

00:00

Introduction

Well, hello and welcome to Ponder.

We're having a conversation about the Word of the Lord as it was preached to us on Sunday and as we encounter it in our everyday lives. My name is Jack, and today I'm joined by Ponderers Ben and Jono, how are you going?

Well, thanks, mate.

Yeah, doing good, thanks. That's good.

Good to be here.

Yeah, I'm very excited to be here because this week we're reflecting on Jono's sermon on Jude, and it's a sermon that has kind of everything I want in it. It had an ancient Greek reference in it.

It's on the Book of Jude, which is sort of I was saying one of my favorite epistles.

0:42

Sermon recap

Jono, did you want to give us a quick overview of the sermon and what you were aiming to do with it?

Yeah, sure. And unlike you, it's not on my top 10 list of favorite New Testament books. In fact, it's funny because when I was reflecting on it, I've been preaching for about 33 or 34 years, and I think I might have preached on it once.

I just probably avoided it. So this time around, I took the angle of the main issue that you discover when you look at it, is that false teachers have infiltrated the church. It's probably late in the first century.

And I took the angle of the first couple of verses where Jude says, I want you to know, I'm referring to you as the called, the loved and the kept.

And so, I tried to focus on that, which is a bit unusual, focusing most of the message on a couple of verses in the introduction.

But then trying to build an argument to say, when you know that you're called, loved and kept in Christ, you can then strongly and confidently move to the doxology, the worship that's at the end of Jude, which is probably the part that we know best.

So, it was contending for the faith through reinforcing our identity in Christ through the Gospel, and then being a person who has a posture of worship throughout our lives, to contend for the faith.

Yeah, I thought there was something I noticed too that I think most of us are most familiar with the doxology of Jude. If we're familiar with Jude at all, there's been worship songs made about it.

But yeah, it was funny that we mostly focus on the last verses, you focused on the first couple of verses. I know Jude is a bit of an obscure book.

2:30

First impressions on Jude

Ben, what do you know about Jude? What do you think of when you think of Jude?

Yeah, the first thing I think of is that Jude was one of the other brothers of Jesus.

And it's interesting at church that I don't think this was intentional, but we've done James and Jude back to back, which are the two letters written by the two brothers of Jesus.

And you told me, Jack, that there's this cool fact that the letter of James and the letter of Jude is to share the most vocabulary in common of any two books in the New Testament.

Aside from books written by the same person.

I see. I see. But just a nice picture that these brothers speak the same way because they grew up with the same person.

And so I love just imagining what life was like for James and Jude growing up with Jesus as your big brother. Like that's just insane.

But then also that shift from the moment that happened after the resurrection, when they went from thinking that their older brother was out of his mind, to he is God incarnate, like the Messiah, the One, their Lord.

It's just a wild shift from my older brother to my Lord. I like that idea.

Absolutely. I love that little fact about the shared vocabulary. I got that fact from Ben Witherington III's commentary.

And he also noted how some of their phrases and the themes are particularly Galilean in nature. So, you get that other little link to sort of Jesus' hometown.

3:51

Is God's calling personal and irresistible?

So, we talked about being called, being loved and being kept by Christ. I want to start with this idea of being called. We got into a bit of reformed territory, as you noted.

When we talk about being called by Christ, we use this word calling a lot in Christian circles, sometimes for vocation, sometimes for this or that.

But when we're talking about salvation, is calling something where God is picking out individual people and saying, I'm calling you to be saved, or is it a call for everyone, do you think?

Well, that's the essence of the debate.

I think what's always struck me is, if you go down a classically reformed position, it sounds good at the start, you know, that God does everything, God is sovereign, we want the most sovereign God we can, so, you know, God's doing it all.

But the further you push in, it just, for me, negates too many other scriptures, where we are called to or charged with the need to obey, the need to repent, the need to respond with faith.

You know, I feel like I haven't met too many reformed people who truly know the ramifications of TULIP, of the five parts of Calvinism.

Yeah, the thought that exactly what you said is true, the only people that are getting saved are the ones that miraculously made born again, called with an irresistible call, and then they respond, not out of free will, but because they were called.

And it's all the work of God. I just don't feel that's consistent with the whole Bible, but that's just me. I think there's a legitimate position on both the reformed side and what is typically called an Arminian side.

5:40

What does TULIP in Calvinism mean?

We should just explain for listeners who might not be familiar what TULIP is and what the reformed side is.

So TULIP is an acronym for the five points of Calvinism. So first part is total depravity, where every single human being is sinful to the point that they can't not be sinful. Second part is unconditional election.

Just that God has chosen people and it's not based on the fact that they would choose him.

It's unconditional God has chosen these people to be saved and these people not to be saved.

Yes. And that gets to limited atonement, which is that the atonement is not for every one, but only for the select people who have been called.

Like the hymn says, for those he came to save.

Yes. And only those he came to save. Irresistible grace, the idea that when God calls you or when there's grace, you can't say no.

It's not your choice. It's all God's sovereign choice. And then preservation of the saints, which is the idea that if God has called you and if you've been selected, you make it to the end.

Once saved, always saved is the thing. And so, listeners probably listening to that definition, you can see how you noted with some hesitancy the way some of these themes could overlap with that.

Ian, the key with all of that for TULIP is total depravity. So, the truly reformed position says that faith is a work. Repentance in faith is a work.

And no one could do that from a place of total depravity. No one is going to repent. No one is going to do any good.

But, the argument is quite big against it. That presumes that no one on earth does any good outside of God. Outside of the kingdom, outside of the Spirit, outside of Jesus.

I don't believe that. I think people are doing good all the time. There is General Revelation, Psalm 19, or Revelation 1, sorry, Romans 1.

Yeah, God is working through different people and doing good. And yeah, I just personally reject that. I think that to respond with faith and repentance is not a work.

We are able to do that. We're capable to do that. And I say that in the sermon, Matthew 24, I think it is, where Jesus says, I wanted you to come to me, Jerusalem, but you were unwilling.

It doesn't make sense to me for God to say, I've got a problem with your unwillingness. When it's like, you can't be willing if you're totally depraved. So yeah, so the key that holds it all together for TULIP is total depravity.

You've got to hold on to that. And the hard part is if you hold on to that, you're stuck with the rest of the four. You have to go with the rest.

8:30

What does it mean for God to call us?

So in light of that, I guess what is our alternate model for what it means for us to be called?

Is that God extending the invitation to us? Is that what it means for us to be called then?

I think so, yeah. I think that just the simple idea of Him calling our name in a crowd is what I described in the sermon. There is no question that He loved us first and we respond because He reached out to us.

He is gracious and loving and we would keep running from Him. It's nothing in us that we can be proud of. That means we're better than someone else.

God reaches out to us and we need to respond with faith.

So it's a statement, I guess, about the initiative of God in that He acted first.

And about Him picking you as well, like not just us as a group, but also knowing you within that group and saying, I'm calling you Ben or I'm calling you Jono, whoever it is.

I think it is the call, I believe is part of God so loved the world, that He wanted the gospel to go to the whole world, to call the world to come under His Lordship, the Lordship of Christ. That's how I see the call.

Absolutely.

9:53

How do we receive God's love without misusing it?

Talking about this idea of being loved by Christ, lovely point. I think we're all on board with the idea that God loves us. I think on a practical, you talked about we need to accept the idea that God loves us and this is sort of very important.

I'm interested between the line between accepting God's love for us and embracing that and not treating God like a genie who's just here to fulfill my every wish. What do you guys make of that?

Yeah, it's an important question, which I think links to part of why Jude is writing his letter.

He says in verse four that these people who have infiltrated the church are ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ, our only sovereign and Lord.

Now that would seem to be an indication of taking the love of God and of Christ in the wrong direction. And to say that, oh, God loves me, so I can just do whatever I want. I don't have to live under the lordship of Jesus, because I've been set free.

That is not the purpose of God's love. Yes, He loves us regardless of what we do. Yes, He's gracious.

Yes, He's forgiving. But the love of God is supposed to lead us to love Him in return. Think of the greatest commandment.

Jesus says the number one commandment out of all 613 is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And that love that we express to God is a response to His love for us.

And so, I think absolutely we can misuse the love of God and not respond to it in the way that we're supposed to.

I think the idea of truly understanding the love of God is so profound. It's just as a concept, it's actually quite different to a license for sin. You're not understanding the love of God if you think he's a genie.

It's almost like the one question is about the character of God, sort of what he's like. Is he easygoing? About holiness?

It's almost like a holiness question. Is he laissez faire about how we act? But the love of God in itself is just his attitude towards us, which is, I think, fearsome, you know?

It's both holy and gentle. That's the key I was trying to say, that if you're going to contend for the faith, the core position of stability is that I am safe in the love of God.

And in that love, I can relax into peering deeper into who he is, and that's a holy God, that's a holy father who disciplines his kids. And that's the point of holding on to contending for the faith.

I think it is a nice, simple summary, this idea of you were called, it was the initiative of God, and it's sort of macro, it's bigger than some other version of what is true in your life.

God is there, He's done everything through Jesus to make a way for you to come and He's invited you, and you've responded with faith and repentance, and you're in the love of God, demonstrated in the cross, and you're kept, and out of that safe

place, you can contend for that said gospel against an aberrant version of it that's crept into the church. But I think just this idea that the love of God is fierce, is helpful.

Perhaps the idea of a jealous love also works, because that's used to describe it as well, that God is, He's jealous for us. He wants us, but He wants us for His own purposes.

And I think that it is, in Jude in particular, it is important to recognize the power of the love of God in contrast to the power of the false teaching and the demonic stuff that's behind it.

So when you look at that whole many verses that talk about disobedience and punishment and giving oneself over to the perversion of the world, gives the idea of a power, there's a power drawing us.

And I think that's what I was trying to say, it's trying to come under a different power.

And recognizing if you're being led astray by the desires that wage war against our soul, which is the sort of James stuff, Peter says that, but I started off by talking about a Trojan horse, and I think that's the key image that's helpful for Jude.

The Greeks came into the fortified city of the Trojans, and they caused chaos from within. And that's the danger that Jude is saying, we've been infiltrated.

14:50

How we tell the differences between doubters and deniers?

Jumping off that, it's about how do we tell the difference between people who are misguided, who have gone astray in our lives or in the church, and need to be responded with sort of patience and correction, versus people who are in a Trojan horse,

wolves in sheep's clothing. How do we sort of distinguish between those?

Yeah, it says there in verse 22, be merciful to those who doubt. It's a human thing. I mean, a key part of faith is doubt.

Faith is not the opposite of doubt. And so, we all, at many times, have questions that we're working through. And this idea that the love of God keeps us is a great encouragement.

At the same time, back in verse 4 and 5, or verse 4 that I mentioned before, there are ungodly people who pervert the grace of God and who deny Jesus Christ as Lord. That is fundamental to what it is to be a Christian, is to declare Jesus is Lord.

That's Romans 10, verse 9. And so, if somebody is walking around denying that Jesus is Lord, this is a significant line. This is not a person who is doubting.

This is a person who is denying the faith completely.

And that's where James writes his very strongly worded letter to those people, the people who deny Jesus as Lord, not to the people who doubt once in a while and who have genuine questions, but are seeking to sincerely hold on to their faith.

So, this line, I think, between doubting, those who are doubting and those who are denying might be a helpful way to draw the line.

Yeah, there's another part too towards the end of the book where Jude says, these are people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

So, in trying to discern, I think we're looking for the fruit of the Spirit, because he actually says these false teachers that have infiltrated do not have the Spirit. He's making a comment to say, they are not followers of Jesus.

What are you meant to do? Build yourself up in the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love, which is getting back to what we just talked about. But, yeah, I think the discernment is Galatians stuff.

Is there evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in this person? Because you can, if Carinthians teaches you, this person that comes in the church could have lots of gifting, very persuasive, very charismatic.

But if they don't have gentleness and humility in the fruit of the Spirit, then there's something to be careful about.

Yeah, that's what Jesus says in Matthew 7, that you'll know a tree by its fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit, and a good tree bears good fruit.

And so, looking at the product of somebody's life and the way that they leave behind them is a way of seeing the character of their inner person.

Yeah.

17:43

Do we have a problem with slander?

Jumping off that, one of the things that Jude sort of lays as an accusation at the feet of these sort of infiltrators is this idea of slander.

And he talks about the slander, anything they don't know, the slander of celestial beings.

I've had the privilege of preaching on Jude before, and I thought that was a key point, because I think slander is potentially something we quite struggle with in this country, in this society, in terms of the way we use our words, it's kind of a

James thing as well, right? That we love to be sacrilegious, we love to be profane, we don't like taking things with a sense of seriousness or sacredness, like Jude seems to imply we should take celestial beings, right?

What do you guys think about that? Does that ring true to you? How do we deal with things like slander?

How do we respond when we hear slander about the things that we think are important?

Yeah, it's certainly very relevant for our time.

I remember thinking once that my generation living in Sydney is a kind of triangle of death because we're young people who tend to be critical of older generations, we're Australian, which means we have this like anti-power, tall poppy syndrome

thing, and we're postmodernists. And the whole point of postmodernism is to rip on everything that's come before and be cynical.

And so my generation and the rest of Australians kind of have these three key factors underneath the surface that form us into people who are very quick to slander, very quick to tear down authority and to heap abuse.

And that's what Jude is referring to. So I just want to affirm it's a very significant issue for our generation at our time. I think we need a revelation of what we're actually talking about.

The word revelation, as in the Book of Revelation, means an uncovering and unveiling. The point of the Book of Revelation is to pull back the curtain into the spiritual realm in order that we might see who Jesus really is.

And there's that image all throughout Revelation of thousands upon thousands praising Him saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, the Lamb who was slain, who is worthy of all praise. We don't keep that image before us.

Instead, we too often operate on the purely physical level, which is a topic that Jude picks up.

And so, having a sense of the holiness of the God that we're talking about and the fact that His name is holy, that's why Jesus talked about that as the first thing in the Lord's prayer, the hallowed be your name, God our Father, keeping before our

minds the holiness of God and the fear of God, which is just a visceral response to the nature of who God is. I think that's helpful because the alternative is we just become sacrilegious and we forget what we're talking about and we kind of make

jokes about everything. We don't take anything seriously.

It's strong language Jude uses against these people, isn't it?

Yeah, the word slander is blaspheme.

Yeah.

Those who blaspheme angels, blaspheme whatever they do not understand.

Wow.

Yeah. I think on that point about strong language, I was just looking at verse 23 where he says to hate even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

20:48

“Hate even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.” Thoughts?

I mean, that is... What do you think he's getting out there?

I think he's just saying there's no place for the teaching that these people are introducing. Again, it comes back to the difference between denying Jesus and doubting in some aspect of faith. If you're doubting, you're not cast out of God's love.

The Bible is so clear about the love of God that keeps us. But for those who deny that Jesus is Lord and who presume to have a place in the Christian community, he says, there is no place for that at all.

Hate even the clothing that is corrupted by people who hold that view because you are not a Christian if you deny the Lordship of Jesus.

So, there is this very, very strong line that Jude encourages us to draw between people who say things like that versus those who doubt and have moments of weakness in faith.

I just wonder if he is on his own journey of development of his theology, Jude, because he is obviously in earlier verses reading the ancient text of the Jewish scriptures outside the Old Testament.

The idea of hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh, maybe that's a spin-off of some of the old Levitical stuff and it's, not to say that everything you just said is true, that don't even talk about what the disobedient doing secretly,

you know, that's sort of pushing away completely into holiness. But yeah, it's a little bit sort of funky, Jude, so maybe that's part of it as well.

I mean, the funkiness is what I love about it.

22:35

How should we understand Jude's quotations?

Speaking of, the devil disputing with Archangel Michael over the body of Moses, what the heck is going on there?

Oh, it's what, I can't remember what it is, but something like Ben-Syriac II or something, some old Jewish text.

I think it's the Testament of Moses.

Yeah, the assumption of Moses.

Yeah, which was a text that first century Jews had in their collection of not what they considered part of the main body of the Bible, but a kind of peripheral, secondary text, almost a commentary on the main text.

And so, Jude, in mentioning that book, I don't think he's saying, oh, we should have that in our Old Testament.

He's just writing to people who know that story and he's using that story to make his point in the same way that we would, when we're preaching, we'd make a point about, oh, you know, the shop up at Westfield Hornsby, this and this, we're appealing

to our common context of the things that we know in order to make a point. It is weird, though, multiple times he quotes from books that we don't have in our Bibles.

First Enoch, he does a lot.

Yeah.

Enthi, right, once said regarding this, the comparison between the Old and New Testament is like the Bible in a room and that's the Christian text, but the Jewish texts fill the whole room. Like it's just, there's so much Jewish literature out there.

And he's talking about the need to read some of that to actually understand how words are used.

Absolutely.

The world behind it.

Yeah. Yeah. No, I've enjoyed, I've done some of that reading myself and it is very interesting.

The way it can sometimes illuminate the New Testament and its world.

24:21

What does it mean to slander angels?

About the point that's being made, I just wanted to sort of follow up on that. So he's making the point about not heaping abuse on celestial beings. And he talks about Archangel Michael not even daring to slander the devil.

What do we make of the way he's sort of suggesting we talk to spiritual beings as it were? I mean, elsewhere in the Bible, we're told to rebuke the devil or to rebuke evil or resist evil and it will flee from us.

Yeah.

What do you think is going on there?

I think the broader point that Jude is making is he's commenting on those who reject authority above them.

And so, here's a case of we human beings who are flesh and spirit, rejecting, blaspheming, slandering those who are above us in authority, which is these spiritual beings, which are spirit without flesh.

And so, I think holding on to that point is key that he's talking to people who reject authority and that's why he's using this image here.

Yeah, I think it's really good to point that out, because the other part, not to be a put cold water on it, it reminds me of Revelation 22, the Millennium, where it's the only place in the whole Bible that it talks about it.

And I think this is one of those occasions that it's like, good to ask questions, it is in our Bible, but you wouldn't build a doctrine on this. Like literally, that is a very true, wise approach.

But I think what Ben said is absolutely a good thing that we take from it.

Yeah, absolutely.

I've heard it said once that if the Bible whispers something, we should whisper it too. And if the Bible shouts something, we should shout it too.

Oh, that's a great one.

So the Bible shouts the Lordship of Jesus, so we should be all about that. But if the Bible has not much to say about angels and the respect that we should show them, then maybe we shouldn't make that such a big deal either.

Very well said.

26:20

What does it mean to be kept for Christ?

Your final point in the sermon, Jono, was that we are kept by Christ.

And you said that we're kept for a person. Could you maybe go into a little bit more deeper about how does that actually work? What does it mean for me to be kept for Christ?

I think that's a reminder that the world God created is built on relationships.

I suppose it comes back to this wonderful truth that Christ is not a means to an end, He's the end in Himself. And that alone is just so profound. We don't come to Christ to get a mansion in the sky or more gold pavement in our little plot.

He is the end. And I think that's the answer. It's about relationship, but it's also about Telos, you know, who is the end?

What is the goal? And it's to know Christ forever. And we are, I think that's the idea of Revelation, that it's not about a new temple, it's that the body of Christ is the temple filled with the presence of God.

And we are united in the marriage supper of the Lamb with the groom in relationship. I mean, that's the whole beautiful story of the marriage, and the body and the bride.

Yeah, it's a beautiful vision.

27:46

Funny brother stories

We're going to try a new section now, which I call our, sort of our fun question for the week, just to palate cleanse us a little bit after all the theology. Jude, obviously, as we said, is a half-brother of Jesus, brother of James.

Now, I don't have any brothers, but I know both of you do. So, I was wondering if you have a fond memory or a fun story to tell of you and your brother, something you do alike, an adventure you had together, anything spring to mind?

Oh, I had lots of adventures with my brother. I've got one brother, an older brother, Murray. And one thing that just always, I've always remembered is him teaching me how to surf.

And we were at Curl Curl. And I'm just at the point where I can stand up and surfing, like, counter to what you would think is sometimes easier to go out into bigger waves. It's easier to surf a bigger wave than really small waves.

And it's sort of quite big. And we're out the back, which when you're learning to surf is a feat in itself to get out the back. And we're out the back sitting on our boards and you're learning how to sit on your board.

And then a set comes and you sort of look behind you and it sort of catches you by surprise. And everyone, there's a collective sense of dread. It's like, are we going to get caught?

And he can see the fear in my eyes and he looks at me and he says, we're all scared, son. I've always remembered that. Just a classic moment.

I appreciate my brother, he taught me lots of things.

Oh, that's awesome.

Yeah, I have two brothers and it's interesting, this idea that Jesus is the brother of Jude. I relate to Jude's feeling in a sense of that sense of my brother is so much better than me. My younger brother is three and a half years younger than me.

So my whole life, I beat him at everything. I beat him at wrestling, beat him at soccer, beat him at basketball, beat him at PlayStation. Now is great, because as an older brother, you don't have mercy on your younger sibling.

You go full hard. But then I remember, years ago, he was growing up and getting bigger and taller and stronger than me. He would start to beat me.

So my approach was, we don't play the games anymore, that you beat me. So I'm just connecting that to the fact that Jude has this older brother, Jesus, who is so much greater than him.

Not that my brother is Jesus to my Jude, but that was a fond memory. Yeah. All right.

Well, thank you guys for coming on the pod.

Thank you all for listening. How about I finish by reading the doxology of Jude, because it is such a good way to end. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling, 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.

30:34

Doxology Conclusion

Amen.