

THE BOOK OF JUDE

(Lesson Seven)

“ But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” **Jude 1:20-23**

INTRODUCTION: In the previous message on verses 14-19, Jude focused on two examples of Biblical prophecy in which God both predicted the appearance of apostates, and His judgment upon them. The first was the Old Testament example of Enoch in his ministry leading up to the Flood, the second example was the New Testament example of the Apostles’ prediction of the falling away of individuals from the preaching of the Gospel. Jude calls upon his readers to remember these prophecies and understand that wherever the truth of God is revealed, there will be an initial acceptance of the truth soon followed by many departing from the truth. The false teachers were unregenerate, and rejected the authority of apostolic teachings, and in its place they substituted their sensual desires and impulses. They attributed these desires as coming from God speaking to them in dreams and visions. This caused division within the church fellowship. Jude now comes to the close of his epistle by directing his attention to the admonition of the believers. Today we will look at four exhortations for Christian living in verses 20 and 21, and three attitudes for Christian ministry in verses 22 and 23.

III. JUDE’S ADMONITION (Believers Exhorted) verses 20-25.

1. The Duty of Perseverance - verses 20, 21.

a. A new section - *“But ye, beloved”*

Jude now begins a new section. He leaves his fierce denunciation of the faithless apostates and returns to admonish the faithful believers. He has told them “what to avoid” now he tells them “what to do.” He turns from negative warnings to positive advice. Christian teaching should consist of a balance between instructions of what should be done with warnings of what should not be done. This balance enables a person to fulfill his duty to persevere in the faith, and not fall away.

The term “beloved” is a term of endearment. It describes a relationship which exists among believers and between God and believers, as well as His Son. Jude makes use of it at the outset of his letter in verse 3, again in verse 17, and here in verse 20. It is a special love flowing from a special relationship. It is not a love which is shared among believers and unbelievers.

b. Four exhortations for Christian living.

At the start of his letter, Jude has exhorted his readers to *“earnestly*

contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (verse 3). Now he proceeds to explain in practical terms how this is done. In the presence of apostasy, how should the church in general, and the believer in particular, respond to this most serious threat? In a series of four commands Jude describes that contending for the faith is carried out by developing the Christian virtues of faith, prayer, love, and hope.

(1) Developing the intellectual Christian life - *“building up yourselves on the most holy faith”.*

While the apostate infiltrators were tearing down the Christian fellowship, the believers were in contrast, to embark on a spiritual building or construction program. The most holy faith consists of the objective primary Christian truths which were the common subjects of instruction given by the Apostles. They concern the person of Christ, His deity, His humanity, His claim to Messiahship, His sinless life, His substitutionary death, His physical resurrection, His lordship over all, and His personal second coming as judge and King. This is Apostolic doctrine. In Acts 2:42 we read, *“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*

Building up is an ongoing process. Jude exhorts us to be making a daily endeavor to gain clearer understandings of these primary truths and principles, and how they apply to the practical applications of life and conduct. Perseverance in the faith depends upon our systematic growth in Christian intelligence. The laws of mental life apply to religious knowledge. Only by the use and exercise of our mental faculties can we maintain them. Let a person become content with what they know of Christian truths and they will discover that what they know will gradually fade away. This will expose them to new subtle forms of intellectual error which they will be unable to resist.

The Word of God is the means to strengthen one's faith in the holy faith. Thus we must study, learn, meditate, memorize and live out the Scriptures. Paul said in Acts 20:32, *“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”* He told Timothy in II Timothy 2:15, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Peter says in I Peter 2:2,3, *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”* A lazy mind will expose one to intellectual error and may lead unto apostasy.

(2) Developing the emotional Christian life - *“praying in the Holy Ghost”*

The power for living the Christian life comes through prayer. Prayer is the emotional side of the Christian life. The Word of God and prayer go together. Acts

6:4 says, ***“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”***

Many people have concluded that the Christian life is nothing but an emotional life, and so they seek daily to arouse and increase emotion. And any effort made by others to restrain the emotion element, and keep it in proper proportion is assumed that a harm is being done to their spiritual life. The emotional side of our human nature is the origin and cause of our greatest anxieties. And it is in exaggerated religious emotion that the false teacher will always find a seed-bed in which to plant his falsehoods. The impulses flowing from selfish desires are thus confounded with those of the Holy Spirit and are believed to originate in God.

While religious emotional exaggeration should be avoided, it should not prevent us from seeking to maintain a daily culture of Christian emotion. There ought to be feeling in our Christian life. Jude says this is to be accomplished by ***“praying in the Holy Spirit.”*** But what does this mean to pray in the Spirit? It means essentially the same as ***“praying in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*** Jesus said in John 14:13, ***“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*** Now what does it mean to ask in Jesus name? John interprets this statement in his epistle in I John 5:14, 15 which reads, ***“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”*** When one is praying in the Spirit they are praying in the will of the Spirit. Thus they are lining up their prayers with those of the Spirit. Prayer is not getting our will done in heaven, it is getting God’s will done on earth.

Does the Holy Spirit really pray for us? Absolutely! Why does He need to do so? Because of our ignorance of God’s will. We are not omniscient. In Romans 8:26 Paul says, ***“The Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”*** James says we often pray for things which will satisfy our own selfish desires. James 4:3 reads, ***“Ye ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.”*** We need the prompting of the Holy Spirit to cleanse our requests and make sure that what we ask is according to the will of God.

Because of our ignorance we need the Holy Spirit to make intercession for us. Romans 8:26 goes on to say, ***“the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*** Some people say this is the Holy Spirit speaking to believers in tongues. No, the “groanings” is not a language that can be uttered, it is a language that cannot be uttered. Furthermore the groanings are not ours, they are the Holy Spirit’s as He prays in a divine language which has no sound to human ears. It is a language wherein the three persons of the Trinity use to communicate with each other. We have not only an Advocate in

heaven, at the right hand of the Father praying for us, but we have a Comforter within us praying for us. Thus Jesus in heaven and the Holy Spirit in us here on earth are constantly praying for the Father's will of purpose to be done for and in us. What confidence this gives!

The Spirit's intercession for our ignorance provides for an identification of what God's will is for us. In Romans 8:27, Paul goes on to say, ***“And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*** Since the Spirit always prays according to the will of God, if I am praying in the Spirit, I am praying according to the will of God. My prayers are thus in line with His will. To pray in the Spirit is to live in the atmosphere of the Spirit. As fish live in the sphere of water and humans in the sphere of air, the believer is to live in the sphere of the Spirit. Thus we are to be always in a spirit of prayer for God's will to be known and directed in our lives.

How balanced our emotional lives would become if this was practiced on an ongoing basis. Let us never resist or quench the impulses of the Spirit. He will take our emotional life and inspire it, direct it, energize it, limit it, check it, and tone it all for the glory of God. This will enable us to remain balanced and persevere in the faith to the end.

(3) Developing the practical Christian life - *“keep yourselves in the love of God.”*

The third Christian virtue which Jude lists is that of love. Love is the motivating force which produces practical Christian living. The phrase ***“the love of God”*** can mean either God's love for man or man's love for God. Since both concepts are taught in Scripture the choice is difficult to make. Since the believers are addressed as ***“being loved by God”*** or ***“sanctified by God”*** in verse 1, I prefer the idea of God's love for man as being Jude's meaning here. Nevertheless, a duty is imposed on the believer to keep himself within the sphere of God's love. This is the human side of our security in Christ. It is known as the perseverance of the saints. The divine side of the believer's security is expressed back in verse 1 and is known as the preservation of the saints. Our perseverance rests upon the foundation of His preservation.

Since it is a duty, how does one keep himself in the love of God? The love of God is the circle or sphere in which His blessings are realized. If for health reasons, the doctor advises you to “keep yourself in the sunlight”, you won't receive any benefit by standing under a shade tree. A Christian must be alert to keep anything from clouding their consciousness of God's love for them. We must know that we are loved by God. His love cannot be enjoyed when we are walking in the shade of our own desires. To be conscious of being loved by God is one of the greatest protections against apostasy that a believer can possess.

Now how can this consciousness be maintained? Well, how does a wife keep herself in the love of her husband? How do children keep themselves in the love of their parents? How does a friend keep himself in the love of a friend? The same way that our Lord Jesus Christ kept Himself in the love of God. In John 8:29 Jesus said, ***“I do always those things that please him.”*** This is a universal law for all Christ’s disciples. Jesus stated His will for His disciples in John 15:9, ***“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.”*** This is the same as Jude saying ***“keep yourselves in the love of God.”*** How is this achieved? In John 15:10 Jesus goes on to say, ***“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.”*** Practical obedience to the Word of God is the circle wherein God’s love is consciously experienced. Jesus also stated in John 14:23, ***“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”***

Our Lord and His apostles constantly exhort the disciples that practical religion is love producing good deeds of action. It is the putting of good principles into practice. John described true religion as doing right toward God and men. In I John 3:7 he says, ***“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”*** And just how did He (Christ) manifest His righteousness? ***“He went about doing good.”*** (Acts 10:38). Never be afraid of ***“doing”***, that is the expression of your new life in Christ and it is that which can keep you in the love of God. It is what God looks for. Doing in order to make a claim upon God’s favor is hopelessly wrong. But doing in order to express our sense of God’s favor is hopefully right. Let men see our good deeds that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven. The continual display of good deeds is an antidote to apostasy.

(4) Developing the hopeful Christian life - *“looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”*****

Jude now introduces the fourth Christian virtue which is that of hope. While the text does not use the word, the context clearly expresses the idea. The word translated “looking” means “an earnest expectancy”. It is also translated elsewhere as “waiting”. It describes an attitude of life that motivates and lifts up the soul at the prospect of our Lord’s return. Titus 2:13 expresses it as, ***“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”*** In II Peter 3:12, 13 it is stated in this manner: ***“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.”***

As Christians we are to eagerly anticipate Christ’s return. While the apostates can only expect judgment, we can expect to receive the mercy of our Lord Jesus

Christ. Even though this world is going to end in flaming fire, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. The expression *“the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ”* is a reminder that salvation is never a matter of personal merit or achievement but totally a matter of mercy based on the atonement of Christ on the cross. This anticipated mercy at the return of Christ will consummate in eternal life which means more than endless existence. It is life in its highest and fullest quality. It is life as God enjoys it. Through faith in Jesus Christ believers already possess eternal life, (John 3:16); 5:24; I John 5:11, 12) but the *“unto eternal life”* looks forward to the final manifestation of that life, consummated in complete conformity to the moral image or likeness of Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:29); I John 3:2). Perfect holiness and a happy heaven are our hope. Let us daily develop a growing positive hope regarding our future. It will help us mortify the love of this present world, overcome false teachings, and put into proper focus our trials and tribulations which we encounter on the pathway to glory.

These two verses then cover the entire spiritual nature of the new man. They give us an outward look toward the study of God’s Word. They give us an inward look into the prompting of the Holy Spirit to aid in prayer. They give us an upward look at the love of God shedding His love into our hearts, and they give us a forward look to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the balanced Christian life, we contend for the faith only as we develop these virtues.

2. The Directives For Ministry - verses 22, 23.

Jude now moves from our duty to develop our spiritual life, to our directive for ministering to those who have been influenced by apostate teachers. In a time of apostasy we are not only to develop our personal spiritual lives, but we are to reach out to others who have been influenced by false teachings and practices.

These verses present a minor textual problem. Because of variants in the Greek manuscripts, it has led to a number of differences in the English translations. Some manuscripts refer to two classes of people, ((1) on some have compassion, (2) others save with fear - KJV). Other manuscripts refer to three classes of people, ((1) those who are doubting, (2) those to be snatched from the fire, (3) those to be pitied with fear - NASV). Due to Jude’s style of arranging his material in triads or threes, I embrace the view that the original text contained three classes of people and they follow the translation of the NASV which reads *“And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”*

In our ministry to those influenced by false teachings and apostasy, Jude would have us realize that not all people are equally affected to the same degree by false teachings. Thus the Christian helper is to exercise discernment among them and adapt his message and attitude to the individual circumstances.

The first group which we are directed to give ministry unto is:

a. The doubters - *“have mercy on some, who are doubting.”*

To show mercy is to manifest pity or compassion upon a person or thing which is suffering or is in distress. Such suffering may have been brought on by some injury or by an offense committed.

The doubters form a group who are unstable in their understandings. Doubt is sometimes the result of imperfect training, or a misunderstanding of the truth. They were unable to judge between the teaching of the Apostles and that of the false teachers. They remain still within the church but are wavering. They are to be approached in an attitude of compassion which gently leads them into the truth. This will require patience, perseverance and clear teaching to accomplish. Realize that many people may profess Christ and then find themselves in circumstances which cause them to say, “What have I gotten myself into?” Don’t neglect them, many people who were doubters are now strong mature Christians.

b. The deceived - *“save others, snatching them out of the fire.”*

This is a class of people who have been influenced by some false teaching or practice and have apparently left the fellowship of the church. To reclaim them requires a more direct approach. They are in danger of eternal destruction. It requires a violent act of approach as that of pulling or snatching a child from the scorching flame. The deceived are people who no longer respond to loving tenderness but must be dealt with what is known as tough love. While no bitterness is to be used, they are to be firmly and sternly confronted with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Due to the excessive loving nature of the church today, we do not see many deceived people restored to Christian fellowship.

When the angels came to deliver Lot and his family from the city, they had to physically take them by the hand and drag them out. In Genesis 19:16, we read, *“And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.”* Christians are to view themselves as God’s instrumental means in rescuing or saving the deceived from the flames of hell.

c. The defiled - *“on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”*

Jude now points to a third group which have progressed in their departure from the faith so that they are thoroughly defiled or polluted in their sin. They have not only left the fellowship of the church. They are now propagating false doctrines and practices themselves. They are teetering on the brink of ruin with little possibility of being restored. They have confirmed themselves in their sin.

As compassion is to be used with the doubting, and concern with the deceived, so Jude advises that extreme caution be exercised in dealing with the defiled. While they are to be personally pitied, their lifestyle is to be despised. Never attempt to convert someone who is engaging in open sin if you yourself are not disgusted at the sin. Why, because you may be attracted and become trapped in the sin yourself. Many a swimmer has been drowned themselves in attempting to rescue others.

A Christian man who is struggling with sexual fantasies has no business in believing God has called him to minister to the prostitutes in the red light district. A Christian who has been converted out of alcoholism, and still struggles with the taste for wine, has no business in believing God has called him to inhabit the night clubs for the purpose of converting drunks. A Christian who still struggles with the love of money has no business taking a job on Wall Street for the purpose of converting the money tycoons to Christ. Not every Christian is equipped to deal with those who have committed themselves over to confirmed sinning. It takes a good knowledge of the Word, a faithful walk with God, an understanding of Satan's devices, and certainly the fullness of the Spirit. A young Christian has no business going head to head in battle with a cult leader, and a church has no business trying to convert the world by using the methods and strategies used by the world. It only results in defiling the garments of the Gospel.

The sin of the defiled is so deep that the believer must be aware of the danger of being defiled themselves. They are thus to hate the garment polluted or defiled by the flesh. The garment to which Jude refers was the under garment known as the tunic. It corresponds to our underwear. Jude's picture is taken from the Old Testament law concerning the lepers in Leviticus 13:47-59. The lepers' disease could cause his garment worn next to his body to become infected, and the garment was to be burned. Anyone touching the garment became unclean and had to be restored through a ceremonial cleansing. In the same way those who came in contact with the defiled sinner could become infected with the unclean lifestyle. Jesus used the same metaphor when He said to the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:4, ***“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”***

We have now been instructed in the art of contending for the faith. We are to protect ourselves from apostasy and minister to those who are in danger of apostasy. May God grant us the ability to persevere in the faith of the Gospel and minister to others at the same time.