

“A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL”

“A Call To Arms!”

Scripture Reading – Jude, 1:1-8

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James: To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.

‘We ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

II Thessalonians, 2:13-14, NIV

This series, ‘A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL’, is based on the letter of Jude.

To protect from harm, to guard from attack, to repulse enemies – for centuries rugged defenders have built walls, launched missiles, and waged wars, expending materiel and human resources in the battle to save nations and cities. With total commitment and courageous abandon, individuals have fought for their families. It is a rule of life that we fight for survival, defending with all our strength what is most precious to us, from every real or imagined attack.

There are many people who live in opposition to God and his followers.

They twist God's truth, seeking to deceive and destroy the unwary, but God's truth must go forth, carried and defended by those who have committed their lives to God's Son. It is an important task, an awesome responsibility, and a profound privilege to have this commission.

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The New Testament\Jude\A Handbook For Survival\01 A Call To Arms!

This was Jude's message to Christians everywhere.

Opposition would come and godless teachers would arise, but Christians should ‘**CONTEND FOR THE FAITH**’ by rejecting all falsehood and immorality, remembering God's mighty acts of rescue and punishment, and the warnings of the apostles. His readers are encouraged to build up their own faith through prayer, keeping close to Christ, helping others, and hating sin. Finally, Jude concludes with a glorious benediction of praise to God.

There are many false teachers waiting to destroy your Christ-centred life, the credibility of God's Word, and the unity of the Body of Christ. THE LETTER OF JUDE calls Christians to stand firm in their faith and defend God's truth at all costs, because nothing else is more valuable...

“A CALL TO ARMS!”

Today, we start a new series under the theme ‘A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL’.

It has been said that THE LETTER OF JUDE is largely unknown and seldom read. But in this series, we will carefully consider much of its teaching. For the great majority of modern readers, the letter is a bewildering rather than a profitable undertaking.

J B Mayer wrote: ‘TO A MODERN READER IT IS CURIOUS RATHER THAN EDIFYING WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE BEGINNING AND THE END’. **James Moffatt** calls the letter: ‘A FIERY CROSS TO ROUSE THE CHURCHES’. Although the letter is short – only twenty-five verses – it contains spiritual dynamite.

It is my prayer that our study of this letter will be profitable to you as an individual and to us all as an Army of Salvation. Once we understand the author's thought, and disentangle the situation against which he was writing, we will see that JUDE is one of the most relevant books for our day...

1. WHO WROTE THE LETTER?

‘Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.’

Jude, 1:1a, NIV

Few things tell more about a man than the way in which he speaks of himself.

Few things are more revealing than the titles by which he wishes to be known. Jude's first sentence tells us two things about him: (i) Jude was a man well content with second place, and (ii) the only title of honour which he would allow himself was to be recognised as a servant of Jesus Christ.

JUDE CALLS HIMSELF A BROTHER OF JAMES

Since the author of this letter was the brother of James, this would make him the half brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord's brothers in the flesh did not believe in him while he was ministering, but after the Resurrection, James was converted, and we have every reason to believe that Jude was also saved at that time. **Acts, 1:14** informs us that ‘**HIS BROTHERS**’ were part of the praying group that was awaiting the Holy Spirit, and the Lord's brothers were well known within the Early Christian Church.

JUDE CALLS HIMSELF A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

The Greek word for 'SERVANT' is 'DOULOS' and it literally means 'BOND SLAVE'.

It is not just a person who serves for the moment; this is a permanent condition in life. It is not simply being a servant – because a servant is paid; it is being a slave – someone who is owned by another. A bond slave had no personal possessions and no personal rights. That means that if it pleased his master then the bond slave would die for him.

John Newton, who wrote the hymn 'AMAZING GRACE', was 'A SLAVE OF SLAVES'.

Newton became a British sailor, but when he deserted, he found himself at the home of a Portuguese slave trader. While this man was absent from his home, Newton was treated like a dog by the black woman who was the chief of the trader's harem. For months, he was forced to grovel in the dirt and pick up his food from the ground with his mouth, being lashed by a slave if he touched it with his hands. Such was life for 'A SLAVE OF SLAVES'.

Are you a true Christian brother and a servant or slave of Jesus Christ?

Are you prepared to live your life in a way that shows you are the possession of another?

2. WHY WAS THE LETTER WRITTEN?

'Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.'

Jude, 1:3, NIV

So much for the identification of the author, why did Jude write his letter?

To warn his readers that the 'APOSTATES' – people who turn away from God's truth and embrace false teachings – were already on the scene! Peter had prophesied that they would come, and this prophecy had been fulfilled. Jude wrote to the same believers who had received Peter's letters, intending to stir them up and remind them to take Peter's warnings to heart. As we study this letter, you will note that there are parallels between JUDE and II PETER.

Jude emphasised the relationship between correct doctrine and true faith.

The truth of the Bible must not be compromised because it gives us the real facts about Jesus and our salvation. The Bible was inspired by God, and should never be twisted or manipulated. When it is, we can become confused over right and wrong and lose sight of the only path that leads to eternal life. Jude felt he had to set his readers back on the right track, calling them back to the basics of their faith so that the way of salvation would be clearer.

Jude wrote to urge and exhort them.

In the Greek language, the word 'URGE' was used to describe a General, giving orders to the Army; hence the atmosphere of this letter is somewhat military. Jude had started to write a quiet devotional letter about the joys of salvation, but the Holy Spirit led him to put down his harp and sound the trumpet. In a real sense, THE LETTER OF JUDE really is 'A CALL TO ARMS'.

What battle does Jude want us to get armed for?

'I URGE YOU TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH THAT WAS ONCE FOR ALL ENTRUSTED TO THE SAINTS'

FAITH IS COMPLETE

The Christian Faith and the Word of God are complete.

There is not one addition to be made to it. There is not one subtraction to be made from it. We live in a world today that delights in picking and choosing that which fits its own requirements. People accept what they want and totally reject what they do not. However, faith is complete in every respect. We need no revelation, and anything that purports to be such is not truth.

I am reminded of the man who stood up and read the scriptures and said if there are no additions or corrections, the scriptures stand approved as read. The reality is there are no additions to me made – if it is new, it is not true! The reality is there are no corrections – God may give you insightful clarifications, he might illumine the truth to you, but there is nothing to correct.

Jude spoke out against 'DREAMERS WHO POLLUTE' (verse 8).

Who are these dreamers? They are not those who come to church and fall asleep during the sermon! They look so reverent when they sit down, and they pretend they are meditating, but we know what they are really doing! Jude is talking about people who have visions; people who have revelations contrary to God's Word; people who make things up. The Bible and the Faith have been signed, sealed, delivered, and entrusted to us.

FAITH IS CORRECT

The Christian Faith and the Word of God are correct.

If you are a dreamer, then you are a bit of a visionary. The problem is that if you get some new revelation, it may well be wrong. There is a big difference between being certain and being right. Do you realise that you can be certain about something, but still be wrong? Sometimes you can be completely certain that you are right about an issue, only to discover that you were entirely wrong about it.

Only when we base our faith squarely on Scripture can we know it is correct.

That is why we are told to 'TEST THE SPIRITS' and discover whether or not revelations or testimonies are in keeping with Scripture. Remember that the Bible is one thing that does not change with the going fad or the times. Only when we compare the Faith to Scripture can we really know if it is truly genuine.

The apostle Peter was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He saw the Lord transfigured before his own eyes. He heard God speak from heaven and say that he approved of his Son Jesus. Many years later, Peter wrote about having something more sure than what he had seen and more sure than what he had heard. Valid as it may have been, he was certain of the Word of God (see II Peter 1:19).

FAITH COMMITTED TO YOU

The Christian Faith and the Word of God have been entrusted to the saints.

If it has been entrusted to us, then we have a duty to defend it. People say that you do not need to defend the Bible because the Bible can defend itself. Whilst that is true up to a point, we have received a rallying call to stand up for the Faith and speak up for the Bible.

John Calvin said that a dog barks when his master is attacked.

We would be cowards if we did not stand up to defend the faith when it is under attack. Christians may not want to seem contentious or distasteful, but we must 'CONTEND'.

*Guard the Bible well, all its foes repel, for its pages tell of the Lord;
Guard what God revealed, our sun and shield; never, never yield his holy word.*

3. WHO RECEIVED THE LETTER?

'To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.'

Jude, 1:1b-2, NIV

The true Captain of the Army is Jesus Christ, and the soldiers he commands are people who share a common salvation through faith in him. They are recipients of heaven's blessings, and this abundance should be our motivation to receive the call up papers...

GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE

'TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED'

The very first reason we should 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' is that we have been called.

God has called us because he has a sovereign purpose for our lives. When Jude uses the word 'CALLED', he is using it in the sense of 'AN OFFICIAL SUMMONS'. Christians are those who are called by God. The Greek for 'CALL' is 'KALEIN' and it has three great uses...

'KALEIN' is used for summoning a man to office, to duty, and to responsibility.

The Christian is summoned to a task, duty, and responsibility in the service of Christ.

'KALEIN' is used for summoning a man to a feast or a festival.

It is the word for an invitation to a happy occasion.

The Christian is the man who is summoned to the joy of being the guest of God.

'KALEIN' is used for summoning a man to judgment.

It is the word for calling a man to court that he may give an account of himself.

The Christian is in the end summoned to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Bible tells us that we 'HAVE BEEN CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE'.

'We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.'

Romans, 8:28-30, NIV

Someone has called these verses 'THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF SALVATION':

God has foreknowledge.

We believe that God is omniscient. He is all-knowing. Therefore, we can be confident in the knowledge that the Almighty is never taken by surprise. He knows from all eternity every detail about you. He knows from all eternity who will respond to the Gospel message. In other words, God foreknows that the one he has set his affection on will ultimately come to him.

Whom God foreknows, he predestines.

In other words, God has predetermined ahead of time that all those who hear the Gospel message and respond to his love will be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whom God predestines, he calls.

God calls that person by sending to them the Gospel so that they can hear it, believe it, and then receive it.

Whom God calls, he justifies.

What does it mean to be justified? It means that we are made like the Lord Jesus Christ in God's sight. We are absolutely, totally, righteous and justified by the grace of God. Someone said that to be justified makes us 'JUST AS IF I'D NEVER SINNED'.

Whom God justifies, he glorifies.

Note that Paul wrote God sees us already as glorified. We often assume that we will not be glorified until we find ourselves in Glory, but as God is in eternity, it is the way he already sees us. That which has been settled in eternity cannot be undone in time. That which has been decreed in heaven can never be annulled by hell.

GOD'S SANCTIFIED PEOPLE

'TO THOSE WHO ARE LOVED BY GOD THE FATHER'

The second reason we should 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' is that we are loved.

The KJV uses the word 'BELOVED'. Beloved is a great word because it means that there is a finished action in the past that has an effect on the present. It is something that cannot be changed. It is fixed, it is settled. We are God's beloved – for ever!

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more.

There is nothing you can do to make God love you less.

God cannot love you any more, nor any less.

He does not love us because we are valuable – we are valuable because he loves us. He does not change us so he can love us – he loves us so he can change us. He just loves us, full stop!

How much does God love us?

'Jesus said, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.'

John, 17:23, NIV

God loves you and me as much as he loves the Lord Jesus!

'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!'

I John, 3:1a, NIV

I heard of a Red Indian who was sending a message to his girlfriend using smoke signals. He had a little fire on one hill and she was way over across the valley on a hill many miles away. He was sending up little puffs of smoke trying to tell her how much he loved her, when way out in the desert in the distance, an atomic bomb was exploded. He looked over on the horizon, saw the huge mushroom cloud, and said, "I wish I had said that".

This is what John found difficult – 'HOW GREAT THE LOVE'.

It is as if he just could not, no matter how hard he tried, find the words to describe the full measure of the love of God. I suppose he was struggling with super love, or fantastic love, or colossal love, or spectacular love.

We are loved with supercalifragilisticexpialidocious love!

GOD'S SURE PROTECTION

'TO THOSE WHO ARE KEPT BY JESUS CHRIST'

The third reason we should 'CONTENT FOR THE FAITH' is that we are preserved.

I have always liked the word 'PRESERVED' because so many Christians look pickled! However, 'KEPT' is a much better word. The idea behind it is not of a prison guard keeping watch over prisoners – the Bible uses a different word for that – but it has the idea of a mother who is watching over a little baby with tender loving care.

'Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one".'

John, 10:27-30, NIV

Just as a shepherd protects his sheep, Jesus protects his people from harm.

While believers can expect to suffer on earth, Satan cannot harm their souls or take away their eternal life with God. There are many reasons to be afraid here on earth because this is the devil's domain. But if you choose to follow Jesus, he will give you everlasting safety.

'Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.'

II Timothy, 1:12b, NIV

Because we are set apart and kept, God's soldiers are the recipients of God's blessings...

'Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.'

Jude, 1:2, NIV


Jude wanted these special blessings to be multiplied in their lives...

 **God in his mercy does not give us what we deserve.**

Instead, he gave our punishment to his own Son on the cross.

'Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.'

Isaiah, 53:4-5, NIV

 **Because of Christ's work on the cross, believers enjoy peace.**

The unsaved person is at war with God and cannot please him, but when he trusts the Saviour, the war ends and he receives God's peace.

'Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.'

Romans, 5:1-2, NIV

 **He also experiences God's love.**

The cross is God's demonstration of love, but his love is not experienced within until his Spirit comes into the believing heart. As the believer grows in his spiritual life, he enters into a deeper relationship of love.

'Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me".'

John, 14:23-24, NIV

Jude was addressing a spiritual army and was issuing A CALL TO ARMS.

If you have trusted Jesus Christ, you are in this army. God is not looking for volunteers, because he has already enlisted you. The question is not: 'SHALL I BECOME A SOLDIER?' Rather, it is: 'WILL I BE A LOYAL SOLDIER?'

Isaac Watts preached a sermon on I Corinthians, 16:13: 'BE ON YOUR GUARD; STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH; BE MEN OF COURAGE; BE STRONG'. When he published the sermon, he added a poem to it. We sing it today as one of our spiritual songs.

*Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own his cause, or blush to speak his name?
Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease,
While others fight to win the prize, and sail through stormy seas?*

Isaac Watts, SASB 678:1-2

"GUARD WHAT GOD REVEALED; NEVER, NEVER YIELD HIS HOLY WORD"