

Talk – Jude 1-16 – Challenges to the Faith

Bible Reading/s

Gen 5:1-32

Jude 1-16

Central Truth

Christians will experience challenges to the Faith – walk with God.

Purpose

I want to listener to recognise that with the Christian call there may also be challenges to the faith – be reminded and ready to walk with God.

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Outline

Challenges to the Faith?

The Little Letter of Jude

Introductions (vv. 1-2)

Purpose for writing (vv. 3-4)

Challenging the Faith (v. 4)

‘godless men’ who...

a.

b.

Historical Challenges (vv. 5-10)

- the people of Israel (v. 5 c.f. Numbers 14:32-35)
- angels (v. 6 c.f. Genesis 6)
- Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7 c.f. Genesis 18-19)

These dreamers

These men

Biblical Examples (vv. 11-16)

ungodly (vv. 11-13, 16)

- Cain (c.f. Gen 4)
- Balaam (c.f. Num 22-31)
- Korah (c.f. Num 16)

godly (vv. 14-15)

- Enoch (c.f. Gen 5:21-24)

Our Challenge Today?

1.

2.

3.

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CHECK TIME

Talk

Challenges to the faith

What do you think are the greatest challenges to the Christian faith today?

- Allow me to suggest three:
- The challenge of *belief* itself?
 - That is to stand for the truth of something that happened so long ago that many don't consider it to be relevant today. Proofs seems more based on opinions rather than evidences.
 - Is it possible to even believe in what the Christian gospel asks of a person?
- The challenge to *personal autonomy*?
 - We live in a world that promises that we can be anything we want to be. Any idea that questions the view that we cannot be the master of mistress of our own domain is offensive perhaps dangerous.
 - Is it possible to submit oneself to the rule of the Christian God of the gospel?
- The challenge of *integrity*?
 - So much is now permissible by so many for some many different reasons. We live in the age of 'fake news' when morals, liberties, freedoms are all up for grabs except for those who wish to lead others.
 - Is it possible to live lives consistent with what the gospel asks, when that at times means Christians will speak against some behaviours?
- There are many challenges to the Christian faith today.

The Little Letter of Jude

- Welcome to the little Letter of Jude.
- A letter that is surprising relevant in the way that it addresses some of the contemporary pressures that Christians are faced with today.
- It is a letter that illustrates itself – so often in its 25 verses we should find ourselves pondering the rich imagery that is used as Jude conveys his message.

Introductions (vv. 1-2)

- It is written by Jude who in verse 1 says he is both 'servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James'.
- You might know that James is also the brother of Jesus – and so that makes Jude the brother of Jesus as well.
- Yet Jude doesn't introduce himself as such.

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- Instead, perhaps humbly, he associates himself with Jesus as messiah and James as the leader of the Jerusalem church – Jude is happy to recognise his station in life as a servant of the Lord.
- Either way, the mention of Jesus and James – should give any reader reason to pay attention.

- And like a modern-day email – the sender identifies who the letter is addressed too – those who have been *called*, who are *loved* by God and *kept* by Jesus Christ.
- Notice those three qualifications – called, loved, kept.
- They are the Christian qualifications. If you are a Christian – then you are in a privileged position – it is not that you have first determined yourself to be Christian, it is that God has sought you out and decided to be in a relationship with you.
- And if it disturbs you that you have not had enough of a say into privileged election, then recognise that what comes with that is that you are *loved* by God the Father, the maker of the heavens and the earth and *kept* by his son such that he will prevent you from being lost.
- That is better than winning the greatest lottery, with a ticket you didn't have to pay for, with a prize that you can't lose!

- Jude starts his letter by reminding his readers that they are in a privileged position.

Purpose for writing (eager to write...had to write)

- So why is he writing?
- Verse 3, you can see that he is *eager* to write and that he felt he *had* to write.
- His topic is the *salvation that they share*.
- If you are Christian – then you should see that this letter is written not just for those who were the original recipients, but to all who share in the same salvation.
- That makes this letter both timeless and very relevant to us today.

- What follows in verses 3-4 gives us the structure for the whole letter.
- In verse 3 – Jude says he writes to 'urge you to contend for the faith' – in the second part of the letter from verse 17, he will go on to describe *how* the Christian person should contend for the faith.
- And in verse 4 – Jude writes to expose 'certain men' who have brought challenges to the faith. In the first part of the letter from verses 5 to 16, he will address what those challenges are.
- Today, I want us to look at the *challenges to the faith*.
- How about I pray – and ask God for help.

Prayer

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Lord and Father,

Bring us to this little letter of Jude ready to learn the big lessons that it offers.

This letter upholds those you have chosen to contend for the faith of Jesus. And this letter condemns those who challenge the faith. Help us this morning to have the wisdom to know the difference and the willingness to submit ourselves to reading, listening and learning from your word.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Challenging the faith (v. 4)

- Please have Jude open in front of you – if you don't, given how quickly we are going to move, you will be easily lost.
- Who is it, that is challenging the faith?
- Verse 4 says it is 'certain men' whose condemnation was written about long ago and men who have slipped in among you.
- There is a warning.
- When he says that they were written about long ago, Jude is not saying that the 'certain' folk who are doing this have been named long ago in some form or scripture – what he means it that the kind challenge that they bring has been condemned previously – and so should be exposed so that history does not repeat.
- And what he will do, is site a whole bunch of examples from those previous writings for us a reader to consider.
- Notice that these 'godless men' are essentially doing two things wrong.
 - *Changing* the grace of God into a licence for immorality.
 - And *denying* Jesus Christ as the only Sovereign and Lord.
- Before we take a step further, we should see that this is speaking right into our circumstance today.
- These godless men have come from among them – so that are folk within the church.
 - As we look at the church worldwide – there are countless examples of people who have changed the grace of God into a licence for immorality.
 - How?
 - Christians are saved by grace
 - that is an act of incredible love
 - that God would freely save someone from there sin
 - not because of some effort on their part, but because of his love to save those who cannot save themselves.
 - Now if saved by grace, the right response is not to then continue sinning in the way that you once did – that is taking his grace and throwing it away.

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- Or worse, to say that because you are saved by grace, that means you have permission to sin all the more.
- That is what Jude suggests here – some are taking that grace and turning it into a licence for immorality.

- The other wrong that these certain men are doing is to deny Jesus as the *only* Sovereign and Lord.
 - And again, as we look at the church worldwide – there are countless examples.
 - Every time a church, a denomination, a ministry, a culture rejects the exclusive claims of Jesus as the *only* way to the Father – every time they water it down – saying that Jesus is but one of many ways to God - then they have denied Jesus.
 - What was the point of Jesus dying for sins, if there was always going to be other ways to God?

Application

- So friends, before we take a step further. Should we ask the question of ourselves – are we personally at risk of being like these certain men? Playing loose with the grace of God? Denying the exclusive claims of Jesus?

PAUSE

Jude, to make his point, lists some *Historical Challenges* and then offers some *Biblical Examples* of these challenges.

Historical Challenges (vv. 5-10)

- So quickly, let's look at the three Historical Challenges he reminds them of
 - a. Verse 5 – remember the *people of Israel* who God delivered by grace from Egypt – they grumbled and turned to other gods, they did not believe – and so later were destroyed as Numbers 14(32-35) records.

 - b. Verse 6 – *the Angels* – these celestial messengers of God who enjoyed a heavenly home with all the authority that came with being with God – they perhaps like what the 'sons of God' did in Genesis 6, left to join with the 'daughters of men' and wickedness spread across the earth.

Their sin, was either their pride or their desire have their own autonomy separate from God – and the result was judgement of God which banished them to the darkness.

 - c. Verse 7 – *Sodom and Gomorrah* – those cities rife with sexual immorality as recorded in Genesis 18-19 – and the punishment was an eternal fire raining down from heaven.

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- Jude says – you know these examples – they were ones who came from God’s stable, yet lived in such a way that they needed to be out of God’s stable.
- Be reminded of them, don’t follow their lead.

Dreamers

- In verse 8 – he calls them ‘dreamers’
- What do they do – they:
 - a. pollute their own bodies
 - b. reject authority
 - c. slander celestial beings
- In fact, what they do is so bad that, it is better to have nothing to do with them and leave them in the hands of the Lord (as like the Archangel Michael apparently did with Satan when the disputed over Moses body!).
- Christians would be wise to...
 - recognise the folly of polluting their own bodies in way that go against God’s will,
 - or rejecting the authority of the Lord over their lives,
 - or of speaking against those who are sent as messengers from God.

Now as an aside,

- One of the interesting things about the first part of Jude’s letter is that he refers to known writings to make his point, writing that are not all from the Bible.
- So, for example, this reference in verse 9 about the Archangel Michael disputing with the devil about the body of Moses – is not recorded in the Bible – that comes from the apocryphal writings (*Assumption of Moses*).
- And a little later, Jude will refer to Enoch, who is mentioned in the Bible, but also has an apocryphal letter written in his name.
- These writing don’t carry the same weight of authority as Scripture but as they were known at the time, they can be used to make the point.

These men (v10)

- Jude highlights more of what these men who challenge the faith do – verse 10.
- They speak *abusively against whatever they don’t understand*
- And they *listen only to their own instincts* (just like animals)
- And the tragedy is that this only leads to their own destruction.

Application

- When we think about some of the challenge to the Christian faith today – it seems to me that Jude is pretty prophetic here.

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- How often do the ‘expert voices’, those champions of ‘progressive religion or thought’ – speak in ways that clearly forget the gospel of Jesus? They speak as people who seem to have little or no understanding of why the good news of Jesus is central to what the church should hold too.
- They add to the gospel, they make it something that it is not, and then speak abusively against those who are simply trying to stick to what the gospel says.
- And often that is motivated by what their own instincts or desires are telling them to do.
- Now this may push some buttons here – and so please excuse me if I come across insensitive in anyway (that is not my intent).
- It seems to me that in our day – in our age of sexual freedom – where permission is given to sleep with who we want, when we want, how we want – that what we are doing as a society is more like unreasoned animals who follow whatever instinct we so desire.
- And then if anyone speaks up as a voice of reason – then there is no shortage of abusive voices ready to shout out ‘bigot’ or ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘hater’.
- Friends, as a church, as a body of believers, Jude’s reminder here is too not buy the lie – and to ensure that as a body, we don’t adopt that which the culture around wants us to adopt if it goes against the grace of God.

PAUSE

Biblical Examples - ungodly (vv. 11-13, 16)

- Jude then moves away from historical events to Biblical examples – and he offers three ungodly examples and one godly example.
- Verse 11 – ‘Woe to them’ who are like:
 - a. *Cain* – you know the story of Cain and Abel in Gen 4.
Cain took the life of his brother because he was angry that God didn’t look favourably upon his offering.
These godless men that Jude is warning about are like Cain – they have no regard for the souls of others.
 - b. Next is *Balaam* – his story is recorded in Number 22-31 – and his problem was that he refused to listen to the Lord – such that in the end the Lord spoke to him through a donkey!
These godless men that Jude is warning about are like Balaam – they do not sit under the authority of the Lord.
 - c. Last is *Korah* – in Number 16, Korah leads a rebellion against Moses because he wanted to have more autonomy than what he had – and the result was that the ground split below him and Korah and all involved in the rebellion were swallowed up.

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These godless men that Jude is warning about are like Korah – they rebelled thinking themselves more deserving than they should.

Jude labels them in verse 12-13 as:

- *Blemishes at their love feasts* – people with no qualms, self-providing shepherds with little regard for the sheep.
 - *Empty clouds* – people who block out the light
 - *Autumn Trees* – people who are barren, producing no fruit, uprooted, so without foundation and ‘twice dead’ (because that at one time had received the word and then given it away – dead, before received the word, but then dead again)
 - *Wild waves of the sea* – people whose shame rises to the surface – like the foam at the top of a wave.
 - *And Wandering stars* – lost, going astray into the darkness like a shooting star as it implodes.
- You have got to love the imagery he uses. This is why I say it is a letter that illustrates itself.

Biblical Example – godly (vv. 14-15)

- And then to the contrast – Jude offers a godly example – Enoch in verse 14.
- Enoch is a breath of fresh air.
- He is seven generations from Adam – and so we read about him in Genesis 5.
- Can I ask you to turn to Genesis 5:21. *PAUSE*
- Here we have the family line of Adam – it all reads in a very ‘boring way’ –
so and so lived for how ever many years,
when he had a son, and he named him...,
after he was born he lived ?...
then he died! – Onto the next son. It is a pattern.
- Until you get to Enoch in verse 21... [*READ Gen 5:21-24 – emphasising ‘walked with God’*]
- Can you see the difference – twice we are told that Enoch ‘walked with God’ and then at the end, we hear nothing of his death, what we hear is that God took him away.
- Enoch is the godly example.
- His example - is the one prophesied about these certain men...
 - such that in Jude 15 he can them all ungodly, because of all their ungodly acts, and their ungodly ways, as ungodly sinners.

PAUSE

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- So, who are these people?
- They are the certain people in our churches who – as verse 16 suggests are:
 - grumblers
 - faultfinders
 - followers of their own desires
 - boasters about themselves
 - and flatterers (for their own advantage)

PAUSE

Our Challenge Today?

What do you think are the greatest challenges to the Christian faith today?

- It may be those *out there* who challenge *belief*
- It could be those *out there* who challenge *God's autonomy*
- It could be those *out there* who challenge *integrity*

What Jude wants to remind believers – is that a great challenge to the Christian faith today will most likely come from within – by those who are not walking with God.

His application:

- *be clear on what you believe* – it is a salvation that we share.
- *recognise the privilege* it is to be called by God – our autonomy is the good result of living as one loved by God and kept by Jesus.
- and for heaven's sake *walk with God* – as one with his integrity.

And next week – Jude is going to tell us how to do that as we contend for the faith.

Closing Prayer