

Praise Builds Us Up

Printed Text • Jude 17-25

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: ANALYZE how God is able to sustain and keep us in our Christian life; feel ASSURED that God is able to sustain and keep us; and THANK God that He does sustain and keep us.

In Focus

Marcus was having a rough time. He was catching flack at work, from extended family, and among his friends. After allowing his faith to grow lax, he reaffirmed his commitment to Christ, and now it seemed that the moment he gained momentum in his walk, trouble hit. His friend Andre kept telling him he had become a drag. His siblings thought he was being sanctimonious at family gatherings when he did not want to participate in the revelry. His coworkers shunned him in the lunchroom, fearing they would get another sermon. Marcus felt as though he had hit an all-time low.

His wife, Felicia, stepped in to encourage him. “Honey, you know, I was praying for you today,” she said. “You should memorize this verse: ‘Cast your burden on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved’ (Psalm 55:22, RSV).”

Marcus took the verse with him wherever he went. When he needed encouragement, he recalled that Scripture and began to praise God because God would do what His Word promised.

As we walk this Christian journey, our faith will be tested. Today's lesson is a reminder about the power of God and how we are to remain in faith through the expression of praise unto Him.

Keep in Mind

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25, KJV)

Words You Should Know

A. Mockers (Jude 18) empaiktes (Gk.) — Scoffers; false teachers.

B. Compassion (v. 22) eleo (Gk.) — Pity, mercy.

C. Faultless (v. 24) amomos (Gk.) — Blameless.

Say It Correctly

Iscariot. is-KAR-ee-uht, is-KAIR-ee-uht

Judas. JOO-duhs

Jude. JOOD

KJV

Jude 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.
20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:
23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

NLT

Jude 1:17 But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted.
18 They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires.
19 These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them.
20 But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit,
21 and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.
22 And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.
23 Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.
24 Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault.
25 All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.

The People, Places, and Times

Jude. He was the half-brother of Jesus and was also known as Judas (not Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus). Jude was referenced in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 as a point of familiarity to the community that raised questions about Jesus being "the Christ" (the Anointed One), the promised Messiah. Along with his brothers, Jude was not persuaded initially about Jesus' deity. He sought VIP treatment, and he tried to cajole Jesus to show off to provide evidence (Matthew 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21; John 7:1–10). However, Jude and his other brothers were among those sequestered in the upper room awaiting the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit as

instructed by Jesus (Acts 1:14). Interestingly, in opening his letter, Jude does not refer to himself at all as the half-brother of Jesus; he names himself, “The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.”

False Teachers. Jude’s letter addressed a time when there were a lot of strange doctrines and heretical teachers who led people astray from the faith. This apostasy was similar to what Paul addressed in Acts 20:29–31; 1 Timothy 4:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:1–9, 13; 4:3; and the tone and manner of Peter’s message in 2 Peter 2:1–22. False teachers were dangerous because they had tasted of the heavenly gift, turned away from it, and misconstrued the truth for their own willful purposes.

Background

Scholars vary on the exact date Jude wrote his epistle (letter); it is believed that his letter was written anywhere from A.D. 50 to A.D. 80. This book of the Bible is believed to have been written after Peter’s death but before the destruction of Jerusalem, and then later circulated. It is also generally believed that Jude’s letter was not targeted to a particular church, but meant as a general epistle to warn saints about false teachers who were misleading those who were not rooted in the church. Although Jude strongly chides those would-be infiltrators of the truth, the purpose of his letter was also to encourage those who would read it to recall the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude exhorts them to stand strong in the face of opposition.

At-A-Glance

1. 1. A Warning for Believers (Jude 17–19)
2. A True Foundation for Believers (vv. 20–23)
3. A Benediction of Praise to God for Believers (vv. 24–25)

In Depth

1. A Warning for Believers (Jude 17–19)

In Jude 1–16, readers are earnestly warned to be on the lookout and contend or fight for the faith which was delivered to and received by them (v. 3), a major theme of this epistle. Recalling how in times past those who lived irreverently and with no restraint were dealt with, the writer lovingly calls attention to the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ that these times would come (Acts 20:29–31; 1 Timothy 4:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:1–9). Jude further extends this love by giving believers a sense of belonging to the family of God through the lordship of Jesus Christ (v. 17). The warning for believers is that these mockers of the truth caused confusion and division among the saints in the end time. These false teachers were “devoid of the Spirit” (v. 19, NRSV), indulgent in their own ungodly lust, and troublesome for the church of Jesus Christ.

2. A True Foundation for Believers (vv.20–23)

The foundation for believers is the love of God as displayed through His plan of salvation—the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s Cross and His imminent return. Faith in Jesus Christ alone is able to keep believers during this time of great apostasy and the heat of affliction. Jude admonishes each individual who should read or hear this letter to get a firm footing on what they believe about Jesus, knowing that their labor will not be in vain (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58). He places special emphasis on the sacredness of their faith by calling it their “most holy faith” (Jude 20). He further implores them to give the utmost attention to building this faith by

praying in the Holy Ghost as Paul instructs in Romans 8:26 and Ephesians 6:18. The Holy Spirit comforts, consoles, and keeps believers strong in the love of God.

As believers maintain focus on the love and mercies of God, they are to look to God with hope of the promised life to come with the Lord Jesus Christ, which is to sustain them in troubled times. These believers are also called upon to reassure and build up those who are wavering in the faith and help them to stand strong (see also Romans 15:1–2). They are told to strive to save others, who are wavering, by putting the fear of God in them in the hopes of bringing them back to their spiritual senses. As well, they are to hate and reprove the very appearance of evil in the flesh as they keep themselves unspotted from the world (Ephesians 5:11–13, Jude 23).

3. A Benediction of Praise to God for Believers (vv. 24–25)

Paul's use of the phrase "now unto Him" (cf. Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:20) denotes the absolute power of God, through Jesus Christ, to provide stability for believers. Jude similarly provides a strong conclusion to his letter to believers by pronouncing a blessing upon Christians in the early church. He commends them to the One who is able to keep, preserve, and sustain them from the harm of falling short or falling away (Jude 24). He further states that because of the remission of sins at His expense, Jesus is able to present them faultless and without blame in the presence of God's glory (Colossians 1:22–23). The writer ascribes to God the Father and our Savior all the glory, majesty, sovereignty, and authority due to Him forever. This praise and adulation foretells the future that is to come for the saints of God, reflected in John's revelation (Revelation 7:11–12; 19:6–8). This is the foundation of the hope we have as believers which enables us to "not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Search the Scriptures

1. What does Jude instruct readers to remember (Jude 17–18)?
2. What did Jude call on believers to do (vv. 21–23)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why is it important to know what you believe?
2. How can you be sure in your faith and grounded in what you believe?

Liberating Lesson

The Word of God gives us instruction for daily living and how to overcome obstacles and stand strong in the face of opposition. As it was at the time the book of Jude was written, the Word of God is questioned and misinterpreted today to suit the fancy of the carnal mind. As well, in the spirit of political correctness, our country has fallen away from the rudiments of the guiding principles which make us a blessed nation by failing to honor and revere God's authority and rulership. The Word of God calls Christians to uphold the standard of holiness and to win back those who are lost by walking in God's love and mercy.

Application for Activation

Think about how you can ascribe to God the glory, honor, and power due Him in your everyday life. Determine to live a life that is free from selfish ambition and interest, and inquire of God what He would have you do for His kingdom. Seek to strengthen your relationship with God through prayer and praise. As you place the will of the Lord above all else, worship will be simple, as He will begin to show you great and marvelous things.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Jude 17-25

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

In this verse, the conjunction “but” opposes the recommended attitude to the behavior of the heretics denounced in verse 16. Jude urges the readers to “call to mind” the things announced by the apostles about the “mockers.” It is important for believers to cultivate the habit of going back to the Word or the apostolic teaching.

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

In the use of the imperfect tense (which represents an action as continued, repeated, or habitual), the word “told” (Gk. *lego*, LEG-o) stresses the repeated nature of the apostolic warnings. (See warnings like Paul’s in Acts 20:29–30; 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:1, and Peter’s in 2 Peter 2:1–3; 3:3–4.) Jude is referring to a specific subject in the apostolic teaching: the prophecies about the “last time” or “end time.” The Greek word *asebeo* (as-eb-EH-o) means “impiety” or “ungodly,” and it can translate as “desires for lusts” or “evil things.” The false teachers’ desires are ungodly.

The expression “in the last time” is equivalent to “in the last days” (see 2 Timothy 3:1; James 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3). The existence of the mockers is thus proof that the last days are near (see Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, 9; 2 Timothy 4:1). In the New Testament, the period of the last days is both future (2 Timothy 3:1) and present (1 Peter 1:20; Hebrews 1:2). It is partly realized through the coming of Jesus and partly awaiting consummation. The prediction about the things to come includes present fulfillment and prolongation into a future date which cannot be set.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Jude uses contemptuously the word houtos (HOO-tos), which means “these.” He sets it in contrast with “but you, beloved” in verse 20 (see vv. 12, 16, and 17). Then he goes on to describe the impious. They are called “they who separate themselves,” meaning that they create division or make a distinction between themselves and other people. They see themselves as superior. They are arrogant and controlled by their own natural desires (Romans 16:17; Galatians 5:20). They claim to be spiritual, but they do not have the Spirit. The Greek psuchikos (psoo-khee-KOS) means “sensual” or “natural,” and it is the antithesis of pneumatikos (pnyoo-mat-ik-OCE), meaning “spiritual” (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:13–15; 15:44–46). The description of the impious people confirms that in them the apostolic predictions are fulfilled.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

These two verses constitute one long phrase. The main verb of the phrase is “keep” (Gk. tereo, tay-REH-o). It is in the imperative voice. It is surrounded by participles, two in front (“building” and “praying”) and one after (“looking”). Thus, the main point of the exhortation is the relationship of the believer with the love of God (Gk. agape theos, ag-AH-pay THEH-os). Here, the readers are urged to stay within the sphere of God’s love. It was God’s love which drew them to Himself (see v. 1). They must abide in that love. We abide in His love by keeping His commands (John 15:9–10).

For the second time, Jude calls the readers “beloved” (Gk. agapetos, ag-ap-ay-TOS), and on each occasion it is in contrast to the false teachers (see v. 17). With this expression, he shows a genuine deep affection for the readers. He gives them instruction on Christian life. If it is followed, the instruction he gives will preserve them from contamination by the heretics.

The readers are instructed to build themselves up in the apostolic teaching (cf. Acts 2:42; 20:32). The use of the present participle “building up” (Gk. epoikodomeo, ep-oy-kodom-EH-o) suggests that the edification is not limited to being inserted in the construction. It needs the will to remain and do the given task. Building up is a continual process. Believers must study the Scriptures continually if they are to grow in the faith and abide in God’s love (cf. Hebrews 5:12; 2 Timothy 2:15). The “most holy faith” is a reference to the Scriptures, the Christian revelation handed down by the apostles (as in verse 3; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Two groups of people are mentioned here. The first group is those whose faith is wavering (Gk. diakrino, dee-ak-REE-no, meaning “be of two minds,” “doubt,” or “waver”). The readers must show compassion to them. Showing compassion is not a passive attitude. True love tries the impossible: to pull the undecided out of the fire of judgment that is awaiting the lost. Compare Amos 4:11 and Zechariah 3:2; fire is the figure of judgment in Matthew 13:42, 50; 18:8; Revelation 19:20. Many different ways must be found to persuade them. The expression in Jude 23, “pulling them out of fire,” denotes urgency.

The second group includes the heretics. They are not at a hesitation stage; they are being pulled away by the stream of apostasy. The readers must exercise great care while getting alongside them, lest they themselves become “spotted” (Gk. spiloo, spee-LO-o), which means “defiled” or “polluted” (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1). They are to love the sinners and hate their sin (cf. Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Titus 3:10; 1 John 2:10–11).

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

Jude ends his exhortation with heartfelt adoration to the One who is able to keep the believers from falling. We have here the announcement of the great victory and the great assurance of the redeemed. God has the “power” (Gk. dunamai, DOO-nam-ahee), which means to “be able.” The phrase “to keep from falling” (Gk. aptaistos, ap-TAH-ee-stos) means “stop from stumbling” (cf. 1 Peter 1:5); it has the same root as the verb “fall” in 2 Peter 1:10. Believers are not left without help. God can guard them so that they do not stumble. He will make them stand before His glory. We will stand “faultless” (Gk. amomos, AM-o-mos, see also Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; cf. 1 Peter 1:19) and “in jubilation” (Gk. agalliasis, ag-al-LEE-as-is) because we are in Christ.

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Doxologies (words of honor, praises) are usually addressed to God in order to give Him “glory” (Gk. doxa, DOX-ah), which refers to “the brilliance of God’s being,” which is what He reveals of His perfection. The word “majesty” (Gk. megalosune, meg-al-o-SOO-nay), “dominion” (Gk. kratos, KRAT-os), and “might” (Gk. exousia, ex-oo-SEE-ah) are aspects of His glory. To God alone belongs the glory! He is the only God.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Revelation 22:14-17

TUESDAY

Psalms 90

WEDNESDAY

2 Peter 3:8-10

THURSDAY

2 Peter 3:11-15, 17-18

FRIDAY

Luke 9:28-36

SATURDAY

2 Peter 1:16-21

SUNDAY

2 Peter 1:1-15