

Lesson 30

Jude

Topping the agendas of many churches today is the issue of making churches more comfortable places for their members; attractive décor, a coffee shop, comfortable seating, a great air conditioning system,. . . the list goes on and on. I once heard a visiting missionary at our old location mention, “Christians think they’re suffering if the air conditioning isn’t working.”

Topping Jude’s agenda is an admonition to sweat – he says we’re to “contend earnestly for the faith.” It’s worth fighting for . . . we need to be willing to roll up our sleeves, be uncomfortable and engage in all-out spiritual warfare.

The author of this little book identifies himself as Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James. Most likely he was the half-brother of Jesus as we read about in Matthew 13:55. It is addressed to born again believers in Jude’s day, but it applies to Christians of all times. It’s interesting to note his original intention was to write on the subject of “the salvation we share,” (probably a letter of encouragement) but the Holy Spirit prompted him to switch subjects and write instead a letter of exhortation – an admonition to “contend earnestly for the faith.”

The faith that he’s speaking about is the body of truth contained in the Scriptures. It was delivered “once for all” – it isn’t in a state of flux like modeling clay that molds around changing society morals and lifestyles. “The Faith” is firmly structured around the cross – the good

news of deliverance – delivered once for all. The Scriptures are complete. We note too that it wasn't given to just a privileged few, but to all the saints. What a privilege to hold in our hand everything we need to know about how to get to heaven and how to serve the living God!

The reason we're to contend for the faith is something we've studied all year long – apostasy. Unger's Bible Dictionary defines apostasy as “the act of a professed Christian, who knowingly and deliberately rejects revealed truth regarding the deity of Christ and redemption through His atoning sacrifice . . . he departs from the faith, but not from the outward profession of it.” So it's not just drifting away, but deliberate defection and desertion. These false teachers who might sound so good would creep in unnoticed and secretly and seductively begin to undermine the truth. Wherever they went, division and dissension followed.

Jude describes these ungodly persons in two ways:

- 1) They change the grace of God into license for immorality
- 2) They deny our only Sovereign and Lord, Jesus Christ.

It's always one of my personal goals as I teach to try and make sure you understand the concept of God's grace. It is His gift to repentant sinners. We don't deserve it, we can't “clean ourselves up” to be worthy of it, we can't earn it, we can't repay it. It's His love for us expressed through Jesus Christ's blood sacrifice for our sins that we might be in a right relationship with the Father.

What the false teachers were saying is that since grace covers our sins, it's okay to live any lifestyle we please. Paul's words in Romans 6 rings in our ears, "Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means!"

Is apostasy alive and well in our generation? You bet! I have a little book titled *Revival God's Way* by Leonard Ravenhill. It was published many years ago, and admittedly these are old statistics. However, considering the condition of the world today, I think there is still some validity to these figures. Without naming mainline denominations, a survey was sent to 10,000 Protestant ministers of whom 7,441 responded. Listen to these statistics on four denominations:

Was Jesus born of a virgin? No - 60%, 49%, 44%, 19%

Was Jesus the Son of God? No - 82%, 81%, 89%, 57%

Is the Bible the inspired Word of God? No - 82%, 81%, 89%, 57%

Does Satan exist? No - 62%, 47%, 37%, 14%

Was there a physical resurrection of Jesus? No - 51%, 35%, 30%, 13%

Those were pastors in America pulpits claiming Christianity!!

Jude was concerned (we should be concerned) . . . it must be stopped! As Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Contamination spreads like the yeast throughout dough. And it can make a terrible mess of our lives, our relationships, our families and our church.

In verses 5-16 Jude gives us four reasons why we are not to follow the teaching of false teachers, and in verses 17-23 he gives believers four

commands. Let's look at the four warnings concerning false teachers . . . don't follow them because: 1) their doom is certain 2) their tongues are blasphemous 3) their religion is empty and 4) their ways are godless.

First of all, their doom is certain. In verse 5, Jude cites an example from Israel's history recorded in Numbers 13-14. This is the dreadful reminder of those led out of Egypt, who traveled across the desert and arrived at the very borders of the Promise Land. But because of unbelief, they experienced death in the wilderness rather than the rest in the land of milk and honey. It was this same wilderness graveyard that haunted the mind of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:5-11 and the writer of Hebrews. Remember in Hebrews 3:18-19 we learned, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." We must be careful to make sure our Christian walk is based on Christ the Solid Rock and not on sinking wilderness sand.

Jude's second example of certain doom changed scene from the world of men to that of angels. Jude describes the judgment of disobedient angels. (vs. 6) "Angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on that great Day." We learned about the Day of God last week in 2 Peter– "angels sent to hell and put into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment." Jesus taught us in Matthew 25:41 that He would separate the sheep (the saved) and the goats (the unsaved).

“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” The promise of judgment is real, even for the disobedient angels.

The third example of doom, vs. 7, Jude recalls the destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19). We recall how homosexuality was rampant and how God sent angels to rescue Lot and his family before the judgment of fire and brimstone. The infiltration of sin will permeate individuals and whole societies until there is no regard for truth or godliness. In the same way apostasy infiltrates into individual lives and the corporate church until truth and godliness are watered down to “humanism” or “materialism” or any other of the “isms” of our day. So first of all, don’t follow because their doom is certain.

Second, we do not follow them because of their blasphemous tongues.

Vs. 8 - These apostates pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. And Jude mentions the archangel Michael, who, when he was disputing with the devil about Moses’ body, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him (meaning Satan), but said, “the Lord rebuke you!” What comes out of our mouth is of utmost importance . . . even Michael was extremely cautious. We know nothing else from Scripture about this dispute between Michael and Satan over Moses’ body, except the assumption that God wanted Moses’ body **not** to be found and enshrined, as Satan would like to have done, so that men would be sidetracked from God to the worship of Moses. Look at all the

controversy we have heard over the years about the Shroud of Turin which is supposed to have been the grave clothes of Jesus. Satan will try anything to distract our focus from the Lord toward some earthly shrine.

Look at verse 10, they speak abusively against whatever they do not understand. Isn't that true? When your point is weak, shout louder. A lot of us can be intimidated by those who speak forcefully and we just assume they know what they're talking about because of their authoritarian presentation. We must be like the Bereans we studied in Acts. What did they do? Check everything against Scripture!!

Jude's third warning, verses 11-13 . . . their religion is empty. WOE TO THEM! he says. The "way of Cain" is the broad way that leads to destruction. It's a religion that offers the fruit of man's works in order to gain acceptance with God rather than the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "The error of Balaam" refers to the teaching and treachery of the Old Testament prophet whose allegiance, like that of Judas, could be bought. He was a prophet greedy for gold, whose life characterized the sacrifice of eternal riches for the pleasure of temporal ones. Balaam's error was his compelling and consuming desire to gain some part of this world. Balaam's purse may have been full, but his religion was empty.

As to the "rebellion of Korah" . . . Korah was a Levite and a cousin of Moses (Exodus 6:18-21). Under Korah's leadership, a cauldron of rebellion began to boil against the authority of Moses and Aaron and he presumed that he was holy enough to approach God without Moses or Aaron, God's chosen mediators. Because of this defiance, he and his

followers were swallowed up in an earthquake of judgment from the Lord. Korah's religion, too, was empty.

Every Christian knows that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." John 14:6

No matter how reasonable it sounds, apostasy leads from the **way of Christ** to the way of Cain; from the **truth of Christ** to the error of Balaam; from the **life in Christ** to the death of Korah.

Verses 12 and 13 give us some vivid word pictures. Apostates may be taking communion with no guilty conscience, but they are feeding only their bodies. There is no remembrance of Christ and His sacrificial atonement for our sins. Apostates bring empty promises like clouds that produce no rain . . . or dead trees with no fruit . . . or foaming waves – all froth and no substance . . . or wandering stars that do not reflect the Light of the World, Jesus Christ himself, but a flickering light destined for the blackest darkness.

Fourth, Jude warns their ways are godless. It's one of the unusual things about the book of Jude that he takes his quotations not only from Scripture but also from the apocryphal books (which means books that are not considered divinely inspired and included as a part of the canon of Scripture). This might raise a red flag in some people's minds, but we remember that both Stephen in Acts 7 and Jesus in Matthew 23 referred to historical incidents not mentioned in the Old Testament. So Jude quotes Enoch, "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and to convict all the ungodly of all the

ungodly acts they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” We have other Scriptures to know that’s true, don’t we?

Jude says, “These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires and boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.” Godless ways . . . grumbling, faultfinding, evil desires, boasting, flattery. We can’t help but feel disgusted at the evil portrayed in the picture of the apostate. But we must remember there is a difference between contending for the faith and simply being contentious. Contending for the faith is frontline fighting with the enemy as were told in Jude 3 – being contentious is back-stabbing behind the lines within our own troops which we’re to avoid as we learned in Titus 3:9. “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.”

Okay, so now how do you and I survive in a day of false teaching? What is our direction? Jude gives us four commands in verses 17-23.

1. vs. 17 REMEMBER – what the apostle foretold.
2. vs. 21 KEEP YOURSELVES IN GOD’S LOVE.
3. vs. 22 BE MERCIFUL.
4. vs. 23 SNATCH OTHERS . . . AND SAVE THEM

The apostles have consistently written to us with warnings to be alert for our enemy who prowls around seeking those whom he can devour. We must stay alert . . . listen to what is being said and look at their lifestyles; when you see loose morals that’s a red flag. Besides their conversation

and their conduct, another identifying trait is causing division. Wherever they go, friendships falter, strife surfaces and congregations crumble. They don't bring unity, which is a characteristic of the Spirit and of those in close fellowship with Christ. They scoff at those whose aim is a godly Christian walk.

This is a real war, people. We're to be soldiers for Christ. Many of you recognize the name Jim Elliot. He was a missionary to the Auca Indians years ago and was martyred as he and others tried to bring them the good news of Christ. His wife, Elisabeth, later published his diary under the title *Shadow of the Almighty*. Let me read you just one entry . . .

“We are so utterly ordinary, so commonplace, while we profess to know a Power the twentieth century does not recon with. But we are harmless, and therefore unharmed. We are spiritual pacifists, non-militants, and conscientious objectors in this battle-to-the-death with principalities and powers in high places. Meekness must be had for contact with men, but brass, outspoken boldness is required to take part in the comradeship of the Cross. We are sideliners – coaching and criticizing each other and the real wrestlers, while content to sit by and leave the enemies of God unchallenged. The world cannot hate us; we are too much like its own. Oh that God would make us dangerous!” Remember Jim Elliot also said, “Lord, make me a fork in the road so that whoever meets me has to make a decision about You.”

We're soldiers for Christ in contending for the faith so we protect ourselves by building up our faith (and again I commend you for your

dedication and faithfulness to the study of God's Word in this year's Bible study . . . that's how we build a foundation of faith . . . that's what gives us the ability to recognize apostasy and false teaching . . . the foundation of God's Word) and we pray in the Spirit. We keep close communication with headquarters and we watch with vigilance for the coming of our Commander in Chief. Prayer keeps us in peak readiness for battle in the spiritual realm. The Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8). He reveals God's will to us and God's thoughts become our thoughts and our ways His ways. Praying in the power of the Spirit brings both, clarity to our mission and courage to carry it out. We are never so strong as when we are in prayer. As they say, kneeling knees don't knock!

We're to show mercy to those who are doubting. Have you ever been one of those with doubts? I hope a patient and loving Christian has ministered to you with truth and reassurance from Scriptures. We're not to get angry, but stand in the gap with truth so that those who doubt will not be swept away into falsehood.

Clearly the directive of verse 22 to snatch others from the fire and save them is a clear reference to evangelism. People may be wearing the garments of worldly pollution in which sin is clothed, but we are to love them and approach them with the message of the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. We all know the apostates – the cults – are working hard not only to subvert believers into apostasy, but to bring in and enslave those

who are feeling unloved and unaccepted and alone. We're to protect ourselves and save others.

Most of you know that I worked for Chuck Swindoll's radio ministry Insight for Living for 14 years until they moved to Texas. In his book *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, (pp. 98-99) was a little parable about the life saving station. Some of you have heard it before, but it bears repeating.

"On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, the station was merely a hut with only one boat. But the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought for themselves, they would go out day and night tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as the lost. Many, many lives were saved by this brave band of men who faithfully worked as a team in and out of the lifesaving station. By and by, it became a famous place.

"Some of those who had been saved as well as others along the seacoast wanted to become associated with this little station. They were willing to give their time and energy and money in support of its objectives. New boats were purchased. New crews were trained and the station that was once obscure, crude and virtually insignificant began to grow.

"Some of its members were unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided. Therefore emergency cots were replaced with lovely furniture. Rough, hand-made equipment was discarded and sophisticated, classy

systems were installed. The hut, of course, had to be torn down to make room for all the additional equipment, furniture, systems, and appointments.

“By its completion, the lifesaving station had become a popular gathering place, and its objectives began to shift. It was now used as sort of a clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings. Saving lives and feeding the hungry and strengthening the fearful and calming the disturbed rarely occurred by now.

“Fewer members were now interested in braving the sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired professional lifeboat crews to do the work. The original goal of the station wasn’t altogether forgotten, however. The lifesaving motifs still prevailed in the club’s decorations. In fact, there was a liturgical lifeboat preserved in the “Room of Sweet Memories” with soft, indirect lighting, which helped hide the layer of dust upon the once-used vessel.

“About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the boat crews brought in loads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty. Some were terribly sick and lonely. Others were “different” from the majority of the club members. The beautiful new club suddenly became messy and cluttered. A special committee saw to it that a shower house was immediately built “outside” and “away from” the club so victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up “before” coming inside the club.

“At the next meeting there were strong words and angry feelings, which resulted in a division among the members. Most of the people wanted to

stop the club's lifesaving activities altogether and all involvements with shipwreck victims were to be put somewhere else. "It's too unpleasant," they said. "It's a hindrance to our social life. It's opening the doors to folks who are not 'our kind.'"

"Well, as you would expect, some still insisted upon saving lives, that this was their primary objective – that their only reason for existence was ministering to "anyone" needing help regardless of their club's beauty or size or decorations. Well, they were voted down and they were told if they wanted to still be involved in saving lives of various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast! And so they did.

"As years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into just another club. And yet another lifesaving station was begun. History continued to repeat itself. And if you visit that coast today, you'll find a large number of exclusive, impressive clubs along the shoreline owned and operated by slick professionals who have lost all involvement with the saving of lives.

"Shipwrecks still occur in those waters, you understand, but now most of the victims are not saved. Every day they perish at sea, and so few seem to care . . . so very few."

Charles R. Swindoll, Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life, pp. 98-99

The message of Jude is an attack on this kind of erosion. It's easy to lose sight of our goal when we get into our comfort zone. The secret rests not with the church as an organization, but with us Christians. How's your

time in the Word? How's your time with Christ in prayer? How are your contacts with the lost coming along? You know, evangelism is just expressing what you possess in Christ and explaining how you came to possess it. How's the warmth of your walk? How about a teachable spirit and a contrite heart? How's your mercy and care for the hurting? Jude may be gone, but his words still speak to us today.

I want to leave you with a thought . . . We live in a world of “basin theology.” Remember what Pilate did when he had the chance to acquit Jesus? He called for a basin and washed his hands of the whole thing. But Jesus, the night before His death, called for a basin and proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples. It all comes down to “basin theology.” Which one will you use?

We close our Bible Study this year recalling the wonderful words of application from Paul:

Be joyful always; pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3)

Then there were the pleas for steadfastness from Hebrews:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with all you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

And the practical, things we learned from James and Peter.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Jude, too, leaves us with a doxology that stirs our hearts . . .

“To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! AMEN.”

We’ve talked a lot this year about relationships, how we’re to treat one another and those still in the world . . . about the dangers of legalism and the bondage it would put us under . . . about the apostates and false teachers who still today are trying to get their converts . . . about controlling our tongue . . . about setting our mind on things above . . . about the power of prayer . . . about the need for perseverance, commitment, holiness. I want to ask you to persevere in your study of God’s Word through the summer until we meet again in the fall. Then we’ll be back in the Old Testament with the unit we last did in 2003 titled the United Kingdom which is found in 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-11. These books cover the lives of Saul, David and Solomon. We’ve added lessons on the books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs written by Solomon. It’s a rich, rich material full of modern application. We’ll see you then and bring a friend!