

Jude 3 & 4

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Please turn then to Jude. That's the last but one letter in the New Testament in the Bible.

And as we thought last week, we looked a little bit at this person, Jude, and particularly those first two verses of his letter.

Peter, realizing we found out that he was half-brother of the Lord Jesus, and a man of humility, and a man who loved the Lord, and delighted in the gospel.

And we realized that we can learn a lot from a person by what they pray for, and for what they believe, and what they have to say about themselves, as he did.

So we're going to start at verse 1, and we're going to read through to verse 4. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father, and kept by Jesus Christ.

[1 : 03] Mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance. Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for morality, and deny Jesus Christ, our only sovereign and Lord.

One of the great advances that we've seen in recent years, of course, is in the area of communication. We're able to instantly, by phone or internet, in just an instant, send news around the world.

Somebody may just be 500 yards down the road, or several thousand miles on the other side of the world, but just with a click of the button, we're able to speak to them, or share with them, or tell them something which we're excited about.

And that's especially the case when we have burning news, maybe the birth of a baby, or some surprising promotion at work, or something else like that. We want to tell people straight away.

[2 : 20] We don't like to have to wait. And so now we can do just that. Jude certainly was somebody who had something very burning to write about, and was very, very keen and eager to communicate it with his recipients.

He says there, dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you. And there's that sense of anticipation. He's got something burning in his heart that he wants to talk about. He was keen that his message got across.

And that's why his letter is so very brief. That's why it's, in some senses, not expanded and explained as much as perhaps Paul's letters or Peter's are. Doesn't include the sort of things that he'd like to have mentioned even as well.

He says, I'd love to have spoken to you about the salvation we share. I'd love to have written to you about those things. But I had something else burning on my heart. I was constrained. I felt I had to write.

What subject was burning on his heart? What was it that he felt so constrained to talk about, to write about? What is it that we feel constrained about?

[3 : 33] What is it that we feel is our message? What is it that we long to get out, to communicate, to share with others? Is there anything burning in our hearts?

Is there anything that excites us? Is there anything that we find hard to keep to ourselves? Such is the good news. Well, before we get to that, we see what it was he wanted to write about.

What he really wanted to talk about. What he wanted to encourage the believers with. And that was the salvation we share. I was eager to write to you about the salvation we share.

That's a sure mark of being a Christian. Wanting to talk about the salvation we share. Jude's not talking about sharing his testimony. There is that sense there.

He's talking about how he became, not just how he became a Christian, but all that God did in saving him and making a Christian. He wants to talk about God's electing love.

[4 : 32] We talked at that, didn't we, in verse 1. Who've been called and are loved by God. He wanted to talk about Jesus and what he did on the cross for him and how his resurrection and how his ascension has made such a difference in his life.

He wanted to talk about the Holy Spirit and his power in raising him to life and giving him faith. As we saw there, again, in the introduction. It's thrilling to talk with other believers about Christ, isn't it? It's one of the great delights. Especially when there are people that we don't know all that well, but we know they're Christians. You start to talk and start to share and there's something happens within you.

I can't explain it, but it's a bubbling up. You get all giddy, don't you? And you start to talk and share about what Jesus has done and what he means to you. There's something lovely. That's exactly how Jude felt.

That's exactly what he wanted to write. A wonderfully bubbly, encouraging letter. Therefore, we see as well, don't we, how important it is that we do meet together as Christians.

[5 : 34] It's so important that we do to encourage one another. So important that we meet like this on a Sunday and a midweek and one-to-one as well when we have opportunities. The salvation.

But notice as well there's something wonderful and it's the reason that this salvation is so precious to each one of us. It's the salvation we share. Not just in the sense of sharing, giving, but share. It's something that we have in common. The package of blessings that we have as believers, as Christians, is the same for every one of us. We've all received of God's wonderful grace.

When Jude says about the salvation we share, he uses a Greek word which we might be familiar with. It's koinonia. Koinos. Some churches use that as their name.

Koinonia Christian Fellowship. It means togetherness. Fellowship. But really what it means as well to us is this. That whatever I have in Christ, you have as well.

[6 : 38] There is no degree of Christianity. Second class, third class or first class. There's no ranks in Christianity. If you are a Christian, you have the full package.

You have all the salvation, all the promises, all the blessings, just as everyone else. If we want to apply that just for a moment, we just think, well, that means it means this.

It means that no matter our past, no matter our sins, present or past, all are forgiven. Every single one. Just turn back.

Don't need to go there, but 1 John, chapter 1. If we confess our sins, verse 9, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

That's a promise for every Christian. So it isn't as if when you become a Christian, first of all, well, God sort of wipes out 50% and then as you do good, that's what some sort of churches teach almost, God wipes out some of the sins, but then you live a good life and you wipe out the rest.

[7 : 42] No. Every single Christian has been forgiven every single sin because every single one of them was laid on Christ at the cross. That's why Romans 8, verse 1, there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

So every Christian, all our sins have been forgiven. There's no standing as well in our, there's no difference in our standing before God. Whether you've been converted just a few months or many decades, each one of us stand before God, the same acceptance, the same righteousness as one another.

Here's Colossians. Once we were alienated from God, but now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation.

So every one of us can come just as close to God as everyone else. You know the story, don't you, about Wesley and Whitfield and Mr. and Whitfield, George Witchfield was asked, will you see John Wesley in heaven?

No, no, no, I won't see John Wesley in heaven. He'll be so close to the throne, so close to the front, and I'll be so far at the back. He was just, he was a lovely man, George Whitfield.

[9 : 00] But the point is this, actually none of us will be, there'll be no distance in heaven. That's what we can't get hold of in our minds, can we? You'll be as close to Jesus as I will be. And every

single one of the many millions, I believe, who have put their faith in Christ over the centuries will be close.

We'll all be as close. No one will be far. And even now, even now, dear friends, we are just as accepted before God as we shall be then.

Just as acceptable to God as we shall be then. There's no degrees. And the wonderful thing again, just thirdly, just in these little thoughts really about what we share in our salvation, we all have equal access to God in prayer.

Again, it's not about the ones with the greater faith get their prayers heard first, or jump to the top of the queue. Rather, God hears our prayers equally.

We're equally loved by him. Equally concerned for us is he. Equally are we able to draw near to him. That's what we read there as we did at the very start of our service. From Hebrews in chapter 10.

[10:13] Those wonderful words of encouragement to us. Hebrews 10 and verse 22. Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience.

Therefore, dear friends, if this is a salvation that we share, let's not belittle ourselves. I know that we do it, and sometimes we do it in a sense of humility, but it's not right.

It's not right to think of other Christians as better Christians than yourself. It's not right of us to belittle ourselves and say, I wish I was more godly like so-and-so. I wish I was a better Christian like so-and-so.

You are, in Christ, as fully accepted, forgiven, and able to come to him in prayer as anyone else. This is the great truth that we believe. There is the priesthood of all believers.

I'm not a priest. In fact, no man or woman should ever call themselves a priest, because there is only one high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. There's the priesthood of all believers.

[11:19] We are all priests. We all have access to God. We all can draw near to him, because it's not dependent on us, but on what Christ has done, the salvation we share.

Now, Jude wanted to talk all about that. I've sort of touched on maybe some of the things Jude wanted to talk about, but he wasn't able to. He had something else which was constraining him, forcibly moving him to write about another subject.

I felt I had to write and urge you. You get something of the importance of what's on his heart, can't you? You can see that here is a man who loves the gospel, loves talking about the things of Christ, wants to write to encourage believers, but there's something so important, so vitally important, that he dare not put it off for another letter.

He dare not somehow slide it even in with another letter, but he has to urge. And this is the whole theme of this letter. This is what we're going to be locking horns with in one sense as we go through this brief letter of only 25 verses.

I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, once entrusted to the saints.

[12:31] He's going to urge his readers to contend. This is a letter which is going to move them, stir them.

It's a provocative letter. It's a challenging letter. We use that word contender, don't we, for somebody who's a boxer, who's going up against the reigning champion.

He's a contender. Isn't it in one of the films? Is it on the waterfront? He goes, No, it's not on the waterfront, no. No, we don't know. You don't know what the film is? Well, it could be on the waterfront.

If you don't know what it is, I'm saying that's what it is. And there's that very famous actor, I could have been a contender. That's a bit like that, I guess. Not quite like that. Anyway, we use the word contentious, of course, when we speak of something, a subject that creates disturbance.

If something's contentious, it's troublesome. And so Jude's saying, I want you to contend. And the word is to fight. Fight. It's not a passive word.

[13:32] He's not saying, I felt I had to urge you to think about this, or form a discussion group about it. I'm urging you to fight about this, to contend for this.

He's inferring clearly, trouble is brewing. Trouble is coming. There's some unpleasant things that are going to have to be dealt with. So it's not an easy letter. What's the controversy around?

What's the controversy, the fighting about? Well, he says, for the faith, once entrusted to the saints. Just as that word salvation means all that God has done in saving us, so the phrase, the faith, means in this sense here, not simply the act of believing.

He's not talking about about faith, the action of trusting and believing and leaning upon God. He's talking about the whole body of truth that Christians believe about God.

The faith. What it is that we have put our faith and trust in. What we have believed about God. This phrase, the faith, comes up again and again. Again, we read it from Galatians chapter 1 where Paul is being spoken of, one who is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.

[14:54] Now the faith he tried to destroy was the faith about Jesus Christ, about him being the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. So this faith, the faith, is something certain, isn't it?

I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith. One of the things that the queen at her coronation declared is that she would be a defender of the faith. Now I know there's some controversy that's been spoken about that when Prince Charles, should he become king, at his coronation he will speak about being defender of faith.

In other words, every religion. The faith is prescriptive. It narrows it down, doesn't it? So what Jude is talking about is here is something which is complete, something which you can measure in one sense.

You can see it's something which has limitations upon it. Something which is already fulfilled. That's why he says, the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

The saints of the whole church of believers. Remember that. It's not talking about the saints as in some elevated position where people are called saints so and so. Saint Bartholomew and Saint Herbert and so on.

[16:10] But no, the saints, the church, the people of God. That's always the way the Bible uses that phrase. So everything that God has said about himself and those truths which relate to living as a Christian have been given to us in the Bible.

That's why the Bible is a complete book. That's why it's all that we need. That's why we don't add to it. That's why when we come and meet together whether it be on a Sunday or on a Wednesday, it's the Bible we turn to. We don't go to one and say well what's your thoughts today?

What do you think about this or think about that? No, we say what does the Bible say? What does God say? Because we believe and know that this is the inspired and infallible word of God.

As our own statement of faith in our church says that it is sufficient authority in all matters of Christian faith and life. The faith. The Westminster Confession was a very key doctrine or rather statement of faith by our forefathers and they say this about the Bible.

The Bible is the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, sorry, faith and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelation of the spirit or traditions of men.

[17:43] So it's closed book the Bible in that sense. It's everything that we need. Now Jude was concerned that the Christian church needed to fight for this faith, the faith that was given to them.

We read there in Galatians, didn't we, how Paul was so disturbed and upset that the Christians in Galatia, he says, how come you've already left and turned to another gospel which is not a gospel at all?

So we see that there in those days there were those who were teaching something which was not the faith, not the truth about God, not what God had given and laid out clearly in his word.

The sad truth is that in every single age, every single century, since when Jude wrote his letter in the first century right up to today there have been such people even now.

And the sad thing is, the grievous thing is that in our day and age there are more of those who have denied the faith than those who have kept the faith.

[18:51] There are more of those who have turned the faith and taken it and twisted it and removed it from scripture than there are those who are faithful to the faith as once they were. And as Christians, dear friends, as Bible-believing Christians, as evangelical Christians, we are called upon to face these challenges, not to ignore them, not to hide our heads in the sand hoping they'll go away.

Remember our Lord Jesus himself faced opposition because of the truth that he declared. There were those, the Judaizers, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, all of them had taken the truth of God's

word and they had denied it and twisted it and added to it and made it something distorted and perverse.

And when Jesus came and spoke the truth and declared the truth, he was met with opposition and he was met with persecution and he was met with mockery and with ridicule. Even today, dear friends, there are constant controversies about true Christian beliefs.

And we know that only so well. We are being pressurized as evangelical Christians to tolerate every other type of belief. Not only within that vast circle of what we call the church, but increasingly laws are being used to force Christians to accept those beliefs which are not simply a personal truth but a God-given and God-declared truth.

So even if you read in your ET or EN this afternoon, you would have seen how a Christian preacher was prosecuted and fined simply for speaking about homosexuality as being wrong.

[20 : 33] And so it will continue. And so it will go on. And we may soon, dear friends, have to contend earnestly for the faith at great cost to ourselves as our brothers and sisters in Christ do around the world.

We are one of the few countries in this world where we can stand up at the moment and preach everything that we believe to be true from the Bible. But even in some places in our country, that can cost you a fine, loss of your job, even potentially worse.

We may, dear friends, find that there comes a time when we have to nail our colours to the mast in such a way that our lives may be counted.

And that's not a small thing for us to think about. There are dark days, difficult days, as there were in Jude's time, so there are now.

No, what we have here, dear friends, in the Bible is that which is the faith which is once delivered to the saints. It's the foundation that we can stand upon and it's that which we can trust for all things.

[21 : 42] Here's Paul as he writes in 2 Timothy. He speaks about what will happen. He says, in fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

While evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. He's writing this nearly 2,000 years ago, but it's up to date, isn't it? It's spot on, just as we're seeing.

As for you, continue in what you've learned, have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you've known the Holy Scriptures, how important it is to teach our children God's Word, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

It's all here and God has given it to us, entrusted it to us. Now, if he's entrusted it to us, he must, well, he must trust us, mustn't he?

[22 : 51] That's a privilege that we have. The Bible, the faith that we have is everything that we need. It doesn't need altering, doesn't need contextualizing, doesn't need rewriting, doesn't need bringing up to date.

It's God's love gift to us, his word. Now, back to Jude. Clearly, news had come to him, hadn't it? I felt I had to contend and write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

For certain man whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. He's heard about what's happening to the churches he's writing to. There's some people who have sneaked in under the radar.

They've come into the church and they've come in with new teachings but these teachings are distorting the truth of the gospel. They used, I'm sure, all the right words.

And that's the same today. You can go and stand before and listen to a man who is not a Christian and he will talk about God's love, he'll talk about God's grace and he'll talk about Jesus Christ but he's not talking about the gospel.

[24 : 04] And that's why we get deceived. You see, if you use the right words, they can get under the radar, can't you? If you go and speak to somebody who's a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness, if you didn't know who they were but you talk about God and righteousness and truth and those sort of things, they will be in agreement with you.

Even about Jesus being the saviour who died for us. But you have to dig a bit deeper and you'll see that they're smuggling in harmful teaching.

Yes, they empty the truth of God's word and fill it with something of their own lies. Well, we know about smuggling, don't we? Smugglers who bring in illegal substances, whether they be drugs, tobacco, even people, they bring them in in innocent looking cargo, whether it be a container or whether it be just in the suitcase.

Years ago when the smugglers used to smuggle in tea. Do you know that? Tea was taxed so highly, people used to smuggle in tea. Some of the smugglers had specially made coats which had hidden pockets inside them and they could carry 30 pounds of tea just in their coat to get past the excised men without being noticed.

The whole point is getting in without being noticed. That's exactly what these men were doing. But they weren't smuggling tea into the church, they were smuggling falsehood.

[25 : 33] Notice what they were doing. The teachings they were bringing, these are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality. So the teachings that they brought had an effect in changing the grace of God, in transforming it.

Now it's clear of course that from these false teachings we understand that the gospel is a gospel of grace. It's a gospel of undeserved love of God.

It's a gospel which has nothing to do with works, salvation or earning our salvation or being good enough for God. The fact that these enemies of the gospel could pervert it into a license for immorality proves.

Because if it was a gospel of works, there couldn't be any abuse in this way, could there? The things that's often leveled at those who preach the gospel of grace is just that. They say, oh well, grace means we can go on sinning.

Grace means you can do whatever you like and God will forgive you. Grace means that it doesn't matter how you live as long as you have faith and you'll get to heaven. But Romans chapter 6 says this, shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?

[26 : 48] By no means. Grace does not mean that we can do whatever we like. Grace does not mean that we simply please ourselves and that faith by itself is enough.

No. Grace means God's unconditional forgiveness for all and every one of us. But it means that our lives are transformed and changed so that we seek to live his way.

Not because we must, but because we want to. That's the transforming power of grace. These teachers, these wicked people, were those who said, do these things.

Doesn't matter what you do. God's grace means he'll forgive you. But there's something else there, isn't there? This twisting of God's grace opens the floodgates, yes, to immorality, to license, which means pleasing ourselves, but also it means something else.

It means that by doing so we deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord. And that word that the NIV translates sovereign is the word master. Master.

[28 : 07] See, the salvation that we share together, amongst other things, is a salvation that rescues us from being under the mastery of sin and Satan, isn't it?

We become a Christian, Colossians tells us, we are taken out of the kingdom and the dominion of darkness and translated and brought into the kingdom of the Son of God whom he loves. There's a transfer of mastery, there's a transfer of leadership and of lordship in our lives.

Once, though we didn't realize it, we were following Satan's ways, we were doing the things that he wanted which were in opposition to God. We didn't know that, we were ignorant of that on the whole. But when we became Christians, God took hold of us and literally brought us out of that place where we were under Satan and brought us under the Lord Jesus, under his mastery and lordship.

And so that means that now we want to please him, our master, we want to do his will. And if we're Christians, how can we carry on sinning and being under the mastery of Satan when we are now under the mastery of Jesus?

You can't have two masters. And so when we live in sin, when as Christians we live constantly in sin, as John in his letter says as well, when we constantly sin and live in a way, as these men were teaching, do whatever you like, please the sinful nature, please yourself, we're denying Jesus is the Lord of our lives.

[29 : 31] We're denying that he is the king of our lives, the master of our lives. The same is this faith that we believe, isn't it? One of the things that Paul tells us that we have to do if we want to be a Christian is we must confess with our mouth Jesus is Lord, Romans chapter 10.

To declare that he's God, yes. To declare he's God of our lives, to declare that our lives have been changed and that we have a new life which enables us powerfully to live in a way that pleases God. In Titus' letter he makes this very plain and very clear that the grace of God changes us and gives us power. Titus 2.11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to say yes to live self-controlled upright and godly lives in this present age.

When you become a Christian, it's not just that this transformation has taken place in the spiritual realm, if I can put it that way, that you're no longer under Satan under Christ, but also in our hearts, in our lives, a change has taken place.

[30 : 50] The things that bound us, the sin that bound us so that we couldn't help but do the things that were wrong and contrary to God, those things we've been set free from, so now we have the freedom and the power to say no to sin and yes to righteousness.

When new creations were changed, these men were teaching quite the opposite. they're taking the grace of God which says God forgives us in spite of all of our sins, all of our failings, it's all because of what Jesus has done for us.

They took that and said because that is the case, it doesn't matter how you live or what you do. And in doing so, they were denying Jesus as the Lord of people's lives.

There are those who teach that even today. Those who teach that if you just try to be a good person, then you'll get to heaven. Or who teach that, well, long as you believe certain things about God, you can do what you like in your life, you'll get to heaven.

But the Bible makes it very clear that you're either one or the other. You're either Christ's or you're not. You're either those who are under his mastery and lordship or you're not.

[32 : 11] You see, these people who taught this were not true Christians. So much so, Jude calls them godless men and speaks of them as those whose condemnation was written about long ago.

They were those who were headed for judgment. They were those whose lives God had warned about beforehand. They had not received God's grace and trusted in it.

They were those who were lost. A lot of people see a great link between Jews' letter and Peter's second letter. And you can see that as well because Peter writes this in the very second chapter of 2 Peter.

He says, There were also false prophets among the people just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.

Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed, these teachers will exploit you with stories they've made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them.

[33 : 30] their destruction has not been sleeping. Exactly what Jude is saying, isn't it, here about these teachers. So dear friends, do we share in that salvation that God has brought to us in Christ?

Do we believe and hold to that faith once and all delivered, knowing that it is that we've been saved by grace, knowing that it is true and faithful and dependable?

Then don't let anybody rob us of it. be careful about who we listen to, what books we read, what preachers we sit under, what churches we attend.

Are they standing on the faith? Are they proclaiming the salvation we share? Are they exalting the grace of the Lord? Are they encouraging us to live as those whose master is Jesus Christ and none other?

Well, let's sing together our final hymn this evening. I wanted to sing this hymn and then I couldn't find it in our hymn book so we've had to put it on the projector but I'm sure all of you will know it as a very well known hymn.

[34 : 40] And in it, the last line says, one faith, one church, one Lord. Thank you. I won't call it to the lost That The Lord has guided thy thought from age to age, The wondrous day is risen, Though clear on every page.

Our Father's own thy goodness, That we can teach with all, And though the best there with us, One charge, one faith, O Lord.

Thy heralds, good and tithes, Till greatest us to these, May we give them price and peace, To share the great things peace.

And this was all their teaching, In every day and world, To all our heart proclaiming, One shout, one faith, O Lord.

Who may be of darkness, Who may be of stride, The faithful people bring me, To have the nation's might.

[36 : 46] May God's will of redemption, Sing garden and restore Also in his end of it O church, one day, O Lord Thy mercy will not fail us Only thy work have done With thy right hand to help us The victory shall be won And then thy men and angels Thy name shall be adored And this shall be their anthem One church, one day,

O Lord May God himself, the God of peace, Sanctify you through and through May your whole spirit, soul and body Be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ The one who calls you is faithful And he will do it Will do it The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ Be with you all Amen Amen Amen Thank you