

XVIII. Contend for the Faith

June 1/3/4, 2020

Jude 17-25; cp. 2 Peter 3:1-3

Aim: To apply Jude's practical recommendations on how to contend for the faith: remember the Word of God; remain steadfast in our faith, hope, and love; reach out to others with the Gospel; and rejoice forever in our glorious God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Moo: Verse 3-4 and 17-23 ... have much in common. Both begin with the address 'dear friends' (lit., 'beloved,' *agapetoi*). Both talk about 'godless men (cp. v. 4 with vv. 18-19). Both appeal to past teaching to make their points: the condemnation of the false teachers was 'written about long ago' (v. 4); the coming of false teachers was 'foretold' by the apostles (v. 17). And, just as Jude urged believers in v. 3 to contend for 'the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints,' so now he exhorts believers to 'build yourselves up in you most holy faith' (v. 20). By these means, Jude shows that he is now resuming the topic of the beginning of the letter; the way Christians should respond to false teaching.

Moo: Specifically, Jude tells the believers to do three things. 1) They are to remember that the apostles themselves had predicted the kind of false teaching they are now experiencing (vv. 17-19)... God knew all along that they were coming. Thus, this reminder reassures Jude's readers that God knows what is happening in their midst. He is still in control. 2) Jude's readers are to devote themselves to their own spiritual growth (vv. 20-21). They must not allow the false teachers to deflect them from their own development in the faith. 3) Jude's readers are to reach out to those affected by the false teaching (vv. 22-23). Withdrawal into their own private spirituality is not enough; Jude's readers must do what they can to reclaim these people before it is too late.

MacArthur: In this section [vv. 17-23], Jude addresses how to properly contend for the faith and prosper spiritually during increasingly more apostate times. The Lord's brother presented his readers with three crucial truths that, if faithfully applied, will grant all believers discernment: they must remember, remain, and reach out.

A. Remember the Apostles (Jude 17-19; cp. 2 Pe. 3:1-3)

Gardner: Jude has used Enoch to warn the false teachers of their impending doom. But now Jude turns to the true believers in the church and reminds them of another vital prophecy if they are to be properly prepared for the world in which they now find themselves seeking to keep the faith. The apostles themselves had prophesied a message that all Christians need to hear: false teachers will come into the church, and they will cause divisions.

MacArthur: Jude's words here echo verses 5-7 and 11-13, which reminded his readers that false teachers pose a constant threat.

1. The Source of the Predictions (17; cp. 2 Pe. 3:1-2)

¹⁷*But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 3:1-2 – ¹This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ²that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles...

Jude – Lesson 18

a) *Beloved*

Gardner: Jude returns in these last verses of his epistle to being the affectionate pastor who is so concerned for God’s faithful people in this church. He has warned the false teachers and spelled out clearly from Scripture what their end is to be, but now he comforts and encourages and seeks to build up the faithful believers.... These people ‘loved in God the Father’ (v. 1) are again ‘loved’ by Jude, as in verses 3 and 20 (‘dear friends,’ NIV).

Moo: Jude’s address of his readers as ‘dear friends’ signals a major transition in the letter, as it did also in verse 3. In the former text, this affectionate address introduced the body of the letter after the brief introduction (vv. 1-2). Here, it signals a shift from denunciation of false teachers (vv. 5-16) to exhortation of the faithful.

Benton: The appeal, ‘*my dear friends,*’ indicates a major transition. He is moving away from the half-light of Jewish religious literature into the clear morning of the New Testament teaching.

b) *Remember*

Moo: When Jude asks his readers to ‘remember’ what the apostles said, he is not just asking them to perform a mental exercise.... ‘Remembering’ in the Bible includes the will and not just the mind. In recalling what God has done or said in the past, we are to take it to heart in a way that affects our thinking and behaving. Consequently, Jude warns his readers, by recalling what ‘the apostles of our Lord Jesus foretold’ to learn how to better respond to the false teachers.

MacArthur: Like Peter (2 Pe. 1:12-13), Jude exhorted his readers ‘to remember’ the truths they had already heard.... The Lord Himself was the first one in the New Testament to warn against false teachers (Mt. 7:15; cp. 24:11). As he defended his apostleship to the Corinthians, Paul echoed these same concerns (cp. 2 Cor. 11:12-15). The apostle gave additional warnings about false teachers in several of his other epistles (Col. 2:16-19; 1 Th. 2:14-16; 2 Th. 2:3-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:17-19; 3:1-9; 4:1-3) ... [as did Peter and John] (cp. 2 Pe. 2:1; 1 Jn. 4:1; 2:18-19; 2 Jn. 7; 3 Jn. 9-11).

Gardner: Jude insists that the teachings of the apostles are foundational and must be recalled if these Christians are to survive and not be led astray themselves by false teaching. Clearly on many occasions the apostles must have taught about false teachers and their danger. In doing this they were, of course, passing on what Jesus had taught them (cp. Mk. 13:22-23; Acts 20:29-31; 2 Pe. 2:1).... The church of all generations has been called by Jesus and the apostles to ‘be on guard!’ Jude commands his people to ‘remember’ this, just as we today need to remember the predictions of Christ and the apostles.

Benton: The false teachers, with their dreams and visions, were very experience-centered in their approach to faith and would have been encouraging the churches to adopt a similar way of thinking. With this in mind, Jude takes his readers back to their initial experience of the gospel. He reminds them of the apostles, who first preached Christ to them and through whom, if they were true Christians, they were converted, experiencing new birth by the Word of God.

2. The Content of the Predictions (18; cp. 2: Pe. 3:3)

¹⁸ *They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.”*

2 Peter 3:3 – ³...knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Jude – Lesson 18

a) Prophecy

MacArthur: Repeatedly, Christ and the apostles were saying that false teachers would infiltrate the church and oppose the truth. In light of that, Jude quoted Peter's warning (see 2 Pe. 3:3)... That the word translated 'mockers' appears in the New Testament only here and in 2 Peter 3:3 suggests that Jude quoted Peter.

Moo: In verse 18, Jude provides the 'text' of the apostolic prophecy that he wants his readers to remember.... We have no prophecy from an apostle using just these words. The closest is 2 Peter 3:3.... The connection is close indeed; for instance, the Greek word in both texts for 'scoffers' (*empaiktai*) occurs in only these two verses in the New Testament.... Peter is an apostle and Jude is not; it would make perfect sense for him to quote 2 Peter 3:3 as an apostolic prophecy. To be sure, Jude speaks of 'apostles' in the plural. By this he plainly indicates that more than one apostle made this kind of prediction (for some other examples, see Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

b) Last Times

MacArthur: The technical phrase 'the last time' refers to the period between Christ's first and second comings (cp. Acts 2:17; Gal. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; 1 Pe. 1:5, 20; 1 Jn. 2:18-19; James 5:3).

Benton: In Scripture, the term 'last times' is almost a technical phrase. The Bible divides the whole of world history basically into two eras. Before the earthly life of the Lord Jesus is designated as 'the former days.' The whole time-period from Christ's ministry, culminating in the Day of Pentecost, right through until His second coming, is called 'the last days' or the 'last times' (Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2). Jude and his readers lived in the last times and so do we. This is one of the reasons why what Jude wrote so long ago is still urgently relevant to us today.

Gardner: In the New Testament, the 'last times' refer to the period between the first coming of Jesus leading up to His return in glory. Like Jude and his congregation, we live in the 'last times' or 'last days,' and so this prophecy must remain foundation for our approach to our own situation at the start of the twenty-first century.

Moo: The New Testament writers regularly use this expression ['last times'], or similar ones, to describe the entire period from the time of Jesus' death and resurrection onward (e.g., Acts 2:17-19; Heb. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:18). Once the Messiah had come, they believed, the last and climactic period of salvation history had begun.

Benton: During that era the gospel will be preached among the nations (Mk. 13:10), but at the same time the church will face many trials, including being deeply troubled by false teachers (Mk. 13:5-13). This is what the Lord Jesus predicted, and that same prediction was taught by his apostles. Jude chooses to use the phraseology used by the apostle in 2 Peter 3:3.

c) Scoffers

Gardner: Jude talks of 'scoffers,' and this is more than simply a reference to those who might poke fun at us. Scoffers here refers to those who think they know better and so pour scorn on other Christians. They 'scoff' at those who perhaps have what may be called a 'simple' faith.

Benton: The 'scoffer' is frequently found in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament under the term 'mockers' (e.g., Ps. 1:1; Pr. 1:22). It stands for a person who despises religion and

Jude – Lesson 18

laughs at morality. Mockers, or scoffers, live loose lifestyles and make the faith a subject of irreverent humor.

Moo: When Peter referred to ‘scoffers,’ the context shows that he was thinking of people who scoffed at the idea of the return of Christ in glory (see 2 Pe. 3:4). This eschatological skepticism never comes to the surface in Jude.... Jude’s depiction of the false teachers focuses on their licentious lifestyle and haughty attitude toward God. And the last expression in the prophecy Jud quotes, ‘who will follow their own ungodly desires,’ suggests this same idea. Probably, then, Jude portrays the false teachers as generally mocking God and his moral requirements. They are so intent on satisfying their selfish and fleshly desires that they have no place for God.

MacArthur: Such mockers will be ‘following after their own ungodly lusts, a fact Jude already established in verses 4, 15, and 16. They will give free reign to their passions and dissipations because they have no capacity for holiness. Since their hearts are not transformed, all they can do is pursue their own ungodly desires.

3. The Object of the Predictions (19)

¹⁹*It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.*

Benton: In parallel with what Jude did after quoting the prophecy from *The Book of Enoch*, he now gives us a second description of these false teachers.

Moo: Jude wraps up this brief section as he has several others (see vv. 5-10; 11-13, 14-16), by identifying the people or examples he has been talking about with ‘these men,’ the false teachers who had infiltrated his readers’ churches.

Gardner: It is vital that they realize that ‘these are the men’ who are the ones the apostles spoke about. The identification is certain. In yet another list of three, Jude summarizes who they are. The Greek can be translated like this: ‘These are the ones who make distinctions, who are worldly, and who do not have the Spirit.’

a) *Dividers (19a)*

¹⁹*It is these who cause divisions...*

Moo: He uses a very rare Greek word (*apodiorzo*). Based on its use in Aristotle, some commentators think the word must mean ‘make a (logical) distinction.’ They therefore think that the false teachers were erecting theoretical distinctions between two kinds of Christians.... But that may be reading more into the term than is justified. The word can also have the meaning ‘make separations,’ in the sense of ‘create divisions.’ We know that one of the almost inevitable byproducts of false teaching is division within the church. There are always some who are ready to listen to anything new and different, who are ready to be swept away by whatever new wind of teaching might be blowing.

MacArthur: The word *apodiorizō* (‘divisions’) refers to the motivation behind the false teachers’ worldly behavior, as well as its divisive effect. The term means ‘to make a distinction’ and, in the case of the apostates, meant that they portrayed themselves as superior to those who taught the truth. Like the Pharisees, they were arrogant (Lk. 16:15; 18:9, 11) and condescending (Mt. 23:4-5), adhering to their self-styled set of standards (cp. Mk. 7:5-8)—their own elite understanding of ‘the truth’ (cp. Mt. 16:6, 11-12). Instead of putting others before themselves (which is the key to true spiritual unity—cp. Phil. 2:1-4), they exalted themselves and their own agendas. Naturally, the end result was division and strife in the body.

Jude – Lesson 18

Benton: These false teachers...disrupt the unity of the church.... The word translated ‘divide’ can mean to separate, or to make a distinction.... The false teachers whom Jude was opposing saw themselves as an elitist group..... They were still going to the church’s love feast. However, we can imagine them forming an ‘in group’ and perhaps even sitting separately from the rest of the brothers and sisters. The implication was, ‘We and those who follow us are very, very much better than others.’ They were bringing division where in fact there should not be division.

Gardner: The word translated ‘make distinctions’ refers to more than simply causing divisions (NIV). It is a rare word in Greek and seems to imply classifying people into groups. Given the point that Jude then makes that they are ‘worldly’ and ‘devoid of the Spirit,’ it is surely likely that these people were making the same mistake highlighted by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians. They regarded themselves as ‘spiritual’ and others as ‘worldly’. They made distinctions within the church, putting themselves on a higher plane than others. This would fit well with Jude’s comments in verse 12 that they ‘feed only themselves’ and in verse 16 that they ‘boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.’

b) *Degenerates (19b)*

...worldly people...

Moo: The NIV’s ‘who follow mere natural instincts’ translates a single Greek word, *psychikoi* (lit., “soulish people”).... Since the ‘soul’ is what all persons have by virtue of their physical birth, the word can connote the idea of what is ‘natural,’ in the sense of what is natural to this world. It can therefore suggest a narrow perspective or behavior that focuses solely on this world and its values.

Gardner: As Paul showed so clearly in 1 Corinthians (especially in chapter 2:14-15 where he contrasts ‘spiritual’ people with ‘worldly’ – using the same Greek word *psychikoi* – ‘the man without the spirit,’ NIV), it is completely wrong to make distinctions between Christians. There is no higher order of the spiritual as opposed to the others. Rather, there are those who are real Christians, those who belong to Christ and have the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), and those who do not have the Spirit and therefore, in spite of their protestations to the contrary do not actually belong to the Lord.

MacArthur: ‘Worldly-minded’ (*psuchikos*, lit. ‘soulish’) is more accurately translated ‘sensual persons’ (NKJV). With a certain deference to Greek philosophy, Jude depicted the false teachers in strictly physical terms. His materialistic description exposed them for who they really were—religious terrorists who lacked such internal qualities as a proper self-perception, the ability to reason, and a true knowledge of God.

Benton: Their immoral behavior is sufficient evidence that they do not possess the Holy Spirit.... The desires of the unregenerate flesh in human beings revolve around sin and self and this world. Sensual pleasure, luxury, and immorality are part and parcel with the flesh. The regenerate soul is not immediately perfect, but it does have new desires. The regenerate soul is not immediately perfect, but it does have new desires. These are desires for God, His Word, and His worship, for purity of life, and for loving fellowship. In a word, the work of the Holy Spirit in a truly born-again person is shown by that person’s longing to be like Jesus.

c) *Devoid (19c)*

...devoid of the Spirit.

Jude – Lesson 18

Moo: Just in case we may have missed the point, Jude removes all doubt by adding that these false teachers ‘do not have the Spirit.’ As possessing a ‘soul’ is the invariable mark of a living person, so possessing the Spirit of God is the invariable mark of being a redeemed person (see Rom. 8:8-10).

Gardner: Jude here is saying that it is in fact these men who are worldly and ‘devoid of the Spirit.’ They are making distinctions, but they have got it entirely the wrong way around. They have no part in the true church, for they do not have the Spirit. Indeed, they are ‘godless’ (v. 4).

MacArthur: Even though the false teachers claimed a transcendental understanding of God, they did not know Him at all—they were ‘devoid of the Spirit (cp Jn. 3:5; Rom. 8:9; 1 Hn. 3:24; 4:13). The truth is that they were physically alive but, because they had never been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, they were spiritually dead. They were religious frauds who paid lip service to faith and spiritual life but denied such claims by their actions.

B. Remain Steadfast (Jude 20-21)

Helm: These verses [20-23] contain Jude’s appeal to his readers to fight for the faith as announced in verse 3, and are therefore not an appendix to the letter, but its climax. In this section, Jude comes to the main purpose of his letter, which is to give his readers positive instructions about how, in the situation in which they find themselves they are to ‘carry on the fight for the faith’ (v. 3)... Beginning at verse 20 we are reading Jude’s ‘how-to manual’ on contending for the faith.

Benton: In verses 20-23, Jude gives orders concerning what he wants his readers to be doing. He tells us what we ought to be doing for ourselves in verses 20-21, and then he tells us what we ought to be doing for others in verses 22-23.... You have a responsibility for yourself before God.... In verses 20-21 there are four key verbs which show us how to take responsibility for ourselves and to grow in maturity. The words are these: ‘build,’ ‘pray,’ ‘keep,’ and ‘wait.’

1. Build (20a)

²⁰*But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith...*

a) Beloved

Moo: ‘Dear friends’ (see v. 17) again signals a transition as Jude now turns his attention to the believers and begins to tell them specifically what they are to do in response to the false teachers. He begins with injunctions focusing on the need to maintain their own faith [vv. 20-21]. Here is the first requirement when false teaching arises: to secure one’s own spiritual position. Only then is one ready to reach out and confront those who are disturbed by it (vv. 22-23).

Helm: Do you see the repeated refrain, ‘But you, beloved’ in verse 20? This appears not only here but in verse 17 as well.... Interestingly, ‘beloved’ can be taken all the way back to the beginning of the letter. It appears in the opening verse when Jude referred to his audience as ‘those who are...beloved in God the Father.’ And then, more importantly, the term showed up again in verse 3 with direct ties to theme of contending for the faith.... Jude wrote this letter in hopes of stirring the *beloved* to *contend*. It shouldn’t surprise us, then, that having secured his claim that certain people were designated long ago for condemnation by the end of verse 19, he is now free to pick up with clarity and unction about what it means for the *beloved* to *contend* for the faith.

Jude – Lesson 18

b) Command

Benton: What is our first responsibility for ourselves? You and I are to be builders: ‘*Build yourselves up in your most holy faith.*’

Gardner: Jude’s second command, ‘build yourselves up...,’ indicates his move now to giving some distinctly practical advice for true believers in this church. It is essential that these Christian believers not be carried away into error, so they must take precautions. The first of these is to make sure they are firmly established in their most holy faith.... The call to ‘build yourselves up’ is addressed in this context to all those who are true believers. It is an appeal to the church, the body of Christ, to work together in this process of commitment to and study of the truth revealed first in the Christ of Scripture.

MacArthur: For those of us who are Christians to exercise discernment and protect ourselves from being led astray, we must remain on the path of sanctification. Doing so involves first ‘building’ ourselves up on our ‘most holy faith.’ We must become doctrinally strong if we would recognize error and effectively fight the battle for truth.... Metaphorically, the idea of building up refers to personal edification and spiritual growth, and it implies the establishment of the firm foundation of sound doctrine.

Helm: Like Paul, Jude views the Christian community as an edifice, a structure meant to rise to the glory of God. He calls the Christian community to *build*.... The apostles poured a godly foundation – they have given you Jesus. Now build yourselves up in Him. Know the faith. Study God’s word. The challenges facing the church are grave, and they require all the structural support the Bible can give.

Moo: The frequent New Testament use of the imagery of ‘building’ to describe the spiritual development of the community probably comes from the idea that the Christian church forms God’s new temple (1 Cor. 3:9-15; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pe. 2:4-10). New covenant believers no longer need a literal temple, for they themselves are now the place where God, in Christ, resides. ‘Build yourselves up,’ then, is a command that Christians together encourage one another in holding fast to the truth of Christ and in maintaining a lifestyle that reflects the truth (cp. Col. 2:7).

c) Holy Faith

MacArthur: As in verse 3, the ‘most holy faith’ is the objective body of biblical truth.

Benton: Obviously, the ‘most holy faith’ is the gospel, that body of truth for which Jude has called us to contend against the heresy of the false teachers. It is termed ‘holy faith’ for two reasons. The first is because of its *origins*. This truth has not been thought up by people; it has come from God. It is the good news that the holy God has revealed, which we would never have found out for ourselves.... Secondly, ... it is ‘holy faith’ because...of its *results*. It makes us holy. The best way to guard ourselves against the false teaching is to be well acquainted with true teaching. The best way to be inoculated against the immorality of the heretics is to be built up in the truth that leads to godliness. That is our first responsibility.

Gardner: ‘Your most holy faith’ refers to the whole of that gospel truth, the whole once and for all delivered faith mentioned in verse 3. At its heart we can sum it up as the belief in Christ crucified – not simply in some creedal form, important as that is, but a belief in Christ which is life-changing.... First, we need to note that ‘the faith’ is indeed the proclamation of Christ who died for our sins and who calls us all to repentance. Second, we must note that the faith is ‘most

Jude – Lesson 18

holy,’ that is, it is set apart, it is from God Himself. Anything to do with God is described as ‘holy’ and this faith comes from God Himself. It is not therefore a subjective personal faith that Jude is talking of here. Rather, he is calling them back to that which is revealed, the ‘given-ness’ of Christianity.

Moo: As in the similar phrase in verse 3, ‘faith’ here means what Christians believe—the doctrinal and ethical core of Christian identity. This is what the false teachers were threatening; therefore, true believers must devote themselves to the faith with renewed dedication.

d) Application

Benton: Now, we are to build ourselves up in that most holy faith. How do we do that? We do it, first, by studying the faith, that is, the Bible; secondly, by believing the Bible; and, thirdly, by obeying the Word of God in the Bible (cp. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 1:1-3)... The Bible is the Word of God written. It is an immense treasure. It encapsulates ‘the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.’

MacArthur: Practically speaking, edification centers on studying the Word of God and learning to apply it (cp. Acts 20:32; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pe. 2:2; 1 Jn. 2:14).

Helm: If we are to become strong, if we are to meet the need of the hour in which we live, we must *build ourselves up in the faith*. And I know of no better way to do this than to spend more time in the study of God’s Word.

Gardner: If we now put this together, we see immediately that Jude’s command is to the whole church to study and to be involved in working out how to live and move on in life with the grace of God revealed in Jesus. It is not about an individual’s salvation, but about the church, loved by God and called by Him, being absorbed with what God has given. A healthy church that is able to stand against falsehood will be a church in which the people are committed to the given-ness of the faith, to Christ, to Scripture as the word of God, and to each other as the body of Christ.

Gardner: Even though we are called upon to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, we are not, of course, left alone in this. The faith comes from God. It is a gift of God to His church and applied to our lives by the Spirit... And so, Jude moves to the third command.

2. Pray (20b)

...and praying in the Holy Spirit...

a) Command

Benton: The second responsibility is to ‘*pray in the Holy Spirit*.’ ... Are you at the church prayer meeting? Because the church must be a prayerful people. People who do not pray are practical atheists, no matter what they call themselves. Churches that do not pray are secular organizations, no matter what is stated in their doctrinal basis. Jude challenges us to pray in the context of the dangers of false teaching.

Benton: Some people want to insist that prayer in the Holy Spirit must be prayer in tongues... But, with the best will in the world, that cannot be what Jude is talking about here. How do we know that? We know it because 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 makes it clear that not all Christians speak in tongues... Not all Christians speak in tongues, or are even meant to speak in tongues. But this command of Jude is a command to all Christians. So, he cannot have in mind speaking in tongues, because only some do that according to the New Testament.

Jude – Lesson 18

Moo: The form of the word in the Greek text may be suggesting that the second injunction is a means by which the first can be carried out—that is, by ‘praying in the Holy Spirit’ we can build one another up in the faith. Many commentators think that Jude is enjoining believers here to engage in distinctly ‘charismatic’ praying, including, though not limited to, speaking in tongues.... I doubt whether Jude intends to be so specific. All praying that is worthy of the name will be praying that is done ‘in the spirit’—that is, stimulated, guided by, and infused by the Holy Spirit (cp. Eph. 6:18a).

MacArthur: A second essential element of sanctification involves ‘praying in the Holy Spirit.’ That expression does not refer to speaking in tongues, but to praying for that which is consistent with the Spirit’s will—His desires, directives, and decrees.

Helm: The call to ‘contend’ back in verse 3 – with all its hurried importance and sense of urgency – does, at the end of the day, plant us on the well-known ground of a more rigorous reading of God’s Word and a greater devotion to Spirit-filled prayer. The main things are the plain things. And evidently it is that way regardless of the century in which you live.

Gardner: The need for earnest and continuing prayer is vital if believers are to stand properly against those who would lead them astray. Such prayer reflects dependence upon God for help and strength (cp. Eph. 6:18).... As we pray, so the Holy Spirit, who is with God’s people permanently, takes those prayers right into the presence of the Father. How different are such prayers from those of the false teachers who do not have the Spirit (v. 19)! Everything Jude is now saying contrasts directly with those who would have Christians believe they are somehow on a deeper spiritual plain when in fact they are nowhere spiritually.

b) Application

Gardner: Romans 8:26-27 helps us understand this work of the Spirit in our prayer lives. It is surely the experience of every Christian that there are times when we do not even know how or what to pray for some situations. At times we are not even aware that we ought to be praying for particular protection from the evil one. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit ‘helps us in our weakness,’ when this happens to us. ‘The Spirit Himself intercedes for us.’ But more than that, praying in the Holy Spirit allows us to be confident in the will of God Himself being carried out in our lives. As we pray, we are aware that the Spirit knows the will of God and so bears us up and our needs up ‘in accordance with the will of God.’ The joy for all believers is that God hears and answers all such prayers brought to Him in accordance with His will.

MacArthur: Although His will is revealed through the plain commands of Scripture, we as believers do not always know how to practically apply it to the various issues of life. Therefore, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us before the Father with genuine sympathy and inexpressible fervor (Rom. 8:26-27).... When we pray ‘in the Holy Spirit,’ we submit ourselves to Him, rest on His wisdom, seek His will, and trust in His power (cp. Jn. 14:14-17; 1 Jn. 5:14-15).

Benton: What is prayer in the Holy Spirit? It is prayer in that spirit of adoption, that spirit of sonship, that coming to the Father through faith in Jesus Christ who has died for us; coming to Him pouring out our hearts to Him, the depths of our needs and our feelings, as a child would to its father. What is prayer in the Holy Spirit? It is not formal prayer. It is not prayer read mechanically out of a book. It is the prayer of a sincere, regenerated heart, being poured out as a child to the Father in heaven.... Jude is exhorting us to prayer from a sincere heart, trusting in the Father, inspired by the Spirit of God.

Jude – Lesson 18

3. Keep (21a)

²¹...keep yourselves in the love of God...

a) Command

Gardner: ‘Keep yourselves in God’s love’ is Jude’s fourth command, and continues his exhortation to his audience to protect themselves properly from falsehood. It reminds his readers that the covenant Lord and Master, who has called them, loved them, and kept them (v. 1), asks for our love in response.... As with the need to pray, we must remember that the Holy Spirit has been given to us so that the law of love is now written on our hearts – the law to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.

Benton: The third key word is ‘keep’: ‘Keep yourselves in God’s love.’ The word ‘keep,’ or ‘kept,’ is something of a favorite word of Jude’s (cp. vv. 1, 6, 24).... ‘But hold on,’ you might say, ‘verse 1 tells us we are being kept as Christians, doesn’t it? Weill, if we are being kept, why do I need to keep myself?’ Human logic would suggest that if God is doing something, then I do not need to do anything about it. But biblical logic is often different. The biblical logic here is that if God is doing something then I should want to do it too (cp. Phil. 2:12-13).

Moo: Jude’s third exhortation combined with his description of believers in verse 1 to form an interesting and instructive pairing of ideas. Christians, Jude has said, are ‘kept by Jesus Christ’; now he urges them to ‘keep themselves in God’s love.’ Here we find the typical two sides of the New Testament approach to the Christian life. God has done all in Christ that we need to be saved, yet we must respond to God if we are to secure our salvation. God ‘keeps’ us; we are to ‘keep ourselves.’ Both are true, and neither can be sacrificed without missing something essential to the Christian pursuit of godliness.

MacArthur: As we who believe pursue sanctification, we must also ‘keep’ ourselves ‘in the love of God.’ This is a vitally important principle, and it means to remain in the sphere of God’s love or the place of His blessing (Rom. 5:5; 8:39; 1 Jn. 4:16).

b) Application

Benton: If God is keeping me, then it is absolutely right for Jude to say that we must keep ourselves in the love of God. We are to co-operate with what God is doing in our lives.... How do we keep ourselves in the love of God? By seeking to obey God and what He has told us through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (cp. Jn. 15:9). That is how we keep ourselves in the love of God.

Gardner: Jude’s command then must be read in the light of this total covenantal relationship. He is asking true believers to ensure that they really live out in day to day life the reality of being God’s people. In practice, this means obeying the commands of God, unlike the false teachers who do not obey God’s law (cp. Jn. 15:9-10).

MacArthur: On a practical level, it means that we must stay obedient to God, since divine blessing is promised only with the sphere of obedience (Jn. 15:9-11; cp. 1 Jn. 2:5).

Helm: We contend for the faith by keeping Jesus’ commandments (cp. Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24). We contend by living under his good word, by submitting our lives to Him in every respect. Now, most of us want to know what it means to *keep* His word. And in this respect Jude has already shown himself more than willing to help. On two previous occasions Jude used the term *keep* when referring to those who failed to contend. In other words, by the time he gets to verse 20 he

Jude – Lesson 18

has already shown his readers – twice – how to keep themselves in the love of God by giving them examples of behavior that Christians must keep away from. The first time he did this was back in verse 6.... Humble submission to God is a mark of keeping. Conversely, when we find ourselves succumbing to self-willed, self-ruling, self-exalting autonomy, we are in danger of being numbered among those being kept for condemnation. Jude uses this term again at the close of verse 13.... To whom is Jude referring here? To people like Cain and Balaam and Korah. To teachers and those like them who reject God's word, who imbibe in and encourage sensuality and greed, and who despise any ecclesial authority. These are the ones for whom the darkness has been kept. Two examples from Jude's greater context inform our keeping. And with them we have seen Jude at his pedagogical best: 'Beloved, you will know that you are keeping yourselves in the love of God by that from which you keep yourselves.'

4. Wait (22b)

...waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Gardner: Jude then reminds his readers of the context in which this command is given, 'as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.'

Benton: Fourthly, we are called to wait.... We are to keep looking forward to the Second Coming, keeping our eyes fixed on Christ, waiting for Him.... We may be in the midst of all kinds of troubles in our personal lives, our family lives, our churches, but we must wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring us to eternal life. There is something worth waiting for. The world wants everything now; we are to wait.... The false teachers were offering the pleasures of sin which last for a short time, but end in destruction. Jude tells us to wait for the Lord Jesus. Such waiting will be rewarded with eternal life and joy.

Moo: Jude's last exhortation, fittingly, directs attention to the future. God's mercy is always present, but the Scriptures often associate His mercy with deliverance on the last day (see e.g., Mt. 5:7; 2 Tim. 1:18). Here, therefore, 'the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ' is something that we are urged to 'wait for.' The verb translated 'wait for' often occurs in such eschatological contexts. It connotes eager yet patient expectation and the kind of lifestyle that should accompany such hope for deliverance (cp. 2 Pe. 3:12-14).... Thus, Jude is urging his readers to look beyond the disruptions created by the false teachers to that ultimate expression of Christ's mercy on the day He comes back in glory to bring His people to their eternal enjoyment of the life He provides.

MacArthur: The verb translated 'waiting anxiously' (*prosdéchomai*) means 'to wait for,' or 'to welcome,' and connotes doing so with great expectancy. Thus, we are to live with eternity in view as we eagerly anticipate the Lord's return (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 1 Th. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:12-13; cp. 1 Pe. 4:7; 2 Pe. 3:11-13). On that great future day, all of us who have trusted in Him will experience Christ's final mercy and enjoy the fullness of eternal life (cp. Rom. 2:7; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Jn. 5:13) as we experience the resurrection and glorification of our bodies (Jn. 5:24; 17:3; Rom. 5:17; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Jn. 5:20; cp. Dan. 7:18).

Helm: Jude fixes the eyes of those embattled early Christians on their future hope.... Hope is a potent motivator for present action. Knowing the end encourages vigorous action now. So, as we read God's Word, as we pray in the Spirit, as we keep ourselves in the love of God, we do it all in eagerness and *waiting*. The future looks bright! Eternal life is the prize for everyone who contends.

Jude – Lesson 18

5. Summary

Benton: If you think about the inner life of a human being, it can be summed up under four headings: the mind (we think), the spirit (the real us), the will (we choose), and the heart (we feel). What Jude has been exhorting us to do speaks to every aspect of what we are inside. The mind: build yourselves up in your most holy faith – feed your mind. You are a living spirit: pray in the Spirit, your spirit and the Holy Spirit in communion – feed your spirit. The will: choose to walk in paths where you meet the love of God and where God is pleased to smile on you – keep yourselves in the love of God. And you have a heart: you have feelings. Many troubles break upon you, but keep your eyes on the love Christ has for you, and His coming, the consolation of eternal life that He brings – and so feed your affections. Here is a New Testament recipe for a healthy spiritual life even during times of trouble in the churches. We are not simply to sit back. We are to take responsibility for ourselves.

Helm: Building, praying, [keeping,] and waiting are impossible for us to maintain over a long stretch of time. Jude knows this. He is aware of our weakness. Did you happen to see that he subtly embedded two means that energize our commitments? We fulfill our commitments by remaining in the Godhead. The Trinity is our source of strength. The Trinity is our source of strength. Take a look: The Holy Spirit is mentioned in verse 20, and the Father and Son in verse 21. Jude knows that we cannot possibly carry out our intentions to contend under our own strength of will. But thankfully, we only need to remain in God. ‘Keep yourselves *in* the love of God.’ ‘Pray *in* the Holy Spirit.’ We make these commitments in confidence because our confidence is in the triune God. He possesses everything we need to accomplish them.

Moo: Two characteristic early Christian triads are observable here: faith, love, and hope; and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Helm: Hidden within these same verses are the triune virtues of Christianity – faith, hope, and love. Take a look: faith and love are overtly mentioned in verses 20-21, while the attending virtuous gem of hope lives quietly in verse 21.... Take comfort in this: because God dwells within you, these virtues will flow from you. So, we find in these verses everything we need to contend. Jude’s curriculum is established in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is centered in the command to ‘remember’ and ‘keep’; it is attended by commitments to ‘build,’ ‘pray,’ and ‘wait’; and it is carried along by the virtues of ‘faith,’ hope, and ‘love.’

Gardner: In these two verses Jude has thus referred directly to two of the three abiding Christian characteristics, faith and love, and now indirectly he points to the third, hope (see 1 Cor. 13:13). It is vital for all Christians to remember that they are living in an age that will come to an end. The ‘last times’ (v. 18) do lead on to the inevitable Last Day when this age will come to an end and the ‘full mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ’ will be seen as he brings us the fulfilment of the promise of ‘eternal life.’

C. Reach Out to Others (Jude 22-23)

Benton: These verses 22-23 are sister verses to the previous pair of verses. In verses 20-21 we saw Jude telling us what we out to be doing for ourselves as Christians. Now, in these verses Jude is telling us what we as Christians ought to be doing for others.... Having told us, ‘Take responsibility for yourselves,’ now Jude is saying we must also take responsibility for other people.

Jude – Lesson 18

Moo: Jude has urged his readers to make sure that their own faith is securely established (vv. 20-21). With their own spiritual condition secure, they can now reach out to others whose position is not so certain. Thus, he exhorts his readers to engage in ministry to those in the community who are being attracted, to one extent or another, by the false teachers.

Gardner: The faithful believers in the church not only have to protect themselves but they also need to know how to deal with those around them who may be influenced by the godless men. Although the Greek is not as clear as we might wish at this point, it does seem that Jude here provides us with another threesome. There are three categories of people who will each need to be dealt with in a slightly different way: those who, under the influence of the false teachers, have doubts; those who, being weak spiritually, are in danger of being burned by the sin around them; those who could be genuinely dangerous to the faithful.

MacArthur: In these two verses Jude identifies three categories of unbelieving people who, from the church's perspective, are both a menace and a mission field. They are the confused, the convinced, and the committed.

1. The Doubters (22)

²²*And have mercy on those who doubt... *

a) Doubt

Moo: The verb translated 'doubt' (the root form is *diakrino*) can also be translated 'dispute,' which is the meaning of the verb in Jude's only other use of it (v. 9). But 'doubt' is the more usual meaning of the word in the New Testament, and it makes better sense to think that believers are to be 'merciful' to doubters than to people who are disputing. These 'doubters,' we can surmise, are Christians within the church who are being somewhat swayed by the false teaching.

Gardner: It is probably the case that at some time in their lives all Christians have doubts about their faith, but usually these are fleeting and at such times we remind ourselves that our faith is dependent on God and His promises rather than on our feelings or our intellectual prowess. However, some doubting is more fundamental than this and is often caused by teachers who raise questions and seek to lead in a different direction. We have seen how the 'godless' men, 'without the Spirit,' have denied God's grace and led people away from God's word. This has caused some in the congregation to have real doubts and questions. Who is right? Are they right to continue in the teachings they received when they first became Christians, or is it better to follow what they are now hearing, especially as it seems so persuasive and these people seem so charming?

MacArthur: The heretical and deceptive statements made by false teachers, along with their licentious lifestyles, can easily confuse some people within the church.... Caught in the web of deception, some find themselves thoroughly confused—unsure of what is true and what isn't. In reaching out to such people, Jude called the church 'to have mercy on' them, showing kindness, compassion, and sympathy to those who are doubting.

Helm: Churches are filled with people who doubt. Young Christians especially have doubts. They have doubts about the Bible. They have doubts about the Christian faith and the exclusivity of our message. After all, stimulating professors and newfound friends from a variety of backgrounds can challenge a faith that was merely assumed to be true until now.... On such as these, Jude says, 'have mercy.'

Jude – Lesson 18

Benton: First of all, we should show mercy.... Sometimes false teaching causes people to doubt. It can even cause good Christians of many years standing in Christ to doubt.... Now that can be a dangerous situation, but it is not a sinful situation. Doubt is not the same as unbelief. Doubt is not a sin. Our response to such people who are in two minds should not be to cast them off. It should not be to say, ‘Oh well, you fool, you must be a heretic, get out!’

b) Mercy

Benton: ‘No,’ says Jude. ‘Our response to doubt is to be merciful.’ That is, it is to be kind and understanding. We need to have an atmosphere in the church which is loving, so that people do feel that they can ask questions, that they can confess their fears and their doubts. Thus, those doubts and fear are brought to the surface and they can be addressed. Those questions can be answered as we work in kindly fellowship together. That is how people can be brought out of confusion and know where they are going. They can come out of the other side of doubt with a stronger faith.

Gardner: Jude’s advice needs to be heeded. ‘Be merciful.’ It is all too easy to make hasty judgments on such people, to criticize them too strongly, and even to separate from them. To do this may have the opposite of what should be desired. Just as in verse 21 Christians are reminded that they await the day of God’s final demonstration of mercy to them, so they too need to show mercy, as they seek to restore these people, answer their questions and their doubts, and lead them back to the true path of God’s way for their lives.

Moo: It would be easy for the faithful to shun such people or lambaste them for their doubts. But Jude wants the faithful to show mercy to them. Christians themselves have received God’s unmerited mercy (see v. 2); they should display a similar mercy to people who are wavering. For mercy is far more likely than harsh rebuke to keep them within the fold of the orthodox faith.

Helm: Don’t be harsh. Don’t think that behind every question a budding heretic is getting ready to emerge. Be helpful. Invest in relationships. Be known for your patience and your love. ‘Have mercy.’ That is how to contend for the faith.

MacArthur: Showing mercy does not mean ignoring the seriousness of false teaching or commending the weak for their vacillation. But it does mean exhorting such people with the truth, in meekness and patience, being diligent to present the gospel to them before they are permanently caught in heresy.

Benton: Remember doubting Thomas? ... When the Lord Jesus heard those doubts of Thomas, he could have said to Himself, ‘After three years of My being with him personally, he does not believe! I will leave him to his doubting.’ But is that how the Lord Jesus reacted? Not at all. The Lord Jesus was not harsh when he heard those doubts of Thomas: ‘Unless I see the nail-prints in His hands, I will not believe.’ What does our loving Lord Jesus do? He appears to Thomas and He answers his doubts. He is gracious. He is merciful. We must follow in the Master’s footsteps.

2. The Deceived (23a)

²³ ...save others by snatching them out of the fire...

a) Save

Gardner: This group of people are those who are in real and imminent danger of being burned by sin.... Salvation belongs to the Lord. The Christian’s job, however, is to ensure this salvation is

Jude – Lesson 18

proclaimed to people, especially here to those who, having a weak faith, have moved into areas of serious danger. The task is to draw them back quickly.

MacArthur: In this aspect of outreach, the challenge for believers increases. It is no longer merely a matter of showing mercy; it becomes the difficult task of rescuing those who are already convinced of false teaching. But in humility and faith we who would be faithful must be willing to be used by God to ‘save others.’ God remains the ultimate source of salvation, but we are the secondary means He uses to reach sinners.

Benton: Secondly, we must show urgency.... We have to be active in taking responsibility, not just for Christians inside the church, but for non-Christians outside the church too. We have a responsibility to evangelize.... People are on their way to a lost eternity. They are on their way to hell and they are unaware of it, blindly walking towards the abyss.

Moo: The second group to whom the faithful need to reach out are those who have gone further down the road blazed by the false teachers. In fact, they have gone so far as to be in danger of suffering eternal damnation. This is almost certainly what the word ‘fire’ refers to here; ... fire is a standard biblical metaphor for hell (see v. 8).

b) *Snatch*

Gardner: In Amos 4:11, we have a picture of God snatching Israel from the fire (cp. Zech.

Benton: And you and I have a responsibility: ‘Snatch them from the fire.’ ... The reference is to Zechariah 3:1-5.... ‘Snatching’ carries that sense of urgency Jude wants us to hear. We will do this by pointing back to Christ and His mercy, to His Word, and to the ‘faith once and for all entrusted to the saints’ (v. 3).

Benton: You and I have a responsibility: ‘Snatch them from the fire.’ ... The reference is to Zechariah 3:2.... Not to have our sins forgiven is to be exposed to the eternal fire. To be forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ is to be snatched from the fire. That is one of the pictures here.

Moo: Some Christians in Jude’s audience have been tempted to such a degree by the false teachers that they are teetering on the brink of hell. The faithful Christians in the community need to ‘snatch’ them from it and save them before it is too late. Jude’s imagery probably reflects Zechariah 3:1-4.... This passage plays an important role in Jude. The words ‘The Lord rebuke you’ in verse 9, while taken originally from *The Testament/The Assumption of Moses*, clearly reflect this Zechariah text. And Jude will soon pick up the imagery of filthy clothes from this passage.

MacArthur: ‘Snatching’ translates *harpazō*, and presents the strong image of seizing something, or taking something or somebody by force. Jude undoubtedly borrowed this imagery from the prophets, specifically Amos’s statement about Israel, ‘You were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze’ (Amos 4:11; cp. Zech. 3:2). Even as he penned his letter, Jude apparently knew of some who had already been drawn into the damning doctrines of the apostates. He pictured them as having been singed by the very ‘fire’ of hell, a foreshadowing of the eternal inferno that would one day engulf them if they continued to embrace false teaching (cp. Is. 33:14; Mt. 13:42). The only way to rescue such people is to crush their false ideologies before it is too late. And this can be done only by the power of God’s truth (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Jude – Lesson 18

3. The Dangerous (23b)

...to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

a) Mercy

Moo: The strength of the language at the end of the verse suggest that he is now thinking of the false teachers themselves, or at least of church members who have given their allegiance to them. The ‘mercy’ that Jude commands here may, then, be pity and sorrow for their dreadful condition (as Luther thought). But it is more likely that the mercy is to be exhibited in prayers for them. Even those who have abandoned themselves to the false teaching are not beyond redemption, and Jude wants believers to continue to intercede for them.

Gardner: The third group Jude is concerned for are those who have moved far enough under the influence of the godless leaders that they are actually becoming dangerous to the faithful.... Jude wants those who are contending for the faith to be merciful just as Christ is merciful to them. However, being merciful and seeking to draw people back into the way of truth does not mean that there is no danger. When dealing with those men who have become involved with the teachings of ‘these men,’ when dealing with those who are already involved in their immorality and godlessness, there is a real danger that the faithful might also be tempted to stray. The attractions of sin must never be underestimated.

MacArthur: Sometimes Christians may have the opportunity to reach out to the most committed apostates. Such heretics are profoundly deceived individuals who are deeply committed to their own deceptions. In some cases, they are even the articulators of heretical doctrine and the leaders within a false system. When reaching out to such people, we who know the truth must proceed with the utmost caution and clear-headedness.

Benton: But thirdly, we are not only to show mercy to those who doubt and urgency to those who are bound for the fire, but to show sensitivity too.... He is probably thinking about those who have wandered from the Christian faith. Jude cares for backsliders. We can imagine that these people have been affected by the false teaching and so gone away from the Savior.... They have walked away from Christ and concluded that Christianity is not true and decided to go back into the world.... Or perhaps they have succumbed to the kind of false teaching that Jude is opposing which turns the grace of God into a license for immorality.... Backsliders go back into the world, out of the church.

b) Fear

Moo: But their mercy must be tempered by ‘fear.’ ‘Fear’ in the Bible often denotes that reverential awe with which believers should view the holy and majestic God.... But the words that follow ‘with fear’ suggest a different interpretation, that believers are to fear the subtle influence of the false teachers. As they ‘show mercy’ to them, they must at the same time be cautious in their contact with them, fearing that they too might catch the contagion of false teaching.

Gardner: By all means, do not separate yourself entirely from such people. Do not run away and set up another church. Do not expel such people from your house-group, but be prepared to forgive and welcome back: have mercy. In doing this, though, also have a healthy fear. There is a very important balance here. To show mercy is not the same thing as fully accepting someone whose sin might well lead others astray. Having mercy is to spend time with that person

Jude – Lesson 18

pointing out their sin and the forgiveness of God that awaits the repentant sinner, but it is not to be gullible.

MacArthur: The admonition ‘on some have mercy with fear’ indicates the sobering, frightening nature that outreach to such people entails. ‘Fear’ stems from an awareness that getting too close to corrupt, apostate error could result in somehow being tainted by those lies (cp. Mt. 16:6, 12; 1 Cor. 5:6-7; 15:33; Gal. 5:7-9).

Benton: When we approach these folks, we need to be very sensitive. There is a need to be merciful, but at the same time there is a need to show that the Lord is to be feared and is not someone to be trifled with.... Have mercy on them and pray that the Lord will give you the right words when you speak to them and when you see them, but mix mercy with fear. Don’t let them think that they are saved because they used to be in church once. Let them realize that it has to be a living, growing faith in the Savior. That is the only true mark of real salvation and that they must repent and come back to Him or they will be lost. So, you need some bluntness and you need sensitivity to know the right way to do that.

c) *Stained Garments*

Benton: However, the mention of fear may also be linked to what follows. We ourselves need to be careful. It is right that we should not be cocksure of ourselves. In rescuing those who have fallen, we need to take heed and to fear falling ourselves. None of us is above becoming a backslider if we are not careful. So, ... above all, show purity.... We need to retain a godly hatred of sin.

Helm: The verse becomes...a warning of sorts to those of us engaged in the work of mercy. This makes good sense, especially in light of Jude’s call for us to hate even the garment that is stained by the flesh. None of us is immune to falling into temptation. In the blink of an eye, an act of mercy or a reach to save puts us not only in touch with evil but also in the presence and fullness of fallen desires.... Jude is warning us that contending for the faith requires great care. Stay pure.

MacArthur: Jude used extremely graphic, coarse language to highlight the degree of danger involved in this type of outreach. ‘Garment’ translates *chitōn* and refers to the clothing that the people of that day wore under their outer tunics—it was their underwear. The word translated ‘polluted’ is a participial form of the verb *spiloō*, meaning ‘to stain’ or ‘to spot.’ To be ‘polluted by the flesh’ means ‘to be stained by bodily function.’ Just as no one wants to handle someone else’s dirty underwear and be defiled physically, so we should be extremely wary of getting too close to the spiritual defilement of those corrupted by false teachers. Even in bringing the gospel to committed apostates, saints must exercise great caution and wisdom.

Moo: The last phrase in the verse expands, then, on this point. Jude’s language is graphic. The word ‘stained’ seems to reflect Jude’s rendering of the Hebrew word for ‘filthy’ in Zechariah 3:3. This word refers to human excrement. And the word for ‘clothing’ that Jude uses here (*chiton*) refers to the garment worn closest to the body. In other words, Jude pictures the sinful teaching and practices of these people as underclothes fouled by feces.

Gardner: The picture is strong. The word for clothing refers to undergarments and the idea is that just as Jude’s readers would steer clear of someone else’s dirty and ‘stained’ undergarments, so they should stay far away from the sinful ways this group may be following. In the same way as one might fear contamination and illness from touching someone else’s clothing stained by

Jude – Lesson 18

bodily discharge, so one should fear the contamination of sin. The emphasis on undergarments probably especially recalls the sin of immorality with which the false teachers are so closely associated. But the principle is universally true for the believer. Hatred of sinful activity should be second nature to the one who has been ‘born from above’ and is now ‘a new creation in Christ.’

Helm: The last phrase, ‘the flesh,’ is the term for human waste. This means that the problem isn’t the garments but the sin that comes from inside the sinner. In light of this, perhaps this third group of people are men and women who after repeated warnings and acts of mercy still remain unrepentant and defiled on the inside. If this is the case, then we are dealing here with hardened, unbelieving people for whom there is no hope. Recalcitrant sinners. Condemned and contaminated reprobates who hate everything about our faith. And how does Jude ask us to contend for them? We are to ‘show mercy’!

Moo: What has caused this filthy condition? ‘Corrupted flesh.’ The Greek here has simply the word ‘flesh’ (*sarx*). But the NIV addition of ‘corrupted’ brings out the sense accurately enough, for Jude is using the word ‘flesh’ here in its common New Testament (and especially Pauline) negative sense, referring to the sinful impulse. The false teachers and their disciples are following their own ‘natural instincts’ and paying no attention to the Spirit (v. 19). They are producing teaching and behavior that is offensive to God. And, Jude is saying here, it should be equally offensive to believers. They should naturally ‘hate’ such conduct. Even, then, as they act in mercy toward these who have fallen, praying that the Lord may bring them back, they must not overlook in any way the terrible and destructive behavior these people are engaged in.

Gardner: This is not so much a call to separate the sin from the sinner (for sin only exists as the sinner commits the sin), but rather a call to deal with the person as one needing forgiveness and mercy, yet one from whom we must keep a healthy distance lest we too become contaminated with the same sin. Again, Jude pleads for a sensible balance as the Christian and the church confront sinful people who need forgiveness. Showing love and mercy should not lead to involvement in their pagan lifestyle. A Christian does not need to commit adultery to be able to minister to an adulterer with mercy and love.... Seeking to become involved with society in order to reach sinners with God’s mercy, the church has often become corrupted and no longer able to see sin for what it is – something of which we should be deeply fearful.

MacArthur: When the church does not deal properly with the spiritual contamination that false teachers can spread, the results can be disastrous. For example, the Lord told the church at Sardis, ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead’ (Rev. 3:1). That was because only a few in Sardis had not ‘soiled their garments’ (v. 4). The rest had indiscriminately embraced apostasy, which damned their souls and killed the church.

D. Rejoice Forever (Jude 24-25)

Moo: We should...note what is absent from the end of Jude: the typical matters, such as greetings and prayer requests, that close New Testament letters. The omission of these typical epistolary forms gives Jude the flavor of a sermon. Indeed, a doxology was often used in Judaism to conclude sermons, and so Jude’s use of it here fits well.

Helm: When Jude began his letter, he did so by telling his readers of his desire to write about the salvation they share in common (v. 3). But the day was urgent. The hour was late. So, he wrote a letter that called them ‘to contend for the faith’ (v. 3) instead.... But in the end, it appears that

Jude – Lesson 18

Jude couldn't resist his initial desire. As he closes his letter, he decides to return to his intended aim. His thoughts on *contending for the faith* have concluded; he now writes about their *common salvation*. Verses 24-25 are Jude's contemplation of the beauty and wonder of all that we commonly share in Christ. His description is doxological, and as such we find Jude finishing his letter in the exalted prose of prayer and praise.

Gardner: Jude has finished his exhortation to the faithful. He has finished warning against the ungodly and deceitful people who have slipped into the church, and now he focuses the reader's thinking once again on the God of all grace with whom he started this epistle. In these two verses, Jude uses the form of a doxology, a hymn or statement which brings glory to God, to commend these Christians to the mercy and grace of God who alone can ultimately protect them and preserve them.

MacArthur: As he brings his letter to a close, Jude underscores God's preserving work in salvation by means of a doxology, a word of praise to God.... In contrast to his warnings regarding apostasy, Jude's doxology brings comfort and encouragement, reminding believers of the faithfulness and power of God.... It does this by emphasizing two crucial things that the Lord will do for us His saints: preserve our salvation and present us blameless before His glorious throne.

Moo: The word 'doxology' comes from the Greek word *doxa*, 'glory,' which is usually the central virtue ascribed to God in these brief formulas. Early Christians undoubtedly picked up the doxology from their Jewish environment. Jews often used doxologies, though benedictions ('blessed by God ...') were much more common.... New Testament doxologies tend to follow a common pattern, with four basic elements: 1) the person praised (usually God); 2) a word of praise (usually 'glory' [*doxa*]; hence the name 'doxology'); 3) an indication of time (usually 'forever' or 'forever and ever'); and 4) 'Amen.' ... Jude's doxology follows this general pattern, but the author expands it, so that his doxology is one of the longest in the New Testament. The additions tailor the doxology to the point of the letter it concludes.

Benton: Praise is in Jude's heart. The contents of the verses can be divided simply into two sections. There is the reason for praising God and the expression of praise to God.

1. What God Has Done (24)

Benton: The reason for giving praise is that God is able. The sovereign God is joyfully able to do all His will. But Jude focuses on two aspects of that which are particularly pertinent to his readers. He is able to keep them and to present them faultless.

a) God Preserves Us (24a)

²⁴*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling...*

Benton: First then, He is able to keep us from falling. Christians are worried about all this false teaching and we can understand that they are worried about falling for it and its immorality themselves, and so falling away from Christ. But God is able to keep the Christian from falling away.

Helm: These words are a balm for anxious souls.... After all, for the better part of the letter Jude has been writing about those who appear to start out in Christ but who stumble and fall along the way. We too have seen them stumble on the pathway to Heaven. They stumbled down the steps of autonomy, apostasy, and the insatiable appetite for sensuality and greed (vv. 5-10). We looked

Jude – Lesson 18

on as men like Cain, Balaam, and Korah fell headlong into eternal darkness (vv. 11-16). We watch them as they tumbled down into rebellion.... As readers, the continuing waves of stumbling in Jude's letter are frightening. It seems to happen to so many. And we wonder, could it not happen to us as well? Only a fool thinks he has no chance of falling.... The Scriptures promise elsewhere that the righteous man, though he fall seven times, will rise up still, because God is able to *keep* him from stumbling (Pr. 24:16). Therefore, never forget – it is the guarding constancy of God that keeps us from utter destruction and eternal ruin. This much we all share in common.

MacArthur: Because God is perfectly faithful, supremely powerful, and infinitely loving, He will not allow His children to fall away from saving faith or defect from the gospel so as to be lost again in their sins. Not only is He willing to preserve believers (Rom. 8L:28; Eph.1:9-11; cp. Jn. 17:20-23), He is also 'able' to preserve them to the end.... 'To keep' is the translation of a military word (*phulassō*) meaning 'to guard,' or 'to watch over.' God is at His post, standing guard over believers to ensure their safety (Ps. 12:7; Pr. 3:26; 1 Cor. 1:8-9) during any assault from the enemy (cp. 1 Jn. 5:18). He is the One who keeps them 'from stumbling' into apostasy (cp. Jn. 10:27-29).

Moo: The theme of 'keeping' has been prominent in the letter. Positively, it refers to God's preservation of Christians in His love (vv. 1 & 21); negatively, to God's 'securing' sinners for judgment (vv. 6 & 13). Jude now sounds the positive note one more time, although he chooses a new verb to do so: 'guard' (*phylasso*; NIV translates 'keep'). God's guarding has the purpose to keep us from 'falling.' Jude may mean that God is seeking to keep us from sin.... But more likely he means that God is working to preserve us from ruin in the final judgment.

Gardner: Jude has in mind the final day when Christians stand before their Maker. It is common to talk of 'standing' or 'falling' when coming before God. On that judgment day it will be only justified sinners who will 'stand.' They are the ones who have been declared 'not guilty' in advance on the basis of the saving death of Christ on the cross. They will be without fault on that day. This saving grace is appropriated through faith but comes entirely of God's grace and so it is fully appropriate as Jude ends this letter that he should commend His people to the God who alone 'is able to keep' them 'from falling and to present' them (to make them stand) in his 'glorious presence.'

Gardner: The Greek word for 'falling' is rare and really means 'stumbling' (cp. Ps. 121:3-8; 1 Cor. 1:8).... This doctrine that is sometimes called the 'perseverance of the saints' is one of the most wonderful in Scripture as we saw when we looked at verse 1. It is entirely appropriate that Jude should return to it as he ends an epistle that has warned against those who would lead God's people astray. To know that God is the Savior who 'began a good work' in us and 'will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1:6) is the truth that brings all Christians through the ages great comfort and assurance.

b) God Presents Us (24b)

...and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...

(1) Present

Helm: So, concerning those things that are common to our salvation, God is able to keep us all from something. In addition, he is able to present us before the presence of something.

Jude – Lesson 18

Benton: The second reason which stirs Jude to praise is that God is able to present us faultless.... Jude assures Christians that God is able to present us faultless in heaven, in glory. The words ‘to present’ are words that come from the background of an Old Testament sacrifice being offered, or presented, to God to honor Him. The offerings of the temple were presented to the Lord. Jude is telling us that God is able to present us to Himself, faultless. We ourselves in heaven, our lives as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2), and our persons in heaven, are presented to the Lord.

MacArthur: A hallmark of genuine saving faith is that it endures to the end (Mt. 24:13). ‘To make you stand’ translates the verb *histēmi*, which more precisely in this context means ‘to set,’ ‘to present,’ ‘to confirm,’ or ‘to establish.’ A present, believers stand in grace (Rom. 5:1-4), but in the future they will also stand in glory (Col. 3:4; 1 Pe. 5:10).

(2) Blameless

Moo: God, Jude assures his readers, is fully able to make us appear before Him on that day ‘without fault.’ The word that this phrase translates (*amomos*) was originally applied to sacrifices (cop. Heb. 9:14; 1 Pe. 1:19), but was then applied generally to moral purity. It is often found in this kind of eschatological context (Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22; Rev. 14:5). On our own power, of course, we can never appear ‘without spot’ before the Lord. But he is the ‘Savior’ (v. 25), and through Christ, God supplies the moral purity we lack in ourselves.

MacArthur: To stand in God’s glorious presence, believers must be ‘blameless.’ Revelation 21:27 makes it clear that unrepentant sinners will not enter the glory of heaven.... *Amōmos* (‘blameless’) means ‘faultless,’ and it is used here to describe the sinless state that believers will one day enjoy. The New Testament also uses the term to refer to the purity of sacrifices (Heb. 9:14, ‘without blemish’; cp. 1 Pe. 1:19). Although believers, as those of us to whom God has imputed Christ’s righteousness, are now positionally blameless (Rom. 4:6-8; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Titus 3:7). We are still in our fleshly, sinful bodies. We are yet awaiting the resurrection when we will receive our new glorified bodies (cp. Jn. 5:24; 11:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:21-23, 42-44; 2 Cor. 5:1; Phil. 3:21). In heaven we will experience not only an absence of sin, but also a presence of perfect holiness (1 Th. 3:13; cp. Rev. 21:22-22:5). All our faculties will be emancipated from evil and fully devoted to righteous worship of God forever and ever (cp. Rev. 4:6-11; 5:11-14; 19:6).

(3) Glory and Joy

Gardner: The ‘presence of His glory’ (Greek) refers to the revelation of God Himself that will take place on that occasion. It is any wonder that they will be full of joy on that day? Jude has held the fear of this judgment day over the heads of those who are godless and devoid of the Holy Spirit, but for those who belong to Christ, who have the Spirit, who are justified by faith, there is no fear of that day, for it will be a time of glorious joy – the fulfillment of all that has been awaited through the entire length of ‘the last times’ when things have been far from easy (v. 18).

Helm: In these words, we find the ultimate goal of life and full longing of every heart. We are told here that one day we will stand in the presence of God’s glory. What vision could ever surpass this? This ought to be the longing of every follower of Jesus.

MacArthur: As saints in glory, we will know nothing of the fear and trauma that characterized being in God’s presence on earth. Instead we will experience ‘great joy,’ which will characterize every aspect of our heavenly life (cp. Rev. 7:16-17). This joy refers primarily to the

Jude – Lesson 18

divine joy (cp. Lk. 15:7, 10; Zep. 3:17) of the Father and the Son over our fellowship with other believers—a joy in which the redeemed will share for all eternity. Thus, all believers will dwell with God in perfect love and holy delight forever and ever.

Moo: But he is the ‘Savior’ (v. 25), and through Christ, God supplies the moral purity we lack in ourselves. Therefore, we can appear before Him ‘with great joy’ or ‘with exultation (cp. 1 Pe. 1:6).

2. What God Is Due (25)

Benton: Having alluded in verse 24 to how marvelously God keeps us and perfects us, Jude concludes with directing praise to God.

a) *Who (25a)*

²⁵...to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord...

Benton: He is described as ‘*the only God.*’ That the God of Israel was the only true God was the distinctive Jewish confession of faith. Jude is writing, almost without doubt, to Jewish Christian communities. He would be reminding them of their roots by this expression and also underlining that apostolic Christianity stands full square with the solid monotheism of the Old Testament revelation.... But the New Testament tells us there is but one true God, who has revealed Himself in and ‘*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*’ Our worship is to be sharply focused on Him alone.

Gardner: God’s kingly glory is especially emphasized here with reference to His majesty, power, and authority. He is the King with ultimate power and authority, for He is the ‘only God.’ But that glory and majesty and power and authority are mediated to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus, as we ascribe glory to God, we do so, remembering that in Christ we have come to know that glory and authority and power. Indeed, through Christ we have come to know how God is indeed the Savior.

Benton: God is also described as ‘*our Savior.*’ Again, this is a traditional Jewish term for God, paraphrasing the idea of ‘the God of our salvation.’ In the light of the false teaching Jude is opposing, this is a timely reminder that even as Christians, we still need a Savior.

MacArthur: ‘Only God...through Jesus Christ’ can accomplish the work of a ‘Savior.’ As a result, Jude reserved the highest praise for the Son.

Helm: Before Jude finishes describing what God accomplishes for us, he wants to remind us that this uncommon salvation comes to us *through* someone – ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

b) *What (25b)*

...be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority...

Helm: ‘Our common salvation’ (v. 3) entails not only those things that God accomplishes for us – it includes the things God will receive from us all as well.... The corporate worship and everlasting praise of God will be the eternal privilege of all who through Christ have a share in God’s good salvation.

Benton: Jude proclaims that ‘*glory, majesty, power, and authority*’ are to go to God. The choice of words here is interesting. Apart from perhaps the first word in the series, all the words carry

Jude – Lesson 18

the connotation of being subject to God. They are words which are used of a king, or one who rules. This expression of praise, then, is specifically an expression of submission to God. It is a proclamation that it is right that God should command us and that all should subordinate themselves to Him.

Benton: ‘*Glory*’ speaks of a concern for the fame and adulation of God. ‘*Majesty*’ gives a sense of the transcendent sovereignty of God. ‘*Power*’ speaks of the unrivaled strength and force of God.... ‘*Authority*’ is an ascribing of the right to use power.... The doxology calls us away from the boasting language (v. 16) and the rejection of authority (v. 8) which are characteristic of the false teachers. It steers us towards humility and thankful obedience. These are the things we should give to God.

MacArthur: ‘*Glory*’ summarizes all the divine attributes in their powerful radiance (cp. Ex. 33:22); ‘*majesty*’ signifies the absolute reign of the Father (cp. Heb. 1:3; 8:1) and the Son (cp. 2 Pe. 1:16); ‘*dominion*’ refers to the extent of His might and active rule over all (cp. Ps. 66:7); and ‘*authority*’ denotes Christ’s supreme right and privilege to do as He wills (cp. Acts 2:33-35); Phil. 2:9-11).

Moo: The four virtues enumerated are commonly associated with God: ‘*glory*’ (His weighty presence and majestic presence), ‘*majesty*’ (His kingly status; cp. also Heb. 1:3; 8:1); ‘*power*’ (His control over the world), and ‘*authority*’ (His intrinsic right to rule all things. The NIV takes ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord’ with the understood verb: it is through Him that we ascribe to God these virtues.

c) *When (25c)*

...before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Helm: On that day, on that day without end, God will finally receive the fullness of all the praise that is due His name.

MacArthur: This divine supremacy over everything in the universe encompasses all eternity (cp. Rev. 1:8): ‘before all time’ (eternity past), ‘now’ (the present age), and ‘forever’ (eternity future).

Benton: When should we give these things, and when should these things be ascribed to God? What is the time scale of His praise, according to Jude? The answer is mind-boggling. He takes us back before the beginning of time: ‘*before all ages.*’ Then Jude tells us to ascribe glory to the Lord ‘now.’ Then he goes on to declare that God is to be worshipped ‘*for evermore.*’ This threefold reference to past, present, and future is unique in Jewish and early Christian doxologies. Normally, there is a reference to the present and the future, but Jude refers us back into eternity past as well. This is probably another way of subtly underlining the uniqueness and pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The false teachers denied Him as the only Sovereign Lord. But Jude turns our attention to the praise of God and astutely raises the question of how God was praised before all ages.... Before...creation, how was God praised? Jude tells us that He was, within the unity of the Trinity, given ‘*glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages.*’ Here is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He is eternally one with the Father, and eternally the one through whom glory is brought to the Father. There is no one, angelic or human, who can compare with Him. Thus again, in this doxology the foolish pretensions of the false teachers are being punctured.

Jude – Lesson 18

3. Summary

Moo: Verses 17-23 are the most important in the letter of Jude. It is here that Jude spells out just how he wants his readers to pursue the purpose for which he has written the letter: that they ‘contend for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints’ (v. 3). Jude specifies three things that his readers need to do: Remember the apostolic warning about heretics (vv. 17-19); secure their own faith (vv. 20-21); and reach out to rescue people in spiritual danger (vv. 22-23). Each exhortation is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. [DSB: and then we come to vv. 24-25, where we are encouraged to rejoice forever in the security of knowing that God preserves us and presents us blameless for all eternity in heaven.]

Moo: Jude’s doxology is a fitting conclusion to his letter/sermon. He has warned the church of a serious and threatening outbreak of false teaching. He has called believers not simply to ‘batten down the hatches’ and ride out the storm, but to reach out redemptively to those who are falling away. Believers can do that because their position with the Lord is secure: He has the power to preserve them intact until the Day of Judgment.

MacArthur: Because He is all powerful, and because His glorious name is at stake, God’s promise to preserve us His saints and to one day present us blameless before His throne can be trusted without reservation. To doubt the reality of that promise is to doubt God Himself. But to embrace it is to find ceaseless joy and never-ending comfort.

Benton: Here, in Jude’s great statement that God is able, we are to find our peace, even in troubled times. Not only will He save us and bring us safe into His presence, but He will also uphold His plans and preserve His church and His gospel. Whatever the opposition from outside, whatever the confusion inside the church, He is able.

Moo: Think of the marvelous security promised to us in verse 24: God is able to preserve us so that we can stand before Him on the last day spotless, forgiven, assured of an eternal ‘home in the heavens.’ Doubt and anxiety are constant companions on our earthly pilgrimage.... God does not promise to take away these worries, but He does take away from us our greatest worry: where we will spend eternity. Do we reflect this confidence in the way we live? Do we truly value heaven enough so that our earthly worries, while sometimes pressing, fade in importance in light of our eternal destiny?

Moo: Consider, finally, the implications of ascribing to God ‘glory, majesty, power, and authority...before all ages, now, and forevermore!’ Reciting these words should create in our minds a fresh picture of the all-consuming power and wonder of our God. Perhaps only by dwelling on these words—to use the old-fashioned term, meditating—can we truly appreciate what they signify. And thus will we be drawn inevitably to worship.

For next time: End of Bible Study. Summer break!