

The Command to Persevere – Part 4

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. our new **benediction**
2. 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
 2. the genuine *disciple* of Jesus will be held fast by God through the **gifts** he has given to him, **means** to be used by the believer to stand fast in the love of God, to **persevere in faith**
 - a. **means #1:** building up our most holy faith = to increase in the knowledge of who God is and what he has done, such that this knowledge *permeates* every aspect of us
 - b. **means #2:** praying in the Spirit = maintaining an open communication with God, being honest with him about our needs and submitting ourselves to his will
 - c. **means #3:** waiting for the mercy of the Lord = walking in great anticipation of what truly matters, the day when Christ Jesus will fulfill all his promises and bring us to himself
 - 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 “fight” for everyone else to come to a full knowledge of God, to know God intimately, and be waiting in full anticipation for his return
 1. **i.e.** **aspect #1** of contending is *personal*, **aspect #2** is *communal* ...

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

Content

a. the structure of the sentence

1. **note:** modern English translations render **vv. 22-23** as a single sentence divided into *clauses*, with each clause separated by a semi-colon
 - a. the KJV uses a full colon at the end of the first clause, implying the 2nd and 3rd follow from it
 - b. a common old-English structure (**e.g.** the 1689 Confession) – the division of a *singular primary point* within a sentence into various *aspects (clauses) of that same point*
 1. **i.e.** each division relates to the others by simply being a different “view” of the primary subject
2. the simple conjunction (logical connective) “*and*” connects this sentence to the previous one
 - a. **i.e.** what you *were* commanded to do in **vv. 20-21** *now* continues along a different path
 - b. specifically, just as you were commanded to keep “*yourself*” in the love of God, now the command *extends* to helping keep “*others*” (**x2 ESV**) in the love of God as well
3. **IOW:** the singular primary point of the entire sentence is for us to “*keep others*” in the love of God
 - a. **i.e.** the key verbs of the sentence are show (or have) “*mercy*” and “*save*”
 - b. and ... there are three (3) specific clauses (or *means*) by which we are to do this ...
 - c. **note:** there is a connection (albeit remote) to the three (3) “orbiting” participles of **vv. 20-21**
 1. the three (3) clauses here are **increasingly difficult realities** that we may have to face as we attempt to help keep our brother or sister in Christ “*in the love of God*”

b. the subjects of the sentence

1. “*have mercy on those who doubt*” = help those struggling with questions of faith
 - a. a *highly personal* subject ... and one that is *rarely* discussed honestly in the church (**IMO**)
 - b. “*doubt*” = (**simple**) unbelief or disbelief; (**specific**) to question the veracity of an assertion
 1. to question whether an assertion can be (or is) true, based on the reliability of the one making the assertion *and* whether the assertion has validity to the hearer, both logically and experientially (does it make sense from what I know and have experienced?)

- a. doubt vs. unbelief = doubt is to *waver*, unbelief is to *deny*
- b. **e.g.** Thomas (**John 20:24ff**) – he *questioned* the veracity of the assertion made by the other disciples, and would not accept their claim *until he had more proof* (revelation)
 - 1. **note:** Jesus did not condemn him for this – he *revealed* the truth and Thomas believed
- c. doubt is a *normal part* of the human experience
 - 1. because we are finite (and fallen) **it is impossible to not question assertions** – because we cannot know *everything there is to know* (and because we cannot fathom the *infinite*), we are *forced* to question and test everything for truthfulness, especially *spiritual claims*
 - 2. **e.g.** the Bereans (**Acts 17:11**) – they “[*examined*] the Scriptures” to validate the claims of Paul and Silas, *which was perfectly reasonable* in light of the “fantastic” nature of the message
 - 3. **culturally:** but, we are told (in our world) that *skepticism* is now unacceptable
 - a. science (or the scientific method): to question the veracity of truth claims; to observe and experiment upon all assertions to determine their validity (**i.e.** no *settled* science)
 - 1. and, although a modern concept *culturally*, the idea of observing and experimenting to determine truth flows from a **biblical worldview** (**1 John 4:1**)
“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
 - b. scientism (the new religion): to accept (without question) the assertions of “experts” *even in the face of observable contradictions* in their claims to reality and experience
 - 1. **i.e.** to question the experts is “wrong” (or -phobic); **classical liberalism** welcomes discussion and debate; *illiberalism* is to be *intolerant* of any question or dissent
 - c. unfortunately, there are some Christians who take this “scientism” approach to the Christian faith: all doubt must be eliminated or you are not a Christian (a form of *perfectionism*)
- d. doubt is a normal part of life, but it can be *unhealthy* (rather than healthy)
 - 1. the distinction between the two is based on **the one making the assertion**
 - 2. **healthy:** to question the veracity of assertions made by *fallen, limited* creatures
 - a. not to the point of *irrationality* (**i.e.** not believing *anything*), but to a proper end (**Bereans**)
 - 3. **unhealthy:** to question the veracity of assertions made by *the One who cannot lie*
 - a. **e.g.** 2+2=4 is fundamental to the created order *as revealed by God* (foolish to question it)
 - b. **e.g.** human sexuality is established within the *Imago Dei* (God established it; **Matthew 19:4**)
 - c. **e.g.** all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (a fundamental revelation)
 - d. **principle: an unhealthy doubt is to question what God has revealed to be true once we understand it to be true and that it has come from God himself**
- e. doubt is *inescapable* when it comes to the assertions *made by God*
 - 1. the truth-claims revealed by God are *so far above our limited capacity to grasp*, we *will struggle to keep them straight* (**i.e.** theology is massive and inexhaustive)
 - a. **v. 22** implies there *would* be those who doubt some elements of the “*faith once delivered*”
 - b. **i.e.** to contend for the faith is to work to grasp the depth of what has been revealed, which *will* cause us difficulty as we try to understand it all and “take it in”
 - c. **e.g.** the person who claims to “never doubt” (probably) has only an “elementary” theology
 - 2. the truth-claims revealed by God are *so opposite our nature*, we *will struggle to align them* with our lived experience (**i.e.** be holy, for I am holy ... but I am not ...)
 - a. our sinful nature will (at times) cause us to question even the veracity of what God has promised – **i.e.** given how I act, am I really saved?
 - b. the Father of Lies (the devil) will attempt to exploit the “disconnect” between our behavior and what we understand to be true – **i.e.** since God’s assessment is based upon behavior (the lie), and your behavior is so poor (a partial truth), God must not love you (a doubt)
 - c. **i.e.** has God *really said* ... the devil sowed *doubt* into the mind of Eve by combining a lie (you will not die) with a partial truth (you will be like God) – he will do the same to us!
 - 3. the truth-claims revealed by God are *so absolute as to their requirements*, we *will struggle to hold them* in the face of fleshly desires
 - a. **i.e.** sometimes we just *want to sin*, and this is what “drags” us away from *what we know to be true* (**note:** for the *regenerate*) – we begin to question *if* God demands holiness ...
 - b. **e.g.** the false teachers “*pervert*” the gospel into a message of “*sensuality*” (**v. 4**) – they promote *fleshly desire* as the “core” of the gospel, causing believers to doubt the central claim that coming to Christ means abandoning sin (**e.g.** the “gay Christian”)

4. **some amount of *unhealthy* doubt will arise amongst us, as we attempt to grasp the depth of what God has revealed, as we consider our nature against his own, and even as we struggle to mortify sin in our flesh to achieve his requirements of holiness**
 - a. **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**
- f. doubt is overcome in the believer through a careful program of **discipleship**
 1. “*have mercy*” = mercy is to give to others *what they do not deserve* (**i.e.** God’s mercy is to extend forgiveness and compassion to us *even though we deserve to be destroyed*)
 - a. **ITC:** to “*have mercy*” on those who doubt is not to *abandon them*, but to come alongside of them to help them through their doubts – **to help those struggling with questions of faith**
 2. a regimen of discipleship over the three (3) areas (above) where doubt *inevitably comes*
 - a. over our **minds** – doubts about the *infinite* nature of God’s revelation can only be overcome by a steady diet of doctrinal training – **a discipleship of learning**
 1. (**again**) more than just “head knowledge” – but (at least) a *thorough* training in theology that reaches into every aspect of the *Imago Dei* in us (**i.e.** his love *revealed*)
 - b. over our **hearts** – doubts about the nature of our relationship to God can only be overcome by a consistent training in the connection of theology to life – **a discipleship of worship**
 1. **e.g.** preaching and teaching and worship and fellowship that causes us to *marvel* at the promises of God, seen in our lives and in the lives of others (**i.e.** his love *in us*)
 - c. over our **flesh** – doubts about the centrality of *holiness* in the message of the gospel can only be overcome by discipline and self-sacrifice – **a discipleship of accountability**
 1. **i.e.** to hold one another accountable to the shared responsibility for the church being a witness of regeneration to the world (**i.e.** his love *through us*)