

Jude 17-25

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[0:00] Well, good morning, everybody. Part 2 of Jude. Now, part 2 is, I think, more favorable for us to listen to than part 1.

So, we're going to start by reading together the verses. So, Jude, and we'll read from verse 17 to 25.

Keep yourself in the love of God. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, in the last time there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts.

These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded and devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are doubting. Save others, snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

[1:22] Now to Him who is able to protect you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy.

To the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, and now, and forever. Amen.

And before I croak. Right, I don't know if you remember, but last Sunday we began the letter of Jude. Jude, and if you remember, Jude didn't exactly ease us gently into the subject.

He talked about false teachers, judgment, rebellion, and about people who had cracked into the church. And he gave some pretty strong warnings.

Now perhaps somebody went home last week thinking, Well, thank you Jude, that was cheerful. But Jude didn't leave us there, and that's important.

[2:30] It's important because Christianity is not simply about knowing what to avoid. It's about knowing how to live. After all the warnings, Jude turns our attention to what Christians should actually do.

And the final section of Jude contains some wonderful instructions. But even more wonderfully, Jude ends by taking our eyes away from ourselves and putting them firmly on God.

And that is where we aim to finish. Because the Christian life is not, Try harder and hope you make it, But trust God, walk faithfully, and rest in His keeping power, The keeping power of God.

Jude 17 to 20, I've classed as the big movement. And there are really four things Jude tells the church to do. 1. Remember the apostles' warning, verse 17 to 18.

2. Recognize the danger, verse 19. 3. Remain spiritually built up, verse 20. And again in verse 20, praying in the Holy Spirit.

[3:48] So number one, remember what the apostles said, verse 17 to 18. Now, Jude has spent quite a lot of time telling us what to watch out for. We need to watch out for false teachers, for false promises, pride, and compromise.

Watch out for people who look spiritual, but have no spiritual substance. If we are not careful, we can spend too much time looking at what is wrong around us, that we forget what we are supposed to be doing.

So Jude changes direction. And I love the way he does it. He says in verse 17, What a great expression.

So after all his strong warnings, Jude says, In other words, there is another way. It may be happening all around you, but don't let it determine who you are.

The false teachers may behave in like this, but you don't have to. Other people may abandon the truth. They may become cynical. But you, beloved, remember what the apostles taught.

[5:06] And that's important, because Christians can have short memories. We remember things we don't need to remember, and forget things that we desperately need to remember.

You can remember the telephone number you had 40 years ago, but you forgot why you walked into the kitchen five minutes ago. I've discovered growing older doesn't necessarily improve your memory.

It just gives you more things to forget. But spiritually, remembering is essential. The Christian life is not always about discovering something new.

Sometimes it's about remembering what we already know. Remember what Jesus has done for us, and how he continues to watch over us. Remember what the apostles taught us.

Remember the good news, the gospel. Remember God's many promises to us. And remember that our Lord Jesus is coming back, and one day we will journey to the place he is preparing for us.

[6:10] It is sad, but it often happens that God does something wonderful for us on Sunday. By Tuesday we're worrying again.

We perhaps heard a powerful sermon on Sunday. By Wednesday we're complaining about the weather. By Thursday somebody cuts us up in traffic, and suddenly our Christian beliefs are being tested.

So we need to remind ourselves of God's provision and goodness. Now Peter also repeatedly tells Christians to remember. Now why does he do that?

Because remembering strengthens our faith and guards us against spiritual and anamnesia. Think about the Israelites whom we considered last week.

God delivered them from Egypt. He opened the Red Sea. He fed them. He gave them water. They saw and experienced God's provision.

[7:09] And yet they forgot and they complained. We can do exactly the same if we forget the blessings of God. The blessings that are bestowed on us every day.

Last week we shared communion. Remembering our Saviour. Why did we do that? Because we are reminding ourselves of what Jesus accomplished for us.

His body broken. His blood shed. Dying on the cross so that we can have a relationship with God the Father. Jude says, Remember.

Jude 17-20 Remember the apostles' warning. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this is important for us because Christian maturity isn't simply knowing more Bible. It's remembering the truth when false teaching comes along.

[8:14] One of the great safeguards against spiritual deception is not merely learning something new, but remembering something true. Verse 18 tells us that the apostles warned, In the last time there would be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.

That's an interesting word, mockers. These people don't necessarily look dangerous at first. They may ridicule the biblical morality or the biblical authority or even the idea that God judges.

The devil doesn't always arrive at the front door wearing a red suit and carrying a pitchfork.

Sometimes he arrives with a very respectable argument.

Number two, recognize the danger. In verse 19, Jude says, These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

That's quite a diagnosis. They are worldly-minded. The problem isn't merely that they have wrong ideas. Their thinking has become earth-centered rather than God-centered.

[9:29] And notice the result. They cause divisions, false teaching rarely remains merely theoretical. Eventually, it affects relationships, it affects fellowship, and the unity of the Church.

Remember this, truth brings God's people together, self-centered teaching eventually pulls them apart. But there is an even more serious statement here, devoid of the Spirit.

And that should make us pause. Jude is reminding us that religious language does not necessarily mean spiritual life. Someone can know Christian vocabulary, they can attend Christian meetings, and they can even speak confidently about spiritual things, and yet not belong to Christ.

And that is why Jude turns from warning us about them to encouraging us. Number three, remain spiritually built up, verse 20.

So Jude doesn't finish with, watch out, watch out, he says, but you, beloved. There is a wonderful tenderness in that word, beloved.

[10:48] Jude has been warning them strongly, but he isn't trying to frighten faithful Christians. What he wants, he wants to strengthen them.

He says, building yourselves up on your most holy faith. What a beautiful picture. Think about a house. You don't build the foundations every Monday morning.

The foundation is already there. But you should keep building upon it. Christian maturity doesn't happen automatically. You don't become spiritually mature simply because you've been a Christian for 20 years or more.

You can have 20 years of Christian experience, or you can have one year's experience repeated 20 times. Growth requires intention. Nobody drifts into spiritual maturity.

Jude says, build yourselves up. How do we do that? Through reading the scriptures, through prayer and fellowship, worship and obedience, learning and serving, Christian encouragement, and trusting God through trials.

[12:00] Nobody building a house says, Well, the foundations are in, so we'll just leave the rest to chunks. The walls need building. The roof needs building.

The plumbing needs doing. The electrics need doing. Don't know what it reminds you of, but to me, this reminds me of our new church building project. And occasionally, somebody has to find the mysterious noise coming from upstairs.

I thought it must be Bob the Builder. A Christian life needs building too. Every sermon we hear should build something into us.

Every time we open our Bibles, God gives us another opportunity to strengthen our faith. And this is particularly important for those of us who have been Christians for many years.

We never graduate from growing. You may have walked with Christ for 50 years or more, and still need to build your faith. Number four, pray in the Holy Spirit.

[13:01] Verse 20. This is where Jude continues. He says, Praying in the Holy Spirit. This gives us a wonderful balance. Jude doesn't simply say, Build yourselves up.

Christian growth isn't simply human effort. We study, we pray, and we obey. We persevere, but we do it in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

We work, but we don't work alone. And prayer is one of the great ways we acknowledge that. When we pray, we're actually saying, Lord, I cannot live this Christian life in my own strength.

I need you. Remember, Jesus himself often went aside to pray. And if prayer was important for him, how much more important it is for us.

Prayer is not simply saying words. Prayer is communion with God. It is bringing our lives into the presence of God. It brings our concerns, our families, our church, our failures, our hopes, our decisions.

[14:13] And with everything going on in our nation today, we need to pray for our nation. We need to pray that people will turn back to the God of the Bible. What about our neighbors?

Do we ever speak to them? Do they know we are Christians? Do we pray for them? Pray that God will give you an opportunity in some way. The word and prayer belong together.

The Bible speak to us, prayer is how we respond to God. We listen through Scripture and communicate with him through prayer.

Think of a marriage. Imagine a husband saying, I love my wife very much. I just don't talk to her. I would say that marriage has a major problem.

And that's why communication matters. It is so important. Prayer is part of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Not because God doesn't know what we need.

[15:16] He does. Sometimes prayer can be wonderfully simple. Just call out, Lord, help me. He knows why you make that cry.

And that's a perfectly good prayer. Lord, give me wisdom. That was mentioned earlier today.

Sometimes we should all be praying for that. Lord, forgive me.

Very important. Sometimes we all need to pray, Lord, thank you. How often we forget to thank God for answered prayer.

And sometimes we don't know what to say at all. But God knows our thoughts. Paul reminds us in Romans 8 that the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Our prayer isn't a performance.

Prayer is a relationship. It's a talk with our Heavenly Father. It changes us. It reminds who God is. It puts our problems into perspective.

[16:18] And it turns anxiety into dependence on Him. Verse 21 says, Keep yourselves in the love of God. Now this could sound as though Jude is saying, If you don't behave properly, God will stop loving you.

That's not what he means. God's love is not something we earn. The Christian life is not, Behave well enough and God will love you.

God loved us when we were sinners. Paul says in Romans 5.8 that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. So what does Jude mean?

I believe he means, Live within the experience and enjoyment of God's love. Stay close to Him.

Don't wander away. Think of a child walking with a parent.

The parent loves the child, whether the child is holding their hand or not. But as I said last week, the child is safest when the parent is holding their hand. God's love doesn't disappear when we stumble.

[17:24] But we experience His love most deeply when we closely walk with Him. Don't allow sin to build a wall between you and God.

Keep coming back to Him on a daily basis. Keep trusting Him. Keep listening to Him. Keep yourself where His love can shape your life. Verse 21, Looking for the mercy of Jesus.

Jude continues, Looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. What are you looking forward to? I personally am looking forward to the return of Christ and eternal life with my Saviour.

The Christian doesn't simply look backward to the cross. We look forward to Christ's return. There is something wonderful about our Christian hope.

The world often says, Make the most of today because tomorrow is uncertain. Christianity says, Tomorrow belongs to God. We have a future.

[18:28] And we know who holds the future. There is a song. I know who holds the future. Jesus is coming again. Do we believe that?

Amen. Yes. Now I do and it really excites me as He's coming. Are you ready? What if He should come today? Are we ready?

Our salvation will one day be complete. And knowing that gives us courage to live day to day. Next he mentions, Have mercy on those who doubt.

Verse 22 is particularly relevant. Jude says, Have mercy on some who are doubting. Notice Jude doesn't say, Attack them.

He says, Have mercy. There are people sitting in churches who are struggling with questions.

Some are doubting. Some are confused. Some have been hurt.

[19:28] Some have been disappointed. Some are wrestling with things they don't understand.

And our response should not be, What's wrong with your faith? It should be, How can I help you?

Doubt isn't always rebellion. Sometimes doubt is simply the mind asking a question. A mature Christian shouldn't be frightened by honest questions.

A young Christian might say, I'm struggling to understand this. Mature Christians shouldn't say, Well, that's ridiculous. What they should say, Let's look at it together.

If someone was drowning, You wouldn't stand on the shore shouting, You should have learnt to swim. No, You would try to rescue them or get help.

After the rescue, you may encourage them to take swimming lessons. Spiritually, some people need correcting. But that doesn't mean we compromise the truth.

[20:31] It means we deliver the truth with compassion. It goes on to say, Rescue those who are drifting. That's verse 23, where it says, Save others, snatching them out of the fire.

That's pretty strong language. Jude sees people heading towards spiritual danger, and he says, Do something. Don't simply stand there watching.

warn them. Pray for them. Point them to Christ. Jude is talking about urgency. There are people drifting away from God, and the church has a responsibility to reach them.

We aren't saved simply to sit comfortably in church. We are saved to become witnesses, sharing the gospel, the good news. Sometimes we're afraid to speak about our faith because we don't want to offend anybody.

But love sometimes has to speak. For example, if you saw someone walking towards a cliff edge, you wouldn't whisper, Excuse me, I don't want to interfere, but you might possibly want to reconsider your direction.

[21:43] No, you would shout, Stop! Why? Because you care about them. The gospel is a message of salvation, and people need to hear it.

Sometimes evangelism can be like this. We're thinking, I think we really ought to reach people. We should probably tell them about Jesus.

We must do something. Meanwhile, the person is still walking towards the cliff edge. Jude says, Get involved. But, be careful, verse 23.

Save others, snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Jude adds an important warning.

We should have mercy, but with caution. Why? Because when we help people who are drifting into sin, we mustn't drift into sin ourselves.

[22:42] There's an old expression, you don't rescue someone from quicksand by jumping into it to be beside them. You reach out from solid ground.

And that's important for Christian ministry. We need compassion without compromise. We need love without approving everything. We need to get close enough to people to help people without becoming so close that they pull us away from Christ.

Jesus was called a friend of sinners, but Jesus never became a sinner. That's the balance. Close enough to love them. Strong enough to stand firm in our belief and trust in Christ.

We are called to show mercy, but we are not called to become careless. We can love someone without approving everything they do. We can help someone without joining them in their sin.

We can reach into the fire without setting ourselves on fire. And that's called wisdom. Jesus was full of grace and truth. He was compassionate towards sinners.

[23:53] He ate with people others had rejected. He touched lepers. He welcomed the broken. He forgave sinners. But Jesus never said, sin didn't matter.

But what he did say, neither do I condemn you. And then he said, go and sin no more. Grace and truth, mercy and holiness, love and conviction.

The Christian life requires all. The church needs both truth and love. And perhaps this is one of Jude's greatest lessons. We can get the balance wrong in two directions.

Some Christians have plenty of truth, but very little love. They know the Bible. They know doctrine. They can spot an error three miles away.

But somehow they have forgotten compassion. Others have plenty of love, but very little truth. They want everyone to feel comfortable. They become reluctant to say that anything is actually wrong.

[25:02] Jude says we need both. Stand for truth. Show mercy. Contend for the faith. Love people. Reject false teaching.

And reach the person who is struggling. That's Christian maturity. Imagine a lighthouse on a dangerous coastline. Its job isn't to stop the storm.

It can't. It cannot calm the waters. But its beam of light shines out a warning. Its light warns ships of danger and points them towards safety.

And it remains standing while the storm rages around it. And that's what Jude is asking the church to be. The world may be confused, but we can be clear.

The world may be drifting, but we can stand firm. People may be wounded and doubting, but we can show mercy. And when we feel weak, we can remember that our strength ultimately comes from God.

[26:09] Not ashamed or pretending, but accepted because of Christ. The gospel does not say, one day you'll stand before God and explain how good you've been.

The gospel says, Christ has done what you could never do. Our righteousness is found in Him and Him alone.

And that is grace. And Jude says, God will present His people with joy. Not reluctantly or grudgingly, but with joy. Verse 24, God is able to keep you.

I think this is one of the great statements in this little letter. It says, Now to Him who is able to protect you from stumbling. Notice where Jude puts the emphasis.

Not, now to you who are strong enough, nor, now to you who have finally got it all sorted, but, now to Him.

[27:12] Jude has told us to remember to build ourselves up to pray, to keep ourselves in the love of God, to show mercy, to rescue others.

That's plenty for us to do. But ultimately, our confidence is not in our ability to hold on to God. Our confidence is in the God who is able to hold on to us.

That doesn't make us careless. It makes us confident. We seek to walk faithfully because the God who called us is faithful. Times when we are weak, times when we wonder how we will keep going. Jude says, We need to look to Him. He is able to keep you. Verse 24, Presented blameless with great joy. He continues, he says, To make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy.

What an extraordinary promise. One day, the Christian will stand in the presence of God, not ashamed, not pretending, or explaining how we did this, that, and the other, but accepted because of what Christ has done.

[28:26] The Gospel doesn't say, One day you'll stand before God and explain how good you've been. The Gospel says, Christ has done what you could never do.

our righteousness is in Him, and that's grace. Jude says God will present His people with joy. What I said before, not reluctantly, not grudgingly, but with joy.

He's going to be pleased to see us there. Verses 24 to 25, To the only God our Saviour. Jude finishes with praise, To the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But notice where Jude ends. Not with be careful, not with watch out, or with try harder. No, he ends with worship.

And that's the destination of the Christian life. Everything eventually comes back to God. He gets the glory, He gets the praise, He gets the honour, because salvation belongs to Him.

[29:34] Glory, majesty, dominion, authority. Jude piles up the words, glory, majesty, dominion, authority. Why?

Because human beings are very good at making ourselves the centre of everything. We say, we like, look at me, listen to me, notice me.

See, it's me, me, me. But Christianity says, look at Him. The more clearly we see Christ, the less important our own glory becomes.

I think John the Baptist put it beautifully. He said, he must increase, but I must decrease. And that's Christian maturity. The final look back at Jude.

We put the whole letter together. Jude begins, to those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. And Jude ends, God is able to keep you.

[30:41] Do you see the beautiful bookends? At the beginning, kept. At the end, kept. In between, Jude warns us about false teaching, rebellion, and sin.

But the final message isn't fear, it is confidence in God. So what should we take home from these two Sundays? Five simple things.

One, know the truth. We cannot contend for something we don't know. So we need to read scripture, study scripture, and know what you believe.

Number two, live the truth. Christianity isn't simply what we say on Sunday. It's how we live Monday through Saturday. Number three, help those who are struggling.

Don't be quick to condemn someone who is doubting. We need to have mercy. We need to listen. We need to pray. We need to encourage and point them towards Christ.

[31:46] Number four, reach those who are drifting. There are people all around us who are spiritually drowning. fine. Some may look perfectly fine. Some may even laugh and joke.

But inside they may be desperate. We have the good news. Let's share it. Number five, trust the God who keeps you. As I said earlier, we may have been a Christian for 40, 50, 60 years.

You may have been a Christian for five years. You may have only recently begun following Jesus. But none of us can say, I've got this Christian life completely sorted.

We haven't. We need God. Every day we need him. The last word belongs to God and perhaps that's why I love the way Jude finishes his letter.

He could have ended with another warning. Instead, he gives us worship. He says, now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling. That's a wonderful phrase.

[32:47] not, now to you who must try harder. Not, now to you who must become strong enough, but to him.

The Christian life begins with God and it continues by God's grace. And it ends with God receiving the glory. So when you're struggling this week, remember, he is able to keep you when you're tempted.

He is able to keep you when you're discouraged. He is able to keep you when you're facing questions. He is able to keep you when you're worried about the future.

He is able to keep you and when one day we stand in his presence, he is able to present you blameless and with great joy. So let's contend for the faith.

Let's build ourselves up and other believers. Let's pray, let's remain in God's love, let's show mercy, let's reach those who are drifting.

[33:51] Above all, let's keep our eyes on Jesus, because ultimately Jude isn't telling us, look how strong Christians need to be, he is telling us, look how powerful our God is, and to him be the glory.

Now I'd like to close the teaching this morning by asking you ten questions that I hope will not only challenge us, but spur us on in the Christian faith.

Now I've actually printed about fifteen copies which I'll put on that table at the end, rather than you trying to write them down. But they're challenging, and I'd like you to think about them when you go home.

So number one, am I building my life on the truth of God's word, or am I being shaped by the opinions of the world around me?

Number two, am I growing in my faith, or have I become comfortable with where I am spiritually?

Number three, when life gets difficult, do I draw closer to Christ, or do I allow difficulties to draw me away from him?

[35:06] Four, is my prayer life strengthening my relationship with Jesus, or have my prayers become little more than a shopping list? Five, who is there around me who needs to be shown the mercy and love of Christ, and am I willing to reach out to them?

Six, am I showing mercy to people who are struggling, even when I don't agree with their choices? Seven, if someone watched my life this week, would they see someone who is genuinely following Jesus?

Number eight, what is the one thing God may be asking me to change, surrender or put right? Nine, am I keeping myself in the love of God, not trying to earn his love, but deliberately living close to him?

Number ten, and perhaps the strongest question to finish with, when I stand before Jesus, will I have lived my life for him, or merely fitted him into my life?

This leads us right back to Jude 24 and 25, now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, blameless with great joy.

[36:28] So the wonderful thing is that Jude doesn't leave us simply with a list of challenges, he reminds us that ultimately it is God who is able to keep you. So as we examine our lives this morning, let's not leave discouraged, let's leave determined to draw closer to the one who is able to keep us.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word and for the reminder in Jude that we are to keep ourselves in your love. Build us up in our faith and help us always to look to Jesus.

help us to stand firm in a world that so often pulls us away from you. Give us wisdom, courage and compassion and help us to be a light to those around us.

And now, Lord, we entrust ourselves to you, knowing that you are able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless with great joy. To you be all glory, majesty, dominion and authority, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.