

The city of Troy was pretty much impenetrable. The Greeks had met their match in the heavily fortified city of the Trojans. That was until they came up with that plan.

The plan to give them a peace offering, build a horse that was big enough to put soldiers in it and present it as an offering to them, a gift. And they took the bait.

The Trojans opened the gate, took the horse in, and out that night came the Greeks, opened the gate of the city, and the Trojans were taken over by the Greeks. The Book of Jude is written to Christians, who I think are a lot like the Trojans of old.

At the end of the first century, the Christian church was under attack from the inside. There were people who had infiltrated it, and were causing trouble.

And so today's message is Jude's response to the church, to encourage them to stand firm and contend for the faith. So this is the Christ in Scripture project.

We're working through 66 books of the Bible, and we're now in the second last book, Christ in Jude. There were erosive forces from these false teachers that were affecting the church and leading them astray.

And so Jude comes to them, and in a very strong way, says, no, don't listen. Judgment comes on people that drift away from the truth, contend for the faith. Jude writes, let me read from verse three.

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

For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago, have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people who pervert 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 at one time 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 proper dwelling, these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgement 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 same way, on the strength of their dreams, these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander, but said, the Lord rebuke you.

Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct, as irrational animals do, will destroy them. Probably a reason why I think I've preached in 33 years once on Jude.

It's a challenging and strange little book of the Bible. Jude is quoting there in verse 9 about Moses' body. He's quoting from Jewish ancient text, not scripture.

And so there's a lot of debate. Why would Jude be quoting Jewish text and putting it into the canon, into the scripture? And there's not really a clear understanding of that.

I think the main point he's saying, I'm compelled to write to you to contend for the faith and point out that abandoning the truth, either from heaven as angels or people in the Old Testament, it always leads to judgment.

And it is good to not do such things, to not drift into unbelief and error. So Jude is about contending for the faith. How?

How do we contend for the faith? Well, I think he teaches that you ground yourself in biblical identity, in Christian identity, and it leads you to worship. So Jude is saying, contend for the faith.

It starts with identity in Christ, and it will lead us to worship. So who is Jude?

CONTEXT

Jude identifies himself as a servant, verse one, of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.

Jude is the brother of James, James the Just, the leader of the Jerusalem Council, and the author of the Book of James, which means that Jude is also the half brother of who? Of Jesus. Matthew 13 says, isn't this the carpenter's son?

Isn't his mother's name Mary and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Who knows that Judas never topped the 100 top Christian names in the first century?

So you can imagine why, if your name was Judas, you might go by the name of Jude. But he is a half brother of Jesus, half brother because his dad was not the biological father of Jesus, but they were brothers.

You might think it's rather interesting, isn't it, to grow up in the family of Jesus. We don't know anything about it. The Gnostic Gospels, which are heretical, they put all sorts of detail about the teenage years of Jesus, but we're not given them.

But just to consider it, it would have been odd, wouldn't it? Growing up as the brother of Jesus, Mary knew who Jesus was, the mother of the family. She stored it up in her heart, the secret things that she was told by the angel.

But yeah, for Jude, he's probably thinking, that older brother of mine, he's very good. He just never does anything wrong. Yet, interestingly, that didn't lead him to believe that Jesus, his older brother, was the Messiah.

That is, until the resurrection, John 7 verse 5, for even his own brothers did not believe in him.

1 — CALLED BY CHRIST

Jude writes in this very short, yet punchy letter, that to contend for the faith, you will need to know that in Christ you are called, loved, kept, and this identity will lead you to a full and proper worship, called, loved, and kept.

Verse one, Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, called by Christ. What does it mean to be called by Jesus Christ? Well, it actually takes us immediately into deeply debated theological territory.

Some, many actually, many Christians would say that to be called is the beginning of those he called, he justified, those he justified, he glorified. To be called is to be made born again. You don't get a choice.

It's irresistible. The call of God makes you born again, and then out of being alive, you respond with faith and repentance. But you are born again by the gracious work of God, called.

Others, like myself, see here the idea that God is doing the first action. He is initiating. He is graciously reaching out to people, awakening, inviting, drawing a person to himself through provenient grace.

And then it is required of a person to believe, to repent and believe. And this leads a person to be born again.

There's lots of reasons why I feel like God doesn't just make you born again and then respond, even though I'm fully respectful of those who believe that, which you would call the reformed camp of Christians.

I find verses like Matthew 23 really probing where Jesus says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stoned those sent to you, how often have I longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and

you were not willing? You were not willing. I find it strange if they could not respond anyway, unless they were made born again.

I feel like there's a lot of strength in this idea that there's a call and we are required to respond in faith and belief. It's a wonderful thought that the Lord Jesus calls us by name. I think he says to the crowd, Hey Mike, I love you.

Come home. Hey Vicki, I'm calling to you. I know you.

I love you. Come home. Hey Rachel, I love you.

Come back. Believe. He does this throughout the Gospels, the Lord Jesus.

He calls the disciples to leave their nets and follow him. They have to respond. He calls sinners to leave their life of sin.

He calls the weary to come to him and drop their burden. We are not Christians because we drift into faith. We are ultimately Christians who are called.

Amen? Called. For Jude, he's very keen to point out, there are some that are drifting, drifting into unbelief, drifting into a distortion of truth.

People are denying Christ as Lord. Jude says, Remember, you were called. Do you remember when you were called?

Anybody remember when you were called? Yeah, by God, through Jesus, by the Spirit. He reached out and drew you.

And I wonder if you're being called now and you're here and you're wondering, why am I here? I don't normally find myself in a church, but I'd put it to you, I suspect the Lord is graciously calling you.

He's inviting you to come and drop the burden of guilt and shame and the mystery of what happens after you die and receive the truth that Christ has died for you, risen from the grave and offers you a way to be restored to relationship with God the

Father and live forever. Come home if you're being called. He loves you and knows you.

2 — LOVED IN CHRIST

He calls and he loves. We are loved in Christ. Jude says, who are loved in God the Father.

Jude is reminding this little church that the living God who is a faithful covenant-keeping God loves them. And he has in fact promised to love his people to the thousandth generation. What does he mean by that?

When God says, I will love my people who obey me to the thousandth generation. How long is a generation? 20 years, 25 years, a thousand generations.

The point is, it's beyond belief, but it is believable. It's beyond comprehension, the love of God for his people. It's massive.

We've been studying the Old Testament as a church quite a bit in recent months.

And while the Old Testament is full of hard teachings, the brutality of holy war that we're about to see in Joshua, judgment and discipline from God to his people and those that don't know him as well, who are living in evil, the overwhelming message

of the whole Bible is that God loves the world and he loves his people. Exodus 19, verse four to six, which we'll look at in a few weeks in detail, says, you yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought

you to myself. Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations, you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God loves his people.

He chose them and drew them to himself. The most important thing for us to do in life, and I know this is a big call, is to allow God to love us. We are called to love God and love others and make disciples.

But how do you love God? You've got to actually first be loved, to know how to love. And so the love of God is so important.

It's something that we, it sort of rolls off the tongue. Oh, Christians believe that God loves them. And we talk about John 3, 16, God so loved the world, but it's the foundation of everything in life.

The love of God. And Jude is saying this. You are loved in God the Father.

And it's not a distant love, it's a personal close up love displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ dying on a cross for our sins. We have been called and we are loved. You are loved first, not after performance, amen.

You are loved, I am loved. We are loved first. We were loved in the cross.

Sometimes you can fail in life. Certainly as Christians, we sin, we mess up. And you can get to the point where you wonder, gee, could God take me back?

Can I be forgiven again? And what is the answer? The answer is yes, because Jesus isn't dying on the cross again.

It's once for all. It's enough. And we will fail, but we must come back to this rock solid truth.

We have been loved in the cross of Jesus, definitively once and for all. And we need to live out of that. So how are you travelling in this season?

Do you know that you were loved by God, the Father in Christ? Or is the evil one, like the Trojan horse, getting inside your head and your heart and saying, you're not loved. You've done too much.

You've pushed him away. But I want to encourage you today, he loved you before you cleaned yourself up, amen? The love of God is enough to cover our sin as we turn to him for grace.

3 — KEPT FOR CHRIST

You've been called by Christ, loved in Christ, and something we don't often think about, but kept, kept for Jesus Christ. Jude says believers are kept for Christ. They are guarded, preserved, held.

It's an active word, not a passive word. Some believers in the church are drifting, but God will keep them if they will let him. It's an interesting truth here that God keeps, but in verse 21, Jude says, keep yourself in God's love.

There's a dynamic here, a mystery. As we respond with faith and discipline and obedience and repentance, he is constantly initiating and holding us, but we respond to as well. To be kept for Christ is not unlike a GPS, I think.

We put an address in the GPS and it takes us to that place, doesn't it? And who's experienced what it's like to miss a turn? Who in their GPS have you seen you miss the turn and says, loser, loser, what are you doing?

Give up. What does the GPS do? Redirecting, redirecting.

And I think that's a beautiful picture of what God's love is like. He's like, yeah, that's not the direction. Redirect, let's come back.

Because he keeps his people. And he's keeping us not for heaven per se, not for the new earth. What is he keeping us for?

Our destiny is a person. Isn't that wonderful? He's keeping us for Christ.

We're being kept for him. It's the relationship with the Son of God that we have been saved for. And we get other blessings, like a place where we can't sin, and it's perfect in the heaven joins the new earth, and it's amazing.

But it's Christ that we've been kept for. We're called, loved, and kept for Christ.

CONCLUSION

And then Jude finishes with this call for us to worship. Most of the book, this little letter, is about outlining the aberrant behaviour of the false teachers. We don't exactly find out what they're doing, but it's not great.

Now, leading people astray into all sorts of perversions of the truth. But Jude finishes by teaching, take that identity called loved, kept, and let it lead you to confidently coming to the presence of God and worshipping him.

Jude writes these wonderful words, to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God, our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus

Christ, our Lord, before all ages now and forevermore. Amen. Who has sung that song?

Here at this church, Mike Dennis used to say, I used to love getting people at the end of the service to turn to each other and sing, Now unto him who is able to keep. And sing it to each other.

And I thought, I wonder, no, we won't do that because we are into safe church. And having someone sing that strangely difficult melody, it's probably unsafe. But, and also creepy.

But his point was fair. He said, you, keep you from stumbling. And that's the promise.

This is known as a doxology. Doxa meaning glory, logia means speech, words of glory. For the church being tempted to drift in their faith and belief, Judy's saying, you need a strong identity, which will lead you to strong worship.

To him who is able, to him who is able, isn't that a great truth to inspire worship songs? We've sung them last week. He is able.

He is able to open pathways through the sea, Psalm 77, that no one knows are there. He's able to open the way and keep us from stumbling. He is able to forgive and restore.

He's able to guide the lost and repair the broken. I wonder if anyone here is nervous about the trial that you're going through. He can keep you from stumbling.

Amen. Is anyone nervous about the power of the enemy that is confronting you? He is able to keep you from falling.

Anyone nervous about whether you can hold on to faith in this season? He is able, hallelujah, to keep you from stumbling. God is preparing you in the midst of that trial, that temptation, that test.

He's readying you to be presented before himself through Christ, called, loved, and kept. In Christ, the text says you are ready to see God because in Christ you are without fault.

You are without fault, no fault, blameless, righteous, in all holiness. The fallen angels are being kept for judgment, but not asked by faith in Christ.

God has made you, if you are a follower and believer in Jesus Christ, he's made you holy so that you can meet God. And you know what? He's excited about it.

He called you by name and he's still excited. The text is, he has great joy in the thought of having you and I presented before him. And that should make us kind of joyful too, amen?

For exceeding joy, God's joy and our joy. He's joyful about us being presented before him. How easy is it to live with guilt and fear of being brought before him?

Anyone know what that's like? The fear of meeting the holy God. Here we're told, he's filled with joy about the thought of you coming before him.

So in Christ, may we be filled with joy about the expectation of seeing God. We're going to praise the only God, the text says. There are not many gods, no matter how many gods and idols our heart tries to create.

The human heart is an idol factory and we try to sort of add gods to the one God, but there's not, there's only one God who is our Merciful Saviour and he deserves all the glory and majesty, power and authority.

In the next book, we read about all sorts of numbers in Revelation and we read and understood a few years ago when we studied it that these are apocalyptic numbers, numbers have meaning and we saw that for the Jews, when you see clusters of four,

that means global. And so this is glory and majesty and power and authority, four terms that are saying all the glory, all the worship is to come from the whole planet to the living God. How? How?

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. When? Before time, now and in the next age.

Do you get the idea that Jude has fully changed from being the unbeliever? To having a pretty amazing revelation of who this Lord is that he experienced as a brother, Jesus Christ. He is to be glorified before time, in this time and after time.

He writes to him who's able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to his joy and to ours, to the only God, our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ

our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen. Christ has called us, loved us and will keep us so that we can live confidently in a posture of worship as we come before God with great joy.

The Greeks were tricky, weren't they, with the Trojan horse? They came from the outside and all of a sudden they were on the inside, causing chaos and carnage. And Jude is talking about the same thing that is happening to the church.

People have infiltrated and teaching false theology. And when I think about what's the application for us today, I'm hoping that even though I had that statement about reformed theology, I don't think we have false teaching in our church.

I'm confident of that. But I wonder how many of us are struggling with an enemy that has infiltrated our heart and mind. The Trojan horse is maybe not so much the local church, but I'm sure it is in some ways.

But for many of us, we can relate to a Trojan horse that got inside of us. As James said last week when we studied it, our evil desires and bent towards sin shows that there's some infiltration of that Trojan horse.

James 1 says, each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full grown, gives birth to death.

If your main battle is the Trojan horse of your own evil desires and unhealthy habits and the perversion of the world, your answer is found in the same truth we've just unpacked from Jude. Amen. You are called, loved, and kept.

You can trust the only wise God who is able to keep from stumbling and to present you before the throne of grace with exceeding joy where you will offer your praise to the living God, clear of a guilty conscience, faultless and clean, all because of

Jesus who is the Christ. Amen. Could we pray together? Let me pray a blessing.

So may you go from this place, knowing that you are called by Christ, loved in the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. May the one who is able keep you from stumbling and present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

May your life resound with glory, majesty, power and authority to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, now and forever more. Amen and amen.