

A PRESSING NECESSITY

JUDE 1-4

Years ago, we had a fellow walk into Calvary Chapel and take a seat on the back row. All was fine, until I finished my Bible Study, and started to wrap up.

That's when this gentleman rose to his feet, and asked me if he could say a word to the congregation.

Well, I had a suspicion, and since part of my job is to protect God's people, I told the man he could tell me what he wanted to say, and if I felt it was an appropriate message; then I'd let him share it with anyone who wanted to stay and listen. *The man was obviously unhappy that I hadn't given him the floor...*

When he walked up to the podium, I asked him what he wanted to communicate to our church. He grunted and pointed to his Bible. I said, "That's fine, I like the Bible, but what in the Bible do you want to read?"

He turned to Zechariah 14, and pointed to the page.

Again I asked him, "Ok, I like the book of Zechariah, but show me the exact passage you want to read?"

Finally, he pointed to 14:12. It's a judgment on God's enemies, "This shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths." I can only imagine the grizzly application he had for CCSM.

I explained to the man the passage he had read was addressed to the enemies of God - not God's family.

And I wasn't about to let him or anyone else walk in to our church - hijack this pulpit - and lay a guilt trip on the folks Jesus died to forgive and wants to encourage.

Then I told him if he had any guts he'd take his message to the streets, and share it with those who didn't know Jesus. Of course, the fellow bristled up.

His final word before he stomped out the door was to accuse yours truly of *quenching the Holy Spirit...*

But as I mulled over his indictment, I sensed the Lord speak to me, "Sandy, you were quenching a spirit, but it sure wasn't the Holy Spirit." No pastor wants to be guilty of quenching, or hindering the work of God's Spirit, but there are spirits that need to be quenched.

Jude would tell us that a big part of being a pastor is quenching the spirits that need to be quenched.

A pastor is like a forest ranger. He teaches people to build *campfires*, as he helps people put out *wildfires*.

Realize, the term "pastor" means "shepherd."

And a shepherd's job is two-fold. He feeds the flock. He sees to it the sheep eat well - but he also protects the flock, and makes sure the sheep aren't eaten.

If all a pastor does is feed, and feed, and feed the sheep - and never warns them of the wolves that threaten them - he's only fattening them up for the slaughter. A pastor needs to both feed and warn.

And this is what Pastor Jude does in his short letter.

This morning, by way of introduction, I'd like to read all 25 verses to get the overview of Jude. Then like a pizza, we'll cut the letter into four slices, and spend the month of July chewing on the book of Jude...

Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.

Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.

But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Verse 1 introduces us to the author, “**Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...**”

There are three Judes or Judas’s given prominence in the NT... First, there’s the infamous **Judas Iscariot**, the betrayer of Jesus... Second, there’s an apostle, an original disciple, “**Judas the son of James...**” And third, there was **Jude, the half-brother of Jesus...**

Obviously, *the traitor* is not the author of this letter.

Neither is Jude “**the son of James.**” *The author says he’s the “brother of James.”* In verse 20 he speaks of the apostles in the 3rd person, implying he wasn’t one.

Thus, the Jude who pens this letter is most likely the sibling of Jesus. Mary and Joseph had at least six other sons and daughters after Mary birthed Jesus.

Matthew 13:55 lists the family, “**And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas, and His sisters.**” Our author was both our Lord’s *half-brother* and *kid brother*.

Imagine growing up in Jesus' shadow? This was James and Jude's lot in life. It had its pluses, but I'm sure it had a few negatives. Imagine, their mom always scolding, "Why can't you boys behave like Jesus?"

"Your big brother makes straight As, why can't you?"

"Jude, a 'C' in conduct? Jesus always gets an A!"

If that were the case you can understand why these boys might've grown resentful or jealous! It's common, younger brothers often carry a chip on their shoulders.

Just an inkling of pride would've kept these brothers from conceding Jesus' true identity. James and Jude walked about singing, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

And apparently an attitude like that developed.

John 7:5 tells us that prior to Jesus' resurrection, all His brothers and sisters refuse to believe in Him.

It wasn't until the siblings saw that Jesus had conquered death; then all their doubts were dispelled. After His resurrection all the evidence was in. The brothers were able to connect all the dots. Jesus was indeed who He said He was... *He was the Son of God.*

Not only did Jude reach this conclusion, *but so did James.* He became a leader in the Jerusalem church, and wrote the NT letter that carries his name.

But Jude likewise repented. Imagine, when it hit him that his big brother, was also his Lord and King! *Could you worship your brother?* Jude humbled himself.

Someone probably encouraged him, “Hey, Jude don’t make it bad. Take a sad song and make it better.”

Hey Jude... did make it better when he accepted His brother as His Lord and Savior, and sang His praise!

Slap my arm... “It was just a beetle.”

Of course, all this means Jude could’ve greeted folks with a pretty haughty introduction. He could’ve wrote to his readers, “*Jude, brother of Jesus the Messiah!*” Or he could have stretched it further, “*Jude, brother of the very Son of God.*” That would carry even greater clout.

He could’ve made up business cards with the titles.

If Jude had been a name dropper, wow could he have dropped the mic! He could’ve pulled out the trump card and ended any argument. Jude could’ve appealed to his earthly relationship to Jesus. *Yet Jude no longer thought in those terms.* He had a new connection to Jesus. He was now His “*bondservant.*”

Rather than haughty, Jude was humble. He had bowed to Jesus, and wasn’t going to steal the spotlight.

He says, “**Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ...**”

A bondservant was a special category of slave.

Realize, in ancient Israel slavery was a way to pay off a person’s debts. Rather than bankruptcy, a debtor became his creditor’s slave. Yet some slaves had such kind and benevolent masters, they found they could fare better in their master’s house than on their own.

So after absolving their debt, and gaining their freedom, a grateful slave would continued to serve his master, *but no*

longer out of obligation, now out of love. This is what made him a “**bond**” or “**love**” servant.

This was how Jude felt about His Lord Jesus...

Jude owed Jesus a debt he could never repay. Jesus is Creator and Redeemer. We all owe him for both our physical life and spiritual life. We're in hock to Jesus!

But once He's been your Master, and you've been His slave for any length of time, you begin to realize how well He treats His servants. You're drawn by His grace, and gentleness, and faithfulness. *After awhile duty becomes delight.* We find yourself serving Jesus not because you *have to*, but because you *want to!*

We too become “**bondservants of Jesus...**”

Then Jude writes, “**to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you...**”

What was true of Jude's readers is true of all Christians. We're **called**, and **sanctified**, and **preserved**.

If you're a follower of Jesus you received a **call**. At some point in the past, heaven got in touch with you. God made a wireless call. He made it personal. He communicated His love and desire for you to be saved.

And you answered that call. *And I'm glad you did...*

But now the question becomes, have you pushed “1” to speak to an operator - or have you punched “#” to unsubscribe? God wants an ongoing conversation with you. He calls again and again and again - if we'll listen.

After 20 years if my boys are in the yard, and I want them home, I'll shout, "**Hoody-hoo.**" That's *the call of the Adams*. They know it when they hear it - *and you know God's call...* When He calls you need to answer.

And whoever God calls, the next step is to **sanctify**.

He sets you apart for His purposes. God loves you from the start, but after He calls you He fashions you into somebody He not only loves, but He really likes. He makes you happy, and healthy, and even holy.

Don't you want to be sweetened by God! *Sanctified*, rather than remain your old *petrified* and *putrified* self.

People think of sanctification as a straight-jacket. But when you conform to God's will you become what you were made to be from the beginning. You become your real self - your true self. You're set free from your twisted-ness. Sanctification is a form of great blessing.

And once He calls and sanctifies He **preserves**.

Whoever God *spends time calling* and *makes the effort to sanctify* He wants to keep! He refuses to let anyone snatch you away. To God it's finders keepers.

God calls us, sanctifies us, and preserves us...

This is what *God does to us*, now here's what *God gives to us*: "**Mercy, peace, and love...**" **Mercy** is love we don't **deserve**. **Peace** is love that has some **nerve**. It won't unravel. And **agape** is love that wills to **serve**.

"**Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.**" *Not just added, but multiplied!* God's gift is love squared.

Mercy times mercy... peace times peace... love times love... this is what you get if you follow Jesus.

Now in verse 3, Jude tells us about the unique occasion of his writing, “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” What Jude writes was not his original theme. His initial desire was to discuss “*our common salvation.*” It would’ve been a positive, uplifting message - *super encouraging to everyone...*

But the Lord was doing something else in Jude’s heart. The Holy Spirit had laid upon him **a pressing necessity** he couldn’t shake. *He saw storm clouds forming - He heard the enemy scheming - He saw the church slumbering...* He had to shift gears. Rather than a soothing sonnet it was time to sound the alarm!

Jude’s readers needed to be exhorted to “*contend earnestly for the faith.*” When false doctrine threatens the church, all other issues have to be put on hold, until the lie is revealed, and the half-truth exposed, and the deceivers either repent or get run out of town.

Jude had probably poured a glass of lemonade, and made himself comfortable in his lazy boy.

He was playing some soft R&B in the background.

It wouldn’t take more than a couple of hours to pen a comfy letter to the believers God had laid on his heart.

But God had more for Jude to write! He stirred him up. He interrupted Jude with **a pressing necessity**.

And let me say, this explains my choice to teach the book of Jude. Quite frankly, I had no intention of teaching this letter. I'd planned other summertime sermons. But the Lord kept drawing me to this book.

In a day when it's difficult to find a church that hasn't shied away from truth - when pastors will compromise hard thoughts to be non-confrontational and politically correct - while carnal congregations expect to be coddled and catered to... I believe, as with Jude, God is exhorting you and I to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints."

All last week the Lord kept sending little signs across my path steering me back to the book of Jude, and his warning against deception and false teachers.

The final straw was Thursday when an older gentleman, a nice Jehovah's Witness, dropped by my house and invited me to a rally. He was so winsome you'd never think he was sending people to hell. Who would imagine, that spiritually speaking this sweet old man had poison dripping from the fangs in his mouth.

I was reminded God takes false doctrine seriously, even when it's spokesperson is a cuddly teddy bear.

In Jude's estimation a polite discourse on the facets of our common salvation would've been a luxury. But what was far more pressing was [a defense of the faith](#).

I read of a retiring pastor who was reflecting on the state of the church he was leaving. He was saddened by his

congregation's compromised faith and slide toward a more liberal theology. He felt their apostasy was his fault.

He explained what had he had done wrong, "I always told people what to believe. My great mistake is that I never clearly taught my people what **NOT** to believe."

Some churches are so careful to be known for *what they're for* - rather than for *what they're against* - they never voice their objection to anything - even diabolical doctrines that are the enemy of the truths they value.

The point is, it's not enough for us to just trumpet the truth. We also need to expose lies and deviations when the people we love are in danger of being duped.

And trust me, **people today are being duped**. Christians are forsaking biblical Christianity - or as Jude puts it, "*the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.*"

In a 2014 Pew Research survey, only 1 in 3 Americans now believe in moral truth as absolute. Two-thirds adhere to a situational ethic - where right and wrong depend on circumstances, rather than God-given laws.

In the same survey it was asked, "where do you go for guidance on right and wrong?" More Americans trusted in "common sense" than in the Christian Scriptures.

And as to the Bible, though 61% of Americans believe it to be the Word of God, only half of that percentage believed you can take it literally in all that it teaches.

In 2016 LifeWay Research did a survey that gave some interesting insights into the theology of Americans.

For example, though 70% of us believe there is only one, true God... 64% - that's two-thirds - believe God accepts the worship of all religions - Christianity, Judaism, and Islam... Just 54%, barely half of America, now believe that faith in Jesus alone as their Savior is the only way to receive God's free gift of eternal life. That means 46% believe Jesus is NOT the only way to God...

52% of Americans believe good deeds help earn you a spot in heaven... 65% believe that though we all sin a little, most people are still naturally good... Only 40% of Americans believe Jesus lived a sinless life... And 56% believe the Holy Spirit is a cosmic force, not a person...

Here's how bad it really is... Among Americans the most quoted "*Bible verse*" is, "God helps those who help themselves." The only problem is, that's not a Bible verse at all! It's a quote from Thomas Jefferson. Yet 82% of all Americans say it comes from the Bible.

I'm afraid we're not doing a very good job contending for the faith. And realize, **this is everybody's job!** Not just the pastor's job on Sunday, it's your job around the water cooler at work, and in conversations with friends.

It's your job to teach truth to your kids. All Christians are called on to "*contend earnestly for the faith...*"

For notice, this is "*the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints.*" In other words, God isn't adding any new truth! The Bible is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so we better defend it to the death. God's menu isn't getting updated.

The OT Scriptures that were confirmed by Jesus, and the NT letters that issued from the pen of His apostles, is the truth given by God - *“once and for all!”*

We’re not waiting on God to release Christianity 2.0. You don’t update the App. The Bible you possess is God’s authoritative word *for all time and for all people.*

Thus, we need to *“contend earnestly”* in our defense of the Bible - *in our understanding of it, our teaching of it, our living out of it...* Let’s fight for God’s truth.

And pay attention to the strong language Jude uses. The Greek term *“contend earnestly”* means *“to struggle or wrestle.”* We need to go to mat for biblical truth.

I’ll never forget the tiny bit of wrestling I had to do in PE class. That mat time was the longest three minutes of my life. Wrestling is intense, grueling, exhausting.

When the whistle blew I was drained - totally spent.

Yet this is the effort we should give the proclamation and explanation of God’s truth. How can you take the attitude, *“Well, I don’t like to get into arguments and heated debates. Passionate conversations make me uncomfortable. I’d prefer to talk about the weather...”*

If this is your take... you’d have a problem with Jude. We can’t be afraid to mix it up in the arena of ideas.

Some of us aren’t even willing to engage other family members for fear of creating a rift. If what we believe is true, our silence may just create a rift for all eternity.

If we don’t speak up, the truth won’t get heard. How can it get under another person’s skin, and challenge their

assumptions, and get taken to heart if we're not passionate about what we say we believe. When we're winsome and eager advocates; then the Holy Spirit will convict people and go to work to make things better.

Remember the song, "Hey Jude, don't be afraid. The minute you let her under your skin then you begin to make it better, better, better.." *Nah - nananana* - I'll stop. But you get the point. When it comes to people's minds and hearts we've got to go out and get her.

We need to get under people's skin with the truth.

We've got to grapple with the issues ourselves; then be shrewd in our engagement. We can't just shy away.

In the coffee shop, or hair salon - on the airplane, or on the Marta train - we need to be bold witnesses.

Years ago I read Billy Graham's autobiography, and in the final chapter he asks, "Is it arrogance or narrow-mindedness to claim that there is only one way of salvation, and that the way we follow is the right way?"

I think not... Do we consider it arrogant or narrow-minded when a doctor points us to the one medicine that will cure us of a particular disease? The human race is infected with the disease of sin - and God has given us the remedy. Dare we do anything less than urge people to apply that remedy to their lives?...

Dr. Graham concluded, "Over the last 60 years... I have crossed paths with people who hold every kind of religious and philosophical view imaginable. Often I am moved by their commitment. But, as the years have gone by, I have become

even more convinced of the uniqueness and truth of the Gospel of Christ.”

In his book Billy Graham goes on to explain the reasons he's so sure of the Gospel... *the authority of the Bible, the uniqueness of Jesus, the proof of His resurrection, the changed lives that result from its preaching...* We too need to be equally sure of God's Word - and relentless in its defense and declaration.

For we are not the only people trying to persuade hearts and minds... Notice verse 4, “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude had encountered “*certain men... ungodly men.*” They were obviously false teachers who had secretly infiltrated the church, and were denying the truth about God and His grace.

And as a pastor, I really don't like this picture of folks creeping around the church unnoticed. These guys were literally, **creeps**. Their *motives were sinister*. Their *methods were sneaky*. *Condemnation had been their destination for a long time*. They were enemies of God and truth, even while they pretended to be godly.

2 Peter 2:1 warned, “**there will be false teachers among you.**” Well, Jude says they're already here. And for the last 2000 years these spiritual creeps haven't gone anywhere! We're still faced with false teachers.

And notice it's not just *God's truth* they attack - it's also *God's grace*. It's His grace that saves us, so naturally the devil would want to obscure its meaning.

Jude tells us, they *“turn the grace of God into lewdness.”* The word *“lewdness”* speaks of a license to do evil - an unbridled bent toward lustful behavior.

And this is how God's enemies try to distort grace. They use grace to justify their sin and selfishness.

They say we're set free from the law to do as we please. *But that's not grace!* Yes, under God's grace we are free from the Law, *but not to do as we please*. The object is to enjoy a relationship pleasing to God.

Grace sets us free from the Law, not to act *lawlessly*, but to *love*. True liberty produces love for God and love for others - not the license to serve myself.

On March 10, 1998 the Atlanta Constitution ran a news story entitled, *“Praying for a Successful Heist.”*

When I read it I couldn't believe it, *“According to a federal indictment in Des Moines, Iowa, Kenneth Ray Bruner led his seven accomplices in prayer asking for God's protection just before they set out to knock off Herman's Fine Jewelry...” (I'm not making this up!)*

“Bruner acknowledged, according to the indictment, ‘that they were going to do bad things but that they were not bad people.’ No one was hurt in the robbery and everyone was behind bars the next day.”

But this is how people today think. They're so blind to God's truth (or they are abusers of God's grace) that they see no

contradiction with **being born again** and **robbing banks... or sleeping with a boyfriend, or pilfering from the company, or fudging on your income tax, or cheating on your spouse, or looking at porn...**

God's grace frees us from condemnation and guilt so we can know God, and enjoy God, and walk in the power of His Holy Spirit. When *His Spirit* enters *our spirit* changes begin to occur from the inside out.

If you say you're a Christian, yet aren't becoming more like Jesus there's a problem - something's wrong.

I ran across another set of disturbing stats recently which describe the similarities between people who say they're Christians and people make no such claim.

"The survey reported 27% of non-Christians volunteered their time to a nonprofit organization last week. Only 29% of born again Christians did likewise...

48% of non-Christians gave money to a nonprofit organization in the past month. Less than that, barely 48% of Christians, gave an offering to their church.

49% of non-Christians tried to influence another person's opinion last week. Again less, 47% of born again Christians tried to do the same... 16% of non-Christians watched an X-rated movie in the last three months. Whereas, 9% of born again Christians saw an X-rated movie in the last three months..." Tragically, there's not a lot of difference between the behaviors of believers and unbelievers. Jude says this discrepancy ***"denies the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."***

The phrase “*born again*” implies a change has taken place in my basic nature, and its working its way out.

If you’re truly *born again* you’ll be different than you once were... You’ll *love* instead of *hate*. You’ll *give* instead of *take*. You’ll *care* instead of *stare right past the need*. You’ll *obey God* instead of *go your own way*.

Grace will make you more *gracious*, and *graceful*, and *grace-filled* - not give you a license to lewdness.

And this was just the beginning of Jude’s rebuke of the false teachers and spiritual creeps. Jude’s letter is the perfect book to start on the July 4th weekend. For though it’s short in length, it doesn’t lack for fireworks!

When Jude writes, sparks fly. This pastor uses tough language and startling pictures. He tells it like it is. He’ll even make some stark and unflattering comparisons.

In essence, Jude laces up his boxing gloves.

He takes his own advice to “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*”

There is a battle raging today for the souls of men and women. It’s being fought inside and outside the church. And in every skirmish somebody wins and somebody loses - a human soul is either saved or lost.

And as Jude realized this is **a pressing necessity!**

How can our goal be a stress-free life when there’s a struggle going on. *I’m asking, don’t you think it’s time you laced up your gloves, and stepped into the fight?*