

EDUCATING A GENERATION UNTO FUTURE HOPE

Sunday, June 16th, 2019, 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2139

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Jude 1:3-7, 11-25 - **“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”**

Just take a minute to notice the emphasis of our text at this point. Our writer is not writing about the *beliefs* of this church. He's addressing something different. He's writing about their ability and their *willingness* to **“contend”** - that's the verb - to **“contend”** for beliefs when they are challenged by opposing ideologies. Most Christians like *believing*. What they don't like is *contending* for beliefs that are no longer popular. **That's** the central issue of this text.

“[4] For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. [5] Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. [6] And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— [7] just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire....[11] Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion....[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. [20] But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray 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. [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. [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.”

Surprisingly, the reason for a Sunday emphasis like this comes from the second last book of the Bible, the book of Jude. Jude writes with a burdened heart to this church. He says he **“found it necessary”**(3) to write them. That means he was inwardly *compelled* to write. He was driven by the *Holy Spirit* to write these people and urge them to **“contend for the faith”**(3).

Jude's concern was the presence of people who had arisen right from within the church membership (4) and were confusing the people of God with false ideas about holiness and grace - **“For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”**(4).

That shouldn't happen in a church, but it *did* and *does*. I read that lengthy text at the beginning of this message to include the many things Jude says about these people. He says they were **“perverting the grace of God,”** turning it into **“sensuality”**(4). He says these people were **“defiling the flesh”** and **“rejecting authority”**(8). That means they had to have their way. They couldn't submit to anyone else. He says these people **“blaspheme things they don't understand”**(10). He says they are **“grumblers”** and **“malcontents, following their own evil desires”**(16). And he says they **“cause divisions”** because they are **“void of the Spirit”**(19).

Of course, this is a terrible list. Jude's heart breaks as he writes. But after we've read this long, soiled, sad list, **it's not the wickedness of these people that troubles Jude most.**

That's really not the object of this text. No, as the brother of James writes these words in 68 A.D., what troubles him most is these wicked ideas had actually arisen within the church **“unnoticed”**(4). And the whole letter of Jude is written because he wants these twisted ideas to be **noticed!** He wants them spotted right away.

It troubles him that, at this late period on the apostolic age, when there soon would be none of the original apostles left around, this church was so vulnerable to false ideas and bad examples. Jude wants these dear Christians to **“contend for the faith”**(3), but knows that will be impossible to do if they lose the ability to discern truth from error, the genuine from the wicked and phony.

Now we're coming to the heart of the issue. And it relates directly to what we're doing here today. How will these Christians be protected from both the *false teaching* and the *immoral lifestyle* rising up in their midst? We all know those lyrical

words at the end of Jude's letter - "**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....**"

But **how?** How will Jesus keep these people from stumbling? How will they be kept blameless? Do they just sit and hope and pray that Jesus will watch over them? **Jude doesn't think so.**

The church will be protected if it can easily and quickly spot false thinking and immoral behavior in its midst. And Jude's strategy for this church is to prepare it for spotting these things by **comparing them with other events and people in Biblical history.** That's the most important sentence in this message.

I hope you will see this and remember it. For example, Jude compares these false teachers to Sodom and Gomorrah - "**Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire**"(7).

Jude assumes that if these Christians are familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah they will have a much easier time dealing with false teaching in their own church. In fact, he says very specifically that Sodom and Gomorrah serve these people well "**as an example**"(7). The whole church, living **thousands of years after Sodom and Gomorrah** will be kept holy by knowing about them.

Then look at what Jude says in **verse 11** - "**Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.**" This is truly amazing. Jude sites **three historic, Old Testament accounts** in one short verse. In one verse he tells this church about **Cain (Genesis 3), Balaam (Numbers 22-24),** and about **Korah (Numbers 16).**

What is this all about? What is Jude doing here? If he has some specific set of instructions for this church to keep her theologically sound and morally pure **why doesn't he just tell them?** Why doesn't he give them something practical and simple?

I'll tell you why - and it's one of the most important things you can learn as a serious disciple. If Jude just gives them some simple, direct instruction for this one specific trial they are up against he will have failed them as a leader. He will help them **quickly** but he will only help them **short-term.**

Jude isn't out to just give them a quick "**how to**" list for this one situation. Jude will die soon and this church, and all churches, and **our** church, will need more than a quick "**how to**" list. Jude wants to give these Christians something much more valuable. He wants to arm them against **this** trial, and **these** false teachers, as well as give them the tools to deal with **any** danger and **any** group of false teachers. He wants to **train their minds** so they can discern and protect and grow and mature whether he's there to hold their hand or not.

There are **three points** to Jude's letter and we desperately need to grab a hold of them in today's church. Most contemporary churches are missing these truths by a mile:

1) **JUDE ASSUMES THESE PEOPLE WILL KNOW THESE STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT**

This is truly amazing. Not one of these people had a Bible. Remember, this was the first century. There **were** no books. No printing press. No magazines. There were no bookstores. There were no blogs or web sites or podcasts. No internet or Christian radio.

But here's what the people **could** do. They gathered together regularly and listened with their ears to **oral tradition and instruction** handed down in local gatherings. For the vast majority of the people this was the **only** Christian learning possible. And Jude **assumes they had taken the time and made the effort to know all of these stories!** Just from **hearing them over and over again**, and **studying them into their memories**, and **reviewing them over and over again at home**, Jude knows he can just mention these accounts and they will all know what he's talking about.

Do you know these stories? That's my question. Given all the resources we have as a church today, **if we don't know these stories the standards of Bible knowledge in today's church are embarrassingly low.** And that means we're vulnerable - terribly vulnerable - to spiritual deception and moral ruin.

2) **JUDE ASSUMES THAT KNOWING THESE STORIES, AND CAREFULLY CONSIDERING THEM, WILL PROTECT THE CHURCH IN HER PRESENT SITUATION**

In other words, to know that **Sodom and Gomorrah** were affluent, trendy, fun-loving, sexy places that, for all their pleasure, couldn't stave off the wrath of God just because they didn't want to think about it or believe it would come, is useful, important information to help me make better decisions at the party at work, or with the friends at church who pride themselves on not being as prudish or legalistic as the rest of the congregation.

To know that **Cain** was jealous of his brother's devotion to the command of God, so much so that he couldn't stand the sight of him, is useful in my own walk with Jesus. Resentment can carry any one of us so much farther into self-destruction than we'd ever imagine.

To know that **Balaam** finally caved in and abandoned faithfulness to God when there was enough material gain is an example to me when I can have a much bigger slice of the world's pie if I'll only sacrifice a pure, simple, and contented obedience to the call of God for my life.

To know that **Korah** sacrificed his own life and that of his wife and children simply because it galled him to submit to someone else's authority - to see someone else shine for God - even though Moses was so clearly called of God to lead the people, is a warning to those who, when they're upset with someone else's leadership, can't maintain a quiet humble heart, but have to cause division and unite people with their own discontentment. **Korah** teaches me to look carefully at the true face of pride and envy and call them by their proper names.

And this brings us to the final point of Jude's letter:

3) **GOD HAS STILL ORDAINED A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE FLOW OF BIBLICAL HISTORY AS ONE OF THE CHIEF MEANS OF PURIFYING AND PROTECTING HIS CHURCH**

People don't commit new sins and there are really no new dangers to the church. The dangers that gnaw away at the fiber of the work of God, be it in **this** church, or any **other**, are only dangerous if they go **unnoticed**. The stories of God's Word are the tool the Holy Spirit uses to expose them. Jude paints this lesson more vividly than any other New Testament letter. But Jude is not the only one to enforce the principle:

Romans 15:4 - "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

So I'm sure Jude and Paul would both salute any church that was stirring up this idea all over again. We're here today because we're committed to **educating a people into hope** - "....**that through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope!**" This is how the New Testament weds the past with the future. We study "**what was written in former days**"(that's the past accounts of the Old Testament) "**that we might have hope**"(that's the way we all want to face the future - and the way we want our children and our grandchildren to face the future as well!).

If these accounts were written to give us **hope**, then not to know them is to be **hopeless**. Study carefully the Biblical account of the **past**, so you can keep your life true and pure in the **present**, so you can have a bright hope for the **future**. We're here today marking the first step of a journey that will, should Jesus tarry, outlive us all. We're making the best, though certainly not the easiest, investment any people of God can make. We're educating a people for brilliant, abiding, eternal hope.

And everyone said.....