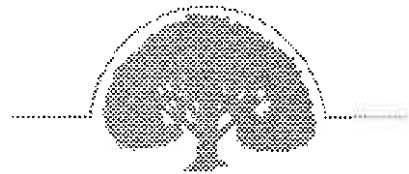


DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 1

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 12th 1999 (Lesson 1)

AN IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING LITTLE BOOK

Introduction Have you ever wondered how a preacher decides what to preach on? Some pastors tie the decision to **①current events** and they seek to help their people interpret what is going on in society or around the world in light of the Word of God. Other pastors want to address the **②great practical subjects** and topic areas that they know their people are dealing with (spiritual growth or discipleship, family life, money, relationships, career and job related things.) And they seek to bring the Scriptures to bear directly on those areas and to draw out, "what does the Bible actually say about money, family life and so forth?" Another focus that pastors often zoom in on is to speak about **③pure theology**, the doctrine of salvation, end times, the Holy Spirit, the nature and attributes of God, etc. Sometimes though, it occurs to the better preachers that the thing that is needed in the pulpit is some good old straight-up Bible exposition. So, we are going to go through the little letter of Jude together and look at it carefully. It is a rarely preached book, I think, for one reason perhaps because it is so short and "out of the way" in the canon of Scripture. It's actually quite easy to find though, because if you can find the last book in the Bible, Jude is just in front of Revelation! It is only 25 verses (451 words in the Greek text, as it was originally written).

Now to start right off, we have a bit of a mystery. Verse 1 says Ἰούδας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος ***Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ...*** or, to render it super-literally: "Joudas, Jesus Christ slave"--and that is about all we know for sure about this man. In fact, it is hard to be sure even which "Jude" this letter was written by. There are (by my count) at least six "Judes" in the New Testament. There is the one you have all heard of, Judas Iscariot; there are also Judas NOT Iscariot (John 14:22) also known as Judas the Apostle; Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37); Judas of Damascus (Acts 9:11); Judas Barsabbas (Acts 15:22) and finally Judas, half-brother of the Lord and also half-brother (therefore) of James. This is the one, which most conservative scholars¹ think wrote the letter. It would make sense, they surmise, that he would NOT gloat in having been the half-brother of Jesus because, as John records (7:5), all His brethren had to live with the stinging memory of NOT having believed in Him early on. Eugene Petersen's *The Message* actually translates this most literally: ***I, Jude, am a slave to Jesus Christ.***

¹ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* and Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* at least.

There is a real sense in which all true Christians are slaves. The NASB uses the word *bond-servant*, which is fine except that I think it softens the meaning of the word a little to our ears. It should not be softened at all. *Slave* is the best word. We are enslaved to the one who bought us.

We are not just *casually* affiliated with Jesus Christ.

We do not merely dabble in an *occasional* relationship with the Son of God.

We do not *privilege* Him with the honor of our friendship.

We are His slaves. The earliest apostles viewed themselves this way and open their letters sometimes this way. Slavery was a common and well-understood institution in the ancient world. No one questioned its validity because it was just a fact of life. There were slaves all around. They were *owned* by their masters, bought and sold often enough and considered, if valuable enough, still as property. There was the owner and the owner. This puts this letter in direct contradiction right off with our whole culture and experience. None of us have been slaves; none of us have *known* any slaves; and none of us (other than perhaps those with a slavery heritage in their background) can even envision very clearly at all what it would have been like to live in a slave society. But right in verse 1 of this letter is the picture of slavery and Jude has no hesitation at all to depict himself as a slave of the Son of God. I would like you to think about that.

A slave does not have the freedom to determine his own life's course. And he doesn't *view* himself as free to be autonomous. A slave does the bidding of his master, even though the master may be benevolent and full of love. A slave knows the boundaries of his movement.

If you wonder if we make too big a deal out of this one word title, understand that Peter (2nd Pet.2:1), James (James 1:1); John (Rev.1:1) and Paul (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1) ALL refer to themselves with the Greek word *slave* (δοῦλος)². I take it that when you have met the Lord Jesus Christ, known Him, walked with Him, seen Him on the cross and then raised from the dead and you have experienced all this in the flesh, personally, you feel *compelled* to view yourself and to **DEPICT** yourself as His slave. You are happy to do it!

If it is our desire at all, to *duplicate* or to *replicate* the attitudes and lifestyle of New Testament era Christians then we should consider viewing ourselves as bound to a master who owns us. We are fiercely independent Americans and I think it is hard to imagine ourselves as **OWNED** by anyone.

For her role in the critical years before and during the War for Independence, and for many Patriots she nurtured, Boston has been called "The Cradle of Liberty." In September 1768, her indomitable spirit was manifest in this declaration from the *Boston Gazette*:

"If an army should be sent to reduce us to slavery, we will put our lives in our hands and cry to the Judge of all the earth... Behold, how they come to cast us out of this possession which Thou hast

² The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament

given us to inherit. Help us, Lord, our God, for we rest on Thee and in Thy Name go against this multitude.”³

But as Christians there are some things wherein we might have to be a little UNAmerican; wherein we *transcend* our culture—by choice, not with a mania (the way we see in cults). But this translates into MAKING DECISIONS based upon the fact that the final court of appeal in my decision-making is not the court of my own pleasure or comfort or convenience. It is the court wherein I must stand before my master and give an account of my decisions to Him. And let us not forget the PRICE which He paid for us. We did not come cheap. He has the right of full ownership having paid IN FULL for us, title delivered.

Now, I do not believe that this should make us down-in-the-mouth people. Being a slave could only be horrible, if it were to be the slave of anyone else but Jesus Christ. And each of Peter, James, John, Paul and Jude (if this is the Jude who was half-brother of Jesus) were JUBILANT bondslaves of Jesus. They thought, “What could be better?” He bought me. He owns me! I would die for Him. (As the sister Cassie, in Columbine High School recently was faced with a split-second decision about living and dying for the Master!)

This letter is addressed simply to *those who are the called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ*. Called, beloved and kept. Three descriptions of true Christians. Jude was writing to a general audience, not just to Asian Christians or to Greek Christians or to Roman or Jewish Christians as some others of the epistles are targeted. He was writing to the called, the beloved and the kept. Who is that NOW? It is now whom it was then—all true followers of Jesus Christ. The body of true followers is universal and it knows no class distinctions or priorities. All Christians can be identified by having been *called*. The first expression “to those who have been called” reflects on the past—God’s sovereign call to salvation in His electing grace (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:24; Eph. 4:4; 2 Peter 1:3).⁴ The calling of God (as we spoke of recently in another sermon under the heading “effectual calling”) refers to the “summoning of [people] by His Word and the laying hold of them by His power.”⁵ The “call of God” envisions a God who approaches the individual, not the individual who seeks out God. God draws us, woos us, seeks us, finds us.

People who are interested in this letter are also described by Jude as BELOVED IN GOD THE FATHER—a reference to the present. The verbal form of “loved” indicates that God’s love was manifested in the past but also continues in the present.⁶ And, note that it is not ONLY to Christ to whom we are attached. The Father Himself loves us. He cares about

³ Bancroft, History, VI, 195.

⁴ The *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

⁵ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 184

⁶ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

us. He has drawn us to His bosom *through* the work completed by His only Son, Jesus—and in effect, makes US His children as well.

People who are interested in this letter are also described by Jude as being KEPT FOR JESUS CHRIST. His third description, “kept by Jesus Christ,” expresses the most positive assurance regarding the future, for He preserves those who trust Him till His coming (1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). The calling is the active work of the Holy Spirit; the love emanates from the Father (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14); and the keeping work is the ministry of the Son. Thus the entire Godhead is included in Jude’s salutation. The knowledge of God’s calling, loving, and keeping brings believers assurance and peace during times of apostasy.⁷

This letter is about some hard times that were happening. It is not a happy-go-lucky letter but the Christian life is nowhere in the Bible ever portrayed as light entertainment, as a party or even as therapy. It is portrayed—like it or not—as warfare, as a highly competitive athletic event, as conquest and as serving a master.

But please do not miss this: the benefits are unspeakable! They are incalculable. They are permanent. Following Jesus is the greatest quest, the greatest endeavor, the biggest project and the most rewarding investment that any person can ever engage in. Christ is so excellent. He will never cease to hold us close to Him, to protect us, to guard us, to strengthen us. This is the Owner of our souls. And we will explore more what was on the mind of this simple disciple of Jesus, Jude, in the coming weeks...

⁷ ibid.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 2,3

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 19th 1999 (Lesson 2)

OUR COMMON SALVATION

Introduction I have thought of this often in recent years: it seems to me that one of the great challenges of the Christian life is the issue of distraction. We *want* to have a simple walk with Jesus Christ and we *want* to have a single-minded focus on living for Him and doing the things that He says are important and leaving for later or for when we might have extra time, the things which He says are secondary. Isn't this what we *want* to do? But we become distracted. We start out intending to emphasize what we know to be important but somewhere along the line it is so easy to put too much energy, too much time or even too much money into things which are not of eternal significance but which we know are only of this world. This is a great challenge for Christians. We would like to "map out" our Christian life and get accomplished in my 20's what a 20 to 30 year old Christian should get done; in my 30's I wished I could have finished the agenda for what a 30 to 40 year old Christian should get done, and so forth... But all too often, I notice, Christians get sidetracked with other stuff—things they really never intended to end up devoting so much time to...

We have an example of this problem in Jude 3. But first notice Jude 2. Christians need a lot of *mercy and peace and love* especially if they find themselves living in an atmosphere like the one Jude's readers were living in.

By the way, you might notice that the blessing of *grace*, so often included in many New Testament letters, is excluded here. I don't want to give too much attention to that fact except to speculate that perhaps that is because when Jude thought of "grace" he thought of it's different *facets*¹: mercy, peace and love. It is an interesting suggestion: grace starts with God's mercy. The personal experience of grace brings the fruit of peace and of course, love dovetails nicely with the idea of grace and sometimes is almost a synonym!

Well, mercy is God's compassion. Do we need more of that than what we have now? Peace is God's gift of quiet confidence in the work of Jesus. Do we need more of that quiet confidence? Love is God's generosity in granting us His favors and meeting our needs. Do we need some more of that?

¹ Edwin A. Blum, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, XII, 387.

We need large amounts of mercy, peace and love. Why? Because we're up against things which attack and wear down mercy. We're up against unforgiveness and grudges. We're up against even Christians and churches within our own movement which seem to "report card" everyone else. "If you blow it, you are all done in the Christian life." We need big amounts of mercy to spread around. We need it for ourselves (because we're still sinners) and we need it to *spread* to other people, maybe non-Christians who are searching.

We need big doses of peace because there is turmoil, depression and an awareness (at least) of psychological dysfunction that is unprecedented. And I'm talking about in the church (let alone the world). Jude's readers needed peace to sustain them in dealing with the problems of false teachers rising up *from their own midst*. We need it to sustain us with our own perplexing questions: why are there so many "brands" of Christians and why is there so little unity? How can Christians allow themselves to get so worldly sometimes? Why don't *other* people recognize the leaders that I trust? These are troubling issues for Christians and we need peace when one of these questions haunts us.

We need big doses of love. Need I illustrate why? We need to receive mercy and sense it (maybe our music is a good tool to remind us regularly of God's mercy!) And we need to relax in the peace of God. But we also need to receive love because I know that sometimes you just feel unloved! Sometimes a Christian person just needs to feel that someone loves him. And if that Christian is in the trenches in the Christian life, and they're out there fighting for Christ, battling the flesh, wrestling with the devil, struggling with even other Christians sometimes—he just needs to be loved and to sense that he is loved.

I like the expression, "may these things *be multiplied to you*. To whom? Well, once again we do not know. So I think we can say, to all Christians ultimately (although at the moment of writing Jude undoubtedly has someone or some group of believers in mind who are struggling with spiritual infiltrators...) But the word *plethuno*, multiplied or added, is neat. Jude's readers needed more than what they had. I need more than what I've got now. Any church needs more than what it has at the moment, especially if they're in a time of trouble. The implication is that we never "arrive" completely in the *mercy, peace and love* department. This would be a great thing for us to work into our regular prayer time for other believers and other churches: "O Lord, please give [whomever] more mercy, more peace and more love." One might say, "that's greedy." But the challenges of the Christian life need constant refueling of mercy, peace and love. And maybe we need MORE mercy than the portion we are experiencing now... It is a good blessing to wish upon somebody.

Then in verse 3 Jude says, *Beloved* (which is how he described them in vs.1), And please note that having just wished upon them MORE love, he tells them that *he* loves them. I take it from this that sometimes the thing we are praying for, for someone, is a thing that we ourselves can contribute to—at least in little ways!

while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you... about something else. This is what I mean by distraction. Jude, evidently, intended to write to his readers a more basic, doctrinal letter. Maybe he intended something along the lines of the book of Romans or the book of Ephesians. But he becomes aware of an urgent need, something about which he has become alerted that is non-routine.

But what is it that he *had* hoped to write about? He calls it ***our common salvation*** and ***the faith*** in verse 3. Our common salvation is the faith that we all share—it is the same thing from one heart/mind to another. Our personalities differ. Our cultures differ. Our ages differ. Our backgrounds and upbringings differ. They did back then between believers too. But the faith I have in Jesus Christ is the same thing you have in Jesus Christ. The faith-experience, the part of my life that one day was dead and the next day woke up alive, is the same inside me than that which is inside you, if you are actively trusting in Jesus Christ. \

Of course in the first century when this letter was penned, they didn't have Baptists and Pentecostals and Congregationalists and Presbyterians and Methodists and Mennonites and so forth. They just had basic Jesus-followers (two kinds: Jewish and Gentile) and then pretty soon they started having cults too. The Jesus-followers were exhorted to remain basic Jesus-followers. They were exhorted, while remaining loving and patient and long-suffering, to ***contend earnestly*** (a wrestling word, used only herein the NT) ***for the faith***. Basically, the Christian faith cannot be changed. It's foundational truths are not negotiable. Jude is not the only one to say this. Paul and John say it too:

*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who **called** you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9)*

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. (2nd John 9)

Now, contending earnestly does NOT mean a number of things. It does not mean that they were to become nasty or mean-spirited. Neither are we. We are not licensed to place the fruit of the Spirit in suspension while we go out on a crusade to earnestly contend for the faith. It also does not mean that have the right to get so fine-tuned in our particular understanding of ***the faith*** that we separate from everybody who has any theological disagreement with us at all. This is the job, in a church, of good elders. Balance and knowing what is a primary, contributing doctrine to ***our common salvation*** and what is a secondary doctrine—takes discernment. Young Christians do not possess it. Every church needs elders who sense what is important and what is of secondary importance. They can balance between unity and love and drawing the line and saying, "No, this is theological compromise." Unfortunately, that balance is far too elusive today.

In every major movement, which names the name of Jesus, there is fracture today. It is a contradiction to what the Spirit is doing, I am afraid.

The faith has ***once for all been delivered to the saints***. The set of foundational doctrines was in place even in the first century. It would take centuries to really decide what they were, in refined form, but before the apostles died off there was a sense in which the basics of Christianity were known and settled: the nature of God, the nature of man—that he has been ruined by a spiritual reality and disease called “sin”, that God the Son had to come to pay the price of sin for anyone and for everyone who would simply believe in it; that the Holy Spirit then came after Jesus, to replace His actual presence until He comes again; that the Scriptures were profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness. That’s just about it.

Our understanding of all these things is not something we (or people we admire), dreamed up. It was ***delivered*** to us. Who is the “us?” Us is the ***saints***. Someone may say, “I thought the saints were super-Christians?” Not in the New Testament. I’m not sure when the word “saint” became re-defined to mean that but in the New Testament it means those set apart by God for Himself. That is all Christians, all believers—not just the super-victorious. Christians have had the BODY OF TRUTH of the faith handed to them, as a gift by God. We are the called, you will remember--not the self-enlightened.

We are saying today that it is our duty, our privilege and our task to struggle to keep our own understanding of Christianity, and anyone else’s whom we can influence, in balance. We need to be viewed as a place which offers and maintains general Christianity. We are committed to a common salvation of a basic, Bible-based and Bible-defined ***faith***.

The nature of God

The nature of man

The mission of

God's Son

Justification by

faith alone

The work of the

Holy Spirit

The Scriptures are

inspired/profitable

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 4

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 26th 1999 (Lesson 3)

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Introduction Sometimes the most dangerous times, are the times when people feel the safest. The Greeks were lulled into a false sense of security when they wheeled into their fortress a giant wooden horse in about 1200 B.C., left in tribute by the Trojan army—who, seemingly, had deserted the field. Alertness was non-existent on that October 12th night 539 B.C. when Belshazzar, King of Babylon was slain by the Medo-Persians as they snuck into the city and took it by surprise (Daniel 5:30). Watchfulness was lax on Sunday morning, December 7th, 1941 in Pearl Harbor. All of these are times when people had a sense of security only to be ambushed.

What has this to do with modern churches, or with your Christian life? I admit this is not a happy-go-lucky topic—the possibility of getting ambushed... But what we have here is a short letter written, probably, by Jude the half-brother of Jesus and James, who really *wanted* to write a letter about positive things (*our common salvation*). Instead he has been diverted to address something which has become very urgent. In verse 4 we read the urgency. In whatever assembly of believers this was, there had arisen a clique of people who had become influential. This may be hard to imagine—but it was happening. Through whatever means, this group of people *crept* in. That is interesting. I wonder how they did it? They were not real Christians but were masquerading as such. And evidently, they were pulling it off. And as they won people's confidence they began teaching that since in Christ we experience the grace of God, we can therefore *indulge* the flesh and act immorally however we want. Since, they said, in Jesus the Messiah all people can now receive redemption freely why not freely indulge the flesh? There is a certain logic to this. Before Jesus came, and before the apostles began to spread the Gospel of grace, the Jews were not particularly strident about the idea that people could come to know God freely. No, then, you had to subscribe to the law of Moses and keep it. Now, the apostles were going from place to place and offering a whole new thing: salvation by grace, freely received on faith alone. By one kind of logic—which evidently this clique was teaching—if conversion was free, what obligation to deny the flesh can there be? This thinking is: if I am saved apart from any good things I can do, why not enjoy the flesh now and then enjoy redemption later? It makes a certain kind of twisted sense, don't you think? There were false prophets in the Old Testament who taught the same kind of twisted logic (See Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11; 23:17; Ezekiel 13:10, 16; Micah 3:5).

But Jude was hearing fire alarms all over the place with this. It had evidently really started to spread and so he wrote to the real Christians and was warning them. He says this about these people: 1) **they were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation.** 2) They were **ungodly.** And in mutating the real teaching on grace into **licentiousness,** 3) they were actually **denying Jesus Christ.**

Marked out can mean that from eternity God wrote down the destiny of apostates, the doctrine of “reprobation.” We see this indicated elsewhere, for example in 1st Peter 2:7,8 and 2nd Peter 2:3. Or it might just refer to previously written predictions about the apostate (as the NIV renders it). In any case, it is bad news for people like this. And yes, it is mystifying. It is one of those things about life that the Scripture reveals that is hard to understand, but which we receive as true. It is a hard-to-understand fact of life.

Understand that this is not far off today from what some seemingly Christian people *want* to believe. It is easy to slip into the idea that well, I am a Christian. I can live however I want. I’ve got fire insurance. I can always go over to some other church if I make a choice that the church doesn’t approve of. I can always just ask forgiveness, at any time, and be fine. This is the height of presumption. It is the starkest evidence that a person really does not yet understand the cross. Thinking that grace can be somehow USED to maximize pleasure, demonstrates that the person has not yet really experienced grace.

The problem is I believe the seed of this lies in all of us. All of us are capable of subtly, slowly buying into this. When I was a youth pastor, some twenty years ago, I was confronted by a man who had left his wife and children and seduced one of my high school seniors. They two of them came to see me and he said to me (and another pastor on staff of that church), “Since I am getting a divorce from my wife, I am now free to indulge a new relationship with ____.” And he tried to quote Bible verses to validate his intent.

Now, it occurs to me that a couple of possible reactions Christians today may have to this passage might be—

1. Can this be me?
2. Is this you? Or, should we watch each other carefully.

To the first question I will not too quickly exempt anyone from this. If it were not a real, live possibility it would not be in the Bible and it wouldn’t be such an urgent warning. It must be a possibility to have stealthy people in our midst. I think it is unlikely in this church, but we should never go to sleep about doctrine and about how to translate doctrine into practical living. It is in the *translation* stage that Jude tells us there can be danger.

You can be assured that you will not become someone like this, by always “re-booting” your own personal, private, secret beliefs about what gives you the right to call yourself a Christian. I have the right by the full payment made for my sins by Jesus Christ on the cross. I also have the right by virtue that I CONTINUE TO SEEK CHRIST. As long

as I remain in pursuit of Him, even though I grow weak sometimes; even though I admit to doubts sometimes; even though I get ticked off sometimes—I am still seeking the Savior. I still pray. I still read my Bible. I still seek out fellowship with other believers and I *prefer* it to fellowship with non-Christians. These are the marks of a person who is working to avoid a hardened heart. As long as I can identify these signs, I can rest assured I will not become a denier of Jesus Christ.

As to the second question, “Is it you?” I am not suggesting we should embark on a paranoia campaign and start scanning everyone with a suspiciousness. Not at all. In fact, such an atmosphere in a church kills joy and stomps out the feeling of grace. The best churches, I believe, are the churches with a good balance of wisdom and discernment but a light-heartedness at the same time. We need to be so in love with the truth of saving grace and what we expect it to produce in people that we can smell error and false teaching immediately! At the same time, we are not always *talking* about false teaching and error. We major on teaching the truth. And as we grow and welcome more and more people into our midst, we must remember that we are not perpetuating traditions here. We are perpetuating the Gospel, living for Christ, slow, hard-won change of heart and a godly love and interest in the best interests of each other.

Membership in our church is one safe-guard we maintain in all of this. We insist that membership include heart-felt agreement with the doctrine and the spirit of what we are about. Anyone can attend and taste of the good things of the Lord. But not anyone can be a member. It is a privilege and although we don’t talk about it real often, we are committed to a concept of membership founded on our church *Covenant*.

If we encountered a problem like we read about in the Book of Jude. How would we deal with it? Well, this is where it is so important to have godly elders and a plurality of them shepherding the body. This kind of work cannot fall on one man or on two. You need a team of men who are loving and wise, both. We would deal with it carefully and patiently, but decisively. Too much is at stake with the quality of our basic teachings—the children God has given us to pass our faith on to; non-Christian seekers who might make their way into our ministry—do they see committed followers of Jesus within these walls?

But let us never be naive. We are not immune from infiltration. I think we have wise elders and a general watchfulness that is healthy. At the same time, we must always be careful to teach and insist that the grace-filled life seeks and loves holiness. It does not strut. But it loves holiness. The genuine grace of God compels its recipient to seek to be more Christ-like. Do you wish to be more Christlike?

Jude 4

Bad people...

**who *look like* Christians
(but aren't...)
who *creep in***

SYNONYMS

sneaky,
stealthy,
infiltrators

To teach:

SINCE
↓
THEN

*People can be
saved by the
grace of God*

**We can translate
That into
LICENSE
To fully indulge all
*immorality***

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 5,6

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 10th 1999 (Lesson 4)

What's Not Right is Not Right

Introduction Preachers love to remind their congregations that God loves them, that there is a real place called heaven, that Christians are the most wonderful people on earth, that the Holy Spirit really *is* working inside of us, that God will protect us and provide for us, that He *will* really use us for the Kingdom if we just make ourselves available, that each Christian has a spiritual gift, that in Christ we have joy and peace and complete forgiveness of sins...

Just like in the news, I would love to just think about news items like "the Redskins won last week," "my mutual fund earned a lot of money last week," "some Christians won a major Constitutional law suit in California," "they closed a prison in some city in the Midwest because there weren't enough inmates to keep it going," "10,000 people came to Christ at the latest Billy Graham Crusade," "a huge drug lord in Columbia ended his cocaine empire because he truly found the Lord," and "the Beatles are getting back together for a new album with Julian Lennon sitting in for his Dad..."

I wish we preachers could just be positive all the time and focus on good things: like the apostle Peter when he wrote what he said in 1st Peter 1 and where he says in vs.12 ***I shall always be ready to remind you of these things (vss.3-11) and to stir you up by way of reminder (vs. 13b)*** about the good things...

Jude had wanted to write a general letter about the good things of the Christian faith, what he called ***our common salvation***. In Jude 5 though, he writes ***Now I desire to remind you...*** Christians sometimes need to be reminded of things we already know. Probably more than 50% of what I actually say to people in this church are things they have heard before. The Christian life isn't always learning *new* things, in fact if you have been a Christian for a number of years you probably find that it is not that often that you DO hear something new. A new Christian hears new things all the time. A stalled-out or carnal Christian maybe hears new things frequently too. A mature Christian though, invests a good bit of time in being ***reminded*** and ***RE-reminded*** of things. WHAT things?

We need to be reminded of basic Bible truths, basic doctrines. We tend to forget. We tend to get distracted, even seduced by seemingly *newer* and flashier ideas. And seduction, of course, is the very problem that Jude is very concerned about (see vs.4 and

Acts 20). Jude takes the approach to refer to several events—three in particular—recorded or alluded to in the Old Testament:

- 1) People whom God destroyed, killed or allowed to be killed, right after Israel had been delivered from Egyptian slavery—people who had *seen* the hand of God work! Exodus 32:28; Numbers 14:29ff.
- 2) Angels, who some time in the distant past, actually went into rebellion against their appointed order and “place” and the God who had both made them and assigned them their stations. Genesis 6:4; Job 1:6;2:1; (also the pseudepigraphical book of Enoch¹). “Apparently some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active among mankind as demons.”²
- 3) The metropolitan area of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:4ff.

Now, strictly speaking, the subject of which he reminds his readers is that *the Lord...destroyed those who did not believe*. There cannot be a more blunt, more direct, more straightforwardly put reason to believe in whatever He says to believe in. I am sure there would be many today who would object and say, “He cannot do that” or “A real God would not do that and wouldn’t even insist that people believe Him about things.” I’m sure there was just a high *proportion* of such disbelievers back in Jude’s day too.

We see three kinds of blackness here--Unbelief can be summarized as that which 1) flies boldly in the face of divine evidence (the first example); 2) that which also has plenty of evidence and yet succumbs to the pride of life and refuses God’s order and sovereignty (the second example); 3) that which says, “I just want to do what my eyeballs or peer pressure or glands say to do at the moment.” We need to be reminded of the blackness of unbelief. Unbelief is to hear of the Lord and His salvation and to deliberately reject it, to *choose* to not embrace it. As widely as the Gospel is heard today and marketed, it is terrifying how many are choosing not to embrace it and believe it. As Martin Luther wrote about Satan in the hymn “A Mighty Fortress” “For lo, his doom is sure.”

Note in vs. 6 that there is approaching *the great day*. On that day, there will be no one to dispute whether the day is real or not. There will be no debates and no second chances, “O Lord, *noowwww* I believe.” The coming of a future time when all things are clear and where the invisible becomes fully revealed is a basic truth and doctrine of the Christian faith. It is central to all that we believe and we order our lives in accordance with it. Before I came to Christ I used to entertain a Star-Trek-like cosmology, that the future just goes on and on endlessly, governed by random chance and the basic goodness of an

¹ **PSEUDEPIGRAPHA.** The term is used to describe those Jewish writings which were excluded from the OT Canon and which find no place in the Apocrypha. For the purpose of this article the term will also exclude the sectarian documents of the Qumran library (Dead Sea Scrolls). Unlike the Apocrypha, which were included in the Greek Scriptures, these pseudepigrapha never approached canonical status. They nevertheless played an important role during the intertestamental period and are valuable for the light they shed on the Jewish background of the NT. While not all the writings included in this group are pseudepigraphic in the strict sense of writings published under assumed names (Pseudonymity), the majority of them are and the name is therefore generally appropriate. It will be convenient to divide them roughly between Palestinian and Jewish-Hellenistic groups, as their place of origin strongly affected their form and purpose. Because of a dominant thread which runs through the majority of these writings they have aptly been described as the literature of the apocalyptic movement. (*The New Bible Dictionary*).

² Edwin Blum, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol XII, p. 390.

evolving mankind. The Bible says nothing about this. It is fantasy and in fact, wicked fantasy. Any science fiction which excludes the realities of the future must ultimately be labeled as "unbelief." That is why C.S. Lewis's science fiction trilogy was so wonderful. He imagined an interplanetary future WITH Jesus Christ at the center.

As we say, sometimes the preacher must remind the people of certain realities and truths which are not altogether pleasant. Reality does not just include the pleasant. It factors in all that truly IS and Jude told his readers that there were people *creeping into* [the church] *unnoticed* who were historical-like and future-like at the same time. Beware of them, Jude says. Don't let them get a foothold, Paul says. Disassociate yourselves from them, John says.

Our task here, is to promote anything which encourages faith. Faith is the opposite of unfaith, of unbelief. When you feel doubt and even worse snaking into your heart, deal with it. Access anything—songs, retreats, counseling, more preaching and teaching, missionary stories or testimonies, a new small group, more Bible reading, Scripture memory—anything which will nurture the growth of your faith. Faith is the secret and invisible reliance upon the God of the Bible and upon His Son. It is the conviction that what He says He will do, He will do. Period. Faith and unswerving believing in Him is a thing which must be grown inside of you. And it doesn't grow too well by itself. It must be cultivated and nurtured. The failure to do so, and the consequences of not growing your own faith are total and eternal.

Lesson 5 is missing

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 9ff

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 24th 1999 (Lesson 6)

What's Not Right is Still Not Right (pt. 2)

Introduction Most people would refuse the suggestion (if it were made to them) that they are gullible. I think most folks like to believe that they are pretty savvy about things. This is particularly true of us “smarty-pants” Christians who go around knowing about the future (because we read and believe the Bible); who know the general engineering of people’s motivations (because we read and believe the Bible); and who know something of what God expects of people (because we read and believe the Bible). So, we *especially* might chafe if someone were to suggest that we can be gullible...

We also like to believe, as Christians, that the church is a safe place—a place where we can let our guard down and where there is no reason to be watchful or skeptical of fellow church members. It is supposed to be that way, after all. Some of us are reading these days Larry Crabb’s new book, *The Safest Place on Earth* wherein he talks about how the church should be a place where real spiritual friendships are grown, where through those spiritual friendships souls are cared for and cured and where people IN those spiritual friendships mutually depend on the Spirit together to hear God’s voice.¹ We want to have only good anticipation for what the church community does for us... We don’t want to experience anything that might make us wary of fellow church members...

But then we come to a book of the New Testament like the book of Jude. And by verse 20 the writer will arrive some happy, positive, uplifting words. But until we arrive at verse 20 we’ve got to see what was on this writer’s heart and on his mind. Because he is worried... He is worried that from within the family of followers of the Lord Jesus Christ there will arise some pretty evil guys. It may seem difficult to imagine, because like most first century churches we are a fairly small church. We pretty much like each other and if you want to, you can pretty much know everyone here. There is a lot of *unofficial* “networking” and community that goes on in our church. It isn’t deliberate or programmed, it just happens. I hope we never lose that. It is *natural* for us to trust each other and to depend on each other. So it is unsettling to read about a sister church—the one which Jude was writing to—which had within it, men (males are mentioned, not females) who are apostate. From within the church there would arise men who would wield such a pervasive influence that it would endanger the church’s continuance.

¹ Larry Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth*, Word Books, 1999.

Now Jude has painted a picture of these infiltrating men which is very black. In verse 8 he calls them dreamers who go the full route in immorality and invite into their own attitudes a spirit of defiance and cursing. Even to the point of cursing angels. He uses an interesting allusion to something which evidently was written in an ancient writing called *The Assumption of Moses* (only small portions of which have survived²). The devil, it seems, claimed the right to Moses' body—either for some reason because of Moses' sin of murder (Ex. 2:12) or because the devil considered himself the lord of the earth. Daniel 10:13,21; 12:1 and Revelation 12:7 and 1st Thess.4:16 mention the archangel Michael. He is a great angelic prince and yet he has respect for celestial powers. These are events and matters of cosmic proportion. I don't care how charismatic and mystical a person might be, we really know very little about these things. And we should always respect the spiritual realm. I do not say we should cringe in fear of it because we are children of God, invested with the very Spirit of God. But a disputing approach to spiritual things is out of order—even Michael did not argue. He simply said *The Lord rebuke you*. He is our shield. He is our strength. He is our authority and our "bar." Any victories we see render to Him the credit and the praise.

But the fully carnal mind in a man—even a church member—gives us verse 10 of the book of Jude. Eventually depravity, if it is given in to, takes a person to a state where he simulates being an animal. And in so doing, *they are destroyed*. This is like what Paul says in Romans 1:22-25: *Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

You see dear ones, God made man *more* than the animals. Man is possessed of a higher and more Godlike nature. But if man wishes, and allows himself, he can become more like animal than like God. And it is through *choosing* to become so—or in the case of the book of Jude, letting others seduce you into it. It is a great peril. It earns the destroying hand of God and it isn't a "maybe." It is a certainty. This is one of the reasons why I believe our ministry to our youth is so important. They need for the more mature to spend as much time as we can with them and instruct them in wisdom. They are the ones who are most easily seduced and wooed by the evil forces in the world. It always shocks me when older people in a church turn cold on the younger people. I have seen it in churches before coming here and it is such a far cry from the heart of God! Our ministries to our young people are not that strong. I think we are losing our young people, in fact.

In verse 11 in light of their coming judgment (here's real cause to get depressed if you were one of these), Jude refers to a "triad" of illustrations in pronouncing *Woe* (οὐαὶ, ouai) upon these apostates: 1) Like Cain they devised their own way of worshipping, envious of others or had a murderous spirit (cf. 1st John 3:12); 2) Balaam, under the guise of serving

² Edwin Blum, *The Expositors' Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, p. 391.

God, encouraged others to sin, at the same time seeking to gain monetarily from their error (cf. 2nd Peter 2:15,16; Numbers 22:21-31). Jude's infiltrators were also greedy for money... 3) In Numbers 16 we read of Korah's rebellion against Moses and Aaron, refusing to acknowledge that God had delegated authority to these leaders—and so their rebellion was actually against God Himself. Destruction of the insurrection was certain.³

All of this illustrates the value of knowing the Biblical stories, which leads us to believe that a regular program of Bible reading is a real good thing for a person to do. When you become a Bible reader you access the wisdom of learning from all the kinds of things that have happened to God's people. It helps for today. It gives me insight into life NOW, in 1999.

In verses 12 through 16 we have more description of these men, very interesting indeed. You will notice in vs. 12 the mention of *love feasts*. Evidently these were meals probably followed by the Lord's Supper each time. They were the most intimate and closest gatherings of the early Christians. These infiltrators, however, had gained entrance and were there too. They were *hidden reefs*, dangerous, fearless. They could shipwreck a man's or a woman's faith. We have here more word pictures: rainless clouds and fruitless, dying trees—beautiful perhaps but useless. He even calls them *doubly dead* or, uprooted. Then he calls them *wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam...* John Calvin commented, "It was to shew [demonstrate] that being inflated with pride, they breathed out or rather cast out [upchucked] the scum of high-flown stuff of words in grandiloquent style."⁴ They are also like shooting stars, noticeable but without course or direction. Their destiny is *the black darkness, reserved for them forever*.

Our need is this, from this passage.

We need to not be gullible.

We need to be watchful and on guard spiritually, which means prayer needs to always be a high priority in our church.

We need to fully realize that we are not of this lot and we have no interest in people like this, other than to share the good news with them and seek to rescue them.

We need to appreciate that the spiritual realm involves far more goings-on than we realize.

We need to know that our destiny is for glory and for the presence of the Lord. We KNOW about these things but we are not of this world.

Even as we try to emphasize joy in our church and happiness and even fun, we never go to sleep; we never come to think that we are invulnerable to attack. We are not. We are no better than Jude's first readers. By God's grace we will be awake and empowered by the Spirit to always keep our focus on Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

³ This summary comes from Edward Pentecost, in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 921

⁴ Calvin's Commentary on the Book of Jude, 1549.

The "Triads" of Jude

To:	the called	
	the beloved	3
	the kept	
	mercy	
	peace	3
	love	
The	ungodly persons	
apostates :	licentiousness twisters	3
	denying Christ	
Earlier	Israel, out of Egypt	
apostates :	evil angels	3
	Sodomites/Gomorrhahites, etc.	
Fantasizers:	flesh defilers	
	authority rejectors	3
	Majesty revilers	
	Cain goers	
	Balaam buyers	3
	Korah joiners	

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 14 to 19

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: November 28th, 1999 (Lesson

7

But You, Beloved...

Introduction Sometimes humility finds expression in realizing what you are not. I say realizing not saying what you are not... It humbles me to give thanks to the Lord, that in His grace, I am not one of the fellows that we read about in the book of Jude. Now, we need to be *careful* with this thought because the Pharisee in Jesus' parable of the tax-collector and the Pharisee, thought the same thing! He said, **God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people...** (Luke 18:11a). But I am thinking more of that old expression, "but for the grace of God, go I." The book of Jude outlines a kind of person who is very scary. He is scary because of his fate and what he will face--the judgment of God. He is the kind of person who, in *this* life, practices a kind of evil rarely described to the degree that it is in the book of Jude. Jude calls this dangerous and special *breed* of trouble-maker **ungodly, rejectors of authority, revilers of angels, twisters of grace** into an evil sense of do-whatever-feels-good, **deniers of Christ**, like **unreasoning animals** and in **Jude 14** targets of the second coming of Jesus Christ, in **vs. 15 grumblers who find fault, arrogant or flattering speakers** and then in **vs. 18 mockers**, and all over the place **followers after their own lusts**. I want this message to turn the corner—**But you, beloved...** but I want to say a few final things about the spirit of these mockers. Although I am glad I am not one of these, I do not view myself as immune to falling into the *spirit* of trouble. You and I need to IDENTIFY and shun these kinds of things.

- 1) **Grumbling.** It is so easy to find fault. Everyone has some. No one, even Christians, have it all together. No church has it all together. Grumbling is a low-volume, negativity which focuses on the short-comings of another person or on a ministry. It has no business in the body of Christ. You will not get everything your way around here. I surely do not, and sometimes I have struggled with grumbling. But as I think about it I realize that there is nothing I deserve by means of my own righteousness or position. If I am disappointed with something, I need to shun grumbling, take it to the Lord and leave it with Him.
- 2) **Using conversation to boost my own position.** This is being an **arrogant speaker or flattering** someone to place myself in a higher position in *their* mind. It is not a thing bred in a person by the Holy Spirit. It is a thing of the flesh.
- 3) **Mocking.** This is cynicism and sarcasm. Now this is convicting because I must confess that sometimes I struggle with this. And the Lord has been talking to me about it too. And when I see it in other Christians it grieves my spirit. It is not a feature of a wise or Spirit-filled person (although discernment is). Mockery and making fun of people is a fleshly thing, a carnal thing.

Jude knew the warnings of Paul and Peter and John, as he alludes to in vs. 17. Those apostles warned other early Christians time and again against divisions between Christians based upon fleshly things. Paul and Peter and John wanted the early churches to be supportive of one another and unified. There are evidences in the New Testament of churches doing just that. Jude appeals to things that the other apostles had written, no doubt already in circulation, and tells HIS readers to heed those warnings. Unity is an important thing. It is almost a cliché today perhaps, but it is still important.

When I hear about new denominations or church groups starting up, I sometimes wonder, “What’s so wrong with the old ones?” And so often I believe there is a lot of ego tied up the starting of new groups. Not always, but often. I have seen many new groups split off out of established churches and there is almost always a strong leader at the helm. I’m not saying they’re all ego-maniacs but we need to always prayerfully check our egos and our agendas by the Word and in the Spirit.

Now we’re about to turn the corner in this book, but before we do let me say that the book of Jude contains some of the most sobering and serious “sacred writing” in the whole Bible. It is unsettling to imagine bad people lurking around the edges of one’s church, let alone arising from within one’s own congregation. I think that for a Spirit-filled Christian it is unnatural to be *suspicious*. Most of us would rather believe the best about people than to find out that someone was really trying to do us harm. This is especially true within the body of Christ. However, Jude tells us that we should not be surprised; and actually this warning theme comes up fairly frequently in the New Testament. We could decide that that was then and this is now and now we have no need to be so watchful today... Rather, it is good to be discerning and awake about what’s going on in our church. A real, Spirit-filled church will focus, Jude says I think, on seven priorities. The Spirit is weaving these things into our church and all Christian churches—people who do not know Him, Jude calls (especially these deceivers and mockers) *devoid of the Spirit*. They do not have the Spirit of God inside of them. And so the practical logic here for us is, why act like someone who does not HAVE the Spirit when we do? But He turns the corner in this little epistle by saying *But you, beloved* and he says it twice (vss. 17 and 20). Now the term *beloved* is a special word. It means “the loved.” No Christian needs worry about whether he or she is loved because every Christian is cherished by God Himself. Every true Christian has been bought at a terrible price by God—through the atonement of His Son, Jesus. And I believe that the apostles really loved the church people. They loved the people of God. I hope that when you come into this church and get yourself settled, that you start to feel accepted and appreciated and needed and valued and missed (if you’re not here for some reason)—and, just LOVED. Jude called his readers *beloved*. And he indicates seven things that came to his mind that they needed—surrounded and even infiltrated by bad people—to focus upon. You could say this is a seven-fold “mission statement” from Jude.

The first is to remember the Word, as we already read in vs. 17. He doesn’t actually say it that way but what the other apostles had uttered, he underscores. Many things the other apostles had written would BECOME what we call the Word of God. It is

good to remember the Word. That presupposes that we *know* the Word and that we can identify relevant things that the apostles said. I'm not talking about a *mania* where we go around robotically quoting Bible verses all the time. I am talking about being able to call up from memory relevant things the apostles said, when you need them.

If there is a conflict going on in the church, a splitting apart into divisions and some people can be identified as trouble-makers, you need to remember what the apostles said.

If there is confusion about what is moral and what is immoral, you need to remember what the apostles said.

On a much more secondary level, I think it is useful and valuable to remember the solid and well-grounded things said by reputable Bible teachers. We obviously do not revere the words of J. Vernon McGee or Charles Spurgeon or John Calvin or Martin Luther the way we would the words of Paul and Peter and John. But it is good to remember things you've read by good Bible teachers over the years and to draw upon those bits of wisdom. Anything which helps us bring the Word of God to bear on problems is useful!

The second strategy Jude mentions is to build on the foundation of faith – ***building yourselves up on your most holy faith***. This is personal edification. We not only watch out for trouble-makers we give attention to ourselves and this gives us strength. It means we do things which build up our faith, not grumble at each other and not make fun of each other. We place a premium on things which recognize the foundation of faith which every Christian has (hearing testimonies tells us how people started in the faith). And then we seek to contribute to a person's growth from there. Not everyone has the same testimony but everyone has the same kind of faith which we were originally saved with. We give attention to what kinds of things will move build us up and make us stronger.

The third strategy for keeping a good focus and for protecting ourselves against internal deception is to pray in the Spirit. I do not believe at all that this is a reference to speaking in tongues. I believe it means praying out of a heart which is indwelt and illuminated and filled with the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean uttering some other language. It means that when confusion or factions begin in the church, we go to prayer. We don't advertise it or make a big program out of it; we just DO it. We spend more than five minutes doing to. I don't know about you, but I TAKE a lot longer than five minutes of prayer just to settle my mind and get IN the Spirit. Sometimes it takes a lot longer than five minutes. We are too human most days to just JUMP into the Spirit on a moment's notice. That's not because He is elusive, just that we are still in the flesh. But when we pray in the Spirit we are doing something that dove-tails with ***building up our faith***. It is amazing to me that we do not want to pray more as a body. It is our strongest and most powerful tool and weapon. I cannot imagine launching into any new project or going to any Christian meeting which does not begin and end in prayer. We must pray in the Spirit. It is a vital part of how to stay positive, how to stay safe and how to stay spiritually strong.

There are four more strategies Jude talks about which we will get to in the next message! May the Lord building these priorities into THIS Bible Church!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 21 to 23

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: December 5th, 1999 (Lesson 8)

8

But You, Beloved... II

Introduction I once knew a fellow who was a Christian for about twenty years. He made a profession of faith some time in his teens, married a nice Christian girl, had three nice kids, went to seminary, became ordained to the ministry, enjoyed a good ministry for a number of years even as an elder in the church which ordained *me* to the ministry. And then something snapped in his head, in his thinking, in his heart and he decided not to live for Christ anymore. I'm not sure why, but his reputation says that he has abandoned the faith.

It's one thing to *become* a Christian. That involves deciding that you believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior, and personally, deliberately, consciously inviting Him to be the Lord of your life. You realize that you can place no demands on God to be good to you because you deserve it. In the process of thinking this through, you hear the message that you are a sinner and you accept it. You cease trying to argue your way out of it or rationalize your violations of God's law. You just accept that you are a rebellious sinner and that you need a savior. Now that is really much easier to do than many folks realize—it's a question of whether you *believe* the claims of Christ or not.

But *staying* a Christian, now that is another matter. It's not that God changes the rules once you become a real Christian. It is not that God says, "HAH! Now I've got you to make a commitment to my Son and I'm really going to make it hard on you." Nothing could be further from the truth. Nevertheless, *staying* in the faith is a challenge, and for many reasons. You're not a Christian very long before you discover that you still seem to have this sin problem. It didn't go away. The PENALTY for it went away and the obligation to sin went away. But the tendency and the pull of sin did not just evaporate. And getting back to the problems that Jude saw, Christians are not somehow immune from being misled, led astray and led off into excesses which are not godly at all. Some days it seems to me, that this life of faith is pretty fragile! We are easily distracted, discouraged and even sometimes defeated. Let's be real about it. Some people who start out saying they will always follow Jesus, don't.

And so, Jude tells his readers, *building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, KEEP YOURSELVES in the love of God...* In vs. 1 he refers to Christians as *kept for Jesus Christ*. So, he looks at us as BEING kept—protected,

preserved for Christ, AND as needing to “keep ourselves” in God’s love. One scholar puts it together this way:

Keep yourselves from harm by making it possible for God to show His love for you in the future also.¹

Another scholar put tried to put it together like this:

Remember the Word and build yourself up in your Christian faith. True believers are preserved in Jesus Christ and they PROVE this by keeping themselves in God’s love. Therefore God can keep them from falling.²

John Calvin says:

He has made love as it were the guardian and the ruler of our life; not that he might set it in opposition to the grace of God, but that it is the right course of our calling, when we make progress in love...³

Another scholar says:

The realm of God’s love is in Jesus Christ. Those who depart from Christ depart from the love of God. Those who reject the commands of Jesus, reject His love.⁴

I find none of these especially satisfying or helpful. It seems that we have a paradox here both truths with which we must live. I must keep myself in Christ, in the realm of God’s love, accessing His goodness, His forgiveness, His grace, His power for living. If I do not, I will fall away or be drawn away. Keeping myself in God’s love is a full-time occupation. When I get there, I will clearly see that it was He all the while who was KEEPING me for Himself. Both truths are true! I cannot understand how they fit together now and it seems to me that most explanations are futile.

The apostle Paul brings both truths (God’s sovereignty and human responsibility) together in Philippians 2:12,13. We work out our salvation, working hard at it, with a certain nervousness some days. At the same time we praise God and give Him thanks as often as we can, for DOING the Christian life through us and in us. We stand amazed that we DO make some progress in holiness and in devotion and in service to Him!

Now, Jude told us that we need to build ourselves up—and by implication, each other on the foundation of faith with which we began the Christian life. And then he told us that part of building ourselves up is to be a person of prayer. If you make prayer a part of your life, you will be stronger and you will keep growing in spiritual strength. You will be in tune with the Spirit of God who resides in you. You will sense God’s presence, His leading as you face different situations and you will not feel alone, even in times of trial or testing. As you make prayer a priority, and really catch a vision for becoming a person of prayer you will experience power to keep on persevering in the Christian life—year after year.

Another strategy is to be ***waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life***. We have to wait to really see His merciful face, to hear His merciful

¹ Arndt, in the *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 1971, Moody Press.

² Warren Wiersbe, *The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*, 1993, Thomas Nelson.

³ John Calvin, *Commentary on Jude*, vs. 21.

⁴ Edwin Blum, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*.

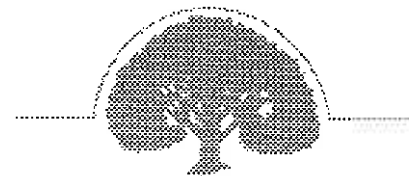
voice and words to us. We cannot see Him yet and the world thinks we are foolish to wait. And the longer you walk with an invisible, inaudible Savior the more anxious you become. You want Him to come back! You *long* for the day when you will experience DAY ONE of eternal life.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is a very important doctrine. It is going to happen. If you are a Christian you are going to be there. One of the things that gets me through each day of THIS life is the absolute knowledge I possess that there is another life coming. It is a life where I serve Jesus Christ literally, where I get to talk with Him and do His bidding whatever that may be. It will not be a life of faith, at least not as THIS life must engage faith. It will be by sight. I will not have to imagine what He might say or how He might judge in matters. I will SEE Him and hear Him. I am anxious for that day, when I think about it! *Anxious waiting* is an activity of the Christian life.

Do not miss the first of three mentions of *mercy* in vs. 21! This is one of Jude's "triplets." He is focused on mercy. Someone who has been guilty of something is someone who appreciates mercy. Mercy is NOT getting a punishment or retribution that you DO deserve. I don't know if you've ever been *caught* doing something wrong. I mean CAUGHT. There was no weaseling out of it. The evidence was right there. That's when the only remedy is mercy. Well, when Jesus returns and everyone's deeds are uncovered there will be those, who by virtue of their decision to trust in Jesus in *this* life, will experience His mercy on *that* day. We will sing songs, I think, about mercy on that day. We will sing songs of mercy into the night (expect maybe there won't BE any night, I don't know!) We will not wear the subject out, so relieved will we feel because we won't be getting the judgment that will be so PLAIN that we deserve. I am anxious for that experience of mercy. I want to get acquainted with it by being a practicer of mercy here and now!

The second mention of *mercy* is the PRACTICE of mercy upon some people in and around the Christian assembly and community *who are doubting*. This is one of the relatively few places in the New Testament where the subject of doubting is directly addressed. We can play a role in encouraging those who are unsure. Doubt, I do not think, is the same thing as unbelief. Unbelief is wholesale rejection of the claims of Christ. But doubt is uncertainty. There might be a willingness to step out on to the ice a little ways, but then uncertainty sets in. The mockers and the lusty leaders start to get to you. Faith gets weak. "I'm not SURE if following Jesus is the way to go." But then someone comes along side and convinces you. They have a little talk with you and convince you that, Yes, I need to keep obeying Jesus. This is what we're told to do as another strategy to keep in the love of God. We need each other. We need someone to really talk to my heart and really connect with me when I'm struggling. This implies I need to not be isolated from other Christians and not cut myself off from them and not limit the amount of time I have near to them.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 21 to 23

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: December 12th, 1999 (Lesson 9)

First Sermon in our New Facility

Ministries of Mercy

Introduction When I think of the earliest Christians and how they owned no buildings or lands or even of the Pilgrims and how they came to this country from Holland (their little rented church of twelve years in Leyden, Holland is even now about to be torn down to make way for a discotheque), I find it is a great blessing of kind Providence that **we** are privileged to live in a time when Christians can jointly own church property; when we can enjoy the process of constructing a new facility strictly for the purpose of worship and take pleasure in its design and outfitting. We are reminded though that the church is not a building and we are reminded of this in our passage today from the book of Jude. The church is not primarily a business, a corporation or a marketing organization. The church is a living "organism," a collection of individual people who have intentionally covenanted together for the purpose of promoting and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes this involves urgent ministry--as we see in the book of Jude.

The book of Jude is a short little letter written to an ancient community of followers of Jesus. That community had sadly lost their innocence when they found themselves infiltrated by an evil sort of man—Jude goes to great lengths to describe them in this letter. Then he turns the corner and really helps his readers re-focus on a few things that are really important for believers in Jesus Christ to maintain. These are the kind of things which really define what the church is supposed to be about...

- 1) Believers are to revere the words of the apostles (vs. 17). We, who read this in 1999, do that by revering the New Testament (since it is the writings of the apostles.)
- 2) Believers are to make it a strong priority to individually take control of their own spiritual walks with God, and by implication therefore (since no believer is supposed to be going it alone; all believers should be connected to some part of the body of Christ), to contribute to the mutual building up of the community (vs. 20a).
- 3) Believers are to be a people of Spirit-led prayer (vs. 20b). We are to pray according to how the Spirit leads us, and in part that means as the Word teaches us.
- 4) Believers are to occupy themselves with God's love—and all that means—thereby *keeping themselves* abiding in Him. As in John 15:9,10. Christians who lose sight of or forget the love which God has demonstrated for them, become mere religionists.

5) Believers are to **wait anxiously** for the mercy of Christ to fully “materialize” which of course, will only completely happen when He returns—an event which we absolutely are persuaded will happen.

Now, we are told by Jude something which is also core to what the church is supposed to be all about. May the Lord always use this wonderful new facility to champion this thing out from us here! We are told to **have mercy on some who are doubting** (vs. 22). Here is another powerful tool to guard against becoming distracted by all the dangers that Jude laid out in earlier verses...

Mercy is a thing which is mentioned three times here, one of Jude’s “triplets.” It’s a big part of what we receive as Christians and a big part of what we’re supposed to communicate or emanate as Christians. If a Christian is harsh or judgmental with the people around him, he contradicts his own creed. Jude tells his readers in vs. 21 to **wait anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life** and then immediately in vs. 22 to BE MERCY-GIVERS. Now notice, upon whom? Upon everyone? No, upon **some who are doubting**. The scope of ministry in the New Testament is often surprisingly narrower than we sometimes hear. Today we often labor under the burden that we are to go out there and win the whole world. But if we really pay attention to what the apostles actually *said*, they are often more realistic in their expectations of whom we can reach. We are to focus on **some**. “Some” is not everyone. “Some” isn’t even “most.” And here, “some” is described as those *who are doubting*. The kind of doubter here is not the person who has already made a decision of rejection, and said, “No,” I deny and reject the words of the apostles, and the things which they taught... Here, a “doubter” is the person who is seeking but is unsure. He wavers in his convictions about how to live. Now, we are not told to approve doubting. We are not told to license everyone who doubts, and just endorse their immoral lifestyle, “Well, they’re not sure yet, so we just accept anything they want to do.” No, that isn’t what Jude said. He SAID to *practice mercy with some of these*.

Practicing mercy means first, not shunning doubters. It means being involved with them and allowing them to stay in the body for that season of time that it takes them decide. How long is that? I don’t know—maybe some time. Not forever, and I think sooner or later most doubters will get off the fence one way or the other of the other of their own decision, given the patience of enough time. But while we wait we need to be gracious and patient with some folks. Here is where we sometimes fall short. We can easily forget that WE are anxiously awaiting the full revelation of mercy from Jesus ourselves. We are not to be like the person I overheard this week at the Registry, pompously lecturing a young waiter-in-line to take the driving test when he was waiting in line himself to take the test. We are supposed to be a humble collection of people, completely aware of our OWN need of mercy from the Lord—of not getting what we DO deserve—and passing that feeling on to others “also in line with us.”

And then Jude uses a very dramatic word picture. He says, “Look, there’s also going to be other people that you *save*, whom it is like **snatching them out of the fire**.”

These are people who don't have any time at all to linger with their decision. And the ministry of a Christian to them just barely RESCUES them. At the last minute, someone yanks them by their "spiritual shirt collar" out of the fire of the kind of fire the "infiltrators" were igniting.

No illustration is more relevant than to think of a firefighter risking his safety, his very life to rescue an endangered person in a fire. With many of you, I grieved the loss of those six brave Worcester fire fighters. I can think of few professions more courageous today than this where men and women would risk their very persons to save others. In the least his eyebrows may get singed, he may ingest smoke, he may feel fear, he may risk danger himself. In the most he may forfeit his life. But he goes in to grab a person and yank them out of the jaws of death. Sometimes ministry to people in and around the church, the Christian community, is like that. They are about to be consumed by sin. They are about to burn up. But someone in the Christian community takes the risk and grabs them. It is mercy. It is like Jesus. It *smells* like Jesus!

The fire-endangered are the lost. We are in the genuine saving business because there are real people who are genuinely lost. Lostness is not the invention of the Puritans, the Reformers, or the Church fathers. It is a real state. It is to be without a savior from sin and there are many, many people alive now who are lost. They need rescue. They need *someone* to rescue them.

In the second part of verse 23 is another description of mercy-giving, probably going further about the rescue process of the fire-endangered. ***On some have mercy with fear...*** We are not invulnerable. We can be tempted too. As we try to communicate God's mercy and make it real to some people, we might feel danger too. It is good to walk in the fear of the Lord. We are accountable for our own lives and ministry does not justify compromising our own sanctification.

Many times I have observed Christians sliding on some moral issue, with the justification, "Hey, I'm ministering to this person." Most often I hear it with young people who open themselves up to romance with a non-Christian on the grounds that they might get to share the Gospel with them." Something in the musical *Guys and Dolls* bothers me. The missionary lady struggles with this as she finds herself attracted to the street guy who has zeroed in on her. No, we are to spread the news of God's mercy in the fear of the Lord.

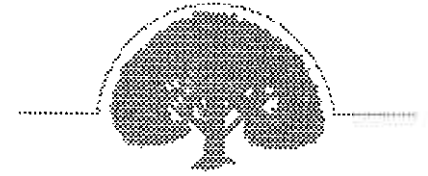
And then Jude says, ***hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*** This is interesting because the imagery is one of clothing. As we try to extend a facsimile to other people of the real mercy of God while *we ourselves* await its full revelation, we loathe the very stinky clothing, the thing associated with the pollution. We are watchful for those whom we can rescue, who are about to be burned up with the fire of sin and we are careful not to become putrefied with it ourselves. This is NOT an arrogant or self-righteous demeanor. Not at all! Indeed, arrogance was a hallmark of the evil infiltrators.

Well, here we are, sitting in a wonderful new building. What are we about? What is our main mission? What holds us together and animates our purpose?

It is ministering to people, some who are doubting, some who are struggling. We do the best we can to rescue people and we watch carefully so WE don't get drawn in. We spread the Gospel and the message that God will extend a merciful hand to whoever will embrace His Son, Jesus Christ for salvation and for forgiveness. May He make us more bold with this gospel, with this good news. May He wisen us so that we know the smell of sin and the temperature of the fire. And may He use us to the full extent of His power and plan for us!

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *Exposition of the Book of Jude*

Scripture: Jude 24, 25

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: January 2nd, 2000 (Lesson 10)

Standing in His Presence

Introduction It is a very human and common experience to face a test of some kind and wonder if you're going to make the grade. SAT scores are much on the minds of high school students. We are hearing a lot these days about MCAS scores. Every August there are thousands of would-be football players who wonder, "Will I make the final cut?" Workers bid for jobs, musicians and actors audition for parts, politicians run for office, all with the apprehension of making the grade or not...

The Book of Jude has raised the question for us, "will we endure against spiritual conspiracy, or against the temptations which be used by those who would wish to derail our faith?" WILL we, as Christians, end up standing at the end of the game? Will we be able to stand in the Lord's presence? And there are great warnings in this book. We are exhorted to undertake the work of ***building ourselves up on our faith*** and ***becoming a real people of prayer*** and ***keeping ourselves in the love of God*** and to ***anxiously await the return of Christ*** and in the meantime to busy ourselves with the work of rescuing people through the message of mercy and through acts of mercy. Jude told his readers that sometimes that process of ministering to people would get them close to ***polluted garments***, a metaphor of how the stink of sin can remain on someone for a while and AS we minister to them in mercy, WE do not get "stinky" along the way; that we do not compromise our morals and standards and purity even as we rescue people.

Now we come to the end of the book. Jude ends with praise for God. It is called a "doxology." In the beginning Jude called believers the ***kept-by God*** people. Then he told ***them to keep themselves*** in God's love. Now He concludes by saying that God ***is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory***. I wonder if YOU ever wonder if He will really do that? Will He make sure that I pass the test? This book ends on the idea that HE is the reason for why I can say with certainty that I shall remain standing at the end, and therefore He is worthy of receiving all the credit.

We are sternly warned in this book to take our Christianity seriously, with a fierce and focused determination.

We are alerted to what CAN happen in a church—indeed was happening in the assembly to which Jude wrote.

We are given much advance-description of what infiltrators are like and the doom to which they are appointed.

And we are told what things to concentrate on in a church, even if we find ourselves under attack or diseased from within.

Now we read a closing praise to the Lord, the Almighty which is a closing benediction in this letter. There are a number of spoken benedictions in the Bible all of which are wonderful to think about: Numbers 6:24-26; Romans 16:25-27; 2nd Cor. 13:14; Ephesians 3:20,21; 1st Timothy 1:17 are a few...

But the main thing Jude is saying that God is eligible for *glory, majesty, dominion and authority* is because He is *able to keep us from stumbling* and to *make us stand in His presence, blameless with great joy*. Jude sees this as something of a partnership. Ultimately—from a strictly theological standpoint—by virtue of our *most holy faith* we are already *kept*. It is very much as the apostle Peter also wrote to his audience (1:5), *protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. But even so we must actively engage OURSELVES in the work of keeping ourselves in the faith. We are not passive. We are supported, energized, refueled, rejuvenated, encouraged, healed and granted wisdom by the Lord—daily, weekly and yearly. But at the same time we've got to be smart Christians, putting our best energies in the maintenance of each other's and our own faith.

Now if this seems contradictory I suggest to you that ALL meaningful relationships involve partnership. No healthy friendship is all one person's doing the giving, bending or forgiving. No happy marriage is all one partner's effort. No good business relationship sees one person providing all the goods or services and the other person just sitting there and passively receiving it. Once I know that I AM kept, and that He is ABLE to keep keeping me stood up in His presence and basically victorious, then I am more MOTIVATED to get to the business of actively contributing to people's edification.

And in the end, He gets all the credit because the true Christian faith—and all its systems and ministries—is *always* looking for ways to better glorify God and to add MORE honor to His reputation.

Glory is the outshining of His radiant holiness and excellence. His holiness is what I want to emulate and to absorb; not some crude imitation of my own.

Majesty is the kingly honor and splendor of His office and position in the universe. All human majesty or even the majesty of Creation, merely reflect the divine majesty which never fades! When we see Him we shall bow in worship and fall down as before a powerful and sovereign king.

Dominion is the power and scope of His rightful position. He is the king. All lands are His. All people are or will be His subjects. He gets to make the rules. He gets to set the boundaries. He asks no permission and He waits on no council. He is the first and the last governing Rule.

Authority is His nature and as our enabler and provider He "wins" the right to be *deferred* to in all decisions and here, to be praised as the final authority. To our benefit,

after Him there is no one left to win approval from. If we can stand before Him, the Judge, and He is the one who enabled us to stand in the first place—then He is surely to be praised.

These things were His *before all time*, now and forever. His rule transcends the boundaries and the dispensations of time. He was who He was before He invented time. And He shall always be faithful to what He has promised.

Sometimes we really are in danger of stumbling. There are a lot of forces at work to undo the faith which we have—to make us rethink our original profession of faith.

There are voices that say to us, “You’re too moral—loosen up.” (vs. 18).

There are voices which whisper to us, “Your leaders aren’t ALL qualified; maybe you better line up behind one specific one and throw in your lot with *that one* (vs. 19).

There are voices which confront us with, “Your faith is too weak. He really isn’t worthy of ALL your trust and *you know it!*”

We feel wearied sometimes in the faith and when you’re weary you can stumble. When we’re not watching where we’re going, we can stumble.

And I HAVE stumbled sometimes—but only temporarily. If I get my eyes on the number of times I’ve stumbled, and take my eyes off the cross of Christ and HIS achievements, then I will never think myself eligible to stand before Him *blameless with great joy*.

But if I make myself a lifetime praiser of Him who is able to keep me from stumbling, then I can always re-plug in to His joy. Joy is a central part of the Christian life. Joy is a central part of worship and it isn’t by accident that JOY is part of this doxology. Let us enter into the joy of His confidence. Let’s foster the environment of joy around here in our church. Let’s not let stumbling be our expectation, but standing. Let’s be a place which celebrates HIS sufficiency to give us all spiritual blessings that will enable us to worship Him and serve the risen Savior!