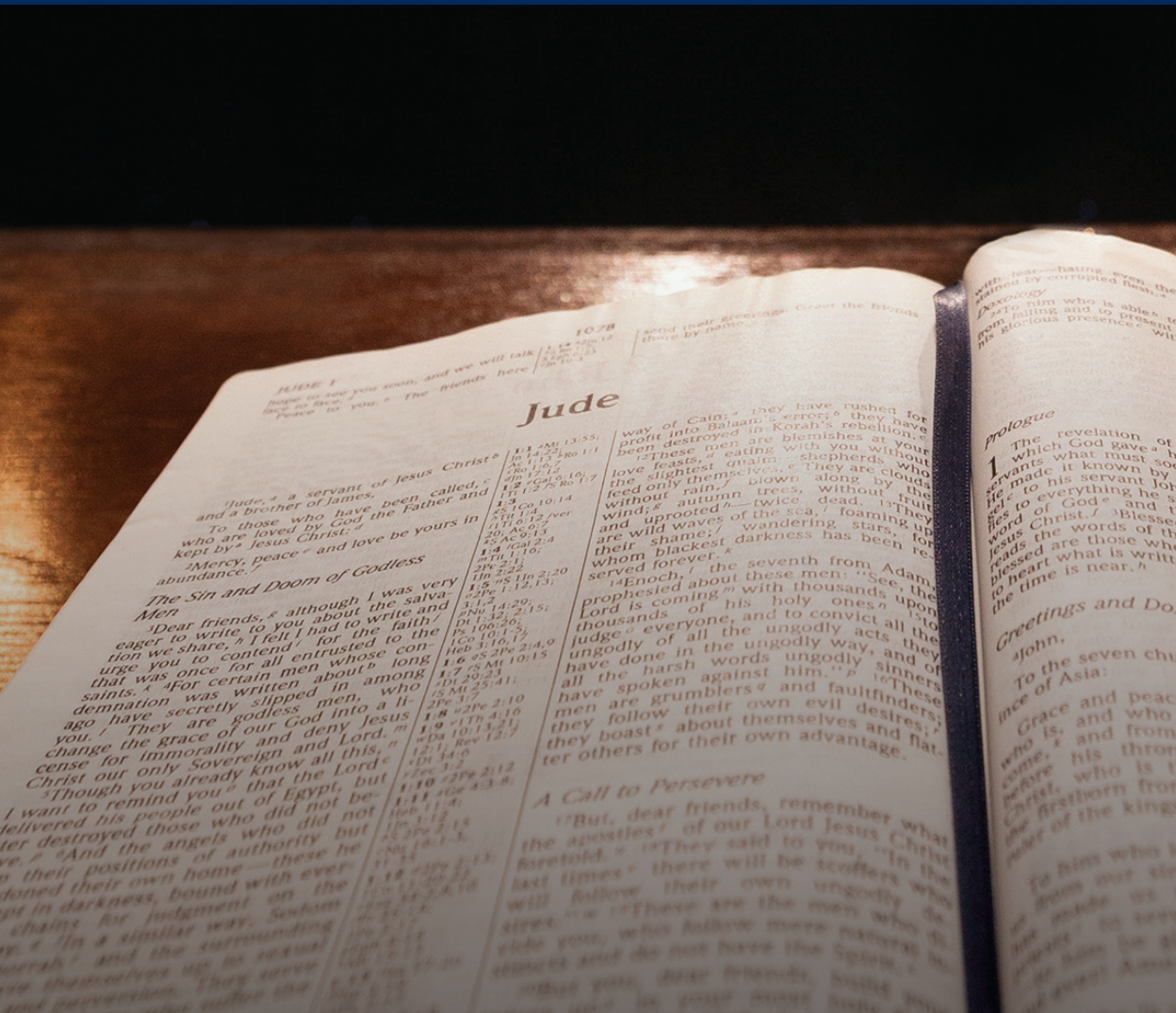


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The Benefit of Baseline Exposition¹

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One of the things that I would say that we are bullish about at Southwestern Seminary is text-driven preaching. You may be wondering why it is not enough to say, “We believe in expository preaching.” The term “expository preaching” is a good term with good definitions, but it becomes necessary from time to time to update and redefine our language. Several years ago in the late 70s and early 80s, when Southern Baptists were dealing with the issue of biblical authority, a new term was introduced—“inerrancy.” I remember people claiming we did not need to use the word inerrancy since it is not a biblical term. They did not stop to consider that the term “Trinity” is not in the Scriptures either. Others objected that it should be enough to say that the Bible is true. Unfortunately, when I was in college I had professors who would look you in the eye and say that the Bible was true, yet did not believe in a literal Adam and Eve or in the virgin birth. It became necessary to define our terms. I think the same thing has happened in homiletics.

Formerly, an expository sermon was a sermon in which the text was central. A preacher presented a text and explained it, illustrated it, and applied it. It has now become necessary to change our language to *text-driven preaching*. The key thing about a text-driven sermon is that the text itself dictates and determines the substance, the structure, and the spirit of the sermon. Let me address an important element of text-driven preaching. I call it baseline exposition, though the term is not unique to me. It is based upon the teaching I received from Dr. Jack MacGorman who used to stand in class and say, “Gentlemen, be baseline expositors.” Allow me to paraphrase his idea. Do not take a relatively minor part of speech (i.e., adverb, participle, or obscure word) and elevate it to a star status in preaching. The congregation might think new insights are being presented, but they would not be true to the text. Baseline exposition emphasizes what the text emphasizes.

Before engaging the book of Jude let me present one reason why baseline exposition is so important. From time to time news outlets publish strange or bizarre stories. One of these stories tells of what happened in a London suburb, “Showing of *Noah* Cancelled After Movie Theater Floods.”²

¹This article is a transcription of an address by the same title delivered to the Advanced Expository Preaching Workshop, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2–3 March 2015.

²Olivia B. Waxman, “Showing of *Noah* Cancelled After Movie Theater Floods,” Time.com, last modified 9 April 2014, accessed 10 November 2015, <http://time.com/55407/>

It turns out that the ice machine had backed up and the whole theater had flooded. Another similar headline stated, “‘Missing’ Woman Unknowingly Joins Search for Herself.”³ In 2012 in Iceland, a woman was lost while touring Icelandic mountains and volcanic sites. She got so lost that she ended up joining the search party that had been sent out to look for none other than her, which is pretty lost. Just like that woman, this world is horrifically and horrendously lost. In the midst of this lostness, as we see in Jude, there are interlopers, creepers, and false teachers who have wormed their way into churches seeking to remove the foundation of our confidence in God’s work and the message of the gospel.

The message of Jude is timeless and powerful; unfortunately many preachers tend to neglect it. Some neglect Jude because they view his message as too controversial and negative because of the focus on false teachers. They might believe Jude’s negative approach does not work well in today’s culture where everyone simply wants to get along, allow people to believe in anything, and circle up together to sing “Kum-Ba-Yah.” In the face of culture, however, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jude claims there is such a thing as objective truth and that this truth matters. Therefore, we need to be careful about how we handle Scripture.

There is one more item to mention before we look at the text and the context of Jude. Haddon Robinson stresses that, “If you are committed to biblical authority, you must preach and preach correctly, and that it is abuse to proclaim in God’s name what God is not saying.”⁴ My late father was a family practice physician in the same town in East Texas for fifty-six years. I have an older brother who has been practicing medicine for more than thirty years. Having grown up in that family, I am aware of the good a doctor can do as well as the potential damage. So it becomes necessary in this litigious world for doctors to protect themselves, which is why they are required to have malpractice insurance. Often we hear of stories that exhibit medical malpractice, which is a serious problem. The preacher, however, unlike the physician, is not dealing with the physical apparatus of people, he is dealing with eternal souls. The last thing preachers need to be is guilty of homiletical malpractice. That is why text-driven preaching is so important.

One of my favorite quotations is from Chuck Swindoll, “The difference between something that is good and great is attention to detail.”⁵ What I want to address in what follows is how to handle Scripture accurately. We must let the text say what it says. If we will do that, God has promised to bless his work. We must be baseline expositors.

showing-of-noah-canceled-after-movie-theater-floods/.

³Ron Recinto, “‘Missing’ Woman Unknowingly Joins Search for Herself,” Yahoo! News, last modified 29 August 2012, accessed 10 November 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/the-sideshow/missing-woman-unknowingly-joins-search-herself-165249353.html>.

⁴Haddon Robinson, “The Heresy of Application,” *Leadership* 18, no. 4 (1997): 31.

⁵Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 60.

A Paradox in Jude

“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ (1).”⁶ This introductory verse presents a threefold description of Jude’s audience. They are “called,” they are “beloved” (or greatly loved), and they are “kept” for Jesus Christ, or by Jesus Christ. The word “kept” in this instance is a perfect passive participle, meaning that Jude is writing to people who have been kept, who are being kept, and who will be kept in the future. The word provides a sense of completeness. We often think about protection, which leads many people to spend an elaborate amount of money and time on security systems. For the sake of our families, we strive for safety and security. However, there is no security system like the security system of a supernatural, sovereign God. If he is keeping you, you are guarded, kept, and covered. This is the idea of verse one.

Contrast that thought with verses 20–21, “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.” There appears to be a contradiction. In verse 1, we are kept—guarded perpetually by the supernatural security system of a sovereign God. However, in verse 21 we are to keep ourselves in the love of God. Which is it? The answer is both. In preaching through Jude, many apparent contradictions like this will need to be addressed. They are *apparent* because there is not really a conflict nor a contradiction within the text. It is a bit paradoxical.

These paradoxes exist elsewhere in Scripture. In Philippians 2:12, Paul writes, “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Paul is not teaching works righteousness. The very grammar of the text indicates a working to completion. Believers are to engage and exert effort in growing in obedience to the Lord Jesus. On the basis of Scripture both concepts are true. Believers are kept by God forever, but believers also have the responsibility to keep themselves in the love of God. Joshua 24:15 says, “Choose you this day who you will serve. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” In John, Jesus says, “this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me,” and “no man comes to the Father except by me” (John 6:39; 14:6). We see in Holy Scripture these powerful indicators of the absolute and divine sovereignty of Almighty God. However, we also see human responsibility. How do we reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility? When he was asked the question, Spurgeon responded, “I never reconcile friends.”⁷ These are ideas found clearly in Scripture that we humanly cannot fully comprehend. The point is not to get hung up here, but to preach what the Bible says. Where the Bible says that we are kept by God,

⁶Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

⁷Quoted in J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 35.

preach that we are kept by God. Where the Bible says to keep yourself in the love of God, preach that too. That is exactly what is going on in this text.

In verse 3 we see the key to the book of Jude—"Contending for the faith that was one for all delivered to the saints." The idea of the verb, "to contend" (ἐπαγωνίζομαι), involves effort and agony. It is a stated, concerted attempt to stand and contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.⁸ In considering this text the term "interloper" comes to mind. This is a word that is not heard much. My wife had an uncle who was very ill and it became necessary for a nurse to stay with him at night. We explained to him that someone would be staying with him all night and we went home. The next morning at about five o'clock my wife's uncle called. He said, "Matthew, you have got to come over here. There is an interloper in my house." The sad truth is that he woke up confused and had forgotten our conversation. He was convinced that someone had broken into his house and believed the nurse was there to harm him. Interlopers, or creepers, exist and can come in undetected. In the midst of falsehood, distortion, and perversion, Jude says we are to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Consider the phrase, "the faith." This *faith* is once for all delivered to the saints. "Once," here is in the absolute sense. It speaks of something that is done uniquely—only once. The depository of truth that we have been given is the once-for-all truth. Some look at Jude and think that it is not very loving and seems to be hammering on people and taking them apart. Christians are not to be contentious nor offensive, but that does not mean we should not stand for the truth and contend for the faith. Unfortunately, there are many preachers today who are fearful of offending people and rarely consider offending a holy God. What they need is a fresh dose of steel in their backbones, the very point Jude is making with the idea of contending for the faith.

This reminds me of the story of Winston Churchill having conflict with the Prime Minister during one of his terms in the British Parliament. He believed the Prime Minister was not playing the man. In relation to this controversy he publically said in Parliament,

I remember when I was a child, being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus, which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit on the program which I most desired to see was the one described as "The Boneless Wonder." My parents judged that the spectacle would be too demoralizing and revolting for my youthful eye and I have waited fifty years, to see The Boneless Wonder sitting on the Treasury Bench.⁹

⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary 37 (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 435.

⁹William Kristol, "Boneless Wonders," *The Weekly Standard*, last modified 22 January 2007, accessed 10 November 2015, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/013/162waviy.asp>.

Our churches do not need boneless wonders in the pulpit. This does not mean preachers ought to have an overweening confidence; rather, they ought to have absolute confidence in the Word of God—the faith once for all delivered to the saints. That is what Jude is saying.

Context and Contrast in Jude

These creepers (my term for interlopers in verses 4–19) have crept, slipped, and wormed their way into the church. These creepers deserve judgment, for they have displayed arrogance, delighted in corruption, and have come in by the side door. Jude cares about the truth and the audience to whom he is writing. His purpose is to give them a word of warning. Look at the description of these creepers. They are “hidden reefs,” “waterless clouds,” “fruitless trees,” “wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame,” and “wandering stars for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved forever.”

Jude is fond of the verb *kept*—the Greek verb τηρέω—using it five times in his letter.¹⁰ What is interesting is that he uses it in the last part of verse 13. The ESV reads, “wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved,” or kept “forever.” As we consider the usage of τηρέω and its idea of keeping, two things are clear: God keeps and guards his beloved people, but God also keeps judgment for those who have perverted and turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to his Word. This is a powerful contrast—the creepers are *kept* and reserved for judgment, but the “beloved” in verses 17 and 21 are *kept* in the love of God.

All of this leads to one of the great practical features of the book of Jude. It is often an easy choice as preachers survey the landscape of our lives and ministries, look at the world around us, and become so discouraged by the world that we want to throw in the prophetic towel and say that the world is going to hell in a handbasket. At times like these Jude provides us some very helpful instruction. The question we are asking is, How do you respond when the world is going crazy? How do you respond when people are attempting to infiltrate the church and to twist and pervert the truth? You keep yourselves in the love of God.

In light of this, let us consider the grammatical construction of Jude 20 and 21. These two verses constitute a meaningful preaching unit of thought and are powerfully important. Structurally, notice the Trinitarian nature of verses 20–21. “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit,” there is the Holy Spirit, “keep yourselves in the love of God,” there is God the Father, “waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ,” there is Jesus the Son. In the span of two verses we have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Since this text presents the Trinitarian nature of our God preachers need to preach the Trinitarian nature of God.

¹⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 490.

In preaching this nature we must be careful not to preach solely from the English text. At first glance this text appears to be a simple four-point sermon: to “build yourselves up,” to “pray in the Holy Spirit,” to “keep yourselves in the love of God,” and to “wait for God’s mercy.” All of these are in the text; however, that is not the best way to preach this text. In fact, it is not a text-driven way to preach the text. This is so because, in giving equal weight to these four things, the benefit of baseline exposition is missed.

Verse 21 contains the imperative, “keep,” which is an aorist active imperative. The aorist tense speaks of the timeless nature. It has a past orientation, but it also has continuing impact—it speaks of urgency. For instance, in 2 Timothy 4, Paul writes to Timothy, κήρουξον τῷ λόγῳ, with an aorist imperative. It is as if Paul is saying, “Timothy, whatever else you do, preach the Word.”

In addition to the imperative this text has three participles: building, praying, and waiting.¹¹ A baseline expositor is going to look at the text and consider the main verb. Then, knowing that participles often qualify, elaborate, amplify, or expand the idea of the verb, he subordinates the participle to the verb. That is exactly what baseline exposition does in this text.

Structurally and grammatically, the verb that is driving the sermonic bus here is “keep yourselves in the love of God.”¹² It is followed by three circumstantial participles: building, praying, and waiting. Let us consider more closely “keep yourselves in the love of God.” The word for love is a form of ἀγάπη, a dative of sphere. It is as if Jude is saying, “Do not stray outside the love of God.” This raises a question, What is Jude talking about in “the love of God?” Is it my love for God? Or is it God’s love for me? In consideration of the context it is best to take “the love of God” as a subjective genitive, which means that the focus is on God’s love for us.

In Jude there is an emphasis on “keeping,” since it is used five times. Previously the idea is negative, as in verses 5–6 where the angels did not keep their proper place. We also see it in verse 13 where creepers are kept in darkness forever. In contrast to these, in verse 21, Jude says, “keep yourselves in the love of God.”

With this in mind let us consider the first participle, “building yourselves up in your most holy faith.” The idea is to build, or to build further upon, an already existing structure. Jude is hearkening back to the foundation of the faith delivered once for all to the saints. This faith is the foundation on which to build. It has to do with a commitment to Christ based on this once for all faith delivered to the saints.

Consider the second participle, “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Pray in the sphere or under the influence of the Holy Spirit. A stark contrast exists when we look back to verse 19. There Jude asserts that these creepers and false teachers are devoid of the Holy Spirit of God. In contrast to these

¹¹Peter Davids, *II Peter and Jude: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 32–34.

¹²*Ibid.*, 34.

false teachers, or creepers devoid of the Holy Spirit, believers are to pray in the sphere of the Holy Spirit. When believers pray under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they pray in a manner that these false teachers lack. In this contrast Jude is offering a great encouragement.

Finally, consider the last participle: “waiting,” “expecting,” or “looking.” It says, “waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” Once again, believers are to look forward to that mercy that is theirs at the last judgment. The mercy obtained and experienced exists because of the blood of Jesus Christ. In contrast to this mercy, these creepers and interlopers, devoid of the Spirit, are not covered by the blood of Christ, and are set up for eternal condemnation. All of these contrasts are intended to offer encouragement to Jude’s readers.

The Sermon Outline

When I preached this text I entitled the sermon, “Keep Yourselves in the Love of God.” I think sermon titles are significant and encourage their use. There is no need to spend four to six hours each week coming up with a cool, alliterative sermon title. However, more consideration should be given than, “The sermon today is Jude 20–21.” We want to attract the congregation to the text so that they are thinking about the text before the sermon.

When I go into churches I enjoy perusing the order of worship. Often, when I look at these orders of worship, the choir anthems and the congregational songs are listed, even the words of the songs are presented, but for the sermon it merely lists, “Sermon,” or “Message.” Though I am not trying to be ungracious, it is interesting that all of the music and titles are published but the sermon title is missing from the worship guide. Preachers should not miss the opportunity to call attention to the message from God’s Word. Though there is more to a sermon than a title, the title can be helpful nevertheless. It calls attention to the sermon itself.

In the case of my Jude sermon, the title comes right out of the text, “Keep Yourselves in the Love of God.” The main idea follows from the text and the context and is simply this, Those who are kept by God keep themselves in the love of God. Alternatively it could be stated, You know that a person is truly kept by God when he keeps himself in the love of God.

For the introduction I discussed how some obsessions are kind of crazy, but believers need to have a biblical obsession. I mentioned a gentleman by the name of Francis Johnston who successfully set out to gather together the world’s largest ball of twine. It weighed more than 17,000 pounds and is recorded in the *Guinness World Book of Records*.¹³ I am not sure many of us would say amassing the world’s largest ball of twine is a great obsession. The

¹³Tim Hwang, “Twisted: The Battle to Be the World’s Largest Ball of Twine,” *The Atlantic*, last modified 9 September 2014, accessed 10 November 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/09/twisted-the-battle-to-be-the-worlds-largest-ball-of-twine/379828/>.

point is that if we are going to be obsessed about something, let it be about something that matters. I think what Jude is saying is that in these crazy, twisted, messed up days, be obsessed about walking in close fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. MacGorman used to say in class, “Admonition is love’s authentic expression in a time of danger.” Imagine a parent who knows his child is about to run out into a street. What if this parent says quietly, “Sweetheart, you may want to think about getting out of the street?” This is not the tone of a loving parent. A parent seeing the impending doom yells, “Get out of the street!” The love for the child compels him to do so. Admonition is love’s authentic expression in a time of danger. Preachers should not be afraid to warn their congregations as they should also warn themselves.

Keep Yourself in the Love of God

What is the approach to preaching this passage? Essentially, a one-point sermon could be preached: keep yourselves in the love of God. Points two, three, and four essentially explain how this is accomplished: building up in your faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and waiting for Christ’s mercy.

Consider how to keep yourself in the love of God. Dallas Willard said a mouthful several years ago when he reminded his readers that grace is opposed to earning, not to effort.¹⁴ There are people in your churches who understand the concept of grace but do not understand the significance of works in their proper orientation. No man is saved by works, as Paul writes in Galatians. If we could be justified by works then Christ died meaninglessly—he died in vain. No one is saved by any amount of good works. The problem is that too often we abuse and misunderstand the concept of grace. Paul says to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Perhaps the greatest preacher of grace is also the one whose favorite verb is ἀγωνίζομαι. He is agonizing. He is pressing. He is pushing. He is trying with all of his heart and all of his effort not to earn a right relationship with God. Rather, he is in strong pursuit of the Lord Jesus Christ who rescued him out of darkness and death.

Today, too many treat their salvation as if it were merely a baptism of fire insurance when in reality it is a matter of fire-endowment. Preachers need to help their people understand the healthy relationship between grace and effort. There are too many people in the pews who think walking an aisle, being baptized, and regular church attendance leads them to the glory road. The task of the preacher is to help believers know they are saved by grace and need to grow in grace. Part of that process is cooperating with the grace of God, which means keeping *ourselves* in the love of God. Many preachers are good at exhorting us to love more, show more kindness, and witness more. Jude helps his readers see what that looks like to help them accomplish it.

¹⁴Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2006), 34.

Building up in Your Faith

First of all, “building yourselves up in your most holy faith.” Let us return to the idea of faith. Remember that this faith is delivered once and for all and is an emphatically holy faith. It has to do with content, which is found in the testimony of Scripture. It is not found in imagination, in feeling, nor in intuition. One of the most helpful things a preacher will ever do for his people is to help them judge everything by Scripture. It is impossible for church members to learn how to do that unless the preacher is in the pulpit letting the text say what it really says.

Too often and in too many churches, we have what I call, *Sharignorance*, sharing ignorance. Here is how sharignorance works. Christians gather together in a classroom to study a passage of Scripture. One might read the passage and say, “Let us talk about that passage. What does that passage mean to you? How does it make you feel?” Then, he turns to the next person and asks the very same things. In doing so, no definitive assertion nor definitive conclusion about the text is reached. All that is accomplished are compliments to comments and feelings that are shared in the group. This is not the way to handle God’s Word. Sharignorance should not be done from the pulpit and should not be allowed in small group Bible studies. Often, one hears well-meaning, professing Christians say things like, “I really struggle with that passage.” “My God would never allow that.” “I do not think God would ever judge those people.” “God just really wants people to be happy.” “God would never forbid those two people, if they love each other, to be married.” We should love people enough to tell them to submit their feelings, opinions, emotions, and sentiments to what God has revealed in the inerrant Word of God.

This is the point Jude is making. He is writing about doctrinal conformity. Paul writes about it in 1 Corinthians 12 as he considers the diversity of gifts within the local church. This is true in our local churches. There are people who have natural endowments (e.g., they can sing or they can do carpentry work) and there are particular spiritual gifts (e.g., showing mercy, helps, or teaching). There is a diversity of gifts in the churches and they are celebrated. However, I would defy anyone to show me a place in all of Scripture where doctrinal diversity is celebrated. Though disagreements and confusion are often in our churches, the point is that the Bible guides believers to a profound doctrinal conformity.

This concept is in Jude in “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” In consideration is the content of this faith, which Jude refers to as the commitment to truth. More precisely, it is a matter of stewardship and personal commitment. Consider the human body. When muscles are not exercised they begin to atrophy, dissipate, and lose strength. Jude is using a construction term to illustrate the need to keep on building yourselves up on the foundation that has already been laid of your most holy faith. Dr. MacGorman would also talk about this text and say, “Gentlemen, when it comes to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, trust the adequacy of the carrier.”

The preacher must trust in this adequacy himself and teach his people to do so as well. The Lord is the one who provides this truth.

During a cold snap in Texas there can be some pretty bizarre weather. One time the mailman did not show up at our house for several days. I was expecting a couple of important letters and was concerned. My concern grew into worry as I constantly queried my wife about the arrival of the mail. Because of the weather, the carrier did not make it to my house. In looking at this text I was reminded of that episode. However, when we are talking about the Lord God Almighty as the carrier of the truth we know that he never misses a delivery. Moreover, he has made the ultimate delivery in the testimony of Holy Scripture.

In addition to this, there is a description of people who are marked by their corruption of the truth. When people do not want to live according to God's standards they either try to change the truth or to deny the truth, which leads to immorality. In looking at the corpus of Scripture as a whole, wherever there is immorality there is idolatry. This is the substitution of someone or something for the worship of the one true God. The connection between immorality and idolatry is the anesthesia of idolatry. Greg Beale writes, "What we revere, we resemble, either for ruin or restoration."¹⁵ One of the symptoms of the anesthesia of idolatry is less sensitivity to truth of God's Word and more reliance on the world's perspective of how to live. Beale continues, "Christians lose their identity as the people of God because of idolatry. They must be shocked out of it by hearing the Word of God, and by heeding the Word of God."¹⁶ The simplicity of this may sound like fifth-grade Sunday school, but it is powerfully important to understand that Christians are to be a people saturated with the Word of God. The victorious life is elusive if we open up the Bible on Sunday and ignore it the rest of the week. If a preacher wishes his congregation to become saturated in Scripture, he must create the environment that models a love and a passion for Scripture, beginning with an accurate handling of the text in the pulpit.

When God's Word is supplanted as the central focus of theology and practice, nothing but idolatry remains. When a church has problems, too often that leadership will consult business management or psychology rather than Holy Scripture. This is idolatry. The primary place of counsel is always Holy Scripture. This is how to build yourself up in your most holy faith.

Praying in the Holy Spirit

Next Jude addresses praying in the Holy Spirit. The word for "praying" is another participle. The true saints of God sense their own weaknesses. First Peter 5:6–7 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Approaching this passage in a text-driven

¹⁵G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 307.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 305.

manner means to consider the imperative command, “Humble yourselves,” which is amplified by a participle. You humble yourself by casting your cares on him. The point is that proud people are not known as praying people because they are not dependent people. The measure of one’s dependence upon the Lord is seen in his prayer life. Jude understood that with the onslaught of freaks, perverts, and creepers coming along, the only way his readers were going to stand is in wedding together prayer and the Word.

“Pray in the Holy Spirit.” This is intoxicated prayer under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26 addresses an aspect of praying under the influence of the Holy Spirit when believers do not have the words to pray. In these times the Holy Spirit makes utterances with groanings that are too deep for words. This is part of it, but another practical aspect to pray in the Holy Spirit is to use the words that God himself inspired. It is a beautiful thing to pray God’s promises back to him. It should touch the hearts of parents when a child reminds them of a promise. “Daddy, you promised today that we were going fishing.” “Mom, you promised that we were going to Six Flags.” Their statements encourage parents to honor that promise. Jesus said, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him” (Matt 7:11). For an example, consider praying Psalm 119:36–37. “Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.”

Relationships demand communication, and in prayer it is all about connection. In our world we communicate via social media at any time of day, but living in a high-tech culture often means living in a low-touch culture. Technology moves forward and leaves people and meaningful communication behind.¹⁷ Communication with other persons requires relationships with those persons. This reminds me of my fourth-grade girlfriend, Sharon. I thought she was quite beautiful. If you remember what it was like to have a girlfriend in the fourth grade, you will remember that you never really talk. Rarely are you even seen in the same room together. What you do is take out a piece of paper and write a two sentence note. You give it to your best friend who delivers it to your girlfriend’s best friend, and several hands down the line it finally gets to her. In response she follows the same protocol through her intermediaries. What develops is this deep, rich, and fulfilling relationship, right? Of course this is not how it works and after a couple of weeks Sharon broke up with me. Relationships do not exist with people with whom we never talk. This lack of communication is existent with many professing Christians, both in human relationships and in prayer. It is all about communication.

¹⁷Kel Smith, *Digital Outcasts: Moving Technology Forward without Leaving People Behind* (Philadelphia: Morgan Kaufmann, 2013), 127.

Waiting for God's Mercy

Finally, let us consider the third participle, “waiting for God’s mercy.” The participle is not passive, rather it is “looking, expecting, anticipating.”¹⁸ Christians understand that this world is not our home. We are aliens and pilgrims. In consideration of the residential status of Christians we see an inextricable connection between eschatology and ethics. Though the objection can be made that some are so heavenly minded they are not any earthly good, that is not our problem today. The primary problem today is that too many profess the name of Jesus but do not long for the return of Jesus. There exists in our churches little thought about, or longing for, his return. Rather, even though it is often admitted that these are crazy times many Christians are content believing they have their best life now.

In looking back at Jude let us ask, How do we live in these crazy times? The answer is that we anticipate the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the word mercy, ἔλεος, and its Old Testament counterpart רַחֲמִים. These words are rich and the English language fails to capture them, but they speak of pity, tenderness, and loyal love. They present God withholding from us what we deserve due to our rebellion, sinfulness, and brokenness. Believers are those who wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Jesus is going to come again and if we are kept by the Lord Jesus then we are kept forever. His mercy is that we are covered by his blood and are with him forever and ever. Notice the contrast, instead of those who have corrupted the truth—those who have corrupted themselves and who are kept for judgment—the Bible says that we are kept for the mercy of God that is to be revealed leading to eternal life. The principle is this: future assurance shapes present activity.

How is the reality of eternity shaping life today? Often we hear people speak of long-term planning. What if we plan thirty million years ahead when time is no more? How important are the present problems? In contrast to eternity the world’s present predicaments are purely pedantic. From the earliest time the church has longed for the appearing of the Lord Jesus. *Maranatha*, even so Lord Jesus, come. Two thousand years have passed and the longing for his appearing should be just as strong. The missionary Amy Carmichael once said, “We have the presence and the promises of God. We are meant to march to that great music.”¹⁹ Those with the presence and promises of God need nothing else.

Finally, let us look at that great doxology in verse 24. “Now to him who is able to keep you.” I keep myself in the love of God and he keeps me. The greatest privilege believers have is to declare to our generation the unsearchable, inestimable riches of Jesus Christ. A message as wonderful as the gospel

¹⁸Curtis Vaughan and Thomas D. Lea, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 231.

¹⁹Amy Carmichael, *Gold by Moonlight: Sensitive Lessons from a Walk with Pain* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2000), 15.

calls for accuracy, focus, and determination. The privilege of the preacher is to point people away from gross idols and urge and plead with them to run into the arms of the one true God who has revealed himself fully and finally in the person of Jesus. When people really meet Jesus, they discover that no substitute will ever do. In conclusion, ponder the words of Ora Rowan's *Hast Thou Heard Him, Seen Him, Known Him?*

Hast thou heard him, seen him, known him?
Is not thine a captured heart?
Chief among ten-thousand own him,
Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,
Lovely things of time and sense;
Gilded thus does sin disarm thee,
Honeyed lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stripped the seeming beauty
from the idols of the earth?
Not a sense of right or duty,
but the sight of peerless worth.

Not the crushing of those idols,
with its bitter void and smart;
but the beaming of his beauty,
the unveiling of his heart.

Who extinguishes their taper
Till they hail the rising sun?
Who discards the garb of winter
Till the summer has begun?

'Tis the look that melted Peter,
'Tis the face that Stephen saw,
'Tis the heart that wept with Mary,
Can alone from idols draw

Draw and win and fill completely
Till the cup o'erflow the brim;
What have we to do with idols
Who have fellowshiped with him?

