

Good morning! I'm excited to preach the seventh and final message to conclude our study in the book of Jude this Lord's day. I began preaching through Jude a little over two years ago. At the time, I thought, *here's a short book of the bible. This will allow me to preach straight through a text, and it should be a nice easy lift.* I quickly learned Jude may be short, but it's also very rich. It hasn't been an easy lift, but I've enjoyed the ways I've been stretched while preparing these messages.

The title of the message this morning is *Winning the War on False Teaching* and we will be covering verses 20-25.

Please pray with me.

Raise your hand if you've heard of the book *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu. It's an incredibly well known book, which is remarkable because it was written around 2500 years ago. The principles taught in the book have clearly stood the test of time. Beyond military strategy, its contents have been applied to sports and even the business world.

The reason you've heard of *The Art of War* is because its military insight is still useful and applicable today. Why am I talking about this? Our text this morning could be called *The Art of War on False Teaching*. If Sun Tzu's ancient book is still being mined for its insights, how much more ought we to learn from the word of God. If winning military engagements seems important, how much more winning the war for souls against false teachers?

In the previous six messages in Jude, I've preached at length about false teachers. I've explained how they:

- Creep into congregations unnoticed
- Twist God's grace into a license to sin
- Have stored up God's wrath upon themselves
- Desire to cause divisions in the church
- Want to bring you under the same condemnation they face

Based on the format of Jude's letter, there has been a lot of teaching, but not as much direct application. This message will be very different. Beginning in verse 20, Jude moves beyond teaching about false teachers to direct application instructing us how to prevail against them. For that reason, this sermon will be filled with imperatives, exhortations, and practical advice for winning the war against false teaching.

Take a look at verses 20 and 21 with me. **But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.**

Like the rest of Jude's writing, he says a great deal with only a few words. What I want you to focus on right now, though, is the beginning of verse 21 where he says **keep yourselves in the**

**love of God.** This is the overarching imperative command in these verses. This is what you need to do to protect yourself from false teaching. Let me set this burden squarely upon your shoulders: you must take responsibility for keeping yourself in the love of God.

If you're anything like me, at this point you're thinking: What? I have to keep myself in the love of God?

- I can't trust myself to do that.
- I'm fallible.
- I'm weak.
- I have a deceitful heart.
- I'm prone to sin.

Perhaps there are verses coming to your mind right now that teach preserving our faith is God's responsibility, not ours. Verses like:

- Jude 1 - where this letter is addressed **To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ....**
- 1 Peter 1:5 - which says we **are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation....**
- John 6:39 - Jesus said, **"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."**

I think if we're honest, we are way more comfortable supposing that our preservation is only God's responsibility, not ours. We will cover God's role in keeping us, but for now, we are going to focus purely on our responsibilities.

As I said, the primary imperative in these two verses is to **"keep yourselves in the love of God."** There are three other verbs in verses 20 and 21 that also sound like imperatives, but they are participles that modify the primary command. In other words, Jude wants us to keep ourselves in the love of God, and he gives us three additional instructions that tell us how to do that. What's the first one? We need to be **building [ourselves] up on your most holy faith.**

That leads me to the first lesson on your bulletins.

To win the war on false teaching:

Lesson One: fortify your spiritual position by

Part One: building yourself up.

I've been in the construction industry since high school. What I do is building material estimation. To keep this short, I receive a set of blueprints and I create a list of required materials to construct the building. These days, I primarily work on apartment buildings, senior

living centers, and hotels, but in the past I've worked on all kinds of single family homes in many areas of the country.

I look at blueprints all day long. Whether it's a house, hotel, or apartment, do you know what they all have in common? They are all built on a foundation. That's not unlike us, spiritually speaking. If you're a Christian, your faith is your foundation. We all start with the same foundation and it's up to us to build upon it. What you build will have a great impact on your life as a Christian. It will determine your spiritual maturity, your discernment, your Christian development, and even eternal rewards.

That is why scripture is full of exhortations for us to build. If you're having trouble thinking of verses that use this same exhortation, the Greek word used here in Jude and elsewhere can also be translated as "edify". It can be used for physically constructing a building (think of the word "edifice"), but when it's applied to a person it means to teach (or learn). When it's applied to a Christian it means to teach or learn what? Doctrine.

We must be built up, strengthened, and fortified with sound doctrine if we are going to prevail over the lies of false teachers.

Our edification happens in three different spheres that involve our participation.

First, we are to "edify" or "build" up one another while we fellowship. In this way, you take part in fellow believer's spiritual construction.

- When Paul corrected the Thessalonians' incorrect understanding of the end times, he said in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 - **Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**
- Ephesians 4:29 - **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

Second, we are edified through the ministries of the church.

- Ephesians 4:11-12 - **11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ....**
- 1 Corinthians 14:26 - **How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.** That almost sounds as if he's praising them, but he's not. He's correcting their chaotic, out of order services and pointing them back to the preaching of God's word. He goes on to say, "**Let all things be done for edification.**" Everything the church does should be pointed toward edifying the flock.

Now, I don't want to minimize these things, but you could make a huge mistake and assume that you can remain passive in your own edification - that it is the responsibility of other

believers and your pastors. That's wrong for two reasons. First, in order to be edified by fellow believers, you have to actively do what? Engage in fellowship. Also, if we are to build up one another, we must build up ourselves first. You can't pull water from a dry well.

Second, if you rely only on your pastors to build you up on Sunday mornings, then you're only hearing God's word one day out of the week. Imagine how slowly a building would go up if the builders only showed up on Sundays. No, we need to be building continually.

Most of you probably know that I coach wrestling. I often hear from athletes about their big dreams to be one of the "greats", or to be a state champion, or place at nationals. Often, it's hard to reconcile their desire for great achievements with their lackluster effort in the practice room. I find myself often reminding them that developing as an athlete doesn't happen because they desire it badly enough, it happens through a great deal of hard work.

Developing as a Christian is the same! It is not a mystical or mysterious process - it takes place through the mind as you expand your understanding of truth and sound doctrine. How does that happen? By the daily, diligent, deliberate study of the scriptures.

Acts 20:32 - **"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up...."**

1 Peter 2:1-2 - **Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow....**

You don't need to answer this out loud, but let me ask, how are you doing in this area? Consider how you've been building...

- Has construction stopped or slowed to a crawl? If you're too busy to be in the word, you're too busy period. If a Christian is not in the word, it's not usually a matter of how busy they are, it's a matter of where their priorities are.
- Are you building haphazardly? Sometimes Christians can become fixated on one aspect of the faith to the detriment of all others.
- Is your building really only a facade? Think of those old Hollywood movie sets where the buildings look real, but only the front wall has been built. Sometimes Christians want others to see them as people who love the word of God, perhaps even posting verses or pictures of their open Bible on social media. Make sure you're actually studying and not just giving people an impression that you're studying.

Studying and applying the scriptures is one of the ways we keep ourselves in God's love (or, how we protect ourselves from being led astray by false teachers). We are being instructed here to build ourselves up with a greater understanding of Christian truth and sound doctrine, so that we can recognize lies and reject them.

At this point I want to increase the stakes in your mind so that you can better appreciate these instructions. I think we can see apostasy as an impossible scenario. We understand that once a person has been forgiven in Christ, there is now no condemnation against them. We understand that eternal life is just that - eternal. So, I think we can read through verses that warn against apostasy and think, "That's for other people, not me."

First, don't be so sure of yourself. I don't say this to cause you to doubt your salvation, though we are commanded to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. I say this so that we take Jude's instruction to heart. The New Testament is filled with warnings about apostasy, so we must take it seriously.

- In Galatians 1:6, Paul wrote - **I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel....**
- In 2 Peter 3:17&18, Peter wrote - **beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

Obviously, Paul and Peter thought this was an important subject, and so should we. Can a genuine Christian fall away from the faith and lose their salvation? No, but he can fall into error and cause all number of terrible consequences for himself.

Even if we take outright apostasy off the table (which I'm saying we shouldn't do since scripture is filled with so many warnings about it). How much damage can be done when a Christian begins to embrace false teaching?

- What sort of damage can be done to your ministry?
- Your marriage?
- Your children?
- What discipline from the Lord might you receive for correction?

A genuine Christian who embraces false teaching, especially false teaching that leads to licentiousness may end up like Lot who lost everything in the end except his salvation.

We are fallible. We are weak. Christians, though regenerated, are still impacted by the remaining vestiges of a fallen nature. To repeat myself from earlier: We can't trust ourselves with this. We have an enemy that desires to devour us. He has empowered wicked men to rise up, teaching destructive heresies to destroy our faith and we know that we can be led astray. That is why Jude's next instruction to remain in the love of God is to do what? Be **praying in the Holy Spirit**.

That leads me to the next part of lesson one.

To win the war on false teaching:

Lesson One: fortify your spiritual position by

Part Two: petitioning God for protection.

Listen to what David said when he was surrounded by enemies. Psalm 18:1-3

**1 I will love You, O Lord, my strength.**

**2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;**

**My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;**

**My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

**3 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised;**

**So shall I be saved from my enemies.**

David was surrounded by physical enemies, how much more ought we to call upon God to protect us from our spiritual enemies. Which is the greater threat? The physical enemy who can end your earthly life, or the spiritual enemy who wants you to believe lies that will endanger your soul?

David calls God:

- his “strength”
- his “rock”
- his “fortress”
- his “shield”
- his “stronghold”

If we want to fortify our spiritual positions we need to take refuge in God’s protection like David did, and we do that through prayer.

God is our Father. We are His children. We are His friends. Those are descriptions of our relationship to Him. This is convicting to me also, but if we do not prioritize prayer, we are not prioritizing our relationship with God.

This is something I think we know intuitively. If one of your children all the sudden clams up and refuses to speak with you, you know something is wrong with your relationship. If your husband or wife gives you the silent treatment, there is something wrong in your relationship. If we are not in prayer to the Father, there is something wrong with our relationship.

Scripture gives us many encouragements to pray all the time, just like our text today:

- 1 Thess 5:17 says we should **pray without ceasing.**
- Romans 12:12 says we should [continue] **steadfastly in prayer**

God wants you in constant prayer. He wants you to bring your praises, your petitions, your cries for help before His throne all the time. He hears you! Now, it’s not only that God wants to hear

from you all the time, He also wants your prayers to be of a specific quality. What is that? They are to be done **“in the Holy Spirit”**.

Similarly, Ephesians 6:18 says we need to be **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**.

What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? Many would incorrectly say it means praying in tongues. We know it can't mean that because even in the early church when the gift of tongues was still being given by the Spirit, not everyone received that gift. But, if you look at our text this morning, everyone is told to pray in the Spirit.

Praying in the Spirit means we are not praying carnally. We are not praying for what our flesh selfishly desires. James 4:3 gives us an idea of the prayers that God does not want to hear from us. It says, **“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”**

**Romans 8:5 - For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.**

Are you praying for the things of the flesh, or are you praying for the things of the Spirit of God? This is how you know the so-called prosperity gospel is no gospel at all. It glorifies the things of the flesh - money, possessions, extravagant homes, cars, etc. Those are not the things of the Spirit.

What does the Spirit want for you?

The Holy Spirit wants you to

- grow spiritually
- gain knowledge of the scriptures
- use your gifts to minister to others
- exercise biblical discernment
- specific to our verses this morning, the Holy Spirit wants you to be protected from false teaching

Those are the sorts of things you should be praying for - spiritual things. Now that's not to say you can't pray for things you rightly desire “in the Spirit.” Those prayers should sound like this:

- “Lord if it's your will please bring me a (fill in the blank) a wife, a husband, a career...”
- “Lord, is it your will for us to (fill in the blank) buy this house, buy this car, start this business...”

Praying “in the Spirit” means we are seeking God's will and not our own. The things our fallen flesh desires are things that are passing away, amen? They will not exist in the future.

1 John 2:15-17 - **Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.**

Look at Jude's last piece of instruction in verse 21. He says, "**keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.**" To keep ourselves in the love of God we need to keep our focus off of this life, off of this world and the things of the world, and on the hope of the return of Christ.

That leads me to the last part of lesson one.

To win the war on false teaching:

Lesson One: fortify your spiritual position by

Part Three: living in expectation of Christ's return.

There is a specific connection between expecting and hoping for Christ's return and keeping ourselves in the love of God. To explain that, I need to share a couple of verses.

First, Jesus taught us how to abide in His love in John 15:9-10 when He said, "**As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.**"

It's not legalism to say that we abide in Christ's love by keeping His commandments. That's the plain teaching of scripture, but our flesh pulls the opposite way, doesn't it? If you're a Christian, I've no doubt that your inner man desires to keep Christ's commandments, but how can we actually do that?

1 John 3:2-3 - **Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

If we truly believe that Christ can return at any moment, it will drastically change how we live. Not only does it have a purifying effect on us, but it gives us hope. Look at the context of Jude's letter. There are enemies of Christ, enemies of our souls, who would come into the church like savage wolves seeking people to devour. There is trouble and pain and grief to bear on this side of eternity, but we can endure because we know it will not always be so. When Christ returns, every knee will bow and acknowledge Him as Lord. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. The fight will be over.



So, just to review, the three instructions Jude gives us to keep ourselves in the love of God is:

- To build ourselves up through the study of scripture
- To have a robust prayer life
- To continually look for the return of Christ

Everything in verses 20 & 21 are about what we need to do to protect ourselves from false teaching. Now Jude is about to pivot and instruct us how we should handle others who have been influenced by false teaching. I believe he wrote it in this order on purpose. When an airplane experiences loss of pressure, you're instructed to secure your own oxygen mask before helping anyone else. This is similar.

When fire departments hire small female firefighters, what's the first thing you think about? *Can this person really lift someone from a burning home and carry them to safety?* Similarly, if you are a spiritual weakling, if you don't know your bible, if you're disconnected from God through a non-existent prayer life, how can you expect to rescue someone else? Do you know what will happen? You'll burst into the metaphorical house on fire, and you'll just become a second casualty.

For that reason, the next lesson is for spiritually mature Christians.

To win the war on false teaching:

Lesson Two: Raid the enemy

Take a look at verses 22 & 23 with me. **And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**

There is no doubt that the enemies of the church are also its mission field. Some of them may hate us, but we love them. We desire to see them freed from false teaching, freed from sin, and given salvation in Jesus Christ. The world is full of those who claim Christ, but have departed from the truth. I want you to think about Mormons, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, and all sorts of other smaller cults.

Think of any who have denied or twisted an essential element of the faith. Perhaps they deny the deity of Christ. Or, perhaps they've added works to the gospel. They claim the name of Christ, but they don't have Him. They think they understand the truth, but they've been deceived. They believe they are on the road to Heaven, but they are headed for hell. It is God's will to save some out of these groups, and perhaps it's His will to use you to do it.

Listen to how the book of James ends in James 5:19&20. **Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.**

Daniel 12:3 -

**Those who are wise shall shine  
Like the brightness of the firmament,  
And those who turn many to righteousness  
Like the stars forever and ever.**

Scripture speaks very highly of believers who engage in the work of “turning” someone to righteousness or “turning” them back to the truth.

In verses 22 and 23 there are several textual variants that modify the meaning slightly. Some variants refer to two groups of people and others to three. If you're looking at the ESV, NIV, or NASB you'll see three separate kinds of people referred to here. If you're looking at KJV or NKJV, you'll see only two. Scholars are divided on which is correct.

Jude does seem to be fond of presenting ideas in groups of threes, but I believe the language makes more sense in the KJV and NKJV. In the translations that describe three groups of people, the ones who need to be pulled from the fire and the ones whose garments we should hate because they are defiled by the flesh, are two separate groups. It seems to fit better to me that this is the same group of people. They need to be snatched from the fire, and that metaphorically requires you grab them, soiling yourself if they were wearing defiled clothing. The defiled clothing is really a picture of what? Their sin.

I could be wrong about this, but I'm going to proceed with the assumption that Jude is speaking of two groups of people. Even if I'm wrong, the basic thought behind what I'm going to teach can still be applied, and that is this: The further entrenched someone is in false teaching, the more guarded, fearful, and wise we need to be when we witness to them.

Are you dealing with someone who has been influenced by a false teacher and is perhaps confused, or doubting biblical truth? Do what verse 22 says. **Have compassion** [on them], **making a distinction**. The ESV says, “**have mercy on those who doubt....**” A well-taught Christian needs to come alongside such a person. Perhaps they could even invite them to coffee and discuss theology with their bibles open. This meeting wouldn't even need to be tense or feel like you were issuing a rebuke. It would be focused on convincing them about the truth from the word of God.

If they are doubting, if they are wrestling with things, they're still unsure, etc... That person doesn't represent a serious threat to your faith. The next group does, however.

The next group are those who are entrenched in false teaching. Jude describes them as "defiled by the flesh," which is similar to the way he described the false teachers in verse 8 saying, "**Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh....**" This group has been so influenced by the false teachers that they have become defiled just like them.

Love should compel us to make attempts to witness to people in this group, but fear and hatred should control how we do it. We should fear being affected by them rather than the other way around, and we should be careful to maintain our hatred for the sin they may be entangled in.

What is the danger that so many people who profess Christ fall into when reaching out to people entrenched in sin? In many cases their love for the people becomes acceptance for their sin. Jude says we must go after the person, but we must hate their sin - which he describes as a defiled garment. That actually doesn't quite match the graphic picture that Jude likely intended.

The Greek word for garment describes the clothing worn closest to the body. The word for defiled is likely describing human excrement. So, Jude is referring to a person clothed in undergarments stained with human excrement.

Picture a man trapped in a house fire. The fire here represents the judgment of God. This man is clothed in filthy undergarments. The garments represent his sin. You are the fireman, assuming you're equipped according to verses 20&21. You need to enter this burning home and rescue this person. How is this rescue going to look?

It is going to be both quick and careful. If you stay long in the flames, they will burn you. If you touch the filthy garments, they will defile you. And yet, we cannot be content to just pass by and withdraw ourselves. A man is about to be consumed by the flames, and we hold the key to his rescue - the gospel of Jesus Christ. The answer is not to withdraw, but to advance, assuming you are established and fortified in the Lord's might. Only, do this: advance with wisdom, taking into consideration all the risks.

Think about the warning in Galatians 6:1 - **Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.** Now, if we need to consider ourselves when dealing with a brother overtaken in sin less we be tempted, how much more the convert of a false teacher? Great care should be taken so that we are not tempted by their sin.

These verses instruct us on how to behave toward those who appear to have committed apostasy. I say "appeared to have committed apostasy" because we do not know for certain.

There are verses that teach apostasy cannot be recovered from. Listen to Hebrews 6:4-6 for instance - **For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.**

And yet, in Jude 23 we are instructed to go after those who appear to have committed apostasy. We cannot write anyone off, because we do not know who has crossed the point of no return. Jude instructs us to attempt to save those who appear to have completely apostatized.

We have a wonderful offer for them, to remove their filthy garments, and be clothed with robes of righteousness. To be rescued from the fires of God's judgment and to be brought into the presence of His glory with great joy. After all, that is what He has done for us, isn't it? If He can save me, I'm fully confident in His ability to save anyone.

That brings me to the last lesson on your bulletins.

To win the war on false teaching:

Lesson Three: Trust the One who is able.

Look at verse 24 with me.

**Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,**

Verses 20 & 21 put the responsibility to keep ourselves in the love of God squarely on our shoulders, but verse 24 says it is God who keeps us **from stumbling**. Stumbling here does not mean sinning like it is used in other contexts. Stumbling in verse 24 means committing apostasy.

So, which is it? Are we responsible for keeping ourselves safe from apostasy, or is God? It is both! And, thank God it is both! If it were up to us alone, we could have no certainty. We would have no confidence. We are weak, easily deceived, and prone to failures.

Why does it say "**to Him who is able**"? Precisely because we are unable. We have responsibilities, but that doesn't mean we have the ability, on our own, to carry them out.

In our verses this morning we see man's responsibility and God's sovereignty on full display. You should feel the tension between those two truths. How can we understand the balance of these things? I'm not sure I can answer that, but I believe I can point to scripture to give us some idea of the truth.

You don't have to, but if you want to follow along, turn to Judges chapter 6. The story of Gideon is familiar to most of us, so I'm just going to touch on a few verses that I believe will be helpful. The preceding context for these verses is that Israel had done evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Midianites for seven years.

The way the Midianites oppressed Israel was to come up and destroy their produce, so there would be no sustenance for them. That is why, when we are introduced to Gideon he is threshing wheat inside a winepress, so that the Midianites wouldn't see the produce and destroy it.

Judges 6:11-14 - **11 Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!”**

**13 Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”**

**14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?”**

The Lord gave Gideon his marching orders, didn't he? Go save Israel from the Midianites. I want you to equate this to Jude telling you to keep yourselves in the love of God. Gideon had orders to follow and so do we.

Gideon obeyed God (at least he obeyed God in his own understanding) and began to amass a great army to fight the Midianites, but the Lord corrected him.

Listen to Judges 7:2&3 - **And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’ ” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.**

So, God cut the size of the army by two thirds, but the ten thousand remaining were still too many. If you're familiar with the story, God isn't satisfied with the size of the army until it's reduced to what? Three hundred! That's us, isn't it? When we hear we are to “keep ourselves in the love of God,” don't we feel like three hundred against an innumerable host? Think of it. The world is against us. Satan opposes us. Even our own flesh betrays us. As Jude has warned, even in the place where we take refuge from these things - the church - there are potential dangers to face.

Judges 7:19-22 - **19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” 21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. 22 When the three**

**hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled....**

Who won the battle? Who receives the glory for the victory? Would we say Gideon? No! God alone receives the glory for the victory. The best that can be said about Gideon is that he obediently played a part in God's victory over the Midianites. That's how we should understand the tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in our verses this morning. We are just Gideon.

- God is the one who is able to defeat vast armies.
- God is the one who is able to keep you in the faith.
- God receives all the glory. Amen?

God receives the glory not only because He is able to keep us from stumbling, that is, committing apostasy, but He is also able to - look at the rest of verse 24 - **present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.**

There is one reason, and one reason only, that God can present you faultless before His presence, and it has nothing to do with you cleaning yourself up or striving for holiness (though we should do those things). Anything you did would not reach the perfection that God requires. It would be an even worse situation than Gideon with his three hundred versus one hundred and thirty five thousand Midianites. Three hundred versus one hundred and thirty five thousand sounds like long odds, but to put it that way sounds like there's still a remote chance, however small.

Listen to what George Whitefield said, *"What! Get to heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!"*

It is impossible! Romans 3:20 says, **"by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight."**

We are unable, but God is able. The reason He is able to present you faultless before His presence is not based on what you have done, but it is based upon what His Son has done. He gave His Son as a sacrifice for sin. Just before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus said these words in John 17:1-2.

John 17:1&2 - **"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.**

What was He speaking of? How was Jesus asking the Father to glorify Him? By going to the cross! You might be thinking, How could He be glorified at the cross? He was humiliated at the cross!

- He was betrayed by His friend.
- He was rejected by His people. They cried out **"Crucify Him, crucify Him!"** (Luke 23:21)

- He received a sham trial.
- He was mocked by the soldiers.
  - They crowned him with a crown of thorns.
  - They dressed Him in purple and said, “**Hail, King of the Jews!**” (John 19:3)
  - They struck Him with their hands.
  - He was scourged.
  - They cast lots for His clothing.
- When He was crucified, the people came to watch and **the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”** (Luke 23:35)
- One of the criminals that was crucified with him **blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”** (Luke 23:39)
- The chief priests mocked Him saying, “**He saved others; Himself He cannot save.**” (Mark 15:31)

To the world, the cross looks like humiliation and defeat. What does it look like to us? When we think of the cross, we see God’s glory and victory. We see

- God’s magnificent love - that He would endure such things for us.
- God’s wisdom - to show sinners mercy and yet remain perfectly just.
- our sins being removed.
- our condemnation being poured out on Christ instead of us.
- Christ’s victory over the grave.

There’s one more thing about verse 24 I want you to see. How does God present us faultless before His glory? Is it begrudgingly? Is He cold toward us? Look! It says, “**with exceeding joy.**” In fact, what was it that enabled Jesus to endure the cross? It was looking ahead to the joy of saving His people and living with them for eternity.

Hebrews 12:2 - **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

All of the things He endured (the humiliation, the shame, the horrific death at the hand of sinners) only serve to magnify His glory in the eyes of His people, because He suffered as an innocent, righteous Man. Though the world cannot grasp it, Jesus was glorified for all eternity at the cross. Since that day, He has been lifted up, worshiped, and adored by countless Christians and that worship is going to continue into all eternity.

I want to end this message the way Jude ended his letter, with the doxology found in verse 25. These words are pure praise and don’t require explanation.

Jude 25:

**To God our Savior,  
Who alone is wise,**

**Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever.  
Amen.**

I will be up front after service and I'd invite you to come speak with me if you have any questions or if I can pray for you in any way.

Let's pray.