

## **Contending for the Faith**

### **Operation Rescue**

#### **Jude 22-25**

### **Introduction**

Adrian Rogers introduced his comments on Jude by asking, "What do these schools have in common? Harvard, Yale, Columbia, William and Mary, Dartmouth, and Princeton? The answer: They were all founded and built for the propagation of the Gospel. Every one of them had a Biblical foundation established for the training of ministers and Christian laypeople dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ across America. Tragically, every one of these schools has long ago abandoned their founding purpose. Is it any wonder our educational system today is a complete disaster? The same thing has happened to many once-great Christian denominations. And the same thing is happening today in many local churches.

The Christian faith is experiencing one of the greatest periods of apostasy in history. These are times when Jude would say we must contend earnestly for the Faith! We must never be ungracious or antagonistic, but we must never surrender our faith in Jesus Christ as God's only begotten Son and the future ruler of the world. Sadly, the church today has gone from a house of prayer to a place where apostates prey on the innocent and oppose the faithful. Jesus said to the money changers in His day, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE IS A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES.'" (Luke 19:46 NKJV)

He might very well say the same thing to the church today! Jude exhorts believers to be strong in the Faith so they can repel these ungodly and false teachers. Many leaders today are controlled by the spirit of the antichrist. They claim to have God's power and authority but disdain and reject Jesus and His teachings. These characteristics are always true of false teachers:

1. They don't fellowship with seasoned saints,
2. They deny Jesus as God's only Messiah,
3. They prey on the weak and innocent and,
4. They disrupt established leadership.

Jude warns believers to protect themselves against this spirit of the antichrist by depending upon the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. We do that by learning and understanding the truth of Scripture and remaining in fellowship with the saints. As he concludes his letter, Jude urges those strong in Faith to have compassion on those who are weak and rescue those who are in danger of perishing.

### **I. Reach Out to Those Who Doubt or Waver**

Believers who are new to the faith are especially vulnerable to false teachings. And others who are weak in faith are also easy prey for the apostates. Jude challenges those grounded in the faith to reach out to those who have doubts or are wavering.

In verse 22 Jude writes, "And on some have compassion, making a distinction;"  
([Jude 1:22 NKJV](#))

- The Amplified says, "on some have mercy who waver and doubt."
- Barclay says, "Some of them you must argue out of their error, while they are still wavering."
- The TLB says, "Try to help those who argue against you. Be merciful to those who doubt."
- The NLT says, "Show mercy to those whose faith is wavering."
- The NIV says, "Be merciful to those who doubt;"

To build a firm foundation of Faith, Jude says:

- Remember the Word v.17
- Read the Word v.20
- Pray the Word v. 20
- Obey the Word v. 20
- Watch for the Living Word to come. v.21

Jude now instructs those who are strong in Faith to actively pursue and contend with those who do not have a firm foundation for their Faith. It is the responsibility of those who are strong in the Faith to reach out to those who are easily influenced by false teachings. Jude recognizes that his readers need more than just a warning; they also needed a plan of attack.

Instead of being merely defensive, we must become proactive in our fight for the Faith. And this meant taking action—not only to reinforce our own spiritual armor but also to come to the aid of others in the church. To do this, we desperately need to develop discernment. We must be able to recognize the difference between truth and error. Otherwise, we will not know what to embrace and what to reject. You can't "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" unless you can discern authentic Faith from its counterfeits.

Keep in mind too that those who waver under the influence of false teachers should not be written off or ignored. Jude says we must show mercy to those who struggle with doubts recognizing that with God's grace, we can rescue them. Even those who seem to have aligned themselves with the teachings and behaviors of the false teachers should not cause us to give up on them. With the truth of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can snatch them from the fire that threatens to destroy them.

It would be easy to become critical or ignore those who fall prey to false teachers. But Jude calls upon us to contend for the Faith! We must seek them out and challenge them with Scripture and reach out to them with mercy and grace before they are consumed and destroyed by the teachings of the apostates. And by the way, showing mercy is far more likely to rescue someone and bring them back into the fold than harsh criticism.

This kind of ministry demands a great deal of love and patience, and we must keep in mind that some immature believers are like little children who think they know right from wrong. If you say no to them, they will only rebel and become more stubborn! Sir John Seeley said: "When the power of reclaiming the lost dies out of the church, it ceases to be the church."

Other people are attracted to false teachers and flirt with their false teachings, but are still hesitant to embrace it fully. It is critical to contend with them and challenge their arguments. They need solid reasons for Faith, and we must be able to point out the difference between their error and God's truth. We must be able to defend the Faith in graciousness and sincerity. Arrogance or intolerance will never work.

Pray for Holy Spirit leading and guidance. Timing is everything when it comes to rescuing someone. I wonder how many people could have been rescued from their destructive thoughts and actions if someone had only spoken to them in time? When you see the need and recognize the problem, it's time for you to act! Don't hesitate! It's always better to try and risk failure than never to try at all! We are God's vessels, God's instruments, God's ambassadors of the soul-saving Gospel.

It's also important for us to remember that it is not our place to condemn, criticize, or judge a person for doubting or wavering in Faith. God calls upon us to be merciful and give people the help they need to recover and strengthen their faith. Doubters need our help and reassurance. We must remind them that they are called and loved by God. We need to emphasize that the Father loves them, and Jesus saves them and intercedes for them. One writer says, "Mercy prefers to deal with the needy in terms of what is needed rather than what is deserved." Nowhere do we reflect God more than when we show mercy.

It takes a heart of compassion to do a hands-on rescue. It's tempting to dismiss those struggling with doubts, or lose patience with them and move on to something else. Jude encouraged those who are strong to show mercy and kindness to those wavering with doubts and to reclaim them with gentleness.

## **II. Reach Out to Rescue those trapped in the Fire**

Secondly, some must be snatched from the fire. In verse 23, Jude says, "but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." ([Jude 1:23 NKJV](#))

Amplified - [Strive to] save others, snatching [them] out of [the] fire; on others take pity [but] with fear, loathing even the garment spotted by the flesh and polluted by their sensuality.

Jude describes those entirely misled by the false teaching as "trapped in the fire." Though false teaching has deceived them, there is still some hope for their rescue. Sometimes, when a person has started down the wrong path, they need to be stopped forcibly, even against their will. With addictions and vices, we often call

this an intervention. Many will argue that a person has a right and the freedom to do whatever they want, but if you genuinely care about that person, you'll do everything in your power to save them even from themselves! If they're turning their back on you and God anyway, what have you got to lose? But, make sure you are prayed up and filled with the Holy Spirit when you do a spiritual intervention.

James writes, "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." (James 5:19-20 NKJV)

We are not the authors but the ministers of salvation. When a believer's faith is in great peril, Jude recommends a spiritual intervention. God can use you to effectively bring His salvation to those trapped and confused by false doctrine. How do we save them? William MacDonald says, "These we are to save by strong, resolute warning and instruction." Jude says, "Snatching them out of the fire." – It's a rescue operation!

Saving someone from the great danger of false teaching is like rescuing a person from a building on fire. It could be the destructive fire of a sinful life, or the destroying fire of false teaching, or the fire of hell itself. But, whatever the fire, the opportunity to save someone lasts only a brief moment and requires swift action and risk. Douglas writes, "This group has gone further down the road blazed by the false teachers. It takes a faithful and caring Christian to "snatch" them from the destroying fire and save them before it is too late."

Jude may have drawn his illustration from Zechariah 3:2, which describes "a brand plucked from the fire." In the book of Amos, God says, "I overthrew you, as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD. (Amos 4:11)

It is spiritually dangerous to fellowship with apostates and others who steadfastly reject and oppose the Gospel of Christ. If you have an opportunity to witness to them, you should exercise great caution, "snatching them out of the fire," as it were, and being careful not to get burned yourself in the process. We should not even listen to "the opposing arguments of Satan or his false knowledge. (1Ti 6:20). (Look what listening to Satan did to Adam and Eve!)

Exposing yourself to reprobate people just for the sake of argument is to risk spiritual disaster (2 John 1:8-11). Notice that the angels didn't try to convince or argue with Lot - they took him by the hand and pulled him out of Sodom (Ge 19:16), and sometimes that is what must be done to rescue someone.

### **III. Reach Out to Those in Peril of Perishing**

The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 6, "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." (Gal 6:1 NKJV)

Unfortunately, some have moved so far from "the faith" that they are even dangerous to the faithful. This group is so infected and polluted with false teaching that you must exercise cautious compassion to avoid contamination by their sins. They are teetering on the brink of ruin, with a very low probability of being turned back to the faith. Despite the depth of their decline from the truth, Jude says even then; we are to shown mercy.

We should never underestimate the attractiveness of sin. However, neither should we underestimate the force with which the evil we stand against will retaliate. Remember, even the most faithful saint is not immune to the charm and deceit of the devil.

Unfortunately, there are those we deeply love and care about that we just can't seem to reach, and it grieves our souls as we fear for their future. To rescue a person in a perilous situation presents a real danger to the rescuer! Those who are trying to produce a vaccine that will curb the COVID-19 virus run the highest risk of being infected and possibly facing death.

If you plan to rescue someone, you must calculate if you are strong enough and equipped properly to do it. The simple fact is that not every believer is adequately prepared to rescue a person in the grip of an apostate. You may be risking your own faith, trying to rescue someone who is perishing. There are some people you are not equipped to reach and will not be able to rescue. For those, you must be able to place them in God's hands and trust that He will find a way to reach and rescue them before they perish. But one thing you can do is pray for them— Intercede before God on their behalf. Intercessory prayer is not an afterthought; it is the cry of spiritual warfare and petition for divine intervention.

If you do carry out a rescue operation, make sure you are grounded in the Word and filled with the Spirit so you won't be "contaminated" by the evil and sin from which you are rescuing them. We need a healthy fear of God and a healthy fear of sin! One writer says, "It is quite possible to approach evil with good intentions, and then, through want of proper humility and caution, end in finding it fatally attractive."

Probably no one better describes what Jude warns about than a preacher named Bob Harrington. The Famed New Orleans evangelist Bob Harrington, known by many as "the Chaplain of Bourbon Street," became a well-known preacher during the 1960s and 1970s. Harrington rented a storefront and opened a chapel on Bourbon Street in the heart of the French Quarter. He then began witnessing and preaching in the bars and strip clubs. In 1962, Mayor Victor Schiro proclaimed him "The Chaplain of Bourbon Street." His street ministry message was bold and simple. "God loves you just as you are. But, in a November 2000 article entitled "Chastened Chaplain," Harrington shared about his failure in ministry during the height of his success through "pride, arrogance, self-centeredness, and stubbornness." His first marriage ended as well as his ministry on Bourbon Street

in 1977. He married again and moved to Florida, but later divorced again. One evening in 1995, in his hotel room, he was robbed and nearly beaten to death. After divorce and bankruptcy, Harrington recalled being at the bottom, which he said: "is right where God can use you!" Harrington said, "It was during that time the phone rang. It was an old friend who said it was time for me to come back to the Lord, and I did." Thankfully, Harrington began a restoration period and spent the final years of his life preaching and sharing the Gospel again.

This kind of experience has been repeated over and over. Dedicated believer's trying to rescue the fallen have become victims instead of rescuers. Jude says, "keep yourselves in the love of God, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

Jesus says to the church in Sardis, "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Rev 3:4-5 NKJV)

## Conclusion

To be a Christian, we are to be like Jesus. Jesus had a reputation for being a friend of sinners, but He hated sin. He came to save the world and to rescue us from sin.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." ( Heb 4:14-16 NKJV)

Fanny Crosby, the blind American mission worker, poet, and hymnwriter of the past century writes, "As I was addressing a large company of working men one hot August evening, the thought kept forcing itself upon my mind that some mother's boy must be rescued that very night or perhaps not at all. So I requested that, if there was any boy present, who had wandered away from his mother's teaching, he would come to the platform after the service. A young man of eighteen came forward and said, "I promised my mother to meet her in heaven, but as I am now living, that will be impossible."

We prayed for him, and he finally arose with a new light in his eyes; and exclaimed triumphantly, "Now, I can meet my mother in heaven, for I have found her God." While I sat there that evening, the line came to me, "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying." I could think of nothing else that night. When I arrived home, I went to work on it at once; and before I retired for bed, the entire hymn was finished. To this day, he remains a nameless friend who touched a deep chord of sympathy in my heart. It is these notes of sympathy that vibrate when a voice calls them forth from the dim memories of the past, and the music is celestial.

And so the hymn was born, Rescue the Perishing.

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;  
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,  
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

*Refrain*

*Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,  
Jesus is merciful; Jesus will save.*

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,  
Waiting the penitent child to receive;  
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;  
He will forgive if they only believe.

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

Sing this verse with me:

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;  
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;  
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;  
Tell the poor wand' rer a Savior has died.

*Refrain*

*Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,  
Jesus is merciful; Jesus will save.*

If you want to drive out the darkness, turn on the light! Jude concludes, "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, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen." (Jud 1:24-25 NKJV)