

Standing Firm in the Faith

Jude 1:17-25

July 15-16, 2017

Jude and his brother James were half-brothers to Jesus. They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah nor follow His teaching when he was ministering on the earth. They grew up in the same house together. Can you imagine having Jesus as your big brother? How much pressure was that? Comedian Michael Jr. has a whole spiff on that. Very funny.

James and Jude had problems, they would get in trouble, and can't you imagine their mother saying, "Why can't you boys be more like Jesus, James and Jude?" Or they would go to their mother with their problems and their mother would say, "Well what would Jesus do?" So she got them a bracelet.

At one point in Jesus' ministry, His mother and brothers came to speak to Him, thinking perhaps He was out of his senses, but Jesus responded, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And then He said, "Whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

After witnessing the resurrection, James and Jude not only became believers and followers of Jesus, James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. It was such a radical transformation for Jude that opens

this letter by referring to himself as a bondservant of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

He writes this short letter to warn the church not to stray into dangerous false doctrines, which could harm the church and draw it into worldliness.

He challenges the church to be distinct from the world. The false teachers were worldly minded and devoid of the Spirit of the living God. That is the key to what he is writing; those who pursue the world do so because they don't have the life of the Spirit.

The life of the Spirit is the difference; that's what changes lives. Simply going to church is not what changes us; we are changed by receiving and living by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus -- in the same way that going to a gym and watching other people work out won't help you at all.

The entire theme of this letter is found in verse 3; *"I felt it necessary to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."*

I. Keep Yourself in the Love of God
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- Verse 21 - Keep yourselves in the love of God... this is the foundation for standing firm in your faith.

- What happens if you don't put wood on a fire? What happens if you don't water your lawn? What happens if you neglect your marriage relationship?
- The answer to all those questions is the same; keep adding wood to the fire, if you don't water your lawn, it dies; if you forget your anniversary, well... Enough said.
- This is the difference between those who are changed by the love of God and those who remain the same.

A. Build yourself up on your faith

- The meaning is to build yourself up on the foundation that has been laid.

Matthew 7:24-25, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.”

- Build on that foundation and build up our lives in regard to our faith. “Build *yourself* up,” he wrote.

Illus – Before an airplane takes off the flight attendants always give a safety briefing and say, “Place the oxygen mask on your face first before helping anyone else.” The same is true spiritually.

Romans 10:17, Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Illus - I was in the lobby this week and some kids were playing so I stopped to talk with them. One of the girls, Mia, who is seven, said, “I listen to you every night before I go to sleep.” I said, “Really? Every night? Why do you do that?...”

App – We have an important part in growing our faith. God gives us the timber, the stones, the mortar; and we are to build a life that is strong in faith.

1 Corinthians 3:10-13, Each man must be careful how he builds on the foundation. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with

fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

- Build yourself up, he wrote, but stresses, burdens of life and sin itself will drain you spiritually.

Mark 4:18-19, “And others are those on whom the seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

- In contrast, we have the presence of the Holy Spirit to bring life to our soul and to build us up in regard to our faith.

B. Praying in the Spirit

- We've all prayed simple prayers that were fitting for the moment, but weren't exactly deep prayer; like, for example, a quick prayer over a meal.
- Jude writes that we should pray in the Holy Spirit. In other words, we also need deeper times of prayer.

- Jesus also prayed over meals and He simply gave thanks for God's provision. But there were many times when He would get away by Himself and spend time in prayer, just Him and His Father.
- There are times when we need to pray with all our heart, and should desire to draw near to the heart of God.
- Paul wrote that the Spirit helps us in our prayers; when our need for prayer is too deep for words.

Romans 8:26-27, In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Illus – I've had times when I've cried out to God because I didn't know *what* to pray. I've had times when I didn't know what I was asking for; I've had times when I cried out because I didn't know *how* to pray.

- But can we pray deeply other than times of crisis? We need to keep ourselves in the love

of God and praying in the Spirit is an essential part of it.

- Some have suggested this is praying in tongues. Perhaps it is. We believe in the availability of all spiritual gifts and this could be included in what Jude is writing because we certainly are built up by it (1 Corinthians 14:4).
- But the essence of what Jude is writing is simply the nearness of God that comes when we pray with a heart of intimacy, *and the Spirit is praying with us.*

Matthew 6:6, “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

- You’re praying in the Spirit; when the Holy Spirit comes into a person, *He comes in power.*

Acts 1:8, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

C. Have a spiritual mind

- Vs 19 – when Jude refers to the false teachers who were disturbing the church, he said they were *worldly-minded*, devoid of the Spirit.
- The opposite should be true of us; we should be *godly-minded*, filled with the Spirit of life.
- If you were to take a quick poll, you would discover that most people truly *want* to be godly.
- One of the most important keys to becoming godly is what happens in our mind.

App – If you want to be godly, you must think godly. If you want to be gracious, you must think gracious thoughts. If you want to be patient, you must think patient thoughts, etc.

Romans 8:6, For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

Isaiah 26:3, You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. NKJV

- We must be very careful about what happens in our minds because we become what we think.

Proverbs 23:6-7, Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, or desire his delicacies; for as a man thinks within himself, so he is.

- Jude encourages us to have a mindset of anticipating the mercies of God.

II. Blessed are the Merciful

- Those are the words of Jesus from the sermon on the mount, but it relates to what Jude writes here.
- Verse 22 – Have mercy on those who are doubting. It's like coming along someone who's running in a race; not sure if they can finish.
- You come alongside them and encourage them along the way to keep going, to keep strong, to keep faithful, they can do it.

A. Strengthen the doubter

- The church was being influenced by false teaching and it was causing some to be

shaken in their faith. ‘Strengthen the doubter’ is a call to stir others up in their faith.

Illus – Daniel was a young Hebrew who was taken captive and exiled to Babylon along with many others. There he determined in his heart to honor God even though he was away from his family and all accountability.

What’s interesting is that Daniel brought alongside Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who later became known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

- The word literally means to encourage those who hesitate or who withdraw, or pull back.

Hebrews 10:24-25, Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Timothy 1:18-19, This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

B. Snatch people out of the fire

- Verse 23 - Jude makes it clear that the Lord uses us to tell people that there is a way out of the world's destruction;
- We have the message of life that a dying world needs to hear.

Illus – I received a rather unusual email once where someone told me I should stop saving souls. “Only God can save souls,” the email said.

1 Corinthians 9:22, I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

- It's true that only God can save souls, but we get to tell people the good news and thus we snatch them out of the fire.

2 Corinthians 5:20, Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; therefore we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- The good news is that not only are we snatched from the fire, but He is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before Him.

Illus – When I was 15, my brother and I had to get a doctor’s approval before we could take a scuba diving class. He pulled out our files and my brother’s file was just one sheet of paper, but my file was over a half inch thick.

I was experienced at stumbling and falling. I jumped off the barn and almost bit off my tongue, I had stitches and scars in many places.

But all our scars and bruises from stumbling are removed in Christ; He will present us faultless, blameless, and with great joy.