

In the Gospels, we don't hear a lot about Jesus' family. At one time, they thought He was crazy.

But when Jesus was raised from the dead, that changed. In Acts 1, we have a picture of the remaining 11 Apostles, together, in one accord, devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.... (together, in one accord, devoting themselves to prayer)

And we know the names of His brothers: James (who went on to become the leader of the Jerusalem Church, and wrote the book of James), Joseph, Simon, and Judas (Not Judas Iscariot – Judas was a common name {Judah [one of the sons of Jacob] [Simeon; Benjamin; Reuban] – The Jews were the descendants of the tribe of Judah})

Anyway:

Jesus' brother James, wrote the Book of James, and one of His **other** brothers wrote the book that we know as “The Book of Jude”... The thing is, so that we don't get Judas (the Brother of Jesus) mixed up with the betrayer (Judas Iscariot), our English translations have given Jesus' brother a nickname: Jude.

In the original Greek, the writer of this letter introduces himself as “Judas” the brother of James (which makes him the Brother of Jesus). But Judas is so humble and so unassuming, he doesn't call himself “the brother of Jesus” – he calls himself the brother of James, and the **slave** of Jesus.

Anyway, we call him by his nickname “Jude” so we don’t get him mixed up with the evil Judas.

So we’re into another one-chapter book of the Bible. We’ll take this one over 3 weeks.

And the letter is addressed to those who are “Beloved in God the Father” “Kept for Jesus” “Called”...

Now, if you’re following along in your Bible, you’ll notice I did that in a different order. But this is the order the original Greek has it: “Beloved in God the Father” “Kept for Jesus” “Called”

I’m not sure why, but just about every modern translation of the Bible leads with “called”, even though that’s not the way it’s written. Maybe 2000 years of theology wants to have it in that order, “Called, beloved, kept”... But I think we’ll keep it the way that Jude wrote it.

Disciples of Jesus are “Beloved in God the Father” “Kept for Jesus” “Called”

And those terms are all very important:

We know about the Love of God don’t we? That’s why Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins – because our Heavenly Father loves us so much... But to be **Beloved in God the Father**, is more than that..

God loved **everyone**, and so He sent His Son to reconcile us to Him. But when we **respond** to that love (as Jesus' Brother did), to become a servant/slave of Jesus Christ, that's when we become the **Beloved in God the Father**.

Are you with me? – 2 different stages of love. One is the way God acted because He loves. But to be “**Beloved in God the Father**”, is our status because of our faith.

Next, in faith, we know we are **Kept for Jesus**. We can be sure of this. Through every trial, through every persecution, we are **Kept for Jesus**. Even if we lose our lives, He keeps us, unto eternal glory...

But later in this letter (next week), we're going to be told to “**Keep yourselves in the love of God.**” So, what is it? Are we **kept** for Jesus? or do we **Keep ourselves**? Well, it's obvious – it's both. While we keep following Jesus, as His disciples (that's the bit we do), He keeps us... We'll talk more about that next week.

And thirdly, we are “**Called**”. Just as Jesus called His first disciples (and it required a response), He calls us. Come. Follow me.

So, the address of the letter, is: To those who are “**Beloved in God the Father**” “**Kept for Jesus**” “**Called**”. And

Jude's prayer is: <sup>2</sup> **May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied (in abundance) to you.**

What a beautiful prayer: Mercy in abundance; Peace in abundance; Love in abundance...

And how shallow and misdirected prayer can be, when we pray for worldly stuff like wealth in abundance or fun times in abundance, when we could be asking for something so beautiful and Godly, like: mercy, peace and love.

Righto, so that's the introduction.

As Jude takes up his pen, he's a bit 'torn'. What he'd **love** to be doing, is to talk to them about the common salvation that we have – the wonderful, life-giving salvation of the Gospel... That's what he **wants** to write about, but unfortunately he can't – he has to write about something else.

*As a preacher and a bible teacher, there have been many weeks, when I wished I could just talk to you about the common salvation we have. But so much of God's word, is dealing with the tough stuff – the tough stuff that we sometimes don't want to hear.*

And so Jude says:

**I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.**

What does it mean, to contend for the faith? Well, “THE FAITH”, is what we believe. To use a theological word, we might say “doctrine”. Many in the church hate the thought of “doctrine”, but “doctrine” is what we believe – it is THE FAITH that was once and for all, delivered to the saints.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, and His apostles, have laid down the foundations of THE FAITH – they’d taught it to the early church – It’s now written in the Scriptures. THE FAITH is unchanging. It doesn’t change – it is **not** something that can be altered to make it more appealing to a new generation. And Jude (with a bee in his bonnet) is compelled to exhort, “Contend for THE FAITH”...

THE FAITH that we hold today, must be the same FAITH that the Apostles taught to the early church... If the faith that we teach at this church, is not the faith that the Apostles taught to the early church, we are not Christian.

And to “contend” for the faith, is to **struggle** for the faith – to fight for the faith. The Greek word used here is ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι (ep-agōniz-esthai) (agonize) to exert intense effort on behalf of THE FAITH.

When I read this, I knew straight away, “**Now**, more than ever before, we need to be a people who are contending for “THE FAITH”. In the world in which we live, it seems the Christian religion, more than any other religion, is under attack. But then I realised, “No, that’s just normal.” Jesus told us, “The world will hate you because of me”...

But the picture that Jude paints, is not so much about “the world” – it’s in the Christian **church**, we need to be contending for “**THE FAITH**”.

**THE FAITH** is under attack in the Christian church. I hope your eyes are open enough to see that. And as I read this letter of Jude, I realised, “It’s not a new thing”. **THE FAITH** was under attack when Jude penned this letter. And the words that Jude wrote almost 2000 years ago, he could just as easily be writing it to the Church on this New Year’s Day, 2023.

I’m not one, much for New Year’s resolutions, but if we were to make a New Year’s resolution today, How about we respond to Jude’s appeal, **to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.**

But I’m going to warn you, like most New Year’s Resolutions, they come with a cost. To contend for **THE FAITH**, also means to live **THE FAITH**, and it will involve great personal cost (and persecution).

Righto:

So, what (in the church) was so at risk with **THE FAITH**?

Certain people had crept into the church (unnoticed) – they fitted right in, but underneath it all, they were ungodly... How do we know they’re ungodly? Because they perverted the grace of God, into sensuality.

Their twisted thinking went something like this (and it's quite common in the church today):

*If the message of the Gospel is “grace” – God forgives us of our sins – therefore, it doesn't matter if I sin – it's just more forgiveness/grace.*

And some will take it further than that – it's the teaching that says,

- *Even though the Bible identifies something a sin, because we now live by the Spirit, we don't have to obey the commandments of God*
- *All of the moral teaching and commands are a thing of the past – we now live by grace and by love.*
- *And if I don't feel that it's a sin, than it's not a sin for me – it's the way God has made me – it's the way He wants me to be” ...*

That's the logic.

And the fact that Jude uses the word “sensuality”, highlights for us, the particular type of sin he's talking about – it's that which pleases our carnal/fleshly nature (often sexual/other physical pleasures)...

And we see exactly that sort of corruption in the church today. Many have departed from THE FAITH that was set down once and for all, by the Apostles. ...

- Some churches embrace Same-sex-marriage.
- And the teaching that goes along with that, is “That's the way God's made you, and we should celebrate that.”

- Men and women (in the church) are shacking up together before they're married, and apparently there's no problem with that.
- And just like the world, they move from partner to partner to partner...

Do you see what this is? It's lawlessness, and a rejection of God...

Now, there are **2** groups of people who Jude is writing about here:

The **first** group, are those whom the letter is addressed **to**: He is appealing to them, **to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints**. And his prayer for them, is that <sup>2</sup> ... **mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you**.

But the **Godless** ones, who have crept into the church, long ago, they don't get the prayer for an abundance of **mercy, peace, and love**. They cannot, because long ago, they were designated for condemnation. **Proverbs 16:(ESV)<sup>4</sup> YHWH has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.**

Sometimes we wonder, "How could God let this happen" (when evil gets into the church). But His word is very clear – there **will** be evil within the church. And on the Day of The Lord, all workers of evil (including those who have gone unnoticed as they crept into the church), will be judged.



So, the 1<sup>st</sup> thing the Godless are condemned for, is perverting the Grace of God into sensuality. The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing, is they **deny** our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

To deny His Lordship, and to deny Him as our Master, is reflected in what we just talked about – we make up our own rules/ethics. You see, if Jesus is Lord, **He** is the one we obey. If He has saved us from our sin, He did not save us to go on sinning. If I live in ungodliness, I am denying the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

But, there's another aspect to this: they deny that Jesus Christ is our only Master and Lord.

THE FAITH that was once and for all delivered to the saints, leaves us in no doubt – there is **One** Lord – **One** Master: Jesus Christ... And we deny Him, when we acknowledge any other god.

*What a wicked generation when some segments of the Christian church hold joint prayer meetings with other religions – I hope you feel sick-in-the-guts when you hear of such things.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, is God the Son. He was there at creation. In today's reading, we hear that **Jesus** saved the people out of Egypt...

*I had a conversation with a Christian minister a few months ago about the wrath of God. And he said, “That’s Old Testament stuff” ... And many believe that the God of the Old Testament, is different to the God of the New Testament... And I just want to say to them, If that’s what you believe, then you haven’t understood the Old Testament... The whole of the Bible (Old Testament and New), is the story of a God of Grace and Mercy, calling, redeeming (and disciplining) those He loves. It was every bit as much God the Son leading the people out of Egypt. And God the Son who judged their faithlessness.*

Anyone who tells you there is no judgment in the New Testament, haven’t read it. And if I believe in the human teaching of “once saved always saved”, then I’m going to have a lot of trouble with what Jude is teaching us here:

He gives us examples of judgment, (even for those who had chosen to follow God), and they started out following God, but then they sinned, and became godless or faithless. And he gives us these examples because he’s saying, “If the judgment of God was true for them, you watch out, because you are stumbling into the same error.”

1<sup>st</sup> example:

Jesus saved the people out of Egypt – they were saved – they followed Him across the Sea, and through the desert... He disciplined them when they made the Golden Calf. And they followed some more. But when they got to the edge of the

Promised Land, they lost faith. They came to a point where they no longer believed. And Jesus destroyed them...

The next example, is the angels who didn't stay within their position of authority. Lust and pride led to the downfall of the angels. God set the limits. But they wouldn't listen to God's authority. And now the fallen angels (demons) are chained in gloomy darkness, awaiting their final judgment.

And many will say "I **won't** be judged because I'm a Christian"? Jude reminds us, "Even the angels will be judged – do you think you will be safe?"

The 3<sup>rd</sup> example:

Sodom & Gomorrah are examples of sexual immorality, and unnatural sexual desire. And you'd think Jude was writing this our generation: A generation where sexuality and gender is explored and where homosexual relationships are normalised...

But the Apostle Jude is telling us that the judgment poured out by God one time in the past (in the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah), serves a purpose for us today: It's an example of punishment of eternal fire, for all who pervert the grace of God into sensuality...

I don't know if you've noticed, but Jude loves his 3's.

- Beloved; Kept; Called;
- 3 blessings – Mercy; Peace; Love;

- 3 examples of judgment
  - Israel on the edge of the promised land;
  - The Angels
  - Sodom & Gomorah;

And now, there's 3 broad offences.

They:

- defile the flesh;
- reject authority;
- blaspheme the glorious ones (spiritual beings).

They defile the flesh: Material greed; sexual sin; self-centred indulgence.

They reject authority. In their pride and arrogance, what kinds of authority might they reject:

- God's word;
- Apostolic authority (what we now have recorded in our bibles);
- the governing authorities (whom God has appointed);
- God Himself and His commandments.

And thirdly, in their pride, they see themselves as being above Angels. And Jude says, even when the Archangel Michael was contending with the devil, he didn't even blaspheme the evil one. He just left it up to God – **“The Lord rebuke you.”**

I think V8 might be a key that helps us to understand what's going on here:

There were certain false teachers in the church, who claimed to have a greater spiritual insight and authority. They claimed to have their own revelation, that overrode God's Word. They relied on their own dreams...

They claimed to be spiritual, but their manner proved that they were not.

Far from being "spiritual", their understanding of spiritual matters was base animal instinct.

*It's a lot of years since I've ridden a horse, but when I used to go mustering on a horse, I was always intrigued how a horse's instinct is different to a human's. If something startles me, I go "Oh! What was that?" And if it's something dangerous, "Oh, I'd better run away". But on a horse, if a bird flies up from the grass beside it, it'll take 3 steps sideways, and then look to see, "What was that?"*

Animal instinct... And a person's carnal desires are "animal instinct". Whether it be:

- asexual desire;
- a financial desire;
- a physical desire; or
- even just a desire to have something,,,

Animal instinct is,

- "If I want it, I can have it".
- "If I crave it, then there's a way that's right for me to have it";
- "If I desire it, then that's got to be God, wanting me to be happy"...

That's animal instinct. It's not the Spirit of God. And Jude says, "**Woe** to them!"

And he gives another triplet: 3 examples from the Bible:

1. They walk in the way of Cain. Cain murdered the one who pleased God. And be aware: false teachers will attack those who are loyal to God.

2. They **abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error**. Balaam knew God's word on a particular matter, but the ungodly were looking for a different answer. And so he kept looking for a loophole

- maybe God's changed His mind.
- let's go to a different spot and we'll ask Him again;
- Let's look at it a different way – we'll get another perspective, and we'll ask Him again;

And in the end, he taught Israel to sin<sup>i</sup>.

3. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> example: **Korah's rebellion**. Korah claimed authority, that had not been given to him. Korah had been set apart to serve God, but he overstepped.

And false teachers are like that. They:

- attack those who are loyal to God;
- they look for loopholes/different perspectives, and lead others to sin; and
- in their pride, they claim an authority they do not have.

They're like:

“**hidden reefs**”. Just like a hidden stump in the river here can tear the bottom out of a ski-boat, ungodly teachers in a church, can tear a church apart.

“**shepherds who feed themselves**” – they’re not looking out for the flock – they’re after their own benefit.

“**waterless clouds**” – full of empty promises.

“**swept along by winds**” – they do not hold firm to God’s truth – whatever is popular on the day, is what they teach.

“**fruitless trees**” – maybe lots of leafy growth, but no spiritual fruit.

“**twice dead, uprooted**” – might appear alive, but destined for death.

Like the surf on the beach, that generates a heap of **foam**: Froth of no Godly substance, but filled with grime...

“**Wandering stars**” – You’re supposed to be able to navigate by the stars, because their position is fixed in the sky... but they wander, leading people astray...

These false teachers: Although they claim to be Christians, because they are so ungodly, and have not held true to THE FAITH, they are bound for eternal judgment...

V16 sums them up: <sup>16</sup> These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favouritism to gain advantage.

What a contrast: Beloved; Kept; Called & and a multiplication of Mercy; Peace; Love... — But within the church, there are the grumbling malcontents, following their own sinful desires & set apart for judgment... — What a contrast...

**This** is why we are to contend for THE FAITH, once and for all, delivered to the Saints.

In our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His truth, there is mercy, peace and love. Outside of THE FAITH is judgment.

Next week, we're going to learn more about how to contend for the faith.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,  
We give You Glory,  
for THE FAITH,  
once and for all, delivered to the Saints.

It is so beautiful;  
it is so true;



it is such a blessing.

Lord,  
Help us to never be led astray  
by ungodly teaching that appeals to the flesh.  
and help us to stand strong against it,  
always holding to Your word,  
for it is both beautiful and true.

in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Numbers 31:16