

# Rescue to the true foundation: look to others with love

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the letter of Jude. If you've been with us on Sunday evenings as we've studied this letter, we have discovered that it is a powerful and an urgent letter.

Packed a real punch to Jude's first readers, and it packs a punch today also, because it tells us plainly that an essential part of Christian faith is not just believing the truth, but contending for the truth.

Verse 3, contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. And Jude tells us that contending is necessary because there is an ever-present danger, that even living and lively and orthodox churches will not survive, but may be destroyed by the encroachment of falsehood and a loss of the true gospel.

And that's not for a minute to deny the sovereign power of God. Of course not. Jude begins and ends his letter affirming that most strongly. Look at verse 1.

It's God who calls and keeps his beloved, his own. Look at verse 24. It's God who is able to keep from stumbling and to present in glory his church.

[ 1 : 24 ] Now that's not in doubt. But, in the Bible, the sovereign power of God never ever means passivity for us. Rather, it's because God is sovereign that as our sovereign Lord, he demands so much of us.

We have great responsibilities. And it's these responsibilities that fill the heart of Jude's letter from verses 4 to 23. Just because God has given so much to us in his grace, we are to respond in faith, keeping ourselves, as verse 21 says.

We are to walk in the true faith. We are not to abandon ourselves to error. And when I say we, I mean all Christians, all believers. Jude is writing to the whole church, not to the leaders.

In fact, in his letter, it's very often the leaders who are the problem, leading astray. But the real defence against these malign influences is always a well-taught and a clear thinking and an actively serving congregation of all God's people.

That's the hope for the church in the future. That's always what matters. So Jude, if you like, in his letter, gives us the three R's of the fight of faith for all Christians.

[ 2 : 47 ] First of all, he says, we're to realise the danger. Verse 4 is very clear, isn't it? Look at it. The true faith, Jude says, is always being rebranded.

The Gospel is constantly under attack by those who are, well, in their words, revising it, developing it, applying it to our own day. But God warned us about these things long ago, not to be naive, never to be complacent.

We must realise the danger. Moreover, secondly, we must recognise these enemies for who they are. We must be alert, because, verse 4 tells us, isn't it astonishing?

These perversions creep in unnoticed. The rebranding is so subtle, it's so clever, it's so reasonable, that we're in danger all the time of being taken in unawares.

But no, says Jude, you must spot the signs and symptoms early and make the diagnosis. And so in these really, very ugly verses, 5 to 19, we are treated to something that's more like a textbook of pathology, telling us the truth about these malign influences, ensuring that we see them for what they really are, not for what they pretend to be and purport to be harmless, an evidence of progress.

[ 4 : 07 ] No, says Jude, they are perverters of the true grace of God. And again, we're not to be naive, we're to expect this inside the church, says Jude.

It's so easy for us, isn't it, to throw up our hands in horror and say, this shouldn't be within the professing church of God. Well, says Jude, it's always been. Always.

Verse 14, it goes right back to Enoch, he says, the seventh from Adam. You can't get much earlier than that. And it always will be, says Jude. Verse 18, that's what the apostles said.

That's what they said would characterize the last days. What are the last days? It's the days of the mission of the church of Jesus Christ until his coming. Now, we mustn't be naive.

We're to expect these things. So don't panic, says Jude. These battles will be real right to the end. But don't be passive either.

[ 5 : 06 ] We're not to give way to these things, nor are we to hide away from these things. We are to contend, to realize the danger, to recognize the enemies, but also, to respond to Jude's warnings.

Verse 20. At verse 20, he turns away from these perverters of the gospel and addresses the task of those of us, all of us, who are to preserve the gospel. But you, he says, that's all of us, every Christian, you, are the answer to all of this.

Our series title for this study in Jude has been this, Will there be gospel churches in the West in the 22nd century? We can make it more specific.

Will there be such churches in Scotland, in Glasgow, in the city centre? Well, the answer, says Jude, is it's in our hands. Every one of us.

Not just leaders. All of us. We all have a part to play in responding to the call to contend for the faith, once and for all delivered. It was delivered to all the saints.

[ 6 : 16 ] It's the job of all the saints to defend it. And these last six verses of Jude spell out for us what that response means in very positive terms, in very practical terms.

First of all, a few weeks ago we looked at verses 20 and 21. Jude says, we are to rebuild on the true foundation, the one true faith.

We are to have responsibilities, he says, for ourselves and for one another. We are to look in in faith, if you like. We are to help one another be contenders for the faith. To be a truly constructive Christian people.

We are to be building. Building on the true foundation and none other but actually building. Not being stagnant. The answer to error is not just to be orthodox.

That's not enough on its own. We are to make progress. We are to go forward. We are to build, says Jude. We are to be on the front foot and not on the back foot. And as we saw, it's very simple.

[ 7 : 21 ] It's not easy. Nothing in the Bible or the Christian life is ever easy. But it's not complicated either. It's just responding to the grace of God that is ours in Christ.

Verses 20 and 21, we saw, are the response, the answer to God's work in us in verse 1 of Jude. In verse 1, he says, we are called by the Holy Spirit.

And so we are to respond by encouraging one another to build lives of intimacy with God. Verse 20, praying in the Holy Spirit. We are to respond day by day to God's call to us.

Second verse 1, we are told we are beloved by God the Father. And so says Jude in verse 21, we are to encourage one another in obedience to God, to keep ourselves in the love of God.

That's all about obedience. Remember what Jesus says in John 15? If you keep my commands, you will abide in my love. And third, we are kept for Jesus Christ, says verse 1.

[ 8 : 25 ] And so we are to encourage one another, says verse 21 and 22, to build lives of patient endurance, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

We are to be a Christian fellowship of people, a Christian family, living, if you like, for the real story. And longing for that real story to begin when Jesus Christ comes.

That means we are increasingly content with our material lot in life. But increasingly discontented, spiritually, longing for Christ's coming.

And if we are like that, we will be increasingly immune from the treasures of this world that are such weapons against us. Such enemies that derail our faith because they cause us to love this world, because they cause us to follow the things of this world and therefore so often deny our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

That's our first responsibility. That's the positive response, says Jude. We have a responsibility to one another, to ourselves, to build on the one true foundation.

[ 9 : 42 ] To be fruitful, constructive, building Christian people and Christian churches. But now Jude goes on in verses 22 and 23 to talk of a second responsibility, again, for every single Christian believer.

And, he says, verse 21, and, sorry, verse 22, we are to look not just in, but we are to look out.

We are to look out with love. We are also to take responsibility not just for ourselves, but for others. We are to rescue to the one true foundation of the unchanging faith in Jesus Christ.

We are to be looking out and drawing back in those who are wavering and wondering. And even those, even those who have already become warped by the wickedness of this world.

Verse 22 and 23 are very, very clear about that, aren't they? We are not just to wring our hands about the people who were once within the fold, but have now defected.

[ 10 : 51 ] No, says Jude, we are to be active in rescue. We are to be reclaiming them, restoring them wherever and whenever it's possible. And Jude is clear, it's a necessary work for the church of God.

In fact, it's an urgent work. Look at the language. Verse 23, we are to save as if by snatching out of the fire. And that can be very dangerous work and verse 23b tells us that, doesn't it?

It does seem from the language that Jude is using here that he is thinking primarily not about evangelism to the total outsider, but rather of reclamation of those who were once part of the church.

It doesn't exclude evangelism, of course, but the emphasis here does seem to be on restoration, just as it is in many other parts of the New Testament. Think of Galatians 6, verses 1 and 2, or James 5, verse 19.

It's very relevant, isn't it? I've got friends and family members, and I'm sure you do too, who were once in the thick of church life, but now are wavering, or in fact have wandered away, or even worse.

[ 12 : 06 ] As Paul says, that awful phrase, living as enemies of the cross of Christ. I'm sure we all do. Well, Jude is saying, we all have responsibilities.

responsibilities, responsibilities to be rescuers to the one true faith. We're to look out with love at all such, and we're to seek to draw them back and to bring them home.

Well, how are we to do that? Once again, Jude's answer is very simple and very realistic. Above all, above all, he says, if we are to be rescuers to the one true faith, we must be, we must be people of mercy.

You see the word twice there in these verses, 22 and 23, have mercy on those who doubt. Show mercy with fear. Mercy is the dominant note in this whole command.

Now, if you read some commentaries on Jude, you'll know that the Greek text of this particular verse is really very difficult. Our translation, the ESV and the NIV both give it in three sections here as we have it.

[ 13 : 20 ] You see, have mercy on those who doubt, save others by snatching them from the fire, to others show mercy. Some translations, some of the Greek manuscripts, really divide that into two. Have mercy on those who doubt, saving them by snatching them out of the fire, second, to others show mercy with fear, and so on.

Now, it doesn't really make a great deal of difference, and the scholars argue as to which they think is the better reading. I'm going to take it just as we have it here in front of us. But if we're to take it the other way, it just serves to emphasize even more this word mercy.

Mercy is what characterizes both of those commands. Jude's interest is in mercy as the key to rescue. But typical of Jude, he doesn't leave us with this idea of mercy as something rather vague.

certainly nothing naive. He gives us three clear angles, doesn't he? In the text as we have it anyway. Three clear angles to show what it means to be merciful rescuers.

He tells us we're to show mercy that is real, that is robust, and is also utterly realistic. First then, mercy that is real.

[ 14 : 37 ] That's the mercy you must show. Verse 22, have mercy on those who doubt. Now, Jude is talking here about the waverer, the person who is seriously questioning things in their mind, weighing up the argument, struggling with themselves about issues that are beginning to pull them away from full-bodied commitment to Christ, from the true gospel, from true Christian living.

not so much what we might call honest doubts, issues that we all struggle with in understanding God, in understanding why he says certain things that he does, or why he does certain things.

We all have doubts at times. We all, well, we all doubt ourselves at times, don't we? We often find ourselves wondering if it's really worth it. Can we keep it up? Should we just give up? That's not what Jude is talking about here.

What he means by doubt here is certainly something more sinister, more dangerous. It's doubt as opposed to belief. It's doubt as opposed to trusting God in his good and perfect ways.

James, in his letter, uses that word in James 1, verse 6. And he says of such a doubter, he is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

[ 15 : 59 ] He is talking about the person who really wants to have a foot in both camps. To be a Christian, yes, I don't want to give that up. But on the other hand, they want the satisfaction of this world at the same time.

I don't really see why I shouldn't please myself in this area of my life or that or the other. I don't see why that should be against Christian faith. Well, James, when he is talking about it, it goes on to make very clear what Jesus himself made abundantly clear.

You can't serve two masters. You can't have a foot in both camps. Friendship with this world is enmity with God, says James.

And that's the kind of doubting Jude is speaking about here. Wavering because of the demands of real discipleship. And that's dangerous doubting because it goes on to wandering away from Christ and ultimately to total waywardness and even worse.

And there are people that you know, says Jude, in your churches and in your family and among your friends who are like that. And it's a road that begins so easily but ends so disastrously.

[ 17 : 20 ] And what is needed from all of us if we're going to help such people, Jude says, is mercy. Mercy that it's real. Not just pretend mercy.

The last thing, the last thing that somebody like that needs is a harsh rebuke, a condemnation. What they need is real interest, genuine kindness, willingness to get alongside them and help them.

Real mercy. You see, the problem is that we're, generally speaking, very good at being very soft on ourselves but very hard on the sins and failings of other people.

At least I find that. But Jesus wants it to be the other way around. He wants us to be much harder on ourselves and much more merciful to others.

That's not to say, of course, that we're to be soft on the truth or ignore the truth or turn a blind eye to sin. Of course not. But it's a merciful attitude in us that helps people and helps us draw them back to the truth.

[ 18 : 32 ] That's our aim. Rescue. It's a hard spirit. It's a censorious spirit that drives people away, further away from the truth. Isn't that right?

And that's a very hard balance for us to keep. It's cherishing the truth, as Paul says, but in love. How do we foster a real spirit of mercy?

Well, you see, Jude has told us, hasn't he? We'll only be merciful people if we're grasped, we've grasped ourselves and are gripped by the reality of the mercy of God to us in Christ.

We are people, says Jude in verse 2, who have had mercy, peace and love multiplied to us. Isn't that true? And we are people who know, as verse 21 says, that still our greatest need is God's mercy.

Isn't it significant that the verse that comes right before this one, this command to show mercy, is all about mercy? Mercy is the very thing that we need, that we're longing for, that we're waiting for at the appearance of Jesus Christ.

[ 19 : 42 ] You see, that's what Jude's telling us. If we know anything about the gospel at all, and what Christ has poured out on us in his mercy, and if we have a fraction of realism about the needs of our own lives, our own hearts, then we of all people surely should be lovers of mercy.

Blessed are the merciful, says Jesus, for they shall receive mercy. They're blessed because they know mercy, they know its meaning. They know the miracle of mercy in their own life from God, and so they can be, they must be merciful people.

And that's the key to being a rescuer, says Jude. We know God's mercy to us, so we must share it, and we can share it. Remember Jesus' words about the woman in Luke 7 who anointed him?

Her many sins are forgiven, for she loved much. You can tell by her love, by her actions, that she knows the meaning of forgiveness, says Jesus. But he who forgives, who is forgiven little, loves little.

And so it is with mercy. You see, our attitude, the way we act towards the waver, can help to rescue them, or it can drive them further away. Isn't that right?

[ 21 : 01 ] And there will always be waverers among us, because the pull of this world, the lures of sensuality, of satisfaction, in all sorts of different ways, so, so strong.

And any theology that embraces a present satisfaction now, and a fulfillment now with all of these things, will always be so attractive, it will cause people to waver and begin to wonder after it.

I'm very conscious in the sexuality debates that are all around us just now in the church, of the need for Jude's words. We must speak the truth about these things, but with evidence of real mercy.

The truth alone is not enough, is it? And we mustn't just talk of mercy, there must be evidence of real mercy. we might not convince those who are hardened and entrenched against the gospel, but we may win the waiver.

And that's our goal, to be rescuers. If they can sense that the mercy in our heart is real. And we can praise God that that message does seem to be going out as our presbyteries across the land are voting against the General Assembly's overture on civil partnerships.

[ 22 : 25 ] Twelve more voted this week and they all voted against. And part of that, I'm sure, is that God is giving grace to those who are speaking the truth to show that they speak it with real mercy.

We must speak with real mercy in these things and we must act with real mercy towards individuals. We mustn't be people who bristle with disapproval and censoriousness at the first whiff of sin.

We must show patience and understanding. We must help those who struggle and wonder but aren't yet set in their rebellion. We can hasten their departure or we can bring them rescue if our mercy is real.

So here's a good question to ask yourself. Am I the kind of person that somebody could confide in? Could share their real struggles and their wanderings and the mess of the sin that they've got themselves into?

Am I that kind of person or would they say I could never say that to him or to her? Think about the person that when you're in a mess you would confide in.

[ 23 : 47 ] The one who would show you mercy and make it your aim to be like them. A mercy says Jude that is real. Secondly a mercy that is robust and responsible.

He goes on save others by snatching them out of the fire. Well there's nothing soft or sentimental about Jude's view of mercy is there? See he's not talking now just about the waverer.

He's talking about somebody who's further down the track the wanderer who's gone from doubts to serious drifting away from the path of discipleship. Somebody who's quite literally says Jude playing with fire.

Here's somebody who's in real danger. Here's somebody who needs to be rescued because they're clearly beyond rescuing themselves. And you says Jude must be his rescuer.

You have a responsibility to show mercy that is robust, that's active, that's urgent. You're to be like the merciful fireman doing whatever is needed to get the person out of the burning building to safety.

[ 24 : 55 ] And that means, doesn't it, that there may have to be some discomfort, some serious manhandling to achieve that result. It's a very vivid image, isn't it?

Snatching out of the fire. Just imagine the fireman up the ladder snatching the little child out of the burning room, throwing them out of the window onto the tarpaulin below. Maybe Jude's thinking about the Old Testament story of Lot and his family.

Do you remember? Manhandled out of burning Sodom by the angel. And that's Jude's point, isn't it? Because wandering from the Lord is heading for disaster unless there is rescue.

So we have a responsibility to others to act, to act with urgency, to act with clear purpose. Now I strongly suspect that we find that kind of confrontation very, very difficult, don't we?

I certainly do. Something to do with our culture perhaps. We don't like to pry. Heaven forbid that we should interfere in somebody else's affairs. But Jude says, well, are you just going to watch your brother or your sister go on walking into the fire until it's too late, until they're burned?

[ 26 : 11 ] And we've got to face the stark reality. The Bible is very clear, the New Testament is very clear, apostasy is real.

Whatever your theology on that particular point, you can't avoid it in the Bible. And our response to apostasy when it faces us like this is never, ever, ever in the New Testament.

Well, let's sit down and have a debate about this. Can a real Christian fall away or can they not? Or was this person really ever saved? Or were they not? If they've gone away, that's never the answer in the Bible.

Never mind that, says Jude. That's for the corridors of the university or somewhere else. Get on with the rescue. That's the job of the church.

That's your job. That's what God's sovereign will and purpose is in this situation. Not that you speculate, but that you get on with rescuing your brother and your sister.

[ 27 : 08 ] Show mercy, that is robust, that snatches out of the fire. And it's not theoretical, is it? In any church, in our church, there will be people playing with fire.

It might be secret addiction to pornography on the internet or gambling on the internet. And goodness, doesn't the internet give us a great cloak to cover so many of these things that can lead us astray?

It might be an inappropriate friendship that's heading, if it's not rescued, down the road that's going to turn into an affair. It might be a mismatched relationship of another kind that's dragging gradually away from Christ.

It might be something much more respectable, if you like, an addiction to your career that's dressed up as conscientiousness or success.

or just some kind of disillusionment in life that's turned somebody bitter, dampened their enthusiasm for the Lord, leading them to seek their joy elsewhere.

[ 28 : 20 ] Now in many of these cases, people know perfectly well that they're in danger. But they're crippled. Might be by guilt and by shame.

Might just be a feeling of helplessness to do anything about it. It might be increasingly a desire not to do anything about it. And friends, what that person needs from you and from me is the robust mercy of mature Christianity and mature Christian people that will rescue them, that will bring them to their senses, that will bring them back to their proper place in God's family, God's purposes.

But that means action, doesn't it? It means us getting involved. It means, God forbid, interfering. Real mercy isn't soft.

It doesn't stand back and do nothing. Nor is it hard and harsh, but it does take action. The Bible says we are our brother's keepers.

And we're to recognize real danger, where it leads, and we're to rescue to the true foundation of gospel living. And yes, it may well be hard for you and for your friend, your brother.

[ 29 : 37 ] But faithful are the wounds of a friend, a true friend who shows real mercy. So are we up for mercy missions like that? Well, if we've got friends and family members and others who are drifting into real spiritual danger, are we going to let them just get burned?

Are we going to wait maybe until they are beyond rescue? Or will our mercy be robust enough to take responsibility, to make a rescue?

Jude doesn't go into details about what it means. Of course he can't. It's different in every individual case. We have to be wise. He doesn't need to. There are many other parts of the New Testament that give wise counsel.

Read Galatians 6 about how to restore gently those who are caught in sin. Read the end of James chapter 5 and whatever. But James is very clear.

And mercy must be real, not pretend. It must be robust and take responsibility, not just be passive and uninvolved. But third, he tells us to show mercy that's realistic.

[ 30 : 50 ] We can't stand by and ignore those who are wandering away. But we mustn't be naive about the danger. Danger to them and danger to us in this situation.

To some, he says, verse 23, we must show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. He's talking now about those who have become warped by the ways and the thinking of this world, who wandered far away from the truth.

Titus 3, verse 10, speaks about just such a person who's wandered and has been warned more than once, perhaps by good friends, by those who are showing real and robust mercy to them.

But they won't listen. Such a person, says Titus, is warped and sinful. He is self-condemned. And some folk have moved so far and perhaps got involved in things that are so contrary to the truth that it means real danger for us even in getting close to them.

That's what Jude means. And then our mercy must be realistic. We must be aware of our own weakness, our own frailty. We are to fear, we are to really fear, says Jude.

[ 32 : 08 ] Perhaps to fear the pull and the influence on us if we get involved. Perhaps also fear for them, real fear. because we see the reality of the terrible danger that they're in.

There's no fantasy about that, is there? We can all understand what he means. Think about the alcoholic friends who are converted, but one slips back into the old life.

How dangerous it is, isn't it, for his brother to go and seek him out in the old haunts with the old friends, exposing himself to all the old temptations. Danger. It's easy to be naive, isn't it?

I'll go and rescue him. I'll resist it all so I can help him. Jude says you must fear. Or the person who's been saved out of a very sexually promiscuous lifestyle.

So easy, isn't it, to be in danger when you go back into that territory, to be enslaved all over again. The mission of mercy is dangerous and so mercy must be realistic.

[ 33 : 19 ] Sometimes it's just too dangerous to get involved directly in certain ways for some of us. But that's not an excuse for abandoning the mercy mission.

Maybe for some of us all we can do for that particular person is pray. Maybe others can be involved in a way personally that we just can't be. Maybe that you've been in a relationship with somebody, for example, had to break off or whatever.

And yet you know that that person needs the merciful ministry of others to help them spiritually. Well, you're right to have mercy in your heart.

You're right to have a desire, but it must be realistic. It's obviously too dangerous for you to be involved directly. You're not that person. That's for others to do. It's not your role.

It's just one example, but there are many, many others. And that's why Jude is writing to a church fellowship, not just to individuals. None of us can do all these things by ourselves.



[ 34 : 22 ] None of us has all the answers. We need one another. We're all to be merciful rescuers. And we're all to be realistic. Realism, too, about what real rescue is.

Real mercy fears the power of sin, says Jude. And it hates sin. It hates even the garments stained by the flesh. That's a very vivid image, isn't it?

It doesn't need any explanation. But real mercy hates sin. Not sinners, but the sin that so damages and ruins human beings.

Real mercy knows that rescue to the true foundation will mean a turning away from sin and a rejection of its clothing, its expression. It'll mean real repentance.

There's no cheap grace in real rescue. It involves seeing sin for what it is, filthy and dirty in God's eyes, just because it so demeans and so ruins what is precious to him.

[ 35 : 34 ] The life and the livelihood, the future of his little lambs, his people. And so rescue always involves calling people and helping people to turn around, to leave all that behind, to repent.

Anything else is just in reality, letting people go on walking into the fire. And that's a grave mistake that so many in our churches are making today.

They're doing just what Jude warned of. They're so desperate to keep people in the churches, in our decaying denominations, that we're saying to people, oh, your clothes are fine with us. That's all right.

Come along as you are. We're happy to affirm your clothes. There's an organization started up in Scotland, in the church, just after our General Assembly, by some people called Affirmation Scotland, an organization that exists solely to promote the place of active homosexuality within the clergy and among the people of our churches.

What they're saying to people is, we love you. We love your clothes. Keep your clothes. We think they're fine. But you see, what Jude says, in reality, that is simply saying we hate you.

[ 36 : 54 ] Because it denies that God can and will save all who call to him. Denies that God calls us to holiness. Hebrews 12, verse 14 is clear.

Without holiness, no one will see God. Real mercy is realistic. It tells the truth about sin. It says God hates these clothes because he loves you.

And he wants you to be separated from your sin. That's why Jesus came. He wants rid of these garments that spoil, that mar his precious creation, your life.

Leave them behind, he says. And come and clothe yourself with Christ's pure clothing of righteousness. That's the message of real mercy. See, it's realistic. It's realistic about sin, but also, don't forget this, it's also wonderfully realistic about God's forgiving and restoring grace.

Yes, people do wander off, get themselves in a terrible pickle. Yes, they do play with the real fire of judgment. Yes, some people may seem almost so far gone, that they really are a true danger to others in the fellowship.

[ 38 : 11 ] But there is mercy, says Jude. Jude tells us to show mercy, because he knows that God does rescue, even from the fire.

Remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 about those who have squandered their lives, and yet still they can be saved, even though it is only as being rescued from the fire.

Surely, there's also another echo here of Zechariah chapter 3 that Jude has already alluded to in his letter. Do you remember Joshua the high priest standing before the hosts of heaven, clothed in filthy rags, representing his sin, being accused by the devil for all his sins?

But his filthy garments, his sin, his wickedness is stripped away. And in its place, he's clothed with a robe of righteousness, of purity.

Behold, I have taken your sins away from you, says God, and the devil is banished. And if ever there was a picture of rescue, of restoration, of reclamation from the flames, that's it.

[ 39 : 27 ] And friends, Jude is telling us, never, ever lose sight of that. We're to show mercy to those who are wavering and wandering, and even those who are far gone and wayward, because there is mercy.

The mercy of God in Christ for all who will turn, no matter how far they've gone away, no matter how far down life's path they've walked.

I don't know, maybe that that's a word for somebody specially here this morning, a word for you. Maybe you've been wandering, maybe you've been playing with fire.

That's a promise from God. There is mercy for all who turn to him, always. But surely also there's a message for all of us here, isn't there?

We're all to be rescuers to the true foundation, to Christ himself. We want to be that, don't we? I do. I know you do. Well, says Jude, it's simple.

[ 40 : 41 ] Will you be a people who show mercy? Mercy that's real, coming from hearts that know the reality of Christ's mercy to us.

Mercy that's robust, that takes responsibility for one another, to go into the flames and pull back our brothers and sisters. Mercy that's realistic about sin and the deadly danger and also the grace and the wonderful restoring power that there is in the call of Christ.

Jude says, it's people like that who contend for the truth of the gospel. It's people like that who build and who preserve the church of Jesus Christ.

It's people like that who will keep the church here this century and next century and every century. People of mercy.

And may God help us to be such people. Let's pray. We're conscious heavenly Father of your wonderful mercy to us in Christ.

[ 41 : 53 ] And as we draw near shortly to this table that speaks of mercy then and mercy now and mercy at the day when you appear, we pray that you would so fill us with a knowledge of your grace and mercy to us that we would be as Jude desires us to be a people above all a people of mercy for Jesus' sake.

Amen.