

TEMPERING JUDGMENT WITH MERCY Sunday School- May 30, 2010

Unifying Topic: AT RISK IN THE COMMUNITY

Lesson Text

I. Contend For The Faith (Jude 3-7)

II. A Strong Faith (Jude 19-21)

III. A Glorious Doxology (Jude 24-25)

The Main Thought: And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with feat, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. (Jude 22-23, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Some people for whatever reason, cause problems within their communities. What can be done to resolve community problems? Jude reminds readers to contend for the faith entrusted to them, and to hold tight to their belief in Jesus Christ.

Lesson Aim: To teach students how to remain true to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Life aim: To teach how Jude strongly encouraged Christians to fight for their faith, to be strong in their faith, and to know that God, through Christ by the Holy Spirit, will give us the ultimate victory.

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- 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
- 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.
- 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.
- 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

HISTORY:

Jude, the brother of James, and the half-brother of Jesus Christ Himself, is the author of this book. Jude wrote to a specific people in a particular situation. Their identity is nowhere given. Its purpose was to exhort them to earnestly contend for the faith. And then he changes his epistle to combat false teachers and apostasy (turning away). The false teaching was the same false teaching that John, Paul, and Peter had to combat, that of Gnosticism. Jude is "*The last General Epistle*" which motivates Christians everywhere to action. The place from which the book of Jude was written has never been identified with certainty, although Palestine and Egypt have been suggested.

V1 Salutation:

Jude does not call himself as an apostle like Peter or Paul. At first, he did not believe in Jesus Christ. But some time after the resurrection of Christ, he gave his heart to the Lord and surrendered his life to preach the gospel. Right from the start he identifies himself as the **servant** of Jesus Christ and his readers as sanctified by God and preserved in Jesus Christ, and also called. The word "*servant*" (*Gr doulos*) is literally "*slave*" and conveys the picture of a bondsman. A bondsman was one who gave himself up to another's will or one devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interest. As a bondsman, there was no other choice, nor interest, except the interest of the one being served. He prefers that we know him as "*slave*" or property of Christ. This is the proper attitude for those of us who are truly believers in Christ Jesus. Now consider two traits of a minister:

- One basic trait is of being the servant and slave of Jesus Christ. Remember Christ means Messiah, the "*Anointed One*" of God; The Son of God whom God sent into the world to save men. Therefore every true minister of the gospel makes this belief the basis of his life and ministry.

- Secondly, having the trait of humility. One's walk among believers and before God is to be with humility. No matter what you're called to do. One is to be thankful for the very fact that God called him.

Jude also makes it known that he is the **brother** of James (who was well known as one of the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem). Both of these men were Jesus' half-brothers. Apparently this fact carried a lot of weight with the believers of their day. When they spoke, it made the believers stand up and take notice, for they had lived with Jesus and had experienced dramatic conversions from unbelief to staunch belief. The letter is written to the **sanctified** (the set apart ones to God)—**preserved in Jesus Christ** ("*teteremenois*"-means to be kept; to be guarded, and watched after)—and **called** ("*kletois*"-means respond to the call of the gospel; to be holy and pure; to eternal hope; and to serve). Jude gives a picture of just who a believer is. Therefore, his writing was to be circulated among all the churches among all believers. The believer is a person who has received the mercy and peace and the grace of God, "*Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied*"**V2**. Our peace is the result of God's mercy.

- Mercy means feelings of pity, compassion, affection, and kindness.
- Peace means to be bound, joined, and weaved together. The believer and the Father and the Son have an indissoluble union.
- Love means unconditional. The believer also is a recipient of the love of God.

Every believer experiences all of these great blessings at the moment of salvation. And Jude spoke that this be multiplied unto them.

LESSON:

Jude 3-7 Contend For The Faith

V3 Warning

There is a terrible danger facing believers, a horrifying danger that always lies right over the horizon. What is it? The danger of false teaching. If a believer swallows false teaching, he dooms himself. Any person who denies that God sent His Son into the world to save man—who denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world—will never be accepted by God. He is doomed to spend eternity, cut off from God. Why? Because he has not believed in the name of God's Son. Time and time again, God warns believers of apostasy. At the beginning, Jude was going to write to these saints a letter concerning the salvation that was shared by all believers. But he was not able to. The believers were being attacked, but not by persecutors. They were being attacked by false teachers and their false beliefs. He wanted to write a pastoral letter, to encourage them to grow in Christ, but now he must warn them and exhort them:

- They must go to war, to spiritual war.
- They must earnestly contend and fight for the faith.
- They must be diligent and strive unceasingly in the fight against false teaching.
- They must not buckle under any circumstances whatsoever, in standing up for the faith that has been delivered to the saints.

The faith must not be twisted, added to, or taken away from. It must be kept pure and free from all error. However, if the believers chooses not to contend, not to fight, not to stand, but to sit and to compromise and to be conciliatory to those who would destroy them, they are not fighting for the honor of the faith and have lost even the desire and the will to do.

V4 Characteristics Of False Teachers

False teachers have crept into the church unknowingly. Now Jude begins to identify the characteristics of those who brought in false doctrine into the Church with the intent to deceive others, to leave the truth and to follow the lie.

- They entered unnoticed; were not God-called teachers—did not believe in Jesus Christ that He is the Son of God who came to earth to save man. They choose to teach in the church as a profession or as a way to serve and teach people the morals and virtues of this world—for the benefit and opportunities it brings them.
- Their Judgment awaiting them will be far more severe than for other persons. This has been before of old ordained.
- They are ungodly men who walk upon the earth deceptively leading believers away from the love, and purity of God.
- They turned the grace of God into licentiousness. The word "*turning*" (*Gr metatithēmi*) means "*transfer*", but what

these people have done is, they called into play, negative transfer; they have "*misapplied*" the grace of God. Look at the word, "*lasciviousness*", it means filthiness, open and shameless indecency. It is a man who knows no restraint, a man who has sinned so much that he no longer cares what people say or think. False teachers promise liberty but they only enslave people. Sin always enslave and turn you away from the grace of God.

- They deny the only God, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Denies that Jesus is come in the flesh.
 - Denies the incarnation—that God took on human flesh and became a man. Etc.

V5 Israelite Apostasy

Jude now gives three examples of how Deuteronomy 13:1-11 was applied in history and resulted in death and destruction for false prophets. The false prophets and those who believed not were put to death. That great tragedy, you will remember, was called the "*day of bitterness*" or "*day of testing*" in the wilderness before the entrance into the Promised Land. The first example is Egypt. When the Lord brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, He brought them to the land of promise. The greatest responsibility was upon those "*spies*" or scouts who brought the "*evil report*." They not only disbelieved themselves, but they caused the people of God to despair and disbelieve the Promise of God. Many of the people refused to go in and possess the Promise Land, so God spoke to Moses and Aaron. Those who believed not were destroyed (Num.14:32-35). What were the sins of Israel that brought judgment upon them?

- There was the sin of lust.
- There was the sin of idolatry.
- There was the sin of fornication or immorality.
- There was the sin of tempting God.
- There was the sin of murmuring and complaining, and grumbling.

Jude speaks directly concerning these false teachers and to all who follow after them. He is putting them in remembrance as to what happened to those who went another way and refused to believe God.

V6 Angelic Apostasy

The second example was of the angels who left their first estate (their dwelling place). What does this mean? They did not stay in their appointed place. They were once pure and holy and living in God's presence, but gave in to pride and rebelled against God (Gen.6:1-4). What else? They "*left their own habitation*". Meaning, they left their own dwelling place. Where did the angels abide? In Heaven. These angels left Heaven for good. They were not coming back. Where did they go is the question? These angels are now chained in custody in a certain place in which they are reserved to the judgment of the last day, or the day of the Lord. (2Pt.2:4)—all to show that turning away from God is the Judgment and ultimate separation from Him.

V7 Pagan Apostasy

The third example was of the sexual immorality of Sodom and Gomorrha—which was so full of sin that God wiped them off the face of the earth (Gen.19:1-29). It shows a likeness or a common link between the angels of verse 6 and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha in verse 7. The likeness goes beyond the fact of guilt concerning sin, but to the fact that they were guilty of the same sin. The sin of the angels in verse 6 then was fornication. Angels transgressed the limits of their own natures to invade a realm of created beings of a different nature from theirs (Gen.6:1-4), where the sons of God (angels) cohabited with the daughters of men (women) and created a super race of creature that God destroyed in the flood. The reference to the homosexuals in verse 7 also mentions that they went after strange flesh. Meaning, they also transgressed the limits of their nature into that which is against nature. The use of fornication (*Gr ekporneuō*) which occurs only here in the New Testament, with strange flesh refers to the distinctive and terrible sin of Sodom and Gomorrha's homosexuality, for which God destroyed the whole area. The point in this passage is that the people of God were lured away from the true worship of God by the homosexual cities (Gen.18-19) and were therefore destroyed. These false teachers are as good as judged.

If the chosen people, angels, and sinful cities were punished, how much more would these false teachers be severely judged? Many people don't want to believe that God sentences people to hell (eternal damnation) for rejecting Him, but this is clearly taught in scripture. Sinners who don't seek forgiveness from God will face eternal separation from Him. Jude gave the warning to all who rebel against, ignore, or reject God. Therefore it was needful for him to write and exhort the beloved to earnestly (intently) contend (put yourself forward) for the faith which they had

once received.

Jude 19-21 A Strong Faith

Vv.17-19 Strong Advice By The Apostles

Jude has just covered the terrible danger that was facing believers, the horrifying danger of false teachers. And they are within the church. This makes the danger even more terrible, for it means that there are people within the church who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth to save man; and that Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God. What can we do about the false teaching? This is the first exhortation of this passage: Now they are called to remember the words spoken by the apostles. There will be mockers in the last days who walk after their own ungodly lusts (v17-18).

V19 The whole purpose of the letter is to remind them that the Word of God was given once and for all by the apostles.

1. First, the false teachers are agitators (mockers) in Churches. These are those who create factions and divisions. There are three ways they cause division:
 1. The false teaching presents a divided Christianity to the world.
 2. False teachers cause hurt and pain in the hearts of true believers because their Lord and His church are being shamed.
 3. False teachers usually cause feelings of neglect and division when they show partiality and favoritism.
2. Secondly, they are sensual, meaning—subject to appetites and passions of the flesh. They are worldly minded in two senses:
 1. False teachers believe that man is to work his way into God's acceptance—be good and do good.
 2. False teachers believe that man is saved and becomes acceptable to God by keeping the rituals and rules of the church, and by attending services when possible.
3. Thirdly, they are void of the Holy Spirit. No matter what they think or say, the spirit they have is not the Spirit of God. The true Spirit of God confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that the incarnation is true. The Spirit of God cannot confess anything else because the Spirit of God Himself dwells within him. Paul made it clear that if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

This passage teaches that these false teachers are lost because they are separated from God and have not clearly remembered the words of the apostles.

V20-21 Strong Advice By Counsel

The second exhortation is to build up yourselves on your most holy faith. To be "*built up*" means to finish the structure of which the foundation has already been laid, to give constant increase in Christian knowledge and in a life conformed thereto. There are four ways that a believer builds himself up:

1. He builds upon the foundation of holy faith. By *faith* is meant our beliefs, the truths learned from Scripture. *Holy* means separate; set apart; different. It is faith that is not based upon opinion, speculation, and imaginations of men. It is faith that has been separated and set apart from man's ideas about God and life. The point is this: believers are to build up their lives upon their studying the Word of God, meditating on it, learning, memorizing, and living out the Scriptures. What they have learned, they are to continue to build more and more, and apply it to daily life.
2. He builds by praying in the Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit. Prayer is another essential weapon in spiritual life. We must be in continued communication with God as to get orders and directions from Him. To pray in the Spirit means...
 - a. That we pray under His guidance and influence, under His energy and power.
 - b. That we seek and ask His help as we approach the throne of grace.
 - c. That we focus our minds and concentrate upon the Holy Spirit helping us to pray, and depend upon Him to help us.
 - d. That we ask and depend upon the Holy Spirit to cleanse our requests and make sure that what we ask is according to the will of God.
 - e. That we walk in the Spirit day by day and offer unbroken prayer to God all day long.
 - f. That we set time aside every day and wrestle in prayer before God for the needs of loved ones and for the needs of God's people and for the world—all in the Spirit.

These false teachers prayed, but without power nor in communication with God through the Holy Spirit—since they knew Him not. The believer was not only able but is urged to rely on the power of the Spirit of God in every area of life, including prayer.

3. He builds up by keeping himself in the love of God.
4. He builds up by looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, by looking for that glorious day of His return. The day of redemption, the glorious day when God's mercy will be fully known will not take place until the return of Christ. It is at His return that we will be transformed into His image of perfection and glory. Therefore, the way to build ourselves up is to keep our eyes upon the mercy of Jesus Christ and the glorious day of His return.

V21 Jude says keep yourself; stay within the circle of God's love or keep yourself in the place (that walk where God showers His love upon you). To live within the boundaries of God's love means to live close to Him and his people, not listening to false teachers who would pull us away from Him (1Jh.15:9,10).

This Part Is Skipped In Our Lesson But Is Our Main Thought: Tempering Judgment With Mercy

V22 And of some have compassion, making a difference.

- This verse concerns the need to be firmly contending with—dealing with those who dispute and argue against you. They struggle in their hardness and toughness. However, we are to separate them from the snare of the false teachers' doctrine. Now there are those who may be doubters of the truth, but have not shut their minds all the way to truth. These are the exceptional cases of men and women who are caught up in error. And therefore, we need to show pity; mercy when contending with them in the faith.

V23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. *Others need a direct approach—those who are at the very brink of hell (judgment) itself. They need to be snatched. Their sins are so deeply rooted that they needed to be approached with the greatest fear lest we would be defiled with them. The proper attitude of hating their sinfulness is the only attitude that will keep us clean.*

Tempering means to modify by the addition of a moderating element; moderate; to stabilize the process of giving the necessary degree of hardness or softness to a substance. Therefore, we are modifying, altering the degree of judgment with the right degree of mercy by separating the believers from false teachers; by snatching them from the brink of destruction with mercy, compassion, and sympathy; and by keeping our eyes upon the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Jude 24-25 A Glorious Doxology

This is the conclusion of Jude's short letter. Note that this is a benediction upon believers. What is the source of the believer's security? Who is it that keeps the believer secure while he walks upon the earth? It is God—God's keeping power.

1. God is able to keep us from falling
2. God is able to make us blameless when we come face to face with Him.
3. God is able to infuse us with triumphant joy in the glorious day that we meet Him face to face.
4. God is the only wise God and He is our Savior.
5. God alone is the God who dwells in glory and majesty, dominion and power.

In closing Jude gives one of the most balanced and beautiful benedictions in the New Testament. It is a prayer fitting for his readers who are threatened both with falling and with fault because of the false teachers who are trying to lure them into sin with claims of false revelation. Only by recalling the Word of God and especially the preaching of the apostles which showed it to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, can they be kept from falling, and persecuted faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. God's mercy and power are able to keep us safe and to fill us with triumphant joy on judgment day.

Jude praises God's work for believers by ascribing to Him glory (*splendor*), majesty (*greatness*), power (*might*), and dominion (*authority*) both now and ever. Amen (*that settles it*).

SUMMARY:

The audience to whom Jude wrote was susceptible to heresies and to temptations toward immoral living. Jude's letter begins and ends with very comforting words to Christians. He emphasizes the important relationship between

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correct doctrine and true faith. Know that there is a danger of doom coming from false teachers that have crept in unknowingly. He encouraged believers to continue to build (rise above, make progress) on their most holy faith praying in the Holy Ghost. This was all the more important because they were living in a time of increased apostasy. When God promises that His church will be kept from defeat, His purpose is not that we lay down our sword and go to lunch, but that we pick up the Sword of the Spirit and look confidently to God for the strength to fight (contend; deal with), and win. So God's way as we see it in Jude is to give His people confidence that their faith will be victorious in the end (verses 1 and 24). The Christian faith is repeatedly threatened from within the church. The threat to the faith is coming from among some (false teachers) who are now inside. This faith is worth contending for. Paul said it would happen. Jude saw it happening. He saw it as a fulfillment of the apostles' predictions. The letter of Jude is not written to a pastor but to "*those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ*" (v.1).

¹Jude cited three examples of failure from the past to warn his readers of the danger involved in departing from God's truth. **(1)**The example of certain Israelites v5; **(2)** The example of certain angels v6; **(3)** The example of certain pagans v7.

Having warned his readers about the failures of false teachers, Jude proceeded to exhort them positively to move them to persevere faithfully in spite of the danger that faced them. The false teachers' teaching divided the believers into two basic groups: those who remained in the apostles' teaching and those who departed from it. While the latter may have claimed to be the truly spiritual group, the false teachers were really worldly-minded and sharing their viewpoint.

In the case of the unbelievers, they were completely devoid of the Holy Spirit. The contrast Jude introduced with "But" distinguishes Jude's readers from the false teachers. Since we are the temple God under attack by hostile enemy forces, we need to build ourselves up, to strengthen ourselves spiritually on our most holy faith. When we depart from His Word and His will, we erect barriers between ourselves and God thus blocking the free flow of His faith-filled love to us. We keep ourselves in His faith-filled love by abiding in Him. Jude concluded his brief epistle with a formal doxology. It included a prayer for his readers. He wanted to assure them of God's ability to help them remain faithful in spite of the apostasy that threatened them.

We too are tempted to give in to sin. Our confidence rests in God's ability to keep us safe and faithful. "*Glory*" is the effulgent (brightness) radiance of God; "*majesty*" His transcendence; "*dominion*" His absolute power; and "*authority*" His freedom of action. These characteristics of God belong to Him eternally. In view of God's changeless character, we should remain faithful as well. Jude is a book full of warning, but it closes with supreme confidence in God.

APPLICATION:

We too are living in the last days, much closer to the end than were the original readers of the letter. This is also a warning to us not to turn away from the Word of God and the work of Jesus Christ. The risk of turning away is Judgment. So glad that when we find ourselves in error, we can repent and come back to God's mercy.

¹ <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/jude.pdf>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-simdayschool.html>