

“Don’t Worry, Be Wise”

Jude 17-25

Jude began his letter wanting to write about our common salvation but ended up issuing a warning about the presence of false teachers around us who – at least in the congregations Jude wrote to – had secretly slipped in among them (v.4). Then from vv.5-16 he described them using vivid comparisons to Old Testament notables like Cain, Balaam, Korah and even demons. He calls them smooth talkers, perverted, slanderous, unreasoning, rebellious, selfish, grumblers, faultfinders who flatter their way to gain access and control over God’s people.

Now Jude changes direction. Enough darkness, gloom and doom because it’s possible the reader is now unsettled, and starting to wonder, is there someone like that in our church? And if one isn’t careful they could get paranoid and start to question everybody. Now in v.17 Jude gives some assurance. Don’t worry; be wise. How can we discern the true believers from these? How can we be ready if someone comes along like this? Now Jude gives some practical steps on how to be prepared not just for false teachers and misguided teaching, but for any spiritual battle that we may have to face.

In verses 17-23 Jude issues four commands/imperatives: Remember, keep, have mercy [twice] and save, concluding with an amazing doxology. We’re going to summarize Jude’s commands here with four action steps. These four can apply at any time in our walk with God. Because maybe you’re worried about the world right now. There’s a lot of unsettling attention in the Middle East. War in Ukraine. Big changes in politics just since January. Are you worried? Don’t be. Here’s how the believer can reduce anxiety.

¹⁷ *But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.*

This is nothing new. We were already warned about these things Jude says. When we’re anxious about world events or even personal issues,

Remember, God’s Word is Always True **(vv.17-19)**

Specifically in Jude’s context, the reality that false teachers are around actually affirms the validity of God’s Word. Many prophets have warned that these types of people will do their best to twist God’s words into lies. That shows you God knows what he’s talking about! Every prophecy and promise from God – negative or positive – affirms the validity of God’s Word. Jer. 23:16; Ezek. 22:28; Matt. 7:15; 1 Tom. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:1 are just a few other warning passages that false teachers will come particularly the closer we get to Jesus’ return. Instead of worrying though, be wise and use it as an opportunity to let people know God’s plan for the world is winding down. Jude says as well *“in the last times there will be scoffers ...”* and today we are reminded,

We are getting close to the end (vv.17-18)

We’ve always been in the last days ever since Jesus left the earth because prophetically speaking we are always looking for His return, the date and the hour no one knows but God. So logically every day means time is getting short. We just don’t if it’s months, years, decades or

centuries. Whenever the end is very near world events will center around Israel, and so w the news sure makes us wonder, how close are we today?

“... They said to you ‘In the last days there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’ These are men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.”

Jude warns us about the potential harm these people can do if we’re not careful. They bring division because the people of God are not familiar enough with the Word of God to recognize it when it happens. Jesus Himself warns us that towards the time of His return in Matt. 24:23,

²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.

The closer we get to the end

The harder Satan works (v.19)

In Rev. 12 we are given a glimpse into a spiritual battle where Satan is finally kicked out of heaven and thrown to the earth. When that happens we read,

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

¹¹ They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

It makes sense that he will ramp up his game when Jesus' return is near because he knows how the bible ends. He refuses to believe it and fights very hard to divide and confuse us. Because we’re the ones who know the truth and can expose his plans. But don’t worry, be wise. Know the Word of God. Help others grow in the Word so they too, will recognize false teachers and prophets when they show up. The word ‘remember’ doesn’t just mean bring it to mind but to recall it for the purpose of obeying it.

That’s Jude’s first command. His second command is found in v.21. I’m going to read it from the ESV which doesn’t divide it into two sentences making it sound like there’s an extra command.

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life

The command is “keep”, while building, praying and waiting describe how we

Keep Growing Spiritually Because of God’s Love **(vv.20-21)**

The motivation for growing in godliness is God’s never-ending love for us. Back in v.1 Jude says we are kept by God for Christ positionally. That’s God’s part in keeping us secure. Yet, we still have a sinful nature and get rattled by many things in life. The way we remember we’re kept secure

by God is to keep focusing and growing in understanding how much He loves us, cares for us and will see us through til this life is over.

This is a wake-up call to those who wrongly believe that since God 'keeps' me saved, I don't need to do anything. No. Salvation requires initial faith and ongoing perseverance on our part, both of which God provides the resources we need. To say that we don't need to 'keep' ourselves in God's love because God already loves us is like saying, since life is a gift from God (which it is), therefore I don't have to breathe air anymore! Which we would all admit is crazy! We need to actively grow in our faith to prove we have faith.

Yet, that's the way some believers think. They think that salvation is something only God does and as long as they have their insurance policy they are safe. But over and over the Bible says without fruit in our life we demonstrate no root. That perseverance and obedience are the evidence of saving faith.

So how do we keep ourselves [our responsibility] in the love of God? Jude offers 3 ways here [not that there isn't more].

Building (v.20a)

'[by] building yourself up in your most holy faith'. The term building means to add to the foundation. The foundation is our most holy faith – that which was *"once for all entrusted to the saints"* when Jesus died, was buried and rose again. This is true saving faith, to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation and not yourself thinking that you are good enough to merit entrance into the presence of God. None of us can. We all fall short before the glory/presence of God because we've all sinned.

How do we build ourselves up? By reading and obeying God's Word. Dealing with sinful attitudes and actions that divide and destroy. Believers build while the unsaved divides. This is what Jesus said in John 15:10, *"If you obey my commands you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."* The more we obey the Word the more joy we'll have. How else do we keep ourselves in God's love?

Praying (v.20b)

Jude says by *'praying in the Spirit'*. To pray in the Spirit means to pray in harmony/in line with the Spirit. Let's illustrate this with a negative example in James 4:1

¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." ⁷Submit therefore to God Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The opposite of praying in the Spirit is praying in our selfish spirit, asking God for things for ourselves instead of asking God for what He wants in us and through us.

The Spirit is the One who moved men of God to write the Word of God. To pray in the Spirit is to pray in harmony with His will, which is the Father's will as recorded in the Scripture. Do we pray biblically? Coming into God's presence by washing our hearts clean through confession and open to doing His will. Asking God what God wants. *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* That will keep us in God's love because we're obeying God as Jesus said. How else do we keep ourselves in God's love?

Waiting for Jesus' return (v.21)

"Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life" – the reward of ongoing fellowship in God's presence forever. Jesus' return is one of the things these false teachers scoffed at, according to 2 Peter 3. Jesus promised us He would return for us and that at present He is building us a room in His Father's house. *"If it were not so I would have told you"* (John 14:2). We have the assurance from God that we have eternal life now which does not expire at death but is the guarantee that we have something beautiful awaiting us for all eternity. This helps us when things aren't going well, to remember what's in store for us after we die or when Jesus returns, whichever comes first.

Remember God's warnings – they will keep you from needless harm. Stay in the love of God – through obedience, fellowship and hope. Thirdly,

Show the Unsaved the Same Mercy God Has Shown You **(vv.22-23)**

Jude's passion for these believers is quite evident here as he implores the people of God to help others come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, to experience the wonderful love of Jesus for themselves. Who did Jude say we need to rescue?

Those who doubt, be patient (v.22)

"Be merciful to those who doubt". There are those who are unsure about Christ. Possibly unsure of His deity or His resurrection or His ability to save us. Sounds like Jude has in mind people who are not adamantly opposed to God but those who just don't know and haven't given it enough thought. With these show mercy; be compassionate and patiently show them what God says in His Word, praying for the Spirit to reveal to them God's truth about Jesus in His time.

"save others by snatching them out of the fire." Here Jude also emphasizes those caught up in false teaching.

They are in danger, they need rescuing (v.23a)

They need rescuing! They have fallen for the lies of the enemy through wrong teachers and false shepherds. They are on the edge of hell's fires and need drastic action. Pleading, confronting and persistent prayer is required for these. They need a miracle from God; they are on the brink of eternal separation from God.

Jude has one other group that needs rescuing and surprisingly it is . . .

Even the deceivers but be careful (v.23b)

“to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”

Even the false teachers need to be shown compassion but with great caution and a healthy fear lest they lure us away from following God. Hating even the stained clothing refers to those so corrupted by sin we need to approach carefully.

Jude himself models patience and grace in saying they too need rescuing and doesn't condemn them. Everyone needs saving, even those deep in sin. God can do the impossible and that's how Jude ends his passionate plea to contend for the faith.

He ends his letter with a great doxology of praise to God:

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

How does this doxology also help us not become rattled by the enemies' strategies to cast doubt and fear in our hearts?

Stay Focused on the Greatness of God **(vv.24-25)**

Why? Because He is *“able [powerful] to keep you from falling [stumbling] and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy”*

In spite of our faults and our tendency to be anxious at the overwhelming godlessness in our world, we have to remember God is greater than anyone or any threat that happens in our world. If Rom. 8:28-30 is true that God works everything for the good of those who love Him according to His purpose, then somehow in His sovereign plan He is showing how amazing and righteous and holy and just He is when He brings an end to all this selfishness and ungodliness. All glory, majesty, dominion and authority belong to God and no one else. He's the Only God. Jesus is the Only Lord and Saviour. And He's our Lord if we have placed our faith in Him alone. We are secure in Him.

While Jude's letter is a severe warning about false teachers, it's also a great encouragement that God is still in control. He's got us and He's got the world under control. One day the last day will be here, and those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord, will face the eternal consequences of that decision. One day every person will know that *glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever* has always belonged to God. May the promises in His Word about these things keep us rooted in His love.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net