

JUDE: Our Response

JUDE, The Call to Stand

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Jude 14-19

Preached On: Sunday, March 2, 2014

Greenwell Springs Baptist Church

19421 Greenwell Springs Road

Greenwell Springs, LA. 70739

Website: <http://www.gsbcla.com>

Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers>

I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to the second to the last book of the Bible, the book of Jude. If you're a first time guest or visitor with us today, we have been progressively walking through what appears to be a very brief book of the Bible, only 25 verses in length, yet in the midst of what appears to be brief, there is a very heavy weighted message that every single one of us needs to adhere to in our life. Kind of the theme of this entire message series, we've entitled it "Stand" is that you and I live in the midst of a culture that has found itself in utter chaos. We live in a world today where it appears that everything is quickly gravitating toward a God-less state versus a Godly state. And what we've seen in the book of Jude is a challenge for you and I to take a stand or more specifically as verse 3, to contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.

Today we're going to be in the book of Jude beginning in verse 12 and I want to share with you, there's only two more weeks left in this series. Now, for those of you who have been with us the entire time, you may be thinking to yourself, "Why is it that we spent so much time on the first 11 verses but we're only going to spend two weeks on what appears to be the last half of the book of Jude?" The reason is, the first half of the book of Jude is laying the case for us. Various times and over and over, it gives us illustration after illustration. In fact, we spent three weeks just on verse 11 because when it speaks of the way of Cain and the error of Balaam there is a lot of Scripture in the Old Testament that we had to unpack to see what does all of that mean.

Today, as we begin in verse 12 of the book of Jude, we'll see in these next two weeks, the evidence has been put forth, the information has been laid out and now the question is this: what will we do with what we know? Now that we've received the information, now that the evidence has been put forth, how does this change how you and I live our life, not just today but every other day. In just a moment as we turn to the book of Jude, we're going to see three very distinct groups or different entities: we're going to see the world at large or those which the book of Jude calls "those who have crept in unawares"; we're going to see God himself; and those of you who would call yourselves believers in Jesus Christ, those who are part of the church of Jesus Christ. We'll see that those three different entities: the world at large, God himself and the church of Jesus Christ, how are

we expected to and how can we expect to respond in light of the information that we've been given in the book of Jude.

I want to encourage you to turn with me to verse 12 of the second to the last book of the Bible as we pick up where it says, "These are spots." Understand "these" are those whom we've been speaking of all this time, those who are against the things of God, those who flat live contrary to the word of God, those who oppose everything that would be called Godly in life.

"12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

I think the Lord is saying, "They're ungodly." I don't know, but I think he is.

"16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. 17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; 18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

In this passage as it's going to be laid out, what we're going to see are these three points: we're going to see how is it that the world who rejects the message not only of God but the person of Jesus Christ, how are they responding to all of what we've shared; how is God one day going to respond; and then finally, how do you and I as believers in Jesus Christ, knowing that the world has turned into chaos out of control and one day God is going to judge it, how do you and I live between those two pillars of understanding.

So, let's begin with the first point, let's begin with those who we would call those "certain men who have crept in unawares." How are they responding? Beginning in verse 12, it shares with us some illustrations not rooted so much in the Old Testament, just from everyday life to describe to us what the world around us is increasingly becoming and going to look like. What is the description of those who are the ungodly ones who are rejecting the things of God? Three very simple descriptions. I think the first one is this: that they are fearless. They are fearless. You know, Psalm 111:10 says, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God." You want to know why there is so little wisdom in this

world today? Because there is becoming so little fear of God. Let me give you some of the best advice anybody ever gave me: there is a God and you are not him and we need to understand and fear who he is, a respect and a reverence for his character, for his presence, for everything about him.

But it says they're here in Jude verse 12. It says "they are spots in your feasts of charity." What it's trying to describe to what would have primarily probably been a Jewish audience, is it's trying to describe that during their worship time, during their holy time, during that which should be Godly it was becoming God-less. They were literally creeping in and turning that which should be directed toward God and directing it toward themselves. I think time would elude us if all of the examples that I could use to demonstrate this in our culture today but I think there is one that stands out. When I first heard of this, when I first read that this occurred, I'll be honest with you, I thought it was a fabricated story. You know, there are a lot of satirical writers out there. I thought there was somebody who had used the craftiness of their pen to make the story up and then I began to dig and dig and dig and I found out that a story that seems so crazy to me was actually true. In another state, there was a group of, for lack of a better term, government officials gathered together in a government building and they prayed a public prayer. Now, that's shocking in and of itself. The same individuals who say we should not be allowed to pray are all of a sudden on tv praying and here's what they did: they actually prayed a prayer publicly, it's on record, you can go watch the video, thanking God for the nurses and the doctors who were capable of providing abortions.

I thought to myself, "Lightning has a 15 foot radius. I'm glad I live in Louisiana." That's all I said. Can you imagine that we've become a culture who thanks God, the giver of life, for the privilege of taking it? Let me tell you what that is: that's fearless. That is not just thumbing your nose at God, that is literally speaking to him, if they were even speaking to God but they were speaking to him completely contrary to anything and everything that he has revealed of himself. That is a frightening position to find ourselves in. We have become a culture that is completely fearless when it comes to our respect of and our thoughts in the presence of God. What has scarily happened is that we've somewhat become our own gods because it's all about what we think and how we think things should be.

So, it says here that these spots in the feasts, that they have that quality where they're fearless. The second quality is I want to share with you, I think that the quality we see is that they're fruitless. It says "they are clouds without water," and then he compares them to trees without fruit. Now, my family and I have had the privilege of living in southeast Louisiana for about six months now and can I just share with you: it rains a lot here. I don't know if you knew that but it rains a lot. In fact, you see, I'm a native Texan, forgive me for that, but I've come from the state of Texas and you need to understand from where I'm from, there are only two seasons. There is not spring, summer, fall and winter. No, they have winter and it lasts for three days occasionally in February but there are none of those seasons. There are two seasons in Texas. Here they are: there's light brown and dark brown. That's all there is. You understand that last month in Louisiana we received as much rain as some places in Texas will get in an entire year. I grew up in an

environment and for most of you this illustration is completely non-relevant but work with me. I grew up in a world where we prayed for rain. We prayed for it. Y'all pray for sunshine but we prayed for rain. Why? One of the games that I loved to play is the game of golf. I grew up playing golf as a young man. I remember losing golf balls in the middle of the fairway because it fell through the crack in the ground because of the drought. That was normal. Any of you ever heard the golf term the Texas wedge? That's when you putt it from the fairway to get it to the green because it's so hard, it's like concrete.

I remember days growing up with droughts and dryness where we literally begged God for it to rain. We begged him. Why? The crops needed it and we need water, it's a major problem if you don't have it. Don't believe me, talk to California right now. They're experiencing this. But you know what would happen is we would go days and weeks and yes, sometimes even months without significant rainfall and we would pray and we would plead and we would beg God, "Please let it rain." And then it would happen. It usually happened in the afternoon and it's been 108 degrees all day long, cooking eggs on the sidewalk and all of a sudden, in the distance you'd see the clouds bubbling up. Woo, you'd get excited. Everybody would call up and say, "It's gonna rain!" Everybody gets excited. All of these old Baptists turned Pentecostal right in the middle of the road. Why? Because rain is coming.

The clouds would billow in and get dark. You'd even hear some thunder. "Oh yeah, here we go." Thirty minutes later the clouds would be on the other side of your house and you didn't get a single drop of rain. Do you know how disappointing that is? Do you know how frustrating it is to be able to see and to hear exactly what you need and want and it doesn't come? Do you know what the Lord is saying about those who have crept in? It's not just that they're fearless, they're fruitless. It means that which they've promised is not coming to fruition. Listen, wake up people. How many times do we need another false promise? How many times do we need to hear, "If we'll just get onboard with this...we'll just get excited about that. This is going to solve all of our problems." No, it's not. How many different times have people in position and people in strong places promised you and I that if we got onboard with their program, if we took their pill, if we got excited about whatever, all our issues would be solved? Do you know what they are? They're fruitless. They're like the rain clouds that you think is coming, they pass you by, you invested time, you invested money and you got absolutely nothing out of it. That's exactly what God says about this world that's crept in.

They're fearless, they're fruitless but there's a final thing: they're furious. Look at what it says here in the book Jude. In verse 13, "they are raging waves of the sea." Now, growing up in Texas and now living in Louisiana, you would have to admit the Gulf of Mexico is not known for its grandiose waves that you could go surfing on. It's just not something that we're known for but my wife and I have had the privilege through the years of traveling. Some years ago we had the privilege to go and stay on the coast of northern California. We were literally within a mile of the golf course known as Pebble Beach. Now, don't get excited, I didn't get to play it but I got to see it from a distance. We're there in Carmel, California, we're staying just a few blocks off the ocean. We were literally awoken in the morning by the sound of the waves. I'd never heard anything like

it. I mean, you are hundreds of yards from the beach and you can hear it roaring time after time. Those waves were so big, so loud, it drowned out everything else.

You know, that's the illustration that God uses for our culture, that they've become so loud, so repetitive, it's as if they are almost drowning everything else out. Let me give you an example of how this happens in our world. If you ever stay up at night and watch a national broadcast news event on any of the major networks or even the minor ones, typically what happens is they will have some type of topic, some type of issue addressing a current event, a law that should have been passed, wasn't passed, whatever it is. Typically what happens on these news programs is whoever the host is, when you're looking at your television screen, they're right there in the middle and they're kind of sharing the issue and they have two different representatives who they typically invite to be on their program. There is one representative that is absolutely against the things of God. They are against everything that would be called Godly. When it comes to biblical Christianity, that is the antithesis of who they are and their number one enemy. Then on the other side of the screen we typically have a very conservative Bible based individual who is going to share the Godly perspective of whatever they're dealing with. Let me share with you the furiousness of what happens. You see, long gone are the days where people with differing opinion can actually sit down and have a decent conversation with one another. Long gone are the days which your opinion may not agree with mine but we can at least agree to disagree.

Let me tell you what's happened in our world today: they've said that you could have any opinion you want as long as it's not biblical Christianity. You can agree with anything out there, just don't believe the Bible. So, here's what happens, the issue is brought forth and whenever the individual who is against the things of God is allowed to speak, they don't speak to the issue. They personally attack the person on the other side of the screen. They call them names; they claim this; they claim that. They never even deal with the issue, they just personally attack them. Then, when the person who would have a biblical perspective gets the privilege to speak, the other one spends the whole time interrupting them. It's like a bunch of roaring waves. You can't get away. It just keeps coming and coming and coming and there's times I've seen the news anchor get frustrated. Why? Because the person that they even agree with philosophically is not even playing by the rules.

Folks, that's the picture that God gives us here in the book of Jude. He says in light of all the stuff that we've talked about, all the illustrations from the Bible, these men who've crept in unawares, these ungodly individuals, what you see in them is that they are fearless against the things of God, they are fruitless in the promises they're giving and they are furious. If there is one thing they despise more than anything else, it's someone who claims a relationship with Jesus Christ and that the word of God is truth. That's the world you and I are living in today.

Now, here's the question I have for you: have you ever thought this, you wake up in the morning, to give you an idea of how our world starts, we wake up in the morning and we start the coffee, we get the dog out of the pen and she sits between us and we watch the

news. About five minutes into the news, this thought runs through my head and usually comes out my mouth, “How much longer is God gonna put up with this?” Have you ever thought that? Seriously, you’re watching and you’re going, “How much longer is God gonna put up with this?” Well, I’ve got some great news for you: beginning in verse 14, it tells us. The book of Jude, it communicates, “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all,” and then he rants about all their ungodliness. What it basically says is this: there is coming a day and the bumper sticker is right, Jesus is coming back and boy is he mad. It says he is coming and he is going to execute judgment.

Now, there are some things that I want you to understand about verses 13 and 14. Before we get to the details, do not panic that it says “And Enoch said,” because some of you may have gone to the table of contents of your Bible and said, “Where is Enoch? I don’t see him anywhere here.” And you go to the book of Joshua and it says “As Jasher said.” Or you go to the book of Chronicles and it says, “As in the book of Kings.” You say, “Why is that so important?” Listen: the Lord may not have inspired Enoch to write a book that is actually in the 66 books of your Bible but that doesn’t mean that a broken clock is not right twice a day and what I see God doing here in the book of Jude is saying this: “You haven’t listened to me, maybe you’ll listen to this guy. You haven’t listened to what I’ve been telling you with Isaiah, with Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zephaniah. I’ve told you all these guys, hey, maybe you’ll pay attention to Enoch.”

So, what is so significant that God would bring up this person who does not have a book in the Bible but is as real as real can be? The first thing we need to understand is this: it shares with us the issue of the firsts. What I mean by that is this: Enoch, as it’s described, is the seventh from Adam. You go to Genesis 5 and you do the genealogies, you know so-and-so begat so-and-so who begat so-and-so who begat so-and-so. You go seven generations down, you find a character by the name of Enoch. Enoch is a fascinating character for so many different reasons, primarily it’s this one: it’s that the Bible says that he walked with the Lord and was not. In other words, he is just hanging out with God, he is so close to God that all of a sudden he is literally just raptured up into the heavens. He does not die a physical death.

Now, the timing of his rapture is significant too. According to the biblical record, he is actually taken up the same year as Noah gets on the boat and the flood comes. He is a picture of one who escaped judgment but who preached it in the process. Now, what is significant about that? Because Enoch said that God is coming back to execute judgment with ten thousands of his saints, listen to me clearly: before there were ten thousands of people even on the planet. I mean, let’s be honest, I’m sure Adam and Eve were very fruitful but seven generations down, it’s hard to get tens of thousands of people. Before there was even a number that could reciprocate this he said it’s going to happen. Before it rained 40 days and 40 nights, he said judgment was coming. Before the Lord descended upon Babel and he spread out the languages, he said it was coming.

Here's why we need to hear this: when we read in the Bible that one day God is going to execute judgment on those who've rejected him, it's not as a reaction to the gravity of their rebellion. It's not like God is up on his throne and all of a sudden said, "Boy, it's gotten way out of control down there. It's gotten beyond what I ever thought it would be. I guess I ought to do something about it." No. Before we ever got to where we are, God said, "I'm going to do something about it." Before we ever got to the place of where we are today, God said, "I will execute my judgment." That is significant because the rebellion that we're seeing, God is not reacting to our rebellion, God responded to it before we even did it and God is saying, "I will execute my judgment."

That's the first that I want to address. The second thing is this: that the judgment of God as displayed in the book of Jude will be and I'm going to put this word in quotes, it will be "fantastic." Now, when I say fantastic, I don't mean enjoyable, I don't mean excitable, I mean almost beyond comprehension. You look at the word "fantastic" in the dictionary and it's a description of something that is verbally difficult to give description to. How many times has somebody come up to you and said, "What did you think about dinner time?" "Woo, it was fantastic." "What do you mean it was fantastic?" "It's hard to describe. It was fantastic." How many times has somebody said, "Well, how was the game last night?" "Woo, it was fantastic." "What about it was fantastic?" "Well, it's hard to say. It just was fantastic." It's a word we use to describe something that is so awing that oftentimes we don't have the words to describe what it really is and what we see here when it says that the Lord will come with ten thousands of his saints understand, one day when he does execute his judgment, it will be fantastic. It will be so grand and great, it will be hard to describe. In fact, when the Apostle John in the book of Revelation was opened up and he began to see and to hear what God was going to do, do you know what he does in chapter 1? He falls at the feet of Jesus as if dead. It's almost as if he doesn't even have the words to describe what he's seen.

So, what's going to happen one day in the future? You turn to the book of Revelation, beginning in chapter 6, there is a period of time that is coming that Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24, he called it the Great Tribulation. Mark 13, he said it will be such a time of the judgment of God there has been no time since the creation of humanity and the creation of the earth. In other words, what you see beginning in Revelation 6 is this: you see the judgment of God finally taking place upon the rebellion of man.

Now, what's interesting about this passage is, back in chapter 5 of Revelation, the person who takes the book sealed with seven seals, the one who actually begins to open up this famous wrath of God is Jesus Christ himself. And when the first seal opens up, do you know what it says? There is the antichrist right there. You know, the beginning of that time period is the revealing of literally Satan within flesh. The antichrist who comes. Listen what comes after him in Revelation 6: famine, death, destruction. That's what's going to eventually when God decides to uncork his judgment on the ungodliness that's described in Jude. It's going to be an event describe so bad that even Jesus said there has never been anything like it in all of the earth. It says there will be famine, there will be destruction. You get to the seals and the trumpets and the vials and it says there is a time where a third of the grass is burnt up, it says a third of the people then a fourth of the

people, then a star by the name of wormwood comes and hits the water, they turn bitter. You've got people dying, you've got people everywhere. There is all kinds of pain, agony, misery and then there is later on, it says that there's an event that is so horrific that men seek out death and they cannot find it.

Folks, that's a horrible position and place to be in and just when you think, "Wow, could it get any worse?" Seven years after it begins, the heavens open up and when the heavens open up, Jesus Christ himself is pictured in Revelation 19 upon a white horse. It says that his feet are brass as judgment, there is a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth, his eyes are a flame of fire and when he shows up, listen to me, he's not happy. You see, he came the first time to seek and to save that which was lost. He comes the second time to execute judgment on those who refuse to be saved. And when he touches foot, according to the Bible, he touches down on what we know as Mount Zion, from there to the Valley of Jezreel or most famously known as the Valley of Armageddon, the greatest battle known to mankind will take place for all of humanity underneath the guise of the antichrist, they will gather themselves together and they will attempt to do the stupid. That's a famous theological term you need to know.

Folks, I'm going to tell you: some things are just stupid. The armies of the world are going to gather themselves on the dirt that was established by their Creator and they're going to try to attempt to defeat their Creator. Now, there's a lot of fancy words I could use for that but I've got a good one for you, it's called stupid is what it is. What happens is when the Lord executes judgment it says that the blood of those defeated will rain in that valley up to the bridle of the horse. I don't know if I get all that but it ain't good and what you see is a judgment that is so extreme that it's literally fantastic. It's even hard to fathom what that's going to look like. I'm going to tell you one thing: I'm just grateful I'm riding behind him and I'm not in front of him. That's what's going to happen.

But here's the thing you need to know: it's not just that it's fantastic, it's final. When I say final what I mean is this is it. This is when he steps down. You see, one of the problems that we have in our culture is we always want another chance. Have you noticed that? Everybody wants a second chance. I'm going to just share with you one of my pet peeves in life. Here we go, some of you may disagree with me completely, that's okay: I cannot stand instant replay and now they're introducing it to baseball. I want to cry. I literally want to cry. They're going to have instant replay in baseball. Do you know why? Because we get a second chance. Everybody wants a second chance and I know people argue, "Well, we just want the game to be accurate." Pretty soon we're going to have robots umpiring the game, robots playing the game, robots watching the game. I don't know where we're going to be but nonetheless, we have this culture that says, "Everything needs a second chance, third chance, infinitum chance." Do you know what it says about the judgment of God? When he comes back, that's it. That's it. Final. You have had your opportunity and judgment has and is taking place.

Now, here's the final thing we've got to deal with: we know that our culture is in chaos. We know there is rebellion. We know they don't fear God. We know our culture is completely fruitless and they're furious. We know one day Jesus is stepping out of the

clouds. We know one day he's going to execute judgment and we know one day he is going to take over and take care of things but what do we do between now and then? I mean, after all, we're going to leave this place today and we've got to live. We're going to wake up, God willing, tomorrow and we've got to live so how do we respond? We turn to the book of Jude verse 17. I love this word, "But." In other words, in light of all of this information, what do you need to do? I think there are three very tangible things that all of us need to exercise as a believer in Jesus Christ in light of the information that's been shared today.

The first thing is this: we need to fight. Now, I know what some of you are thinking, "You mean put on the boxing gloves, get in the ring and go after it?" No, no, no. You see, the only illustration that the Bible gives us to give us a picture of our relationship with Jesus Christ is a marriage. It doesn't give us the picture of siblings or even cousin to cousin or aunt to nephew, whoever it may be. In fact, Ephesians 5, it says, "The mystery the church is as a husband to a wife, as Christ is to the church." One of the privileges that I've had throughout the years and I know this may sound strange but I'm being absolutely honest with you, I really enjoy doing premarital counseling. You say, "Well, why is that?" Because everybody's happy on that side of the vows. That's a wonderful time. It's on the other side that it can become stressful. And I'm not perfect and they're never going to know everything but one of the illustrations that I give is I say there are going to be times in their marriage, they don't believe me then, there's going to be some trouble times. There's going to be some difficult times. Marriage is a rose: it's beautiful but it's a little bit thorny. They're going to have some of those moments. So, one of the things that I like to share with them and I'll use an object that has no marital relevance. You know, I'll use a candy bar. I'll use a piece of paper, a pen, it doesn't matter. I'll put it in between them and I'll say, "I want you to imagine that this is a problem. This is news that someone in your family is terminally ill. This is news that there is a bill that has been significantly unpaid and it's going to cost you dearly. There is news that someone has lost a job. Whatever it may be, this is a problem that has happened, how do you respond to it?" You know, people typically respond one of two ways: they either fight or they flee. They either attack the problem and say, "We've got to solve it," or they run away and say, "Oh, can we just sit on this a while? Maybe give it a week or two? Maybe if I just ignore it, it will just go away."

Folks, let me equate that to the church of Jesus Christ at large. We've got a problem in our culture; we've got godlessness that is running rampant and the majority of the "church" has decided to flee. They have decided to go find a cave, get as many MREs as they can discover, sing Kumbayah and say, "One day Jesus is coming back and I don't want to think about this anymore." That's not the picture you get in the book of Jude. Why? Back in verse 3 it said to contend. It said to get in there and make a difference. It said to take a stand. We are not called to evacuate the culture, we are called to make a change in the culture. We are not called to dismiss ourselves, we are called to be a part of it. We are called to contend. We are called to stand. We are called to fight. There is no place in the book of Jude at all where you get the idea that you can just check out and wait until Jesus comes. It is a fight.

The second thing is this: it says that unlike the world which is sensual, we are to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Now, we could do a whole sermon on what that means but let me give you just a quick synopsis: when you are filled with the Holy Ghost that means that God has more of you today than he had of you yesterday. That means that tomorrow you so yield and surrender yourself to the Lord, he has more of you tomorrow than he had of you today. Let me share with you why that is so significant. It said there are going to be mockers in the last time, they are sensual, not having the Spirit but you are to be filled with the Spirit. You see, what that means is that the more that we yield ourselves to the things of God, the more he can empower us to make a difference out in that old world that's gone chaotic. Do you know what Jesus said? This is in the famous Olivet Discourse, he's literally about to be crucified just hours and days away. He's taken his disciples up and he's sharing with them about the end of the world. Do you know what he says about at the end? He says, "Don't worry what you're going to say. The Spirit will give you utterance."

If we are yielded to the things of God in our life, if we wake up every day and say, "God, I don't have a clue how to do this but I just yield myself to you," it says he will give us the words, he will give us the actions. We'll go to bed at night going, "How on earth did I do that?" You didn't because he did it in you. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit so don't check out. Don't check out, just check in with him every morning and let him take care of it.

But here's the last thing and probably the most important: it is the word "faithfulness." Faithfulness. Yes, we're called to fight but fighting gets old. Yes, we're called to be filled but at times we just don't feel it. But we are called to be faithful. I don't find anywhere in the book of Jude, in fact, I don't find anywhere in the Bible where it says that the believer in Jesus Christ, we come to a point where we can just quit and give up. In fact, Daniel 7:25 says, "The purpose of the devil is to wear out the saints." Let me tell you what the devil wants you to do. Are you ready? He just wants you to quit. He just wants you to quit because if you would cease sustaining, if you would quit fighting then he can just literally run amuck. Do you know what the Apostle Paul said at the end of his life? "I have fought the good fight. I have run my race." And what he was stating is he went to the finish line as fast as he'd ever gone at any point in his faith. Faithfulness.

You know, I mentioned earlier that the one illustration that we have for our relationship to Jesus Christ in the Bible is that of a marriage. Ephesians 5, it's the mystery of the church. It says, "As he is to us as a husband to a wife," and there are all those illustrations but, you know, the thing that makes a marriage truly make a difference is faithfulness because I'm going to tell you what: when feelings go away, faithfulness will keep you together. When the facts aren't pretty, faithfulness will get you down the road. Today, this very day, my wife Tracy and I celebrate 18 years ago today we exchanged our marriage vows. It's been 18 years. Let me tell you the vows that we exchanged to one another and then I want you to translate them to your relationship with Jesus Christ. Are you ready? For better, for worse. Let me ask you a question about your culture: go back 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, is it better or is it worse now? It's worse, so you just quit and give up like you would on a marriage? No. Why? Because you said for

better or for worse. Guess what folks? It maybe worse but that doesn't mean we quit. That means we continue on.

What was the second vow we gave? Are you ready for this one? For richer or for poorer. Do I need to ask how we're doing there? I've read the news. I hope none of you all had any Bitcoins, that's all I've got to say. You look at the past and you look at where we used to be and where we are today where we work harder to get less and less and less. Does that mean you just quit? You say, "God, you know what? Boy, when I was prosperous life was good but now that things have gotten tough, I think you'll understand if a just take a step back." No, no, no.

How about this one? In sickness and in health. I'm going to tell you, it's easy to serve the Lord, it's easy when life is good, your pockets are full and your health is great. But what about when it's not good, you're poor and on top of that you're sick? Now, I'm just going to state the obvious: we're not getting any younger and I have learned, in fact, I'm suffering from a very traumatic ailment in my life. Some of you all have heard me share this. It's driving me nuts. For the last few years, I have begun to suffer. Now, the medical doctors have not said this is what's happening but I do know this: I am suffering from chest-to-drawer disease. My chest is dropping to my drawers. It's just dropping. Gravity has taken over. It's incredible. I can't do what I used to do. It's the truth. Brother, I know how old you are. It's going to happen to you too. That's all I've got to say. Why? Because we can joke and laugh but it's true.

Folks, none of us are as fit, none of us are in as good of health today as we were years and years ago. Just because it hurts doesn't mean we quit. Just because we don't have the finances, doesn't mean we quit. Just because it doesn't look like we hoped it would doesn't mean we quit. Let me tell you something: 18 years of marriage, we've had some times and a couple of rocky moments but pretty good. We've had some rich times, we've had some poor times. We've had some sick times. We've had some healthy times. Let me tell you what's made our marriage: not feelings. Let me give you one of my wife's favorite expressions. Are you ready? Love ain't got nothing to do with this. You love all you want but when love fades, faithfulness is what gets you through.

Folks, I'm going to be honest: as a believer in Jesus Christ I wake up every morning and some days it doesn't look very fun and it doesn't feel good but that does not give me the excuse to quit. That doesn't give me the excuse to say, "You know what? I think I'm just going to turn it in because it ain't what I thought it was going to be." Folks, we have been called to be faithful. We have been called to run the race. We have called to not quit. The devil wants you to quit. He wants you to check out. He wants you to go into a cave. Just for spite and out of love for Jesus why don't we just not give him what he wants and go ahead and stand and contend and say, "I'm not going to quit. I may be worn out. I may be tired out and I may be broke out but I'm going to keep going. I'm going to fight. I'm going to stand and I'm going to contend."

In just a moment, we're going to have our time of invitation. In just a moment, Brother Jeremy is going to come and lead us and if you're a first time guest or visitor, the song

that we've been singing so resonates this, it says, "I'll stand." I will take a stand. Maybe it's in your home, maybe it's in your business, maybe it's in your school, your community. I don't know where it is but would you make this commitment today that from this point forward no matter what it feels like, no matter what it looks like, "I will not quit. I will stay faithful until the Lord either takes me home or comes back to get me."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe you're here today and you've heard a lot about standing. You've heard a lot about contending. You've heard a lot about not quitting. But maybe all that we've shared today is foreign to you because as we've mentioned the name of Jesus Christ so many times, maybe you're here this morning, maybe you're watching on television, maybe you're listening on the internet but you understand and realize that you don't have a relationship with him. All this sounds great and grand but you really don't get it. Maybe you're that person this morning, maybe you're a man, woman, boy or girl, it doesn't matter what your background is but you're here this morning and you say, "You know what? I realize that I've listened to the lies of the world. I've listened to the false promises, the clouds that have raged and they've promised and they never delivered." Would this be the day that maybe you would put your life, your trust, your soul and your eternity in the only one who actually fulfills what he's promised, Jesus Christ.

If you're that person today, let me encourage you to just have a conversation with God, technically we call it prayer. Not out loud, not exactly what I am communicating to you but just have a conversation with him and say, "God, I realized today, man, I have been headed in the wrong direction. I have been listening to the wrong people and I have been trusting in the wrong things but I realize today that the only person that I need to place my life and my trust in is the person of Jesus Christ. Lord, I believe today that he lived for me. I believe he went to the cross for me. I believe he rose from the dead so that I could be forgiven. I could be saved. Lord, I confess I'm the problem, Jesus is the answer. I ask you to forgive me. I ask you to save me. In the best way that I know how at this moment, I want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed. I know there are many listening today, that was a decision you hopefully made years ago. Some of you even decades ago. Let me ask you a simple question: is the fervency, the excitement, the passion of contending for the faith today as strong as it was then? If not, maybe our invitation today will be a time of recommitment, a time of taking another stance and saying, "You know what, I fall into the lies of the enemy and I refuse to back down. I refuse to quit. Today, I will stand." Whatever your decision, after I pray, we're going to have folks here at the front and you have the opportunity to step out and step forward and to do something about it.

Lord, we come to this time of decision and that's exactly what it is, when we do with our feet, when we do with our hands, when we do with our mouth what is within our heart and mind we know needs to happen. God, you have convicted us, you have shared truth with us. It is now our responsibility to respond to what you've revealed. Lord, I pray that you would remove discouragement. I pray you would remove doubt. I pray you would

remove any kind of discouragement or anything that would make somebody say, "Oh no, not today." Lord, may you give us a spirit of boldness in this hour. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to encourage you to stand with me as Brother Jeremy leads us. Whatever decision, you come.