

Sermon Title: Details and Distractions of Faith
Scripture Text: Jude 3-4 (Bible Postcards #7, Jude #2)

Speaker: Scott Basolo
Date: 11-6-22

Our text this morning is Jude, and we are in the third and fourth verses of Jude; you have an outline there in your bulletin.

As we think of this text, and as I have gone through this passage, I was reminded a bit of World War I. World War I was called "The Great War," and it was believed that it would be the last world war that would ever occur upon this planet. Because of this, starting in 1921, the United States minted—for the first time ever—a coin with an eagle with its wings down, in a peaceful position as opposed to the outstretched wings of an eagle in battle. They called it the "Peace Dollar," because they believed that peace was going to reign throughout the world following that.

In light of the casualty statistics of World War I, these were admirable considerations. Of the 68 million men that served in the several theatres around this planet, we find that 12 million of those 68 died in battle. In addition to that, 7 to 8 million died battle-related deaths. The percentage of deaths to men served was at nearly 30 percent, making this one of the bloodiest wars of all times.

Trying to find positive aspects—such as titling this "The War to End All Wars" or minting "Peace Dollars"—was a nice idea. But the reality of man's depravity and its effect on society would rear its ugly head within 20 years, from the *same* source.

Although rather difficult, these are similar constraints that are detailed in the Book of Jude, and also in the Church today—and this is where our title comes from: "Details and Distractions of Faith."

Follow along as I read the first four verses of the Book of Jude: "Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity 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 God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted) "Details and Distractions of Faith."

Two weeks ago, we saw an excellent introduction to the Book of Jude. Jim gave us the background of Jude. He answered the Who? and What? and When? and Where? and Why? of this book. And in short, we saw that it is a book warning against false teaching, and guarding against apostasy (cf. Acts 20:29-32). We also saw the beginning of the book, in Verses 1 and 2; and in those verses, Jude's connection to the Lord (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3) and to His brother, James (Gal. 1:19).

And we were also drawn to consider the audience: those who were "the called" and the "kept" of God, and what *powerful* terms these were—that is, that it was speaking of God's effectual calling to salvation of every believer (Jn. 6:37a, 44-45; Acts 2:39; 13:48; 16:14; 18:27b; Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:30; Titus 3:5b; Rev. 17:14), *and* the eternal security which we possess as believers in Christ (Jn. 6:37b; 10:27-29; Rom. 8:30-39; Phil. 1:6).

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We were also given a definition of an apostate as one who "falls away" from the faith (Matt. 13:21)—that is, those whom we are speaking about in this text were *presumed* to be believers; they were those who partook in the corporate worship of God through the church, and then fell away. We in no way should consider that somehow believers, then, can fall away from God, for that is *not* what is being spoken about (cf. Jn. 8:31; Heb. 3:14; 1 Jn. 2:19; Rev. 14:12). The Scripture is very clear that those whom Christ chooses and calls are *eternally* secure (Ps. 37:28; Jn. 5:24), and that He will "lose" none of them (Jn. 6:39; cf. Ps. 37:24; Jer. 32:40; 1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 1:6). So these are ones who *professed* to be believers, but were not—and were evidenced so as they fell back and left from the truth of what was being told and taught (cf. Heb. 6:4-6, 9; 10:39).

So with that, let's come to our text today—which will present our theme: Three Unchangeable Elements to Encourage Your Faith. And each of these three are our three points.

So let's go to our first of three points, which is: Unshakable Eagerness.

Jude begins by addressing his main audience: "Beloved." He uses the biblical term of unconditional love from the root word *agapē* that we are so familiar with. And as he does so, he explains not only *his* great love for this group, but it also tells us of his close and abiding relationship; *and* even more: the amazement that *these* are the ones upon whom God has showered His unconditional and "irrevocable" covenant of love (Rom. 11:29). This is a *fabulous* consideration—and not one to be taken lightly, although we see it often in Scripture (e.g., Ps. 103:17; Rom. 5:9; 8:1). So we need to recognize the broad aspects that this simple word conveys.

Then he dives in to being forth our first point: The Unshakable Eagerness. Verse 3 says: "While I was *making every effort* to write you..." Literally in the Greek, it's "making with all diligence" or "making with all *eagerness*." Second Peter uses this word three times in the first chapter: in Verses 5, 10, and 15; and as Peter does so, he wants to convey to his listeners the importance and the *eagerness* with which they must be pursuing their faith (cf. Rom. 12:11; Phil. 3:12-14). Jim reminded us two weeks ago of Jude's familiarity with Second Peter, as evidenced by the similarity of themes. And we are going to see much of this, and it's very important for you to keep this in mind through the study of Jude, as it has many important implications.

Jude's desire for this letter was to "write" them "about" their "common salvation." He wanted to express his *great eagerness* to talk about the *joy* of his faith, and of *their* faith—the assured "hope" of Heaven (Heb. 6:19), the "peace" amidst great conflict while on the earth (Jn. 16:33), the unrestrained "joy" of having Christ in their lives (Jn. 15:11), being indwelt by the Holy Spirit so they could understand the glorious teaching of God's Word in the Scripture (1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). And it's almost as if you can feel him ready to *burst!*

But there is yet *more* joy as we consider the actual terms that Jude uses. We would literally translate this as "the fellowship of our salvation." The word "fellowship" is the Greek word *koinē*, from which we get "Koine" or "Common" Greek. This was the language

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that the New Testament was written in; it is that which was "common" to all of the world in that day—the main language of the world, which God had chosen to convey the truth of His Son in Scripture.

Jude is celebrating that which *every* believer has in common: that *all* are brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11); that we hold not just ourselves as a body, but we hold "all things in common" (Acts 2:44); that we are a local body here at Heritage Bible Church—one *divinely* joined together by God Himself (1 Cor. 12:18), with the spiritual gifts that He gives to everyone knitted for the working of *this* body in *this* place (1 Cor. 12:7), to "build up one another" (1 Thess. 5:11; cf. Eph. 4:16) and to carry out the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Peter was concerned about having given up everything in his early life as a believer, and he shared that concern with Jesus; and in Mark 10, the Lord responded to Peter's concern. In Mark 10:29-31, we read: "Jesus said, 'Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.' "

And so, Peter was thinking, "Lord, we have come to follow You; we've left everything! I've left the fishing. My wife is kind of off on the side; I don't see her very often. I've left my family and my tradition. And Lord, what do I have?"—because He has just finished telling them that it is harder for a "rich man" to get into Heaven than "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" (vs. 25). And the Lord then tells him this truth, and we have to ask: Okay, "in the age to come" we are going to get all these things; how do we get it *now*? How do I have *hundreds* of times of "brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms"? Look around you, beloved. *Hundreds* of brothers, *hundreds* of sisters, *hundreds* of mothers, *hundreds* of farms—and *these* are what we hold in common, and this is the blessing that we have in "our common salvation"! And how incredibly grand is this commonality: to rejoice in our common worship, to come together on Sunday and lift our voices in praise as God is glorified and our hearts raised to the heavens, to recognize the commonality of our faith, to lift one another up in our earthy suffering and struggles—knowing that in all this and more, we each have "all things in common"! It's *incredible*!

It reminds me of when our sons were born. I just wanted to run out and tell everyone that would hear that *God has blessed us with a child! God has blessed us with a child! Can you believe that?* And beloved brothers and sisters, as *I* was overflowing with joy, this must be the same exuberance in *your* Christian lives. But the question is: Do you *have* this exuberance? Do you *rejoice* with anticipation Saturday night, getting ready for a good night's sleep, *not* turning on that movie at 9 o'clock that is going to take you to 11:30, even on Daylight Savings Time, but going to bed to get a good night's sleep because tomorrow, on Sunday, I get *three whole hours* to spend with those who *love* Christ and who *love* me, and who are *pursuing* the same thing I am! What a beautiful consideration!

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Do you delight to speak with one another in this body about matters of Scripture, about matters of well-being, about other things of eternal significance—and not simply the weather or sports or other trivialities?

This is the exuberance we must have in "our common salvation" (e.g., Deut. 12:12; 16:11; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 31:7; 32:11; 33:21; 40:16; 68:3; 106:5; Prov. 29:6b; Phil. 4:4). This is the exuberance of Jude in Unshakable Eagerness.

But, alas, this was not to be his subject. Rather, Jude was divinely guided to write of a different topic, and we are introduced to that topic in our second point: Unavoidable Engagement.

The second half of Verse 3 takes us to Jude's "necessary" subject, where he writes: "I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints."

Jude begins the main body of his letter with two strongly emphatic aspects: those of "necessity" and of "appealing." This was not an optional topic. The original translation would well be stated as: "I have *necessity* to write." Something created an abrupt U-turn in Jude's direction of writing, from *wanting* to write about their "common salvation"; he wanted to just exude the joys that they held together in their lives in Christ, and to make this a love-manual of all that Christ had done for them. And isn't that a *delightful* thought? But he was unable to do so. Rather, he was brought by God to bring forth this urgent matter. And that item and that matter was the false teachers of Verse 4 and the rest of Jude's epistle.

Jude is *compelled* to enter into this discussion, both because of his love for this group, and because he is the *only* one to do so. Both Paul and Peter had influence on this group, perhaps were even known personally to this church that Jude writes to; and we will see the influence of Paul and Peter on Jude repeatedly throughout this letter: We will see it in this verse, and we'll also see it in Verse 17 and many other cases. And yet, both Paul and Peter are dead, so Jude alone is left to take up his pen.

Commentator Gabelein notes that here, at the end of the New Testament, is a great illustration of how the Word of God came into being. That is, that God gave it to His chosen human instruments, as Second Peter 1:20-21 tells us. This was not man just getting an idea: "Hey, I think I'm going to write something down. Hey, I think I heard about Jesus in a dream. You know, I read something in one of the Old Testament books, and I have a better idea about what it says." This is *not* Jesus calling. This is God, through His Holy Spirit, speaking through men (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2; Acts 28:25)—*not* "an act of human will" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Furthermore, we know, per Second Timothy 3:16, that this is the "God-breathed" Word—God literally *breathed out* His Word *through* the human instruments and their natural inclination to write, to bring about the perfect and inerrant Word that we hold in our hands (Ps. 12:6; 19:7-9; 119:128, 140, 151b, 160; Prov. 30:5a; Matt. 5:18; Jn. 10:35).

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This word that he says here, this "appealing"—or, as some versions say, "exhorting"—this can also mean "to implore" or "to beg." There's the strongest of emotion brought forward in this. As excellent commentator D. Edmond Hiebert notes: "This is *not* a casual teaching moment. This is an exhortation to action with all the authority of God as the ultimate Source." (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 4:2)

The details of this content require the *strongest* emphasis! And the point of all this emphasis is to make sure that hearers "contend earnestly for the faith." The verb translated "contend earnestly" is a compound verb used only here in the New Testament. The root of that Greek word is *agōnizomai*; it's where we get our English word "agonize," and you can hear the parallels.

The origination of the word comes from the sports world, where they were putting forth the most extreme efforts, such that they were leaving *nothing* back. In our modern vernacular, we would speak of this as "leaving it all on the field." The verb can also reference a conflict or a fight or a lawsuit. One commentator notes: "It is a fight, standing upon the truth of faith which is assaulted and which the adversary desires to take away." (cf. Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5)

Only here, the verb is even *more* emphatic, and has the idea of a defensive battle waged with *every ounce of effort* as one stands in front of that which he is protecting (cf. Eph. 6:13). And here, that element protected is "faith."

This is very much like David as he faced Goliath, in First Samuel 17. Behind him is all Israel—King Saul and all of the armies. And if David were to lose the battle with the giant, which it appeared likely that he would, all of the army would become the slaves of the Philistines. So in a very real sense, David is "contending earnestly" for the nation; and in a physical and figurative sense, standing in front of them and also standing upon them and their freedom.

And so it is with Jude's exhortation for them to "contend earnestly for the faith." The *very lifeblood* of faith was at risk if they did not engage in this battle! And, beloved, you *must not miss* that this same comes down to *you today!*

In First Timothy 6:12, Paul spoke of the same thing as he instructed young Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

Undoubtedly, Jude knew of Paul's and Peter's writings, and he understood the same admonition—that this was a fight that was a "good fight," and it is one that *must* be engaged in by all of the believers in the Church!

We note one other vitally important point in this discussion, as Hiebert identifies: "Jude is not advocating for a negative offensive attack against the philosophy of these false teachers. He is not saying, 'Go out and learn about all of the things that they believe that are errors, and attack those things.' Rather, he is proclaiming a positive defense of the truth of faith."

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Again, you must know this is the same with us today. There are these aspects of evangelism and apologetics. And in apologetics, we would learn the philosophies and ideologies of other individuals—and in the wrong negative context, to go out and seek to tear those down. Jude is not saying that. He is saying, "Take the evangelistic approach, stand on the truth of the Gospel, stand on the truth of the Word of God—and *this* is the platform for your *positive* battle." (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2)

Now, we certainly recognize that there is a negative element to engaging in confrontation of error (2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:9). But nonetheless, it is not attacking those who have these wrong ideas; it is *proclaiming* the truth of the Word of God (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 4:2-4).

We further recognize that this "faith" being earnestly contended for is the firmly established body of truth contained in Christian doctrine (2 Pet. 3:2); not some emotional, erratic response of sinful man, but the unshakable foundation of Scripture (Is. 55:11). It is the "apostles' teaching" to which they were devoted (Acts 2:42). It is the unshakable truth that confronts us in our sin (Heb. 4:12; cf. Ps. 19:11; 119:80), and that through the Holy Spirit and the Word brings new life in obedience, as Romans 6:17 and Galatians 3:23 reveal to us; that for which Paul told the Philippians to "stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, ASV).

"The faith" is the body of doctrine surrounding the Gospel (e.g., Acts 6:7; 13:8; 1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:9; 4:1, 6; Titus 1:13). It is all of the truths of God's Word that come together to support and uplift the truth of the Gospel—that is: Jesus' sinless life (Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22), His sacrificial death and burial (1 Cor. 15:3-4), and His resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:9; 5:31; Heb. 10:12), such that the sin which exists in each of our lives *has a solution* (Rom. 3:23-24), and that solution for sin is "forgiveness" for those who will fully submit their lives to Jesus as Lord and Master (Acts 10:43; Rom. 10:9), and receive His "free gift" (Rom. 6:23)—*that*, rather than the "eternal" damnation that awaits those who refuse His offer (Matt. 25:41; Jn. 3:18; 8:24; 2 Thess. 1:8-9). It is a gift of "repentance" (2 Tim. 2:25) for those who "confess" their sin and reject it in favor of obedience to God and to Scripture (Prov. 28:13; Ezek. 18:21; Acts 26:18). It is that those who believe have been acquitted of their sin and deemed by God as "justified" (Rom. 3:24; 8:33; cf. Is. 53:11). It is that their "sin" has been exchanged for the "righteousness" of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Rom. 1:17; Phil. 3:9), and they *no longer* are guilty; they *no longer* are under "condemnation," because of what Christ has done (Rom. 8:1). And it is that in the end, "these" will be "glorified" (Rom. 8:30), and forever with Christ (1 Thess. 4:17). This is a result of His "finished" work on the Cross (Jn. 19:30; cf. Heb. 10:14), which God confirmed "by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31; cf. Rom. 4:25). *This is the Gospel!* This is what you must believe!

And, friend, if you do not know this, "now" is the hour of "salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2; cf. Heb. 3:15)! *Now* is the time to drop to your knees in your heart and recognize that you are eternally separated because of your sin (Is. 59:2; Eph. 4:18), and that you must confess and turn from that sin to live a life of obedience in Jesus Christ (Ps. 32:5; Rom. 6:12-14). And this is the grace "gift" of "faith" (Eph. 2:8) "through" Christ (Acts 3:16; cf. Heb. 12:2) found in the "Scripture" (Gal. 3:8), for which *every* believer *must* "earnestly contend"!

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And we are given additional glorious detail on this "faith" in Verse 3: It is that "which was once for all handed down to the saints." One commentator notes: "It wasn't given all at once, but was 'once for all handed down to' those who believe." This was not some willy-nilly group of writings that were thrown together, and then the Church weeded through them and said, "Yeah—that stays, that goes, that stays, that goes." This is God's Word being brought forth and recognized as authoritative (Is. 8:20; Matt. 4:4), and drawn tougher in the corpus of that which we hold as Holy Writ in Scripture (cf. Ps. 119:89-91; Is. 40:8; Lk. 16:17; Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

This is such a beautiful understanding for us! God's revealed truth, in both the Old and New Testament, stands as His proclamation of what saving faith is all about (Jn. 5:39).

The once-for-all nature shows that this body of doctrine is unchanging (Matt. 24:35; Gal. 1:8-9); it has been established, it is completed, and it will *not* be added to nor taken from (Deut. 4:2; Matt. 5:18; Rev. 22:18-19).

And it is the responsibility of each successive generation to pass along this body of truth *exactly* as it was given (Deut. 4:9-10; Ps. 145:4; 2 Tim. 2:2)—as given to them, just as it was originally given by Christ and the Apostles to the Church (Eph. 2:20; 2 Pet. 3:2).

And this is what the designation "saints" means. It is for *all* the Church; it is for *all* the saints. This is not a body of doctrine held by "one holy catholic church"—*that is a lie!* That is those who *add* to God's Word their human tradition! (cf. Mk. 7:8) No, this is the Word for *all* believers! This is the Word for *all* churches! *None* are exclusive to this truth (Matt. 4:4; 28:20a; Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 3:16).

It is this "faith" for which we must "earnestly contend."

You know, when our first son was born, it was a difficult labor for Karen. During the process, there was concern he was in distress. The fetal monitor which had been placed in utero was not recording because it had been dislodged. Our son was born, and about 12 hours later, it was discovered that the monitor which had dislodged had left a hole in the top of his head, and it had been covered by a cap for this time. It became infected. There was discussion that he was going to have to have a spinal I V and be life-flighted to Boise. It was a harrowing time; I can remember it as if it were yesterday.

And here we are, up in Hailey in Moritz Hospital—it looked like a one-level Motel 6. And this doctor had just come new to town. And we're thinking, "Wow, here we are. And then, there's the big medicine in Boise. What do we do here?" And the doctor said, "You know, if you will give me a couple hours, I think I can turn this around." Well, it was a scary decision. But when Karen and I made it, we were all in—fully behind the doctor, and fully ready for battle. And by God's grace, the doctor was right.

This is how medical conditions need to be addressed, and it is how believers must respond as you are called to protect the truth of the Gospel and the doctrine of Scripture—recognizing, beloved, that *the battle is raging* around us! We stand in this wonderful sanctuary, rejoicing in God. Outside, they want to *tear us apart!*

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Our world is *not* friendly to these truths which we speak (Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21; 1 Jn. 4:6). They are not friendly to our common salvation (Jn. 15:19; 1 Jn. 3:13). And each one of us must be *fully* prepared and *fully* engaged, so as to "contend earnestly" for our faith (cf. Phil. 2:15-16). It is an unavoidable engagement, and you must each know that it is *your* responsibility to be in the battle (Matt. 10:32; Eph. 4:12; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Well, that begs the question as to what we are to "contend" against, and this is answered in our third point: Ungodly Entanglement.

Verse 4 gives us the opponents in this battle, where it says: "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 God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

These individuals have come into the church, and no one is initially alerted to their presence; they have come in stealthily. The verb, used only here in the New Testament, means "to go down into and to settle alongside." It's as if they have slid in a side door, undetected. "This is a subtle insinuation of something evil in the church," as one commentator notes.

We see Paul decrying a similar situation in Galatians 2:4. Paul writes: "But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage." Paul identified these who were being "secretly brought in."

The world is contrary to the truth of our faith (cf. Jn. 7:7b; 1 Jn. 2:15-16; 5:19), and the one who empowers them—God's enemy and ours—is seeking to send in emissaries to the church, to come in so that they may take "into bondage" all those who believe in the faith of Christ (cf. Gal. 4:9; Col. 2:8).

And their designation here in Verse 4 as "certain ones" is often a negative implication in Scripture. There is often an insidious nature to that term "certain ones." Note that as you see it elsewhere in your study (e.g., Jdg. 19:22; 1 Sam. 10:27; Dan. 3:8-12; Gal. 2:12; 1 Tim. 1:3). It is showing a clear distinction between the ones back in Verse 3 who were "saints" to these "certain ones" who are completely contrary to the work of the saints (e.g., Phil. 3:18-19; Titus 1:16).

Then we get a very interesting designation next, as their origin: They are "those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation." The tense of this passive perfect verb shows that this was written down in the distant past, and yet the effects are felt yet today and will continue to have an impact (cf. 2 Pet. 2:3). The actions of these were spoken all the way back in the Old Testament; and in the verses ahead, we will see examples of this from Genesis 6, Sodom and Gomorrah, and many other locations.

These also are the very ones that Jesus denounced in Matthew 7:15, where He said: "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

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Paul also warned of these in Acts 20:29-30, where he writes: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Pet. 2:1-2)

I don't know what your thoughts were about the reintroduction of the wolves into Idaho, and I don't want to get into the politics of it. But my dad lived 45 miles down a dirt road down below Shoup, Idaho, where he had ample opportunity to see the impact of wolves on herds of deer and elk. You see, a pack of wolves does not come in and find the weak animal and take it down so as to eat it and feed themselves and their young, and go on. No, a pack of wolves comes into a herd of animals, hamstringing the animals—leaving them helpless, unable to move—and moving on to the next animal, trying to destroy the entire herd. It is a bloody and gruesome scene.

And *this* is the effect of those who are coming to take us down: not just him, not just him—*all of us!* And that is why we see such *graphic* pictures.

Their "condemnation" is the guilty verdict which is next established in Verse 4, and also the sentencing which will be established in the next verses throughout this great book.

Their guilty verdict is established by three aspects in Verse 4. First, they are guilty of being "ungodly." Jude uses this word more than any other book in the New Testament—over two to one against the nearest higher usage, in Second Peter. In Verse 15 of Jude, he uses the word "ungodly" *four times* in one verse.

And the word means that there was absolutely *no* reverence for God in their lives. Psalm 36:1 perfectly conveys this, where the psalmist says: "Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes." There is no desire for God amongst the ungodly (cf. Job 21:14-15; Ps. 10:4; 12:4; Is. 30:9-11). There is no "fear," which is "the beginning of wisdom" (Pr. 9:10); rather, iniquity and sin and unrighteousness "speak" in "his heart," *proudly* proclaiming that, "This is who we are in our lives!" This is the perspective and the truth of the "ungodly."

Literally, the word means "without worship." Those that come into our presence, they would *not* sit and worship as we just did in the rejoicing over the hymns of faith. They would not worship and sit and listen and seek to be instructed in God's Word. But rather, what we would see from their evident lifestyles is that their purpose is to *corrupt* and to *steal* from the church, as Dr. MacArthur notes.

Second, they are guilty of turning God's "grace" into "licentiousness." God's "grace" is His unmerited favor. The other side of the coin is mercy—mercy being: not receiving what we deserve, and what we deserve is "eternal punishment" for our sin (Matthew 25:46). The other side, grace, is *getting* what we *don't* deserve, which is God's "gift" of "eternal life" (Rom. 6:23).

I learned while I was in Africa that in Swahili, these two elements of grace and mercy being two sides of a coin are beautifully conveyed in the language. The word "grace" in

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Swahili is "neema." The word "mercy" in Swahili is "rehema." "Neema" and "rehema," these parallel elements on two sides of the coin of "grace" and "mercy."

Well, what is the "licentiousness" for which this "grace of God" is wrongly exposed? "Licentiousness" is "unrestrained vice," or "gross immorality." It is open flaunting of "sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3; cf. 1 Pet. 4:3). One commentator well describes it as "a shameless lifestyle indulging in unchecked and open immorality." Another describes it as "every excess of indecency, carnal defilement, and fleshly indulgence."

Lenski well adds that "it's not just moral excesses, but it is running wild in all kinds of excesses of sin." Paul describes it in Romans 1:26-27 this way: "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." And he puts a capstone on it in Verse 32 of Romans 1: "And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

And all of this, flaunting God's gift of grace in His face; as if, as a believer, one can live in unrepentant sin (cf. Ps. 32:3-4; 1 Jn. 3:9)—let alone freely practicing this in every public and private arena (cf. Deut. 29:19; Jer. 7:8-10). This is the false doctrine of "Antinomianism." The word "antinomian" means "lawlessness." It is the view that Christians saved by grace are able to live lives however they want, sin as often as they want, because Christ has died for their sin, and they don't have to worry about it (contra Rom. 6:15).

This is the "Free Grace" movement of our day; where, as an example, alleged believers—and that's what they are; they are alleged, and not true (cf. Titus 1:16; 1 Jn. 2:4; 3:6; 5:18)—go out and get raucously drunk and engage in horrific immorality, and claim that they can do this on Saturday night and it's fine to come to church on Sunday with *no* guilt or consideration—as if somehow we could live in this wanton sin, and that God's blood will cover it and we don't need to consider it.

Does Scripture say something about that? I think that it does—in Romans 6, Verses 1-2, where Paul says: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" If we are believers in Christ, we must recognize the sin that is in ourselves, and *fight it* with every element of our being! (Lk. 9:23; cf. Matt. 26:41; Heb. 12:4; 1 Pet. 2:11; 4:2)

Thirdly, they are guilty of "denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Commentator Lawlor identifies this denial as the attacking of four separate aspects of the Second Person of the Trinity: It is attacking that He is "Master"—or, that He is the "sovereign" of the world (1 Tim. 6:15). It is attacking that He is "Lord" (Phil. 2:11)—or, that He is Ruler "over all" (Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:10). It is attacking that He is the "man," Jesus, who is Savior (1 Tim. 2:5; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:13). It is attacking that He is "Christ," the promised "Messiah" (Jn. 1:41; 4:25), come to bring forth the "New Covenant" (Lk. 22:20).

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These disavowals directly impact two critical spheres of who Jesus is: that of the coming "King" who will rule all the created realm (Jn. 18:37; cf. Zech. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:25-27; Rev. 20:4), and that of the coming "Judge" (Acts 10:41; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1) who will call to account all lawlessness (Matt. 12:36; cf. Ecc. 12:14).

And so these denials of deity *must* be the truth for these, in order to justify engaging in such open debauchery and immorality (Ps. 10:11, 13; 12:4; 73:11; 2 Pet. 2:1).

The word "deny" here is actually best understood as not open rejection, but repudiating or rejecting or perverting. This isn't these false believers coming in and saying, "You're all nuts! The truth of this Jesus is not true!" *Rather*, they subtly come in and they repudiate and they attack each of these perspectives, seeking to tear down the truth of Scripture and of the church.

These deplorable issues are much like the nature of cancer in our bodies; one which, upon diagnosis, causes initial despair and fear, because it is so completely foreign to all that we are and know, and it is an unthinkable intrusion into our existence. And so it is in our church with these "certain ones" who slimily sneak into our midst.

These are some difficult things to grasp, much like the 30 percent casualty rate of World War I, or even the civilian casualty statistics that are nearly as high as the active service death. Two and a half million killed by war crimes. Six to eight million civilian deaths from malnutrition and from the spread of the Spanish Flu.

Well, our text has some major health concerns that it addresses, doesn't it? And what is the answer to these health concerns of these false teachers? It is an educated church, well-nourished on the solid doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! (Heb. 5:14; 1 Jn. 2:14) *This* will protect the Church, Christ's "bride" (Jn. 3:29; Rev. 19:7; cf. Eph. 5:25-27, 32).

To be ready to speak the name of Jesus, each and every one of you *must* be a proclaimer of the Gospel—to call out sin and its solution, which is Jesus' shed "blood" on the Cross of Calvary, by which *alone* we can receive "forgiveness" (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; cf. Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). But that forgiveness requires *complete submission* of our lives to Him (Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:9-11; Titus 2:14). It requires confessing and repenting of our sin (Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1). It requires living an obedient life to Jesus Christ and His Word (Matt. 28:20a; Jn. 14:15; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; Rev. 14:12).

Only then is the Gospel the "good news," because *only then* is there deliverance from the "bad news," which is the necessary judgment and eternal punishment for sin (Rom. 1:18; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Rev. 20:10, 14-15).

So what are we to do as believers? To begin with: Focus on the truths of these verses. Recognize the present realities of your faith. Embrace and be motivated by the common blessings we have in our faith, and in the fellowship of one another (Gal. 6:2; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24). *Rejoice* in the fellowship of our faith, and recognize that *nothing can overcome you* as a believer! (1 Jn. 5:4, 18b; cf. 2 Thess. 3:3; Jas. 4:7)

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Read the end of Romans Chapter 8. Let me share with you just a few verses at the end of Romans 8, beginning in Verse 37—"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is the Unshakable Eagerness of our faith!

And this takes us to our second application: Don't be discouraged by the necessity of battle. If we cannot be defeated or separated from God—which we just read—then our response *must be to join the fight!* Be ever diligent to "build" yourself up on the knowledge of God and His holy "Word" (Acts 20:32; cf. Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:16; Jude 20). This is an unavoidable engagement (1 Pet. 5:8-10; Rev. 12:17).

And lastly: Be ready for the unsavoriness of these opponents (e.g., Matt. 5:10-11; Lk. 6:22; 1 Pet. 4:4). Like cancer, no one wants to deal with this; but if left untreated, it will consume *everything* in its path. And that destruction is the very motivation of the one behind these efforts—or, *the one*, Satan, who empowers them for the attacks (Jn. 8:44; cf. 1 Jn. 3:10). And that is his "*only*" purpose—"to steal and kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10).

But remember the words of Martin Luther, in his wonderful hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God": "The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." (cf. Rev. 20:10) And that "little word," beloved, is God—and the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

Be ready to share the truth of the Gospel with anyone you meet (cf. Acts 8:4). Let me implore you: Every morning, wake up and pray to God for the strength to share the Gospel. It's fearful; it's a thing that we don't do well. We move by opportunities all day long. Pray that God would give you the understanding and the recognition, and then *take those opportunities!* We all have opportunities, each and every day (cf. Matt. 24:14; Lk. 21:13; 1 Jn. 4:14; Rev. 6:9; 12:11; 20:4).

This is Ungodly Entanglement. The rest of Jude is going to continue to guide us down this path, so let's embrace these present realities. Let's recognize the joy and the strength that we have together, and that yet there is a battle to be waged, and that each and every one of us must join arm in arm to engage in this conflict against an enemy that wants to destroy our faith (Phil. 1:27).

Father, thank You for the power of Your Word. Thank You for the admonition of that which lies all around us—which, Father, honestly, we would like to close our eyes and pretend that it's as if we could just sleep in in the morning and avoid that alarm. But Father, the alarm is sounding. And the clarion call for us is to take up "the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," to rejoice in the common salvation that is ours, to be encouraged in one another, strengthened in our "most holy faith," so that we are ready for this battle, so that we are empowered for this battle, and to realize that this is not going to be a subtle enemy; this is not going to be something as easy as a minor affliction. But Father, this is a battle waged for the truth of Scripture; it is a battle waged for the next generation and the accuracy of biblical doctrine.

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Help us to grow in this. Help us to realize, Lord, that we each have a responsibility to grow in our understanding of Scripture, and that we each have a responsibility to speak the name of Jesus so that You, through the power of Your Spirit, might be pleased to bring new life and deliver these who are in bondage to the power of Satan, and bring them to the Light and to life, as You have to us.

And for all this, we will give You thanks, because we know it is Your work; and we praise You for it, asking it all in Jesus' name. Amen.