

Warning

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[0 : 0 0] Be seated. It's appropriate that the prop is still there this morning because this sermon is a word of warning to us. The passage, as you just heard, is quite a heavy passage.

And I always numbered Jude as one of my favourite books in the Bible, but I think it was just because it was a short book with a great ending. And I found over the last few weeks studying this that there's actually a lot more here than I first expected and quite a hard word for us, especially here this morning in this text.

Next week we're going to go on to encouragement and perseverance and heaven. This week we're stuck in warning and false teachers and judgment. So bear with me. I think I should pray for us to begin.

Father, we do need your help here this morning. There's many references here in this passage that are hard to understand.

So I pray that your Holy Spirit would come and would illuminate our minds to know what this passage is about. I pray that you would give us good encouragement in the midst of warning and judgment to hold fast to the gospel.

[1 : 1 1] I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I'd love you to have your Bibles open, please. We're going to walk through this just passage by passage, verse by verse, see what God has for us.

So let's dive straight in first. Verse of this book, verse 1 and 2. He says, Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James, to those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ.

May mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance. Just by way of introduction, a little bit of historical background. First of all, the two big themes of this book are the two big themes that we're going to look at over the next two weeks.

The first being that Jude wants us to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. That's verse 3. That's going to be our key verse this morning.

He wants us to contend, to fight for the gospel, to hold on to what we believe in the midst of false teaching and contrary teachings. And second of all, he wants us to persevere in faith.

[2 : 1 7] That if we persevere day by day in our faith, God promises to keep us safe onto the shores of heaven. We're going to see that next week in a sermon called Encouragement. But first of all, this morning we're going to look at this issue of false teaching and the warning from Jude for us to stay strong in the midst of it.

Jude himself was actually the brother of Jesus. His name, in fact, would have been Judas, but that name kind of went out of fashion after Easter, if you know what I mean. So in the Greek, it's Judas.

It's called Jude for good reason. But he was the brother of Jesus. We see that in Matthew and Mark and I think 2 Corinthians as well. He refers to himself here as the brother of James, who identifies himself as the brother of Jesus.

But I think we see in this introduction of great humility in Jude, that he is the servant of Jesus Christ, even though he was his earthly brother, and that he was the brother of the more famous James, who is the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

So he's happy to be known as the servant of Jesus and as of the brother of James. So he's a humble guy by all accounts, but he does have a pretty strong word here this morning.

[3 : 26] And he concludes his introduction quite beautifully. He says, may mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance. It's a beautiful introduction. But you kind of get the feeling as you read on that he's setting us up for some hard teaching.

As a pastor, I've experienced this a lot. I'm sure you have in your life that when someone wants to give you a rebuke, they generally start off by saying something like, great guy, love the work you're doing, and then you know that the but is coming.

Or you might have heard someone gossiping say, I love the guy to death, but I hate his guts or whatever. So I feel like that's the way it's going to go. Jude has introduced himself.

He obviously cares for these people and loves them, but he's got a strong word for them. If you look in verse 1, I just want to highlight with reference to next week the sequence there of salvation that he gives us.

He says, to those who are called, who are beloved and kept safe. So that's the sequence of our salvation that we have, that for us to be saved, if you're a Christian here this morning, it's a result of God calling you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[4 : 37] That Jesus is the great shepherd who calls his sheep by name. And in order for you to respond to God, to follow God, you must first be called by God. So that's why he refers to these Christians as being called.

Then he says, you are beloved in God the Father. That is that God shows a particular special love for those people whom he calls. In the Bible, this is also known as foreknown.

We are foreknown. Known there mean love. So we are foreloved by God, called out by God and loved by God in a particular way that should encourage us. And he also says that Christians are kept safe for Jesus Christ.

We'll particularly look at this next week with this issue of perseverance. That God promises that those who contend for the faith, those who hold fast to the faith that was entrusted to them, God perseveres them in their faith onto the shores of heaven.

So that's what we're looking at next week. In the meantime, why don't we take a look at verse 3 and see the nature of this letter that Jude has written. He says, I want to go back to this verse as the main point of application right at the end of the sermon.

[5 : 58] That we should contend for the gospel. But just so we know the setting into which he's written this letter, what he actually wanted to write was a completely different letter, which he never got to write apparently.

And that letter was going to be about the general kind of common faith that we share, the fact that Jesus is the king, that Jesus died for our sins, a kind of theological letter that he wanted to write to these people.

But he didn't write that because he felt the more urgent thing was to write to them, encouraging them to contend for the faith. So I feel like I have this experience quite a bit as a pastor, that if it was up to me, my natural inclination would be to hang out with you guys and particularly the young people that I oversee and talk about the great Christian truths and talk about theology and what Jesus has done for us.

And we do that. But I find more often than not, I have to, rather than that, rebuke, warn, guide, encourage away from folly, that kind of thing.

And it's the less kind of, it's the less nice task to do. It's the less, it's not my natural inclination to want to do that. But because the days are evil, just as they were in this day, pastors need to shepherd their people with hard words of truth.

[7 : 17] So I know where Jude is coming from in this situation. He wanted to talk to them about theology. Instead, he's got to warn them about false teaching. Why does he have to do that?

Let's take a look at verse 4. He says, For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who long ago were designated for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

These are false teachers. They're wolves. Jesus spoke about wolves who come in amongst the flock in order to kill the sheep. They're false teachers who are sent into the church by Satan to mislead people, to encourage people to walk away from faith.

That's who these men are. And if they came into the church with banging a drum, saying that Jesus really wasn't the Son of God and that we should instead worship, you know, the trees or something like that, they'd be kicked out instantly, wouldn't they?

But the good false teachers, I mean not the good ones, the effective false teachers are devious and deceptive and so they've come in stolen in among you. They've come in and pretended to be Christians.

[8 : 30] They look like the other Christians. They hang out and have a cup of tea after the service. They get involved in ministry. This is who the false teachers are. And we're warned in the Bible that these teachers will continue to be among the church for as long as there is a church.

We shouldn't be deceived about this. There are false teachers everywhere. And the reason you don't see false teachers in this church is either because they're really well hidden or more likely because you've had pastors over many years who have been very vigilant in protecting the flock, very vigilant in watching out for wolves.

We should thank God for that. And we should not be deceived. False teachers are at large today. While they might go unnoticed by us, God is not surprised that they are there.

You see that they were designated for this condemnation as ungodly. God knows exactly who they are. He sees them. He sees past the sheep fleece that's covering the wolf. He knows who they are.

And he has lined up condemnation and judgment for them as we're going to see at length in just a minute. What do they do? What are the hallmarks of these false teachers? Two things. They pervert, this is at the end of verse 4, they pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness.

[9 : 50] This is what they say. Isn't Jesus a great God? We all worship Jesus here. We're all Christians. Jesus is great. He died on the cross for our sins. Therefore, why don't we just get busy sinning and we're going to be forgiven anyway, so let's do it.

Have you heard that before? Have you been tempted to think that way before? I have. In that moment of temptation, Satan whispers into you, well, you're saved.

Jesus has died for your sin. Past, present, future. Just indulge yourself. You're going to be forgiven anyway. That's what these guys were doing.

And our faith is open to that kind of abuse, isn't it? Because the grace of God is great. The grace of God does cover sins, past, present, future. But Paul says, Romans chapter 6, you'll know this.

He's been accused of saying what these guys are saying. Indulge the flesh because you're forgiven anyway. But he says, what then are we to say? Romans 6, 1. Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?

[11 : 00] By no means. By no means. He goes on to describe that that is not evidence of faith. If you are living that way, you're showing yourself not to be saved in the first place.

By no means is our polite English translation for something a lot more strong. By no means. So that's the first thing they do. They indulge their flesh.

They are involved in all kinds of sexual immorality because, well, Jesus will forgive us anyway. And secondly, they deny the very Jesus whose grace they appeal to.

They deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Jude's very, very convinced. Do you remember, just as an aside, I just thought of this. Remember in the Gospels when Jesus' brothers and mother comes to him and says, Jesus, you need to come home.

We're going to put you in a home. You've obviously lost your marbles, the teaching that you're coming up with. I assume Jude was one of those brothers who thought Jesus had lost it. And yet now, post-resurrection, listen to what he thinks about Jesus.

[12 : 06] Jesus is his Master and Lord and Christ, which means King. Jesus is his Master, Lord and King. What a turnaround.

Unequivocally saying that Jesus is God, that Jesus is Saviour, that Jesus is Master over the Church. And yet these false teachers deny him.

And this is what all false teachers do in the end. Let me give you an example of a false teacher today who I think has the biggest church in the world. Oprah Winfrey. Right?

A church of millions of deceived housewives and lazy stay-at-home dads, pretty much. A few university students thrown in. Because she denies that Jesus is Master and Lord and Christ.

She does, unequivocally. That's a false teacher. That's the kind of person you need to contend against, fight against for the faith. And these false teachers are everywhere.

[13 : 10] They're not just on TV shows. They're leading churches. They're leading some very big churches as well. So let's move on. We need to keep moving. Verse 5 to 7. Jude reminds the people that God is a judging God.

They need to be reminded, perhaps you do this morning, need to be reminded that God, though he is a God of love, because he is a God of love, is also a God of judgment. Let's read.

Verse 5. Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

I think we've got the wrong translation there. In the earliest, most common manuscripts, it says that not the Lord, but that Jesus was the one who saved the people out of Egypt in the Exodus.

That Jesus was the one who judged the people who did not believe. That the eternal Son of God was the one executing that judgment. And it looks forward to the judgment day that we're going to hear about in a minute, where Jesus will come and sit on a throne and judge those who don't believe in him.

[14 : 16] That's the Jesus who we worship this morning. Meekness and majesty. Loving and judging. Verse 6. Let's keep moving. And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains, in deepest darkness, for the judgment of the great day.

Probably refers here to when Satan led a rebellion against God and took angels with him in rebellion against God. Jude here says that since that day, those angels, those demons, have been kept in eternal chains.

And if you read the book of Revelation, you'll see that those demons, along with Satan, get thrown into a fiery lake in judgment for what they did. That's the kind of judging God we worship.

Again, verse 7. He looks back to the Old Testament. Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which in the same manner as they, that is the same manner as these false teachers, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust.

They serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. There's a great historian back in the first century named Philo, and he wrote that the site of Sodom and Gomorrah in the first century was still smoking.

[15 : 40] And he said that it served as a reminder and a foreshadow to these people of this time, including Jude, of God's eternal judgment.

That just as the Sodomites and those people of Gomorrah were judged for their sexual iniquity, for their sexual immorality, so all people will be judged who continue in that kind of sin apart from faith.

So, Jude says unequivocally, God is a God of judgment. Therefore, be warned. Be warned, false teachers. Be warned, people of the church who attempted to follow them. God will judge.

He moves back to the false teachers to speak some more about them. Let's go to verse 8. Yet in the same way, these dreamers also defile the flesh, reject authority, and slander the glorious ones.

So, they rely on dreams rather than scripture to tell them what to do. You see this a lot in churches today, people who have rejected the scriptures as the faith, the content of the gospel that was once for all delivered to us, the unchangeable word of God.

[16 : 54] They reject that and embrace rather subjective experience, dreams. It's not that God can't speak to us through dreams. He can and does. It's not that God can't speak to us through words from other people, but His fundamental means of communicating to us is through the word of God.

These guys have rejected that and they are instead listening to their dreams. They also defile the flesh as we've seen, sexual immorality, greed, licentiousness.

They reject authority. This is pastors. This is the Bible. This is Jesus Himself. They reject all of that and they slander the glorious ones. This is a difficult passage there.

It's also mentioned in 2 Peter, probably talking about demons. They slander demons and this is how they do it. They commit all this sin, sexual immorality and such and at the same time they slander demons saying, well, we can do this and that because there's no such thing as demons.

There's no such thing as the devil. Well, that's an outdated myth. We don't need to worry about them. They won't have any influence on our life. We hear that again today, obviously. Verse 9, But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, the Lord rebuke you.

[18 : 17] I'm not sure where this comes from. It's not in the Old Testament. It's probably a story from an extra-biblical source that's been lost in history. He's not appealing to it as scripture.

He's just making a point really. But the point is that even when the archangel Michael wrestled with the devil, disputed with the devil about the body of Moses, even Michael the archangel didn't slander him.

Instead, he rebuked him in the name of Jesus. The Lord rebuke you. Let's move on. Verse 10, it keeps going.

But these people, these teachers, slander whatever they do not understand. Isn't that timely? And they are destroyed by those things that, like irrational animals, they know by instinct.

They slander what they don't understand. We see this every day in the media today. I used to get the age on subscription. I don't get it anymore. I just got fed up. With the slander of Jesus and the church.

[19 : 18] I don't mind if you read the age, it's fine. But in the popular media, popular culture, I'm thinking about nighttime television shows as well, there's constant slander of Jesus with very little understanding.

The scholarship is normally very bad. The understanding of basic Christian truths is often non-existent. And like these people, they slander what they do not understand.

In addition, they are destroyed by those things that, like irrational animals, they know by instinct. This is what they do. They lust after that woman or that man and they follow that lust.

They're greedy for more than they need to eat so they indulge that greed. They're like irrational animals. My dog eats when he's hungry. My dog sleeps when he's sleepy.

He has no self-control. He does things by instinct. These men are like irrational animals. They follow their instincts blindly. And this is our generation as well, isn't it?

[20 : 20] If it feels good, do it. Twice. Or three times. Or as much as you like. We're just living out our natural instincts. This is the way we were created to be. That's the catch cry of our generation.

Let's go to 11. He says, Because of all of that, woe to them. Woe to them. For they go the way of Cain and abandon themselves to Balaam's error for the sake of gain and perish in Korah's rebellion.

It cites three examples from the Old Testament of people who were not satisfied with the position that they held and so they rebelled against God and took whatever they could for themselves at any cost out of greed.

That's what these men do as well. Not satisfied with the grace of God. Not satisfied with their position in the church. They take whatever they want. Greedily seeking their own selfish gain at any cost.

Verse 12, he said, These are blemishes on your love feasts while they feast with you without fear feeding themselves. This morning we shared in a love feast at 8 o'clock, the Lord's Supper.

[21 : 36] This would be one of the feasts that they shared in remembering the body and the blood of Jesus in communion. And these men come in and pretend to be Christians and they take the Lord's Supper without fear.

Paul spoke about these men in 1 Corinthians, didn't he? He said that they would be condemned because they ate unworthily. When you come here for the Lord's Supper, we will say beforehand as a warning, do not come without examining yourselves first.

Make sure that you have confessed your sins, repented of that, that you are in good standing with your neighbour and with God. You need to examine yourself before you come to the Lord's Supper and yet these men feast without fear, feeding themselves.

Paul speaks about these men as well, feeding themselves, getting drunk, eating more than their fill, neglecting others at the Lord's table. And he says their judgment is deserved.

And then he opens up what's an incredible passage with incredible descriptive imagery of who these men are and what they do.

[22 : 48] It's a beautiful picture really of a pretty dark situation. Let's read it together from the second half of 12. He said, These teachers, let him paint a picture in your mind, they are waterless clouds carried along by the winds.

They are autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, uprooted. They are wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame.

They are wandering stars for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved forever. It's amazing imagery, isn't it? So what does it mean?

Waterless clouds, that's where he goes first. I think this means that they promise much but they never deliver. You ever experience that in this drought?

You see rain clouds coming and you think, great, the garden is going to get a water and then they disappear and we never get a single drop. It's like these guys. They promise so much and they never deliver.

[23 : 47] Also, they are carried along by the winds. They are carried along by every new kind of teaching. You will see this today with false teachers. Whatever is new, whatever is on the New York Times bestseller list, that's what they are on, that's what they believe in.

They will go from religion to religion. They are carried along by winds. They are also trees without fruit. They have got fruitless ministry. They might have the biggest church in the world but very few people in their church are Christians.

Very few of them persevere in faith to the end. Very few of them know who it is that they worship. There is no fruit for all the ministry that they are doing, for all the teaching, the false teaching that they proclaim.

They are also wild waves casting up the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame. This is how they behave, particularly sexually. Wild waves, they do whatever they please.

Whatever is the most degenerative sin against God, they will be in that. Sexual immorality or porneia in the Greek is like a, you know your third drawer, how it is just full of junk.

[24 : 52] You put everything in there, that is like that term. God made that term so that everything we could come up with, possibly that is sexually immoral, goes in that drawer.

And so that's what they do. They indulge themselves in all kinds of sexual sin. And the result is that that foam that it produces, that the stuff that happens in the wake of that sexual immorality condemns them, comes up and shows their shame, shows their spiritual darkness.

They're also wandering stars. They give misleading advice to travellers. You know all of us are like the pilgrim, in Pilgrim's Progress. We're on our way to the celestial city.

We're trying to take the narrow path and as we navigate, we're supposed to navigate by these stars, these teachers who are supposed to encourage us on our way, to take the right way, to take the true way.

And yet these stars are like wandering stars, these teachers mislead people, they misdirect them, they send them down the wrong path that leads to the city of destruction.

[26 : 05] So he's saying don't listen to them, they'll mislead you, they'll misguide you. It goes on, verse 16, they are grumblers and malcontents. These people are in every church, grumbling all the time, doesn't matter what kind of service you have, doesn't matter who the teacher is, doesn't matter who the pastor is, doesn't matter what building you have, they're grumbling all the time.

Malcontents. They indulge their own lusts, we've seen that mainly sexually, in all kinds of ways. They are bombastic in speech.

I love that word, bombastic in speech. They're loud mouth boasters. I should be the pastor of this church. That guy doesn't know what he's doing. Spreading gossip about the leadership.

Always talking about how they would do a better job. Loud mouth boosters and they flatter people to their own advantage. The job of a teacher, the job of a pastor is not to flatter anyone, it's to love people.

And in order to love them, you need to tell them hard things. You need to call them out on hard grounds. And these people, rather than doing that, flatter people to gather a crowd, to gather a church.

[27 : 22] So then, that's the false teachers. What have we learned about them? First of all, I want to say that this isn't just contained in this time in history, about 60 AD.

This is today. This is our experience today, that there are false teachers everywhere, that they're a reality, that they're hard to spot, they're deceptive, deceitful, wolves in sheep's clothing, they're that kind of people, they're heretics, they're sinners, they're libertines.

We've also seen not only are false teachers a reality, but God's judgment is a reality. Being reminded that we shouldn't be fooled, God has judged in the past, God will judge in the future, come judgment day.

It's very popular today to say that God was a God of judgment in the Old Testament, they were kind of like his rebellious teenage years, but then he grew up in the New Testament and now he's much more mellow and much more forgiving.

That's not who we worship, God is the same God for all time, he's both exceedingly loving and patient, he's also going to judge and has judged in the past, so we need to take that as a warning.

[28 : 33] God will judge on judgment day, he will judge false teachers and condemn them, he will judge those who follow them and disown their Lord Jesus Christ.

So don't do that, don't follow them, hit mute when Oprah comes on, I don't know. Make sure you're tuning in to the teaching, downloading the sermons, reading the Bible, this is the way that we protect ourselves.

So main point of application, I'm going to end on this, I know this has been a heavy passage, heavy sermon, but the application for us this morning is back at verse 3. I think this is the verse that flies over the whole book, that we should, as Jude says, in response to these men, response to false ideas about God, we should contend.

What does that mean? We should fight, fight like a soldier, fight for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Once for all entrusted.

So the faith that Jesus passed on to the apostles, that they passed on to the church, this was once for all entrusted to us. It doesn't change. We don't follow every kind of new gospel slant, every kind of new religion.

[29 : 49] This is the faith that was once for all entrusted. And related to that, the gospel talks about Jesus' redemption of us, Jesus' act of sacrifice that was once for all earned by him.

When we come to the Lord's Supper, we're not sacrificing Jesus again. We're not. Jesus died once for all. Every time you repent and ask for forgiveness, Jesus doesn't have to die again.

He did it once for all. Okay? So the faith was handed to us once for all. It doesn't change. Our salvation was earned once for all and it's entrusted to us, to the saints.

That's us, Christians, saints. We need to hold on to it and we need to fight for it. Now what is it? It's the gospel. It's the good news.

Do you know the good news? I've got two people nodding. Two people know the good news here this morning. That's a wonderful thing. The good news, the gospel of Jesus, that there is one God, not many gods, there is one God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the Trinity, who's been in existence for all time.

[31 : 05] That one God created everything that there is and he created us to be stewards of this earth. He created us in his image and likeness.

He gave us dignity and value and worth and he gave us dominion over this earth to rule it under him. But rather than do that, rather than obey him and enjoy fellowship with him, we rejected him, didn't we?

We rebelled against him. We declared autonomy. We shook our fist in his face and said, we don't want anything to do with you. We'll be our own gods, thank you very much.

The penalty for that is what? Say it. Death. The penalty is death. Physical death but also spiritual death for the death.

For eternity, being judged by God. He's not going to let us get away with that kind of autonomy, that kind of sin. He's not. He'll judge us for our unbelief, for our lack of trust, for our rebellion.

[32 : 13] But he'll also do something magnificent. He'll send his one and only son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It's called the incarnation, that God came into the world, took on flesh as Jesus Christ, that he lived a perfect life, a life that we could never live, that he died the death that we should have died on the cross, in our place, as our substitute.

The Bible says that he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that while we were enemies of God, Christ died for us. And in dying on the cross, he took the punishment for all who had turned to him.

Three days later, he rose again from the dead. Death couldn't hold him down. God vindicated him as his glorious son by raising him from the dead. And now he's seated at the right hand of God in power and he's going to come to judge the living and the dead.

We say it every week, don't we? Do you believe it? That's the gospel. And God tells us that great news, the gospel, so that we will respond to him, so that we'll put our trust in him.

And once we do that, he wants us to persevere in that faith. This is what we're going to talk about next week. And part of persevering is fighting every day, training like a boxer every day to contend for the faith.

[33 : 45] Don't let go of it. It's been entrusted to you. It's a deposit. Keep it in here. Don't let it waver. Don't listen to false teaching. Don't walk away from the Lord.

Stay true. It's the good news. We should be beaming when we hear that news. Jesus died for us. Are you hearing me? Jesus died for us to bring us to God.

If you don't know him this morning, there's no reason why you should leave without knowing him. If you're not going to heaven this morning, there's no reason why you shouldn't be by the end of the service. Respond to him.

Accept him. And he says, truly, I will never turn away anyone who comes to me. I'll finish on that and pray for us. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the good news for the gospel that you passed on to the apostles who passed on to the church, the saints, that you have entrusted it to us.

Lord, please help us not to abuse it. That you've entrusted it to us. Lord, please help us not to ignore it. Lord, please help us to meditate on the gospel. Preach to ourselves day by day the gospel.

[34 : 56] Tell our friends about the gospel. Lord, we look forward to the day with trembling when you'll come to judge. Lord, please help us to be warned of against walking away from you, walking away from the truth, listening to false teachers.

Please help us to hold fast to the gospel and to fight for it every day until you call us home, till you return to take us there. I pray all these things in the great name of Jesus.

Amen.