

What a marvelous book the Bible is! What comfort in heartbreak; light in our darkest trials; guidance in the midst of the deepest of perplexities; mighty restraint upon our sinful temptations to wander. How is it possible that *one* book would be sufficient to direct the spiritual paths *of every single one* of His children, shining as a light for *each single* footstep on the pilgrimage of *every* believer in *every* age throughout church history?!

No wonder the writers of Scripture are *not only acutely aware* that they are *writing* by the inspiration of the Spirit of God - but they also know that what they write is under the direct supervision and inerrant influence of God Himself. It is *His* book, and writers of His book are simply those who are being *reminded* of all that He has said and taught. By the Spirit they were *led* into the revelation of all new truth which God was and is pleased to reveal in what is now *His* closed canon.

“Canon” is a theological word which comes from the Greek “kanon,” meaning “rule.” Applied to the books of the Bible, it means an official list of books recognized as inspired and authoritatively God’s Word – not because the church said it, but because *their content* attested to the reality that they had the power, wisdom, and truthfulness that demonstrated clearly that God was their Author. How does Jeremiah 23:29 put it? Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

May God increase our awe as we see Him sovereignly superintend His Word through the book of Jude, in particular, in this week’s Bible notes.

Mon/Tues: Read Jude 1-3 & 1:20-21

Ultimately Simple, Eternally Profound

The Lord is in charge of His Word, inspiring its composition and preserving the integrity of that Word and even guiding the *thoughts* of the authors who wrote it. The first exhibit that proves to us that the Lord Himself is in charge of the writing of the book of Jude is to see how the Lord *changed the direction of this book*.

Think of it. Jude was deliberate and worked hard in focusing on the initial goal of his book. The King James version describes his laser focus in Jude v.3, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation...”

The idea is that Jude was earnest to apply himself to write a book that sought to build up the faith of those who would read his book. He viewed their faith as one with his own – equally precious and vital. I believe that Jude viewed what he had to say as a matter of a singular focus on Christ in His person and work. Just as Paul resolved to know “nothing but Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2), so Jude was determined to write about matters that would both glorify his Savior and encourage his readers’ faith.

But the Lord had other plans. Of course, nothing that the Lord would direct Jude to write was in any way *contradictory* to the salvation he shared with them. But the church to whom he wrote was under threat, hence the Lord directed Jude to change the direction of his book from positive encouragement to earnest warning.

Meditate and Pray: My father, Dr. Stanton Durham, laid out the principle which Jude followed in Jude 3 as follows:

In the pastor-prophet's role as watchman, the need to write a letter such as Jude sometimes is unavoidable. Jude's love for these brothers and sisters in Christ stems from true conviction. Hence, the key to the letter is found in Jude's words that the saints are to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to them ... Note that this faith has been given or entrusted by God Himself; it has been given once for all and is not to be added to or subtracted from, and it has been entrusted to all the saints.

It is not an elitist faith! It is ultimately simple, yet eternally profound. And we are reminded that this faith is not universal; It was not once for all entrusted to everybody. It has been entrusted to those who are called by God.

So, later, at the end of the letter (Jude 1:20-21) when Jude tells his friends to build themselves up in their most holy faith, he means that all of them are to be built up in that faith. This is the saints' response to God's love, calling and keeping mentioned in the salutation. As Michael Green puts it in his Tyndale Series Commentary on 2 Peter and Jude, "The Christian Apostolic tradition is normative for the people of God."

Stanton Durham, *Salutary Warnings out of Jude, Banner of Truth*, Nov. 1988

Wednesday: Read Jude 1:3-8 & Jude 1:11

Meekly Receiving Truth

One of the chief characteristics of the false teachers, who "crept in unnoticed," was that they were contemptuous of authority. No matter how glorious the personage; no matter how certain and threatening the doom promised to fall on them who rejected it, these false teachers could not be intimidated into any reverence towards those more spiritually authoritative than they – even blaspheming angels!

So, in fact, they denied the Lordship of Jesus Christ, including denying His authoritative Word (Jude 1:4). Having refused to bow the knee to the complete effulgence of power and might in the Son of God, they found it easy to reject church leaders and easy to elevate their own word, founded on their "dreams." What *they said and decided* trumped what the rest of God's Word said! *They* would not change the purpose and goal of their self-willed proclamations purporting to be from God. They would rely upon their *own* dreams and modes of revelation, falsely claiming these to be from God (Jude 1:8). What a contrast to Jude, who bowed the knee to the Lord's will by completely changing the direction and goal of his book – all because God told him to!

Meditate and Pray: May we always have a soft heart, willing to say – I was planning such and such, but God has led otherwise. Sing about bowing the knee, *not* to one's own will, but to the will of God revealed in Scripture. Use *Trinity Hymnal* # 141, especially making the last verse your prayer.

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.

Thurs/Fri: Read Isaiah 55:6-11 & Jude 1:24-25

The Divine Word

Turning to Jude's closing doxology, we begin our conclusion of our study of Jude by focusing on the doctrine of inspiration as it is described in Isaiah 55:10-11. Here are those verses:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

The message is simple, as EJ Young puts it in his commentary on these verses: “If in matters so transitory (as rain and snow bringing forth plants) God's power is effective, what will it not be with respect to the word that proceeds from His mouth?”

Young continues, describing Isaiah 55:11 as a great statement in the Old Testament on divine inspiration:

The thought is the same as in 2 Timothy 3:16, in which the Scriptures are said to be God-breathed. The reference is to propositional revelation, and the origin of this propositional revelation (as also in 2 Timothy 3:16) is in God Himself. The word originates in the mind of God, goes out from His mouth, and comes to man either in spoken or written form through the divinely appointed means of revelation. There is no magical power in this word ... The reason why it unfailingly accomplishes the purpose for which it is sent forth is that it is divine. It is the very expression of the truth itself and so cannot fail. It is, “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Sat/Sun: Read Jude 24-25**To Him Who is Able**

The amazing result of God's word, written by "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ," is that this little book, written to warn the church about the danger of false teaching (verse 3) also accomplishes the purpose for which Jude originally put pen to paper. He wanted to write of the "common salvation" which he shared with his readers. Now that purpose is accomplished as well, as well as successfully delivering a warning for his readers to be alert to the dangers facing the church.

Amazing! How was God able to re-direct the purpose of Jude and yet *actually accomplish the original purpose that Jude had in writing*? Jude must have been amazed to see the Lord re-shape his book to be not only a mighty weapon with which to fight false teaching but also accomplish the purpose which God had originally placed on his heart – to build up the church in greater knowledge of the salvation which they shared.

I base my hope that Jude's *heart burden* was fulfilled as well as God's *doctrinal concern* on the confidence expressed in Jude's doxology:

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, 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.

Jude begins with an absolute statement about God's power to keep us from sin: "He is able to keep you from stumbling ..."

This is much the same as Paul's absolute statement about God's faithfulness in 1 Corinthians 10:13:

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. **God is faithful**, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Here there is no room for viewing God's ability to keep us from being overwhelmed by sin's temptations as potential, or somehow dependent on anything in us. God is faithful, full-stop.

In the same way, God's power to keep us from stumbling is asserted by Jude as 100 percent iron-clad. At Christ's return, we will not only marvel at God's glory as a sure and eternal reality – we will also *forever agree with thankful hearts and voices* that we are only in heaven because of Christ's power to keep us, in the end, from stumbling. Such a promise does not mean that we can achieve sinless, trouble-free living in this life. Only at His return will we be eternally confirmed in the way of spotless holiness and eternal life - free from sin forever.

How did Charles Spurgeon illustrate this? He said that the Christian life in the here and now is akin to being a sailor on a ship. We will be tossed to and fro while on board. But a good ship will never surrender to the waves in such a way that we would be thrown overboard. Just so with Christ's church. We will fall, and bruise ourselves by rolling against objects on the deck. But we will never be lost at sea when it comes to God's saving purposes towards us in Jesus Christ. "The work which His goodness began, eternity will not erase."

Amen!