

J U D E

H E L D F A S T

Studies in the book of Jude
Group Applications
Personal Study



FOUR OAKS CHURCH

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Jude 1-4

“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” — Romans 6:15-16

Contend for the Faith

I clearly remember wrestling with the idea of sin and grace as a young teenager. I was considering leaving my church with the desire to do things I knew were sinful, but I didn't want to have to worry about my salvation. I had already done what I thought was necessary for salvation, so did that mean my eternity was secure and I was free to sin as much as I wanted? One might wonder, "If God loves to forgive, why not give Him more to forgive?" This attitude shows a lack in understanding the seriousness of sin. Jesus paid for sin with his life, to bring us forgiveness, but the availability of God's mercy must not become an excuse for careless living and moral laxness.

Without the right teaching and understanding, I let myself believe I was free to sin, even though in my heart this seemed too good to be true. Jesus tells us no man can be a slave to two masters. I chose sin as my master, but let myself believe I was still under God's mastery. It didn't take long before I completely forgot about God, his commands, and how to live for Him. In Jude's letter, he spurs the church to contend for the faith which holds that we have died to our sinful nature. If we merely pretend that God is our Master, like I did, we are still dead in our sin. Over a decade passed in my life before God graciously called me to His fold. A clear message for all of us, one which I wish I had heard back in my questioning days, is Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7 that it is not enough to know His name, we must also do the will of His Father. Paul also speaks of our new life in Christ in his letter to the Roman church. In Romans 6 he writes, "So now present yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to

sanctification." We don't accept Christ and then immediately start living a perfect life of obedience, but those who are truly in Christ have been given a new spirit from the Lord, and He changes us each day so that we become more and more like Christ.

Scripture warns us that ungodly or irreverent members, who look like the real thing but are counterfeits, will sneak into our churches. This had already happened in the church Jude addresses. These people were misusing and perverting what God's grace means, and were denying the sovereignty of our only Master, Jesus Christ. In the face of such perversions we contend for the faith by serving the Father and obeying His word.

Sermon Notes

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. In what ways are you living like you are called, loved, and kept by Jesus? Where are you not living in these truths?

2. What things do you need to change in your life to live more fully in your identity in Jesus?

Go

1. As someone entrusted with the faith, how is that shaping your identity and decision making?

2. In what ways is the Lord calling you to contend for the faith? Who could you join in community around that?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when you saw the need to contend for your faith. What were the circumstances? How did God help you? What was the response?

2. According to verse 3, what is the reason for Jude's letter?

3. Before Jude commends the believers to action, he reminds them of their identity as those who are called, beloved, and kept (verse 2). Why do you think this is significant?

4. Jude says that ungodly people have perverted God's grace into sensuality and denial of Jesus' rule in their lives. How might the people's situation, beliefs, and values then be similar to ours now?

5. How might you (or those you know) be tempted to pervert grace? Spend some time praying for God's Spirit to convict, strengthen, and establish your faith to persevere in following Jesus.

Additional Reading

*Servant or Slave from Grace to You*¹

There are two critical things to understanding the believer's identity. One is Jesus is Lord. Kurios--"one who has the power," "one who is the owner" is what the Greek word means. One who has an absolute right to command. It is synonymous with another word. In Jude this other word is used, and this is a good comparison. You'll remember this in Jude. At the end of verse 4, it talks about ungodly persons who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Do you hear the slave talk there? Our only Master and Lord; you can only have one, right? No man can serve two masters. He is our only Master and Lord. What I'm driving at is the word "master." "Lord" is kurios. Master is used here as a synonym, and the Greek word is despotes, from which we get the English word despot. Now we use it as an adjective. We say somebody who is overbearing, totally in charge, dominating is despotic. That's exactly the word that's used. It means an absolute ruler, a sovereign ruler. He is our only despot. He is our only master--extremely powerful words, extremely narrow words.

That is why, when our Lord offers the invitation to follow Him, He says this: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." You're no longer in charge. "Take up your cross and"...What?... "follow Me." That's what it means to become a believer. You just became a slave of Jesus Christ.

Our life is not defined by our own wants, our own will, our own desires, our own ambitions, but by His will, His desires, and His purposes. This is the basic truth of Christianity--Jesus is Lord.

When I say I'm a Christian, I am saying Jesus is the sovereign over my life. Whatever He wants, I submit to that. That's the first great understanding of Christian life.

¹ "Servant or Slave?" *Grace to You*, 26 Aug. 2010, www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/GTY129/servant-or-slave.

Jude 5-16

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” — Ephesians 6:12

Dire Warnings

Jude is a strange little book, but if we take the time to work through it we find some incredible truths. First, Jude makes an outright connection between Jesus and God. Jesus is the one who saved Israel from out of Egypt (verse 5). Jude knew what he was claiming when he wrote this—that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament. Furthermore, we see that the world before our eyes contains an unseen realm. Angels rebelled against God and will face destruction alongside the wicked. Michael, an archangel, fights with Satan himself over the body of Moses (I have no idea what that is about). Our lives are more than meets the eye. We live in a world in which angels and demons operate and we must not lose sight of this. It is tempting to ignore passages like these because they are unfamiliar, but their unfamiliarity is a gift to us. Unfamiliarity forces us to recognize our modern blinders and open us up to the fact that everything is not as it seems.

Finally, we have this peculiar instance of Jude quoting from the book of Enoch. Let me save you the trouble of scouring your Bible’s table of contents—it’s not in there. The book of Enoch is not part of the biblical canon, that is, it is not considered a Holy Spirit-inspired book. So why does Jude quote it as if it is Scripture? The best way to think about this is to consider Jude’s audience. Jude was writing to Christians that were “into” apocalyptic ideas and traditions. He probably quoted this particular prophecy because he knew it carried weight with the people he was trying to reach. It is possible that Enoch recorded a genuine prophecy, but it was not in an inspired book. There are multiple references to prophecies in the Old Testament that are not written down but were nevertheless given by God. Either way, we do not need to

worry about the fact that Jude quotes from outside of the Bible. The book of Enoch may not be inspired, but one prophecy within it certainly can be. Jude knows this, and guided by the Spirit, incorporates it into his letter for the building up of the church.

Sermon Notes

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking *who/what/where/when/why/how?*

Grow

1. What are some questions you have regarding the unseen “spiritual realm” of angels and demons?

2. Why does Jude bring up multiple Old Testament references to a New Testament church?

Go

1. What is the modern attitude towards the supernatural?

2. Why do people find the topic of final judgment difficult?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Share an example of apostasy. What do you think led to these false beliefs?

2. Jude shares many examples of apostasy in this section. What do they have in common? What were the results of their being led astray?

3. Jude warns of impending judgment on those who do not follow God. What role do you think warnings should play in our lives and our culture? Can you share an example of how God used a warning to change your life?

4. Is there a particular warning that you need to heed right now? Ask your group to pray for you.

5. Is there a person you need to warn right now? Spend some time as a group praying for your courage to speak and for that person's willingness to listen.

Additional Reading

From Douglas Moo's commentary on 2 Peter & Jude in The NIV Application Commentary Book 181

What, specifically, is the noise that Jude's quotation of 1 Enoch creates for us? It is the idea that Jude may be quoting as an inspired and authoritative source of doctrine a book that is not in the canon of Scripture. And it is important to note here that 1 Enoch has never been given official canonical status by any religious body. It has never been in the Jewish canon, nor in the "Apocrypha" (those books accepted by the Roman Catholic church but rejected by Protestants). But doesn't Jude's use of 1 Enoch create, then, a problem for our belief that God has inspired only those books contained between the two covers of our Bibles and that only these books are to be used as an authoritative source of doctrine? If Jude can appeal to 1 Enoch, why can't we appeal similarly to Maccabees, or Sirach, or, for that matter, C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*? These questions are not new to the modern era. Early church theologians asked the same ones. They came to three different opinions on the matter. (1) Several church fathers considered 1 Enoch to be an inspired book based on the reference here in Jude. (2) Others took the opposite tack: Because Jude quoted a noncanonical book, Jude did not belong in the canon. (3) Augustine thought that Jude's reference showed that 1 Enoch was inspired at some points, but he argued that this did not mean that the entire book was inspired. As we know, it was this third view, or something like it, that the ancient church as a whole finally adopted. Jude was accepted into the New Testament canon, while 1 Enoch was officially rejected from the Old Testament canon. Can we justify this decision today? How can we explain Jude's use of 1 Enoch? Many commentators assume or argue that Jude's reference to 1 Enoch shows that he thought it was an inspired book, as authoritative as, for example, Genesis and Isaiah. They point out that not only does Jude quote from 1 Enoch; he also uses the verb "prophecy" to introduce the quotation and alludes to the book elsewhere in his letter (most clearly in v. 6). But I do not think this conclusion is justified.

Let me make two critical points. (1) As I noted in the "Bridging Contexts" section on 2 Peter 3:14–18, we have solid evidence that Jews and Christians in the first century were already operating with a "closed" Old Testament canon. Jesus' appeal to

¹Moo, Douglas J. 2 Peter, Jude (The NIV Application Commentary Book 18). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Scripture, the remarkable quotation pattern throughout the New Testament (according to which only books now found in the canon are called Scripture), the lack of any evidence of dispute between Jews and the first Christians on this matter—these and other bits of evidence suggest a widely accepted and set group of authoritative writings. Jude may, of course, be different, but we should not assume that without good evidence. (2) It is crucial to note that Jude does not refer to 1 Enoch as Scripture; that is, the critical word *graphe* (“Scripture”) is not used here. The cognate verb of this word, *grapho*, is used throughout the New Testament to introduce Old Testament quotations: “as it is written,” and this formula is not found here either. Moreover, we find other quotations in the New Testament from sources that no one would consider canonical. Paul, for instance, quotes from the pagan philosopher Aratus in his speech to the Athenians (Acts 17:28); certainly he did not think that this writer’s *Phaenomena* (from which his quotation was taken) was a canonical book. To be sure, Jude claims that Enoch “prophesied.” But this word need not mean “wrote an inspired prophetic book”; it could well mean simply “uttered in this instance a prophecy.” The reference, in other words, could be to the immediate passage and not to the entire book.

I conclude that Jude probably did not think that 1 Enoch was an inspired and canonical book. We do not have sufficient evidence to lead us to believe that he differed from the apparent consensus of mainstream Jewish and early Christian opinion on this matter. But how, then, did he view this text from 1 Enoch? His use of the word “prophecy” and the placement of the quotation—as the wrap-up to his denunciation of the false teachers—suggest that he viewed the text as having authority for his readers. The phrase “for his readers” is important here. As J. Daryl Charles has shown, the letter of Jude seems to have been written to Christians who were “into” apocalyptic ideas and traditions. Jude may well have quoted this particular prophecy because he knew it would carry weight with his audience. They regarded this book highly, and a quotation from it would be effective in motivating them to agree with him. Clearly, Jude thought that the content of the prophecy was true or he never would have quoted it. But did he believe that the historical Enoch really uttered this prophecy? It is certainly possible; God could well have seen to it that the unknown author of 1 Enoch included at this point in his book a genuine prophecy of Enoch. But it is also possible that Jude meant no more than that the “Enoch” of the book both he and his writers knew about uttered this prophecy.

Jude 17-25

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.... And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” — Philipians 1:6, 9-11

Journey of the Most Holy Faith

Jude’s letter is intended to show that this “most holy faith” is worth contending for (verse 3) and worthy of building ourselves up in. It is not simply mental assent to a variety of theological or ethical beliefs, but how Christ is integrated into our lives through obedience and faithfulness. The end trajectory of our lives is to be presented holy (sacred, set apart) to God who is Himself Most Holy. This task is not simply about living “moralistically,” but living in relational communion with God. In this way, we avoid the errors of cold doctrinalism, moralism, apathy, or self-gratification.

The majority of the letter describes particular examples of false teachers and their immoral choices. Jude warns the church to beware of the ungodly and the scoffers in the division they bring (17-19). He contrasts these ungodly examples by exhorting the church: “But you, build yourselves up in the most holy faith.” How? Jude provides three main ways for Christians to do this: 1) Pray in the Holy Spirit. Praying specifically in the Spirit again contrasts those who are devoid of the Spirit mentioned in the previous verse. 2) Keep yourselves in the love of God while waiting expectantly for God’s mercy that leads to eternal life. Our reception of God’s mercy leads us to show mercy to others. 3) Have mercy on others by actively and empathically seeking to point to the eternal life that is found in communion with the Triune God.

Finally, Jude closes with a beautiful doxology praising the Triune God who is able! God is the only one who is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before Him. The fact that God is able to present us blameless should invoke praise and excitement among God's people knowing that we are not alone in our journey to faithfulness. Our own inadequacies, failures, and sins are not ultimately final or definitive when we put trust in the Triune God. (cf. Philippians 1:3-11)

Being built up in this most holy faith and being presented blameless is not achieved by a seasonal high or a mountain top experience, but by a journey of faithfulness. The constant process of being formed in the image of Christ (character formation) is the journey of the Christian life. The moment-by-moment decisions of trust, obedience, and faithfulness make up the building process in this most holy faith. It is an interdependent communal work through the power of the Holy Spirit and our Savior Jesus for the Only God who is for all time now and forever. Amen.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. What is this most holy faith? Take 2-3 minutes and describe this “most holy faith” in which we are to be building ourselves up. (Hint: Look at Jude’s doxology in verse 24-25.)

2. Verse 21 tells the church to “keep yourselves in the love of God” and verse 24 gives praise to Jesus as “him who is able to keep you from stumbling.” How do you understand this two-sided coin of our own efforts and the work of God?

Go

1. How can we show someone mercy when they doubt? How can we show someone mercy while also hating the flesh? (Caution: Notice Jude says in verse 23 what to do this with fear.)

2. What do we learn about the Triune God, His character, and His work from the doxology in verse 24-25? With whom can you share one of these aspects this week?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Share a time God kept you. What were the circumstances? How does it encourage your faith even now?

2. Jude instructs believers to do several things “in the last time when there will be scoffers.” What are they and why do you think each is important?

3. Which of Jude’s instructions are you most called to pursue right now? What steps can you take this week to obey?

4. While we are called to “keep ourselves in the love of God” (verse 21), Jude also reminds us that God keeps us. What comfort does this give to you? How might you comfort others with these words?

5. Jude concludes his letter the way he starts—with a good word about who we are in Christ. How can finding our identity in Christ be our greatest defense against apostasy? Is there a particular truth from verses 1-2 or 24-25 that you need to hold onto right now? Spend time as a group praying for these things.

Additional Reading

From *Have Mercy* on the Ligonier Ministries website¹

“Have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh” —Jude 22–23

Luke 15 contains some of the most powerful illustrations of the love of God for His sinful people. The parables of the lost sheep (vv. 1–7) and the lost coin (vv. 8–10), in particular, demonstrate the eagerness with which God pursues sinners and the joy He experiences whenever someone repents.

If we are to be imitators of God (Eph. 5:1), we must likewise pursue sinners and call them to repentance. Today’s passage explains how we are to do this. Before we look at Jude’s specific instructions, let us first note he does not tell us how to deal with errant believers until after he has detailed our need to be established in the faith (vv. 20–21). Unless we are well-grounded in the Word of God, we will not be able to bring sinners back into the fold.

Secondly, we are not to treat everyone in the same way, but instead we are to deal with each individual according to his predicament. John Calvin writes, “If we wish to consult the wellbeing of such as go astray, we must consider the character and disposition of every one; so that they who are meek and tractable may in a kind manner be restored to the right way, as being objects of pity; but if any be perverse, he is to be corrected with more severity.” Verse 22 says we must have “mercy on those who doubt.” We are to be especially gentle with and avoid vilifying those who are honestly and humbly struggling with some aspect of the faith but have not yet entertained the idea of abandoning Christ. On the other hand, those needing to be snatched from the fire (v. 23) have gone beyond mere doubt and are on the verge of leaving Christ altogether. Those who seriously flirt with false teaching, which is any teaching opposing apostolic doctrine, must be warned stringently lest they

¹“Ligonier Ministries The Teaching Fellowship of R.C. Sproul.” Ligonier Ministries, www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/have-mercy/.

be condemned. Those who are to be shown “mercy with fear” in verse 23 are likely apostate. Jude, thinking of false teachers, exhorts Christians to be merciful to them. Yet this mercy demands fear—fear of God when rebuking them and fear of their teaching’s contaminating influence (“the garment stained by the flesh”) lest we too fall prey to it.



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