

Rebranding the Faith

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[0 : 00] You can turn to the letter of Jude and our subject tonight is the rebranding of the faith. And we're looking at Jude verses 3 and 4.

Last week we began a new study in this neglected letter of the New Testament, the last letter of the New Testament. And I've been working quite hard to try and get to grips with it.

I've given you out tonight an outline of the letter, maybe just to give a little help as you go through.

It's just a skeleton, but I do think it perhaps helps to get into the heart of Jude's message for us.

You might want to then, I don't know, keep it in your Bibles and just refer to it as we go through this term. I'll probably revise it as we go along. But that's the problem, isn't it?

When you get to the end of the book, you finally realise you've begun to understand how to start at the beginning. So I might have given a better outline if I'd waited till the end.

[0 : 54] But one of the mottos we used to have at the Proclamation Trust was, if a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing badly. And I recommend that to you if you've got perfectionist tendencies like me. Just say it ten times a day and you'll find it gives a lot of help.

So I've given you something now at the beginning, instead of at the end, in the hope that it will give you some help, even if it doesn't entirely satisfy me. So there we are. If it's of help, then use it.

We were introduced last time to our teacher in this book, to Jude. Verse 1 tells us he's the brother of James. And that means, as we find out, he's also the half-brother of our Lord Jesus himself.

But Jude doesn't mention that. Rather, he tells us that he is humbly somebody who has submitted himself as a servant, literally a slave, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because he's someone who's come to see Jesus as more than just a man, more than an earthly relation, but rather one who is, as verse 4 says, the only Master and Lord, the only Sovereign, Jesus Christ.

[2 : 01] So Jude is a slave of the only Master and Lord, and he's a teacher of the only true faith. Verse 3, the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

And he's writing urgently and powerfully, as he does, precisely because not all influences in the church are as Jude's is.

Now, verse 4 is very plain. Can you see? Certain people, no names are named, but clearly people with real influence, certain people have crept in unnoticed.

And these people have the very opposite agenda to Jude's. On their own authority, they pervert the one true faith.

He says they perverted the grace of God into sensuality. And they deny the one true Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

[2 : 59] And therefore Jude is writing to real churches, to real Christian believers, those that verse 1 says are called, beloved in God the Father, kept for Jesus Christ.

He's writing to them because they're in real danger. It's not an academic exercise, this letter. The very future of the churches is in jeopardy.

And Jude's letter, Jude's letter is a call to arms, it's a call to action. It's got the greatest urgency about it. There's no room for complacency. There's no room for presumption.

Already, if you look at verse 22, Jude is making it plain that some people are wavering. They're wandering away from the faith. And that's a journey, says Jews, that can lead to only one place.

Do you see? The fire of judgment. So the stakes are very, very high. We're talking about ultimate issues here in the letter of Jude.

[4 : 00] And Jude's very plain about that. The future, the eternal future, is being forged right now, according to Jude. And either it's a future, look at verse 21, of the mercy of Christ that leads to eternal life, or, as the end of verse 7 says, it's a future bearing the, what does he say, the

punishment of eternal fire.

Verse 13, he calls it, the utter darkness remains forever. Pretty chilling, isn't it? But that's what's at stake, says Jude, when these kind of influences take hold within the professing church of Jesus Christ.

And that's true whether we're talking about Jude's day or our own day here in 2001. No, what are we in? 2000 and, whatever we're in. What is it? 2006.

No, there we are. We're getting old. So, Jude's message is just as clear. The churches are always, whatever the year, in real danger.

And that's why we have as our title for this series, the question, will the churches in the West survive the 21st century? Well, Jude would say, only if you listen and heed my message.

[5 : 30] So, what is Jude's message? Well, we saw last time that he really wants us to grasp two things. First, Jude is determined that we grasp that God is sovereign, that he does have an ultimate plan, a future glory for his chosen people.

He is able to keep them from stumbling. He's able to present us blameless in his glory. He's able to do that for those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father, who are kept for Jesus Christ. And that is the glory of our common salvation. It's a great salvation. It's the sovereign work of God, solely God's work on our behalf. And yet, at the same time, Jude is equally determined that we shouldn't misunderstand God's grace.

Certainly not pervert God's grace, as the false teachers are doing. Because God's sovereign grace in salvation never, ever leads to presumption.

It never leads to complacency. It's quite the reverse. When we really understand God's sovereign grace in salvation, it always leads to perseverance. It always leads to contending for the faith.

[6 : 44] So Jude's letter, you see, is enveloped by God's sovereign purposes. In verse 1, we're kept for Jesus Christ. In verse 24, we're kept for the day of his glory, for the great coming day.

But what that means for us now, in this day, in this life, in this world, is above all that we must grasp that that eternal privilege confers upon us now, in the present, very solemn responsibilities.

And that's what fills Jude's letter. So in verse 20, he says, build yourselves up in the most holy faith. Verse 21, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the coming of Christ in glory.

Now do you see how Jude is doing these two things all the way through this letter? He's clearly making a distinction all the time between the future and the present.

Between the future glory of our salvation and the present struggle of our salvation. And all through his letter, he's doing that again and again and again. He's pointing to the future, both to the glory of our coming salvation and also, as we've said, to the judgment of that day.

[8 : 07] And then he's turning to the present and he's telling us what that coming future certainty means for the present day, for the here and now, for Christian living now in the present.

Now seeing that, seeing that Jude is talking about these two horizons, is absolutely key to understanding his message. So when we see that, that we begin to see the dangers that the churches are facing and why those dangers are so beguiling.

So when we see that, that we see that Jude is telling us about the true faith, the one true faith delivered to the saints and what that really is and what it isn't. You see, when Jude says in verse 3, do you see verse 3?

He says he was eager to write to us about this common salvation and found it necessary to write that we should contend for the faith. He's not saying that he's written about something totally different to what he was originally wanting to write about.

Some of the scholars think that's the case. I don't think that's true at all. Now, Jude's ultimate subject has not changed. He's writing about one salvation, one faith.

[9 : 20] There only is one salvation. There only is one gospel. Jude is very plain about that. But what he is doing in the light of the threats and the confusion brought about by these malign influences, these certain people, what he is doing is he's making clear to the churches what God's true message of salvation does promise and when it promises it and what it doesn't promise.

In other words, Jude is talking about our common salvation and he is explaining to us what our expectations of that salvation should be both ultimately in the future glory of our faith and now.

And especially now because that's precisely the grounds of controversy that he has with those who have crept in, who have perverted the faith. So in verses 3 and 4 here that we're looking at tonight, you see Jude puts side by side the true biblical faith, our common salvation, the faith once for all

delivered to the saints, and the new faith, the perverse faith, the faith that's insinuated itself into the church through these teachers, the faith that's in danger of taking over, what I'm going to call the rebranded faith.

And here's the crux of the matter according to Jude. The biblical faith, listen, the biblical faith is a faith fixed on the future.

It promises glory then. There's absolutely no doubt about it, but it also promises struggle now. And therefore it demands holiness and perseverance and patience now.

[11 : 12] The true faith, although it's fixed on the future, means living now in the light of that future, in submission to the unique lordship, the unique mastery of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Lord and Master, the one who, verse 25 at the end says, has dominion both now and forever and always.

That's the true faith of the gospel. It's fixed on the future. But it has present implications for the way we live now. Not so the rebranded faith, you see.

The faith that subtly crept into the churches in Jude's day and in our day is a faith fixated on the present. It's a faith that demands satisfaction now.

It's a faith that therefore downplays the future. In fact, sometimes it forgets all about the future. And therefore, because there's no real thought of glory and satisfaction in the future, there's no sense of patience and waiting and persevering now in the present.

And, because there's no sense of a real judgment in the future, there's no sense of restraint or holiness or submission now.

[12 : 28] now. Now, it's fixated on the present. It's all about reward now. It's all about satisfaction and fulfillment now in the flesh, in this world. And therefore, you see, the gospel of the kingdom of God, of the new age, of the world to come, has been perverted into a thing just to do with this world.

A matter of sensual fulfillment now, instead of a matter of salvation out of this world, out of this evil age, as Paul called it in Galatians that we read.

It's no longer focused on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life, that we wait for, Jude says in verse 21. Now, there's no waiting in the rebranded faith.

And that's what makes it so beguiling, so attractive. It's crept in unnoticed, but it's so, so dangerous. Now, it's so important that we grasp the difference between the true faith and all rebranded versions of the faith. I want to focus on just that tonight.

[13 : 39] We must realize the danger of the rebranding of the true faith that's all around us today, just as it was in Jude's day. And that's absolutely vital for us contending for the one true faith.

It's vital for us in our churches, and it's vital for us in our own Christian lives as we seek to live the true Christian life today, not a false one. So, first of all, then, let's get clear in our minds about this common salvation, this true faith that was once for all delivered, the true faith that Jude speaks about here.

Let's get it quite clear right away that when Jude in verse 3 uses this word salvation, he's talking primarily about the future.

Now, that might seem very strange to you, especially because in evangelical circles people tend to say things like, well, I've been saved, or I was saved way back then, whenever it was, Billy Graham in 1955, or whatever.

And what we mean by that is, well, that was when I came to faith, that's when I was converted, that's when I believed. But salvation in the New Testament is primarily a future term.

[14 : 56] We're not saved yet, according to the New Testament. And if that's a surprise or a shock to you, let me suggest it's because subtle influences have crept in unnoticed to the church today, just as they had in Jude's day, to muddy the waters, to endanger our Christian faith.

I'll say it again, I'll be even more daring. I'm quoting now from the theological dictionary of the New Testament. Quote, salvation is a future term.

I qualified it by saying primarily future because it does extend into the present. Paul says, you are being saved if you hold fast to the word I preach to you. He says in 2 Corinthians 6, now is the day of salvation, but primarily in the New Testament, salvation belongs to the future.

Let me convince you. Paul says, our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. Romans 13, 11. Because salvation is from judgment to come.

Romans 5, 9. We have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. Still to come. And salvation is for glory to come.

[16:17] Philippians 3, 20. Our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

That's why Paul says to the Thessalonians, the hope of salvation is our helmet. And hope is for what's in the future. That's the whole message of Romans chapter 8, isn't it?

Paul says, we're the children of God, we're the heirs of God. Yes, but heirs look to the future, don't they? To an inheritance. Meanwhile, says Paul, we groan with the whole of creation because we're waiting for our hope, our full salvation, the resurrection of our bodies, the resurrection of the whole world, the universe.

It's still future. Paul says, who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8, 25. But as salvation for Paul is such a glorious hope, it's worth every sacrifice now. For the sake of our salvation and for the sake of others, Paul says, I endure everything for the sake of God's elect so that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

[17:35] 2 Timothy 2, 10. A salvation that Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1 and 5 to be revealed at the last time. You see, I could go on and on quoting like that, but you can see it clearly, can't you?

Our common salvation is our hope. It's future. It's a sure and certain hope, yes, but it's a future hope. And Jude himself couldn't be clearer about that all through his letter.

All through it, he's fixing his eyes upon the future, upon eternity, because that, above all, is what our common salvation is. Look at verse 1. His eyes are on the return of Jesus Christ.

You're kept for Jesus Christ. Look at verse 21. It's the coming of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, that we wait for because that's what leads to eternal life.

In verse 24, it's his presence in glory that's the goal of absolutely everything. It's the future.

Everything Jude writes is a lens that's causing us to focus on the future, the day, the great day of salvation.

[18:44] And, don't forget, the day of judgment. There is a dark side too, isn't there, in Jude? He's reminding us of a future judgment that's got to be reckoned with.

Verse 6, the judgment of that great day, he calls it. It's in the future. The judgment of eternal consequences. Either it will lead to glory forever or to darkness forever.

So, you see, our common salvation that Jude is speaking about is the future of our faith. It's the eternal life that comes when Jesus Christ returns. It's a glorious future for God's beloved.

It's glorious in the presence of Christ. No doubt, Jude was loving the thought of writing more and more and expanding on that, on the future salvation. You get a hint of it in his doxology in just the last two verses, don't you?

No doubt, Jude would have loved to expatiate more on our common salvation and its future glory. But, Jude also knew that essential to the future salvation then is contending for that faith now, persevering in the faith now.

[20:02] The future of the faith, the future of our salvation is glorious, yes it is. But, the fight of faith in the present is just as real.

And so, he's urging us as his readers to keep hold of this true faith, about this real salvation, and not to be swayed by any rebranding, however seductive that might be.

This salvation, this hope of glory, this coming of Jesus in glory, this alone is the faith once for all delivered to the saints. There is no other, there can be no other.

Notice how clear, how definite Jude is. He calls it the faith. faith. Now, he's not talking about a subjective thing there, he's not talking about your faith or my faith, our trust in something.

No, he's talking about the objective truth of the one apostolic gospel. We read about it in Galatians chapter one, where Paul's defending the one true gospel. He calls it the faith that he was preaching.

[21:08] He calls it the gospel that was preached by me. Not man's gospel, says Paul, it was received from Jesus Christ. It's the faith, the one and only. There's no other gospel, there can't be any other gospel, there's no other faith.

That's why Paul says even if an angel from heaven comes to try and peddle you something, don't listen to it. It's the faith that was once for all delivered. It's uniquely authentic.

There was a certain time in history when it came into being. once upon a time. Because in history, Christ died once for sins, as Peter tells us.

Incidentally, that's the only other time that word is used in the New Testament. Christ died once for sins. The gospel was given once to all the saints. It's unique in its authenticity.

It's rooted in historical fact, and therefore it's unalterable. It can't be changed. And it's uniquely authored. It's once for all delivered. It's not man's gospel, it's God's.

[22 : 16] It's delivered to all the church for all time. It comes through the apostles who are eyewitnesses of his majesty, as Peter says. So this one faith, once for all, has unique authority.

It's delivered. It therefore can't be developed, either by adding to it or by subtracting from it. But of course, that is exactly what certain people have been seeking to do right from the beginning, says Jude.

I find it rather a comfort, don't you? Even if it's rather shocking, that the problems that we're seeing today in most of the church denominations in the West, they're not new.

The things that we're facing in the Church of Scotland, Jude was up against in the first century, just the same. In fact, Jude tells us it goes back much further than that. He's going to give us examples going right back to the book of Genesis, to the very beginning.

He says the Bible spoke about this long, long ago. It was written about long ago. It goes right back to the beginning. I think that's rather comforting.

[23 : 22] And it's a comfort too to know that God knows about the battles we face today, just as he knew about Jude's. And Jude says his condemnation, his just judgment, will come in the end.

To those who pervert the gospel have no fear. Their condemnation was written about long ago. But at the same time, says Jude, there's no place for complacency.

There's no room for naivety. You've got the scriptures, they've written about this. You've got the warnings of the apostles, they've written about this. You should expect these things. You should be ready for these things.

But you haven't been, says Jude. You've been asleep. These things have crept in unnoticed. But how on earth can such gross errors in the faith creep in unnoticed?

How can that happen in Jude's day, new apostolic churches? How can it happen in our own day? How can the grace of God be perverted so much into sheer sensuality?

[24 : 29] so that the Lord Jesus Christ is totally denied and scorned instead of worshipped and obeyed? How can that happen? Well, we need to look secondly at the nature of this perverted faith that's crept in.

What we're going to call the rebranded faith. The faith of certain men. You see, heresy doesn't creep in unnoticed by trumpeting itself with a fanfare, does it?

It creeps in, it's smuggled in. That's the connotation of this language. There's a touch of the spin doctors about this language. There's a touch of the marketing men.

It's the slipperiness of the advertising world that we're dealing with here. We're always seeing rebranding today, aren't we? So your soap powder will have a new formula, new improved, fairy liquid, or whatever it is.

That's not soap powder, is it? But you know what I mean. And what it's saying in this rebranding is that you've got the best of both worlds. Isn't that right? You've got the same trusted product, the same cherished history, but there's something fresh, there's something new, there's something contemporary, cutting edge.

[25 : 43] If you can be cutting edge with a soap powder, I'm not sure. But we've had it with new labour, haven't we? The rebranding of the party. And the message, the spin is that, well, this is the same party, with the same history, the same heritage.

It's a message of reassurance, isn't it, to the old faithful. But there's something new, and fresh, and improved. It's today's thing. You see, it's something extra to attract the wider electorate.

Very successful, isn't it, for nearly ten years? Whether Mr. Blair make his ten years or not, we'll wait and see. Whether it will be as effective for Mr. Brown, we don't know. But that's what skillful rebranding does, isn't it?

You get a subtle change in emphasis, and you open up a whole new market. You try and retain the name and the trust and the history of everything that's gone before, but you get something new.

You attract people. And you see, once you can smuggle in a subtle change in emphasis in the big focus of the gospel message, church, so that people get used to that different slant in the big picture of things, well, once you've got that as the central concern and the thing that's being talked about and written about and sung about in the churches, then after that it's very easy to change the troublesome details here and there about specific issues, about things that seem much more peripheral now to the big story.

[27 : 16] what is that subtle shift in the focus of the big picture that these certain people have brought in? Well, here in Jude, as so often throughout the New Testament and throughout history and in the church today, it's a shift from the future focus of our common salvation to the present experience purpose of our salvation.

And that shift, friends, that shift alone is the root of more disastrous departure from the true gospel than almost anything else in history.

It lies behind so many errors that have afflicted the church over the centuries and still afflict the Christian church today. And you can see why it's such an easy shift to smuggle in.

Because by nature, we love this present world, don't we? We're attracted by this world. And if we could, we'd love to have salvation in this world, on this world's terms.

Isn't that true? And so it's so very easy to smuggle into the church a language that's borrowed from the true faith and the true salvation, of a salvation still to be revealed at the last day.

[28 : 43] To smuggle in the same language but actually be talking about something that's quite different, that isn't that at all. Talking about something that's primarily here and now, in this world.

And it's easy to just play down and then begin to ignore altogether any sense of the future, of a real future glory, as the true salvation of the Bible, and of the reality of a future judgment of that great day, especially that perhaps, in our day.

And once you've done that, once the future perspective has been largely forgotten or at least pushed to the back of our consciousness, well obviously the thing that really matters is the present. Present satisfaction, present blessing, present glory, present salvation now in our experience, in our experience now in the flesh.

And the grace of God, the true Christian message, becomes not primarily about a future salvation that verse 21 is speaking about, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 54] No, it becomes a message about present personal fulfillment, a matter of fulfillment in the flesh. And in this situation that Jude was speaking about, quite literally, sensual indulgence.

But do you see how perfectly logical it is? If there's no thought of the future, of eternity as the real thing, as the overwhelmingly real thing, well then all there is is now.

And the gospel of salvation must deliver salvation, fulfillment, now. You can see where that takes us in so many different ways. Here's just one in the present situation in the Church of Scotland.

We're facing a lobby to accept gay marriages, civil partnerships. Here's a quote from the One Kirk magazine that some of you have seen. I sent it to you on the email. It's an organization that's supposedly meant to represent the middle ground of the church.

Well, that's an amazing thing. Here's a book review by Brian McLaren. Some of you may have heard of him. He's one of the emerging church leaders, apparently evangelical, but very interestingly he's seen in this magazine as being an ally of the pro-gay movement.

[31 : 09] Well, that's rather interesting in itself, isn't it, don't you think? The review of the book states approvingly that McLaren tells us, quote, the kingdom of God should not be confused with a heavenly kingdom.

This is the kingdom here and now. You see? The future's pushed away. And he goes on then to applaud inclusivity in the church.

And in this context inclusivity means welcoming, practicing gay and lesbian relationships. He says those who want to seek to destroy inclusivity must be resisted.

What he means there is anybody who wants to say that there is anything sexually immoral about such things must be resisted. You see, it's all about now. Inclusion now.

On my terms. Fulfillment now. On our terms. On the next page is a minister who writes, quote, We all know a significant number of people in society are gay.

[32 : 10] If this is their God-given orientation, are we to say that God wishes them to be gay but not to express their sexuality in a gay relationship? Clearly it's a rhetorical question expecting us to say, no, of course, we couldn't possibly think God would want that.

Why? Well, because we must all have fulfillment now. Including sexual fulfillment. Surely. I'm not going to single out the homosexuality issue, so let's think about it more broadly in the sexual realm.

The assumption you see here is that the gospel, the Christian faith, must despise a full salvation now, a full satisfaction now, a fulfillment now that includes, obviously, sexual fulfillment in this world.

Every ambition salvation now. But is that the salvation that the Bible promises us? Are we all promised sexual fulfillment now?

Are we all promised marriage now in this world? Are we all promised children, family, and all of these things, and a hundred others besides? Well, no, we're not.

[33 : 20] But if all the focus is on this world and this life, then that's all there is. But no, says Jude, that's wrong. We're still waiting for the glory that's to be revealed.

Our calling is not just for this world. If it is, Paul says to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15, we're of all people the most miserable. It's not. No, Paul, Jude says, our calling is to be kept for Jesus Christ.

To be presented blameless before the presence of his glory. That's our salvation. And that will be our true salvation and our true fulfillment and our true glory that surpasses every sensual glory in this world.

Whether we experience it in this world or not, all such experiences in this world are just prophetic. They're just pointing to something far, far greater in the future. And that's the glorious reality for all of us.

Whatever our deprivations may be now, whatever the problems we struggle with are now that stop us perhaps having the fulfillment in these and many other ways that we long for. That is promised as our full salvation.

[34 : 37] But not yet. And Jude says, your thinking is wrong because you've forgotten the future. And that's what it's all about. That's what the hope of glory is.

And that's why this rebranding of the faith is so utterly perverse. That's why all through his letter Jude is reorientating us to the future, both to encourage us and to warn us.

You see, if you forget the future glory that's to come, if you forget what's not yet, the eternal life that they were waiting for at Christ's coming, if we forget that then we'll be chasing now all sorts of things that have never been promised to us for now.

And we'll be tempted, won't we, to add to the true faith. That's the root of all prosperity gospel teaching, isn't it? We're wanting heaven now. We want material blessing now.

We think we deserve and must have healing in our bodies now. We must have health. We must have heavenly gifts now. But no, says Jude, we're kept for Jesus Christ.

[35 : 45] It's in the future. We wait for his mercy. But it will surely come. Likewise, it's the same if we forget about the judgment to come.

We'll subtract from the gospel, but we will deny the total lordship and mastery of Jesus Christ over all our life now because, well, we want fulfillment now. We'll deliberately choose to forget the true grace of God, which, yes, offers us forgiveness, but also demands from us transformation and repentance.

It offers new life in Christ, but it demands a new life in the Holy Spirit, the most holy faith. Because we won't call it licentiousness and sensuality.

It'll be called progress. It'll be called relevance and compassion. Here's another quote from the One Kirk magazine. Our theology says this minister must prove itself to have relevance and worth and to be life-affirming in this world.

Well, to the worldly men, that means only one thing, doesn't it? Affirm my desire to fulfill myself now in any way I like and still be accepted by the church. And because many in the church want to have this praise in the world, we've smuggled in total perversions of the gospel to achieve just that.

[37 : 11] And once the focus of our common salvation becomes this world, this evil age, as Paul calls it, well, salvation inevitably just comes to mean affirmation and fulfillment in this world's terms instead of deliverance out of this evil age and for the new creation.

And we've had such a successful rebranding exercise that we can start trimming out all the details here and there that we don't find congenial anymore. In fact, it becomes essential to do that, doesn't it?

So here's a view from the eldership from this magazine. I find it sad that those wishing to deny freedom of conscience for all emphasize a few Jewish legalities in the Old Testament laws and a few verses from Paul's letters and make no mention of the love and the compassion of Christ.

1 John 4, 7 tells us that everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, says this person.

Well, the preceding verse in 1 John says, whoever knows God listens to us, the apostles.

Whoever is not for God doesn't listen to us. It's by this that we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Of course, John's got plenty to say about what love really is. This is the love of God, says John, that we keep his commandments.

[38 : 29] But you see, love and compassion have been evacuated of all biblical sense, all gospel meaning, about the love of God that rescues us from sins and to eternal glory.

They've been turned into an argument for pursuing sensuality, whatever we want, seeking fulfillment in sexual immorality now. Total denial of our Lord and master Jesus Christ.

So you see, here we are in Jude's day and in our day, caught up in a massive rebranding exercise of the Christian faith. And the special focus of it is repositioning sexual ethics so that we can be in line with the permissiveness of a pagan society around about us.

They call it progress. Jude calls it perversion of the grace of God. They call people who want to resist this kind of perversion divisive.

But Jude says in verse 19, it's they who cause divisions. They call themselves inclusive and compassionate. But Jude says they're worldly people, devoid of the spirit, godless, ungodly people who pervert the gospel and deny our Lord and Master.

[39 : 55] No doubt they profess to know God, they write books, they speak at popular conferences, they hold positions of influence within the church. But as Titus 1.16 puts it, they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

They pervert the grace of God into sensuality and they deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, says Jude. Jude will never be asked to be moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Jude will never be a bishop. He'll never be welcomed by John Humphreys onto the Today program at 10 to 8 in the morning. But I think we better listen to Jude, don't you?

He seems to know a very great deal about the church in the 21st century, just as he did about the church in the 1st century. He's put us right about our common salvation, as we need to have all the time a constant reorientation to the future.

He's opened our eyes to the rebranding that so easily we are susceptible to today. And he's given us a command, hasn't he? Contend.

[41 : 13] Contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It's a strong word. It means fight. It means wrestle to preserve the true faith that is our common salvation.

Whose responsibility is that, do you think? Who does Jude mention? Can you see pastors? Can you see elders?

Can you see specialists and teachers and bishops and people like that? There's only one group that he mentions. Can you see them? It's the saints. Isn't it?

That's all of us. It's our common salvation, says Jude. And we are responsible, you and I, all of us, for its preservation and for its proclamation.

So let me ask you this. Will there be a church faithful to Jesus Christ in Scotland for your children and for your grandchildren? It's over to you, says Jude.

[42 : 23] It's up to us. Contend for the faith, once for all, delivered to the saints, 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 their only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Will the Western churches survive the 21st century?

It's up to us. It's up to us.