



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: Jude: Hope Filled Living in a Culture of Despair

By Pastor Bryan Clark

Message Title: Things to Remember Pt. 1

Release Date: Thursday 10/31/19

We've reminded ourselves that what God wants for you is for you to experience more of His mercy. He doesn't want you to live in the dark room; He doesn't want your days to be filled with shame and guilt. He wants you to experience more of His peace. He doesn't want your days to be full of anxiety and fear. He wants you to experience more of His love. He doesn't want you to be lonely; He doesn't want you to feel abandoned or rejected or forgotten.

But here's the problem: We have an enemy, and the enemy is a liar and a deceiver, and the voices are loud and compelling. He sends false teachers and they creep in unnoticed to try to subtly lead us astray. He says they are clouds without water; they are fruit trees without fruit. They are liars and deceivers; they are big talkers, but they are empty talkers. At the end of the day, they promise everything and deliver nothing, and it just breaks your heart again and again.

We've viewed it as like a minefield, where we are trying to cross this minefield and it can be very complicated. So, when we talk about false teachers and landmines and all this stuff, it's not uncommon that people get kind of panicky. They start to have this anxiety of, "Oh no! I'm going to get led astray; I'm not going to make it! I'm going to get my foot blown off," to which Jude ends his letter by saying, "Hey! Relax. I've got it covered. You just have to remember a few things." That's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with us to the little New Testament book of Jude. We pick it up in Verse 17. He's been talking about the grumblers, the faultfinders, the false teachers. He gets to Verse 17:

But you, beloved, (*NASB, Jude, Vs.17a)

So, this has been the tone of the letter. He loves these people. They are people he deeply cares about. He's just trying to help them. He's trying to help them not make a mess out of their lives.

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." (Vs. 17-18)

So, what he's saying is, "First of all you've got to remember that the apostles said this would happen. Before, the prophets warned us of false teachers, now the apostles of Jesus warned us—you should expect this. There's no reason to panic, no reason to be caught off guard. We should expect false teachers to try to lead us astray." He says we need to remember that.

He talks about the last times; they are often translated the last days. It isn't uncommon that I hear people say, "I think we're living in the last days," to which I say, "I know we are. It started with the First Coming of Jesus and ends with the Second Coming of Jesus. So, yes, we are; we have been for two thousand years. Maybe Jesus comes back today, maybe it's a hundred more years. Nobody knows that." But there is this unique time in history called these last days, and we know for certain there will be false teachers who will try to lead us astray. No big surprise—there's no need to panic.

He refers to them as mockers. It's a word that means they make fun of, they laugh, they belittle, they attack. One of the things I had to come to grips with early on, when I believed God was calling me to preach is: you have to settle with the fact people are going to laugh at you; people are going to make fun of you; people are going to mock you; people are going to throw stones at you. If you can't take it, you'd better figure out something else to do. That's just part of it. But it's not just me. It's all of us. If you're going to be a serious Christ-follower, there are people who will laugh at you; people will make fun of you; people will mock you; people will be little you. That is part of it, so it helps to just settle that it is part of the story; I shouldn't be surprised by that.

But we also remind ourselves, that there are brothers and sisters around the world, and today they will be beaten; today they will be attacked; they will be imprisoned. They will be executed for the cause of Christ. So, if somebody laughs at me, somebody belittles me, that's not really too much to ask, is it...for the cause of Christ? I just need to know that it's coming. That's part of what it means to be committed to Christ.

Following after their own ungodly lusts. Ungodly just simply meaning these desires that define them because they have no relationship with God. People have legitimate longings and desires, but without God they are trying to meet them some other way. That is what drives them; those are their passions. That's what defines them in this world.

Verse 19:

These are the ones who cause divisions,

Divide and conquer—there's always conflict—they are always stirring things up. That's part of the strategy. Now this might be a coworker; this might be somebody next door; this might be a member of your family. It occurs in lots of places. One of the ways we see it all the time is with young people. You have a group of friends that were friends maybe in elementary school and middle school. But you kind of hit that place in middle school and high school where there's often a divide. There are those who decide, "I think I want to go a different way." And there are those who have determined, "I still want to obey; I want to live my life for Jesus." There is often a divide of long-held friendships and relationships. It can be a very difficult season. Sometimes you walk alone, and that's a really common time where you feel this divide between those who are going to follow Jesus and those who choose to go another way. He also defines them as:

...worldly-minded, (Vs. 19b)

Again, the best way to understand this terminology is to understand, we as people are made in the image of God. We were made to find our significance, our value, our pleasure, in a relationship with God. But as a result of sin, we are cut off from God. Therefore, we now try to figure out, “How do I meet these needs without God? Where do I find significance? Where do I find meaning and purpose? Where do I find pleasure?” And basically, functioning as our own god, we are trying to satisfy these longings and these desires. That creates a value system that is what the New Testament refers to consistently as the world. It doesn’t mean that they are evil, bad, sinful things. They are just ways to try to find meaning to life apart from God. And that’s who they are: They don’t know God: they are ungodly. They are trying to figure out something that will satisfy.

...devoid of the Spirit (Vs. 19c)

That simply means they are not believers. These aren’t Christians; they don’t have the Spirit of God within them.

So, I want to talk about this for just a minute, because I want to make sure we understand who we are talking about. So, all of us, probably on a daily basis, rub shoulders with people that don’t believe—unbelievers. If you don’t, you should! That’s what we are supposed to be doing. That’s our calling. Now these are not mockers; they are not people that are on the attack. They are just simply people that don’t understand; they don’t get it. They don’t understand what Jesus did for them. So, our responsibility is to patiently build relationships with them, try to explain to them the truth of the Gospel and what Jesus did, and why He did it. They are not the people that Jude is concerned with.

It’s helpful to remind ourselves, especially those of us who have been Christians a long time, maybe we forget how odd so much of this stuff we believe, and so much of what we do, would be to those that just don’t understand it. Maybe they don’t understand the Bible; maybe they have never been around church much, and it’s just odd to them. Think about it this way: You have a neighbor, doesn’t know much about what’s in the Bible, doesn’t really know much about church life, but your neighbor decides to come with you. So, what are we doing? We’re passing out crackers and grape juice, (laughter) and it has something to do with someone who died 2000 years ago, and that somehow is supposed to impact my life today.

Now these are things that are deeply meaningful to us but view it through the eyes of someone who doesn’t understand. It’s like, “What are you people doing?” Sometimes people show up and we have horse tanks on the stage, and we dunk people, and everyone applauds! (laughter) It would be like, “What is this—the state fair, or is this a church?!? I can’t just think about how silly that must seem to them. How many of the lyrics of our songs just make no sense to them? All this talk about blood and sacrifice—again, if you have no background, it’s like, “What is with these people?” So, imagine you bring your friend, and the lyrics to the song go something like this:

There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel’s veins,

And sinners plunged beneath its flood, lose all their guilty stains.

And then we'll follow that with There's Power in the Blood.

How could that make sense to people that don't really understand what we hold so dear?

Some of you have heard this before, but years ago, in my previous church, one of my elders came out of World War II. He was a mess; he was about ready to lose everything...then had a radical conversion to Christ...but his father really struggled to figure out what had happened to him. When they would eat, this elder would pray for the food...and his dad would refer to it as talking to the 'taters. Now just stop and think about this. Next time you see someone in a restaurant that prays—that's exactly what it looks like. Somebody brings me the food; I talk to the 'taters, then I eat them! (laughter) If you don't believe, if you don't understand this, it just makes no sense. There's this realization that there are people around who are not mockers, and they are not really wanting to make fun of me. I have lots of unbelieving friends. They don't mock me; they don't make fun of me; I think they respect me. But they don't understand what I believe; they don't get it at all.

That's not who Jude is talking about. It's really important to understand that. He's talking about those who creep in unnoticed. They are intentionally trying to divide. They are wanting to mock and belittle and make fun. They are seeking to lead people astray. It's a very different kind of person that he's referring to there.

Again, what often happens when we talk about false teachers, when we talk about the potential of being led astray, we talk about landmines and all that, people get panicky. "Oh no! What if that's me? What if I get led astray? What if I don't know the truth?" To which Jude comes back and says, "Wait; settle down; there's no reason to panic; just a few things to remember. The first thing to remember is the apostles said this would happen, so no need to panic.

Starting in Verse 20, he goes on:

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith,

The first one is to build ourselves up. The most holy faith, that's the same way he used the terminology earlier in Verse Three, the faith is a reference to a creed or a body of doctrine. We would say today: the Scriptures, the Bible, the Word of God. The idea of building up on is the idea of a foundation, and upon a sure foundation, then, the building is built. It is the idea of being grounded in the Word of God, being grounded in what is true. But it is important that we don't misunderstand. Clearly, he is saying we do have a responsibility; there is our part. It's a present participle—every day I ground myself in what is true—but I don't ground myself to myself. That's not going to work.

Let's imagine that we're rock climbing. We are climbing a mountain. We're going up a sheer cliff, because I'm such a rock climber. You're with me, and I'm up ahead, and then there's a cable. You're down below and I'm leading the way, and I tell you, "Before you come up, I need to anchor myself, and then you can come up." I have three straps that are hanging off my belt and they all have hooks on them. I take each of the straps and I hook them into my belt, and with the three straps hooked into my belt, I say, "Okay, now I'm secure! You can come up." The reality is I'm no more secure than I was before, because I merely grounded myself to myself. What he's saying is not that you ground yourself to yourself. This isn't a try-harder theology; this isn't just gritting my teeth and bear down and do this. Rather what he's saying is, "I need to

ground myself into the rock. I need to anchor into the rock. Now, secure in the rock, it's safe to come up.”

I wish it was true that we as Christians could go to sleep at night, put our Bible under our pillow, and wake up in the morning with our head full of knowledge. One of the challenges we have, is a lot of Christians diminish the importance of biblical truth and have lost sight of the fact this is a war of truth and deception. If you do not know the truth, then you're going to be deceived; you're going to be lied to; you're going to be off track. That's why he says you're going to have to ground yourself in the truth...in the faith...in this body of doctrine that we believe.

Think of it this way. Every single person, you have an area of expertise. Think about what that is. You have an area where you really understand something and you're really good at it. When someone comes along and lies to you in your area of expertise, you immediately, with great confidence and calmness, know it's a lie. Why? Because you're confident you know the truth. It's the same idea. “I need to know the truth which exposes the lie.”

I think sometimes we make this more complicated than it needs to be. Again, I think people go into panic mode—like I have to memorize everything in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, or I'm in trouble. It's not that complicated. We're not talking about arguing over the intricacies of Bible doctrine and the need to be a Bible scholar. That's not what we're saying. We're just saying you need to have an understanding of the core theology that exposes the lie. Think about it:

What were the two areas that Jude identified in Verse Four? One is they turn grace into a license to sin. If you just read through the New Testament, isn't it overwhelmingly clear that grace isn't a license to sin? It's not that complicated. The second was: they denied Jesus as their Master and Lord - that God is okay with the fact that I'm in charge, running my own life, me deciding what's right and wrong. Isn't it true, that just a basic reading of the New Testament makes it very clear? I'm not in charge; He's in charge! He's the Master and Lord, and I need to submit to Him. Those are the examples of Jude. It's not that complicated. We just need to have a sense of the truth, which exposes the lie.

Cara: Bryan, thanks for that example of sifting a lie from the truth. You're right. We don't have to be Brainiacs to do this, but we do need to pay attention. One of the biggest lies that I've come across, is that all roads lead to Heaven.

Bryan: Yeah, so a very common lie in our culture, so I'll turn it around. Cara, you tell me, how do you know that's a lie?

Cara: Because Jesus says, “Nobody gets to the Father but through Me” and He is not a liar. [That's a really good answer.] Yeah, it narrows the road then, doesn't it?

Bryan: It does. These things are built on beliefs, so if you don't believe there's truth, then all roads lead to Heaven. But if there is truth, then contradictory statements can't both be true, and reasonable people can start to sort out reasonably, what's true and what's not. Dallas Willard used to say, reality is what you bump into when you're wrong, and it's like at some point you're going to hit reality.

Cara: For me, I don't understand. I guess they leave the Bible then up to interpretation, but how do they pick and choose what they choose to believe is true?

Bryan: Well, I think they would dismiss the Bible, and believe whatever they want to believe, whatever they feel like believing. But in the real world, if there are contradictory statements, we do know they can't both be true. It's not cold and hot at the same time. It's not light and dark at the same time. That's how we actually live. So, some of those lies are convenient, because people want to be their own god and believe what they want to believe, live what they want to live. But at the end of the day, there is such a thing as truth. And that means contradictory true statements can't all be true. There's got to be true, and there's got to be false.

Cara: Like when Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; Nobody gets to the Father, but through Me," to me that gives me great relief, because there's nothing else I have to do. That's it. I don't have to try to figure it out. [Yeah.] I just have to go.

Bryan: Yeah. Jesus was so clear. If you're going to believe the Bible, then that's as clear as it gets. John 14.

Cara: And that's as free as it gets. [Yeah.].

Arnie: So, I remember as a new believer, on fire for Jesus, working in Israel, and here comes a false teacher, and a lot of the people that I worked with went to see them. He was a healer and I knew he had put people in that were fakes, and I did everything I can to convince them not to go, and yet I failed. And maybe I was too fanatical about it. Can you give us some coaching on what do you do, when you know it's a lie? What can we do, Bryan?

Bryan: Yeah, so it is really challenging because unless they really want to know the truth, it's probably pretty limited what you can do. And sometimes it's only a matter of time before what they thought was true, lets them down and maybe they're willing to reconsider. But I also think by our model, by our example, we can demonstrate hope filled living. We demonstrate living out the truth. So, when you're drowning, you don't look to somebody else that's drowning to help; you look for somebody who knows how to swim. So, I guess we might say if we can demonstrate we know how to swim, maybe in time they'll ask questions and look to us. You know, Peter even says, we studied it, that we need to be ready to give an answer when they ask. So, it implies we're living a certain way. They decide they want that. So, they ask and all that presupposes time and relationship.

Cara: I like how from the very beginning, since you became the Bible teacher here, all lies seem to come down to, "I want to be my own god".

Bryan: Yeah. So, you kind of picked up on this. I'm like a broken record, but I do think it's very helpful in my own life and helping people process their own stories. That is the core issue. And it's always a good question. You know, what is the need, and in what way am I trying to be my own god? And why is that I can't trust God with this particular area of life, and gets to the heart of the issue, which I think is helpful for straightening things out.

Arnie: Jude talks about building ourselves up in faith. That's a pretty clear directive. That's something we certainly can do, especially when things are okay and we're not in crisis, is that right?

Bryan: Right. So, the language matters here. It's not for salvation, but we're building ourselves up in faith, meaning now that we believe, so there's God's part, but there's our part. It doesn't just magically happen overnight. And I think mostly our part is understanding and believing the truth, because if we understand it and believe it, it will be manifested then in works. That's what we learned in James. We're pretty passionate about that here at Back to the Bible, and we try to help people do that. Arnie, maybe you could explain a little bit how we do that.

Arnie: We do that through our discipleship app, goTandem, by having you take a spiritual assessment right off the bat, so we know where you're struggling spiritually, and then we can match truth to help you get through your struggles and continue to grow each day. So, all of this is about personalized Biblical messages, meeting you where you are, and then encouraging you to get deeper in God's Word throughout the day.

Cara: I actually like the variety of messages on that, Arnie, because you get those short texts and you can schedule them for whatever time you want, or there's longer Bible studies. The other thing I like to do with it, is when I'm witnessing to somebody or talking to somebody, I can have them download the app and I can help them get set up in that. It's just a really neat tool to talk and grow other people with it. So goTandem.com for anyone who's interested in that.