

# THE LETTER OF JUDE

[NCTM study]

**Rostrevor Baptist Church; Second Term 2004**

John D. Calvert

## STUDY ONE: Reading: Jude 1- 25

Do church services still conclude with a Doxology? If so, the last two verses of Jude are well known. The remainder of this letter tends not to be as well known. The letter appears to be largely neglected either because of its size or the direct language used. The author does not inform us as to the destination but it is addressed to people the author knew who were facing particular dangers. However it is not confined to the first century, the letter is just as applicable today despite being largely ignored.

No portion of God's word more accurately describes the increase of apostasy within the church than this letter. It has been called the preface to the Revelation. Jude confirms the teaching of the N.T. by repudiating any theory that Christianity can easily recover from the spreading corruption of the 'white ant or fifth column' activity that has continued throughout history. It knocks any suggestion that God's kingdom will come into existence through human effort. The letter of warning also presents a candid portrayal of the unbelief and wickedness of those who claim to be Christians but distort and deny God's truth.

The reason for the letter is that the author intended writing about *the salvation we share*, **verse 3**; but realised that his friends needed *to contend for the faith because godless men had secretly slipped in* to their fellowship. The relation of false belief to false living disturbs the writer: **verse 4**. Verses 4-16 are similar to 2 Peter 2.

Author: **verse 1**, there are several men named Jude in the N.T. This one is believed to be the brother of James and the half-brother of Jesus. Jude comes from the name Judah: Mark 6: 3. James was the leader in the early church and Jesus' half-brother. Calls himself, not a brother of Jesus but, *a servant of Jesus Christ*, a bond-slave without any rights or privileges. Nothing more is known about Jude.

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Then follow three significant words; *to those who have been called*. The divine initiative is with God and we are summoned to responsibility, Romans 1: 7 & 1 Corinthians 1: 2. There is no aspect of our lives personally or collectively that is outside the call of God.

Then *loved by God the Father, or sanctified*. The only love or holiness we have is God's. Every believer is holy or saintly and we must live in the light of that truth. It's a relief to recognise that there are no excuses.

Thirdly, *kept by Jesus Christ*. We are preserved in him; 1 John 5: 18; 1 Peter 1: 5; 2 Timothy 1: 12. While we are responsible to obey Christ, we do not keep ourselves, that his task; cf. **Verses 21 & 24**, which adds the eschatological picture. This is Christian perseverance and is connected with obedience or discipleship. To know that we are called and loved and kept is wonderful security for we are always *in Christ*, as Paul declares; Philippians 1: 1 & Colossians 1: 9 & 10. This is no revolving door situation.

**Verse 2** adds to this wonderful picture; *mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance or multiplied*; 1 Peter 1: 2 & 2 Peter 1: 2. The mood of the verb denotes ardent desire, filled to capacity, and spilling over. *Mercy* corresponds to Paul's word, grace, the undeserved gift of God. It is not often used in a greeting but occurs always against the background of false teaching. *Peace* is the Hebrew greeting 'Shalom', signifying everything for our highest good and in the midst of turmoil, not tranquillity. Then *love* that is never a commodity but God himself, and there is never any lack of him.

**Verses 3 & 4** reveal Jude's reasons for changing his intentions in writing and where he shows that Christian love is not sentimentality or soft talk. The task may not have been welcome but it was essential. The pastor or elder, parent or teacher are not spies, but we need to be on the watch and this ministry is sometimes neglected under the idea of legalism or tolerance: Acts 28: 28-30. There is no excuse for Christians not to know why they are Christians and what they must believe. Our 'switch-off' mental mechanisms that we adopted as children and continued at school and church are our responsibility and we are accountable. Jude says that we *share salvation* that is both present and ongoing, and *faith* is the body of belief. Jude does not explain this faith for his readers know, as do we.

His urgent appeal is *to contend for the faith*. Every Christian is a defender of the faith, and defend has the basic meaning of 'agony'. So

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here is *faith* that *was once entrusted to the saints*, signifying once and for all. This faith is the apostolic preaching and teaching: Acts 2: 42.

The serious situation, written towards the end of the first century, meant that this letter was penned not so much to teach new aspects of the faith, but to rally the believers to defend the faith they knew and fight the evil influences within their own fellowship. These *certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago*, refers to the O.T., where there are judgments against those who are false prophets and live falsely. Such corrupt infiltrators *have secretly slipped in among you* and are turning the grace of God into an excuse for blatant immorality and denying the Lord through their life and belief. This pictures the seduction of clever words, an outlaw secretly returning, subtle insinuation of evil into a situation. Note; *they are godless men*, and the danger was not persecution from outside but a canker within that was eating the heart of the church. Most people when they sin endeavour to hide and not be caught for some feelings of shame remain. But this description is of the man who has no shame or decency and does not care who witnesses his actions. Wandering teachers and itinerant prophets, perhaps with their followers, were common in earlier times.

The church has never been free from the heresy of people who feel that they can do anything they like and God will forgive them. With immorality, is dishonesty and deceit which is their philosophy and they make the grace of God an excuse to sin and seek to manipulate their conscience. They *change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality*, and illustrate the antinomians; ie. those who believe they are released from observing the moral law: Romans 6, 2 Peter 2 and 1 John. They claim to possess forgiveness so it does not matter what kind of life they live. The expression is not in Scripture but its idea surfaces at times. Grace establishes the law, it sets us free from sin's dominion so we can keep the law: Romans 6: 11-23. The believer is free from sin, from its dominion but not free to sin.

Also they *deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord*, his person and work, that he is the God-Man. The belief of 'Gnosticism' was emerging; matter is evil and spirit is good. Hence Constantine and the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Also, 'Docetism' ie. Jesus only appeared to be human. Such beliefs obviously deny the significance of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Galatians 2: 4 & 5. Such men condemned themselves: 2 Corinthians 11: 12-15. Note the warning in **verses 17-19**.

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Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church ... Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner ... Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow upon ourselves ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace ... is costly because it calls us to follow ... Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life ... Above all, it is grace because it cost God the life of his Son ...  
[Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, pp 35-37]

**Verses 5-7** contain three warnings of divine judgment. The evil men who are corrupting the church did not regard themselves as enemies. They probably saw themselves as advanced thinkers, as spiritually mature and a type of aristocracy, as leaders needed by the simple believers. Jude now chooses his examples to make clear that no matter who has received privileges, they can still fall into disaster. *I want to remind you, though you already know all this*; so here is a lesson from O.T. history.

**Verse 5** refers to the first story found in Numbers 13 & 14. The people of Israel were brought out of Egypt but rejected the report of Caleb and Joshua; 13: 26-33 & 14: 1-4 & 36-38. Such disobedience by the people was clearly lack of faith in God who had delivered them and this meant wandering forty years in the wilderness and death for all who came from Egypt except Caleb and Joshua. John Wesley: 'Let, therefore, none presume on past mercies, as if they were out of danger'. Note: 1 Corinthians 10: 12 & 13. The faithless Israelites and the false infiltrators had both identified themselves with God's people, and then apostatised. We can continue to give the impression of following the Lord and still attend church, but be out of relationship with Him. Note; 2 Peter 3: 17 & 18.

**Verse 6** mentions the second account. The Jews believed that every nation had its presiding angel. They also believed in a fall of angels and this may refer to the apocryphal book of Enoch. Tradition plus a few isolated scriptures give the idea that such a fall was due to pride. See, Isaiah 14: 12. Jesus sent out the seventy and when they returned and informed Jesus of their success He warned them against pride; Luke 10: 18. Then, 2 Peter 2: 4. Jude combines these ideas of pride that issues in judgment.

**Verse 7** is the reminder of the destruction of the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The story in Genesis 19 and the sin of Sodom is one of the most repulsive in history. (The clear Hebrew language of what happened is somewhat hidden in many English translations.) Homosexual

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behaviour and sodomy are used without much shame today. Ezekiel 16 is an allegory of unfaithful Jerusalem,[verses 43-52]. When selfishness, affluence, sensual desires, etc. are pre-eminent in thinking and result in family and societal behaviour, it is asking for judgment.

These words in Jude are not addressed to the world but to the church and the writer is warning us in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Apostasy, unbelief, rebellion, sensual behaviour, crime, debauchery, marriage breakdown go together. The *godless men had secretly slipped in among the people of God* (verse 4) amongst those who initially were not aware of the danger.

Proverbs 22: 6 is a guide for parents and for every believer for we learn from one another; *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

A friend once told the poet Coleridge he did not believe in giving religious instruction to a small child. He insisted that every young person must have an open mind when he/she chooses his or her faith, if any. Without replying to his statements, Coleridge invited his visitor into the backyard to look at his garden. The man was surprised to see part of it badly in need of attention. 'Why, you have nothing here but weeds.' The poet answered, 'I did not wish to infringe in any way upon the liberty of this plot of ground, so I gave it a chance to express itself and choose its own product'. The visitor got the message.

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### **STUDY TWO:** Reading: Jude 8-16

The people to whom Jude wrote were believers in the churches of his day as we are of ours. The letter is as applicable to us as to them. They knew the O.T. Scriptures and the history of God's dealings with his people including Deuteronomy 13: 1-5. This passage reveals what is to be done with *the prophet or dreamer of dreams* who corrupts people and seduces them away from the Lord. Such a person is to be put to death. God's wrath and judgment is an expression of his love but there is no toleration of idolatry.

**Verses 8-10:** *In the very same way*; ie. despite such examples the false brethren acted the same way. The evil characteristics underlined here are sensual indulgence and self-willed rebellion, with displays of arrogance and pride. Such men are dreamers of false dreams, false prophets and corrupt the people. They are dead to anything decent and push their antinomianism by claiming divine revelations in their dreams. *They pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.* **Verse 8** they flout authority and this can also be referring to a revolt against the authority of church leaders.

Linking this with the context of **verse 4b**, *deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord*, it seems clear that these heretics were turning their backs on the Lord, despising him, rejecting his authority and showing their mindset of anti-law by worshipping their own knowledge. The reference to celestial beings, or *slander the glorious ones*, means they spoke contemptuously of angels; 2 Peter 2: 10-12. The context of verses 5-7 connects with the account that the angels who were insulted at Sodom were messengers of God and to be honoured.

Jude draws his information for **verse 9** from an apocryphal book, the 'Assumption of Moses'. This is a story from oral tradition and speculation, which his readers probably knew, about the body of Moses but is not written in any surviving fragment. The account has survived

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and says that the Archangel Michael was given the task of burying Moses and the devil came and disputed his right as he wanted the body, because Moses was a murderer (Exodus 2: 12). Moses' death is recorded in Deuteronomy 34: 1-6.

The point is made that even Michael, powerful as he is, did not argue with the devil, a fallen angel; he said *the Lord rebuke you!* eg. Zechariah 3: 1 & 2. This expression has the significance of divine conflict with hostile or evil powers. The utterance of the powerful word by our Lord brings demonic forces under control: Mark 1: 25 & 26. In countering the devil's accusation, Michael appeals to the Lord's judgment and requests that God dismiss Satan's accusations and show his authority as Lord. Michael is not giving any respect to the devil, for the devil is the accuser bringing accusation under the Law. This is a lesson for us regarding spiritual warfare and demonic influences. The accuser will remind us of our sin and at times will endeavour to envelop us in some pit of despair. Evil forces are defeated through the cross and resurrection but we are never to engage with them, that is our Lord's task. In addition, Jude's response to the false teachers shows that he does not act as a judge and condemn them from his own authority. He points to the coming judgment of the Lord, **verses 14 & 15**.

**Verse 10** is pointed language. They claim to have superior knowledge and *they slander* or pour abuse on what they do not understand, but actually they know nothing. Their appetites, which are physical, are shared with the animals that are not rational: *unreasoning animals* = brute beasts. It is ironic that such men claim to be knowledgeable and are actually ignorant; and these are the very things that destroy them.

If a man is persistently blind to spiritual values, deaf to the call of God, and rates self-determination as the highest good, then a time will come when he cannot hear the call he has spurned, but is left to the mercy of the turbulent instincts to which he once turned in search of freedom. And those instincts, given free reign, are merciless. Lust, when indulged, becomes a killer.  
(Michael Green, 2 Peter and Jude, Tyndale Commentary, p 171)

Note: 2 Peter 2: 12, Ephesians 4: 22-24, Philippians 3: 18 & 19.

In **verse 11**, Jude now uses Hebrew history for parallel illustrations and compares the evil men with three notorious characters: Cain, Balaam and Korah.

1. Cain's wickedness resulted in the murder of his brother; Genesis 4: 1-8. Jude is implying that those who delude and seduce others are

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murderers and therefore spiritual descendants of Cain. The Hebrew world regarded Cain as a cynical, sceptical and materialistic unbeliever, devoid of faith and love who did exactly what he liked for his own benefit, 1 John 3: 12. Cain was not only the first murderer but regarded as the archetypal sinner who instructed others in sin. No one can defy God and escape.

2. Balaam is the example of those who taught Israel to sin and there are two stories about him; Numbers 22-24. In the first account Balak the king of Moab tries to persuade Balaam to curse the people of Israel for he feared their power and five times offered Balaam large rewards to do so. In this story Balaam refused, but in the overall picture the illustration of human covetousness is seen, and it is only fear of what God would do to him that prevented the bargain with Balaak.

In Numbers 25 Israel is seduced into Baal worship with evil and repulsive moral consequences. Numbers 31: 8 & 16 reveal that it was Balaam who was responsible for involving Israel in immorality, idolatry and seduction. He perished miserably because he taught others to sin. Therefore Balaam stands for two things: the covetous person who is willing to sin so as to gain reward, and the evil person who is guilty of teaching others to sin. Jude equates the evil people in his letter with Balaam; 2 Peter 2: 15 & 16 – 22, and Revelation 2: 14.

3. Korah (Core) was the grandson of Levi and with two companions was notorious for his rebellion against the guidance of Moses and nearly overthrew his leadership, Numbers 16: 1-35. Here is the person who refuses to accept authority and is insubordinate, verses 1, 11, 21, 27-35, 47 & 48. This was a serious pastoral problem in the early church and occurs today, eg. Titus 1: 10 & 11 and 3: 10 & 11, 1 Timothy 1: 20 and 2 Timothy 3: 1-9, also the revolt of Diotrephes 3 John 9 & 10. Jude is charging these evil infiltrators with defying the authority of the Lord and of the church and pushing only their own way.

These three O.T. illustrations were spreading disease in the early church and they met with ruin. Their descendants may be seen today and are just as dangerous but often in more subtle fashion: Proverbs 16: 25.

Jude's word pictures in **verses 12-16** contain one of the great passages of moral indignation in the N.T. The Agape or Lord's Supper was a real meal held in the evening, Acts 2: 46 and 20: 7 & 11, and in N.T. times was not distinct from the Eucharist. This meal was the focal point of



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shared life in the Christian community, and it seems that some brought abundant food and others hardly any according to their circumstances for slaves would be included with masters. The presence of false teachers and their irreverent behaviour was dangerous and their influence spread. The believers in Corinth needed strong words from Paul because of their behaviour, 1 Corinthians 11: 17-22.

**Verse 12** *these men are blemishes at your love feasts, hidden reefs or sunken rocks waiting the shipwreck the unwary. Arrogant brazen revelling, gluttony and self-gratification remind us that all apostates are selfish and a serious danger to any assembly of God's people, shepherds who feed only themselves; Ezekiel 34: 8-10.*

Jude uses four metaphors taken from nature and from each region of the universe as an example of nature not following its allotted path in air, earth, water and the heavens: *clouds, trees, waves, stars*. *They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind*; describing people who make great claims and promises of supposed 'advanced' or 'deep' teaching but are useless, like fairy floss, without nourishment and substance. Barren talk under the guise of teaching depicted as clouds carried past by the wind without any benefit to the parched land. They may be smooth talkers and skilled communicators, but it is just words, words, words. Then, *autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted – twice dead*. An autumn tree should be loaded with fruit but the apostate teacher is like one that is worthless and dead. The trees carry no fruit and no amount of pruning can restore life for the trouble is in the roots and they are out of the soil. Similar to the barren fig tree of Jesus' parable; Luke 13: 6-9. Check, Matthew 7: 15-23.

*They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame*, cf. Isaiah 57: 20 & 21. The restless waves of the sea depositing litter on the shore symbolising the turbulence of those who reject the truth. The word *foam out* is rare and used by an ancient poet to describe seaweed and other rubbish left on the beach by the waves. And, *wandering stars, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever*. Possibly a reference from the Book of Enoch (18: 14ff & 21: 2, 6, 10) and reminds us of shooting stars that flash brilliantly for a brief moment, then are engulfed in darkness. The false teachers appear to possess life but like shooting stars they are doomed to eternal darkness. In verses 12 & 13,

Jude has evoked a swift, bold picture of the men he is castigating. They are as dangerous as sunken rocks, as selfish as perverted shepherds, as useless as rainless clouds, as dead as barren trees, as dirty as the foaming sea, and as certain of doom as the fallen angels.  
(Michael Green, Tyndale, p 177)

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The prophecy of Enoch applies in a final analysis of Jude's prophecy of inevitable judgment in **verses 14-16** that will accompany the return of Christ. He quotes from the Apocrypha and a book that was known and respected despite it not being in the canon of Scripture. The O.T. nowhere refers to Enoch as *the seventh from Adam* but seven is regarded as the perfect number in Hebrew thought, and as the man who walked with God, Enoch is highly regarded (Genesis 5: 24). Enoch is included in this picture of the Lord coming in judgment; Matthew 25: 31. There are differences of opinion about the Lord's return or appearance and we must not be focused on a system that becomes more important than the Lord Himself. Christ will come again, not as a baby or to be saviour, but as King ushering in the kingdom, Revelation 1: 7.

He comes *to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly... ungodly acts ... ungodly way ... harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him*. Jude's language is descriptive and colourful in describing the characteristics of these evil men. He calls them *grumblers* or murmurers in **verse 16**, the expression used by Paul in 1Corinthians 10: 10, and in describing the complaints of the children of Israel against Moses, cf. Exodus 15: 24 and 17: 3. They are also *faultfinders* or complainers who are chronic grumblers about life in general. When Jude writes that such people are governed by *their own desires* we might think he has overemphasised the point, but they are totally self focused with the attitude, 'I'm all right, Jack'.

Such people are filled with pride and arrogance but will pander to the so-called important if they can obtain more prestige. They glory in themselves and flatter others as occasion demands and their descendants continue today; but *the Lord is coming to judge and convict*, and then it will be too late.

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**STUDY THREE:** Reading: Jude 17-25

Reviewing the end of verses 14-16 we note that **verse 16b** *they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage*, links with James 2: 1- 4. To curry favour and boost one's own ego reveals what/who a person worships and their descendants continue to big note themselves. Jude has let fly with a series of missiles and the false teachers who are causing such trouble are cut down to size. From **verse 17** he issues a call to persevere and commences with the same expression as **verse 3**, *dear friends*, and points out that nothing has happened that was not expected. Jude was not an apostle but he knew that the apostles had given clear warning that such evil men would come, cf. 1 Timothy 4: 1-3. Jude's expression, *remember* is the first time he has used an imperative word and signals a number of them in the concluding verses. Note verse 5 and 2 Peter 1: 12 & 3: 1. Like Jude's readers we need to remember what we know and should remember rather than concentrating or mind wandering in fascinating but useless areas. **Verse 18** *They said to you ...* was not a once off warning but repeated; Acts 20: 29-31. We do not know whether Jude's readers had such warnings written so they may have been oral, but were warned numerous times.

*In the last times ...* understood as beginning at Pentecost, Acts 2: 17; cf. Hebrews 1: 1 & 2. Then *there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires*, and Jude had used the word *ungodly* four times in verse 15, cf. verse 4 *godless men*. They mock at goodness and illustrate gnostic belief that separates matter and spirit. So the body is unimportant and can be abused with gluttony and selfish desire. The significance of verse 4b continues throughout the letter with clear application that comes to us; *They ... change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ ...* Their thesis is that sin does not matter for grace is always available, and sin gives grace the chance to operate; cf. Romans 6: 1 & 2 & 14-16. These men mock at goodness and are governed by their own evil desires; Psalm 53: 1 *The fool says in his heart, There is no God.*

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In that context the word fool does not refer to intellectual or brainless inability, but to the moral fool. The person who eliminates God from their thinking and is governed exclusively by their own opinion.

In the last analysis those who eliminate the moral law, those who give free reign to their own passions and desires, those who say that the moral law is out-of-date, do so because they want it to be out-of-date in order that they may do as they like. They have listened to themselves instead of listening to God – and they have forgotten that there comes a day when they will be compelled to listen to God. (William Barclay, 'The Letters of John and Jude', 1960, p. 236)

**Verse 19:** the third occasion Jude writes, *These are the men*, cf. verses 12 & 16. Here he describes fleshly creatures without the Spirit of God. He portrays them *as men who divide you*, who separate themselves and make distinctions, as superior people or Christian Pharisees who form their own clique, (verse 12 *blemishes at your love feasts*) the elite! They cause divisions in the church, draw a line and set off one part from another. In reality they are counterfeit believers who they do not have the Spirit; Romans 8: 9. *They follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.* They cannot be Christians when they behave like Jude describes, so the ones who imagined they were superior are shown to be living in falsehood, in an illusion and trapped in their sin. They wanted to control in the so-called intellectual superiority of their own opinions and twisted their beliefs into self-justification for sin. Exclusiveness is always sin and an obvious contradiction in Christian fellowship.

We need to be aware and on guard for there is always some apparently new method, 'how to', program, emphasis, revelation (?) or whatever, that comes with attractive packaging in the bookshops and in the church to excite and catch our minds. There are so many books, tapes, videos, CDs, speakers, some of them may-be helpful but others geared to capture our time and money and worship, and therefore us! Remember the warning of **verse 4** *and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord.* What place does Christ the Lord as the only Son of the Father, revealed by the Holy Spirit have in our worship?

Jude has emphasised the dangers in the fellowship and described the characteristics of false belief no matter how it might otherwise seem. Now he describes the characteristics of the believer and in **verse 20** turns to his *dear friends*, verses 3 & 17. This is in strong contrast to the false teachers and with significant exhortations in Christian instruction for the people of grace are to be active in obedience, not passive doormats. Here there are two clear instructions in **verse 20** for there is no place excuses or for letting it all just happen (?); He firstly states, *build yourselves up in*

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*your most holy faith*, which refers to revelation handed down from the apostles, cf. verse 3. Our responsibility is to study the apostolic teaching revealed in the Scriptures, Acts 2: 42 & 20: 32. To grow in grace we need to both read and study the Scriptures for our own development and the spill-over of that is to be useful to others; Hebrews 5: 11-14 & 2 Timothy 2: 15-17. Before we can build ourselves up we need to know what we believe. So, what do Christians believe and why? Where does this building up occur? Church and study groups are helpful but the home is the area of building as husbands teach wives and parents teach children. The home can not be superseded by church services. The illustration of home cooked versus restaurant meals is an indication.

Why *most holy faith*? Because it is different to the world's opinions, set apart from all other beliefs, unique in its message and in the moral transformation it produces in lives that are changed by God not through self-effort. The founding and sustaining of the Christian life is never on something of human manufacture. Our faith is in Christ who is Himself holy and brings us into His holiness.

'We shall never be real or holy by trying to be either, but only by trusting and loving the Most Holy and real'.

(P.T. Forsyth, 'The Grace of the Gospel as the Moral Authority in the Church', quoted in Harry Escott, *P.T. Forsyth and the cure of souls*, 1970, p 58.)

The second instruction is to *pray in the Holy Spirit*. The battle against false teaching is not fought by argument; 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5. Prayer in the Holy Spirit does not necessarily mean tongues and there is no reference here but no prohibition either; Galatians 5: 16-18. There are simple, childlike prayers but we are to penetrate into the depths of prayer. We think thoughts or utter words, even time the prayers of others and of ourselves but do we pray? We have all experienced occasions when we found difficulty in concentrating or knowing what to say or 'feeling' rather than trusting. Prayer is a battle as is the life of grace each day. Using the Scriptures in prayer can assist our focus, and enable us to move beyond the shopping list idea. The Spirit who is within and amongst us utters the distinctive cry 'Abba' or 'Father', which is our privilege alone as children of the Father; Romans 8: 12-17.

A few more thoughts from the above book by Forsyth taken from his 'The Soul of Prayer.' *Prayer has to be learned ... we must learn that art by practice ... If you are not praying toward God you are toward something else. You pray as your face is set – toward Jerusalem or*

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*Babylon ... Every life that is not totally inert is praying either to God or God's adversary ... Pray as your actual self, not as some fancied saint ... Not to want to pray ... is the sin behind sin. And it ends in not being able to pray. That is its punishment – spiritual dumbness ... we do not take our spiritual food, as so we falter, dwindle, and die ... For it is the Christ at prayer who lives in us, and we are the conduits of the Eternal Intercession.*

The third instruction in **verse 21** is to *keep yourselves in God's love*; cf. verse 1 *loved by God the Father*, then love in *abundance*, along with *mercy and peace* in verse 2. We are responsible to respond with the love that has been granted to us; we can and we must, John 15: 9 & 10; also Exodus 24: 3 & 7 which describes covenant relationship. Flagrant disobedience had broken the relationship with the Lord and with others and their 'keeping up appearances' meant disaster. The same verse refers to *waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life*. His appearing when our eternal life, which is our present possession, will be complete. This means active waiting in ministry rather than the mentality of waiting for a bus and counting the cars; cf. Titus 2: 11-13.

Jude mentions our Lord's *mercy*. This basic O.T. characteristic of God (Psalm 116: 5), is rich in its usage and linked with His steadfast love. It is not just an emotion but involved personal action. God's mercy is His unmerited response to human need. Jude's use of *mercy* refers to the work that Christ achieved on the cross, Titus 3: 5 & Ephesians 2: 4 & 5.

**Verses 22 & 23** remind us that we are saved to serve and show the spillover of our salvation to others. The verses are complicated but suggest that ministry is needed when we get alongside someone who is giving in to doubts, *be merciful* and point them to the truth. To one who is being diverted into false teaching there is need for a talk over coffee, again *be merciful* and direct them to Scripture. This does not mean be soft or discuss matters and get nowhere. Others need to be *snatched from the fire* in a direct approach and need to be told they are going the wrong way on a one way path. Then, hating even the garment stained by corrupted flesh; the warning that compromise with evil leads to defeat. In dealing with infection one can be infected.

The magnificent doxology in **verses 24 & 25** is a wonderful ascription of praise and reminds us of God's power in the midst of false teaching and all the issues Jude has mentioned. On three N.T. occasions we read of the

## The Letter of Jude

*God who is able.* In Romans 16: 25 *God is able* to establish us. In Ephesians 3: 20 *God is able* to do far more than we can ask or imagine. Here in Jude, *to Him who is able to keep you from falling*, an expression used of a sure-footed horse that does not stumble. Note **verse 1**, *kept by Jesus Christ*, or preserved in Him, the other side of the coin to *keep* in **verse 21** where it means watch. In **verse 24** the word is guard. Therefore we are preserved in Him and our task is to watch (Verse 21) that we keep walking with the Lord or keep in step with the Spirit, but only He can guard (verse 24) us so we do not stumble.

He is able to present you before his glorious presence, which is his unveiled presence in heaven. Because we are incorporated into the One who is without blame, 1 Peter 1: 19, we are presented before his glorious presence without fault or without blame and with great joy. The expression without blame is a sacrificial word, and Christ was the perfect sacrifice. God is the initiator and He sets us before Him, before the presence of is a strong expression. We do not come in fear and trembling, shame or disgrace before a holy God, for he presents us. No charge can be brought against us when we are accepted in His Son and this is the cause for exceeding or great joy, an expression of exultation.

**Verse 25** concludes his letter by reminding us that *the only God is our Saviour*, and to Him alone *be glory. Amen.*