

Jude: Identifying the Problem

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[0:00] Well, always good to be with you.

Like a lot of you, I'm looking forward to cooler weather.! Wasn't too bad today. Tonight we come to the fourth lesson in this great book of Jude.

And last time I closed with a prayer in which I thank the Holy Spirit for writing and preserving the 25 words of this book.

As shocking as this may seem to some of you, my wife, who has never been bashful about correcting me, quickly pointed out that Jude is 25 verses and not 25 words.

But she readily admitted it marked only the third time I've been wrong in 42 years of marriage. And so we got through it all right.

[1:07] And, well, I'm glad to tell you that last week at this time, or a little bit 30 minutes later, we finished our introduction in the book of Jude.

And now we're going to move into the very heart of the message. I hope that you've seen a certain flow to the lessons thus far.

We spent the first lesson identifying the human author. Told you a little bit about his background. In the second lesson, we identified his relationship to the Lord Jesus.

Not only half-brother, but slave to Christ. We talked about that. In that lesson, we also discussed the meaning of the called of God, which is a description for believers.

In lesson three, we saw additional descriptions of believers as being the beloved of the Father and kept by Jesus Christ. So this evening, we come to lesson four.

[2:15] The Holy Spirit will use verse three and beyond to describe the problem impacting Jude's generation.

And it continues to impact even down to our generation. I want to read to you verse three of Jude. Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

And we again see that word beloved. As we discussed at some length last time, it designates followers of Christ.

For those who belong to Christ are the beloved of the Father. We next learn something that has fascinated me, really, for decades.

In my fantasy world, I kind of picture Jude sitting at his desk in his study. His bookshelves are full and overflowing onto the floor like mine.

[3:44] It is winter and outside the wind is blowing and snow is following. Fire is crackling in the fireplace. Probably unusual for the Middle East.

Mrs. Jude has been brewing some really nice Scottish tea. Its aroma has filled the home. The trash can next to Jude is filled with wadded up paper.

And on the floor all around are wadded up papers that missed the trash can, like my study. Jude is frustrated. Try as he might, he can't get started.

His wife walks in, no doubt to pick up the papers on the floor and says, unlike my house, and says, what's the matter, honey, writer's block?

Well, Jude did in fact have writer's block of a sort. And the one blocking him was none other than the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit of God.

[4:49] So what is going on here? Jude's already told us. He wants to write a book on our common salvation, a letter really.

And in my fantasy, I've always wanted to slip into the room, pick up the wadded pieces of paper and read them. They would not be inspired, but I do think they would be very instructive.

Why did Jude abandon the project? He hoped to accomplish, namely writing a paper on salvation, and he seems to change themes in midstream.

The Holy Spirit led him to do so. But we are still left with the question of why. Clearly, something much more urgent has come up.

And Jude, in obedience to the leading of the Spirit of God, has been commissioned to tell the church throughout all generations about what has come up.

[6:04] And I think I will say this later in tonight's lesson, but his message to the churches through the centuries is no more appropriate than it is right now in the 21st century.

It's as if Jude dropped in and wrote this yesterday and said, Highland Park, you need to read this. You really need to read this. Jude has received very clear instructions that the time has come, and there's urgency to this.

The time has come for the church to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

And so urgent is this message that Jude found it necessary to put it to the churches in the form of an appeal. He's appealing to the churches, and not just the church in his century, but down through the millennia to our very century.

I think it's interesting that Di and I left early because we went to dinner, and I went out to cool down the car, and I turned on the radio, and two very solid people on the Christian channel talking, and the first thing this woman said was, We need to be contending for the faith.

[7:42] And I can't believe I'm hearing this because I'm getting ready to drive over here. And what prompted that, and I've been reading about this on the Internet, I don't know if you all saw it, but a somewhat prominent minister, and I don't even know his name, I think they're more of the charismatic bent, but he has walked away from the faith, and announced it to his church, and invited them to go with him.

He said, I don't find anything in Christianity that's appealing anymore. I find nothing in Christ that's appealing anymore. Well, that was followed up a few days later with, I'm told, one of the lead singers of Hillsong.

Have I got that right, Dan? Which I'm not really into the Hillsong. I'm more into Just As I Am and My Mighty Fortress. But in any event, he says, I haven't abandoned the faith, but I'm just an inch away. And I don't think I can worship or serve a God that will let four billion people go to hell just because they didn't receive Christ. Christ, well, you know, my statement to him, if I could say I'm talking to him, is have you ever examined yourself?

I mean, go back to the beginning here, and I dare say that if I asked him about his salvation, he would give me a flowery report about everything that he did to get himself saved. And wouldn't have anything to talk about how the Lord saved him, but that's just my personal opinion.

[9:14] But how appropriate that that's what was on the radio station as I'm getting ready to drive over here? Jude is a hero in my book, in every sense of the word.

I'm a great admirer of his. Jude clearly understood something. At least it was clearer to Jude than to the church, many of the churches in the 21st century.

By and large, the churches in Western Europe and in the United States are either ignorant of this fact or consciously choose to ignore it.

So what is the fact I'm talking about? There is presently going on, and it's been going on since Jude, it's intensified in our day, but there is presently a global war on truth.

We are the frontline soldiers in that war. Everyone in this room. Everyone in this room. And it is global, and it is a war in every sense of the word, and it's on the truth of God.

[10:29] This has led many of the great preachers, like John MacArthur and R.C. Sproul and others, to ask the question, does truth matter anymore? Does it matter anymore?

And in a lot of churches, it doesn't. It doesn't matter anymore. The church is engaged in a war on truth. We have been locked in this fight since the church was born on Pentecost, and we will be engaged in this war until Christ returns and removes us from this planet.

And I more and more hear people say, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. When the church was just a few hours old, Peter and John were in jail.

They were arrested for preaching the truth that had been delivered to them by Christ and by the Spirit of God. Didn't take long for persecution to come in.

And the war on truth has claimed untold numbers of people that bought into the enemy's lies. And right now and forever, they will spend eternity in hell for having rejected the central truth, which is the gospel of Christ.

[11:53] That's the truth that the Father wants us to hang on to, the gospel of Christ. Now, as in any war, there have been some great defenders of the truth.

Tremendous defenders. Many men and women who have come before us formed a barrier against error and stood for Christ.

They stood for His Word, even to the forfeiting of their own lives. I think it should be required reading before we get to heaven that we sit down and read Fox's Book of Martyrs.

Now, this is not light reading. This is not something, well, I think I'll read some, a couple chapters in Fox's tonight in bed and you're laying there. That's not the time to read that book.

But I strongly urge you to do that. You can buy it at VOM. And I think that should be required reading. I think also Pilgrim's Progress should be required reading.

[13:04] That's just personal. So we've seen people rise up. And let me say to you also, there are men and women in this world who have lost their lives standing for truth.

Lost their lives. Diane and I went to a Bible museum. I think it was in Florida. And we saw this old Bible of 1500s. And it was stained.

It was open and stained. And they said, this man kept this Bible hidden because it was illegal for him to own a Bible. And the church of that day came in and killed him for possessing this Bible.

And they killed him while he was reading it. And that was his bloodstains on that Bible. Amazing.

But there are men and women in this world that lost their lives today rather than deny the Lord who purchased them.

We heard a statistic once. We've never been able to verify it. So I don't give this out in concrete. But a believer dies about every three and a half minutes in the world somewhere because he or she won't deny their faith.

[14:27] But again, we don't have that down in stone. You should study the lives of the defenders of the faith and be like them. I think the women are doing Hearts of Fire.

And those are women that defend the faith. And I think two of them have been to our house. I

looked for my copy and I couldn't find it the other day. As in, they were VOM.

As in any war, there have also, in addition to being defenders, there have been defectors. churches had a lot of defectors and they have them today. I just mentioned two.

Some men and women have gone over to the other side and joined the enemy. Remember when Jesus said, if you're not for me, you're against me?

Very true. There have been defectors all the way back into the New Testament period. Paul used to name them by name. I heard John MacArthur do that one time and his wife got on him and he said, well, Paul did it.

[15:31] You know, and that's his great mentor, the Apostle Paul. Many of the inspired writers had to contend with those defectors who spread error.

Paul's chief enemy when he was on earth were the legalists and the Judaizers. He wrote the entire book of Galatians concerning legalism and the Judaizers were those, they were Jews who said to be saved, yeah, you can be saved by the grace of Christ as long as you keep all facets of the Mosaic law.

Well, no one ever kept the Mosaic law for 30 seconds or three seconds. And so, Paul had to battle those guys. So, he dealt with the Judaizers in his day.

John, when he came along and wrote five books, the Gospel, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and Revelation, he was battling the Gnostics and these were the guys that said they were the ascended learners.

They knew greater truth and were on a different level than everyone else. And what they said went. It reminds me of a guy that was listening on the radio. I was in Arkansas and I was working on a fire case in the old days.

[16:57] And he said, if I tell you anything that conflicts with the Bible, remember, I have the latest word from God. And I almost broke my finger because I was trying to reach through the radio to choke him.

I thought it was scripture. I just choke him. And I just about broke my hand trying to reach through there. So that was the Gnostics. He also had to deal with the antinomians against the moral law.

People that taught you're saved by grace you can live any way you want to. Go out here and do anything you want to because you're saved by grace. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing.

The truth war has had its defenders and it has had its defectors down to this very week which is what they're talking about all over Christian radio right now.

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, stood for truth and warned his generation and every generation that has followed and ours about this great war on truth.

[18:09] the book of Jude concerns itself with standing or contending for the truth. Scripture is true truth.

The book of Jude concerns itself with standing for that truth. Here the Spirit of God gives us our marching orders. We are ordered to contend for the faith.

Let me read that again but also add verse 4. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt it necessary to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints for certain persons have crept in unnoticed those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation ungodly persons who turn the grace of our good into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. That's the why of the book of Jude. The 25 verses of the book of Jude. By the way this is the only book in the Bible where the author tells us he sat down to write one thing and ended up writing something else.

It's the only one. The Holy Spirit led him to go in another direction and there is no doubt though that there were human events that were occurring around Jude which also compelled him to change the content of his writing.

[19:57] There were things going on in that culture. most likely there were a series of events that had probably come to Jude's attention. He probably saw and if he read Peter and he did 2 Peter he probably saw a trend that was taking people in the church away from the truth that had been once delivered by the Holy Spirit to the saints.

The salvation that Jude wanted to write about was being seriously undermined by forces that had come in to spread lies concerning the truth of Scripture.

Now Jude walking by the Spirit of Christ the Spirit of God correctly surmised that the very salvation he wanted to celebrate with his audience was in grave danger of being compromised.

the problem was so serious in Jude's day that he sounded the alarm and he issued a call to arms to the church and we're not supposed to put those weapons down yet until Jesus comes back.

Jude literally drew a line in the sand and asked who is going to be on the Lord's side. Jesus did the same thing in John chapter 6 and when he issued that it says and many followed him no more and he turned to the disciples and said you guys going to leave too?

[21:39] No. You have the keys to eternal life. You have true truth. We're not going anywhere. the alarm bell that went off in Jude's head most likely had to do with a serious problem that was affecting the church in his day.

The church had been infiltrated and those that have been in the military we know about infiltrators don't we? You don't want infiltrators coming in and getting in the tent next to yours.

You're not going to sleep very well at night if there's infiltrators on the base. Jude gives us a description of the infiltrators as those who crept in unnoticed.

Boy there's a lot that'll preach pastor. Those who crept in unnoticed. That's the scariest kind of intruder isn't it? Crept in unnoticed.

Christ. And these infiltrators came in and tampered with the grace of God.

[22:55] Anytime someone tampers with the grace of God they are a deceiver and defector.

tampered grace is a form of denying the Lord Jesus Christ. Churches in America are filled with ministers who have tampered with the grace of God.

You never want to tamper with God's grace. You never want to touch God's glory for him alone. Now we do not know the specifics of what set Jude off.

We do know though that it was so serious, so egregious that it caused Jude to change directions on his writing project. And Jude correctly surmised that the church was in grave danger.

He also was correct in noting that this danger was from within. That's the greatest danger from the church. We know we're going to be assaulted from outside.

[24:10] We know that's going to happen. But the danger is that which is from within. And that's the gravest danger there is.

And the fact that the danger was from in or within the church is a great clue to us. People within the true church should be exposed to truth.

That's why it's a true church. They're preaching, teaching truth. They hear truth preached. They hear truth taught every week, many times a week.

but knowing the truth and then rejecting the truth once heard and understood at least to an extent is a grave sin before God.

There is of course a term for these people. Anyone who is exposed to truth considers it, maybe lives under it for a season or two, and then rejects it is known as an apostate.

[25:28] We've heard that word apostate, we've heard apostasy. When apostates infiltrate a church as they did in Paul's day, as they did in John's day, as they did in Peter's day, and as they did in Jude's day, they bring with them the goal of turning that church into a center of apostasy.

And there is of course a term for these people, and that is apostate. When apostates infiltrate, they want to turn the church. Mark this thought down in your mind and in your heart.

The true church, and I would submit that Highland Park is one, the true church must always and fiercely be on guard against apostates and apostasy.

And remember, that's from infiltrators that come in to the church. And let's not think that it can't happen on the buckle of the Bible belt.

There are apostate churches within just a handful of miles of this classroom. You don't even have to leave Bartlesville to find them.

[26:54] The Lord Jesus spoke of this in Matthew and in Luke. I want to read some words from Luke's Gospel chapter 8 verses 5 to 8.

Listen to these words if I can get my hearing aid on. I won't know what I said if I don't. The sower went out to sow his seed and as he sowed some fell beside the road and it was trampled underfoot and the birds of the air ate it up.

Other seed fell on rocky soil and as soon as it grew up it withered away because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among the thorns and the thorns grew up with it and out.

Other seed fell into the good soil and grew up and produced a crop a hundred times as great. Now to say the least the Christ followers were confused when they heard this parable.

They had no clue what it meant. So the Lord explained it to them in detail. He gave them the meaning in verses 11 to 15. Luke 8. Now the parable is this.

[28:16] These are Jesus' words. The seed is the word of God. Those beside the road are those who have heard. Then the devil comes in and takes away the word from their heart so that they will not believe and be saved.

Those on the rocky soil are those who when they hear receive the word with joy and these have no firm root. They believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

The seed which fell among the thorns these are the ones who have heard and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to maturity. But the seed in the good soil these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart and hold it fast and bear fruit with perseverance.

We see then in this parable three different cases where people hear the word of God and at some point for a variety of reasons they turn away from it.

[29:39] Turn away and reject the truth that has been delivered to them. That is the basic definition of apostasy. It is hearing the truth understanding the truth at some basic level and then turning away from that truth.

That is the message of Jude and there is no doubt in my mind and in my heart that the greatest danger to the church in our day is the infiltration of apostates within the church.

And you know we've come a long way at Highland and those of us who are a little bit older and been around for a long time we know something. Used to if he showed up some Sunday morning and came forward to join you joined.

We voted. Yeah, amen. He's in. If he came three weeks in a row you'd be in charge of the bus ministry and if he came four weeks you'd be a teacher. We've come a long way since those days. A long way. This parable also speaks about the good soil. There exists within the church the good soil of true believers.

[30:54] They are rooted in Christ and produce legitimate fruit for the kingdom of God. I love what John MacArthur says about fruit. He says he's of the opinion that every genuine believer produces fruit.

He said now we all produce plastic fruit. It's going to burn up with wood, hay, stubble. It says wood, hay, stubble, and plastic. And we all produce that.

But he said every true believer does produce a certain level of fruit. Some a lot, some a little. He said you may have to take a magnifying glass on some and really look for it, but it's there.

It's there. But the apostates do not produce true abiding fruit because they're not connected to the vine.

See, the branch doesn't ever produce fruit. No branch produces fruit. It comes from the vine. In other words, they have no root. another example of an apostate in Scripture was Simon the magician.

[32:03] Remember that guy? He's in the book of Acts. He claimed that he believed. And he came to the Christ followers and apostles and he said, I'm a believer.

He said, I'd like to follow through in New Testament baptism. And then he says, he saw the Holy Spirit manifesting himself in them.

He said, look, I want to receive the Spirit of God too. I want the Holy Spirit in my life. Well, what was behind his request? He wanted to be better able to market his magic tricks and make more money.

He was Simon the magician. reasoned that with the Holy Spirit in him, he would have tremendous power to display to his audience who would fork over money to watch this show.

And let me tell you, I don't recommend you turn on your TV and look at this, but you can see these guys doing the same thing in our day. These outlandish televangelists.

[33:25] Simon found out, or Simon was found out and rejected by the apostles as an apostate within the church. Apostasy has always been around the true church.

And I'm going to kind of stick myself out on a limb here, but let me just say to you that Roman Catholicism as practiced today is a form of apostasy. I would hate to sit down with a good Catholic friend, but I would.

Just as an example, Mary, first of all, is not a virgin. They believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary. She had four boys and a girl that we know of.

And Mary can't save your soul. Mike Stark, few in here know that name. We went to Kansas City Festival Evangelism, Dine wasn't able to go.

We don't want to get into that tonight. And we were up there and it was at the Kansas City Convention Center. The largest Catholic church in Missouri was right across the street and that wall says, Mary, Mother of Jesus, save our souls.

[34:44] That was emblazoned on that deal. And I heard MacArthur say this, and I would have the courage to say it, but he said, to my Catholic friends, Mary's never heard one prayer you ever prayed.

She's not in the business of hearing your prayers and telling her son, yeah, this one you need to listen to, but you can throw these away. She is another sinner saved by grace in heaven.

I believe she's in heaven, and I am fond of Mary. I respect her greatly. She went through a lot. She went through a lot.

People are just assuming she messed around with Joseph or somebody. That was the assumption. so, let's get off Catholics.

Liberalism, neo-orthodox existential theology, I'll explain that someday. It's all prevalent today. All of the cults practice forms of apostasy.

[35:44] So does the extreme fringe of the charismatic movement, and by that I mean guys that are trying to make trees walk, and trains fly. There is a central truth concerning apostasy and apostates.

They've been exposed to the truth, they considered the truth for a time, ultimately rejected it. Usually by saying something like there's got to be more.

I'm looking for something more. I'm looking for something better. Now in that regard, an unbelieving tribal member in say Africa or Asia, he's an unbeliever, but he's not an apostate because he's never been exposed to truth.

We're supposed to go and tell them, and Southern Baptists do a pretty decent job of doing that through the cooperative program and other ways, but he's not an apostate because he's not been

exposed to the truth of the gospel.

So Jude tells us that apostasy existed 1900 years ago and that it will increase and exist in our day. [37:01] And then he tells us what to do about it. He says we must, mark that word down, contend earnestly for the faith.

contend for the church. Contend for the faith. That word contend is very interesting. It comes from a Greek word from which we get our English word agonize.

It means we are to fight strenuously. We are to defend vigorously. This type of defending of the faith could bring about our own agony.

We had a man in this very room that spent 444 days in prison in Sudan. He is on the VOM team. He came to our church.

He spoke at our church briefly. Dr. McBride had him speak. Good friend of ours. And he was contending. And so this type of defending of the faith can bring about agony.

[38:11] And what are we to contend for? Why do we contend? Contend, in the Greek language it's a continuous command. Meaning we are to continue to contend because apostasy is always going to be with us in this life.

So it's a continuous command. And what do we contend for? The faith. The faith. Dan and the team have been contending for the faith in the last week in Latvia.

The faith. It is not some unknowable mystical thing that we're talking about here. It is the faith that God has given to everyone who believes.

Ephesians 2:8. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. It's a gift from God. The faith is what the Lord has entrusted to us.

It is worth more than all the gold and precious stones in the universe. It is the treasure from heaven.

It is the pearl of great price. We are to guard the faith vigorously, continuously.

[39:26] We are to share it liberally and accurately. Underline that word in our day. Now just who are the guardians of the faith that has been once delivered to the saints?

It is easy to say, well the pastors are, or the teachers are, but in truth, faith, every believer is to be a guardian of the faith.

Everyone that believes is a guardian of the faith. We are to protect its truth. We are to proclaim its truth.

You may not be in the pulpit Sunday, but you might be in Walmart Sunday afternoon or Monday.

But if we do not protect the truth, and that is the accuracy of the word of God, there is not going to be any truth left to proclaim.

We won't have anything to proclaim. In our day, in the last few years, entire denominations have departed from the truth.

[40:40] Whole denominations. The truth we protect is fragile, and the enemy is content if we are off just a degree or two. Remember just a few years ago, they shot a missile to Mars, and one group of scientists computed in metric, and the other in inches.

And it was only off a fraction of an inch when it was launched. But after going to 148 million miles, guess how far it missed Mars? A whole bunch.

A whole bunch. It was way off. And it's so fragile, and the enemy is content if we are just off a degree or two.

He just wants us off a degree or two. I used to think Satan used to hang out in bars and night clubs. Found out he hangs out in churches. That was a revelation to me as a new believer.

Well, just how serious is God about the preservation of his truth? Listen to Paul in Galatians chapter 1. And I'm told this is very strong in the Greek language.

[41:53] This beginning here. I am amazed. I'm told that's a strong expression. Paul says by inspiration, I'm 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 are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

as we have said before, so I say now again, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you have received, he is to be accursed.

I remember he said even if an angel, and Paul in Corinthians talks about Satan's followers appear as angels of light. I think of that every time I see the Mormon elders on their little bicycles.

No one looks more clean. But they're not God's angels. Anyone who preaches an inaccurate or watered down version of God's grace is delivered by Christ and the apostles to be accursed. [43 : 29] And the original American Standard Version used the word the anathema of God, meaning the eternally damned of God.

that's a long time. It doesn't get any more serious than that. So let's remember, there is a war going on.

It's all around us. It's been inside us here in years past. There's a war going on. Many have fallen on the battlefield.

we must contend until the Lord takes us home to be with Him. We are to fight for the truth as He Himself is the truth.

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