
Those Who Persevere in the Faith

Jude 14-25

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The cure of souls, like the practice of medicine, requires a skillful diagnosis of every spiritual disease and the application of sensible treatment. And like our health, the cure of souls also requires inoculation against diseases and healthy preventative practices. Finally, the cure of souls also requires the excising of tumors, diseased organs and gangrenous limbs.

This is what Jude is about. It is about a careful diagnosis of the dangerous disease infecting the church. It is about the beloved of God recognizing its symptoms, dealing with the contagion and going to the Balm of Gilead for the application of the Spirit's healing of our souls.

Jude has called us to contend for the faith. In contending, we will be those who persevere in the faith. The end result? We will praise God with the faith.

So, to the Word...

Its Prophetic Declarations

(v. 14-16)

These polluters and pruners of the faith, these creepers into the church, have a judgment that has long been waiting.

¹⁴ It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." ¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

The Enoch here is the great saint mentioned in Genesis 5:21-24. He is identified as the seventh from Adam to distinguish him from another Enoch in Genesis 4:17. Moses wrote:

¹⁸ When Jared had lived 162 years he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died. ²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch lived in the era alluded to earlier, the time before the great Flood when the angels crossed the boundary, lusting after human women and taking them. Their offspring were terrible giants, violent and vicious. These roamed the earth in the days of Enoch. He was one of the last generations before the Flood.

Jude is clearly and simply saying this prophecy with Enoch. We are not told how he knows this since it is not in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is very similar to another writing that was circulating in Jude's day. The content of the prophecy is actually from Deuteronomy 33:2-4 which is the final blessing of Moses.

² He said, “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand.

³ Yes, he loved his people, all his holy ones were in his hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you, ⁴ when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob.

Clearly God’s judgment upon the wicked is an act of love for his people. This is not so much taught today, but is an important idea in the Bible. God loves His people in such a way that He will judge those who seek to harm them.

Of their Coming Judgment

(v. 14-15)

Enoch’s original prophecy would have been about the wickedness of his own day. But it looked forward to the final judgment awaits the world yet. So, these wicked people who are polluting the faith will be judged. They will be judged when Jesus comes. This judgment is as sure as the Lord’s coming with His holy ones. It will be part of the purpose of His coming – to set everything right. But this judgment is also universal. Four different words and phrases highlight that all will be judged; none will escape. All are under the scrutiny of God’s evaluating gaze.

The great Puritan Thomas Manton wrote of this text that “what is spoken in the word in general doth as much concern us as if it were spoken to our own persons.” If Jude were writing today, he would say much the same thing. What was true Enoch in his day, Moses in his, Jude in his is true in ours as well.

For their Wicked Conduct

(v. 15-16)

They will be judged because of the wicked wickedness of their wickedness. The triple repetition here is to invoke the triplets of sin in the earlier paragraphs. They have compounded their sin by all the harsh things they have said against God. God has taken affront. He is offended. He will deal with them.

Notice again what Jude writes:

¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

In addition to all their previous sins, here are the harsh words spoken against God. Jude evokes the people of Israel in the wilderness. Grumbling. Discontented. Loud mouthed. Braggarts. They are pursuing their own sinful desires. They flatter others in order to get their own way. They use the position they have and power they hold to leverage people and get ahead.

Dick Lucas says, “A flatterer has precisely the same evaluation of our talents and abilities that we have always secretly felt, understands our motivations and puts them into words that we would never dare to utter, and promises a future that is, remarkably, centered around the very achievements we have always fantasized about. That person slips under our guard and manages to mislead in the name of telling the truth. No wonder the Bible has to warn us constantly against those who *flatter*.” [Lucas, p.212].

Understand this. Jude is not talking about politics here. He is not talking about what went on in the pagan temples. This was going on in the church. It is still going on today. Sadly, there are people like this pastoring in the churches today. They are surrounded by people who fawn over them for what they can get from them. They are never content with what they have. They are constantly trying to achieve more, accomplish more, be more recognized. And it seems like they always get away with it. But they won't. The Lord is coming. Judgment day is soon. For the love of His people God will set things right.

Its Present Dangers

(v.17-19)

These people pose a present danger in the church.

¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."

¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

In Biblical Predictions

(v. 17)

We are warned of our present danger in the apostolic predictions. Jude can seamlessly move from quoting the Old Testament to quoting the Apostles. The band of men that Jesus had called and God had sent, empowered by the Spirit, predicted the deadly heresies that infested the church after their departure.

But we must remember what the apostles predicted. How do we do this now? By reading, studying and learning the New Testament. In the New Testament we have what we must learn and remember. We will only be safe from the dangers predicted if we know them and are alerted to them. Our failure to really grasp the Bible has exposed us to the infectious viruses of the error.

Against Ungodly People

(v. 18-19)

We are warned against ungodly people. Here are the characteristics of those we are in danger from and are to be alert to.

These men are scoffers. They are sarcastic in their speech. They ridicule what is to be taken seriously. They are subtly skeptical of the veracity of the Scriptures. So, mark out those who undermine our confidence in the Word of God.

These men are self-indulgent. They are driven by their own ungodly passions. Their ambitions, drives, desires, agendas control them. But even more, as we have seen, they are in the grip of the most vile and degrading passions of the flesh. So, mark out those who are self-indulgent and immoral.

These men are divisive. Error and evil divide. They will be united in their pursuit of destroying the Word of God and the people of God. Truth unites us and holds together. So mark out those who are using error to divide.

These men are worldly. They are shaped by the values of the present world system. In this age, they are shaped by political correctness, feminism, multiculturalism and universalism. They look, walk, talk and blend in well with the world. So, mark out those who seem to fit in well with the world.

These men are devoid of the Spirit. They are not mislead believers. They are not God's people. I can say it no better than this:

By contrast, Jude says that it is these self-proclaimed 'Spirit-led' people who do not have the Spirit, and that their new ideas reflect not openness to the Spirit but openness to their lower desires. It is very easy to claim to be led by the Spirit, and any sensitive Christian will pause when something is taught in the name of the Holy Spirit, and consider whether he might previously have been taught wrongly. But when the Bible is declared outmoded, the resurrection denied, the saving death of Jesus watered down or the biblical guidelines on sex and marriage made amenable to people's greed, and all in the name of 'where the Spirit is leading us', we can be sure that the Spirit is not leading us there at all. [Lucas, p.217].

So, mark out those who claim to be spiritual but have not the Spirit of God.

Its Positive Duties

(v.20-23)

In the face of these grave dangers we have serious personal duties. Jude has written appealing to us to contend for the faith. So far, this effort has been to recognize and adequately respond to those who would pollute or prune the faith. He now turns to the positive industry we are to expend in contending for the faith. This is how we will persevere in the faith.

In Relation to Ourselves

(v.20-21)

First, we have responsibilities in relation to ourselves.

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

We are to be edifying ourselves. This word comes from the building trades. This is a vivid image in a day and place where everything was built by masons who laid block or brick or stone. Block by block, stone by stone, the skilled mason takes from the pile he has and builds up a home. He understands how the foundation is laid. He carefully lays each block and locks it in both to the course below it and to the stones beside it.

We are to keep on building up ourselves in the faith. Truth by truth we build up on the foundation the edifice of truth in life. Thus the believers contend for the faith by learning it widely and well and living it in holiness and wisdom. We are being transformed and strengthened by developing a deeper knowledge of and belief in the truth. This is both individual and corporate. We should not think of this as a bit here for me and bit there for all. It is the ongoing dynamic of each believer learning and living the Bible together in community with every other believer. So, it is not just pastor/elders or teachers who engage the Scriptures and express their growing understanding of the faith, of truth in life. They lead the way while the whole church is growing in their understanding of the faith.

This is done alongside of praying in the Holy Spirit. Notice how the Christian contending for the faith is different from the creeper polluting the faith. The contending Christ is focused on the Word and thus is communing with God in the Spirit. Here is another of the many examples of Word and Spirit being inseparably connected. We contend in the Word and Spirit. We commune with God in the truths He gives us. Communing with God is not some mystical experience separate from the Word of God and words in our heart/mind.

A great many people are deeply misled in this area. They are exposed to soul destroying dangers because of their attempts to separate the Word from the Spirit. Many of our theological friends try to have the Word with little thought to the Spirit. With terrible effect on people and the church as a whole, having the Spirit with little thought to the Word dominates the so-called Christian experience. Jude would say of today that these so-called Spirit-filled but Word-empty people are in fact devoid of the Spirit because they are deprived of the Word. Part of contending for the faith is having the spiritual conviction this is so and the spiritual courage to say so.

But do not hear me to be coming to this text and reading Jude as arguing for Charismatic expressions in prayer. This would be wildly off target and unrecognizable by the apostle. He is envisioning a people deeply committed to the Word and true spiritual maturity in Christ and communing with God in the Spirit. Because the Word forms and fills our hearts and lives, then it forms and fills our prayer. So praying is not a sub-mind or supra-mystical experience – it is a Word filled expression in prayer.

It is also a Spirit dependent praying. Without taking the time to develop it here, praying in the Spirit in other New Testament writings conveys a sense of the necessity of the Spirit to translate our feeble, earth oriented requests in powerful heaven focused petitions. We understand that as we pray, even formed and filled by the Word, we are expecting the Holy Spirit (may I say, oh so hoping and wanting and loving that He does) to deliver our prayers helped by His knowing the mind of God.

So the Christian contending for the faith is one who maturing in the Word and praying in the Spirit. It is the only way.

The structure of this sentence underscores the imperative.

Building yourselves up in faith
praying in the Holy Spirit
keep yourself in God's love
waiting for God's mercy leading to eternal life.

We are to be enduring until Jesus comes. We have a responsibility to ensure that we are living in the realm or sphere of God's love. One writer put it this way, "Amid the uncertainties, difficulties, and temptations that surround the believers, Jude admonishes them to keep themselves within the circle of God's love and literally to stay in that sphere. Christians are recipients of this love when they strive to do God's will by loving him with heart, soul, and mind and by loving their neighbor as themselves."¹³ The right response to God's love for us is loving obe-

dience to Him. Surely this is what is meant by keeping ourselves in the sphere of God's love. We were comforted by the opening assurance of being the beloved of God. Now we are challenged to live as the beloved of God.

What if we don't do this? We can know what happens to those who do not keep themselves in God's love by remembering what happened to the Israelites in the desert, the angels who left their ordained habitation, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam and Korah. The present counterparts of those people and places are all around us. They are those who behave in the same way and thus mock God and pollute the faith.

Do you seek to keep yourself in God's love by seeking to lovingly obey God? Do you intentionally seek to endure trial and trouble with God's love for you in view? Doesn't this have the feel of the end of Romans 8? Do not allow yourself to be separated from the love of God because you cannot be separated from the love of God.

We are to be expecting the Lord's return. This is not a passive waiting. It is an active waiting. It is not sleeping in the lobby. It is bringing a book to read, a project to do, needlepoint. We are waiting in motion. The Bible calls this kind of waiting, hope.

And we are waiting for mercy. We are waiting for the final delivery of what God has promised. When He comes, in the midst of awful judgment on the wicked, there is sweet mercy to the believer. While the wicked go off into eternal damnation and death¹⁴, the believer enters life eternal.

Christians then contend for the faith in the Trinity. You obediently keep yourself in God's love; you pray in the Holy Spirit; you patiently wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the while you keep on building yourselves up in the Word of God.

In Relation to Others

(v.22-23)

Second, we have responsibilities in relation to others. This is the shape of the Christian mission in contending for the faith.

²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Once again, we have one of Jude's triplets. As the others, the center is the highlighted one. An attempt to find a forward moving progression will mislead us. We encounter in contending for the faith, three kinds of responses to the faith. The middle response is the one that concerns Jude the most in the rest of this epistle.

So, while contending for the faith:

To the doubters, have mercy. Many believers struggle at times with questions and doubts. Even at the giving of the great commission, some of the disciples doubted and hesitated. Even as we are committed to believing the Word, we must help those who are thinking hard and wondering aloud. Be kind, gentle and merciful with spiritual strugglers.

To the apostates, rescue them. Move towards those whose belief and life is headed towards apostasy in view of the judgment that is coming. Most of this book has been doing what is called for here. The allusion here is to Amos 4:11-12.

¹¹ "I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD. ¹² "Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

Lucas comments, "He is saying that it is still possible for people in peril to escape God's judgment and to be snatched from the fire. God has proved it twice already. We need this reassurance because, as we talk to friends in this position, we will find that they may very well be behaving in ways with which they feel quite comfortable. They have grown up with the idea that God's wrath is an antiquated notion in which it is impossible for today's Christian to believe. As we pray for and talk to our friends who think like that, we must keep before ourselves the fact that, without being offensive or insensitive, we are instructed by Jude to *save* them; the *fire* is near and coming closer, and we must watch that we are not sucked into its path as well." [Lucas, p227-228]. Use gospel tongs to rescue them from the fires of hell.

To the repentant, be welcoming and cautious. Show God's kind of mercy to those who have turned away from their sin. And be very careful that you do not go down the same paths of sin. Recognize that no one is beyond God's forgiveness. Here, the allusion is Zechariah 3:

² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." ⁵ And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

⁶ And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, ⁷ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. ⁸ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. ⁹ For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. ¹⁰ In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."

While hating sin, have mercy on the repentant.

Are you contending for the faith? Are you working to grow along with all your brothers and sisters? Are you contending for the faith? Are you working to rescue those who have been affected by the polluters of the faith and are in danger of apostasy?

Its Pleasing Doxology

(v.24-25)

From all this sharp edged danger and doom, Jude moves happily to praise.

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

Those who contend for the faith and those who persevere in the faith, praise God:

For What He Does

All praise to God that He is able. When we arrive safely at home, it will be because of God.

He will keep us from apostasy. He will keep us from falling from believing. We do not fall because God keeps us from falling. He keeps us believing by reading, understanding and living books like Jude. God's ability to keep us from falling flows through His Word. The wire of Scripture carries the power of grace. One of the strands of that wire are exhortations not to stop believing and warnings about what will happen if we do.

He will present us blameless. Even in churches filled with blemishes, God will bring us formally and finally into His presence, faultless. What a great hope. We may struggle in the race. But when the finishers are brought before the king and placed on the podium, we will not stand there in exhausted sweat, bending over with our hands on our knees. We will be presented in all the faultless finery of Christ, upright by His grace, clean by His blood, clothed in His righteousness, crowned with His life and awarded for His glory.

What God does for us brings Him joy and spills over and fills our lives then and now with joy. But look at it carefully. The joy here is God's joy. He does what He does with a happy gladness. He brings us safely home. He welcomes us into His court. He is a happy God.

For Who He Is

This able to do it God is the object of our worship and our praise. He is the One we celebrate. To really worship and praise God, we have to be saying what is true of Him. In other words, we worship God with the faith.

HE IS THE ONLY GOD. Let that offend who it may, but it is simply the truth. It is not to be hidden. It is to be proclaimed. It is the content of our praise. All other gods are false gods. All other objects of worship, systems of faith, and communities of belief are all false. We worship and praise the only one true God.

HE IS THE ONLY REDEEMER. No one who is saved from sin, death and hell is saved any other way. Islam will lead you to hell. Hinduism will lead you to hell. Buddhism will lead to you hell. Humanism will lead you to hell. Religion, even a Christianized religion will lead you to hell. Only in God through Christ can you

be saved. You must have faith in His Name, belief in His person, trust in His work and submission to His rule.

HE IS THE ONLY RULER. He is the one and only true Lord. Yes, there are other lords and masters of people's lives. But they are usurpers and their servants are rebels. But we submit to and serve the true King. So we worship the one and only true Lord.

HE HAS DONE IT ALL THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Since all we have and all we are comes through Christ then all our worship is of and through Christ. We will celebrate Jesus as the center of all our doctrine, duty and doxology.

I must pause to say that we decry the tendency in the church today to celebrate the glory and accomplishments of man. We delight in all the movement to re-frame the focus of the church to acclaim the accomplishments of God.

For What He Deserves

This is what He deserves, that is, all glory, majesty, dominion, and authority. Our worship is simply an acknowledgment and an ascription to God of all that He is due. So the words of David at the inauguration of Solomon (1 Chronicles 29) are reflected here.

"Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

One greater than David has come. One greater than Solomon is just over the horizon of time. So, hold fast to the faith. Contend for the faith. Rescue those leaving the faith. Persevere in the faith. Praise God with the faith.

Bless the LORD your God. May all the assembly bless the LORD, the God of our fathers, and bow your heads and pay homage to the LORD and to the king. May we praise the glorious Name of God.

Notes

¹³ Kistemaker, Simon J. and William Hendriksen. Vol. 16, *New Testament Commentary : Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001. P.406.

¹⁴ Death here is the living, eternal, conscious separation from the presence of God. Death is never the cessation of a person's existence; it is separation from life.