

JUDE: A Warning

JUDE, The Call to Stand

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Bible Text: Jude 5-7; Isaiah 5:20-22

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I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to two very specific places: the book of Jude and the book of Isaiah 5. If you're a first time guest or visitor with us, you are joining us today as we journey through a very small book of the Bible, as least as far as quantity is concerned, but an incredible piece of the word of God as far as quality is concerned. The book of Jude only contains 25 verses. Maybe 1-2 pages of your Bible and the best way to find it is to go to the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible and hang a hard left. In just a moment, we're going to be in the book of Jude, primarily verses 5-7 but toward the end of the message, we're also going to find ourselves in the Prophet Isaiah 5.

If you're one of those first time guests or visitors or maybe you even had the privilege of being with us in a while, allow me to catch you up to speed of where we find ourselves today in the book of Jude. We have been studying this content, this idea that those who are believers in Jesus Christ have been commissioned and have been called to take a stand. We live in a world today, whether it is in the home, whether it is in the community or whether it is in the culture, it appears that chaos is running rampant and here in the book of Jude it says, particularly in verses 3 and 4, that we are to contend, that we are to fight, that we are to take a stand for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. The entire book of Jude is encouraging those who already have a relationship with Jesus Christ on how to put action to our faith and to take a stand for the things that are godly and against those things which are not.

Today we find ourselves in Jude verse 5-7 and what we see today is a very stark warning. Over the last few weeks, we've addressed the fact that that which is evil, that which is ungodly has crept in. Today what we're going to study is this: what happens if those who claim the name of Jesus Christ do not stand? What can we expect to see in our homes and in our culture if those who are believers do not contend for the faith? If we do not stand, today the word of God warns us about what is soon to happen next.

As we get to verses 5-7 in the book of Jude, I want to begin with verse 3 just to give us a little context of what we're dealing with. It says,

“3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

As we focus on verses 5-7 and the stark warning that the word of God gives to those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ, that if we do not contend, if we do not stand, what can we rightfully expect to happen next? There are three very simple concepts that we're going to break down. The first one is this: that there is an emphasis that the Lord places upon this warning. There are expectations that we can discover or expect on the backside but in the middle, there are examples from history, examples from the Old Testament that God has given us to not just tell us but to actually historically show us what happens when the people of God do not stand for the things of God.

Let's begin with the emphasis. Verse 5 begins, “I will therefore put you in remembrance.” Now, you hear that word “remembrance” or “to remember” or “to have a memorial” and you may think, “Well, what's the huge significance there?” This word “to remember” or “remembrance” is a word that the Lord uses very sparingly in the Bible. In fact, he actually uses it very strategically. Not everything we're told to remember but very specific things.

Let's begin in the Old Testament. Exodus 20, the Israelites have come out of Egypt, they've crossed the Red Sea, they are preparing for what we know as the Promised Land. Moses goes up on the mountain, comes down with what we know as the Ten Commandments. It begins with having a relationship with God and it ends with our relationship with others but right there in the middle it says, “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” It's the only one of the ten that has the word “remember” attached to it. You say, “Well, what is the significance of that?” Not only does the book of Exodus go on to say that the Sabbath is a sign between Israel and God but you remember the wilderness experience where the manna, I mean the Krispy Kremes, came down from heaven. He provided them every day, everything that they needed. Remember if they did not eat them in the proper manner that by the next day, they would spoil. But the day before the Sabbath, they were to collect two day's worth and on the second day, the Sabbath day, it was just as good as if they had taken it that morning. The Lord is showing them and saying “remember” that is able to do more with little than we could do with

lots. He is able to do more with what we perceive as nothing as we can do with everything. And he tells them “remember” who he is in light of who we are.

You continue through the Old Testament and we discover that the people of Israel, that they have a very special relationship with God. In fact, it's not just one of being called out, it is a covenant relationship. It is one in which they are his people and he is their God and even in great times and in bad times, in wonderful times and in sad times, we discover that even in the midst of their rebellion, that covenant never ceased. Ten times in the Old Testament, ten times the Lord reminds them to remember the covenant that he established with them. Now, those are significant items, remembering who he is in light of who we are and remembering even when we fail, he does not. Remembering even when we rebel, he is there to forgive and to heal. So, when we see the word “remember” it is a very critical strategic thing by God when he tells us to remember something.

Let's go to the New Testament. Luke 16, there is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Now, it's not the Lazarus who had sisters, Mary and Martha, and on the fourth day Jesus raised him from the dead. This is the Lazarus who is pictured as a beggar. He is pictured as one who sat at the door of a “certain rich man.” The story that Jesus tells in Luke 16 is that they both died but their eternal destinies are very different. For the poor Lazarus, it's in what we know as Abraham's bosom, basically a figurative heaven, so to speak. And the certain rich man finds himself in a place the Bible calls hell. While he's there in that midst, in Luke 16, from the mouth of Jesus we have recorded a conversation that the rich man and Abraham have. He has communicated that there is a great gulf fixed between them. He has communicated that the torment will not stop. He has communicated that Lazarus is enjoying himself immensely to which then the rich man pleads to Abraham. He said, “Oh, that someone might go and tell my five brothers.” Abraham says, “Oh, they have the prophets and they have the word of God.” He says, “Yes, but if someone would just raise from the dead and tell them, oh, they would believe.” To which then Abraham recites this, he says, “Do you not remember that in your life you had great things and Lazarus did not. But now in this eternity, he has wonderful things and you do not.”

Why did the Lord use the word “remember” there because we need to pay very special attention to this thing called eternity because we settle it now and it lasts forever. And he uses that word in that story to say, “We need to remember that this life is fleeting. We need to remember that one day it will end for all of us and eternity is way too long to be wrong.” He says, “Remember you had the opportunity.”

You go one chapter more to Luke 17. Jesus Christ again is speaking. It is the only time in the gospels that we have a recording of him, Jesus, telling us to remember any one particular person. Now, think about the Old Testament, there are a lot of people Jesus could say to remember: remember Adam and Eve; remember Noah; remember Abraham; remember David; remember Samuel, Samson, Solomon. We could go through the whole list. In chapter 17 of the book of Luke, do you know who Jesus tells us to remember? Lot's wife. You know, the only person that Jesus Christ personally says “remember” is a woman who had been given the opportunity for freedom and forgiveness and decided to look back because she desired the things of the world more.

You see, every time we see this word “remember” it's strategic. 1 Corinthians 11, celebrating what we know as the Lord's Supper, recounting the words of Jesus, “do this in remembrance of me.” You see, there are Old Testament illustrations, there are New Testament but there's also historical references. Notice what it says in verse 5, “I will therefore put you in remembrance,” I love this, “though you once knew this.” It's almost as if the Lord is telling the original recipients here, “This was something that you used to grasp and somehow you have forgotten it.”

Let me share with you one of the most frightening things about the 21st century today: we have forgotten to learn from history. We have decided that the mistakes of the past do not necessarily dictate ours of the future and the error is on our part not theirs. And what he is saying is, “You once understood this but now you don't.” And what the emphasis is here is this: that who are we to thumb our noses in the face of God and say, “Well, they couldn't handle it but we can.” Let me remind you of one of the great stories of the Bible, one of my favorites. His name was Samson. His strength was in his hair. He battled the Philistines all of his life and one day there came 1,000 men to fight Samson. All Samson had was the jawbone of a donkey. They began the battle. I don't know how long it took but somewhere down the road there are 999 dead guys and one guy alive and he bows his chest and says, “I think I can take him.”

Folks, that's what's happening in our world today. We look at past cultures, we're looking at past civilizations, we're looking at past generations and saying, “Well, they may not have been able to persevere but we can. They may not have been able to last but we can.” And what we need to discover today is this: that we need to remember history so that we as believers in Jesus Christ do not repeat it.

Now, what are the examples? Beginning in verse 5, there are three very simple examples that are given. Please understand: each one of these verses represents multiple chapters in Scripture, kind of the behind-the-scenes of the story and so I just want to kind of skip a rock across the pond, so to speak, and just look at what is the example that is given to us here. Verse 5, “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” I want to call this the example of possibility. Now, think back to this passage: the Israelites have been in captivity for 400 years. They are delivered by the hand of Moses and the mouth of Aaron. You know, the famous ten plagues. They come across the Red Sea. As they stand on the other side of the Red Sea, they are 11 days away from the Promised Land. They are 11 days away from the land flowing with milk and honey. They are 11 days away from being in a place with vineyards they didn't have to plant and cities they didn't have to build. They are almost there.

But what happens in the story? They begin to grumble. They begin to whine. But more importantly, the Lord sent 12 spies and when those 12 spies come back, two of them say, “We've got this,” and ten of them say, “We don't have it. They're too big. They're too strong. We're too small. We're too little. There is no possible way that this can humanely be pulled off.” And they were absolutely right. There was no way that Jericho would fall

by human means but if you march around it for seven days, the Lord will take the walls down. There is no human way that they could eradicate the land of all the ites that were there but with God leading the way, it could absolutely happen. And the possibility that we need to understand today is this: that when you are “fighting with God,” there is the possibility of victory but when you flee from God, there is guaranteed defeat. Because they made the decision to side with the latest poll, they made the decision to side with the “majority opinion,” they made the decision that there was no way this could happen because they could not conceive how.

Let me use a little modern history here when it comes to possibility. A little over 40 years ago on the other side of the globe, a little piece of land that we call Israel completely surrounded by every nation in the Middle East, they decided to wage war. They were greatly outnumbered, greatly outmanned and great out-armored, yet six days later, the nation of Israel stood in victory and everybody else was in defeat. How do you explain that? You can't. You see, the example of possibility is simply this: that when we contend for the faith, even though it looks like we're outnumbered, even though it appears there is no way we can “win the victory,” when he guides and he leads and we follow and obey, the victory, according to Zechariah 14, is not by might nor by power but by his Spirit says the Lord. And we have an example that when we do as he's asked, he does bring the victory though it may not appear that it's even humanely possible.

That's the example of possibility. Now, the next example in verse 6 is one I want to call the example of position. It says, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” In this illustration or in this example, we have the story that at some time in history past, what we know as the angelic beings, that there was a portion of them, there was a minority of them that decided that John Milton in “Paradise Lost” was right: it is better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. They decided to leave their first estate. Now, here's the significance of this passage: we do not know how long they had been in the presence of God. The Bible makes it clear in the book of Job 38, then when the heavens and the earth were created the sons of God, the angels of God, celebrated and they rejoiced. We don't know how long they had been there but we do know that for a significant period of time, the angelic beings of God were content, they were happy, they were around the throne room and everything is good.

But then something happened for there is an entity in the word of God, we know him as Satan, the accuser. Originally he was Lucifer, the lighted one, the anointed cherub over the throne of God. According to Ezekiel 28, at some point, it said that welled up within him this desire to be number one. He no longer wanted to serve God but to be served by God. And he orchestrated a coup and in that coup, some way, somehow, we're not given the details, he convinced these angelic beings that the grass was greener on the other side. Now, folks, let me give you my theory of the grass is greener on the other side: it's not greener, it's burned up. And what he shared with them is, “Hey, why would you continue to do what you've been doing? Oh sure, everything is fine, everything is wonderful here but what if it could be better? What if we expand our horizons? What if we broaden our

minds to see what's on the other side of the gate?" And what happened? They traded ultimate God-directed freedom for bondage and captivity. They traded heaven for hell.

Why would this example be given to us? Because you and I, not just as believers in Jesus Christ but as the wonderful blessing of being residents where we live in our place in the world, you and I have had the privilege of most of us being born and most of us being raised in a place where we have had a position of freedom when it comes to our faith. We have had a position where we can express our faith. We have been in a position where the things of God and godly behaviors and laws and morals and ethics have been the rule of our culture. The problem is, that we're not learning from history and there's an increasing number of people saying, "Yeah, but is there something on the other side of the fence?"

You know, I think it started some 40-50 years ago. We can blame what we know as the decade of the 60s but it really wasn't the decade, it was the people that were living in the decade and they adopted the philosophy, it came from the other side of the water, the Rolling Stones came and they shared with us, "I can't get no satisfaction, though I tried and I tried." And what happened was there was this mentality that we were no longer satisfied in the foundation that had been laid. We were no longer satisfied in an attitude of godliness but we needed to expand our horizons and see what this world could offer. It was a few years later in 1971, a musician by the name of Dan McLean would come across and he would say, "Bye-bye, Miss American Pie, I drove my Chevy to the levy and the levy was dry." Those of you know the song and I'm not singing the next verse.

Moving on, but what did that communicate? It communicated that over 40 years ago, the pillars, the foundations, the morals and the ethics and most importantly the faith of our culture was drying up and we decided, "Do you know what? Let's see if we can do it without God. Let's see if we can do it apart from a biblical foundation." Can I ask you a very honest rhetorical question? How's it going for us? Not very well.

But here's an example, he says, "Remember this." And then there is one final example that is listed. Verse 7 says, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." I want to call this the example and I've got it in quotations "of perversion." Now, please understand: the word "perversion" means "to take anything and to use it for an attitude, a benefit or an action that is contrary to its original purpose." What we know as a perversion does not necessarily have to be of a physical intimacy construct. Anything can be a perversion if you take it and utilize it for a purpose that it was not originally utilized for.

Now, a couple of other things that I want you to notice about verse 7 is this: it says, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them." When we talk about the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, we typically think of that one city, we think of that one family that Lot led and we think about that one judgment that God brought. But notice what it says in Jude 7, it wasn't just Sodom and Gomorrah. It says "and the cities that were round about." The problem that they had was not just a city community problem, it was a cultural problem. It had gone and it had spread all throughout.

But there's one last thing that I think is very critical for us to understand in this series through the book of Jude: when we hear the story of the Sodom and Gomorrah, when we read about it in the Bible, we most naturally gravitate to one very specific sin construct. But I want you to notice the word that's used in verse 7, "fornication." Let me give you the definition for fornication: any behavior by anybody that is outside of God's plan and provision. Fornication is not just limited to one very specific sin of a "intimate nature," but if one is intimate with someone before they are married, that is called fornication. If they are intimate with somebody while they're married, to somebody who they're not married to, that is fornication. Notice what it says here: you see, when we think of Sodom and Gomorrah and we think of all that's happening, we typically set our sights on one specific thing when the Lord's not using a 30 or 6, folks, he's using a 12 gauge here. He's saying, "It's not just one, it's a whole bunch."

Folks, it would take hours and hours and hours to disclose all that that means and sometimes, even in the church, we're so guilty of pointing out all of the obvious things that we are against. Sometimes it's good to point out the one thing that we're actually for. So, I would encourage to go back to Isaiah 5. It's a prophecy hundreds of years before the time of Jesus and in light of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and in light of the story that we have in the book of Jude, this example of perversion goes way beyond one particular item. It's a shot gun. Verse 20 of Isaiah 5, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" You see, the Prophet Isaiah is warning us. Sodom and Gomorrah is used as an example in Jude 7 of what happens when we begin to say, "That which is good is bad and that which is bad is good."

Over the course of the last decades, just as we addressed in verse 4, there have been certain men and certain things that have crept in and they've been incremental so that it's almost as if we didn't see it happening and it's happened in our very homes. You see, there was a time in our society and our culture that you could have a family hour of television. You cannot have, hardly, a family hour anymore unless you are quick on the trigger of the remote. But you go back 3-4 decades and you go back to the family hour, one of the things that you will notice in those days is that any time they showed a home, any time they showed a family, it was always a husband and a wife and some children. That's the way it looked. It was as the Bible had described. But then something began to filter in. You see, what happened in the beginning was not an obvious construct, it was incremental and you can go back and watch the shows because something happened so subtle, most of us missed what was actually happening. Within those homes that looked the way they were supposed to look, they were not acting the way they were supposed to act. And one of the things that you'll see creep up in the family sitcom hour of decades ago, work with me on this one, is that the dad and the husband was more times than not perceived as the idiot of the family, couldn't get anything right, always messed everything up and lo and behold, here came the savior: Mom is the only one who has a clue what's going on.

What happened is, it didn't start with a family structure, it started with a family attitude that they do not work together, there is no respect for their husband. It started with flipping the model and do you know how they did it? Humor. It was funny to watch. Why? Because we've all seen those situations played out in our home but that's not the way it is every day, every conversation, every scenario. And 3-4 decades later, I challenge you to find a show that much less you see a family built the way God laid it out, but more than that, where the husband isn't the bumbling idiot and the opposite is true.

But, you see, it goes beyond that for in today's television world that's guided by humor, if you do see a family that's rooted as God has them and has built on faith, you notice what you find in the show? They are the outcasts. They are the bigots. They are the narrow-minded alien neighbors is who they are. And what has happened? We have fallen to the incremental creeping in of perversion. We've taken the home, we've taken relationships, we've taken how we deal with one another and we've twisted it to be different than it was originally meant to be.

This is an example; it's right before our very eyes. The problem is that after 40 years, hardly do we even notice it yet every one of these examples, whether it's a possibility, whether it's the position we hold or whether it's the perversion happening, these are examples to us of what happens if those of faith do not stand up. What happens to those who have received faith in Jesus Christ if we do not stand for that which is godly and against that which is ungodly? So, what I want to share in conclusion is this: what can we expect to occur if we don't stand? What can we expect to happen if we in our homes, we in our occupations, we in our community and yes, even in our churches, if we do not stand for the faith that was once delivered to the saints?

Three expectations that come from these three verses. The first one comes from verse 5. It says you are to remember of that which happened in Egypt when they who came out believed no. I tell you, the first thing that we can expect to happen, not just in our homes but in our culture, if we as believers in Jesus Christ do not take a stand, let me prepare for you the next thing that you can begin to expect is a desert. Now, think about the desert experience with the Israelites: they had an 11 day journey, it took them 40 years. And because of their unwillingness to do the things of God, for 40 years they just took another lap, took another lap, took another lap. Can you imagine day after day waking up and realizing it did not have to be this way. Every time they would go around that mountain, they caught a glimpse of what Canaan could have been in their lives.

Do you feel like when you wake up every day it's become a desert event? You know what you see on the news? Same story, same problem, same sin, different place, different names. It's the same scenario. It's the same problem. It's the same battles. The same struggle. The only difference is the names of the guilty have changed. That's it. We are becoming, quickly, a desert culture. Where all we do is go around the mountain and experience the same thing a different time with a different amount and a different personality at the helm.

Folks, there's no Promised Land there. There is no getting to the promises of God. We just continue, listen, to manage the disobedience. Folks, last time I checked, you cannot manage sin. You can just delay the inevitable. What happened to that generation? It says in the book of Exodus that they all died out. Do you know what we can expect if we as believers don't stand? That our culture, our homes even if it's within our home, are going to become more of a desert, more of just going round and round and round, never solving anything and experiencing the same problems over and over again.

What's the second thing we can expect? Darkness. That's what it says in verse 6. It says the angels that left their first estate that they were chained in everlasting darkness. Listen to what Jesus said in John 8:12. He said, I'm quoting Jesus, "I am the light of the world." 1 John 1:5, it says, "God is light. In him is no darkness at all." Then in Matthew 5, Jesus tells us that we are to be the light of the world." And as believers in Jesus Christ, if we do not penetrate the darkness with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, what is going to happen? It's going to get darker and darker and darker spiritually. I've got some bad news for you: if we as believers don't begin to stand, tomorrow we'll be spiritually darker than today was. The darkness is creeping in and listen, it's picking up speed. It said that there will be a darkness that will descend.

Folks, we have been commissioned to be the light. Do you know the amazing thing about light? All it takes is a little bit of it to make a huge difference and maybe you're thinking to yourself, "You don't understand. I'm the only light in my home." You may be thinking, "I'm the only light where I work. I'm the only light on the street that I live." I've got good news for you, according to verse 5, that's enough. Why? Because he said that's the possibility that with God we can overcome.

So, what we have set before us: expectation of a desert and darkness but there's one last thing. Verse 7, what happened when that culture and that society decided to not do things God's way? Destruction. You know, this is where we need to really deal with history because one of the problems that I see in our culture today is that we suffer from something that was formerly called ethnocentrism, commonly it's known as arrogance. We believe that somehow, some way, the lessons of history are not valid for us, that we've decided that we're going to pave our own way, we're going to do it in our own stride and that nobody should tell us how.

Let me give you a list of the culprits of civilizations of greatest gone by. Shall I begin with Egypt and Babylon and Persia and Greece and Rome? Do you know what happens in those places? I've been on some of these trips. You can go to some of these places that at one time were significantly impactful of the world and do you know what they call the places now? Ruins. Go to Greece, there just a pile of rocks. Go over into Rome, bunch of rocks. Everywhere you go of great civilizations of the past, what you see are a bunch of rocks. Listen to me: if the people who claimed faith in Jesus Christ do not begin to take a stand, that at some point in the future, students from somewhere else are going to come to America and see buildings that have been crushed down and say, "They used to be something but now all they are is a tourist site."

Folks, the foundations have begun to crack and the question is: are we going to be the ones who stand? Listen, you go back to verse 5. Ten people said it can't be done, two said it could. The two were right. You come here to verse 7, there was one family. Remember Lot's family? Jesus told us to remember his wife. There was one family who stood and they were spared.

Let me challenge you today as we prepare for next week about how to actually stand, that we would realize today that God has given us a very clear warning and aren't you thankful that he didn't leave us to our own devices? Aren't you thankful that he didn't come and say, "Well, good luck. I hope you do well." He's given us his word with very specific examples and said, "If you will heed their mistakes, you won't have to fall into the same trap."

Let me give you some of the best advice my dad ever gave me. Now, my dad is not a man of great words but he's a man of great wisdom. Here's what he said, he said, "Son, to the best of your ability, try to learn from other people's mistakes." He said, "It's a lot less painful and a lot less expensive." Now, translate that: whether it's coming out of Egypt, whether it's the angels that left or the story of Genesis 19, folks, we ought to heed the lessons of history today and realize that the only means to preserve and to prosper is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Everything else eventually becomes ruins.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed as we prepare for our time of invitation. You know, maybe you're that individual today, maybe you're here as a first time guest, maybe you've been here most of your life, maybe you're watching us on tv or even the internet and with all that you've heard from the word of God today, you realize that you may not be an Israelite coming out of Egypt, you may not be an angel that has fallen but you realize that you're a human being who's tried every way but God's way. You've tried education. You've tried money. You've tried relationships. You've tried experiences. You've tried everything but you've never tried Jesus. Let me encourage you this morning that wherever you are, whatever your background, whatever your age, would this be that day where you would submit and surrender and say, "Okay God, I'm the problem and, God, you're the answer."

If that's who you are today, before our time of invitation, I want to encourage you to have a conversation with God. Technically we would call it prayer and you don't need to say it out loud and you don't need to repeat exactly what I say but in your heart would this be the conversation you would have with God. You say, "God, today I realize that I'm the problem. I realize that I'm the one who, though I may have tried my best, I'm the one who has fallen short and I understand the Bible says that means that I have sins and that the wages of my sin is death. I understand, God, that I'm the problem but I also understand that Jesus Christ loved me enough that he was willing to come searching for me, he was willing to be born for me, he was willing to live for me, he was willing to go to the cross for me and three days later he rose so that my sin could be forgiven and I could be saved. Lord, I come today asking you to simply forgive me and save me, not based on my own merits but on the blood of Jesus Christ. And the best way I know how, I want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed. Maybe you're here this morning and a prayer similar to that has taken place at some point in your life past, maybe months ago, years ago, maybe even decades ago but maybe today from the warnings of the book of Jude you realize that there are some things that have crept up into your life, there are some things that have crept into your family, there are some things that have crept into your work place or your culture or whatever you want to label it and you realize that it's time that somebody stood before the whole thing comes crumbling down. Would you at this time, would you just call out to God that he would strengthen you as he did the two spies in Exodus?

Lord, as we prepare to sing together, God, as we prepare to stand together, as we prepare, yes, at some point to celebrate together, we realize that there is some business that some of us need to do with you. Lord, for some of those that require stepping out and stepping forward, grabbing one of these ministers by the hand, Lord, I pray that you would encourage them right now that when we stand they wouldn't wait, they would just come on down.

Lord, also for those where it's not about stepping out and stepping forward but it's about going out of this building and making a difference somewhere else. Lord, I pray that at this time our feet, our hands, our mouths would just be a conduit of what you've done in our minds and our hearts and whatever takes place, we'll be very careful not to take any credit for ourselves or this church but for you alone. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.