smile on His face, but an angry look and clenched teeth and a baseball bat in His hand.

[Laughter]

I'm thinking, you know, He's not happy with me right now.

And this was kind of a game-changer for me because the Lord makes His face shine upon you. He's smiling on you. Think about it as an earthly father, even a grandfather. The joy — you know, grandparents are just silly, stupid. They get bumper stickers about their grandchildren. And until you have grandchildren, of which I don't, so I don't understand you grandparents, but I mean, when your grandchild comes to you and jumps on you, your whole countenance changes. And I'm embarrassed for you. I just want you to know.

[Laughter]

I mean, you just — you make weird sounds. (Talking baby talk) And you do weird things because that's your grandchild, and your whole countenance has changed. That's what God's like with us. Can you believe it? It's like I'm not getting on His lap to be bent over His knee to get a spanking but a bouncing. God is playing with me. He's happy. He's smiling at me. I

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don't know. That was a life-changer for me to think that God is lifting up His countenance upon me. And He's making His face shine upon me. That's His attention.

You know, when you walk in a room, and somebody just gives you their undivided attention? How much does that mean to you? I mean, conversely, you walk into the room and they're on their phone. Oh, hi. Wow. When you walk into God's room, He's not on His phone. He doesn't have one. So they can't track Him.

[Laughter]

But— I'm sorry. That was no extra charge too.

But He gives you His undivided attention. He turns away from everything that He was focused on. He's looking at you. He's shining His face upon you. He's smiling His face upon you. He's lifting up His countenance to you. He — you have His undivided attention.

How about what's referred to as the "heavenly hush" in heaven when the prayers of the saints are lifted up in the Book of Revelation? It's like — you'll forgive me for seeing it this way — but this is how I think and picture it. Here's God in heaven, my Daddy, my Abba, my Baba, my Papa. And He's in heaven, and I'm getting ready to pray. And He says, Everybody, the whole heavenly host, shush, quiet. JD's about to pray. I'm giving him My undivided attention. I'm lifting up My countenance upon him. Wow! Is that chicken skin?

Can we talk about verse 27 lastly? So every time they would hear this blessing upon them that God was going to keep them, were kept by God, the Son; loved by God, the Father; blessed, He says, verse 27, **“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”**

This is something that is totally lost in our culture, in our day. But in my culture in the Middle East, to this day, the highest honor and the most pronounced blessing you can ever bless somebody with is when you put the name of God on them, the name of God on them. That's like the ultimate. My name is on you.

You know, when the husband marries the wife, he changes her name. Now she has his name on [her], something for which my wife has still never forgiven me of after 35 years. Her maiden name was Lynn, so beautiful. Irish: It used to be O'Lynn. They dropped the O, like a lot did. So "Lynn." Here I come along: Farag.

[Laughter]

My name is on her, and she can't get it off. (Chuckling) Anyway, till she gets her new name. Anyway... But she's identified by my name. That's what God's saying. I want you to be identified by My name. My name is on you now, and I want to bless you.

So growing up, my mom would always say in Arabic, "issam," and I'm not going to say "Allah" because in — innocently, Allah is synonymous in Arabic with "god," not the name, the title, "god." But Allah is not the title of God. It's the name of the Islamic god. It's a false god; and

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Mohammed, a false prophet; and Islam, a false religion. Allah is not Jehovah. But she would say, "issam Allah alayk," "the name of God is upon you." Highest blessing.

So I changed it after I got saved to "issam Yasū'a alayk," "the name of Jesus is upon you." Yasū'a in Arabic, Yeshua in Hebrew, the name of Jesus be upon you. And that's what I pronounced upon my children. It's the highest blessing that you can pronounce on anyone is to put the name of God on them, pronounce the blessing of God, the name of God, the nature of God upon someone.

Now let's sew it up. How does this all tie in with, again, the reasons, not meritorious, that God is in control? We belong to Him. Think about it like this. He's, at great risk, chosen to identify Himself with us. Think about that. So we are identified by His name and His nature because we belong to Him. We're a child of God, loved by God, the Father; kept by God, the Son. So again, if I were God, I would not put my name on you. Because if you do something, then my name is attached to it.

It's like when somebody says, Is that your son or your daughter? My response is: It depends. What did they do?

[Laughter]

I'm just asking. If it's good, yeah. I would take it further with my wife. Is that your son? Yeah, it depends. If it's good, yeah, that's my son from my side of the family. It's not my wife's. See, because my wife takes everything that is bad genetically about our children, and she says that's your side of the family.

[Laughter]

So I said, well, that's okay. We're even because I changed your name to Farag. So there you go.

We belong to Him. Thursday night, Ezekiel 37, **"They will be My people, and I will be their God."** And because I'm their God and they're My people with My name on them, that comes with certain perks and benefits. It's kind of like — and I'll close with this — when somebody says, "Well, do you know who my daddy is?"

(Chuckling)

You know, because we're dropping names again, so why not? "So yeah, you know who my father is?" He owns this huge, you know, company and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[Laughter]

And then I just come back with, of course, in a very pastoral way, say, "Well, do you know who my Father is? He's the creator of the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that in them is, and He's my Daddy. (Chuckling) So take that in Jesus' name."

Kapono, come on up and save me from myself. Go ahead and stand up. We'll close in prayer.

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(Chuckling)

Thank You, Lord, so much. You're so — You're smiling right now on us. You're a smiling God. You're a loving God.

Lord, I pray that every single one of us would not leave this place today without relinquishing control to You so that we can be kept safe under the shadow of Your wings, protected in the palm of Your hand, covered, loved, set apart. Oh, Lord, we want that. Forgive us for fighting You with that, trying to take control and do it our way and grieve You when we do.

Lord, we know that You are in control. Our prayer is simply this: We want to let You be in control. And to do that, we want to relinquish control. And Lord, in so doing, as only You can, would You deliver us from that need to be in control of every circumstance or even people in our lives and relationships? Lord, we want to relinquish it to You so that You are truly in control, and now we know why. In Jesus' name. Amen.