

Jude

Greeting

1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

1 servant. This was the title among early Christians, especially leaders. Many Romans regarded slavery as “living death.” But slavery included a rescue from death, because it often began when a military commander did not kill persons captured in war but put them into service. Thus “slave” also pointed to God’s rescuing mercy. (TLSB)

brother of James. Early historians recorded that James and Jude were sons of Mary and Joseph, and half-brothers of Jesus. (TLSB)

The author of this letter calls himself “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,” v. 1. This is not James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, but James the Less, the son of Alphaeus, Jas. 1, 1; Gal. 1, 19; 1 Cor. 15, 7. This Jude, or Judas, therefore, was also a brother (or cousin) of the Lord; he was an apostle, and is probably to be identified with Judas Lebbaeus, or Thaddeus, Matt. 10, 3; Mark 3, 18; Luke 6, 16; Acts 1, 13. The letter seems to have been written to Christians in Palestine, and since no mention is made of the destruction of Jerusalem, its date may safely be set at about 68 A. D. (Kretzmann)

called. The elect, called by God to faith and service. (TLSB)

loved by God. See Jn 3:16; Ro 8:28–39. (CSB)

kept for Jesus Christ. He who holds the whole universe together (see Col 1:17; Heb 1:3) will see that God’s children are kept in the faith and that they reach their eternal inheritance (see Jn 6:37–40; 17:11–12; 1Pe 1:3–5). (CSB)

For the day when Jesus returns to judge mankind and to gather His own people. (TLSB)

The letter shows evidence of great agitation on the part of the writer, who evidently had cause for the gravest apprehension as to the steadfastness of the Christians to whom he was writing. After the salutation there follows a brief reference to the reason for addressing this letter. The apostle next reminds his readers of some of the great judgments of the Old Testament, at the same time characterizing the false teachers as people that despise the divine authority in order to live according to their flesh, who, however, will receive their punishment when Christ returns to judge the quick and the dead. The readers are urged to remember the teaching of the apostle and to remain steadfast in faith and prayer, full of abhorrence toward sin, but also of true love for the sinners. The letter closes with a doxology. (Kretzmann)

Jude assumes that those who read his letter already know and confess Jesus as Savior. He writes about their common salvation, which was once delivered to the saints. Unfortunately, some men have come among them, perverting that message by twisting the grace of God into licentiousness. To make matters worse, Jude’s readers are doing nothing to correct the situation, even allowing these heretics to proclaim their distorted message. Through several examples, Jude unequivocally declares that these actions are an invitation for God’s judgment. Verses 20–25 culminate in Jude’s double exhortation to his readers and in his doxological assurance that God can keep them from falling and enable them to stand without blemish in His presence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

2 *peace*. The profound well-being of soul that flows from the experience of God's grace. (CSB)

1–2 Despite the stumbling faith of Jude's readers, he begins with comfort and encouragement. He greets the whole congregation as God's chosen people, even though false teachers exist among them. Today, view and address your congregation as godly and beloved, even if troubled by divisions or false teachers. For the Lord has called them by the Gospel. • Lord, grant our congregations abundant mercy and peace; strengthen their service. Amen. (TLSB)

Judgment on False Teachers

3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 5 Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. 8 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. 9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." 10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. 11 Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. 12 These are hidden reefs[e] at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. 14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." 16 These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

3 *about our common*. Jude's original intention was to write a general treatment of the doctrine of salvation, probably dealing with such subjects as man's sin and guilt, God's love and grace, the forgiveness of sins and the changed life-style that follows new birth. (CSB)

necessary ... to contend. Though Jude did not hunger for controversy, he was forced into it by his concern. (TLSB)

the faith.† Here used of the body of truth held by believers everywhere—the gospel and all its implications. This truth was under attack and had to be defended. (CSB)

Catechetical summaries of apostolic teaching (1Co 15:3–11) as well as the OT (cf Jude 9–11, 14). (TLSB)

once for all delivered. The truth has finality and is not subject to change. (CSB)

Nothing will supersede this faith. To offer other doctrines is to offer falsehoods. Polycarp: “Forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning” ANF 1:34). (TLSB)

saints - True saints of God expect no further revelation from God than what He has already delivered by His Son through the Holy Scriptures (Heb. 1:1-2). Luther: “Wicked men will come, and they will not persevere. They will always have this fault of teaching something different and new. A wicked spirit, not rooted in solid doctrine, causes this. It always looks for something new and a better doctrine” (AE 28:221). Luther: “We should labor over this faith and contend for it to the end. The flesh becomes sluggish; it sees to it that we forget the Word and grow tired of it. The bishop should not worry that he is often teaching the same thing... (Paul) opposes diseases of doctrine; that is, doctrine should be right, stable, and constant...Those who do not have a doctrine that is sure and constant do not teach” (AE 29:32). (TLSB)

4 For. Introduces the reason Jude felt impelled to change the subject of his letter. (CSB)

certain people - Jude repeatedly describes this group as “ungodly.” He implies that the readers recognize them. They profess to follow God but actually deny Him by their words and deeds. (TLSB)

Jude did not condemn the congregation(s) where the ungodly had hidden. (TLSB)

this condemnation. The reference may be to OT denunciations of ungodly men or to Enoch’s prophecy (vv. 14–15). Or Jude may mean that judgment has long been about to fall on them because of their sin. (CSB)

Long ago, the OT prophets warned of people who, perverting the truth, would suffer God’s rejected. (TLSB)

pervert grace of our God into sensuality. They assume that salvation by grace gives them the right to sin without restraint, either because God in his grace will freely forgive all their sins, or because sin, by contrast, magnifies the grace of God (cf. Ro 5:20; 6:1). (CSB)

Not just sexual sins, but all corrupt desires, such as pride. (TLSB)

deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. The Greek term translated “Sovereign” describes power without limit, or absolute domination. The Greek construction indicates that both “Sovereign” and “Lord” refer to the same person, and this verse, as well as the parallel passage (2 Pe 2:1), clearly states that that person is Christ. (CSB)

Luther: “Now you have obtained freedom through Christ. That is, you are far above all laws, both in your own conscience and in the sight of God; you are blessed and saved; Christ is your life. Therefore even though the Law, sin, and death may frighten you, they can neither harm you nor cause you to despair. This is your brilliant and inestimable freedom. Now it is up to you to be diligently on your guard not to use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh.’ This evil is very widespread, and it is the worst of all the evils that Satan arouses against the teaching of faith: that in many people he soon transforms the freedom for which Christ has set us free into an opportunity for the flesh....The flesh simply does not understand the teaching of grace, namely, that we are not justified by works but by faith alone, and that the Law has no jurisdiction over us. Therefore when it hears this teaching, it transforms it into licentiousness and immediately draws the inference: ‘If we are without the Law then let us live as we please. Let us not do good, let us not give to the needy; much less do we have to endure anything evil. For there is no Law to compel or bind us.’ Thus there is danger on both sides, although the one is more

tolerable than the other. If grace or faith is not preached, no one is saved; for faith alone justifies and saves. On the other hand, if faith is preached, as it must be preached, the majority of men understand the teaching about faith in a fleshly way and transform the freedom of the spirit into the freedom of the flesh. This can be discerned today in all classes of society, both high and low. They all boast of being evangelicals and boast of Christian freedom. Meanwhile, however, they give in to their desires and turn to greed, sexual desire, pride, envy, etc.” (AE 27:48). (TLSB)

3–4 Jude flatly condemns the activities of the ungodly, while gently rebuking the godly for tolerating them. He candidly points out that the Gospel itself is at risk for corruption. The Lord certainly calls us to work patiently with those who err. But we can never compromise the Gospel, which is the basis of our salvation. • Master and Lord, save us by Your pure grace alone, and make us diligent for the truth. Amen. (TLSB)

5–11 Series of OT examples bears strong resemblance to the list of examples in 2 Peter 2. (TLSB)

5–7 Three examples of divine judgment. (CSB)

5 *fully knew* - Influenced by false teachers, his reader forgot the basics. (TLSB)

Jesus who saved a people out of the land of Egypt. Jude confesses Jesus’ existence before the exodus and His role in that deliverance. (TLSB)

destroyed those who did not believe. They did not believe that God would give them the land of Canaan; consequently all unbelieving adults died in the desert without entering the Promised Land. (CSB)

The unfaithful Israelites died in the wilderness and did not reach the Promised Land. Likewise, Christ’s judgment would prevent the ungodly from reaching heaven. (TLSB)

6 *angels ... position of authority.* Cf Eph 6:12; Rv 12:7–9. The fallen angels abused their offices. The tempting of Adam and Eve is a clear example. (TLSB)

position of authority. God had assigned differing areas of responsibility and authority to each of the angels (see Da 10:20–21, where the various princes may be angels assigned to various nations). Some of these angels refused to maintain their assignments and thus became the devil and his angels (cf. Mt 25:41). (CSB)

their proper dwelling. Angels apparently were assigned specific locations as well as responsibilities. Some assume that they left the heavenly realm and came to earth. (CSB)

gloomy darkness. Hell is a prison where the light of Christ does not go (1Pt 3:19; Rv 20:7). God restrains the demons. (TLSB)

kept in eternal chains ... until the judgment. The final judgment. (CSB)

7 *just as.* Does not mean that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was the same as that of the angels or vice versa. This phrase is used to introduce the third illustration of the fact that God will see to it that the unrighteous will be consigned to eternal punishment on judgment day. (CSB)

surrounding cities. God also destroyed Admah and Zeboim; He spared Zoar (Gn 19:22). (TLSB)

sexual immorality. More specifically, homosexuality. (CSB)

Background for the English term “sodomy”; cf Gn 19:4–11. (TLSB)

serve as an example of. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by pouring out “burning sulfur” (Ge 19:24)—a foretaste of the eternal fire that is to come. (CSB)

The cities burned, but the people also went to everlasting punishment. (TLSB)

5–7 Jude refers the people back to their catechesis in the OT history of God’s wrath and grace. Jesus Himself condemned the Israelites for their sins and also acted as their Savior. You never outgrow the catechism basics of Bible stories and Law and Gospel, by which the Lord grants constant blessings. • Jesus, You saved Israel from Egypt; save me from unbelief, and refresh me in the examples and blessings of Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

8–16 Jude uses a series of comparisons to illustrate the corruption of the ungodly (v. 4), who are dreamers (v.8). He cites two examples of popular Jewish legend against them (vv. 9,14–15), perhaps drawing on their own literature to condemn them. Jude’s use of this literature does not mean he regarded it as equal to Holy Scriptures. (TLSB)

8–9 Jude relates a popular Jewish description of an angel contending with the devil over Moses’ body. Such an account is recorded in the Assumption of Moses, which was perhaps written down in the early first century AD. Jude refers to this Jewish legend as well as accounts of Enoch (vv. 14–15), which were probably sources of speculation and contention that disturbed the churches (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Ti 1:14; 2 Pt 1:16). Like the apostle Paul, Jude used examples from popular culture to illustrate his points (e.g., Acts 17:28). (TLSB)

8 *relying on dreams.* The godless men were called “dreamers” either (1) because they claimed to receive revelations or, more likely, (2) because in their passion they were out of touch with truth and reality. (CSB)

defile the flesh. Probably a reference to the homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah (see vv. 4, 7; 1Co 6:18). (CSB)

9 According to several church fathers, this verse is based on an Apocryphal work called The Assumption of Moses. Other NT quotations from, or allusions to, non-Biblical works include Paul’s quotations of Aratus (Ac 17:28), Menander (1Co 15:33) and Epimenides (Tit 1:12). Such usage in no way suggests that the quotations, or the books from which they were taken, are divinely inspired. It only means that the Biblical author found the quotations to be a helpful confirmation, clarification or illustration. (CSB)

Michael - Hebrew for “who is like God?” He watched over Israel (Dan. 10:21). (TLSB)

body of Moses - The Lord was responsible for Moses’ burial. Jude indicates that the agent for this work was Michael. (TLSB)

pronounce a blasphemous judgment - Jude’s opponents may have used curses, such as ancient magical rites. (TLSB)

Lord rebuke you - Even a powerful messenger like Michael appealed to the Lord. (TLSB)

10 *blaspheme.* Sinful desires naturally led to self-destruction. The ungodly were in danger of being destroyed because they refused to admit their sins and repent. (TLSB)

11 Three OT examples of the kind of persons Jude warns his readers about. (CSB)

Woe to them! A warning that judgment is coming (see Mt 23:13, 15–16, 23, 25, 27, 29). (CSB)

way of Cain. The way of selfishness and greed and the way of hatred and murder (see 1Jn 3:12). (CSB)

Cain attacked and murdered his own brother out of jealousy. “As long as a person is not regenerate and guides himself according to the Law, he does the works because they are commanded. So from fear of punishment or desire for reward, he is still under the Law....These are ‘saints’ after the order of Cain” (FC SD VI 16) (TLSB)

Balaam’s error. The error of consuming greed. (CSB)

Balaam sought to gain financially by cursing Israel. (TLSB)

Korah’s rebellion. Korah rose up against God’s appointed leadership (see Nu 16). Jude may be suggesting that the false teachers of his day were rebelling against church leadership (cf. 3Jn 9–10). (CSB)

Korah refused to accept God’s leadership through Moses and Aaron. Each OT example illustrates the behaviors of ungodly opponents who were apparently dividing the congregations to which Jude wrote. (TLSB)

12–13 These verses contain six graphic metaphors: (CSB)

1. *are hidden reefs at your love feasts.* The Lord’s Supper and attendant meal. (TLSB)

2. *shepherds feeding themselves.* Instead of feeding the sheep for whom they are responsible (see Eze 34:8–10). (CSB)

These ungodly shepherds did not accept the authority of God’s shepherds, who faithfully taught His Word. (TLSB)

3. *waterless clouds.* Like clouds promising moisture for the parched land, the false teachers promise soul-satisfying truth, but in reality they have nothing to offer. (CSB)

4. *fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead uprooted.* Though the trees ought to be heavy with fruit. (CSB)

Unfruitful and uprooted. They had passed the opportunity to produce righteousness or come to repentance (Heb. 6:4-6). (TLSB)

5. *wild waves of the sea.* As wind-tossed waves constantly churn up rubbish, so these apostates continually stir up moral filth (see Isa 57:20). (CSB)

6. *wandering stars.* As shooting stars appear in the sky only to fly off into eternal oblivion, so these false teachers are destined for the darkness of eternal hell. (CSB)

A navigator gazing into the night sky in Jude's day would have known that some of the lights in the sky (the planets) were unreliable for navigation because these "stars" were constantly shifting their positions from day to day. These teachers were unreliable guides, constantly changing their teachings. (TLSB)

14-15 Jude takes an example from Jewish tradition about the mysterious OT figure Enoch. His quotation is from the book of 1 Enoch, an account of Enoch's teachings and activities. Like many of the Jewish pseudepigrapha, this book attempts to fill in details about an interesting biblical character. Portions of 1 Enoch were written in Aram as early as the second century BC, though they may have been written originally in Hebrew and could be much older. Jude quotes 1 Enoch, a popularly known work, as an exemplary description of false teachers and the judgment they must face, much as preachers today cite popular writings for sermon illustrations. (TLSB)

14 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam.* Not the Enoch in the line of Cain (Ge 4:17) but the one in the line of Seth (Ge 5:18–24; 1Ch 1:1–3). He was seventh if Adam is counted as the first. The quotation is from the Apocryphal book of Enoch, which purports to have been written by the Enoch of Ge 5, but actually did not appear until the first century B.C. The book of Enoch was a well-respected writing in NT times. That it was not canonical does not mean that it contained no truth; nor does Jude's quotation of the book mean that he considered it inspired. (CSB)

Enoch's generation was the seventh recorded as coming from Adam, who counted as the first of the seven. (TLSB)

prophesied. Not in the sense of supernaturally revealing new truth, but merely in the sense of speaking things about the future that were already known (see Da 7:9–14; Zec 14:1–5). (CSB)

the Lord comes. Jude uses the quotation to refer to Christ's second coming and to his judgment of the wicked (see 2Th 1:6–10). (CSB)

Enoch foresaw the Lord's coming to judge all. (TLSB)

holy ones.† Angels (see Da 4:13–17; 2Th 1:7). (CSB)

15 *execute judgment* - When the Lord will give back to everyone according to their deeds. Faith works show some have trusted in the Lord; unbelief's works show that others have not trusted the Lord. (TLSB)

ungodly ... ungodliness ... ungodly ... ungodly. This thunderous repetition and the awesome judgment scene that is depicted emphasize the condemnation of the false teachers in v. 4. (CSB)

sinner have spoken - Jude emphasizes the imprudent words of his opponents (vv. 9-10, 16). They blasphemed, grumbled, and boasted. (TLSB)

16 *These are.* The ungodly men first mentioned in v. 4 and subsequently referred to repeatedly as "these men" (vv. 10, 12, 14, 19; cf. v. 8). They are the libertine false teachers who pervert the grace of God. (CSB)

favoritism. They flattered people in order to gain their trust and support. (TLSB)

8–16 Jude mercilessly describes the sins of the ungodly without explicitly naming them or their group. He knows that the congregation will read his letter publicly, in the hearing of these false brothers. Jude apparently trusts that the congregation will take all necessary action to correct the problems. By not naming names, he leaves the congregation to work with individuals at its discretion. This will grant

opportunity for confession and absolution. • Lord, You bear with my weaknesses patiently. Grant that I might also bear with my brethren, and may patient teaching lead to repentance those who call themselves brothers but act contrary to the Gospel. Amen. (TLSB)

A Call to Persevere

17 But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. 18 They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” 19 It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

17 remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles. † The coming of these godless men should not take believers by surprise, for it had been predicted by the apostles (Ac 20:29; 1Ti 4:1; 2Ti 3:1–5). Some see in vv. 17–18 a reference to 2Pe 3:3). (CSB)

Esp in 2Pt. All the apostles warned of false teachers who would twist the Scriptures for their own agenda. (TLSB)

18 They said. The Greek for this phrase indicates that the apostles continually or repeatedly warned that such godless apostates would come. (CSB)

scoffers. In both 2Pe 3:3 and Jude the scoffers are said to be characterized by selfish lusts (“desires”). (CSB)

19 who cause divisions. At the very least this phrase means that they were divisive, creating factions in the church—the usual practice of heretics. Or Jude may refer to the later Gnostics’ division of men into the spiritual (the Gnostics) and the sensual (those for whom there is no hope). (CSB)

following their own ungodly passions. An ironic description of the false teachers, who labeled others as “sensual.” (CSB)

devoid of the Spirit. Rather than being the spiritual ones—the privileged elite class the Gnostics claimed to be—Jude denies that they even possess the Spirit. A person who does not have the Spirit is clearly not saved (see Ro 8:9). (CSB)

True Christians did not cause these divisions’ false brothers did - unbelievers who were not guided by God’s Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

20-23 A major shift and new section begin here. Jude resumes the theme begun in verse 1-4, where he exhorted the “beloved” (Jude 1, 3) to “contend for the faith one and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The church militant must now engage in battle because ungodly invaders are promoting licentiousness and heresies from within (Jude 4). (CC p. 343)

To grasp Jude’s message fully, a clear focus is needed on the theological progression in his epistle. Jude’s message thus far is a powerful, impactful tapestry of the eschatological tension between the “already now” and the “not yet.” Jude’s presentation of realized eschatology “already now” essentially refers to the salvation gifted to his readers through Baptism and their faith in Christ, and to the sure status of Christians as His rescued people. However, they have “not yet” been delivered from the evildoers currently at hand, the battles now in progress, and the crusades yet to be fought. Christians live under the

cross in progress, and the crusades yet to be fought. Christians live under the cross and in this world, where affliction, hostility, and temptation surround them. (CC p. 343)

“Already” rescued and strengthened through the Word and the Sacraments of grace, Christians forge onward toward the final victory in which they have “not yet” fully participated. Despite their suffering and oppression, they know that Christ has already won the war for them and that His tomb is empty. Jude presented the “already” and the “not yet” in Jude 5-19 through a barrage of images of OT evil archetypes already judged; those wicked exemplars correspond to the contemporary intruders, who are destined for similar future judgment. Jude thus illustrated to the beloved how the destruction of those ancient villains is a preview of the final judgment which will befall the impenitent infiltrators. The Law condemnation of the immoral heretics means Gospel for the beloved as Christ the great Warrior has destroyed and will destroy all enemies in His church. (CC p. 344)

20:20-25 The author of the Epistle of Jude introduces himself as the “brother of James” (v 1). This is likely an expression of modesty for a much more prominent familial connection; if, as is highly probable, the James he mentions is the author of the epistle by that name, and if, as widely believed, that James is the half brother of Jesus, it follows that Jude is also likely a son of Mary and Joseph and another half brother of our Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

This letter is addressed to the faithful, the ones who are kept by Christ in the faith (v 1). They are encouraged to fight the good fight for the faith (v 3) and persevere even in the midst of sufferings and persecutions, for the time is short (“the last time,” v 18). Jude clearly tells them to watch out, recognize, and fight against the godless who have even infiltrated the Church (v 4; 2 Pet 2:1). Few passages in Scripture are as graphic or as harsh in condemning enemies of the faith (vv 4–16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

20-21 Jude first gives an exhortation to each believer regarding that individual’s personal faith. Be built up in the faith. Remain in God’s love. Expect Christ’s mercy for eternal life. This vigilance is necessary as long as we live on earth in a sinful world. Therefore, faith can never be static. It is either growing or dying. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

The emphasis is on the believer and his faith in the midst of the last days. Build yourselves up upon your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

20 beloved. In contrast to the ungodly false teachers, about whom this letter speaks at length. (CSB)

building yourselves up – After Jude reminds the recipients of their status as “beloved” in Christ he proceeds to the first participial phrase: “building yourselves up by the means of your holy faith.” On the basis of the indicatives of divine love and mercy, Jude invites the readers to live thus in their redeemed identity as they “content for the faith” (Jude 3). While the spirit-less purveyors of the false doctrine are attempting to tear apart the church (Jude 19), Jude invites the Christians to build each other up. The imagery of construction envisions the church as the new temple, the place of God’s incarnational, merciful presence as He comes to his holy people in His Word and Sacraments. The plural reflexive pronoun, “yourselves,” has a corporate connotation, referring to the Christians’ mutual consolation with the Word as well as corporate gathering around the Word and the Lord’s Supper (Jude 12). (CC p. 345)

most holy faith. The Christian faith is set apart from the world’s unbelief. Such faith is not common to the world; it is holy. (TLSB)

Faith can refer to both the means for building and the foundation upon which Christ's church is built. Perhaps Jude intends both possible nuances. It is important to note that verb "build up/upon," assumes building upon something already present, a foundation already laid. If Jude employs "faith," as the foundation already laid, the objective revelation centers upon Christ as that foundation. This corresponds to 1 Cor. 3:11 in the context of 1 Cor. 3:10-15. If Jude employs "faith," as the mean for building, this emphasizes the efficacy of the prophetic and apostolic Gospel, whose cornerstone is Christ (Eph. 2:19-20). This would correspond to 1 Cor. 3:12-13 in the context of 1 Cor. 3:10-15). (CC pp. 345-346)

in the Holy Spirit. According to the Spirit's promptings and with the power of the Spirit (see Ro 8:26–27; Gal 4:6; Eph 6:18). (CSB)

Praying according to God's Word, which the Spirit inspired. (TLSB)

"Praying in the Holy Spirit." Continue to pray as one who has been brought into faith by the Holy Spirit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

After the participial phrase about edification, Jude adds another participial phrase that draws the believers back to their Baptism through the remembrance of the Trinity (Mt. 28:19): "praying in the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit works through the means of grace to impart Christ to us (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:14). The Spirit also moves us to pray (Eph. 6:18) and gives us the content of prayer (Rom. 8:15-16, 26; Gal. 4:6). As we offer our petitions by the Spirit, we are led to utter prayers that confess who Christ is and what He has done for us (1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Jn. 4:2; cf. Lk. 2:25). (CC p. 346)

Since Jude focuses on the corporate sacramental setting in Jude 12, here he may also envision the context of congregational prayer. In contrast, the heretical intruders cannot pray in the Spirit, since they do not have the Spirit (Jude 19). As a result, their prayers, cannot lead anybody to Christ. (CC p. 347)

21 *Keep yourselves in the love of God.* God keeps believers in his love (see Ro 8:35–39), and enables them to keep themselves in his love. (CSB)

Guard against false teaching that leads away from the love of God in our Savior. (TLSB)

Jude continues to explicate how the beloved contend for the faith. Here we encounter the first imperative verb form: "keep yourselves in the love of God." The "love" refers to God's love for the readers, not their love for Him. This imperative links linguistically and theologically with Jude 1-2, where Jude declared that his Christian readers are already "beloved in God the Father"; note the passive voice of "beloved." Jude then invoked an overflowing abundance of God's love upon them: "may...love be multiplied to you" (Jude 2). Additionally, he designated the baptized and communicant believers as the undeserving recipients of God's love through the implicitly passive adjectival substantive, "beloved," in Jude 3, 17, 20, which summarizes their identity in Christ. (CC p. 347)

The verb "keep" is noteworthy, since like the vocabulary for love, this verb too has a history of usage throughout Jude. In Jude 1, Jude referred to his readers as called saints who are "kept" for Jesus Christ. In Jude 6, he soberly reminded them about the angels, "who did not keep" their God-given preeminent status: God "has kept them for severe judgment. Similarly in Jude 13, speaking about the stars who did not retain their God-given course in the heavens but wandered, Jude warns that hellish darkness "has been kept" for them. In this way, Jude encourages his Christian readers to live in their blessed kept-for-Christ status (Jude 1) and not be like the archetypal malefactors now imitated by the churchly imposters. They are outside of the God's love and consequently are kept for eternal condemnation. In contrast, by God's grace, the beloved are called as one kept in His love. (CC p. 348)

waiting for mercy – Here in Jude the specific object of expectation is “the mercy” of Jesus Christ. The “beloved” (Jude 1) have already received “mercy” according to Jude 2, where Jude prayed for God to multiply His abundant “mercy,” plus He peace and love, upon them. Thus, “mercy” involves the eschatological tension of the “already now” verse the “not yet.” Mercy is among the blessings “already now received by baptized believers in Christ because of His first advent. Still, a “not yet” aspect is that “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ” here refers to the final consummation of salvation to be implemented by Christ at His second coming (Lk. 1:76-78; Rom. 9:23; 2 Tim 1:16-18; 1 Peter 2:3-4). Christ will return as Judge and all the dead shall be raised bodily. The Lord will issue the final public pardon for His people. This mercy will result in eternal life for Jude’s readers and for all in Christ. The present creation will be destroyed, and they shall enter the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:10-13). (CC pp. 348-349)

22–23 *those who doubt ... others.* Perhaps those who have come under the influence of the apostates. (CSB)

All Christians might have questions (e.g., David asked questions in the Ps). They should be treated with patience so that faith might overcome their doubts. (TLSB)

Now in Jude 22-23, Jude turns to contending for the faith in relation to those of the communion who, to one degree or another, have been deceived and seduced by the heretical intruders. Should the faithful beloved reconcile with them, ignore them, shun them, or hate them? Jude approaches the wayward members of the congregation with a pastoral heart of care in the hope of bringing them repentance and back into the communion. In the same breath, however, Jude jealously guard and protects the beloved from falling prey themselves to the seductive influence of evil. (CC p. 349)

23 *snatching them out of the fire.* Rescuing them from the verge of destruction. (CSB)

All who commit sin are urged to repent so that they might receive forgiveness, lest they remain in the fire and lose their faith.

Indeed, fire often represents divine judgment (e.g., Rev. 9:17-18; 16:8; 20:9), especially damnation to the eternal fire of hell. Consequently, for some outward members of the church, the flames of hell are now reaching up to their feet. Jude’s mention of fire also brings to remembrance the fiery destruction of the Sodomites because of their homosexuality (Jude 7) and how God’s angels snatched Lot from that conflagration by fire (Gen 19:16). Jude’s verb rendered as “snatch” denotes a forceful act of rescue. Like Lot, the person rescued might be reluctant or even hostile toward the rescuers before being persuaded to let himself be saved. (CC p. 350)

Therefore, Jude envisions a direct, vigorous intervention by the beloved to rescue the sinned congregation members who have fallen prey to the false teachings and carnal sins promoted by the intruders (e.g., Jude 8). Saving them from the fire requires stern calls for repentance, which, if heeded, are then followed by absolution, reinstatement, and readmission to the Supper to receive the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and strengthening to eternal life. (CC p. 350)

mercy, mixed with fear. Even in showing mercy one may be trapped by the allurements of sin. (CSB)

Scripture exhorts God’s people to exhibit such kindness to the wayward (Mt. 18:15-20; cf. Romans 14). Thus, Jude still envisions hope for this group, although their situation is dire. When Jude says that these persons are “those who dispute,” he means that they have become more combative toward the faithful as their adhesion to the intruders has strengthened. If the previous verse refers to a separate group, the

members singed by the fire seem to be more passive in their stance, whereas these people are more confrontational, antagonistic, and bellicose. (CC p. 351)

Jude then qualifies the act of showing mercy to be “with fear.” The faithful must fear the influence of this group and act with appropriate caution, lest they also become stained by sin. Other interpreters suggest that possible objects of “fear” are “God’s holiness” and “God’s/Christ’s coming judgment. Jude may intend a combination of all three. (CC p. 351)

garment stained by the flesh. The wicked are pictured as so corrupt that even their garments are polluted by their sinful nature. (CSB)

Correcting one another must be done with fear, because all Christians are sinners, attracted to sin. Sin is not to be toyed with or dallied in. Unrepented sin is like a stain on our robe of righteousness, which we have from Christ. Only His blood can make it white again with His forgiveness. (TLSB)

Jude clarifies this act of mercy and articulates the degree to which the disputers have become corrupted: “despising even the garment stained by sin.” Like the quote in Jude 9 and the picture in Jude 22, this imagery too comes from Zech. 3:1-5, where the high priest stands in soiled clothing as an indication of sin. As the high priest, he bears the corporate guilt of Israel and also is guilty of his own personal sin. The Angel orders the removal of the soiled clothing and provides clean, new garments to portray the forgiveness of sin. Thus, Jude employs this image from Zechariah and joins it with the accusation in Jude 8 that the immoral heretics “defile flesh” to indicate the intruders’ corrupting effect on the congregation. (CC p. 351)

Even in this case of severe and contagious defilement, Jude still encourages the beloved to seek to bring such polluting people back to the communion of saints. Yet, Jude asserts extreme caution. This group has become so intertwined with licentious intruders that their garments have become soiled by sinful flesh. The “garment” here is a tunic, that is, an undergarment. Thus, it is in constant contact with the skin and is the first garment to become discolored and filthy from the flesh. Jude directs the beloved to despise this garment stained by sinful flesh. (CC p. 351)

17–23 Christians, who have the full salvation already delivered to them in Scripture, need not fall into deceptions. We have been warned about false teaching and the deception of sin that leads to death. Likewise, the Lord has taught us the path of righteousness by which His Spirit leads us in the Gospel of grace and peace. • Lord God, keep us in Your love and mercy in Christ until He comes to deliver us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life with You and Your Holy Spirit. Amen. (TLSB)

Doxology

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

24–25 After all the attention necessarily given in this letter to the ungodly and their works of darkness, Jude concludes his letter by focusing attention on God, who is fully able to keep those who put their trust in him. (CSB)

The climax of Jude’s letter is this doxological conclusion. Blameless and praising God, we stand in His presence. Left to our own devices we stumble. Without His forgiveness our sins make us unfit for His presence, but God is our Savior through Jesus Christ, our Lord. To God belong glory, majesty, strength, and power. Although we live in a sinful world during the time between Jesus’ fulfillment of God’s plan

of salvation and its final manifestation, we live with full confidence that He will preserve us to the end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

This is a benediction for the faithful as they struggle to persevere in a sinful world and as they seek to carry out acts of mercy in a corrupt and dangerous setting. The view is toward the coming of Christ and everlasting life, for the time is short. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

24 *who is able* – This verse is filled with words of comfort and jubilant exultation for the Christian readers. In the midst of concern among the beloved, Jude joyfully confesses the one who alone is able to meet their ultimate needs both now and at the end of time. The omnipotent God wields all power in heaven and on earth. Nothing can hinder His ability to rescue His beloved (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). Other doxologies begin with a similar confession about “him who is able.” (CC p. 360)

keep you from stumbling – Now Jude specifies that under the Lord’s care, they will not fall away from Christ and into the trap set by the intruders, and so suffer condemnation with them. The image of stumbling to indicate mortal danger for God’s people arises from the Psalms. (Ps. 121:3-8; 140:4; 141:9) (CC p. 360)

Only God could keep them in the one true faith by the power of His Word. (TLSB)

present...his glory – God is able “to present (you) in the presence of His glory as blameless with great exultation.” The expression “in the presence of His glory,” is a respectful Semitic circumlocution for God. Being in the glorious presence is a distinct tenet of the Christian hope for the Last Day, when the Son of Man will present His beloved as “blameless.” His church, the bride of Christ, has been rendered a pure virgin through the Sacrament of Baptism, “the washing of water with the Word” (Eph 5:26), so Christ may present the church to Himself as “glorious,” “not having a spot or stain or any of such things, but that she may be holy and “blameless” (Eph 5:27). (CC p. 361)

present you blameless – The word “blameless/without fault” has distinct liturgical connotations of an acceptable sacrificial offering free of defect. Because of the atoning sacrifice of the perfect unblemished Christ, baptized believers stand blameless before God. (CC p. 361)

“Blameless/without blemish” is another indication of the eschatological quality of the “already now” and “not yet” of the Christian hope. Although Christians are still encumbered by their sinful human nature and their lives filled with impurities, nevertheless, already now, on account of Christ, the sins of the beloved are not counted against them. Upon the return of Christ, they will be raised bodily to the incorruptible, and so, at the cusp of the eschaton, they will finally be freed from their original sin and all its effects. They will stand blameless before God’s glorious presence, unlike the heretical intruders, who will be raised to everlasting shame and torment. (CC p. 361)

with great joy – Finally, this blameless presentation of the beloved at the parousia will result in “great exultation.” Although we already have joy now in Christ (1 Peter 1:3-8), a yet greater joy awaits us. (CC p. 361)

25 *God our Savior* – Jude confesses God as “our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here Jude apparently distinguishes between “God” the Father and the “Savior” name the Son, “Jesus Christ.” Other verses that expressly refer to the “Father” and the “Savior” name the Son, Jesus Christ, as the one who is the “Savior” (Titus 1:4; 1 John 4:14). This verse is unique in declaring the Father as the Savior. However, His role as Savior only occurs through Jesus Christ, therefore this phraseology is reminiscent of John 3:16. Moreover other texts refer to the triune God as Savior (e.g., Lk. 1:47; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; see also Is. 45:15). (CC p. 362)

The heavenly Father, who saved us through Christ. (TLSB)

glory – “Glory”, conveying the highest honor and reputation, appears in most NT doxologies. It also occurs in 1 Chr. 29:11-12, which is a model for OT doxologies and a likely source for the wording found in the doxology of the Lord’s Prayer. The term has eschatological connotations, since the Son of Man will appear in glory at His second coming (Lk. 9:26; Titus 2:13). It also causes remembrance of the incarnational, gracious presence of God’s glory at the OT tabernacle and temple. (CC p. 362)

Praise for all that He has to save. (TLSB)

majesty – “Majesty,” associated with monarch, appears three times in the NT (Heb. 1:3; 8:1; Jude 25). In Hebrews, the term functions as a circumlocution for God, whose right hand Christ is now seated (Heb. 1:3; 8:1). (CC p. 363)

dominion – “Power” (kratos) is connected with God’s omnipotence and graciousness, as conveyed by His designation as “Him who is able” (Jude 24). This noun usually appears with other terms of honor when ascribed to God (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 1:6; 5:13). (CC p. 363)

The all-encompassing sphere of God’s rule over all that exists. (TLSB)

authority – “Authority,” referring to sovereignty as a ruler, also has connotations of grace, as it appears in the Great Commission. Already during His earthly ministry He had bestowed upon His apostles the “authority” to cast out demons and heal disease (Mt. 10:1). (CC p. 363)

now and forever – Jude’s sweeping time element includes past, the present, and future eternity. The threefold time element may result from Jude’s general proclivity for triads in his epistle. (CC p. 363)

amen – The concluding “amen” is a most glorious liturgical finish, a joyous response by the beloved in Christ. AS Jude likely intends his epistle to serve as a Scripture reading in the corporate worship service, the assembled congregation utters the “amen” to make this confession of their own. (CC p. 363)

24–25 Jude emphasizes that salvation is not based on our own reason or strength but is wholly the Father’s work in Christ. As the Lord grants you opportunity, share the message of salvation with boldness, for it truly comes from the Lord and He truly works through that testimony, leading those who repent to great joy. • Lord, grant me present joy in my service and everlasting joy in the glories of heaven You prepared for me through Christ Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)