

## JUDE: Finish Strong

*JUDE, The Call to Stand*

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I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to the second to the last book of the Bible, the book of Jude. If you're a first time guest or visitor with us, I want to welcome to what I like to call caboose Sunday, this is the end of the train. Over the course of the last couple of months, we have progressively walking through the book of Jude and as you open it up, if you're a first time guest today, you may see there's only 25 verses in the entire book but as we've noticed the last weeks, the message from the word of God that we've been presented from the book of Jude is incredibly powerful. Why? Because it is challenging us to stand in a world that is increasingly becoming more and more dark, more and more cynical and more and more secular. In fact, the word that I used so much in the book of Jude is the word "ungodly." Could there be a better word for the world that you and I are living in today than the word "ungodly." What appears in our life is that righteousness is waning and unrighteousness is growing, that godliness is going by the wayside and ungodliness is increasingly growing and that has been the challenge of the book of Jude, that we would stand, that we would as verse 3 says, we would contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

In the course of all of that information in the last few weeks, it has been somewhat a dimming, darkening message. It could be disheartening. Why? Because it appears that we wake up every morning, we've been challenged every week from the book of Jude that the world that we're living in is growing ever more increasingly dark and it could put a mentality or an attitude in you of wanting to give up or wanting to quit or wanting to go by the wayside but I want to encourage you today as we look at verse 20-25, the book of Jude is going to challenge us to finish strongly. It's going to challenge us in this famous salutation to do something contrary to what the world and the enemy, the devil, would want us to do. It's going to challenge us to stand in the midst of it anyway.

Now, over the course of the last weeks, we've dealt with the Israelites who waned in the wilderness; we dealt with the angels who fell from their first estate; we dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah and the judgment of God; we dealt with the way of Cain; the error of Balaam; and the gainsaying of Core. In the midst of all of that information, it is discouraging. There is a part of you that would love to just hold your ears and go hide in a cave but the book of Jude, in the midst of all that stuff, contending for the faith, challenges us in these last few verses to do something much to the contrary.

Beginning in verse 20, there is that word again, “but.” In the midst of all of this information, in the midst of all of this bad news, in the midst of a world that has been incredibly, increasingly ungodly, it says,

“20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. 24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

This is the salutation, this is the conclusion, this is the exclamation point on an entire message of encouraging us to take a stand, to fight for that which is of God. Today we see three very simple concepts, very tangible concepts. In fact, these are the how-tos: how do we put it into place, how do we put it into action. All that we've dealt with during this study in Jude, how do we actually put wheels into motion on Monday morning, Thursday afternoon and whatever time is a struggle for us.

I think the first thing that we've got to know and discover is this: the position in which we hold. Just like in a sport's arena, if you do not know what position you have, you do not know how to play the game. So, let me share with you the position that you have as a believer in Jesus Christ. If you are a saved soul, a believer in Jesus Christ, here is your position: first and foremost it says you are beloved. That means you have the provision of God on your life. Think about the word “provision” and I realize there is a sport that is dear to my heart, that I know it's popular in this part of the country as in others, but the game is called golf. I know some of you think, “If I'm going to spend time out in the middle of nowhere chasing something, that something is going to have four legs and a tail.” I get that but in the game of golf a provisional is when you have hit a shot that has gone in error and you hit a second shot so that now when you realize your first ball is lost, you can now stay in the game. Let me tell you what happened the day you got saved: you got a provisional. That's what you got, you got a provisional. Why? Because your life was out of bounds, your life was out of the game, your life was nowhere in the fairway. You were out there and God gave us a provisional through Jesus Christ.

Do you know what he calls us? He calls us his beloved. That's what it says. “But you who are beloved.” It does not say, “But unto you, you ought to just be grateful for what I do for you.” Did he say that? He said, “My beloved.” You know, that word “beloved” is most familiar in the book in the Old Testament known as the Song of Solomon. I know that book of the Bible is somewhat controversial as it discusses the dialogue between King Solomon and his wife and much of the language has a romantic overtone to it but if you take a step back, it's a beautiful picture as we discussed last week in Ephesians 5 of the mystery of Christ and the church, that Christ is to the church as a man is to a woman. And in Song of Solomon, what does it say about the spouse? That they are his beloved.

Think about the picture of a wedding ceremony: you've got the groom who's gone to great expense on the ring, great expense on all kinds of things. He has put himself out there and asked that person, asked that woman to marry him. He stands at the front with witnesses, waiting and desiring for that bride to come forth. We're called the bride of Christ. We are the beloved of Christ.

That's the imagery that we have. Let me give you a picture from my life: you can mess with anybody but don't mess with Tracy. You can mess with me. You can get mad at me. You can say all kinds of bad things you want about me but don't get close to her. Let me tell you why: because she's my beloved. She's my wife. She's mine. That's what Jesus says about you. That's your position. You're his beloved. He gave himself for you. He sacrificed for you and here's what he says about this old world: don't touch my bride. Don't mess with my life. That is the position that we are in. We need to understand that we may see defeat around us but we are not defeated. We may see darkness all around us but we are not in darkness. Why? He says we're his beloved. We are his bride. We are the apple of his eye. We are everything to him. We've got to grasp that. That is the provision that we have in him.

But the second thing we need to understand about our position is that this provision brings great power. It says, "But beloved, building up yourselves in the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." When we speak about prayer, we could talk about the power of prayer literally for hours and I think we understand that when it comes to being on our knees and getting before the throne of God, we recognize that there is power. I mean, after all, in Matthew 21, Jesus made this statement that as we pray that we can cry out to a mountain and if we ask it to be thrown into the sea, it will be done. And you read that passage and you think, "Well, that's a nice parable. That's great imagery." No, no, read the book of Revelation 12 and one day that's actually going to happen. There is a group of people who are running from what we know as the antichrist, they're on their way out, they plead to God, "Protect us," they cry out to the mountains and guess what happens? They fall into the sea and it protects them on their way. That was not just an illustration of power, that was a reality of power.

And it says that we pray in the Holy Ghost. Now, those of you like me, we have the old King Jimmy version in your hand, it says Holy Ghost. Understand that 77 times in the New Testament we have the phraseology "for the Holy Ghost, for the Holy Spirit." In the King James version it says Holy Ghost 71 out of 77 times. You may be thinking to yourself, "It sounds a little archaic and ancient. Why would that be so significant?" Because as you look at those passages in the Bible and when it says Holy Ghost, the idea, the picture that you get every time is that the one who used to be present is no longer physically present but the power that was there has never departed. He is the Holy Ghost. His presence is there. That is why in John 14, Jesus comes along and says, "Guys, I know you don't want me to go but it's actually a good thing. It's actually beneficial for me to leave for when I leave there will be another comforter, there will be another one who will come and not just be among you but will actually dwell within you."

Here's why that's wonderful: have you ever watched the news? I mean, I do this on a regular basis. You're sitting by yourself on the couch, the loveseat, chair, whatever your situation is and you have this conversation with the Lord. You say, "God, did you see that?" Have you ever done that? I mean, it's just a normal prayer language, right? Paul says pray without ceasing so I talk to the Lord all the time. Sometimes we think, "You know, God is just somewhere out there whistling Dixie," and all of a sudden, you say, "I wasn't paying attention. I'm sorry. What was going on?" But it says that praying in the Holy Ghost means that as a believer in Jesus Christ having the provisional of his position, that means that when you're sitting on the couch watching, it's as if he's there. He's not somewhere out there. It's as if his presence and his power is there.

Let me tell you why that's so significant: because we live in a world that increasingly those who don't get the things of Jesus Christ are numerically outnumbering us and sometimes we get this tendency to say, "God, where are you?" Let me tell you where he is right there. You say, "God, would you please show up?" He says, "I'm already there." And the stories go infinitum in Scripture about how many times that God showed up in such a majestic and mighty way that they could not fathom him doing it. Why? Because they couldn't see it with their eyes. They couldn't hear it with their ears. I'm reminded, even discussing with Nicodemus, Jesus made this statement to him. He said, "Nicodemus, the Spirit of God is like the wind. You can't see where it's coming from, you can't see where it's going but, oh you can see what it affects in the process."

That's the same thing. Sometimes we may not physically see him beside us, sometimes we may not physically hear him but that is the position where not only has he saved us and redeemed us and we are his beloved but he is with us wherever we are, whatever we're dealing with, in whatever situation we are standing against. Listen, I heard this just this morning and I know I've said it before but it's good to hear it with fresh ears that you plus God is a majority and whenever we are standing for the things of God, sometimes we feel like that's all we've got and last time I checked, that's enough. That's the position that we're in. That position of power gives us a perspective like none other? Why? Because it gives us God's eyes. It gives us God's perspective. It gives us his angle of looking at things.

You know, this last week, we had a wonderful privilege of hosting the K-Love Listener Appreciation Concert, that free concert that literally packed this place on Wednesday night. We had people coming from far and wide and it was a wonderful concert for multiple reasons but one of the things that surprised me, one of the things that I didn't necessarily expect but was grateful that occurred is that the headliner, Jason Grant, he actually preached as much as he sang and he spoke incredible words of encouragement and he hit people exactly where they needed to be hit. But one of the things that he addressed Wednesday night that so emulates what the book of Jude is saying is he said that if we get our relationship with God right, then we can get our relationship with others right.

Let me tell you why this world has gone amuck. Are you ready? Because they're trying to fix everybody with each other and they're not fixing it with God first and that's the

problem that we've got. And what Jude is saying about this position is that through his provision, through God's power, if our relationship with the Lord is right, then our relationship with humanity can be right. And maybe you're worried about the family members, the job situation, the finances. You're worried about all the horizontal stuff. Let me tell you something: if we'll get the vertical settled, let him take care of that part. That's the position we have. Do you know what that position is? It's a position of victory. That's what that position is. We are the beloved of God himself. He is with us everywhere we go and he promises us that if we are right with him, he can get us right with others.

Folks, that is a wonderful place to be in but here's the problem: the problem is the world that you and I live in. Notice what it says in verse 22, "And of some have compassion, making a difference." You know, one of the things that I've learned in life is those who need the greatest amount of love probably deserve it the least. Let me say that one more time: those who probably need the greatest amount of love deserve it the least. It says one of the things that we're to do, the problem that we have is that we have a world that is burdened all around us. It says have compassion on them. Let me tell you what I mean by burdened. Have you ever made this statement to somebody: a decision is made, something occurs and woo, the weight of the world was just taken off my shoulders. We understand what a burden is, it's when there is a weight of something.

Folks, we live in a world today where people have more weights on their life than probably ever before: emotional weights, financial weights, physical weights, mental weights. All kinds of weights. We live in a burdened world and what does it say? For those that are burdened have compassion on them. Compassion, it means actually caring more that their burden is lifted than we get to experience or do what we'd probably rather be doing. It's a call of sacrifice. It's a call to reach out. You see, this is the message of Jude I want you to hear in the last week: it's not about retreating to our own private retreat center, it's about actually getting out there and making a difference. Isn't that what it says? It says to have compassion, make a difference. If we make a difference that means we see something that is not right and we're a part of the solution, not just declaring that it is a problem. On those who are burdened, those who need compassion, invest in them.

A couple of years ago, there was an experience in our family's life that to be quite honest with you to describe it is still somewhat emotional. For those of you who do not know, my wife, Tracy, her background, her education is in elementary education. She was a kindergarten and first grade teacher before all the boys came along and so having that background, not only because of our children but because of her education, wherever we've lived she's invested in the schools that our boys have been in. She volunteers on a regular basis. She's in the classroom. She's meeting with folks. She is a part of that. She's not going and hiding, she's actually a part of the system. She's there. A couple of years ago we had a third grade teacher at the school my boys were attending, knew Tracy's background, listen to this: we did not even have a student in her classroom. She came to Tracy, knew who she was, knew our boys and all that and said, "Tracy, I have a young girl in my class, third grade. Testing is coming up in the spring." She said, "She does not

even read on a first grade level. She is about to become a statistic. She comes from a horrible background. Would you be interested in tutoring her and teaching her to read?"

Now, can I speak on behalf of my wife? She's married to me and has three boys, she's got enough on her plate. She didn't need this. She came to me and we talked about it and she felt compelled that this was something that she needed to do. And once a week she would gather together with this young girl, her name was Cheyenne. Do you know what she found out about Cheyenne? Cheyenne probably has more burdens in her life than you do. Cheyenne was eight years old, in third grade, single parent home and her mother was a meth head. Eight years of age, she set her own alarm clock, made her own lunch and got on the bus by herself. Now folks, you don't have any problems compared to Miss Cheyenne. Eight years of age. Can you imagine that? You talk about a burden. And then gets to school and is failing everything in school because she had to get herself up, make her own lunch and get on the bus. No support system at all.

Once a week Tracy went in there and she would help tutor her and having compassion on her and enduring from the perspective not just of an adult but a teacher of how difficult that is to make up two years in a very small amount of time. Do you know what happened to that little girl's life? She started skipping recess to read with my wife. Now, when an eight year old skips recess so they can study, that's because their burdens are being lifted by somebody, compassion has entered into their life. I've walked in that school before and seen this little girl coming down to the lunchroom and take off in a mad sprint and bear hug her with everything she's got. Why? She had compassion on her. And here's the best part about this story because here's the tendency of Christians, we want to run away and hide and pretend there are no problems. One day they're sitting in the hallway reading, preparing for a test and that little girl asked my wife this question: she said, "Miss Tracy, where do babies go when they die?" Now, I don't know what had happened in her life but do you know what that is, that is sic them to the gospel presentation bulldog right there. And my wife had the privilege of talking to a little girl about Jesus in the hallway of a school because she had compassion on her and she loved on her and spent some time with her.

Notice what Jude says, "And of some have compassion, make a difference." Let me tell you the rest of the story. Spring comes and goes and little Cheyenne takes the test. She failed by one question but she had a smile on her face because she almost did it. How far she had come from where she had been. A difference had been made in her life. Listen, we have not been called to run and hide in a cave, we've been called to go and to make a difference and for those who are burdened, if we would just have some compassion on them, you might be surprised the difference that it would make.

Then it goes on in verse 23, it says, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." We live in a world that is burdened but we also live in a world, put up with me on this word, that is burning. You know, John 3, we love that chapter: Jesus, Nicodemus, famous verse 16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We love that verse. You get to the end of chapter 3 of the book of John, verse 36 and it says those who

do not believe on him, the wrath of God already abides on them.” The picture that we get is even though you are moving, you're walking and you are breathing on planet earth, having rejected Jesus Christ it is as if you have already put yourself in a seat in hell. That's why in 1741 when one of the great preachers of our history named Jonathan Edwards, got up in a small Presbyterian Congregational Church and he preached a sermon known as “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” In that famous sermon that back in my day we actually studied in school, in that sermon it says that we as humans are dangling over the fires of hell merely by a simple string and it is by the grace of God that that string is not cut and for all of eternity we are there burning. The picture that is without Christ tomorrow one burns but without Christ today, one is burning. It says that those who are burning, it says that we are to go in and we are to pull them out of the fire. Listen to me clearly church: it does not say stand in the road and yell at them. It does not say just scream, “Hey, we're going good and you're not.” It says actually go in and pull them out.

You know, through my course of ministry days, I get some phone calls that you wish you didn't get. Usually it's a situation in somebody's life or even the community's life that is beyond tragic and there have been times where I've been called to the scenes of great destruction, the scenes of great calamity and loss of life and I'm called as pastor to go and not just help those who are affected directly by it but even the first time responders who sometimes have great difficulty dealing with some of the things they've seen with their eyes and heard with their ears. I got a call a couple of years ago of a situation that I do not know if I've personally witnessed one with my eyes that could have been more tragic. It was a two-story house, had about 8-9 individuals that were living in it and in the middle of the night there was a fire that was started on the bottom floor. All the kids and grand kids and all of the people in there were all on the second floor sleeping but on the bottom floor this fire started and because of the condition of the house, the age of the house, it spread very rapidly and before long the entire first floor was engulfed yet all the people upstairs on the second floor. Because of the noise in the middle of the night, the neighbors in the area heard it and they saw what was happening and they began to run out. There was a 17 year old boy, 17 years old, a senior in high school who ran over to his neighbor's house. These were the kids that he had played ball with in the backyard. These were kids that he knew. These were ones that he had played out in the street with. They had the windows open and the smoke was billowing and they were crying for their lives and this 17 year old boy screamed, “Jump! Jump! I'll catch you.” In that cold night, he witnessed every one of those neighbor boys and girls lose their life before his eyes because they were scared to jump.

Let me ask you a question about verse 23: where does it say to go to someone who is lost and tell them to jump out of the window? It says go pull them out. Now, I understand, in the physical illustration that that young 17 year old man was not able to go into those flames. I get that but last time I checked, that's why we have firefighters and firemen who have the gear, they have the protection on them and they have the ability to go into the heat of battle. They have the ability to go into those things. Listen, did you not understand point 1? He's given us the provision. He's given us the power. He's given us the perspective. We can go in the house. We can go into their lives and not be spotted. And says we're even to hate the garments spotted by the flesh.

Not only do we have a burdened culture, we've got a burning one. We have been called to make a difference. We have been called to go in but here's the third thing: the problem is that our culture is blind. They're burdened and they're burning and they don't even know it. Many of them even aren't at the windows screaming. They are enjoying themselves to the fullest and they do not even know what is around the corner. Here's the problem with a blindfold: the longer you wear it, the more you get used to it. You know, the first time you put on a blindfold it is somewhat disconcerting. You don't know exactly where you are, you don't know how to get around.

I'm going to share something. They say confession is good for the soul so I'm going to confess about a time in my life, some of you just need to forgive me in advance, but when I was in college, I was a part of a group of men known as a fraternity and when you're going through that organization, don't worry I was the designated driver, I was daddy to everybody so don't worry about it. That being said, when you're going through the pledging process, when you're going through the time period where they're going to decide are you "worthy" to be in this group, there just are a lot of times where they wrap a blindfold on you and do things that are just unconscionable to you, okay? I had been taken out in the middle of nowhere, I've been dropped places, I've been stuffed in the back of trucks. I've been put in all kinds of places with a blindfold on. Do you know the first time they put a blindfold on me it scared me half to death. I didn't know where I was. I didn't know where I was going but six months down the road, it was like, "Eh, no big deal." Feel yourself around. Listen real carefully. I got this, it's just a game.

You know, that's what's happened to our society. They've been blinded for so long to the truth, they think they're normal. They think their lifestyle is the way everybody and everything is supposed to be and they don't realize they're the ones that have been blinded. Do you know what 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, it says that the god of this world, Satan, has blinded this world. He's blinded them. You know what it begins in the next verse? It says, but you and I are called to take the glorious light of Jesus Christ to them. Do you notice a theme here? The burdened world, the burning world, the blinded world. We are not called to just sit back and observe it and say, "Well, too bad for them. Good for me." We are actually called to have compassion. We're called to pull them out. We are called, according to 2 Corinthians 4, to go into their world and take the light of Jesus. What did Jesus say in Matthew 5? Does a man take a light and hide it under a bushel? No way. He puts it forth so it can be seen.

That's why in verse 3 of Jude it says contend for the faith, take a stand for the faith. Not sit back and just seen what happens. That's a problem. Here's some good news. I've got a promise for you: there are promises here at the end of the book of Jude that we all need to hear because we know we have a position in Christ, we know we've got a problem in this world but here are the promises of God. Beginning in verse 24, it says, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling," that's the first promise. The promise of God is that when you begin to take a stand in your world, you begin to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints, it says that God will make an interception on your behalf. Let me tell you what an interception is. You know what it is, you've watched a football game.

An interception is when you have a quarterback, typically, who desires to throw the ball to a wide-receiver or whatever it may be, in the process of trying to complete that play, a defensive player comes and takes the ball away, he intercepts the ball. The thing that I'm trying to communicate is this: that there is nothing more than the devil wants to do than to make havoc of this world, to rule this world and to have darkness over all of this world and as we go and make a stand in the world, what this verse is saying when it says "He is able to keep you from falling," it means that God can intercept you from the claws of the devil. He can intercept you from his wiles. He can intercept you because one of the big struggles that people have is, "Oooo, if I get out there and start making a difference, what's going to happen to me?" I'm going to tell you what could happen: he is able to keep you from falling. He can make an interception in your life.

Do you not remember the end of the book of Genesis? Joseph who is an incredible type of Christ, he's been sold into slavery, he's been done wrong by his brothers. He rises up to the powers that be in Egypt and when his brothers finally come to repent, listen to what he says, "What you meant for evil God meant for good." What he's simply saying there is, "God made an interception in my life." And God will make an interception in your life when you go out and you begin to work with those that are burdened and those that are burning. He will keep you from falling. Isn't that what it says? He is able to keep you from falling.

That's the interception but there's a second thing here. It says, "And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory." Not only does he promise us an interception, he promises us the ability to intercede on our behalf. It says that he presents us faultless. What that means is this: that because of one day in my life, like many of you, I was literally a sinner on the way to hell and I realized that I needed a Savior and his name was Jesus Christ. When I called out for Jesus Christ to save me, let me tell you what's going to happen one day in my life: according to Hebrews 9:27, I as every one of you, am going to stand before God himself and when I stand before God, let me tell you what I am: I am dirty, I am rotten, I am sinful and I am unclean. That is who I am and that is who you are. We are filthy rags. We are unclean vessels. But hear what Jesus Christ is going to do on my behalf and for many of you, when I stand before God, see I'm his beloved, right? I'm going to stand before God one day and he's going to intercede and he's going to step in the way and say, "Excuse me, Dad, this one's with me." He's going to say, "Excuse me, Dad, I've taken care of this one. Excuse me, I need to intercede here because he may look dirty but I've taken his dirtiness. He may look unclean but I have made him clean." And I've got great news for some of y'all, I know I laugh about my height all the time but I'm sure Jesus is taller so when he stands in front of me, he really cannot see me in that situation. I'm going to be hidden by him. Not physically but spiritually. He is going to intercede on my behalf.

Listen, if he's going to intercede for me that day, would he not intercede for me this day? Would he not go before me when I'm going in that situation? I literally could take hours of your time giving you story after story in my family's life where Tracy and I have been concerned and we've been prayerful of who is this going to work, how is that going to happen and we come back and here's the phrase we use all the time: I didn't think God

was going to do it that way. Do you know what that is? That's him interceding because humanity didn't think God would save us that way, did we? Remember the Christmas songs, that's such a strange way to save the world. He has interceded on our behalf.

But here's the final thing: yes, there is the promise of an interception, yes, there's a promise of intercession but it's the promise of intervention. Now, this is a word that's gaining a lot of ground in our culture today. Why? Because we have a lot of people who are suffering substance abuse, a lot of folks that are involved in all kinds of addictions and struggles and bondages and strongholds and basically what an intervention is, is this: that when you have an individual who will not relent, you have an individual who will not repent, you have an individual who will not seek help in their life, those who love them, care for them, sometimes family members, co-workers, neighbors, whoever, they get a battle plan together. What they do is they surprise this individual, they go in and they basically share because of our love for you, you're going to get help whether you like it or not and they sometimes even physically restrain that person and they take them to get help. It's called an intervention, when not expected, those who care and love for them actually intervene into their lives to see that help is brought to them.

That's an intervention. Let me tell you something: in the midst of all of the darkness we've talked about, in the midst of all of the world gone chaotic that we've addressed all throughout the book of Jude, God is a God of intervention. He is a God who comes in because of his care and concern for us and he intervenes in our lives even when we least expect it. Let me give you a couple of examples. You do realize that the Christmas story is a story of intervention. Everybody was just minding their own business, life was good, they're blinded, they're burning, they're burdened but they thought everything was good. What happened? God showed up and he intervened in their lives. He showed up and said, "Guess what? I'm here to show you the way." You do realize that the cross event, Easter, was an intervention. Why was it intervention? Because it says in the Bible that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. In other words, when the world was going about their business celebrating even a religious holiday, God showed up and said, "Here's the deal: you can't save yourselves, you won't save yourselves, it's impossible to save yourselves so I'm going to do it for you. I'm going to have an intervention." Guess what? God's not done yet because the great intervention is yet to come because the Bible says that even though this world is in chaos, even though the culture has gone astray, even though as Jude says there is ungodliness everywhere, one day, it says as in the days of Noah, when they were marrying and drinking and having all kinds of fun, it says the skies are going to split open and God is going to intervene and when he does, he takes care of his beloved and he has wrath upon those who have rejected him.

There is another intervention coming. Here's that great promise: not only will God take care of us as we make a difference, not only has he interceded on our behalf when it's beyond our skills but at the end of the day, he's coming back for us and the question is: how will we have ourselves presented before him? You know, before our time of invitation, before Brother Jeremy comes, one of the great preachers and pastors of this land in the last 50 years, a small little church out of Atlanta known as First Baptist, Charles Stanley, I'm sure some of you have heard of him occasionally, hundreds of

millions of people around the world listen to him every day but one of my favorite stories that Dr. Stanley tells is the story about when he was a young boy, probably 8-9 at the time, about the age of some of my children. Many of you may not know that he grew up in a single parent home. He grew up with his mom taking care of him and he claims that his mom made the best chocolate chip cookies of anybody in the world. He said when he would come home from school he could smell them. When he'd come from playing out with the neighbor, he could smell them in the house and just like you and just like me, when I smell chocolate chip cookies, it's like a beeline, I've got to have them. She would tell him, she'd say, "Now Charles, I've saved those for later. There is going to be a time where you can have them but not right now." He said, she would go and get distracted and he would do what all 8-9 year old boys do, right? They would find a way to make away. So, he would go into the kitchen and he'd put a stool up and he would be as quiet as he could.

He told the story that one day he went into the kitchen, he had been as quiet as he thought he could humanely be. He gets up on the stool, he takes the lid off the cookie jar, puts his hand in it and just as he's about to grab the cookie, his mom steps in the kitchen and with the wisdom of the ages she says, "Now Charles, is that what you want to be doing when Jesus comes back for you?"

Let me tell you, church, why I chose to tell that story as the last story of the last message of our study of Jude: Christians, church and those who are bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, get your hand out of the cookie jar. Get your hand out of the cookie jar. You're spending so much time, so much money and so much energy trying to get the thrills and the frills of this world when at any point Jesus is going to intervene and it won't matter the thrills, it won't matter the frills. Folks, he's going to come. He's going to intervene and we've been called to be standing when he splits open the skies and the question isn't if he's coming or not, the question is will we be standing when he does.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed as we prepare for our time of invitation. I recognize not only here in person but also in the television and internet ministry, I know that vocal presentation has not been what it usually is but I also recognize that in the book of Isaiah, it doesn't say where the voice of the preacher goes, it does not return void, it says where the word of the Lord goes forth, it does not return void. We have read it, we have studied it and we have explained it and now every one of us has the privilege and the opportunity to respond to it. We began this series with this simple message: that God reveals and we are to respond. He has revealed to you today and the question is: have you responded?

Maybe you're that person today, maybe you're seated here, maybe you're at home, maybe you're driving down the road in your car as you're listening to this and you realize that all of this energy working on the horizontal relationships aren't going to matter much because you don't have the vertical one fixed. Maybe you're that person, man, woman, boy or girl, young or old, it doesn't matter and you've realized at this moment in time that you've never called upon Jesus to save you. You've never confessed that the problem is you and not him. You've never asked him to save you. Here's what I would encourage

you to do: wherever you are right now, even in this very place, if that's who you are, not out loud, not necessarily the same words that I say but you be that individual today who cries out to Jesus to save you. It's a real simple process. You don't have to have any kind of formal education or degree but you've just got to admit that there's a problem and you're it. That's more than most of the educated people in our world can do to begin with. If you would just say, "I'm the problem. I've sinned. I'm the issue." And then would you confess that Jesus is the answer? If you're willing to admit and acknowledge those two things today, here's what I would encourage you to do, just have a conversation with God and say, "God, today I realized I'm the problem, Jesus is the answer and I'm asking you to forgive me of my sins. Save me from the mess I've made so that one day, I'll be able to stand before you not because of my goodness, righteousness or how smart I am but because Jesus rose from the dead and loves me enough to save me. God, I don't understand everything but I do know today I need Jesus and I'm asking you to save me because of him and him alone. In 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, in a moment we're going to have our time of invitation and Brother Jeremy is going to lead us to sing. We're going to stand together and maybe you're one of those today who needs to step out and step forward, one of those who made the decision we just talked about for salvation or maybe there is another one. What I do know is this, we've heard the commission to stand, the question is will we follow?

*Heavenly Father, you have spoken, you have convicted us. You have communicated to us the truth of your word now it is up to us what do we do with it? So, God, I pray that in these next moments we would just simply respond to you properly. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as Brother Jeremy leads us. Whatever decision, you come.