

We Will Always Have to Deal with Scoffers (17-19)

Have you ever heard someone talk about the first-century church with affection for a return to “the good old days” of early Christianity? The little letter of Jude should give pause to anyone with that affection. Jude teaches us that the first-century church had more than its share of difficulties, including those who mocked the Christian faith.

We will always have to deal with scoffers (Modern examples of Dawkins, Hitchens, and “everyday” people; Biblical examples of Jesus’ crucifixion and Paul in Athens)

The NT contains warnings about scoffers (Ac 20:29-30; 1 Ti 4:1-5; 2 Ti 3:1-5). We really shouldn’t be surprised, then, that there always have been and continue to be scoffers. Our modern means of communication, including the ubiquitous social media, provide a platform for scoffers undreamed of in previous decades. And the scoffers utilize that platform to mock and deride Christianity.

What does Jude say about these scoffers? The Apostles predicted that scoffers would arise. Jude says that they follow their own ungodly passions and are divisive and worldly (vv 17-19; cf 1 Co 2:14). They are unbelievers who cannot please God because they do not have the Spirit of God (Ro 8:8-9). They are rebellious people who reject God (Jude 4-16). So the scoffers are worldly, ungodly, unbelieving and unable to please God. But the scoffers also are not going away. We will always have to deal with them. The question is, how do we deal with them?

We Deal with Scoffers By Being Built Up in the Faith (20)

The solution is to be built up in our faith (Eph 2:20-22; Col 2:6-7). Just how are we built up in the faith? How do we do that? Four ways:

1. Prayer
2. Reading the Bible
3. Church attendance
4. Service.

To confront the many scoffers who are around us, we must be builders (thus the title of the sermon) and we must be those who pray fervently.

Because Being Built Up in the Faith Means that We Love God and Show His Mercy (21-23)

It is crucial to remain in God’s love and wait for his mercy. Jude’s command is: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” (Cf John 15:4)

I think Jude has in mind Matthew 5:7, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”* The Lord Jesus promises eternal life to those who wait on his mercy (1 Ti 1:16).

Note the progression in the text: “build yourselves up,” “pray,” “keep yourselves in God’s love,” followed by “Be merciful to those who doubt. We are builders instead of scoffers so that we can be built up, keep ourselves in God’s love, experience his mercy and show that mercy to others (Lk 6:36).

Vv 22-23 seem to refer to three different types of situations: Those who doubt, i.e., who have doubts about their faith; those who are in “the fire,” i.e., engaged in sin and in need of deliverance and those who have disengaged from the faith.

Are We Being Built Up in the Faith?

How do we react to scoffers? Do we react in despair, or do we react with building ourselves up in faith, praying and showing mercy? Do we merely complain about the scoffers, of whom there are many, who surround us and routinely make their voices heard, or do we respond in faith? Are we builders responding to the scoffers?

Mocking God is nothing new. It goes back to the beginning of time and is a part of man's rebellious nature following the Fall. The letter of Jude, which rightly condemns the false teachers and false followers of his day, provides a wonderful antidote to scoffers of all ages. Be built up in faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God and have mercy on others.

Are we being built up in the faith? As you look at the middle of the year in 2014, is your "building" bigger and better than it was in June of 2013? Have you grown in the faith? Is your love of Christ deeper? Are you praying in the Spirit? Do you look forward to eternal life and the Second Coming? Are you showing mercy to others?

If your answer is "yes," praise God for His abiding grace in you and ask him to make you even more like Christ. If it's "no," here's the good news: Jesus forgives sin, grants repentance to us and changes us so that we're built up in the faith. He answers everyone who sincerely comes to Him. And His mercy is so great that He works it in us so that we can show it to others.

May God grant us the grace to persevere to the end. That's the lesson of Jude 17-23. May we be built up in the faith as we await that wonderful day when we are forever with the Lord Jesus, who has shown such mercy to us.