

Called, Beloved, Kept, Pt 3

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

What a fascinating statement! We are not only called, but we are beloved (which is *why* we are called) and once we respond by embracing His salvation, we are *kept* for one purpose: *Jesus*.

In essence, then, we *become* the property of Jesus, and if you think that this is taxing or difficult on us, then you do not know Him. Could there be a better *master*? Is there anyone better with whom we could be associated?

Jesus took care of His apostles when He walked this earth. He cared for their needs as well as the needs of thousands of other people who lived at that time. Jesus healed the sick, fed thousands, cast out demons, and, most importantly, preached the gospel to them in order that they might receive salvation.

His love for people went deep as He walked this earth. He cried when His good friend Lazarus died (cf. John 11). His heart went out to the crowds that followed Him. They reminded Him of sheep without a shepherd.

The fact that God would stoop to become part of His own Creation as a human being in order to live a life of absolute perfection is amazing. Yet Isaiah tells us that He shared in some of the downsides of being human.

“He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him” (Isaiah 53:3)

As people, we know what it is like to be despised or rejected. We know what sorrow feels like. We certainly understand grief and frustration. While the above verse seems to zero in on Jesus’ time during His set of illegal trials and eventual crucifixion, it is clear from the gospels that he was despised by the religious leaders. In other parts of the gospels, the average person rejected Him after realizing that He was merely “the son of Joseph, the carpenter” (Matthew 13:55; John 6:42).

Jesus knew what it meant to be fully human, being tempted just as we are tempted (cf. Hebrews 4:15), yet He remained sinless. I cannot imagine taking temptation to the end without sinning. Jesus did, every time.

Just as He was able to keep Himself completely pure, never giving into sin, He is able to keep us in His care. We are kept for Jesus as the Father's gift to His Son. We will one day be perfect, no longer having the sin nature, which prompts us to sin.

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Jude 1:3-4

In verses three through four, Jude states the reason he was led to write. Originally, he wanted to write about the salvation that he shared with the believers to whom he was writing. However, the Holy Spirit apparently directed his thoughts instead toward those who had wormed their way into the visible Church but were not really of the fold – not authentic believers.

It is interesting how the Lord works. We start to move out in one direction, and the Lord moves us in another. There is nothing wrong with this. Note that Jude did not struggle *against* the new direction the Lord had placed on his heart. When he says, *"while I was making every effort to write..."* he is not necessarily saying that he was determined to write about salvation and nothing else.

It is likely that under the circumstances that existed at the time, with so much upheaval because of growing persecution from Roman authorities and Jews, finding the time to write at all was very difficult. By this time of the church's history, the tide had begun to turn against Christians. First thought by Rome to be little more than a sect within Judaism, they soon realized, because of the negative reaction of Jews toward Christians, that Christianity was *not* something with which orthodox Jewish individuals agreed.

With people like Paul (Saul, prior to his conversion in Acts 9) chasing down Jews who were believed to have converted to Christianity from Judaism, as well as the fact that Jews in general were opposed to Christians, Rome soon realized that persecuting Christians was in their best interest, since it made Jews happy as well. When Jews were happy, there was little danger of Jewish revolt or treasonous uprisings against Rome.

I believe it is for this reason that Jude says what he does about the reason he initially wanted to write. He was likely becoming hemmed in on all sides, and he himself probably had to deal with a number of apostates such as he warns his readers about. When an apostate enters the church, you can bet that little fires will start all over the place, drawing people away if allowed. These little fires, if left unchecked, will grow into full-blown conflagrations. It is the responsibility of the leaders of that particular assembly to take care

of the matter by putting that person out of the fold, if necessary, in order to maintain biblical peace, even if that person happens to be a teacher or pastor.

So it was that Jude wrote. The Holy Spirit obviously impressed upon him the realization that apostates were becoming a problem and that people needed to guard their hearts and minds from the error these false teachers espoused. Apostates needed to be *opposed*; it was extremely important to head off problems before they became monumental, and this is what Jude was trying to accomplish. Like the shepherd who carefully watches not only his sheep, but watches for any sign of danger and takes precautions against that danger, Jude, as a shepherd, was dutifully doing what he could to warn his readers that danger may be near. Maybe that danger had not yet approached, but his readers needed to be aware that there was a good likelihood that they would soon be facing the challenges of dealing with an apostate, if they had not done so already.

Jude's letter was also very clearly a form of encouragement. In it, he tried to help them understand what the apostate "looked" like in terms of their *modus operandi* and how they might approach that local congregation. If they could see this in one of these apostates, they would be able to identify him and take action against him.

A car is very difficult to turn when the motor is off and it is in park. Once the car is started and put in drive, as the operator applies pressure to the gas pedal the car begins to move and turning becomes extremely easy. We can see this same scenario in Jude's writing. As he *began* writing regarding a direction he thought was correct, the Holy Spirit simply nudged him to focus on a different area. This is the mark of an authentic Christian who is eagerly looking for the directing of the Holy Spirit. That type of Christian can "go with the flow" and not be encumbered by confusion because he is open to the Holy Spirit's direction in his life.

Once Jude explained what he had originally intended to write, but that he then was moved to deal with another issue, he is off and running, wasting no time in explaining what these apostates do to gain the trust of those within a congregation.

He first warns his readers that above all things, it is important to "contend for the faith." This means a form of apologetics, but Jude is not talking about *debate*. He is taking about presenting the gospel clearly and in no uncertain terms. If someone in the congregation begins using unfamiliar language with reference to the gospel of Jesus, they should be gently questioned in order to determine their real intent.

That is our show for today. Thanks very much for joining me and until we meet again, may the Lord open your eyes to show you how blessed you are in Him!