

Any study of the book of Jude must begin with the three-part greeting in the letter:

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: *May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.* (italics mine)

Mercy, peace and love: What an antidote to the three great dangers outlined in verse four:

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.

May the Lord protect His church from this great danger of false teachers, and keep us in His mercy, peace and love.

Monday: Read Jude 1-7

Lessons for the Battle

Jude gives further spiritual protection to his readers by reminding them of three Old Testament lessons (vs. 5-7):

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. 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— 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.

We could go on and note how Jude quotes yet more Old Testament examples for the warning and instruction of his readers. He packs verses 5-16 of his letter with so many examples-- if we were to pause and study each one, we would be well on our way to understanding the whole of Old Testament history! Why does he cite so many Old Testament warnings in such a small letter? Because he wants to strengthen his readers to be able to “contend for the faith” (vs. 3).

Meditate and Pray: Let us hear and receive Jude’s somber warning to not only cherish our faith, but to be willing to fight for it. Use *Trinity Hymnal* # 574 as a prayer for your active role in spiritual warfare:

1 Christian, dost thou see them
on the holy ground,
how the pow'rs of darkness
rage thy steps around?
Christian, up and smite them,
counting gain but loss,
in the strength that cometh
by the holy cross.

2 Christian, dost thou feel them,
how they work within,
striving, tempting, luring,
goadng into sin?
Christian, never tremble;
never be downcast;
gird thee for the battle,
watch and pray and fast.

3 Christian, dost thou hear them,
 how they speak thee fair?
 "Always fast and vigil?
 Always watch and prayer?"
 Christian, answer boldly,
 "While I breathe I pray!"
 Peace shall follow battle,
 night shall end in day.

4 Hear the words of Jesus:
 "O my servant true:
 thou art very weary -
 I was weary too;
 but that toil shall make thee
 some day all mine own,
 and the end of sorrow
 shall be near my throne.

Tues: Read Jude 4-14 & 2 Peter 1:1-2

Our Only Master and Lord

The basic problem behind all false teaching and errant spiritual leadership is a failure to bow the knee to Christ in every area of life and ministry. To “deny the Lord Jesus Christ” must be our focus this week.

One evidence of this problem is a deeply-rooted tendency to reject authority (verse 8). This means rejecting all types of authority by which Christ rules His church, whether ethical, sacramental, or Scriptural.

Anti-authoritarian tendencies erupt whenever God’s will is at cross-purposes with our sinful wills. We simply *must have our way* and so make up many different excuses for rejecting God’s.

Another basic root of this “master sin” of denying Christ’s Lordship is a refusal to bow our minds to embrace the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus in His *character and work*. Perhaps not as overt as direct defiance, this is still a stubborn, crippling, and insidious tendency. Jude urges his easily deceived and gullible believers to wake up to a danger that seems to have crept into the church: Mental laziness *had* started to afflict his readers. For example, in verses 3-5 he writes (with my bold print for emphasis):

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. 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. **Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it ...**

Evidently, the believers for whom Jude was so concerned were exposed to the *danger* of false teaching. They stood in need of reminders of what they once knew (verse 5) and also of the need to wake up and contend for their faith *as something that was being threatened* (verse 3).

Citing a very similar situation of spiritual danger in 2 Peter, one scholar wrote about the dangers that faced the readers of Second Peter. Though Peter speaks of “grace and peace being multiplied,” while Jude speaks of the same abundance of blessing in terms of “mercy, peace and love,” the point is the same: All such saving, protective gifts of salvation flow to us only in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second Peter 1:2 makes clear (my bold for emphasis): “May grace and peace be multiplied to you **in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.**” Listen to how Paul Engle describes the all-important antidote when growing in our knowledge of the Lord:

How do we become recipients of this gift of an abundance of grace and peace? The text states, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” So the more we progress in knowing the Lord, the more grace and peace He pours into our lives. As John Calvin comments on this verse, “The more one progresses in the knowledge of God, the more every kind of blessing increases.” What an incentive to spend time in the Word, the divinely inspired book by which God reveals Himself in all the fullness of His acts and attributes. The more we discipline ourselves to digest and implement the Word, the more we grow in personal acquaintance with our Lord and the more grace and peace He showers on our lives.

Paul E. Engle, *Guarding and Growing, A Study in 2 Peter*

The fountainhead of the “mercy, peace and love” which the church in Jude so desperately needed is found in a rich, deepening knowledge of the loving and gracious character of God the Father and of Jesus our Lord.

Meditate and Pray: Sing to express your need for the Lord to open your eyes to know Him more and more through His word, using #141 in our *Trinity Hymnal*, especially verse 5:

1 God, in the gospel of his Son,
makes his eternal counsels known;
where love in all its glory shines,
and truth is drawn in fairest lines.

2 Here sinners of a humble frame
may taste his grace, and learn his name;
may read, in characters of blood,
the wisdom, pow'r, and grace of God.

5 O grant us grace, almighty Lord,
to read and mark your holy Word;
its truths with meekness to receive,
and by its holy precepts live.

Wed/Thurs: Read Jude 1-3**Back to Basics**

We just finished yesterday's notes by emphasizing the importance of promoting among God's people a God-centered knowledge of the Scriptures, with the prayer that they would grow to know the Lord as Father, and His Son as their Savior. As Jesus points out in John 17:3: "This is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the One you have sent."

No wonder Jude set about to put pen to paper to pursue diligently this very same goal of building up the saints in their shared salvation. His intention of building up his readers is a crucial and primary work, and the reason Jude describes his goal as one that he pursued "with all diligence" (KJV, verse 3).

What a death Jude must have died, to put aside this primary work and descend into the mud to defend the faith, urging those to whom he wrote to do the same. No one wants to go to battle in this way. But Jude was committed to "defending the faith, once for all delivered to the saints."

Meditate and Pray: Sing about the importance of defending our faith with the words of *Trinity Hymnal* #578:

1 The Son of God goes forth to war,
a kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar!
Who follows in his train?
Who best can drink His cup of woe,
triumphant over pain,
who patient bears his cross below,
he follows in His train.

2 The martyr first, whose eagle eye
could pierce beyond the grave;
who saw his Master in the sky
and called on Him to save.
Like Him, with pardon on His tongue
in midst of mortal pain,
he prayed for them that did the wrong!
Who follows in His train?

3 A glorious band, the chosen few
on whom the Spirit came,
twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
and mocked the cross and flame.
They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
the lion's gory mane;
they bowed their necks the death to feel:
who follows in their train?

4 A noble army, men and boys,
the matron and the maid,
around the Savior's throne rejoice
in robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heav'n
through peril, toil and pain;
O God, to us may grace be giv'n
to follow in their train.

Fri/Sat: Read Jude 14-23

Dangerous Symptoms

The verses which sum-up the grave danger which the church in Jude's day (and also in our day) faces are Jude 17-23. False teachers, scoffers, divisions, worldliness and a dead lack of experiencing the graces of God through the Holy Spirit – all describe the erring church of Christ visibly present (and, alas, struggling) on this earth. Such spiritual sickness is a constant danger. As Jude says:

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

To sum up the spiritual danger facing Jude's readers, and the enemies of the Gospel which he describes – consider the words of Dr. Stan Durham, in an article in *Banner of Truth* magazine written some years ago on Jude. My father highlights how such proud apostates reject biblical authority only to place their own sinful desires on the throne:

Twice in the passage beginning at verse sixteen Jude describes the behavior of those "who will follow their own desires ... who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit" (verses 18,19). They are "grumblers," and by being so they divide the saints by sowing discord ... They are "faultfinders," and thereby begin by slandering saints and end up as scoffers, slandering and blaspheming God Himself (Jude 8-10). They follow "their own evil desires" and, being totally self-centered, they inject a spirit of egotism and selfishness into the fellowship of the saints. They boast about themselves, and are proud, following the natural human instinct.

Meditate and Pray: Father, give us an emergency sensor for grumbling and faultfinding, in ourselves and others. May we grow in quick repentance within each day so that these sins would seem more and more alien to us – they are so common in our everyday conversations. We repent of trusting in our own human wisdom and relying on our own strengths. Keep us, indeed, from being these kind of scoffers who cause divisions, and give us a nose to detest even the whiff of these sins in your Church.