

**Message #6****Jude 1:17-23**

One of the movies that is always shown around Christmas time is the movie “It’s A Wonderful Life.” It is one movie worth watching. There is a point in the movie in which an angel permits Jimmy Stewart to see what life would have been like if he hadn’t existed. The point of it was to show he made a difference.

This book of Jude is designed to communicate to us that we need to make a difference. In fact, his point in writing this little epistle was to get believers to make a difference by contending for the faith in a religious world that is filled with ungodly, immoral religious people who are unsaved. As Jude begins to think about ending his epistle, he wants to carefully instruct the “beloved” as to how to cope in this kind of world.

One thing that is interesting to observe is that Jude is only 25 verses long. But Jude keeps using the noun “beloved” four different times (v. 1, 3, 17, 20). Why is that? It is because of the content of the epistle.

Jude has written a scathing letter that exposes and condemns false religious teachers and leaders. But he wanted God’s people to realize that they are not in that classification. They are loved by God. They sit in direct contrast to those who creep into the church who are heading to condemnation.

Jude has blasted these guys ever since **verse 4**. He wanted God’s people to contend for the faith against these shameful and disgraceful religious men. However, in spite of the phony corrupt men who are sneaking around in their shameful and disgraceful sin.

**IN CONTRAST TO THE MANY FALSE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND TEACHERS, GOD’S BELOVED PEOPLE NEED TO STAY FOCUSED ON UNDERSTANDING THE INSPIRED WORDS OF THE WORD OF GOD, THEY NEED TO STAY FOCUSED ON PRAYER AND WITNESSING AS THEY WAIT FOR THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST.**

Verse 17 opens with a strong contrasting statement “but you.” In contrast to the ungodly people who manifest all of those ungodly traits, God has special information for the “beloved.” Jude has warned the church about the characteristics of the false teachers; but in sharp contrast to them, God’s people are to have a godly character and godly focus. There are certain remembrances the beloved are to have which are necessary for a godly life:

**GODLY REMEMBRANCE #1** – God’s people need to remember Apostolic teaching. **1:17**

If one carefully thinks about this verse, one must conclude that a dispensational approach to Scripture is the method of interpretation that Jude used and the only method of interpretation he wanted the church to use.

Why didn't Jude say I want you to remember the O.T. prophet? Why didn't Jude say remember the O.T. Law? The reason is because the Church Age is an age focused on apostolic instruction. The obvious implication of this statement is if we forget about apostolic teaching, we can quickly spiritually deteriorate.

A focus on the O.T. Law will never produce a God-honoring spirituality. Jude was very much aware of this fact.

In order to have a true spirituality, we must focus on apostolic instruction. It is clear from going through this epistle that two key apostles who Jude really came to grasp was the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul. The Apostle John was still alive at this point, but had not penned his gospel, his letters or Revelation. Although Jude would have certainly known of John's teaching and embraced it. Jude came to understand the importance of apostolic teaching for the Age of Grace.

We may remember that originally Jude wanted to write on the subject of our "common salvation" (1:3) and he would have been seriously researching the writings of Paul to do that. We also know there are many similar quotes to Peter in this epistle.

So Jude, who at one time was dedicated to O.T. Law and was not a believer in Jesus Christ, had come to faith in Christ and he came to the place where he embraced apostolic instruction and he recognized its value.

**Now notice specifically what God's people need to remember: "the words" (τῶν ῥημάτων).** Now this is not the normal word used for "words." This particular Greek word seems to emphasize the fact that we are to remember the words and the way they are used in their context so that we may have a real spirituality.

I think this is very significant. What this teaches us is that it is not just remembering Bible words that develops us, it is understanding those Bible words in the sentences and contexts in which they are written.

So the mandate of Jude here is to carefully, grammatically and accurately understand the written words in the context in which the apostles wrote them. **So in Jude's mind, the words were inspired by God.**

There are some who believe that the concepts of the Bible are really what is important. We would actually agree with this, but the concepts of the Bible are developed by words and what truly is important are those words.

J. Vernon McGee said that he believed that this challenge meant that God wants us to carefully study the words of all 66 books of the Bible and not just a few favorite passages. Studying the whole council of God, every book of Scripture, is what will make us strong.

Not long ago, someone fired a couple of verses at me which he said were from the Gospel of John, but actually they are from Matthew. One of the verses was we shall love our neighbor as ourselves. Well, that is a great verse that was spoken by Jesus Christ specifically to the Pharisees who hated Him and wanted to kill Him (Matt. 22:34-39). The problem with this is no one has ever done it, which was exactly Christ's point in using it. Jesus is not using this verse so His people can have a warm fuzzy feeling about their neighbors, He is using it to show religious people they have not even come close to measuring up to the righteousness of God. So the person who actually thinks that he is walking around loving his neighbor as himself needs to honestly ask himself a few simple questions. Have you ever gone out and bought your neighbor a new car or house? When you go to the grocery store, do you check your neighbor's stock pile of food and buy them everything they need? When your neighbor's water heater goes out, do you contact a mechanical company and pay to have a man go in and fix it or replace it? Do you pay the deductibles for your neighbor's prescriptions? The fact is Jesus used that verse to show that no one has measured up to the righteousness of God.

You see it is not just knowing a few Biblical words or Bible verses; it is understanding what those words and verses actually mean that matters and that is exactly Jude's point. It was especially important to analyze things in view of apostolic teaching, which is precisely what this verse says.

**REMEMBRANCE #2** – God's people need to remember that the apostles taught that as the Church nears its end, more and more false ministers will surface.  
**1:18-19**

The prepositional phrase "in the last time" uses an interesting pronoun "in" (ἐν) with a genitive case "last time." This particular construction emphasizes coming in contact with something. In this case it is coming in contact with the final time. So what I would understand this to mean is that **as we are coming in contact with the last moments of the apostolic Grace Age, we are going to see more and more of these false religious leaders surface** (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 106).

Now there are five more descriptions Jude gives us of these men:

**Description #1** - They are mockers . **1:18a**

The word "mock" is one that really means to make fun of something as a child would mock something. So what we may expect to see as we near the end of the Church Age is more and more religious leaders who will actually be mocking the truth of God's Word and God's doctrine. They will make mockery of reverent worship that is devoted to truth.

**Description #2** - They follow their own ungodly lusts . **1:18b**

These are irreverent men who are led by godless lusts. The participle "following" is telling. It is a present tense which means these men continually go after irreverent, immoral lustful things.

They continually pursue godless things. They are irreverent and profane. They are given to ungodly desires and behavior. They are like “dogs in heat.”

**Description #3** - They cause divisions. **1:19a**

This is a very intriguing word. This word seems to suggest that they separate themselves from things that are reverent and godly. In fact, the Greek word “divisions” (αποδοριζω) is very rare. If we carefully dissect the word into three parts (απο διο ριζω) it appears to me that what these types of men actually do is they cause divisions by moving away from the roots of sound doctrine and reverent worship and actually pursue things that are contrary to what is true and right (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 49, 119, 397). In other words, these kinds of men move away from true Bible exposition and apostolic instruction.

They actually affect people in that they cause them to move away from true, reverent, God-honoring worship.

**Description #4** - They are worldly minded. **1:19b**

The actual color of this word “worldly minded” (ψυχικοι) is a word that means that these men are totally given to their natural, sensual, animal, worldly instincts. Nothing about them is truly or really spiritual. Their soul is not in tune with God, but they are devoted to this satanic world.

**Description #5** - They are devoid of the Spirit. **1:19c**

Here it is plain and simple; these men do not have the Spirit of God. The present tense of the word “not having” means they are in a continual state of never having the Spirit of God. They are continually unsaved. They have never had a true relationship with Jesus Christ even though they are very religious. They are in a continual state of being lost.

The truth is the existence of these phony religious leaders is an eschatological evidence that we are nearing the end, because the apostles predicted more and more of these guys would surface.

**REMEMBRANCE #3** – God’s people need to keep themselves in the love of God. **1:20-23**

We cannot ever lose our salvation, but we can lose our love status. The challenge here is to keep ourselves on a Biblical course of righteousness so we are always loved by God at the highest possible level. God does not love it when His people sin. God does not love it when His people are pursuing worldliness. God does not love it if His people are irreverent or immoral. But He does love it when He sees His people loving Him and His precious Word.

We may illustrate this in a marriage. You cannot possibly be loved by your mate at the highest level if you are being unfaithful to your mate. There is no way. You will have a breach in your relationship. The same is true with God.

Years ago, a minister was upset with me because I taught that it was possible to be a believer and actually be in such a relationship with God that He loves you at the highest level and it was also possible to be a believer and be in a relationship with God in which He does not love us at the highest level. He said he didn't think that was right and I said that is what the Word of God teaches, and, in fact it teaches it right here.

The fact is when we move away from God and His Word, we move away from His greatest level of love for us because we put barriers between us and God.

False religious teachers will tell you that you are always loved by God no matter what you do. That is not true. We need to carefully think about what we do, where we go, what we say at all times because we can be in a relationship with God in which He loves us or is angry at us.

**Ingredient #1** - Continually build ourselves up in a sanctified and holy faith. **1:20a**

True faith is a faith that strives to be set apart in holiness. Holy faith must be built. It is not an automatic. We need to work at constructing a faith that is truly set apart in a way that honors the Lord. To do this, we must understand God's Word and seek to apply it to our lives. By faith we obey the Scriptures and that builds our faith.

**Ingredient #2** - Continually pray by means of the Holy Spirit. **1:20b**

Now as we saw in our study of the doctrine of prayer, there are many different words used for prayer. The word used here (προσευχομαι) is the one that emphasizes moving into the presence of God through prayer. Now in order to do that, in this dispensation we need the Holy Spirit.

When Paul addressed this subject of praying by means of the Holy Spirit, he specifically speaks of praying by careful use of our minds (I Cor. 14:15-16; Eph. 6:18). So praying by means of the Holy Spirit means we are to give careful thought to what we are praying as we go into the presence of God.

So here is the point; the false religious leaders are devoid of the Spirit and don't have the Spirit and therefore their praying, like speaking in tongues, is truly not of God.

But we who know the Lord have the privilege of thoughtfully moving into the presence of God and communicating with God by means of the Spirit of God that indwells each of us.

**Ingredient #3** - Continually wait for the coming of Jesus Christ. **1:21**

We are to live our lives with an "eschatological hope." I am of the opinion that since Jude names Enoch in **verse 14**, he clearly believed in the Rapture of the Church. So the challenge of this verse is that we should continually be anxiously waiting for the Rapture and we should be focused on the grace and mercy of God in this blessed event. So we should see the Rapture as a blessed, merciful event in which the Lord Jesus Christ comes to retrieve us.

**Ingredient #4** - Continually witness to others. **1:22-23**

Now this challenge is given in the backdrop of a religious world filled with a bunch of false religious men. We have the responsibility to communicate truth in this kind of world.

What is actually described here is a Spirit-led witnessing that is able to determine exactly what needs to be communicated in any given situation. Now there are three seeming groups of people that are described here and each uses the pronoun “some.” I understand this to be referring to three separate groups who need to hear truth:

**(Group #1)** - Some who doubt need to hear of the mercy of God. **1:22**

One of the key themes of Christianity is the mercy and grace of God. Jude drops this word into this context some three times (v. **21, 22, 23**). God’s people need to understand grace. **They need to hear about grace and mercy.**

According to **verse 22**, doubters need to hear about the mercy of God. Now the word “doubt” refers to one who does not have a discerning, discriminate mind. This kind of person offers arguments but is truly searching for truth. This kind of person needs to have a clear presentation concerning the grace of God. They need to know that there is a merciful God who designed an amazing salvific plan whereby people may be saved. They need to know about the forgiveness and mercy of God. They need it explained. Doubters need to grasp apostolic grace and if they do, they will realize that their connection to God is not based on them, it is based on God.

**(Group #2)** - Some need to hear about the eternal fire of God. **1:23a**

Hell is a real place. It is a real threat to any person who has not believed on Jesus Christ. If a person thinks that God’s grace and mercy is okay with sin, they need to be snatched from the furnace of fire to which they are heading. You cannot have God’s Spirit in you and actually believe that God is okay with sin. God’s grace will save you from any sin, but it will never promote a mindset that your sin is okay.

**(Group #3)** - Some need to hear about the mercy of God in a context of fear. **1:23b**

God’s grace and mercy is not one of total toleration and promotion of sin. In fact, the more you understand of grace, you will hate any sinful flesh pollution in your own life. This is what God’s grace does; it causes us to hate flesh pollution in ourselves. In other words, some need to hear about the need to reverence God and God’s mercy demands that.

We are to be people who contend for the faith and we do it by careful study, by prayer and by witnessing.