

The Other Brother: Jude 1-2
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Sunday, April 23, 2017

Let's open our Bibles to Jude. It's an easy book to find if you know where Revelation is. It's not an easy book to find if you're just looking for Jude. You only get a one-page shot at it. It's only 25 verses, no chapters. If you go to Revelation chapter 1 and look back a page, you're right on it. It's a great privilege for me today like every Sunday to invite you to open your Bibles. I know that takes a lot of different forms in these days; it can be electronic; it can be paper. As long as I can hold out, I'll only use a paper copy. I just like the sound of it. Call me old school, but it's hard for me to write on my screen. I have a hard time getting my ink pen to work on my screen. But I want today for us to go to this letter of Jude, this book of Jude.

What a joy it is to be able to explain God's word, to be able to apply God's word to our everyday life, and then pray that the Holy Spirit will transform our lives. Don't be mistaken, every Sunday when we meet to open God's word the goal is that the spirit of God would take the word of God and transform the people of God, that God would work in our hearts both individually and corporately to make us the people that He wants us to be and to make us the church that He's designed us to be. And He does it through His living, active word applied to our life and us being obedient to whatever He says in it. So today we're going to His word and we're looking for an opportunity to change. We're looking for an opportunity to be more like Jesus after we've spent time in His word, and I am praying that the Holy Spirit would be free to work in every one of our lives in this room today.

I love preaching through books of the Bible. Today when we start Jude, we have- Lord willing- the opportunity to finish these weeks in Jude, and it will be 38 books of the Bible that I've preached through. Most of those have been with you here; some of those have been in Cleveland, Tennessee when pastoring there at Macedonia Baptist. Some people called Jude the most neglected book of the Bible, and with this being the 38th book that I've preached through, I don't have much room to argue when it comes to neglecting it. But it's my strong conviction that God knows when we need it. In our world and our community and our culture -perhaps in our church- God is saying, "I need you to hear the message of Jude in these days for this time in our world." The key word in the book of Jude is the word "contend." If you had to shrink these words down- these 25 verses down to one word- it would be the word "contend." And it's Jude saying that we must as followers of Christ, as servants of Christ, contend for our faith. We must fight for the truth; we must stand for what this true gospel is that has been passed down to us from the very beginning. He's speaking with great passion and great urgency that the gospel and our faith- the good news of Jesus- would not be changed, that it would not be watered down, that it would not be manipulated into something that it was never meant to be.

The book of Jude can be read in less than five minutes; it's 25 verses. When you come

to this letter, you see that Jude sounds both the heart and the trumpet. He comforts us in his words with our position in Christ, but he also calls us to a position to battle for our faith. It's harp and trumpet. Jude speaks to us with tenderness, and he speaks to us with strength. It is a letter of faith and a letter of force. It is a letter of grace, and it is a letter of judgment. It is a letter of God's sovereignty, but also a letter of human responsibility. It is a letter with wild illustrations, but it is a letter also with wonderful praise. When we read these 25 verses, one of the great riches of it is that it gives us the opportunity to look at it much closer than perhaps if we were taking a journey through Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel or even a gospel. We can slow down just a little bit and take some verses together and really dive into it and try to grasp what Jude was saying to us. With this idea of how Jude writes, let's look at verse one:

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own

sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever.

And all God's people said? Amen.

Rob, help me out right there. Can you throw me that basketball? Amen. That's a good strong pass, you 'bout knocked my glasses off, brother. We hadn't practiced; we'll work on that ahead of time next time. I love basketball. If you love basketball, just say "amen." (Gosh, that was weak!) In basketball, one of the most fundamental lessons you learn from the very beginning, from day one, is a position for basketball. There is a position that every person that's ever coached, every person that's ever played- knows this position. And it's so important when you're on offense to understand what is called the what? Say it out loud; you got it-the triple threat position. There are a few players in the room. The triple threat position- you're on offense, you break it down, you've got knees bent, you've got the ball right here in your hand, and before you dribble, you're in triple threat position, because you've got three things that you can do to attack the defense and score. You can shoot from here, you can pass from here, and you can dribble from here. You've got three options. And so the defense is standing there trying to stop you from scoring, but you're in a position. You're in a triple threat position to move the ball, to score the ball, to pass the ball, dribble the ball.

Well look, today when we talk about the book of Jude, I want you to understand there is a battle we're in; there is a game. I don't mean that frivolously, but I mean there's a competition that we're in. There is an engagement that we're in, and the critical piece before we ever understand even what the contention is over, is for us as believers to be in the right position. I want to show you just in the first two verses of the letter of Jude a triple threat position for us as a believer. If we are going to be able to contend for the faith, there's a three-word position that describes where

we've got to be to win. Our faith is constantly under attack. Many of you in this room can remember a day in your junior high or middle school years where some teacher stood before you, and in that class they said to you, "This is why you cannot believe that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be." Several of you have sat in a university classroom or college classroom, and you had a professor say to you early in those days of your semester, "This is why you cannot believe the Bible. This is why you cannot trust Jesus. This is why Jesus can't be the only way to heaven."

Some of you have had the experience of sitting down in front of your television and listening to someone who claimed to be speaking from a church, who claimed to be speaking as a voice from God. And as you listened to them and you began to hear what they were teaching and hear what they were saying, it caused your head to turn just a little bit to make sure you were hearing what you think you were hearing. And there's a check in your spirit where you're saying to yourself, "Now wait a minute. Something about what they just said doesn't sound like what I read in my Bible. Something about what I just heard doesn't sound like the reason that Jesus Christ died on the cross." We live every day in a place where our faith is attacked, and Jude writes with a sense of urgency, with a sense of emergency. He says, "I was going to talk to you about the common ground that we have in our salvation, but instead I've got to address the fact that our faith that was once and for all handed to the saints needs to be fought for. The truth needs to be contended for." But before we get to what the false teachers are doing, before we get to what the contention is, before we get to what the judgment is- if you go that route- in these very first two verses there's a position for us to take.

Submission, security, and strength- every day- whether we're walking into a classroom, we're walking into a workplace; we're walking into a reading room or a conversation. The position that Jude lays out for us to walk into that battle is one of submission, security, and strength. First is submission. In verse one: "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." What you have in that single statement where three names are mentioned is an identification of the kind of heart that Jude has. Jude is acknowledging in that simple phrase that he's under authority, that he is submitted to Jesus Christ. Why is that so significant? It's very significant because of who Jude is. I can't go into all the reasons here, but just standing on years and years and years of research, what you find out about Jude- the author of this book- is that Jude is the brother of Jesus. He's the brother of James, who is also the brother of Jesus. Jude is translated and is from a Greek Word, and in other passages of the New Testament when it's in its full form, it's the word "Judas." This seems to be that Jude as the brother of Jesus shortens his name and identifies himself as Jude so it would not be confused, but he's identified as a brother of Jesus by the name of Judas in the Gospels.

I think you're probably aware that that Jesus had brothers. He was firstborn; He was born of a virgin, but after Mary gave birth to Jesus, accounts of Scripture tell us that Jesus had both brothers and sisters. Look in the Gospel of Mark. Mark chapter 6- it's

kind of an obscure verse; it's one of those verses that you win trivia games with. Can you name the brothers of Jesus? Jesus had brothers? There are names to those brothers? Right here in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, Jesus is being criticized and being doubted. Mark 6 verse 3: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.'" That begins some accounts throughout the New Testament of the brothers of Jesus and the family of Jesus. In John chapter 7 verse five, it speaks of his brothers. In first Corinthians 15:7, it speaks of his brother James, who Jesus appeared to after His resurrection. In Acts chapter 1 verse 14, you have the list of those that gathered in the upper room to pray after Jesus had risen and ascended to heaven. We're told that in that upper room, they were with those followers, and it gives some names of some of those followers. Then it says, "Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers were there with him."

Now as you put together this identification that he was the brother of James and we put these other verses together, we won't spend all our time on that. But it comes down to the fact that this Jude writing this letter was brother of Jesus and the brother of James mentioned here. Why is it significant for this letter? Because he doesn't mention that he's the brother of Jesus. I've got to just tell you that my temptation would be that if my brother had worked miracles and fed 5,000 and raised the dead and died on the cross and came back to life, I've just got to believe that somewhere in the letter I would've just kind of thrown in there, "Hey, that's my brother. That's my brother."

But instead, Jude saw was that the most important part of his relationship with Jesus was not an earthly familial relationship, the most important relationship that he had with Jesus now was that he was a servant of Jesus Christ. As you read through the Gospels, what you find out is that Jesus' brothers and sisters did not believe that He was the Messiah when He was alive. It was not until after His death and resurrection that their hearts and lives changed. Several years ago, I preached a sermon in the sanctuary called "My Crazy Brother." The whole sermon was me dressed up and speaking as if I were James, the brother of Jesus. I walked through an account of how Jesus' family actually came for him in one scene trying to get him out of the crowd and bring him home. And they kind of made excuses of saying things like, "Y'all, He's just like this; you've got to excuse Him." They kind of treated Him like He was crazy, but that all changed after they saw Him die and they saw His resurrected body.

We're a week out from Easter. One of the most enduring proofs of the resurrection of Jesus is how lives changed after they saw Him. When you look at those who doubted Him and those who deserted Him and those who denied Him, you see that they became the most devoted followers of Him once they saw Him alive after the grave. Here it's the case for Jude that he doesn't name drop and say, "I'm the brother of Jesus!" He wanted them to know, "I'm a servant of Jesus Christ." And it speaks to

us of humility and honor. It speaks to us of Jude seeing it being more important to have the humility of a slave, the humility of having a master, the humility of his rights being laid down as a slave and as a servant of Jesus Christ. And also here's the better honor of being a brother of Jesus- the better honor is being a servant of Jesus. It's so important for us to see when we think about battling for our faith and fighting for our faith- when we're in that interaction perhaps where somebody is contentious toward our faith- that we enter into those conversations not as someone who's in charge or not as someone who's an authority on this particular subject, but to enter that conversation with a sense of humility and honor. A situation where we're saying, "I come to this conversation as a servant of Jesus Christ."

When you walk into the workplace: "I come here as a servant Jesus." When I walked into this room as a pastor: "I come here as a servant of Jesus." When you walk into that classroom, you walk in as a servant of Jesus Christ. When you walk into your family as husband or wife or son or daughter or brother or sister: "I come to this family as a servant of Jesus Christ." He mentions James, and it seems to me that he mentions James just as an identifier to let them know that "When you're wondering who I am you can identify me with my brother, James. He's the pastor of the church in Jerusalem." You see that in the book of Acts; you see it again in Galatians that James, the brother of Jesus and the brother of Jude, is very influential. He was looked to as the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and he was able to lead them and make decisions for how they were operating as a church. It seems to me that Jude just wanted to say enough here for them to know when he wrote that that's the faith they were talking about.

The second word we think about with this position of contending for the faith is the word "security." We come from a position of submission; we come from a position of security. The second phrase in this verse: "to those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ." Those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. Do you know what that is? That is a statement of security. When you look at the structure of Jude, you have him writing and saying that some people have come in unknowingly and they're changing what is true about Jesus. They're perverting grace and they're denying that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Master. You can imagine how unsettling it might be to these believers to hear that some teachers among them, some people among them, some people that were operating as shepherds among them were actually operating from a place of what was not true. What would this mean for them? What did this mean about their faith? Jude writes them and he's saying, "I want you to know that I'm addressing you as a people that are secure. You don't have to live in a place of fear, but you do have to live in a position of submission and security in your faith." He shores them up with this address. He says, "You're called, you're the beloved, and you're kept." What you have here are the dimensions of grace. Here's God's grace active in their life- God's gifts of grace where God had called them to salvation. God called them to salvation because He loved them, and God calling them and loving them would keep them until the day they would see Jesus.

This word "called" is a word that clues us into the fact that our salvation is initiated by God. That tug on your heart, that pull for you to give your life to Jesus to follow him, to believe him, to trust him - that's not something that you thought of, that's not something that you came up with. That is the work of the Spirit of God who calls us and initiates salvation. Jude is writing to encourage them to say, "What you have in Jesus Christ- you didn't work for it, you didn't think of it, you didn't make it up- this happened because God acted. It's a place of security." Romans 8:28: "for we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are-" what? Called. "For those who love God and are called according to His purpose." Then he says, "You're the beloved." It's one of his favorite words and in 25 verses he uses it at least four times. He addresses them as "beloved in God." Then in verse three again: "beloved." Then over in verse 17: "but you must remember, beloved." It was a term of endearment; it was a term of affection. He says, "As believers, here's how secure you are. God called you to salvation and this God that calls you to salvation- He sees you as His beloved."

There's something there in that Greek word "agape" that adds a prefix to it that describes this term that we are surrounded by God's love, we are in His love, we are saturated by His love. We are inundated by God's love. He's describing a relationship that is meant to bring security to our heart and our life. This word "beloved" is in the perfect tense. As you read the Greek word in the perfect tense, there's this understanding that it's something that happens, but it doesn't just happen on this day. It's something that happens and continues to happen, and it's a picture of yes, God loves you and God loves you at salvation when Jesus died. Yes, that was a demonstration of love, but this love that God has for you is a continuous action. He loves you today, He loves you tomorrow, He loves you the next day. He loves you, He loves you, He loves you. it is a place of security. And then he says, "kept." "To those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ." This is also perfect tense word "téreo." It is a word that means on and on and on and on- that God guards you and watches over you. Do you ever wonder if you might've lost your salvation? Do you ever get to feeling just really low and think, "I'm not saved." Did Jesus leave you? Did the blood covering for your sin run out? Did you do so much bad that it overcame the grace of God? Do you ever get the thinking that you don't even need Jesus because you've been so good?

What he's describing for us is a place of security in our faith. We are called by God, we are loved by God. But we also in His power are watched over, we are guarded, we are kept safe on and on and on and on and on. We are kept by Him. I want to kind of step out of the picture here for just a second into the darkness. Do you know what this is? This is my life. This is 47 years of my life right here. My parents sold their home place about three years ago, and my mom set this box down in front of me and said, "Here's your stuff." I was looking through the stuff again this morning- here's my rock collection. That's crazy! There's my leaf collection, right there is a petrified wood from the forest in Northern California from a trip when I was kid. And

this is impressive- I lettered at Mount Hope School as a manager. Amen? That's why I'm so good with a basketball. All kinds stuff in here- real exciting stuff in here. You know is kind of crazy that 40-something years of your life can be reduced to a Rubbermaid bucket.

Here's the most amazing thing. Somebody kept that stuff. Who kept it? Mama kept it? Why, why did Mama keep it? Because she loved me. She kept it, and it was her way of loving me. What would destroy that? What would get rid of that? What could happen that would make that go away? Some of you have lived through it-fire. But isn't it beautiful that the God who keeps us says to us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God? When we contend for our faith, we come from a position of submission as servants. We come from a position of security. I wish I could give you homework today. It'd seem like punishment to, but it would be the most glorious thing if I could send you home and say, "Take a piece a loose-leaf paper and write 100 times on that piece of paper 'I am called, loved and kept. I am called, loved, and kept. I am called, loved and kept. I am called, loved, and kept.'"

There's a third word. Real quick- the word "strength." We contend for our faith from a position of strength. He offers a prayer. He says as a prayer and an address to God: "May mercy peace and love be multiplied to you." When we contend for our faith, when we stand for truth the weapons of our warfare are not carnal like the world's, but they are mighty through God. And the weapons of the warfare that we fight with are mercy, peace, and love. And Jude prays that these just like spiritual proteins to our spiritual lives would be multiplied to us. That word "multiplied" there is the word "abundance;" it means to be filled up. It means to increase; it's the Greek word "pléthunó." If you say it a few times, you'll stumble over the word "plethora" in there. It is a picture here that he's praying that there would be mercy and peace and love multiplied to us, increased to us, abundance to us. So we take our position today. When we walk out these doors to contend for our faith, we go from a position of submission, servants, secure, called, loved, kept, in strength, mercy, peace and love.

Several years ago in a pool in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania a young guy was in the deep end- Andre Houston, 12 years old. In the deep end of that pool he drowned. The Red Cross of that city did an investigation, and when they looked they said it was a lifeguard issue. They said the lifeguards were out of position, and the local leader of the American Red Cross said these words. And I quote "The lifeguards should have been at their stations. They were not at their stations. It's that simple." When I think about our faith in a world of people like Jude says here: "snatch them out of the fire." The emergency, the urgency is for us to be in our positions, for us to have a heart of submission, for us to have a heart of security, for us to have a heart of strength.

Let's pray. Father, I bow before You today and ask You for Your help. Would You show us where we're prideful instead of humble? Would You work in our lives to celebrate being servants of Christ. Would You today baptize us with this great truth of security that nothing can snatch us out of Your hand? Thank You for calling us and

loving us and keeping us. Would You multiply in all of our hearts mercy, peace, and love? In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.