

**INTRODUCTION:**

This morning, we are living in a land of patriots.

- According to the latest Random House Unabridged Dictionary, a patriot is, “...**a person who loves, supports, and defends his or her country and its interests with devotion.**”
- In American history, we can think back to men like Patrick Henry who was made famous for saying, “**Give me liberty, or give me death!**”
- We remember Nathan Hale’s statement from right before he was hanged, “**I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.**”
- In modern times, perhaps we think back to the days and weeks after 911 and remember all of the flags in people’s car windows and the “**God Bless America**” bumper stickers that were so popular.
- And even today, we see the huge funeral processions and the flags waving as a soldier arrives home for the last time.
- In America today, we see many indications of strong patriotism.

This morning as we direct our thoughts back nearly 2,000 years to the pages of the New Testament, we can see that same kind of devotion—directed not to an earthly nation but to the kingdom of God.

- We think of men like Peter and John who were beaten, and abused, and thrown into prison for preaching the gospel.
- We think of women like Lydia and Tabitha who gave their lives in daily service to God’s people.
- We think of the apostle Paul—a man who was persecuted for basically everything he ever did after becoming a Christian.
- And when we think of these men and women, we understand that they were dedicated to the word of God.

We know that the Bible is the most powerful book in the world.

- The Bible, in fact, is described in **Hebrews 4:12**, where we read that, “...***the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.***”
- The word of God, then, is a living document.
- The Bible is not like a precious heirloom that we pass on from generation to generation.
- The Bible is not like a piece of jewelry that our grandmother left for us.
- It is not like a beautiful vase or some kind of antique. But the Bible is a living document.
- In modern times, God’s word is printed on fine paper, bound in leather.
- Sometimes the word of God is measured in megabytes on a hard drive.
- But regardless of the format, the message itself is living and active.
- When the word of God gets into someone’s heart, that person’s heart is changed.

The fact that the Bible is living means that it will always have opposition, because as far as I can tell, every living thing has enemies.

- We know from experience that when we plant seeds in the garden, those seeds have enemies—if they happen to survive the harsh conditions of spring, then they may survive long enough to be crowded out by weeds or perhaps even devoured by a family of rabbits.

Every animal on the face of the earth also has its enemies.

- We know that big fish eat little fish.

- We know that big animals often eat the little animals.
- And even as humans, we also have our own challenges.
- We face diseases and even threats from bigger animals and other humans.
- And so as soon as we say that the Bible is a living document, we know that God’s word will have enemies as well.

This morning, I’d like for us to study a patriot who was dedicated to protecting and defending the word of God.

- The message comes from one of only five one-chapter books in the Bible.
- In the Old Testament, the only one-chapter book is the book of **Obadiah**.
- In the New Testament, we have the book of **Philemon**, as well as **2 and 3 John**, but this morning, I would like for us to begin a series of lessons from the one-chapter book of **Jude**.
- It is very easy to find—it is the next-to-the last book in the entire Bible.

Obviously, the book was written by a man named Jude (or Judas).

- There are several Judases referred to in the New Testament.
- Obviously, it was not written by Judas Iscariot, because Judas Iscariot took his own life after betraying the Lord.
- But rather, most people usually agree that the book was written by a Judas referred to in **Matthew 13:55-56**.
- We know that this particular Jude was raised by a Jewish family in Nazareth.
- His parents were Joseph and Mary.
- They were very poor, but they were descendants of King David from the tribe of Judah.
- We know, of course, that Mary’s first child was Jesus, the Son of God.
- But after the virgin birth, Mary and Joseph went on to have several more children—four sons (who are named in the Bible) and at least two daughters (who are referred to in **Mark 6**).
- In **John 7**, we are told that the brothers did not believe in the Lord, and yet after the resurrection, things seem to have changed dramatically.
- In **Acts 1:14**, we are specifically told that the Lord’s brothers had come together with Mary and the apostles in the upper room for the purpose of constant prayer.
- We are specifically told that the Lord appeared to his brother James at some point after the resurrection.
- James became a pillar in the church, and it appears that the Lord’s other brothers became traveling missionaries supported by the church (as referred to in **1 Corinthians 9:5**).

It is interesting, then, that when Jude writes his book, he identifies himself in a very unique way.

- He refers to himself as, “**Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.**”
- Just writing those words would have taken a great deal of humility.
- He refers to himself basically as a slave of his oldest brother.
- A lot of times in the religious world today, people love those fancy titles—starting with Pope (which means father) all the way across the spectrum to “**The Most Right Reverend.**”
- But here we find that the Lord’s own brother referred to himself as a “**bond-servant of Jesus Christ.**”
- Jude came to understand that his oldest brother was the Son of God who came into the world to save the entire human race from sin, and death, and judgment.

We also find in the opening verse that the letter is addressed, “**To those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.**”

- As Christians, we have been called through the gospel, and so the letter was written to members of the Lord’s church, the body of Christ.

- In **verse 2**, Jude offers a prayer in the form of a greeting, “*May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.*”
- Jude’s hope was that there would be peace among God’s people.

This morning, as we look at the first four verses, I think we will find that Jude was a patriot—“...a **person who loves, supports, and defends the gospel...with devotion,**” and he was a man who encouraged others to do the same.

If you will, please look with me at the first four verses of the New Testament book of Jude (**Jude 1-4**)...

*1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:*

*2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.*

*3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*

*4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

As we focus in on these four verses, I’d like for us to notice several basic concepts with one major lesson.

#### **I. First of all, we find that JUDE STARTED OUT WITH THE INTENTION OF WRITING HIS LETTER ABOUT OUR COMMON SALVATION.**

At this point, we can only imagine what an incredible letter that would have been!

- In fact, it would have been amazing! It would have been encouraging!
- Oh, how we would have loved to read a letter about salvation from the younger brother of the Son of God. It would have been a great subject.

Even today, we would love to have a letter completely devoted to the joy of our common salvation.

- By common, he does not mean ordinary, but he is referring to unity—the joy of being united in the Lord—united in our common salvation.
- In the first century, Jews and Gentiles were coming together for the very first time.
- The barrier of the dividing wall had been torn down through the cross.
- Gentiles were being welcomed into the family of God.
- Jews were reaching out and inviting their pagan neighbors to learn about the Jewish Messiah who had appeared in the flesh and had been offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the entire world.
- Jewish Christians were sending missionaries into the pagan Gentile world.
- After just a few years, Gentiles were taking up collections and sending funds back to the Jews in Jerusalem to help them through a severe famine. What an amazing situation!

This message of a common salvation is a message that the world still needs to hear today.

- Jews and Arabs need to be united.
- We can only imagine what could happen if those two groups were to suddenly lay down their religious differences—if they were to suddenly come together in the Christian faith.
- And yet that is exactly what was happening in the first century.
- It would have been an exciting story.
- If Jude had truly been a traveling missionary (as we believe that he was), he would have had some amazing tales to tell.

And in **verse 3**, Jude “*was making every effort*” to write about this subject.

- However, even before he gets started, we find in **verse 3** a very disturbing statement.
- As he sits down to write, he tells us that his subject changed at the very last minute.

One of the hardest parts of preaching is choosing a topic.

- The Bible contains 1,189 chapters, and those chapters contain literally hundreds upon thousands of subjects. It’s hard to narrow it down.
- There are only 52 Sundays a year, I figure I’ll be out of town for at least three of those, and if we have just a couple of special guest speakers and with me not preaching a full sermon on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday evenings, I normally end up preaching only about 84 times every year.
- Focusing the entire Bible down to only 84 sermons is truly difficult.
- Well I am sure that Jude was facing that same challenge.
- And after getting it all laid out, he narrows it down to “*our common salvation.*”
- But just at that moment, Jude gets some disturbing news.

## II. **This brings us to our second concept, because instead of writing about our common salvation, Jude, the Lord’s own brother, a patriot of the gospel, is called up TO MAKE A DEFENSE OF THE WORD OF GOD.**

In **verse 3**, he says, “*...I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*”

- And again, there were other more positive subjects that Jude wanted to cover, he wanted to write about their common salvation, but the success of the once-for-all delivered faith absolutely depended on these Christians getting personally involved in the struggle of a lifetime.
- Some people have referred to the book of Jude as a “**call to arms.**”
- Jude was in the position of Paul Revere, and was sounding the alarm that it was time to go to war.

Sometimes when trouble arises, even in the church, we are tempted to sit by and hope that things will just get better on their own.

- Maybe we hope that the situation will just go away.
- And yet as with certain illnesses, we know that decisive action must be taken.
- We know that there is sometimes just a brief window of opportunity when we may be able to catch the cancer before it is too late.

The same is true when it comes to this situation that Jude is addressing in **verse 3**.

- Jude was saying that if the early Christians failed to come together and get involved in the fight, that the consequences of being cowards would be disastrous.
- It was not enough to just focus on the positive, it was not enough to just keep on teaching and preaching about “*our common salvation,*” but the time had come to turn away from the positive and take up arms in the battle of faith.

Even today, we know that it is so much more enjoyable to talk about the positive things.

- We would love to speak of nothing but love, and faith, and grace, and joy, and forgiveness, and yet when God’s enemies try to sneak into the church with a hidden agenda, the Bible absolutely requires that we “*contend earnestly for the faith.*”
- Just as the patriots of American history would have preferred being at home with their families, we also prefer to be at peace, but Jude is telling us that there are times when peace is not possible.

Jude refers in **verse 3** to a faith, “*which was once for all handed down to the saints.*”

- We need to strengthen ourselves with the understanding that the gospel was not slowly developed over time.
- The gospel did not evolve over hundreds of years.
- The gospel was not decided on by dozens of councils down through the centuries.
- But Jude reminds us that the faith was “**once for all handed down.**” It was delivered!
- It was signed, sealed, and delivered with the blood of Jesus on the cross.
- The Bible tells us that the good news was first revealed by Jesus and was then written down and confirmed by the writers of the New Testament who had been given the divine power to miraculously remember exactly what the Lord had said through the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- There have never been any annulments or amendments to the New Testament.

When Jude tells us to contend earnestly for this faith (this body of doctrine), he uses an athletic term that means to wrestle or put forth great effort.

- It is the same Greek word from which we get our English word “**agonize.**”
- We are to agonize in our struggle to defend the faith. We are to spare no effort.
- We are to put up a real fight.
- A spiritual patriot will agonize over the threat of false teaching to the word of God.

As Paul wrote concerning one of his many conflicts with false teachers (in **Galatians 2:4-5**), “***But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.***”

In so many ways, the gospel can be compared to the freedom we have in this country—sometimes we may not appreciate the value of what we have until we are called upon to defend it.

- Jude, therefore, says that he wanted to teach about our common salvation, but he had to call upon his readers to contend earnestly for the faith instead.

### **III. As we close, we need to consider **verse 4**, because in **verse 4**, Jude gives THE REASON FOR THIS SHIFT IN THINKING, AS HE WARNS ABOUT A VERY SPECIFIC DANGER.**

In **verse 4**, Jude says that, “***certain persons have crept in unnoticed.***”

- Since we are talking about patriots this morning, I should point out that the definition of treason is, “**the offense of acting to overthrow one’s government (from the inside).**”
- Treason is, “**the betrayal of a trust or confidence; a breach of faith; or treachery.**”
- The exact definition may be different from nation to nation, but there is almost universal contempt for an act of treason.
- Death and life imprisonment are the two most common penalties for the crime we are considering.
- So it is interesting that Jude is basically describing treason in the kingdom of God—where those on the inside would work against the word of God.

We notice that these people “***crept in unnoticed.***”

- It is not that they literally snuck in the church building and hid behind a pew, but they worked themselves in—perhaps they made friends, perhaps they were great at hospitality, perhaps they were big givers.
- However they did it, they were not being honest with their motives.
- They were not being honest with their true beliefs.
- They were not being honest with their intentions.
- But as one commentary pointed out, “**Like double agents, they worked to subvert the very faith they professed.**”

Aubrey Johnson has written an amazing commentary on the book of **Jude**, and these are his comments, “**Because false teachers perceive themselves to be more knowledgeable than those they seek to enlighten, they do not equate their lack of candidness with dishonesty. They believe their deception is harmless and justified. No announcement of their intentions will be made at the outset, and no confession of wrongdoing will be made if they are ousted.**” How true that is!

Truly, just as Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15**, “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves*” [NIV].

- And the most disturbing part of this is that these wolves were quietly working from within the congregation.
- Apparently they were able to blend in easily.
- When we read about this, we need to slap ourselves awake, because these people will be among us and we will not know it.
- And so maybe the doctrine starts with something that many of us may consider to be rather insignificant. Jude would tell us to keep our eyes open.

When these people are pressed and called on the carpet, their defense is, “**No, no, no—you misunderstood what I was saying! I was just asking the question! I was just throwing it out there! I was just...**” and so on, and so on, and so on, until their cover is finally blown.

Here in our nation, we know the damage that can be done from the inside.

- On September 10, 2001, there were 19 men in our country—eating our food, sleeping in our hotels, using our water, breathing our air—they took advantage of our ignorance and our kindness, and the next morning they woke up to hurt us in a way that we have never been hurt before.

In **verse 4**, Jude describes these people as “*ungodly*.”

- Through the rest of this very short book, Jude will go on and use the word “*ungodly*” a total of six times—all with reference to false teachers who were tearing the church apart from the inside out.
- These people did not respect God, and because of their lack of reverence they did not hesitate to deceive and pull people away one by one by one.
- And then at the end of **verse 4**, Jude says that these people turned the grace of God into a license to commit sin.
- They were saying that the grace of God would forgive anything, so go ahead and continue in an immoral lifestyle.

## **SUMMARY:**

This morning, therefore, we have looked at the fact that Jude wanted to write to us about our common salvation.

- However, at the very last minute he was forced to change his focus and had to urge the church to wake up and contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.
- And the reason for all of this is given in **verse 4**, as we find that the church was being threatened from the inside by false teachers who were not being honest with their true intentions.

## **CONCLUSION & INVITATION:**

Jude has reminded us this morning that the Christian life is a fight.

- We would love to constantly talk about our common salvation.
- We would love to be nothing but positive here at this congregation.

- And yet we know that that is not always possible, because Jude (the Lord's own brother) gives us a stern warning that applies to the church even today.

We have a faithful congregation that assembles here.

- If we want to keep it that way, then we must also contend earnestly for the faith.
- Each member of this congregation has an obligation to know the truth, to guard the truth, to protect the truth from error—not only from the world, but also from the inside.

Next Sunday, I'd like for us to keep our focus in the book of Jude and notice from the next few verses that Jude gives us some famous examples from the past of those who have turned away from God and the consequences of doing so.

Some of you here this morning have not yet accepted and obeyed the truth that we've been talking about.

- The good news is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and was raised up on the third day.
- We follow His example by dying to sin (that is, stopping evil behavior), by being buried in water for the forgiveness of our sins, and by then being raised up to walk a new life, having put our faith in the power of God who raised Christ from the dead.
- If you are ready to take these steps, you can be baptized right now.
- You can let us know about your decision as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...