

The Command to Persevere – Part 5

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Jude commands the church to persevere in the face of false teachers in true faith
2. aim – to cause us to persevere by building up our faith and helping others to do the same
3. passage – Jude 17-23

b. outline

1. The Reality of Scoffers (Jude 17-19)
2. The Command to Persevere (Jude 20-21)
3. The Need to Help Others (Jude 22-23)

c. opening

1. the command to **persevere**
 - a. Jude's **primary imperative: persevere in the true faith (and help others to do so also)**
 1. the central verb is to “*keep yourself*” – to keep oneself in the love of God
 - b. **(now)** Jude takes up **aspect #2** of what it means to “*contend for the faith*” (v. 3): to assure that **every believer in the church** is persevering in the faith – to *keep others* in the love of God
 1. **note:** the assumption of the NT is that the Christian faith is *not just personal* – although trust in Christ is *individually expressed*, the *continuing action* of justification **occurs in community**
 - a. **IOW:** although our highly *individualistic* and *religiously private* culture demands that we “keep our religion to ourselves,” the Bible clearly teaches that we persevere in faith *together*
 - b. **i.e.** lone-ranger Christianity is unbiblical – **the means of our perseverance is each other**
 2. **now:** a sentence expressing this sentiment in three (3) distinct clauses
 - a. first clause: “*show mercy*” to those who doubt = come alongside those who question the veracity of assertions, especially the revelations made by God
 - b. **i.e.** healthy doubt vs. unhealthy doubt = questioning assertions made by *men* vs. questioning assertions made by *God*, the One who cannot lie
 - c. it is impossible to eliminate *all* doubts from our minds and hearts, even as believers, but doubt is **not inherently fatal** unless it is allowed to *fester into apostasy*
 1. “trivial” doubts are overcome by a regimen of *discipleship*: over the mind (in learning), over the heart (in worship), and over the flesh (in accountability)
 3. **so:** Jude addresses (in clauses #2 and #3) what must be done where **doubt festers and threatens to be fatal** (i.e. what if “standard” discipleship practices are not enough?)
 - a. **i.e.** increasingly difficult realities that may arise in the body, **especially in the face of false teachers pushing heterodox beliefs and practices in the church**

III. The Need to Help Others (Jude 22-23)

Content

b. the subjects of the sentence

2. “*save others by snatching them out of the fire*” = help those falling into apostasy
 - a. “*snatching them out of the fire*” = another example of **imagery** in the letter
 1. like **vv. 12-13**: reefs, waterless clouds, dead trees, crashing sea waves, wandering stars
 2. **ITC:** the image of something *valuable* falling (or about to fall) into a fire; the “quick action” of reaching in to pull out something that has fallen into a fire
 3. “*snatching*” (root: *harpazō*) = to take away; to gain control over; to seize; to catch
 - a. **Matthew 13:19**: the seed “snatched away” by the evil one (in the Parable of the Seed)
 - b. **John 10:28**: the elect secure in Christ so they cannot be “snatched” out of his hand
 4. “*fire*” = either a) the consequences of sin, or b) the ultimate fire: hell (damnation and destruction)
 - a. a metaphor for something to be avoided, in this life or in eternity
 - b. **IMO:** either intended use makes the point – doubt that festers threatens to be fatal; apostasy has consequences *both* in this life (in loss of blessing) *and* in eternity (in the wrath of God)
 - b. “*save others*” (root: *sōzō*; **x106**) = to rescue; to deliver; to bring safely through to a good end
 1. generally: to bring to salvation; to bring safely through the wrath of God into eternal life
 2. contextually: to *preserve* to salvation; to assist in the *perseverance* of another unto salvation

- a. **i.e.** the assumption is *of believers* – the work to “save” an individual is to bring him back from the brink of *apostasy* – to reach out and “snatch” one back from doubt → apostasy
- c. Jude employs an imagery of believers *reaching out* to other believers to “pull them back” from the edge of apostasy, from doubt that festers until it reaches a fullness of disbelief
 - 1. **remember (from James 1:6)**: doubt and faith *start from the same place* (an assertion of truth); faith moves towards *belief*, doubt moves towards *disbelief*
 - 2. doubt that *festers* continually moves away from truth *revealed by God* until it “flowers” into full rejection of that truth in disbelief (**i.e.** apostasy)
 - 3. **the command: be prepared to intervene in the life of someone whose doubts (regarding the truths revealed by God through Christ) are getting the better of him**
- d. **question**: what does this “snatching” look like – if this is *different* (in scope) from the simple process of discipleship outlined above, what must I do to help “save” such a brother?
 - 1. **answer: it will require a willingness to intervene, potentially in ways far greater than simple teaching can go, bringing a profound warning to such a person**
 - 2. **e.g.** Jesus’ warning to the Pharisees and scribes in **Matthew 23**
 - a. the details of this event
 - 1. at the end of **chap. 22**, the Pharisees try to “test” Jesus by asking him to “choose” amongst the commandments for the “greatest” – he silences them with his response
 - 2. so, **chap. 23** becomes Jesus’ **exasperation** with them (**after so much time with them**)
 - 3. he pronounces seven (7) woes over them (**vv. 13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29**), warning them (and others) of the danger they represent by their “religiosity” that rejects *God himself*
 - a. “woe” = their miserable condition in God’s sight which will *lead* (ultimately) to wrath
 - b. **note**: I chose this example because there is a parallel here between brothers and sisters in Christ *in the church* and Jesus and the religious leadership *of his day*
 - 1. **i.e.** both Jesus and the Pharisees had similar ethnic background, cultural milieu, religious practice, spiritual centrality (**i.e.** love of Torah, temple, law, etc.), conservatism, etc.
 - 2. **IOW**: Jesus *expected* the religious leadership to *recognize* him within the framework of revelation that had been given to them, in their world, *which he had entered into*
 - 3. so, this is consistent to us *in the church* because *all believers* should have a *common* understanding of the revelation of God in Christ, a revelation that saves
 - c. **the point**: Jesus recognizes that the Pharisees are about to fall into the “fire” of damnation, so he *confronts them directly* with their unbelief
 - 1. he does not “coddle” them (**as many claim**), but he *directly confronts their unbelief* in the hope that they will see him correctly in the light of revelation *and repent*
 - 2. thus ... Jesus himself gives to us an example of **intervention**: a willingness to confront the makings of apostasy in others, the willingness to call for repentance, the willingness to pronounce the reality of judgment *in the hope that it will lead to repentance*
 - a. sometimes we have to get “in the face” of a fellow brother and confront his error ...
 - 3. “show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by sin ...” = help those falling into gross sin
 - a. **ITC**: take everything from above and substitute “doubt” with “sin” – what does it mean to “show mercy” to a brother not festering in *doubt*, but festering in *gross sin*?
 - 1. moving from doubting the veracity of God’s **promises** to the veracity of God’s **requirements**
 - b. “show mercy with fear” = (**again**) willing to intervene, but (**in this case**) with **greater intensity**
 - 1. “with fear” is probably the idea of *employing fear in the heart of the sinner*, not just “feeling” (in yourself) a sense of fear for what he or she may be doing (albeit, a good thing to feel)
 - a. **i.e.** show the kind of mercy that brings *true fear* (repentance) in the *other*
 - 2. “hate even the garment stained by sin” = displaying a sense of **revulsion** over every aspect of sin, such that it becomes clear to the sinner what he is doing *and why it must be repented*
 - a. “garment” (*chiton*) = a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin (**i.e.** underwear)
 - b. **i.e.** hate everything about sin that even comes close to “touching” you
 - c. **principle: a mark of the true follower of Christ is that he hates his own sin**
 - c. Jude employs another imagery of believers *reaching out* to other believers to “pull them back” from the edge of apostasy, from sin that festers until it reaches a fullness of apostasy
 - 1. **i.e.** the imagery of “shaking off” every sin that comes close to “
 - 2. **the command: be prepared to intervene in the life of someone whose sin (in doubting the requirements of holiness in Christ) are getting the better of him**
 - d. **question**: what does this “hating” look like – if this is *different* (in scope) from the simple process of discipleship outlined above, what must I do to help “save” such a brother?

1. **answer: it will require a willingness to intervene, potentially in ways far greater than simple accountability can go, bringing a profound warning to such a person**
2. **e.g.** Paul's instruction to the church at Corinth in **1 Corinthians 5 (and Matthew 18)**
 - a. the Corinthian church is "boasting" over the fact that someone in the church is having an inappropriate relationship – they are "tolerating" the sin within the framework of "grace"
 1. **i.e.** failing to see sanctification as the vital "next step" to justification (**Romans 6:1-2**)
 2. **remember:** this is instruction for *believers*, not for the reprobate (although we should still warn the lost with tears, begging them to repent and believe; **e.g. Phil. 3:18**)
 3. he instructs the church to *excommunicate* the offender (deliver him to Satan) for "*the destruction of the flesh*" so that "*his spirit may be saved*"
 4. **i.e.** the removal of the man from the official life of the church will "cut him off" from the means of grace given to the church, and this will (hopefully!) cause him great suffering
 - b. **the point:** confront this man with discipline so that he will see the error of his ways and turn back for *restoration* – do not allow the sin to *fester*, but intervene, even if it means that the believer must suffer "in the world" without access to Christian fellowship
4. the imperative of Jude is to **persevere in the true faith (and help others to do so also)**
 - a. "*keep yourself*" in the love of God by seeking the means God has granted *in the church* for your sanctification: building up your faith, praying in the Spirit, and waiting in anticipation for his return
 - b. "*save others*" in the love of God by being prepared to reach out *in love* to intervene where doubt or sin festers: bring *honesty* and *discipline* where necessary to keep a brother in the faith
 - c. **especially in the face of false teachers pushing heterodox beliefs and practices in the church – stand firm contending for the "*faith once delivered to the saints,*" in yourself and everyone else who claims Christ as Lord**