

¹ Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

³ Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. ⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. NASB

"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all" – Isaiah 7:9b

Chapter 1

The words of Isaiah 7:9b are good to keep in mind as we begin our study of Jude. If we do not learn how to stand firm in the faith once for all entrusted to the saints, we will not stand at all.

In our day and age, a time where "tolerance" is championed as the greatest virtue, Jude's letter sounds a discordant note. Society tells us that everyone has a right to their own opinion and their own beliefs; a right to do their own thing without anyone judging them, Jude tells us the opposite. He tells us that there is only one faith, handed down from Christ through the apostles to the church. One faith, one set of beliefs, one opinion that matters – God's opinion.

Jude writes out of a compelling love for both his Lord and the Church. It is because he loves the church that it angers him that she has let false teachers inside the body. It is because he loves God that he is angry that the church has not kept herself pure, as a bride-to-be should. For these reasons, Jude uses strong language throughout his letter. He will focus on a particular type of evil, one that threatens to wreck the entire church. It is the evil of not holding pure the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jude informs those he is writing to that more than one false teacher has already entered into the assembly of the saints. These false teachers are not fellow Christians that are teaching in error, they are non-Christians. They are non-believers who should not have even been allowed in as members of the church, who have now managed to work their way into positions of influence and authority.

They were there because the church had not been vigilant. They had allowed these non-believers, these ungodly people, to become members and gain power over the saints. They are tares among the wheat, wolves in sheep's clothing, and infiltrators from the enemy among God's people. Paul wrote about such people in Acts 20:25-31:

25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. 26 Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. 28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. NASB

Those whom Paul had warned the church had arrived. Now was the time for the church to wake up to the threat among them and take corrective action. These wolves, these false teachers, are distinct from true Christians, as Jude will show in his letter. Even though they are described as "ungodly", which means without or opposite of God, they are taking and claiming the name of Christ. They are imposters, synthetic Christians whose religion is only skin-deep. They talk the talk but their actions give the lie to their words. Jude writes from his heart, because the church he loves so much is blind to the evil in their midst.

Jude is concerned because the attack on the church wasn't coming from the state, followers of pagan religions or other enemies outside the church, it was coming from the professing people inside of it. The attacks they were launching were three-fold. First, they were challenging the absolute authority of the Bible as the absolute truth. Second, they were changing the grace of God into a license to live worldly and sinful lives. Third, they denied the exclusivity and deity of Jesus.

These attacks are still plaguing the church today. Amazingly, they still plague the church from inside of her, as if we have heeded Jude's words any more than the church of his generation did.

George Barna has estimated that 2/3 of professing Christians do not believe moral absolute truth.¹ This is called relativism, a "here is what it means to me" or "this is my interpretation" mindset. This stands in stark

¹ <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/21-transformation/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in->

contrast to "thus saith the Lord." It is a failure to understand, to comprehend who Jesus is. He is Lord. He is the only Lord. We either submit to His instructions in complete obedience or we are guilty of being in rebellion and destined for eternal punishment. Truly, it does not matter what we think Scripture means. What does matter is finding out what God meant when He wrote it.

The very first issue, one that has eternal consequences, is on the issue of salvation as Jude mentions in verse 3. Many people today, like those to whom Jude was writing, have a faulty understanding of salvation. They then spread their faulty understanding (belief) and it becomes damning to those who hear and accept it as truth.

When the Holy Spirit brings salvation to a person, they are made a new creation. They are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit. They are fundamentally changed as to their character and desires. No longer is sin in control of them, no longer does it have power over them. Oh, they may sin at times but their life is now characterized by a change to godly living. They are filled by a desire to please God and follow His plan, His will, for their lives. When they do sin, they are filled with remorse and sorrow. They are broken over doing the very things that caused their Lord to suffer and die for them on the cross.

Some people wrongly believe that once a person is "saved", they can live however they want, commit whatever sinful habit they choose because they have been "forgiven". They believe that they will go to heaven because they said a prayer, walked the aisle, went through confirmation or did something to get "saved". No. Salvation is from the Lord (Jonah 2:9) and when God saves a person they are forever changed. They are made new, born again by His Spirit. Anyone whose life has never been changed, has never undergone the metamorphosis from being a child of the devil to being a child of God. They have never been "saved" by Him.

Jude says to beware of such people. They have slipped in with destructive teachings, heresies, and lifestyles. They deny by both their life and their teaching Jesus as Lord.

We see this today, people teaching that a person can be saved by Jesus without submitting to Him. Nonsense. Jesus is Lord. It is who He is. Saving is what He does but He does not save those who do not acknowledge Him as Lord. You see, a person can deny Jesus as Lord in a couple of ways. One is unbelief, of course, but the other is by a lifestyle opposite that of Jesus'.

Instead of a life being transformed daily into an image of Christ Himself, their life continues to reflect ungodliness. Jesus addressed this in a lengthy discourse recorded in Matthew 23.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' 31 So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? NASB

David Legge, of preachtheword.com, says this in his commentary on Jude:

"You see it, don't you? Superficial believers. Apostates! The great pretenders of the church of Jesus Christ today. The ministers, movements, denominations that contain abominations! People, places, things wearing the name of Christ and Christ hasn't any of them."²

It is easy to be pleasant and tolerant in small matters in today's society. Do you know, do you realize what toleration of wrong leads to? It leads to its

² <http://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/jude01.shtml>

establishment. If you tolerate wrong, whether in your life, home or church, it will become established, entrenched and eventually take over.

Like Paul feared for the church at Ephesus, I fear for the church today. I fear that we do not take seriously the command to be vigilant. I truly do not think that today's church grasps the importance of contending for the faith. I believe that we, like the churches Jude wrote to, are guilty of listening to what we want to hear from people. Instead, we should be holding their lives up to the plumb line of Scripture. We should be measuring their teachings, actions and lifestyles up to God's Holy Word.

The Bible transforms lives. It changes them as the Spirit applies its truths. One simply cannot claim to follow Christ and be wandering off following their own agenda, their own desires at the same time. I am constantly asking people, "If you are following Christ, where is He leading you?"

I am saddened at the number of churches who do teach the uncompromising truth of God and see a loss of membership because of it. I am especially saddened by those who stay firm and don't compromise on the doctrine of salvation, the sovereignty of God, the expectation of holy living by those professing Jesus as Lord and other vital teachings and see people leave to find a congregation that doesn't demand that they actually follow the Scripture's commands. I see so many godly churches struggling to keep their doors open while churches who have no biblical standards to adhere to continue to grow that it breaks my heart.

I wish everyone could be privy to conversations I have had with people engaged in destructive behaviors. I wish you could see how many warnings were ignored and how many so-called believers left the church in a huff because someone dared hold them accountable to the commands in God's Word. I wish you could have heard those things so that you would understand how my heart breaks just as Jude's heart was breaking. I would do almost anything to have you understand that live or die, the church grow or decline, there can be no compromise of the faith that was handed down to us from Jesus Christ through the Apostles.

Jude tells us to vigorously defend, or earnestly contend for, the faith no matter the personal cost. Whatever cost we bear, whether it is our reputation, our job, our health, our ministry – none of these compare to the cost paid by those deceived by false teaching, eternal separation from God.

Jude is a good shepherd. A shepherd's job is two-fold. First, it is to lead the sheep to where they can find food and water. A pastor does this by preaching, teaching and declaring God's Word. His second job is to protect the sheep from dangers. Poisonous weeds, predators, thieves, all of these are

dangers to a sheep. Sheep need a protector because they do not even realize how easy a target they make. They do not watch out for themselves.

For three years at Ephesus, Paul pleaded for the church to watch out, to be on guard. In the end, after he left, the wolves came and managed to attack the flock. Jude wrote, urging the church to wake up, to see the realities of spiritual predators already at work inside the congregation. He urges them to take up arms and vigorously defend the faith, examining everyone in their midst. He pleads with them to hold everyone's teachings and beliefs to the standard of Scripture and see if it measures up or falls short.

Contend for the faith, he pleads. Care enough for the church to know, understand and defend her beliefs. Care enough about Jesus to keep His church, His bride, pure. I care about such things greatly, do you?

STUDY GUIDE

1. Read Acts 20:25-31 and Jude 1-4. In Acts, Paul warns the church against those who would slip in and deceive the flock. Jude writes, telling the church they have let their guard down and allowed false teachers inside.
 - a. How can a church defend herself from false teachers?
 - b. Who is the church for, believers or "seekers"?
 - c. If Paul, perhaps the greatest Bible teacher ever, knew that wolves would arise from within his flock at Ephesus, what caution should that give us?
2. Day after day, service after service, Paul continued to warn the church with tears.
 - a. Do we warn fellow brothers and sisters with scolding, condemning words or tears?
 - b. Are we more concerned with people or with being right?
 - c. When tears don't work, when warnings go unheeded, how do we react?
 - d. Just because Jude is sterner than Paul, is he any less concerned?

3. If a person or church tolerates wrong, it will become established, entrenched and eventually take over.
 - a. Are we vigilant about the doctrine our pastors, teachers, elders, deacons and leaders espouse?
 - b. Are we contending for the faith no matter the cost?
 - c. Have we compromised biblical truths to pacify people?
 - d. Does your church practice church discipline? Why or why not?
4. A pastor's job is two-fold as a shepherd of God's flock (see page 20).
 - a. Is your pastor leading the sheep?
 - b. In order to be a leader, you have to have followers. Are the sheep following the pastor or being disobedient?
 - c. Is the pastor feeding and watering the sheep from God's Word or his own opinions?
 - d. Is the pastor protecting the sheep from false teachers outside AND inside the church?
 - e. Is the church grateful or resentful when the pastor does this?
5. Jude writes, urging the church to wake up, to see the reality of spiritual predators.
 - a. Do you care enough about Jesus to keep His bride, the church, pure?
 - b. Does your church care enough about her Lord to earnestly, vigorously contend for the faith?
 - c. Does your church hold people accountable when their teachings conflict with biblical truths?