

Keep On Going!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 October 2024

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[0 : 00] Now turning back to Jude. Last time we were looking, a big chunk, remember, down to verse 16.

This evening, a shorter chunk for us, verse 17 down to verse 23. To remind ourselves, Jude of course is here writing to this struggling gathering of saints, this struggling church, and they're struggling, as we know, because they are being faced with false teachers.

And we said this at the start of verse 3, a few weeks ago, almost a month ago now, if not more, we saw that Jude had planned to write something else, but it's on his mind instead to write to them, to stand strong.

So last time we looked at these verses together, in that big central chunk, Jude uses examples from history and from culture to show them that although they are facing tough days, almost impossible days with these false teachers, Jude's saying, God is still God, he is still just, and he will bring all things to a just end.

Those who carry on in their false teaching will not escape judgment. Indeed, they will face severe judgment. That brings us then to our verses this evening.

[1 : 27] Verse 17, as Jude brings to a conclusion, or starts to the conclusion at least, of his short letter. This evening, really, he's just reminding them, exhorting them.

If you have a church Bible, ESV, it gets quite handy. We sometimes, remember, just to remind ourselves, the verses are man-made in our Bibles, we're not inspired, and the titles are man-made, not inspired.

Sometimes the verses are good, sometimes the verses make no sense, same with the titles. But a good title here, an ESV, above verses 17 down to verse 23, the title is A Call to Persevere.

I've named it to this part, but know your enemy, or Jude's reminding them to know their enemy. But A Call to Persevere is also a good title.

Just two simple headings for us this evening as we look to these verses, just to help us break it down. First of all, then, know the enemy, and also then, know your tactics.

[2 : 31] So know the enemy, and know your tactics. Starting then with know the enemy, verses 17, roughly down to verse 19.

Really, one thing is being said here, but it helps us perhaps to break it down in a shorter way. So 17, roughly, to verse 19. How, then, does Jude call these people, and how are we called to know our enemy?

We said before, we face false teachers. We'll say that more this evening, later on. Nothing's changed. We are perhaps more physically vicious, and more clear, and more forward, in many ways, in Jude's context, in this church's context.

Nothing's changed. As Christians, as a church, as brothers and sisters, we're still assailed, both personally, but also as a corporate body, as a gathering of God's people, we're still assailed by false teachers.

Remember, in past weeks, we said that the obvious ones are obvious. Our Muslim friends, our JW friends, our Mormon friends, that's kind of, in a sense, obvious. Although the JW and Mormon friends, less obvious, because they take the gospel of sorts, and they twist, and we've covered that before in our Trinity series.

[3 : 48] But what's even more dangerous, even more insidious here, is false teachers who are in the church, who change small things.

We'll see later on what that looks like, and what it turns out to look like in the end. Verse 17, then. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In short, Judas saying to them, we were warned, you were warned. Brothers and sisters in Tolstead, we are warned. We must remember.

We must remember. But you must remember. And you see the emphasis there in English is even stronger than the Greek. The sense that you really have to remember. You were told about this.

We knew this would happen. Don't be surprised. And sometimes, we are so shocked when we see things in the world our Saviour told us to expect in the world, aren't we?

[4 : 54] We see sin in the world. We see false teachers in the world. We see the gospel being mangled and destroyed and attacked. We see perhaps our friends and family turning against us because we love the Lord.

And we panic, and we're shocked, and we're surprised. It's not pleasant. It's awful. But we shouldn't be surprised. Why? Because we're told. Our Saviour told us.

The apostles told us. And Jude's saying, yes, it's awful what's happening to you. But, beloved, don't be surprised. The predictions of the apostles were given to you, were passed down to you.

We were told, and you were told, there was trouble ahead. So who are then the enemy? Jude once more describes the enemy to us.

And summarising the apostles' preaching and quoting elsewhere in Scripture, verse 18, he says, They said to you, the apostles, in the last time there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions.

[6 : 05] How do we then identify false teachers? Every week we've seen the obvious false teachers. How do we then identify the less obvious false teachers? How can we say to someone or identify someone who is not in line or not in step with gospel teaching?

Well, they're scoffers. They are mockers. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean they're openly mocking the gospel. Satan is much smarter than that.

The real dangerous false teaching, it mocks the gospel, but not in a loud, obvious way. The gospel is mocked, scoffed at by perverting the gospel, isn't it?

They scoff at true theology. They'll take what was passed down through the generations and say, yes, you heard that, but actually it says this.

The trick, as old as mankind, isn't it? When Satan in the garden says and convinces, and we say Eve, but Adam and Eve. Adam's right beside her, we find out, remember.

[7 : 09] Adam's standing right beside Eve when the serpent's talking to her. Did God really say? Are you sure? Are you sure that's right?

Are you sure he didn't actually say this or actually mean this? And we see it quickly. Our first parents are just turned upside down. And we might laugh and scoff at them, but we are no different.

It doesn't take much for any of us. Whether it's five years of theology degree or none at all, it makes no difference. There's plenty of people who are false teachers, who have been through the most orthodox, correct, good seminaries and education systems, who have masters and PhDs in bits of theology I can't even begin to spell, and they are false teachers as bad as the rest of those who are other false teachers.

They scoff at true theology. What God says, they scoff at and they twist it. They also scoff at the gospel. In that they take the gospel and they say, yes, this is true, but also there's this or there's that.

They add arms and legs and barriers at times and extra requirements at times and create and change what God said.

[8 : 29] We're covering it in our evening series and we saw also in the morning series, we saw Jesus speaking with the Pharisees in Mark.

There's a good few chapters there where Jesus is teaching the same sermon almost in different ways, again and again, different examples, again and again. But the gospel, it is not Jesus plus anything.

The gospel is Jesus and Jesus alone. And false teachers say, yes, but it's Jesus plus good works. It's Jesus plus the right worship style, perhaps.

The right X, Y or Z. The right church dress. The right way of looking. The right way of speaking. Now, we're not saying about things that are outwith the limits of Christian decency or anything else, but false teachers will say, if you don't do this, X, Y or Z, then you cannot be saved.

Or you're not a real Christian. You're not truly a Christian unless you follow these exact dictates that we give you. And by the time you finish trying to fulfil all the laws and rules of man, as we said before, you end up being so far away from the true gospel.

[9 : 46] So far away. Where Jesus and Jesus alone, finding our hope, our perfection, our salvation in him and nothing else, then changes very subtly and very slowly, very surely into, yes, Jesus, but also this and that.

Jesus, but also you must do this a certain way only, or else it doesn't really count. Jesus plus our works. Jesus plus our efforts. And we've covered before at length how that features at times in life.

So we scoff at through theology. We scoff at the gospel. We also at times scoff, we could say, at the church. And by that I mean they are driven by ego and not driven by who they are as a brother or a sister.

You see this as false teachers who are all about their image, all about making themselves look good and sound good.

And don't think for a second we wouldn't fall for it. There are plenty of good believers, we'll see that later on, who fall for it. So much so that Jude gives instruction how to rescue those who are falling, as it were, for false teaching.

[11 : 04] It's those who promote themselves over the gospel. Now our minds go to the big celebrity pastors, don't we? Those with millions and billions of pounds and dollars. But it happens in small churches too.

It happens in small gatherings too. Where a man promotes himself above the message he is preaching. And not by being a servant to the word, but also a servant to his people.

He makes the word a servant to himself. He makes his people a servant to himself. There's nothing wrong with it.

As time goes on, the word minister is being replaced at times. The word pastor, and we are both ministers and pastors. Both words are correct and biblical. But as people hear minister, and because of our history, because of our culture, or whatever else, because we just don't understand it or take the time to think, we hear minister and we think one thing.

What is it to be a minister? Well, it's to minister, isn't it? It's to do something. Yes, ministers are servants to God. But how do we serve God?

[12 : 10] Well, we serve God by serving the congregation. Really, a minister should be the least of the congregation. Should be one in the congregation who is at least thriving to be humble.

False teachers don't. They are there to make a name for themselves, to use the church, to use the Lord for something. Whether it's power, whether it's money, whether it's fame, or ten other reasons, a hundred other reasons.

They twist the church. They twist God's people. And we know ourselves, and we've seen ourselves at times, what it looks like in the end.

When those come, and those go, and who we see, usually after the fallout happens, that a ministry is all about a personality rather than what we're actually preaching.

It's all about an ego rather than what we're serving the people. And once all the beauty fades, and once all the charisma stops, there's always destruction and trauma.

[13 : 24] And a destroyed gospel witness is left in the wake. They are scoffers. They also follow ungodly passions. Again, they follow after, they seek after things which ministers, which church leaders should not be following after, seeking after.

What are some of the common, just three ungodly passions? Well, we said it's now. It's fame, wealth, and power. You'll note in our instruction as to what an office bearer should be.

We see mentioned there, quite uncomfortably, and I hope it is uncomfortable for us, and we've preached before, we've preached again by the end of the year, I hope, to go over again the convocations of office bearers.

To not be a chaser of money, to not be obsessed with money, to not be one to accrue wealth. If there's a teacher, a minister, a leader, and he is seeking after wealth as his primary function, his primary goal, there's something wrong there.

There's something wrong. Power. Harder to spot, perhaps, than wealth. Power. Ministers, false teachers, false ministers, false pastors, who want to lord over the congregation.

[14 : 54] Who are in position because they want to show and to prove that they are fully in charge. When in reality, we're called to be servants, aren't we?

To be called to follow and model after our servant king, the Lord Jesus, who had all the power, quite literally, eternal power, but yet he made use as a word.

He took none of the glory off that. He takes aside the praise. He takes aside the glory. And he enters down as servant king. Fame.

Whether that's fame in your congregation, or fame on an international stage, even in recent days, we have seen well-known ministers and pastors in recent years and recent days.

And for all of our fame, it all comes to nothing sometimes in the end. Now, we perhaps are not aware of some of the major false teachers today, and I touched this last time.

[15 : 57] We don't do this lightly this evening. We're always very careful in naming names. We're always very careful in speaking about individuals.

We always try and talk in general terms as best we can. But sometimes, sometimes there has to be exceptions to the rules. When you signed your call to call me, on the top, if you remember, you saw that part of you did, that you're signing a call to me to come and to care for your souls.

Now, that's a document that both humbles me, at times it terrifies me, but that's what you call me to do.

And part of caring for your souls is being there as a warning to you of those who are dangerous and those who are popular. I think it was Calvin who said, a shepherd or not, it was Calvin.

If you know afterwards, please correct me. But a minister, a shepherd has to have two voices. One to gently lead the sheep and one to scare away the wolves.

[17 : 08] And I hope you find that most of the time I am speaking to gently to you as my beloved flock. But just for a second, for two minutes, I would change my voice to a voice to scare away the wolves.

And to name just some of the major false teachers. I don't know if it's a shame you, if you have these books in your libraries or if you listen to these preachers perhaps regularly, just listen and perhaps change your listening style.

Perhaps find these books a new home outside your home. Now these are not people who are just different to us. You know, we love our brothers and sisters.

God willing, next year, for one of our communions, hope to have a Baptist in this pulpit come and share and lead us in communion worship over the weekend if he's not too jam-packed.

These are not people who are just different to us. These are people who are dangerous. These are people who I don't like personally. These are people who are dangerous. I'll list some names. These are the prominent false teachers of today.

[18 : 16] The most obvious one, and I hope it's clear to everyone, this man is to be avoided. The biggest smile I think you've ever seen in your life, Joel Osteen. His fame is somewhat waning and waxing away, but he still pumps out about five or six different books a year.

Joel Osteen is worth, we don't know how much it's worth, upwards of a billion dollars. Or fame, money in itself, if you earn it genuinely, then the Lord has blessed you and be thankful for that.

But he has earned his billions in preaching a false gospel. Behind him, perhaps in popularity and in fame, Joyce Meyer.

She is very popular. In particular with books targeted towards children and women. And there's no time this evening, but she has a raft of teachings that are just against the gospel.

The problem of her being a woman preacher, that doesn't even feature in the issues I have with her. Because everything else she has is so much worse than that. So much worse. It is heresy.

[19 : 22] We then see popular, even on our island and some areas, the influence of Bethel Church. Bethel Church, who are causing and have caused many people to lose or to walk away from faith.

I've got several of my own friends. I've got involved with their group and a church who promotes them up here. They'll basically teach, in short, that Jesus, if you love Jesus, he will look after you.

And if you have enough faith, you'll have an easy life. They say it better than that, and they're far more smart than that. But in short, if you love Jesus good enough, he'll be good to you.

If you trust him well enough, he'll look after you. You won't fall away. You won't have any hard times. In fact, if you really believe in him, if you're sick, and you really worship him well, he will heal you.

What happens then, when mam dies? What happens when cancer appears? It's my own friend group I think about just now. What happens when marriages break down?

[20 : 34] When mental health hits? I say, well, we were taught by this church that Jesus wouldn't let this happen to us. Therefore, Jesus has abandoned us. Therefore, Jesus has failed us.

And they're not wrong. The Jesus of Bethel has failed them. The Jesus of Bethel church has abandoned them. Because it wasn't the real Jesus to begin with. And we see destruction.

And my own friend group, five, six, but one's come back to the walk again. But five who've had their faith destroyed as it stands. Because of faith teachings.

T.D. Jakes. Rick Warren. I'll throw it in here. I'm careful saying this. There's a book that was very popular. Up here too. I saw a few people.

Not on Tolstice. This was years ago. But a lot of people had them in their shelves. It was Jesus Calling by Sarah Young. Sarah Young. I'm not calling her a false teacher.

[21 : 30] I'm just saying the book she wrote is false. And that's a chat for a different day. But essentially she claims to have basically heard from Jesus. And she adds to the scripture by what she writes.

Now that's six, seven names of hundreds. All to say, be aware. Be on the alert. And see everything you're taking in.

Both my sermons and external sermons and other books. Test it all against scripture. Test it all against what God has given us.

And see how it stacks up. They follow. Verse 19. By following these individuals.

By following false teachers. We see divisions. They cause divisions. And ultimately. No matter how holy they make themselves.

[22 : 31] Look or sound. As Jude very clearly writes. Through the inspiration of the spirit. They are worldly people. And the damning phrase there.

They are devoid of the spirit. They look spirit filled. They sound spirit filled. They act spirit filled. They might even believe they are spirit filled. But they are devoid of the spirit.

So that's the enemy. What then are the tactics to guard against. To work through the attacks of false teachers. Well Jude changes tone then.

In verse 20. Down to the end. Down to verse 23. But you. Verse 20. Beloved. But you. Beloved. A contrast here isn't there.

A contrast between. The false teachers. He's been talking so much about. He goes. All that aside. All that being said. Brothers and sisters. You. Beloved children. You. Beloved children. Of our God.

[23 : 30] I turn back to you. And I say to you. He's clear here. The separation. But yes. They are powerful. And they're false teachings.

And yes. They are attacking. And engaging with you. But you are not them. You are separate to them. And again. He uses that title for them. That glorious title.

We see again in verse 3. He repeated for us once more. Beloved. Beloved. Not just beloved to John. Although we know. Jude sorry. I'm sure Jude did love them.

But they are beloved. More importantly of course. Of God. Brothers and sisters. As you face perhaps. In discussion with family members. And friends. And neighbours. Even our village.

As you see the effects. Of false teaching. As you see false teaching attack. Our own church. Perhaps. Remember. We are part of those.

[24 : 27] One of those. Who are called. By God. Beloved. As you battle. The enemy. As you battle.

The evil one. As you battle. His servants. You do so. As a beloved. Child. Of God. What's the instruction then. To those. Who are beloved of God.

We're told. To build. Up. Our faith. Building yourselves up. In your most holy. Faith. How do we defend. Best against false teaching.

Is it to learn. Every single point. Of say the Mormon theology. No. I mean. If you've got time. And space to do that. In your lives. Then feel free to dig into it.

Carefully. But. How do we defend. Against false teaching. How do we know. What is false. And what is true. How do we face false teaching. And say. Clearly. That you are wrong.

[25 : 22] In all what you're saying. And wrong in what you're doing. The best defence. Against false teaching. Is to be built up. In true. Teaching. To be built up.

In true. Teaching. I probably used the example before. But it's a good example. It's one that. Bob Ackroyd used. Often for us. In our theology classes.

Bob. Knows everything. About everything. Basically. And Bob's an expert. On lots of things. And Bob knows a lot. For reasons. We never actually asked him.

About how money is produced. In America. He knows. He asked Bob a question. About agriculture. And weed colour. In Ohio. He'll tell you. He just knows everything. Anyway. Talking about how money is produced.

And talking about the secret service. In America. Those who protect the president. The secret service. Is also in charge. Of the monetary system. Of guarding. And checking for fraud. In the monetary system.

[26 : 16] In America. And Bob. Told us. And it's true. We believe Bob. But Bob showed us. I should say. But there are of course. Fraud experts.

Who are there. To make sure. That every dollar bill. How do you know. A fraudulent bill. Well. There's two options. You ever study. Every single. False bill.

And see how they make. The wrong bills. And see how they make. These fake bills. Or much more simply. And this is what they do. They study. A real. Dollar bill.

And they become. So acquainted. With the actual dollar bill. The second. They're faced with another bill. That's fake. Even when it's incredibly close. They can tell straight away.

There's something off. And maybe they can't tell. Exactly why it's wrong. But in their spirit. In their brains. They know there's something wrong. With this fake one. Then they investigate.

[27 : 11] Why it's wrong. Build yourself up. In the most holy faith. In the holy faith. In other words. Brothers and sisters. Like those.

Jude's writing to. We have to know. What it is we believe. And the better we get to know. Our own gospel. The good news. The second someone comes. Of a false gospel. The second we get a whiff of that.

There's something in our hearts. In our heads. In our very being. That says. There's something off here. There's something wrong here. We build. Or are built up. In.

The faith. We must be. Quite simply. A people. Who are guided. A people. Who are. Led. By. The word.

You beloved. Build yourself up. In your most holy faith. And praying. In. The holy spirit. Unlike the false teachers. Who may well pray. It is Christians alone.

[28 : 10] Who pray. And who are unable to pray. And who are heard. By the power. By the working. Of. The spirit. Yes. The false teachers. Can pray.

Yes. The false teachers. Can preach. And pray. In great power. And great skill. But there is no. Genuine power. As Jude said.

Previously. The spirit. Isn't in them. The spirit. Is not in them. But brothers and sisters. However small. And lowly. We feel. Or we are. We pray in the spirit.

Our whole lives. Are moved. Within. The spirit. Keep. Yourself. Versus.

21. In the love. Of God. Waiting. For the mercy. Of our Lord. Jesus Christ. That leads. To eternal. Life. We are to have.

[29 : 06] A patient faith. What you are saying here is. Keep on going. Look forward. As a word. To the final day. We are here.

Instructed. To. To keep on going. Keep on going. Now. Some get confused. What it says. Keep yourselves.

In the love of God. Is it something. You know. It depends on us. To make sure. We are still. Loved by God. Is that what. Jude is saying. Of course it is not. I mean. Verse 1.

Tells us. That we are called. Beloved. And kept. Aren't we. God. God doesn't leave us. God doesn't lose us. God doesn't. Lose his love for us. What then. Does verse 21. Say to us.

What does it mean. To keep ourselves. As it were. In the love of God. To keep striving. To live in a way. That glorifies God. That honours God.

[29 : 59] Spurgeon. Gives a good example. To help us understand this. He deals with this verse. He says. The image here. It's like. A sunny day.

A sunny day. Now wherever you are. As a Christian. You are. As it were. Being hit by the rays of the sun. The sun hits us.

But sometimes. There are places. The sun shines brighter. Spurgeon says. This verse is saying. Be where the sun shines the hottest. It's like saying.

Go outside. And stand in the sun. Rather than stay in the shade. The sun is still hitting you. Even in the shade. But strive to be where it's hottest. And brightest.

Strive to serve God. As best we can. Knowing that he has us. That he keeps us. In the face of false teachers. For to say. And to act. And to live in ways.

[30 : 54] That glorify God. Above everything else. At the same time. Trusting that he will keep us. Waiting for the mercy. Of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That leads to eternal life. Waiting in other words. For that final moment. That final day. That final. Final moment.

The Lord comes. And takes us. Home to himself. And on that day. That day of mercy. There is an end. Into all false teaching. Those who repent.

And those who turn to him. Will join us in glory. Those who do not repent. Who do not turn to him. Will be cast aside. Into hell. I ever wait. False teaching ends.

And we enter into eternity. Of nothing but truth. And beauty. And perfection. Rather than rush. The last. The last. Thank you.