

Jude 17-23

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[0 : 00] Go ahead and take your copy of God's Word and open to the book of Jude.! We're going to be looking at verses 17 through 23 this morning. So we've talked about the examples of false teachers.

We've talked about the specific false teaching that Jude's opponents are guilty of, namely antinomianism. We've talked about the threat that false teachers pose to the church. We've talked about the character of false teachers and so many other facets pertaining to false teachers and false teaching. In our first week especially, we talked about how false teachers always arise within the church.

So we would never call a Buddhist or a Hindu a false teacher, even though everything they teach is blatantly not true. But a false teacher, biblically speaking, is one who professes faith in God, who proclaims to follow God, and yet distorts God's Word, distorts who God is, and then lives wickedly and teaches others to do likewise.

So, in short, everything about a false teacher is a lie. What they say and how they live, it's all a lie. So, knowing these truths, knowing these realities, Jude writes to the church on the occasion of this infiltration by false teachers.

[1 : 52] And his overall charge to the church is simple. Verse 3, contend for the faith. And so today, we're finally going to see what contending for the faith looks like in Jude's mind.

He's going to tell us what to do. So, looking at Jude, verse 17 then, Jude writes to the church. He says, But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit.

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

And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

[3 : 00] So, before we get into our outline, I want to address something briefly. It's come to my attention that some might be wondering, Why are we studying this book?

What does all this have to do with me? Perhaps you're thinking, I'm just trying to be a good spouse, or a good parent, or a good friend right now. Or you might think, I don't know any false teachers, or I don't know anyone being duped by false teaching, so why this book?

And obviously, I do not know if anyone is thinking in those terms. I certainly hope nobody is thinking in those terms. And I even doubt anybody really is. But just in case someone is, let me briefly explain why you need Jude right now.

2 Timothy 3, verses 16 through 17 says, So those two verses alone should silence any thought of us thinking we do not need Jude right now.

And do not hear that as some cliché reference, but that is the word of God. So Paul is telling us in a very real sense that the book of Jude is profitable for teaching, for reproof, and for correction, and for training of righteousness.

[4 : 27] The book of Jude equips us for every good work. And so if you have found the last few weeks as irrelevant or unhelpful, that probably says more about me and my preaching than it does about the book of Jude.

So if I have failed in that way, then I genuinely apologize. But do not blame Jude. I would encourage you to spend time in Jude to prayerfully consider how God is desiring to shape and mold you in light of the reality of false teachers and what Jude tells us about them.

And I will tell you these truths in Jude and these realities in Jude are essential for you to be a good spouse, a good parent, and a good friend. The day will come, if it has not already, when your spouse or your child or your friend will be caught up in false teaching.

And there will be more than one day. This happens many times. They will hear something that tickles their ear. They will hear something that makes them feel free to sin.

And they will try to get you to come along with them and condone such thinking and such living. So you need to be ready. You need to be aware of such things.

[5 : 40] And most importantly, you need to know how to contend for the faith. So as to keep yourself and your loved ones on the right path so that you might be a faithful messenger whom God uses to preserve his people.

Now, if you are doubtful about the chances of you or anyone you know coming into contact with false teachers or false teaching, then listen to our first application and corresponding verses carefully.

Application number one. Remember the predictions of the apostles. Jude says, But you must remember, beloved, in verse 17, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They said to you in the last time, there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit.

So you will notice that Jude switches back to addressing the believers in this letter. The last few weeks he has been talking about and talking to the false teachers, but now he is telling the believers what he wants to tell them.

[6 : 51] And immediately we see that the apostles themselves are under the authority of Jesus Christ. Not the authority of dreams like the false teachers from last week, right?

But under the authority of Christ, these apostles warned that in the church there will be scoffers. So make no mistake, it is prophesied.

And so we would all be foolish to doubt that we will encounter false teachers and false teachings in our life, in our community. It will happen. And the Greek word for scoffer is empektai.

One scholar defines this term well. He says that an empektai is one who, quote, despises morality and true religion. He is arrogant and he is a godless libertine.

What a fitting word to describe those whom Jude is up against. The false teacher is inherently also a scoffer. That is who they are and what they do.

[7 : 53] Recall that it was scoffers who crucified our Lord. Matthew 27, verse 29 says, And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on Jesus' head and put a reed in his right hand.

And kneeling before him, they mocked or scoffed at him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. They mocked him in an irreverent, ungodly way. And Matthew goes on to describe in verse 31, he writes, And when they had mocked or scoffed at Jesus, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

And in verses 41 through 42, Matthew tells us this. He says, So also the chief priests with the scribes and the elders mocked or scoffed at Jesus, saying, He saved others, but he cannot save himself.

He is the King of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. So notice in Matthew's Gospel, we see both the pagan Romans and the so-called God-fearing Israelite leaders mocking or scoffing at the Lord, God incarnate.

There is no reverence. There is no sense of submitting to Christ's lordship. All these people hated Jesus. So let that image, that image of all these people wickedly treating our Lord, be the image you think of when you picture these false teachers that Jude is addressing.

[9 : 21] It is no exaggeration to say they are one and the same of the exact type of person. They hate Jesus. Jude 4 tells us this. They say, or Jude says, they deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

And in our text today, he says that they are people who are following their own ungodly passions. So at this point in Jude's very brief letter, he has called these false teachers ungodly six times.

He adds here that they are proactively following their ungodly passions. This is a way of life for them. And the Greek word for passions here is epithumies.

This word is often translated as lust in our Bible, and with that we tend to think of specifically sexual temptation or sin of some kind. And given the rest of the letter that we've studied so far, that may very well be what Jude has in mind.

However, this term can also just denote an extreme or intense desire for anything. You could have an intense desire or passion for money or power or the praise of man or anything.

[10:33] It's an uncontrollable desire. You are a slave to this type of desire, right, is the idea of epithumies. So it seems that Jude is simply saying that these false teachers are wholly committed to their ungodliness.

So whether you take that as sexual sin or sin of any kind, they are chasing after it with every fiber of their being. Again, think of those who crucified our Lord and how they did it.

So that kind of person, that false teacher, is prophesied to come time and time again. And that person will come for you, for your spouse, for your kids, and for your friends, for your church.

And if the last few weeks in today's text are not enough to tell you to have nothing to do with false teachers, Jude ends the discussion by saying that they are those who cause divisions.

They are worldly people devoid of the Spirit. They're not believers. The battle is certain. It is inevitable. And so we must be ready.

[11:42] We must remember what the apostles prophesied. And in Greek, the word remember is an imperative, meaning it is a commandment. So this isn't an invitation. Jude isn't suggesting.

He's telling you, you must remember. But without further delay, let's finally see what Jude has in mind for how we ought to contend for the faith.

So application number two, build up the church in the gospel. Application number two, build up the church in the gospel. So in the first half of verse 20, Jude writes, but you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith.

Yet again, Jude distinguishes his address by saying, but you, beloved. He is creating a contrast with the false teacher. So whereas the false teacher causes division in verse 19, the beloved or the true believers are to build up the church.

Right? The phrase, building yourselves up in English, it might sound like a very individualistic statement as though you yourself build yourself up. But that is not what Jude means.

[12:56] Jude is borrowing from a metaphor that the church used a lot during the first century when our New Testament was written. This metaphor always depicts the church as a body or a structure in which each individual is working to build up or edify other believers in some meaningful way.

So some examples, Romans 14, 19, Paul says, so then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Paul also said to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 14, 12, he says, so with yourself, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

And likewise, he says to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 5, 11, therefore encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. So clearly, Jude is making use of a well-known metaphor.

The true believers in the church are to build one another up in the most holy faith, as it says in verse 20. Now, I take that phrase to be referring to the gospel the same way I believe Jude is referring to the gospel in verse 3 from our first week together when he says we are to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude says, your holy faith because it is a faith or a gospel that comes not from false teachers and their authority, their dreams, but it is the one that was given to them by the apostles and the apostles received it from God.

[14:34] So it is their holy faith. And we are to be building one another up in the gospel. The true gospel is the foundation of everything that we do as believers.

And I fear that sometimes we think of the gospel as simply something for unbelievers, right, and an essential tool for evangelism to be sure, but then we leave it at that as though it is only use.

And while it is certainly important and obviously essential for evangelism, the gospel is also essential for Christian living to recall, to reflect on, to enjoy, and so much more.

It should encompass everything we do, think, feel, and desire. So listen to Paul's words about the centrality of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1-2.

Paul writes, and notice how this kind of echoes Jude. He writes, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

[15 : 48] So notice all the tenses there. We can clearly see the gospel was essential to the Corinthians when Paul first preached it to them, right, past tense, and is essential as they stand in it, present, and is essential for the end of days because they are being saved by it.

There's the future, right, it encompasses all of our life. And Paul also said this to the Ephesian church in Acts 20, verse 32. He said, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, referring to the gospel, the word of his grace, which he is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

So there's the build-up language again, and it is for our sanctification. So let's be about this work. Let's encourage one another by reminding one another of the gospel.

And don't forget that Jude initially wanted to write to his audience about the gospel, right, a thing that Jude himself says they know all things about it. Yet he wanted to remind them of the beauties and the truths and the hopefulness that the gospel offers despite them already knowing it.

So clearly it has use, it has purpose daily for Christian living. And so here at CFC there are ample opportunities to do this. We have community groups where you as an individual can go and share the gospel with other believers, not in an evangelistic way but in a discipleship way and in a way to encourage or build up one another, right?

[17 : 24] Leave your insecurity at the door and love others by speaking up about the word of God and how it has worked through your life. Be an encouragement. We also have really organic discipleship here at CFC, right?

We have core groups that are meeting every week and forming every week. Core groups consist of two to four guys or two to four gals to get together hold one another accountable, right?

What an opportunity to reflect on the gospel, to teach the gospel, to remind one another of the gospel. And then there are also obviously just people hanging out all the time, people doing dinners, game nights, and other gatherings.

And I would suggest to you that this is not a night off from being a Christ follower, right? That is a temptation I often face. I think it's a temptation we all often face to think these are just nights to forget that and let loose or what have you.

But again, that's not true. Let's make the gospel some aspect of that fellowship night, whether it's through prayer or encouraging word or whatever. But be gospel-centric.

[18 : 36] And so what else does Jude tell us to do? Well, Jude tells us to pray in the Holy Spirit. Application number three, pray in the Holy Spirit. So looking at the second half of verse 20, here, Jude describes how our actions ought to be in the...

Excuse me. Jude describes how our actions ought to be in light of the danger of false teachers. And he says we should be in the second half of verse 20 praying in the Holy Spirit.

So that expression of praying in the Holy Spirit is referring to praying in such a way that we are seeking and asking God for that which the Spirit wills.

So, of course, the Holy Spirit wills for the exact same things as the Father and the Son. So we can pray in the Holy Spirit or in the Father or in the Son because they are one.

Right here, Jesus' words on this matter in John 14, verses 14 through 17. He said, If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

[19 : 40] If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper referring to the Holy Spirit. He will give you the Holy Spirit to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. So notice that. The promise for believers who pray in the Spirit or in the Son, Jesus says, I will do it.

When our prayers are conformed to the will of God, then we can trust our almighty, sovereign, one true God to bring it to completion, to bring it about. Right?

Not only does he hear our prayers, but he answers them when we pray for that which we know he desires. That is amazing. And how do we know what he desires?

Well, you'll have to read the Bible. to know what he desires. So I would commend to you to pray through the Bible. One of my professors, Don Whitney, he wrote a little book about this idea.

[20 : 46] I believe Nathan's recommended it before. I'll recommend it again because it's a fitting book to recommend for this time. It's called Praying the Bible. Okay?

And it basically will teach you how to use Scripture as a prayer guide. And I'll tell you, honestly, for me, when I sit down to pray, it is not uncommon that I'm not sure what to say. Right? And I end up saying the same things over and over again day to day and my heart is just not really in it. And God hates those prayers. The prayers where my lips praise him, but my heart is far from him.

He hates those prayers. But opening the Psalms and seeing what the Holy Spirit inspired the psalmist to pray about, and then in turn praying those things myself, after meditating and contemplating those texts, God loves those prayers and he answers those prayers. And I will tell you, I love those prayers because I can tell a big difference in my prayer life when I am actively and truly praying for those things as opposed to going through the motions. [21 : 55] When I am really praying in the Spirit, I know the difference. And I am sure and trust that many of you do too. So praying through the Bible is a wonderful way to wake up, so to speak, in your prayer life.

You just have to do it. So prayer is an essential daily habit to cultivate. One benefit of praying daily for Jude's context, right, is that it will prepare you for the day when false teachers inevitably come your way.

And another exhortation that Jude gives us is that we ought to keep ourselves in the love of God. Application number four, keep yourselves in the love of God. I took this right from the book itself, verse 21, first half, keep yourselves in the love of God.

So Jude loves to contrast the believers with false teachers. Now recall in verse 6 from weeks ago that it was the false teachers or the angels who did not keep their proper dwelling. They left their proper dwelling for unnatural desires. Well, we as believers are called to keep our position, our position being in the love of God.

[23 : 11] So what does that mean? It means obedience. Jude is borrowing another well-known idea that is throughout the New Testament, the idea of keeping as equated to obedience.

James chapter 2, verse 10 says, whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of this. Notice that language, keeping the law. Likewise, in 1 John, chapter 2, verses 3 through 5, John writes, and by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says, I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

By this we know that we are in him. And recall that Jude refers to believers as those who are kept by God the Father in verse 1.

The reality of our standing before God being the result of his work or his keeping is the ethical grounds for why we must keep ourselves in the love of God.

[24 : 24] Now I'm going to repeat that. This is the indicative imperative pattern if you're familiar with this concept but just hear this phrase is all I'm talking about. The reality of our standing before God being the result of his work or his keeping is the ethical grounds for why we must keep ourselves in the love of God.

So this is one of those texts that helps us see both divine sovereignty and human responsibility at play. So yes, God sovereignly chooses those whom he saves.

He sovereignly sanctifies his elect. Philippians 1.6 says as much Paul writes, I am sure of this that God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

yet it is also true that we are held responsible for our sanctification and perseverance in the faith. 2 Peter 1.10 says, Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.

So because we can rest so greatly in the person and work of Christ, we can work so hard to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. It's all of God and yet we are able to work so hard to strive towards godliness because it is all of God.

[25 : 52] Because God wills it, God promises it for those of us who are in Christ. And Jesus himself expressed these realities in John chapter 15 verses 9 through 11.

Jesus says, Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Abide in my love or keep in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.

These things I have spoken to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full. So notice the promise, our joy will be made full in obedience to Christ.

And do not let it go unnoticed that Jude is assuming we are loved by God and in the love of God. In verse 1 he addresses the believers as beloved, as does our text today twice in verse 17 and verse 20.

Beloved, beloved, beloved. So just take a moment and put some of the things together that we have been talking about. We as believers are in such a great position to succeed despite false teachers and false teachings.

[27 : 02] We know from verse 1 of Jude that we are called, beloved, and kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ. We are told in the book of Jude in advance that false teachers are coming.

We are able to prepare beforehand. We are able to pray to our Father in the Spirit and He will answer our prayers if they are truly in the Spirit.

And we have a faith community, the church, to hold us accountable and to point us to the true gospel. So think of the love of God, of the providence of God, that He has orchestrated all these things to be for our good, for our salvation and well-being and protection, yet still chiefly for His glory.

So do your work. Keep yourselves in the love of God, yet rest knowing that ultimately He is keeping you too. And finally, we are to orient our entire lives toward the end of days.

So this is application number five. Orient your whole life toward the end of days. So looking at verse 21 on, Jude writes, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

[28 : 22] And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. So in the last bit of our text this morning, there is one commandment after another.

We are to have mercy on those who doubt, we are to save others from the fire, and we are to show mercy with fear. But each of these commandments that Jude gives falls under the waiting in verse 21.

We are to wait for Christ's return at the end of days. The day when He will come with His host of angels to judge the wicked that Jude described in verses 14 through 15, but also the day when He will rule His elect righteously for all eternity.

So in anticipation of that day, the end of history, Jude is telling us that we are to do with false teachers and those who are to do with false teachers and those who are deceived by false teaching.

Here it is, Jude says, have mercy on those who doubt. So who are the doubters? I don't think he's thinking of skeptics or atheists or something like that, although I do think this principle applies in that case.

[29 : 44] But I think Jude has in mind those who are not sure what to believe, those who are caught up between the apostolic faith once for all delivered to the saints or the false gospel spread by the false teachers.

These are people who just aren't sure. Who's right? Who do I trust? What is true? In other words, these doubters are those who are being swept away by false teaching.

They haven't committed, but they're open. They're thinking about it. Right? And for the one who is confused about what is true and what is false, our desire should be mercy.

And I don't think it is a stretch to say that Jude has in mind the patient work of discipleship, or even evangelism if necessary. So think of Jesus when doubting Thomas was unconvinced that Jesus had truly been resurrected.

Mind you, it's an ancient heresy to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so here Thomas is doubting. He's playing with fire. He's being pulled into this heretical idea of denying the resurrection.

[30 : 53] He's doubting. And yet in John chapter 20 verses 26 through 29 Jesus comes to the disciples and his very first words to all of them, including Thomas, are this.

He says, Peace be with you. Then Jesus said to Thomas, Put your finger here. He's referring to where his hands had been pierced. He says, Put your finger here and put your hand and place it on my side where he was stabbed by a spear.

So Jesus says, Place your hands in these places. See that I truly am the one who was pierced, the one who was crucified. And Jesus goes on to say to Thomas, Do not disbelieve, but believe.

And Thomas answered him, My Lord and God. I see how gently and yet firmly Jesus showed Thomas the error of his doubt.

Let us be likewise to those who doubt today. And likewise, there are those who are so convinced by false teaching that they are practically on fire, meaning they are heading for hell if they do not repent and believe in the true gospel.

[32 : 06] Yet the grace and love of God demands that we work to save them by snatching them, as Jude says, from the fire. So this is much more forceful language.

Jude is saying we are to aggressively plead and argue with this person concerning the error of their way. God think of how Christ sternly and bluntly called out the Pharisees and Sadducees throughout the gospels.

These were false teachers convinced by their false teaching. So Jesus dealt with them in a very bold and serious manner. And again, I pray that we would do likewise when the occasion calls for it. That we would be so bold and so loving to call out such people to their face for their salvation. To give them that opportunity again to repent and believe.

And Jude tells us lastly that to others we show mercy with fear. So who is this last group? And the description at the end of verse 23 is key.

[33 : 10] And I will warn you that this is gross imagery that Jude gives us. The imagery is that of one who's undergarments. In your ESV it says garments but the Greek word really means undergarments or their underwear to be clear.

And he says it is stained by all manner of bodily produce. And specifically given the Greek underlying this text as well as the context of the letter as a whole I think Jude is depicting an adulterer whose undergarments are stained significantly.

In other words Jude is addressing the actual false teachers who practice licentiousness. He's talking about the very people who quote verse 4 pervert the grace of our God into sensuality. Well you say well that's disgusting to which Jude would reply that's the point. He's talking about the very people who are just like the grumblers in the Exodus just like the rebellious angels just like Sodom and Gomorrah these people who are also just like Cain and Balaam and Korah these ungodly perverted adulterous false teachers are whom Jude has in mind and it may surprise you given the language we have read thus far about judgment and hell but what exactly does Jude tell us to do with such people how do we contend for the faith with these people and Jude's answer in verse 23 we show mercy with fear I've said it throughout these last few weeks and I'll say it again these false teachers are not beyond the power of the gospel God has and can and still does save such people praise the Lord and we should not give up on them or turn our backs to them rather we show mercy to them by correcting their way by calling them to repentance and faith by pleading with them to turn to the true gospel to turn to Christ and we need to do so with fear

I think Jude intends by this that we must be very wise and discerning with how we approach such people you read the New Testament carefully or the Old Testament warning after warning is given to those who spend too much time with false teachers and yet we see Jesus sit and dine with Pharisees and yet we see Jesus come to false teachers and engage them and we don't have time to go into that in depth but just know that we need to be careful with how and when we interact with such people but don't miss that we do interact we do reach out we do still preach the gospel to such people and we do so with fear because if we are not careful knowing that these people teach false ideas that sound biblical knowing that these people then use those ideas to justify sin something that our flesh innately desires we have to be careful because who knows what temptations or what doubts will come our way if we interact with these people carelessly so the end is coming the time is ticking away and Christ will judge justly all who do not repent and believe in him and we're going to be assaulted by all kinds of false teachers in our life we already have been

[36 : 40] I know for many of us we've encountered this for many of us we once believed these things and so we need to wait and be merciful we need to orient our lives right now with this end in mind knowing that God will judge the wicked so we need to be wise and intentional with showing mercy to all so that they might come to know Christ and be saved so to that end let's pray