

Church Under Attack, II
Why it Matters How We Live

In his book, *The Grace Awakening*, Chuck R. Swindoll writes, "In the great state of California there are many picturesque roads and highways through mountainous areas. Though some are narrow and a bit treacherous, all of them lead through sights that are breathtakingly beautiful. Those who have driven the Pacific Coast Highway, Highway 1, can never forget the incredible natural scenes that stretch along the craggy coastline from Los Angeles to San Francisco. A few of the curves are especially dangerous and must be driven slowly and with great care. There are treacherous drop-offs, which add both to the beauty and the danger of the journey.

It occurred to me that our state could offer two options to travelers along these dangerous mountain roads. First, the state could build very well equipped clinics at the bottom of those high elevations where the narrow roads twist and turn. Every sharp curve could be provided with a clinic down below. When speeding drivers went over the side and tumbled down the cliff, those in the clinic would be there to rescue and treat them. Second, the state could erect very clear, well-placed signs before each sharp curve, reading "Danger! Curve Ahead. Drive Slowly." You are not surprised to know that the highway department chose the second option, not the first. Smart plan. We should learn from that decision."

Life's a whole lot easier if you avoid disasters rather than to try to clean them up afterwards.

Listen to some of these verses from the book of Proverbs:

Pr 1:5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.

Pr 11:14 Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Pr 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.

Pr 15:22 Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Pr 19:20 Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days.

Last week we looked at the beginning of the short epistle of Jude in the NT. I'd like you to turn there again this morning. **Jude pg 1087**

We saw last week that this little letter was written by one of the brothers of Jesus.

Judas or Jude, which are both translations of the same word, was typical of Jesus' other brothers.

During Jesus' lifetime Jude didn't believe his brother was Messiah, or Savior. But after Jesus' resurrection there was no more doubt in Jude's mind.

Acts 1:14 describes what happens in the upper room after Jesus ascended back to heaven. It says, *(The disciples) all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.* From that point on, Jude was a totally devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

This letter of Jude is classified as one of what we call the General Epistles. These are NT letters like James, I Peter, I John that weren't addressed to a specific person or church.

When you're reading a book of the Bible it's always helpful to identify the key verse. We call it that because it unlocks the meaning for the rest of the book.

In Jude the key verse is verse 3. So let's go back there today to refresh our memories. This is the main point, the heart, of this letter.

Read vs 3

Listen to what some other translations do with vs 3:

stand up for the faith

strive strongly for the faith

agonize for the faith

hold very strongly to what you do believe

defend the faith

That's the heart of Jude's message. Earnestly commit yourself to guarding God's truth, and here's the reason, **VS 4 read...**

From the very beginning there have been people who want to take the purity of God's Word, the Bible, and twist it for their own ends. The worst part of this is, as Jude says, they creep in unnoticed.

Right now our Supreme Court is hearing a case in which Michael Newdow has sued saying the phrase "under God" should be removed from the pledge of allegiance.

His argument is, that he as an atheist can't in good conscience, pledge allegiance to the US if he's forced to say "under God."

Justice Stephen Breyer suggested "under God" had acquired a broad meaning and "civic context" so "it's meant to include virtually everybody, and the few whom it doesn't include don't have to take the pledge."

Newdow hit the nail on the head when he came and said, it can't be interpreted to mean "there is no God."

I personally believe there's a danger if the court decides that 'under God' is merely one part of a traditional display of patriotism.

Under God means we recognize God as the author of freedom.

Our Declaration of Independence says: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

If we're not creations of Almighty God then we have no rights. Our founding fathers knew that. If the court says, "Under God" is just tradition and patriotism, even if they leave the words there, it's just one more nail in the coffin for the US.

Now if Michael Newdow says that the Bible is a book of myths and fables we wouldn't be surprised. We would understand that completely. But when Pastors, teachers, and seminary professors say that there is no absolute truth, and the Bible is unreliable, that's what becomes confusing to people.

It's not that attacks from the outside that cause the most difficulty. You can see those coming. It's when someone rises up from inside Christianity that causes the confusion.

It only took a few decades after Jesus walked the earth for people who were anti-Christian to sneak in to the church and bring confusion.

Jude's warning us, watch out, be careful, hang on, because the truth is always under attack.

Acts 20 records a warning to the elders in a church in Ephesus: *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from*

among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

The attacks come from the outside and the inside. Watch out.

Watch out because it's a whole lot easier if you avoid disasters rather than to try to clean them up afterwards.

There are conservative, Bible-believing Christians in every one of our major denominations in this country. They're working hard to reverse the trends in their denominations but it's a tough assignment.

Unfortunately, most of the seminaries that train the pastors for the big denominations are filled with professors who think the Bible is myth. That's why in the 30 years from 1970 to 2000 the UMC lost 27% of their members. For PCUSA it's 18%. Episcopal Church USA 21%. United Church of Christ 23%.

Those are staggering losses. And all this at time when our nation's population increased by 35%.

Another report says: Those who are studying for the Christian ministry are shunning mainline Protestant institutions and enrolling in conservative seminaries in greater numbers. The transition has become so pronounced that at least one former world-class mainline seminary – Union Theological Seminary in New York – is struggling for survival.

The reason why couldn't be anymore obvious. If you tell people that the Bible isn't true then eventually they're going to stop coming to church, right? Why would you come to learn about something that isn't true.

If it's not true then forget it. That's how I feel. If the Bible isn't true then I'm not going to waste my time learning it. I'm surly not going to stake my eternal destiny on it.

If the Bible isn't true then it's completely irrelevant and church is meaningless.

The thing is, the Bible is true. The accuracy of God's word can be substantiated in so many ways. Even a cursory study of the prophecies in the Bible show that this book didn't originate in the mind of man.

God used human authors to write His truth in an accurate, understandable, and practice way. And the forces of darkness hate God, His Word, and His people. And are ready to undermine and corrupt God's truth.

So Jude warns us about the battle. Jude is encouraging us to put up the *Danger! Curve Ahead. Drive Slowly* signs.

Last week we saw, it really does matter what we believe. This week we want to see the corollary to that: It really does matter how we live.

In light of those who would come along and try to discount God's Word and undermine His authority this is how we're to live. This is how we prepare for the onslaught:

I. Remember the Instruction Book **Read vs 17-19**

Jude says, "Remember the words of the apostles." Some of those people could actually remember the words because they were contemporaries of the apostles.

But most of them were like us. They had to read the words of the apostles. We read their words in the Bible.

There's plenty of warnings in the Bible about deceivers who undermine the truth of Scripture.

Gary Greenberg is the president of the Biblical Archaeology Society of New York and a trial lawyer. He wrote a book titled *101 Myths of the Bible* which basically says that Jewish writers stole stories from Egyptian myths. He argues that since the Israelites spent 400 years in Egypt before the Exodus they had plenty of time to get indoctrinated.

That's interesting because his fellow Bible critics think the exodus is a myth and that the Jews were never there.

Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., Ph.D. is a professor of biblical and constructive theology at Chicago Theological Seminary and is a United Methodist clergyman. He's written: *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament*.

One reviewer says: "The Man Jesus Loved" clears away centuries of traditional Christian

teaching to reexamine Jesus' positions...This book is an excellent start on reclaiming Christianity from Traditionalists.

These are the real attacks we need to watch out for.

An eighteen-year-old took a Seattle police car for a joyride. The theft was reported on law-enforcement broadcasts, and a bicycle patrol officer in downtown Seattle spotted it. A police car immediately gave chase but lost sight of the stolen vehicle after pausing to check for oncoming traffic at an intersection. It was then that a second police car pulled up and - thinking the stopped car was the stolen vehicle - rammed it from behind.

Two policemen in the car that had been hit thought they were under attack. So they pulled out their guns and started shooting. A police spokesperson said the officers involved - two in the rammed car and one in the other - exchanged more than twenty rounds before they discovered their mistake: **THEY WERE SHOOTING AT ONE ANOTHER!**

Sometimes that's the way we act as Christians. We take pot shots at each other when we're really on the same side.

Its those who attack the Bible and mock God who are partnering with the enemy.

How are we going to know truth? *...remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ...*

God has given us an instruction manual. He's given us a battle plan. It's absolutely vital that we know what God's Word says.

We're at war, but we're not at war with one another!

The real enemy isn't even Greenberg or Jennings, with their books.

Eph. 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

There's a constant, unrelenting assault on God's name, on God's truth and on God's people. Our defense is we need to be people of the Book.

I. *Remember The Instruction Book*

II. *Keep in Shape* **Read v 20-21**

On Fort Knox, Fort Benning, and Fort Jackson new recruits are in a new kind of basic training.

Now that nearly half of all new soldiers go straight to Afghanistan, Iraq or to units preparing to deploy to war, the training is being overhauled for the first time in decades to immerse soldiers into the realities of modern warfare.

That includes training for fighting in city streets, detaining civilians and dealing with the threat of suicide bombers.

This especially affects support personnel, like cooks and mechanics. In the past they didn't get as much combat training.

It used to be that most support troops were far from the front lines, but that's not true in Iraq where a supply clerk is just as likely as an infantryman to face a roadside bomb.

For these men and women basic training just got that much harder. Why?

Pvt. Timothy Wilson said, "What we're learning here is going to save our lives and more importantly, the lives of our buddies out there."

Jude says we need to be building ourselves up on our most holy faith. Now obviously, in order to build yourself up on your faith, you have the faith to begin with.

I have no doubt that there are people sitting here this morning who have not come to that place in their spiritual life where they've trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.

If you fall into that category please listen carefully.

The Bible says Every Person Has a Need

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). By committing just one sin, we fail to meet God's standard of perfection. Because God is holy, He can't allow any sin to enter His heaven. The Bible says, *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)* Since we've all committed plenty more than one sin we're in trouble. So how can anyone overcome the penalty of sin and go to heaven?

Most people think it has something to do with being good enough. Going to church, being baptized, and practicing good morals are good, but they don't satisfy God's holy demands. According to the Bible, *a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.* (Galatians 2:16)

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for sin. He died on the cross to pay for your sins, all of them. *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8)

Jesus died to pay for all your sin. Hebrews 9:22 says *without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness) of sin.* On the third day after His death, Jesus rose from the dead, demonstrating His divine power over sin and death. This is God's great gift to every person: complete payment for sin. All we can do is receive the gift. How do we receive it?

The Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31) Believing means that after you realize you are a sinner, you completely trust in Jesus and what He did for you as payment for your sin.

The Bible says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16) Out of gratitude to God, your desires, actions, will, your entire life - all begin to change. He loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.

Recognize that you can't do anything in your own strength to overcome the penalty of sin. Place your complete trust in Christ! *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

When we receive Christ, then we have the foundation to grow. Life is God's boot camp and He's using the stuff of life to build up our confidence in Him.

For those of us who have trusted Christ as Savior Jude's telling us to build ourselves up on our faith. That's a clue there is going to be some work required on our part. God doesn't automatically zap us with all the knowledge and wisdom that we will ever need for our Christian walk. We have to put some effort into it.

What do we do at boot camp?

We build ourselves up by;

1) praying in the Holy Spirit; That means prayer that's guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

2) keeping yourself in the love of God; God's love is like the sun. It's always shining down on us. The problem is, sometimes we want to duck in a cave or shield ourselves from the sunlight.

I John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

3) looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; That refers to the second coming. Keep your hope sharp and bright, looking for the intervention again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. *Remember The Instruction Book*

II. *Keep in Shape*

III. *Demonstrate Compassion On The War-torn* **Read vs 22-23**

You'll see verse 22 translated a couple of different ways. The NKJV says, "making a distinction," while NIV says, "those who doubt."

You might wonder, "Why the difference?" It's because the word that Jude used in the original has a couple of different meanings. There's a lot of words in English that have multiple meanings too.

We can climb the elephants trunk, empty the old trunk in the attic, cut down a tree trunk, or put our spare tire in the trunk of our car.

This word, *diakrino*, literally means "to judge through." Sometimes it's translated "distinction," sometimes "difference," sometimes "contend," and sometimes "doubt."

It has to do with making a distinction, therefore there's two sides: two sides of an argument, or going back and forth in doubting.

Jude writes talk about the doubting, and the burning. Two classes of people who are suffering the ravages of this battle.

The doubting are those who have been swayed by a false message. They could be swayed by cult members who have come to their door and got them confused. They could be a university student who has a professor who spouts off a bunch of liberal criticism about the Bible and confuses them.

Jude says, “have compassion.” You don’t have to back down from God’s truth, but the biblical command is, “speak the truth in love.” Don’t argue with people about God’s truth, just present it.

Don’t knock the person or the organization that’s brought the confusion. Just focus on the joy of salvation. Let them you know you’re not trying to win an argument. You care about them.

The burning are those who aren’t just dabbling with false doctrine, they’ve jumped in with both feet. Jude says these take a dramatic rescue mission. But he warns us, “Watch out. Be careful.”

There are some you can’t help. Maybe you aren’t experienced enough, or old enough yet. Maybe you’re not wise enough to help these others.

Even the strongest believers have to handle them with great caution. It takes a good knowledge of the Word of God, a faithful walk with God, an understanding of Satan’s devices, and spiritual discernment.

It’s always easier to disciple new believers and keep them away from false teachers than it is to snatch them out of the fire.

- I. Remember The Instruction Book*
- II. Keep in Shape*
- III. Demonstrate Compassion On The War-torn*
- IV. Show allegiance to the commander and chief*

Does it really matter how we live? If we’re saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, then what’s the motivation for living out the truth? If we’re secure in Christ, what does it matter?

Read vs 24-25

Getting to heaven is not of works lest anyone should boast, but standing before what the Bible calls The Judgment Seat of Christ, is all about works.

II Corinthians 5: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

I Corinthians 3: Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Bob Wilkin writes: "The context makes it clear that Jude is encouraging believers to look to the One who can keep them from being duped by false teachers. To suggest that in v 24 Jude was unconditionally guaranteeing his readers that they wouldn't be tricked is to destroy the whole point of the letter. It was Jude's concern that his readers would be conned by the false teachers that prompted him to write this letter.

What is in view is the future judgment of believers, the Judgment Seat of Christ. That is the time when every believer will be presented by the Lord Jesus before the Father.

Not all believers will be presented as "faultless." Nor will all believers have "exceeding joy" at the Judgement seat. Only believers who lived faithful lives will have such an experience."

Why does it matter how we live? Because, if we really understand God and what He has done for us, our passion will be to please Him. To hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" at the judgment seat.

Why does it matter how we live?

Because our Commander and Chief is also our Savior.

Only He is wise.

Only He deserves all glory and majesty

Because only He has all dominion and power both now and forever, amen.

Why does it matter how we live?

Because it's not all about me. It's all about God. And how I live my life needs to be all about God too.