

The Letter of Jude

A Call to Rescue the Wandering and Lost

Jude 22-23
Sunday, October 13, 2019

Introduction

The letter of Jude is a letter of warning and of exhortation. The warning is that there are those within the church who are opposed to the truth. Jude spends much of the letter describing those who are threatening the church with their misuse and distortion of the Gospel. But Jude's primary reason for writing is to exhort the church to stand strong and to contend for the faith.

After spending a good deal of time considering the opponents, in verses 17-23 Jude begins to give some attention to what it looks like to 'contend for the faith.' In verse 17-21 we saw that we are to *remember the warnings* that have been given regarding false teachers and then to keep watch on our own hearts; or to use Jude's words, we are to *remain in the love of God*.

In vv. 22-23 we come to a third aspect of what it looks like contend for the faith. Jude issues this exhortation: *Rescue those who are wandering and lost*.

How do we respond to those who are tempted to doubt or wander from the truth?

We must act with mercy toward the doubting (Jude 22)

- **The presence of doubt** – The first thing Jude acknowledges is that there will be those who doubt. Of course, as false teachers infiltrated the church it would be natural for there to be those who would fall prey to their teaching. The same is true today. There will always be those who are tempted to question the truth or to wander from the faith.
- **Responding with mercy** – Jude's exhortation is to respond to those who doubt with mercy. As we consider what it means to show mercy we should remember that this is the way God has dealt with us. We are all sinners who have rebelled against Him, and yet He has responded mercifully. God sent Jesus to come and die so that we can be forgiven. And even still, as we continue to sin He is mercifully sanctifying us.
- **Understanding this response** – While showing mercy is characterized by compassion and concern and patience, mercy can also include correction and even rebuke. Showing mercy does not mean that we ignore sin or justify doubts, but it does mean that we approach our erring brother or sister with meekness and love. In summary, we are to deal with others as God has dealt with: hating sin and calling for repentance – all the while showing compassion and care.

We must act with urgency on behalf of those who are walking toward hell (Jude 23a)

- **The consequence of unbelief** – In order to understand Jude's exhortation, we must first be clear on what he means by 'fire.' The Bible consistently describes the consequence for those who don't believe as eternal fire (Jude 7, Matthew 5:21-22; Matthew 18:8-9). It's this 'fire' that Jude is calling us to 'snatch others from.'
- **The seriousness of the situation** – While Jude has called for mercy, it becomes clear that our mercy must not negate or ignore the seriousness of the situation. The stakes are high. Those who reject God will be subject to His judgment.
- **The urgency of the situation** – Jude's use of the word 'snatch' is an indicator of the urgency of the situation. We must not be complacent or idle – souls are at stake and we must take our call to help them seriously.
- **Application:** As a church we believe that we are called to watch out for one another and to help protect one another from the dangers and the deceitfulness of sin. Passages like Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1-3 make it clear that we are to be active in helping those around us identify and repent of sin. We are also told that that God uses our efforts as part of His plan for 'keeping us' (James 5:19-20)

We must act with caution as we show mercy toward those who are committed to their sin (Jude 23b)

- **Garments stained by the flesh** – The Scriptures refer to the natural man or the sinful man as 'the flesh.' When we are reconciled to God we are given 'the Spirit' (Galatians 5:17-21). In this verse Jude describes people who are living in the flesh and indicates that their opposition to God is so prevalent that even their garments are 'stained by the flesh.'
- **Showing mercy with fear** – While Jude has been clear that we are to go hard after those who are wandering and lost, now he adds this caution: show mercy with in fear. We are to be ever mindful of our own weakness and frailty. As we interact with the doubting and the one committed to sin, we must be watchful that we are not tempted (Galatians 6:1).

Summary – While Jude is clear that we are to contend for the faith and warns us about those who would distort the truth, here we also see that we are called to deal mercifully and wisely with those who err. Just as God the Father has been merciful toward us, we should be merciful toward others. And we should strive to see those who doubt or wander come to a place of repentance and restoration.