

ADVICE FROM JUDE: 2. KEEP YOURSELF IN FAITH.

The Book of Jude in the Bible is a short letter written to Christians. In the 25 verses he offers three pieces of advice, the second I am writing about here.

Early in his letter, Jude jumps into the concern that has him writing in the first place:

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”
Jude 3-4

He goes on and on about these godless men, describing their evil:

“...these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings” – vs 8

“...these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.” – vs 10

“...These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves.” – vs 12

“...These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.” – vs 16

So you might ask, “Where is he going with this? What is his point?” Certainly he wants to elicit fear and cause us to be more alert. This is appropriate when there is a danger near that not everyone seems to notice. But in the next verses, 17-19 he tells us first to remember that these things are nothing new, and we should not be shocked. Now notice what comes next:

“But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”
Jude 20-21

After getting us all worked up about the mess that is all around us, he reminds us that this is nothing new, and then points the finger back to us. This is similar to the argument Paul uses in Romans 1:18-32 where he goes on and on about the evil people all around us, and then says in Romans 2:1 *“Therefore **you** have no excuse, whoever **you** are, when **you** judge others; for in passing judgment on another **you** condemn yourself, because **you**, the judge, are doing the very same things.”* (And when do we do that? – just now, whenever we get worked up about other people’s faults.)

What is it about us that other people’s faults that grabs our attention? Is it like the accident that we just can’t look away from? From the beginning, Christians have had problems with gossip and even slander- Romans 1:29, 2 Corinthians 12:20, Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:11, Titus 3:2, James 4:11, 1 Peter 2:1. Ask yourself if it makes you feel better to know that

other people around you are stumbling. Perhaps it allows us to think that there is no urgency to improve our lives because we are “good enough” compared to everyone else out there.

How easily, though, we slip into a life that isn’t really better than everyone else out there. To love God with all our heart and love our neighbors is something we have to continually work on. What Jude calls “building yourself up on your most holy faith” we can think of as: doing good and doing no harm to others, and growing in love with God by worship, private prayer, reading the Bible, giving, and spiritual conversations (either one-on-one or in small groups).

Some of us might be concerned that if we become too focused on building up our faith we might become so holy that we will be out of touch with family and friends. You might know some people who are “holier than thou.” However, I find that this arrogance is more likely from people who are focused on the faults of others and *not* doing all they can to grow in their own Christian faith.

Jude’s advice is only helpful if we actually do it. When I was growing up (a process that I haven’t finished yet), there was a saying “if you want to change the world, start with the person in the mirror.” This is sound advice, except that you then have to take action. You can ask yourself each day, what am I doing to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ? Am I in worship and prayer, both privately and with others? Am I involved in some kind of service to others? Am I learning about the Bible and faith from someone else? Am I teaching what I have learned about faith to someone else? If our answer to any of these is no, then we are not doing all we can to heed the words of Jude 20-21.

So if we can get started (or continue) on that, then we can go on to Jude’s third piece of advice (in the next article).

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Kevin' written in a cursive style.