

The Command to Persevere – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Jude commands the church to persevere in the face of false teachers in true faith
2. aim – to cause us to persevere by building up our faith and helping others to do the same
3. passage – Jude 17-23

b. outline

1. The Reality of Scoffers (Jude 17-19)
2. The Command to Persevere (Jude 20-21)
3. The Need to Help Others (Jude 22-23)

c. opening

1. the call to *jury duty*
 - a. I am looking forward to it ... and grateful it isn't the Chauvin trial in Minneapolis!
 - b. jury = a group designed to sift through information to find truth, and then to render that truth into a conclusion (*i.e.* a verdict) that creates an outcome for the participants in the trial
 - c. we come now to the “verdict” of Jude – *i.e.* what *outcome* does Jude expect as his audience reads the letter, sifts through the truths he brings out, and applies the conclusion to their lives?
2. the command to *persevere*
 - a. the letter of Jude shows a realistic *indicative-imperative* structure
 1. *e.g.* like **Romans** – chaps. 1-11 as indicatives (truths); chaps. 12-16 as imperatives
 - b. the indicatives (truths) are presented in **vv. 3-16**, the imperatives (commands) now follow: what are we *commanded to do* now that we know *will* be happening around us?
 - c. **remember**: Jude had indicated at the outset (**v. 3**) that he had *intended* to write a letter about some element of our “*common salvation*” ...
 - d. **instead**: he “*found it necessary*” to write of the need to “*contend*” for the faith – the truths he brings are *negative* (or pejorative) rather than *positive* statements of some aspect of the gospel
 1. instead of discussing some positive aspect of Christianity (*e.g.* justification, Christology) ...
 2. he writes of “*certain people*” having “*crept*” into the church, bringing condemnation upon themselves, “*perverting*” the gospel from a message of salvation from sin/death to a message of “*sensuality*” (pleasure), even denying Jesus as Lord (**his thesis; v. 4**)
 - e. so, what does it mean for the church to “*contend for the faith?*”
 1. **aspect #1**: to contend for the faith is to *know what we believe and why we believe it*
 - a. *i.e.* the *personal aspect* of contending is to “fight” to *know* what the gospel truly is
 - b. Jude suggests that this *was* going to be his point in writing (**see above, but now ...**)
 2. **aspect #2**: to contend for the faith is to *fight for orthodoxy in all believers* (and before the world)
 - a. *i.e.* the *communal aspect* of contending is to “fight” against false teachings that creep in
 - b. Jude made *this* his point because he was seriously concerned about it in the church
 3. **aspect #3**: to contend for the faith is to *live out that faith in a world trying to drive it out of us*
 - a. *i.e.* the *continuing aspect* of contending is to “fight” to live the *ramifications* of that faith
 - b. **Jude will now make *this* the primary imperative of the letter: a command to *persevere* in the true faith (and to help others) – to *persevere* in the faith we have received**

I. The Reality of Scoffers (Jude 17-19)

Content

a. the predictions of the apostles (v. 17)

1. “*but you must remember*” = Jude *starts* by pointing out a reality that makes this imperative necessary
 - a. *i.e.* a *reminder* of something they have *already heard* and how they need to take that reminder *into consideration* as they move forward ...
2. “*the predictions of the apostles*” = the *warnings* issued by those who “delivered” the faith
 - a. “*predictions*” = something told beforehand; something already said; something foretold
 1. **not**: a guess, or a “prediction” in the sense of believing something “might” happen (**a forecast**)
 2. **rather**: a statement of *fact*, something “prophesied” in the sense of being *absolutely sure*

- b. “apostles” = messengers; ambassadors; the first men who defined, proclaimed, and defended the substance of the gospel; the men *specifically* set aside by Christ to begin his church
 1. **note:** the “*faith once delivered to the saints*” was delivered by the apostles – orthodox Christianity holds that the *fullness* of the gospel was revealed by the apostles as they were carried along by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21 cf. John 16:13)
 - a. **i.e.** “red letter” Christianity is *heterodox* – to assume that *only the words of Jesus* are the gospel is to overlook the work of the Spirit to complete the work of Christ, as he himself said
 - b. **i.e.** even Peter “reminds” his audience (with a similar statement; 2 Peter 3:2) to remember the predictions of the apostles, and then closes ascribing Scriptural authority to Paul’s letters
 2. **IOW:** the apostles who originally delivered the message of Christ to the world *also warned the church* that some would come to *pervert* that gospel
 - a. **e.g.** most (all?) of Paul’s letters contain specific warnings about the perversion of the gospel
 - b. **e.g.** Galatians is probably the most *obvious* of these warnings from Paul
 3. **IMO:** Jude would *undoubtedly* agree that this warning *also came from Jesus originally*
 - a. **e.g.** the Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:24ff) = the church would have within its midst both true disciples and false disciples, but he would separate them in the end
 3. **Jude begins this “application” section by appealing to the message of the apostles** – turning his audience back to the **substance** of the “*faith once delivered*” and its inherent *warning* ...
- b. the warning of the apostles (vv. 18-19)**
1. **note:** v. 18 could be an *actual quotation* from an apostle (**i.e.** quoting Peter’s similar statement in 2 Peter 3:3), or it could be a *paraphrase* of an apostolic *concept* gleaned from them (**e.g.** a paraphrase of Paul’s statement of Acts 13:40f where he speaks of the scoffers of Habakkuk’s teachings)
 - a. **i.e.** the quotation marks in the ESV are not original (**no punctuation in the original MSS**)
 2. “*in the last times*” = the period of time that “ends” the history of the world (unlike previous times)
 - a. this phrase conjures up the *eschatological* idea of the time just before the return of Christ
 1. as in “*the day of the Lord*” (2 Peter 3:10) – that moment when Christ returns to his world
 - b. however, here, it more *likely* refers to the entirety of the *church age* (**i.e.** the *last* age of the world)
 1. every generation of the church has *anticipated* the return of Christ (**e.g.** Thessalonians)
 2. every generation of the church has *experienced* forms of tribulation (**i.e.** persecution)
 3. every generation of the church has had to fight to keep the gospel pure (**e.g.** against Arianism)
 - c. **IOW:** the last times is *the time we live in, as have all previous generations of believers*
 1. **the warning is given to all who are a part of the church, from Pentecost to the Parousia**
 3. “*there will be scoffers*” = there will always be those who scoff at the Christian faith *inside the church*
 - a. “*scoffer*” = a mocker; someone who jeers; someone who is derisive or scornful of others
 1. **e.g.** the rulers scoffing at Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:35): “*he saved others, let him save himself*” – the *ridicule* of the idea that Jesus was who he said he was (**by his signs**)
 2. **i.e.** somewhat who mocks an idea because they don’t want to believe it (**e.g.** you don’t honestly believe this “Christian” stuff, do you? only fools would believe such things or live like that!)
 3. **note:** given the context of the letter as a whole, Jude is *clearly* referring to scoffers *inside the church* – those who **scoff at the gospel from inside the church** (in clandestine ways)
 - a. **e.g.** you don’t need to believe that Jesus *actually* rose from the dead to be a Christian
 - b. **e.g.** the gospel is not about the forgiveness of sin – social justice is the gospel
 - c. **e.g.** you don’t need holiness to get to heaven – just being a good person is enough
 - d. **i.e.** they *scoff* at the idea that God gets to set the “standards” of behavior – that God gets to define the very essence of Christianity
 4. “*following their own ungodly passions*” = satisfying their own immoral physical appetites
 - a. the point of vv. 4, 7, 8, 12, 15, 16 – people who want you to believe that embracing the gospel of Jesus “frees” you (in some way) to enjoy every kind of carnal delight *in this world*
 - b. they *scoff* at the **core** of discipleship, discipline, obedience, submission, holiness, etc. (v. 19)
 1. they “*cause divisions*” = they work to create *factions* in the church, with each division pursuing a *different goal* in the life of the body (**e.g.** the *programmatically* church)
 2. they are “*worldly people*” = they are more concerned about *temporal* matters than they are about serving Christ (**e.g.** the “big church” mentality)
 3. they are “*devoid of the Spirit*” = they are **either:**
 - a. unregenerate – not having been regenerated to begin with (**i.e.** still reprobate), or
 - b. unwilling to submit to the power of the Spirit – not realizing that the *primary* work of the Spirit of God in the believer is to *transform* him or her into the image of Christ Jesus
 - c. **i.e.** embracing *moralistic, therapeutic, deism* = the gospel is all about “being good”, about “feeling good”, and God is not *intimately* involved (unless needed)

c. the intention of the apostles (as applied by Jude)

1. **application #1: you have been warned ...**
 - a. Jude begins his “application” section by reminding his readers (including us!) that the apostles warned of these “scoffers” coming into the church and questioning everything
2. **application #2: don’t be naïve ...**
 - a. **IOW:** don’t think it can’t happen *here* ... **e.g.** every church I have been involved with in a leadership capacity has had *someone* in it who has insisted that the preaching needs to be more “relevant” and “accessible” – which is “code language” for *watering down the message*
 - b. **IOW:** don’t think it can’t happen *to you* ... **i.e.** every Christian is subject to the cultural pressures around them – **e.g.** a constant diet of social media *will* change your worldview