

KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD
(SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019)

Scripture: 10 Words; Jude 20-25

INTRODUCTION

Why is the book of Jude such an important book even though it is one of the shortest books in the NT?

I don't mean to imply by this question that we can rank which books of the Bible are more important than others.

God has given us one Word. All of Scripture is the God-breathed Word.

But returning to the question, why is Jude so important?

Let me mention two reasons. More could be given.

First, Jude confirms what Peter, Paul, and other apostles said was going to happen in terms of false teachers invading the church in the first century.

Second, Jude through the Spirit's direction adds his voice to the warning and also the encouragement that we need as God's people in the face of spiritual danger.

We might ask the question, why didn't Jude write more?

Part of the answer is that we have the rest of Scripture.

Jude did not have to try to repeat everything that had already been written.

Every age of the Christian church has had to face the sinister threat of the devil and his demons seeking to undermine the foundation of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

I listened to a sermon recently by Sinclair Ferguson on Jude. He made an excellent point. Persecution cannot destroy the church. False teaching is much more dangerous.

Not that we should pray for suffering, but the age in which we live in some ways is more dangerous than simply persecution.

Last week our focus was on verses 11-19.

Remember the words that were spoke before by the apostles and know that the Lord Jesus Christ will execute judgment.

Jude's first command in the book in terms of earnestly contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints is that we remember that the apostles said there would be a battle!

As Jude finishes this short but powerful letter, he gives a second command in verse 21.

Keep yourselves in the love of God.

This command, as we will see, is explained in three ways.

And then Jude also calls us to seek to bring back to the truth those influenced by false teaching.

We will look at the final verses of Jude in two parts:

- 1) Your duty in the face of false teaching, verses 20-23
- 2) Glory and Praise to God, verses 24-25

1) YOUR DUTY IN THE FACE OF FALSE TEACHING, VV. 20-23

Starting with verse 20, Jude moves from woe to duty, from the needed negative to the positive.

I think it is significant that in verses 20-23 there are two parts to Jude's instruction.

There is the duty in terms of the truth, what we might say is especially our individual duty.

There is also a duty towards others in terms of seeking to bring people back to the truth who have been led astray.

Is this not what you see throughout Scripture?

Every person stands before God in terms of the truth.

But we are called not to just focus on ourselves. We must have a concern also for others in terms of God's truth.

As I mentioned earlier, in verses 20 and 21, there is a central command that is described or illustrated in three ways.

Keep yourselves in the love of God.

In terms of the grammar, this is the imperative or command.

The three other phrases in verses 20 and 21 we can describe as the means by which we fulfill or keep this command.¹

The verb **keep** is especially significant in the book of Jude.

It is a verb used five times.

Look back to verse 1: **preserved in Jesus Christ.**

It is used two times in verse 6.

Angels who did not **keep** their proper domain. He has **reserved** in everlasting chains...

And then again in verse 13, for whom is **reserved** the blackness of darkness forever.

Jude's use of this same verb now in verse 21 is especially significant.

What does it mean to keep ourselves in the love of God?

In light of God's love and grace shown to you, you are called to live according to God's truth and grace.

Listen to John 15:9-10.

John 15:9-10, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, **you will abide in My love**, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

¹ NET Bible explains these participial phrases as means.

What Jude commands here is what we see throughout Scripture.

Gen. 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. **2** And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

The truth and call of God’s Word is not difficult to understand.

Salvation and God’s grace are entirely God’s work.

Those who have been shown God’s grace are never to think that they have earned something, but they are called to walk now in a way that shows we have been regenerated and changed.

Unlike the unbeliever, the believer does now truly have a battle with sin and the choice of walking in God’s truth or chasing after the lusts of the flesh and this world.

In verses 20 and 21, we are given three means of keeping the central command.

1. Building yourselves up on your most holy faith.

Faith here is not just our subjective response but the truth of the gospel message which we have received.

It is significant that this is not just an individual duty but that this also has a focus in terms of other believers.

We run the race of faith together.

We must seek to encourage and edify each other together.

Heb. 3:13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

2. Praying in the Holy Spirit

What is praying in the Holy Spirit? It is true prayer encouraged and guided through the working of the Holy Spirit.

This is not a reference to speaking in tongues or anything ecstatic.

It is a call to pray recognizing we must be guided by God's truth and the working of the Holy Spirit.²

John Calvin wrote:

And as we commonly pray in a formal manner, he adds, *In the Spirit*; as though he had said, that such is our sloth, and that such is the coldness of our flesh, that no one can pray aright except he be roused by the Spirit of God; and that we are also so inclined to diffidence and trembling, that no one dares to call God his Father, except through the teaching of the same Spirit; for from him is solicitude, from him is ardor and vehemence, from him is alacrity, from him is confidence in obtaining what we ask; in short, from him are those unutterable groanings mentioned by Paul (Romans 8:26.)³

3. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

We use the verb looking in the sense of seeking for something.

There are people who are looking for handouts we say.

The verb looking could also be translated as waiting.

The believer already enjoys God's mercy and grace.

Scripture here reminds us of the importance of hope in terms of the fullness of God's work of salvation that is connected with the glorious return of Jesus Christ.

Though we have received the mercy of the Lord in our salvation this is a future-received mercy on the day of judgment.

² MacArthur Study Bible, s.v. Jude 20.

³ John Calvin, s.v. Jude 20.

I think it is probably the case that this aspect of waiting is not as common as it should be as we live in a very impatient age.

It is not that we throw away technology and progress.

We see how important it is that we cling to and seek to closely follow God's truth.

Is. 30:18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD *is* a God of justice; Blessed *are* all those who wait for Him.

Last week I mentioned how the return of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the book of Jude.

This assurance is given for our comfort.

But in light of the awesome splendor and power of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only proper response is to seek His mercy unto eternal life.

This is not a call to doubt your salvation.

This is a reminder of the awesome nature of the return of our Lord.

Before we move to verses 22 and 23, I should point out that verses 20 and 21 parallel the opening verses.

What God does for us becomes the basis now for our responsibility.⁴

As we look at verses 20 and 21, we do so keeping in mind the context and warning of this book in terms of false teachers who were not just affecting the church from the outside but from the inside.

How do we deal with those who have been led astray?

As we look at these verses, there are some differences in translations because of slight differences in Greek manuscripts.

What we can say is that Jude does not give us simply a one-size fits all approach.

⁴ Davids, 93.

In the NKJV there are two groups. In the ESV and other related translations there are three groups.

There is a difference but, in the end, the same basic point is made.

The first category is made of those who are not given over entirely to false teaching but are affected to some degree.

On some have compassion, making a distinction.

Other translations read: **have mercy on those who doubt.**

Don't give the baseball-bat treatment to everyone, Jude is saying.

This is not to downplay false teaching in anyway, of course.

But Jude is reminding us that although we hate false teaching we can still show compassion to those who are in error.

And this is a reminder also that our duty is not just to recognize false teaching, but to also take the even more challenging step of ministering to those caught up in it.

We see from this instruction how important what Jude calls us to being doing in verses 20 and 21.

Others are more influenced or deeper into some sort of false teaching.

Here Jude commands a more serious response.

If we assume three groups as Jude has done throughout this book, there is a second group, those who have to be pulled from the fire.

Think of the significance of this illustration – pulling them out of the fire.

If you saw someone caught up in flames, you would certainly do what you could to get them out.

You would not simply stand by and watch what happens.

How cruel you would be if you just remained a bystander. That would not be mercy or compassion.

When we looked at verse 9, I mentioned that a passage in the background would be Zechariah 3.

It would seem that Zechariah 3 is also the source of some of Jude's language in verse 23.

Zech. 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. **2** And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! **Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"**

Zech. 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

Zech. 3:4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

A third group described in verse 23 would be those even more given over to false teaching.

Even to these more caught up in false teaching we seek to deliver, but this is an even more dangerous situation for the rescuer we can say.

Here we consider how prone we are to sin when helping others who might be caught up in sin.

We tend to think too highly of ourselves in general - other people have problems, we are okay.

As an example, there are way too many stories of pastors who fall into sin while counseling others.

What God's word commands here is fear and a hatred for the garment defiled by the flesh.

Jude is not telling us to stay away but to exercise great caution in dealing with those caught up or influenced by false teaching.

What Jude is describing here is how false teaching leads to very perverse and disgusting behavior.

This is not a pleasant subject, which is why Jude gives this warning.

Sadly, there are many cases where people change their views on what is sinful when dealing with a family member or friend caught up in sin, for example.

The world and its push for tolerance has led many to give in.

Jude's instruction and warning are very much needed.

Our culture today so encourages apathy, acceptance, and silence.

We must fight against this spirit according to the strength of God's grace and the power of His Word.

2) GLORY AND PRAISE TO GOD, VERSES 24-25

Jude's letter ends with a beautiful benediction and praise of God.

And this benediction is very significant in light of the calling of this letter.

Yes, we all have our own responsibilities based on God's truth.

But your own efforts and labors can do nothing except through the power of God accompanying them.⁵

Verse 24 speaks of God's great work.

God is the one who alone has the power to keep you from stumbling and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

⁵ John Calvin, s.v. Jude 24.

This is the only place in the NT where we find this word translated as **stumbling**.⁶ However, the theme of stumbling is not only found here.

David in the Psalms speaks of God's power that guards and keeps us.

Psa. 56:13 For You have delivered my soul from death. *Have You not kept* my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In the light of the living?

Psa. 66:9 Who keeps our soul among the living, And does not allow our feet to be moved.

Here is the first encouragement for the believer.

Jesus Christ is the one who keeps you from running head long into rebellion and apostasy.

But that is not the end as wonderful as this truth is.

Our Lord also then is the one who presents us faultless.

The same verb translated as present is used in the warning of 1 Cor. 10:12.

1Cor. 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he **stands** take heed lest he fall.

We are never to be filled with self-confidence that we can stand.

At the same time, we are to know that it is our great Savior who will one day present us faultless.

Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

Eph. 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

This presentation as faultless we can say is the future aspect of what we are assured of now in terms of the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

⁶ The word is used in 3 Mac. 6:39. "on which the Lord of all most gloriously revealed his mercy and rescued them all together and unharmed." (NRSV)

What we don't enjoy now in fullness is the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy.

One commentator has written:

"Moses could not see God's glory and live, but followers of Jesus are destined to stand in his very presence. They will stand there unblemished because... God has kept them. And they will stand there in public celebration. The picture is that of a festival in the presence of God, a sea of people singing, praising, and dancing in joyous celebration in the very presence of the God they had served on earth."⁷

Sadly, we don't always grasp the fullness of what we enjoy now in Christ.

We can be like spoiled children who don't realize all that they have been given and enjoy.

But one day we will know in fullness all that our great God has done for us!

The best is yet to come!

The joy that we should have now is nothing in comparison to the joy that one day we will have!

Verse 25 ends with an important statement of praise.

We know that God does not need anything from us ultimately.

His glory does not depend on us.

His truth does not depend on us.

And yet God does save us for a reason and purpose.

And part of that reason and purpose is that we will give honor and praise to God.

So, while we cannot add to His glory, we can give praise to God and recognize His work of salvation, His wisdom, His majesty.

We bow before Him in praise of His dominion and power.

⁷ Davids, 111.

And we do this as best we can now and with the recognition that in eternity we will never grow weary in praising God.

Conclusion and Transition to the Lord's Supper:

Jude calls us to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

How does Jude show us we are to do this?

1. Be aware of false teaching and teachers.
2. Be confident of God's judgment of those who attempt to pervert the truth.
3. Remember that from Enoch's day these things were prophesied.
4. Keep yourselves in the love of God.
 - Edification of other believers, Prayer, Patient Waiting
5. Look for opportunities for rescue and evangelism.
6. Be confident of God's power and glory in all things.

And as we come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, let us do so with the praises of verses 24 and 25 in our hearts and on our lips.

How can we be certain that we will be kept and presented faultless?

It is based on the assurance that Jesus Christ has died for us and was raised from the dead!

As we hold in our hands the bread and the cup, let us give all the praise to our great God!

Prayer

Hymn 359

BENEDICTION: HEBREWS 12:1-3

You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.