

Jude 22-23

Before I go forward I want to mention something else I studied this week on last week's text. Where it says "Keep yourselves in God's love" I made the emphasis that this is something we do by abiding in Christ. And I still think that is true. But I missed something that is important.

The word for **keep** is sort of a defensive word. It is similar to the word "guard". It means to guard from loss or injury. The word for "yourselves" can mean "one another". It depends on the context. So while my emphasis was that we should individually remain in an obedient relationship with Christ, the emphasis should also include everyone looking out for each other to make sure they also remain faithful to the Lord.

To me it is just one more evidence that we are truly all in this together. We were not designed to survive on our own. And it is particularly difficult to do so.

Now on to this week's text.

Jude has given a serious warning to his readers. He told them about the false teachers in no uncertain terms. Now he has just told the believers what they must do to protect themselves against the false teacher's influence. At this point he directs his reader's attention to another task at hand, the task of rescuing people.

I'd like to read 3 translations so you get the feel of the variations of the interpretation of this text.

Young's Literal says this: 22and to some be kind, judging thoroughly, 23and some in fear save ye, out of the fire snatching, hating even the coat from the flesh spotted.

King James says this: 22And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

The English Standard Version says this: 22And have mercy on those who doubt; 23save others by snatching them out of the

fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

New King James says this: 22And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

So we see right off the bat that some versions speak of three kinds of people needing saved and some speak of two.

But the general gist of the verses is the same. There are people who need rescued who are in different levels of being deceived.

We can't know for sure if Jude is referring to people who have been deceived by the false teachers or to the false teachers themselves. It doesn't really matter. Both need rescued. The teachers would normally pose more of a challenge than the deceived followers. But in reality, the salvation of anyone's soul always takes a miracle. Here is Jude telling these people to reach out to people who seem very unlikely to change. A good example of an unlikely salvation was Paul. Here was Paul, a Christian killer. When Ananias was told to approach Saul, you can imagine how he felt. It may be similar to how Jude's audience would feel reaching out to the false teachers.

Acts 9: 10Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias."

And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Here we see Ananias being told to minister to, what had to seem like, the least likely person in the universe to come to Christ. Yet Ananias is told to go, much like Jude's readers are in our text. We cannot know what goes on in a person's heart. We

can't know who God has singled out for himself. We do well to follow Ananias's example when we feel the need to witness to someone. Who knows what God will do. After all, Christ called us and how likely was that?

13Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

Ananias evidently knew of Paul's reputation. He wasn't just nasty to Christians. He put them to death. If ever a man had a reason not to follow the Lord's promptings to witness, this man did. Ananias points out that Paul is a real threat.

15But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

At the end of the day the most important thing about Paul was not what Paul had previously chosen to do. The most important thing about Paul was what **God** had chosen to do.

Remember that about your life as well. We may be able to point to a history that we are far from proud of and wonder how God could ever use someone like us. But we must always remember what happens when **God** chooses. When God chooses for something to happen, it happens. And we don't know what God might do in and through people like us. So expect His will to be accomplished in our lives and live courageously in Faith.

17And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18Immediately there fell from his

eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Look at the wonderful result that Ananias got to be part of. The most unlikely candidate for salvation was saved. And Ananias will always be known as the one who ministered to Paul in this crucial period of his Christian life. We don't know much about Ananias, but we know a lot about Paul. Sometimes a faithful act of an obedient Christian can have effects that are far greater than he would ever imagine. And our God has not changed a bit from Ananias till now.

So Jude tells his readers, after having warned them of the dangers this:

22And on some have compassion, making a distinction;

Compassion- To have pity on, to have compassion on.

As we as believers are looking for mercy from God in verse 21, we should be showing mercy to those who are falling prey to the enemy.

The word for making a distinction is just one word in the Greek. It is a word loaded with meaning. It is translated as judge, contend, doubt, differ, discern, waiver, stagger. It's primary meaning is to distinguish between persons.

Given that the first group of those in error are dealt with compassionately and the next group is dealt with forcefully I think the emphasis might be that Jude's readers should recognize that not everything that looks like a duck really is a duck.

When I lived at my parents it was my job to feed the cat. We fed the cat in the basement. One day I went down to feed the cat and thought I saw it in the corner of my eye. When I bent down to put food in the bowl it caused me to look in the cat's direction. The cat was really a raccoon just a few feet away from me. I don't think any of the food I was pouring actually made it into the bowl. My point is, I failed to make the distinction. When I did, it was quite a surprise. I think we often make that mistake in our ministries to one another.

I think often we assume the worst motives of fellow believers when really what they might be suffering is just stupidity. Sometimes those who appear to be rejecting the truth are really suffering from being deceived. I have often prepared myself gloriously for a battle that never materialized. Because the big guns were never needed. That is always a sweet feeling. It is always good to find out that I overestimated the evil in a brother's actions and that the brother really just wants to do the right thing but might need some help. I think that we do well when dealing with each other to start with questions. And we will often find that God is at work in that brother or sister preparing them for the ministry you will have to them.

So in Jude's case, there may be some who were confused about what the truth really is. The false teachers may have unsettled them. But in their heart of hearts they are truly followers of Christ. We need to discern that difference and treat them accordingly. We can afford to be gentle with them.

James 3:17 says 17But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Before jumping to conclusions we should find out what the facts are.

Now that's not to say that our ministry to win people back always goes well. Sometimes we will start with a gentle approach but it will have no effect. When that happens we must do all we can do. We move on to those who will only be affected by extreme measures.

And that is where Jude goes next:

23but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

But others- these are the ones that won't be won with compassion. These are more like the entrenched Pharisees.

With Fear- It is us that should fear. Why? Because the ideas of the false teachers are dangerous. Christ compares their

teaching to leaven and that theme is carried through the New Testament

Matt 16:6 6Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

12Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

I Cor 5: 6Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.

Gal 5: 7You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. 9A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

A false belief can do a great deal of damage, even in a true believers life. Ideas can be extremely dangerous. They are the fiery darts shot at us by the devil that do nothing but spread if not stopped by us taking every thought captive. If you think about it, every sin begins with an idea. And often the idea is sown long before we do the sinful act. The idea itself is dangerous. So it is not a small thing to enter into confrontation with a false teacher. They are dealers of dangerous ideas.

Proper fear is warranted.

Ministry to them is presented in very graphic terms. To save them would be to **pull them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**

To pull is to seize, carry off by force. This isn't sissy work. Being nice, even being gentle is not going to accomplish this ministry. Given that leaven is a similar danger, let's take a look at the ministry of Christ to the Pharisees, the dealers in leaven. I think they were pretty much in the same positions as those who are committed to the false teaching being done in Jude's day. We can learn by Christ's example of the type of ministry that needs done to reach out to those entrenched in their position of false teaching.

Luke 11:37-54

37And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat.

Now we know enough about Jesus to know that he wasn't thinking this would be a nice time with friends. Jesus knew what was in the hearts of men. Jesus knew this man would soon show himself to be Jesus's enemy. But he went to eat with him for some reason. I think it was at least to show us how to minister to those who stand against truth. The Pharisees were the conservatives of his day. They were the fundamentalists. They took the truth most literally. And people like Nichodemus showed that some, at least, were responsive to Christ's ministry. I think that Christ's ministry to them was an example for how we are to minister to those who boldly proclaim the Bible but are wrong about the core tenants. That would also include the false teachers that Jude spoke about. They are wrong, maybe not even sincerely so, but can be ministered to none the less. It is just a more confrontational approach.

38When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.

39Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. **40**Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? **41**But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.

Jesus didn't turn his back on the false teaching the Pharisees were doing. He directly addressed it. And He addressed it forcefully. The Pharisee was watching Jesus and running Jesus's actions through the Pharisees legalistic

doctrine. Jesus came up short of true holiness in the Pharisaic rule book. And the Pharisee was taken back by that. He expected Christ, as highly as HE was spoken of, to be a better Jew than that.

Note that Jesus didn't defend himself. He attacked the core of the Pharisees misunderstanding of the law of God- the very core of their false teaching. He even calls them "Foolish Ones." These were the men who were used to being venerated as the wise teachers. But Jesus won't play their game.

He attacked the external focus of the Pharisees teaching. Their teaching left some feeling like they **deserved** God's reward and others feeling like they **could never attain it**. But in reality the change on the **inside** is the change that **everyone needs** and **no one can accomplish**. Then he goes on to show them that they have missed that which is important and focused on that which mattered little.

42"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

43Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.

Now Christ begins to reveal the Pharisee's true motives for their behavior- men's applause, men's regard. It isn't for God that they put on such a show.

44Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them."

45Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also."

The lawyers or scribes worked hand in hand with the

Pharisees. And it is almost like this guy is telling Christ he might want to consider the implications of what He is saying. Surely Christ wasn't wanting to insult the Pharisees and the Scribes.

46And He said, **"Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47**Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. **48**In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. **49**Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' **50**that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, **51**from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.

52"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

53And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, **54**lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.

Notice that Jesus struck at the heart of their error. He called what they were doing evil. And he pulled no punches in doing so. Why? Because the only way these people can get right with God is to repent, is to see their sin, to see their need for a Savior, and to call out to God for a salvation that they **cannot deserve** and **cannot attain to**. They must understand that the only way they will be saved is by grace through faith. It won't be of their efforts

in any way. So the ministry is harsh. It is true, every word of it. But it is harsh.

I think this is Jesus's example of forcefully pulling people out of the fire. Jesus words of truth were the only chance the Pharisees would get. Just like a true minister laying out the error to an entrenched false teacher will be the only chance the false teacher will have. We should first discern the difference, so we don't bring out bigger guns than are needed for those who are just genuinely confused. But we cannot be afraid of taking on a false teacher head on, directly refuting by using scripture, the core tenants of their false teaching.

The fire in Jude is probably talking about hell fire. The false teachers are headed in that direction and running toward it at breakneck speed. It is almost as if they are already in it. And we all know what we would do if we had the chance to pull someone from a house fire. We would grab whatever we could grab and pull as hard as we could to rescue their lives. Rules of politeness and appropriateness would be temporarily put in limbo. All that matters is pulling this person from the fire and by so doing saving his or her life. This is the imagery used by Jude to create that kind of urgency in the ministry to even these false teachers.

hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

This is strong language that Jude uses, even gross language. The interpreters make it a little more palatable. But the original language would have made it objectionable to the delicate. These are basically akin to undergarments stained by human excrement. Now, think how you handle such a thing. You certainly don't cling to it. You certainly don't view it with any kind of respect. You want rid of it as soon as you can possibly do so. That is what the treatment of these folks error should be like when they turn from their error. Their repentance if true needs to be dramatic. Because the lies they were telling, the leaven they were spreading, was so demonic that it cannot even be allowed to remain to exist in the life of a believer.

For application this week, at this church, at this moment, I don't know of any false teachers. But I know that all of us have false ideas. We all have the seeds in motive and thought for false teaching. All it takes is to allow a lie in our thinking to go unchallenged. Given all that Christ says about leaven and its danger we do well to ask ourselves- WHAT LIES AM I BELIEVING?

Here is some homework for this week. You might want to jot it down. Think back over your life. Look for re-occurring problems. Maybe it is a sin we just never really gave up and it keeps raising its ugly head. Maybe it is a sinful habit of thought that we get caught in and spiral down. Maybe it is a pattern of relational trouble with fellow believers. Whatever it is, you can be sure it is fueled by lies. Ask God to show you the lies that you believe that create these problems. This is the kind of prayer God will answer. When He does, then find the truth in scripture that counters these lies.

As believers, we don't need TO BE what we always were. If God is telling the truth, we have the resurrection power of Christ coursing through our veins. And that has to make a difference.

What do I believe about myself and others and life that is untrue? What does scripture say that contrasts what I believe. And what would change if I believed scripture instead my errant ideas. You can rest assured, it is God's will for your life to believe what He says. And when you do your life will change to look more and more like Christ's.

Also keep your eye out for opportunities to witness to those you view as being those least likely to respond. God might have some exciting appointments scheduled for you.