

Rebuild on the True Foundation: look to one another with faith

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the letter of Jude. Now, Jude's letter begins and ends by reminding us of the powerful sovereignty of God.

Verse 1 tells us, it is God who calls us and keeps us for Jesus Christ. And in verse 24, we're told it's God who is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before the presence of his glory.

But in between, as we've seen, there is a clear and an urgent message about the great responsibility that we ourselves have for the preservation of the one true faith, the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

And Jude is quite plain. An essential part of Christian faith is not just believing the truth, but what he says in verse 3, contending for the truth.

And so far, we've seen that Jude's great concern is to tell us why that is so necessary, to realize the danger. And verse 4 is very chilling, isn't it? The very foundations of our faith, the apostolic gospel itself, once for all revealed from God, is under attack and under continuous attack.

[1 : 23] The faith has been many, many times subtly rebranded and perverted, so that it turns into something totally at variance with the true gospel. And that had happened just a few years after that very gospel had established these churches that Jude's writing to in Palestine.

But it has been, and it still is, very subtle. Jude says it creeps in. And often it's only when it's too late that we realize it has crept in, and then it's too late to do anything about it.

And so Jude says we must recognize these enemies, so as to be able to resist them. And as we've seen, verses 5 to 19 give the signs and the symptoms that we are to learn to diagnose, so as not to be taken in.

And as we've seen, they're very unsavory and at times grotesque. It's like a textbook of pathology. But it's not unexpected.

That's Jude's whole point. The professing church has always been, right back to the very beginning, beset by these problems. Jude says it goes right back to the time of Enoch, the seventh from Adam.

[2 : 34] And these problems always will be. Look at verse 18. That's what the apostles said right till the end.

There will be these problems in the church. So as we've seen, Jude's letter could have been written this very year, as it were. And it could have been written to our churches in Scotland.

And on Tuesday night, our presbytery is going to be voting, as I said, on this issue of same-sex blessings. It's verse 4 of the letter to Jude, alive and kicking right now today. Well then, what are we to do when we recognize that Jude's words are prophetic, that they are abundantly pertinent for our own day?

Well, the answer of some within the Christian church is, well, we must capitulate. That's the position of the liberal. It's the position increasingly of the so-called liberal or open evangelical.

They say that, well, we must move with the times the church is losing influence in society, and therefore we must change or else we'll die. They call it progress.

[3 : 46] But really what it means is absorbing the thinking of the world into the church. Another opposite way of responding to this situation is to go the other way and say we must depart into a holy huddle.

We must separate ourselves into a situation of purity. And the emphasis is all on maintenance and on defense and on isolation. But really that just means to abandon the real world altogether, to have no impact at all on anybody outside.

And often as well, unfortunately, that approach does lead in the long run to even worse heresy. That's how most cults begin.

It's with that kind of separation and withdrawing from the Christian church. But now neither of these things is the answer that Jude gives us. We're not to absorb the world into the church.

We're not to abandon the world altogether. What are we to do? Well, Jude says we are to be active in the midst of the mess and the error and the unbelief and the falsehood that flies around and always will.

[4 : 55] We are to contend, he says, for the true faith, the true gospel of our one Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. And so now at last, as we come to verse 20 tonight, we've left behind these perverters of the faith.

Hallelujah. And we can turn our attention to what it means to contend for the true gospel of God. Look at verse 20. But you, beloved, he says, build yourselves up.

Not on the erroneous and perverted faith, but on the most holy faith. The faith revealed by God. On your faith, he calls it.

The faith revealed to you once and for all in the gospel. Now notice that Jude says, you are the answer. You build yourselves up.

You, plural. He's not primarily writing here to church leaders, to preachers. He's writing to all the church. And what he's saying is that the future is all of our responsibility.

[6 : 00] We're asking the question in this series, will there be a Western church in the 22nd century? Will there be a Scottish church, a gospel church, in the 22nd century?

Well, the answer is, God has put it in our hands. All of our hands. It doesn't depend on leaders. It certainly doesn't depend on people like moderators and bishops and archbishops and that sort of thing.

Many people were getting very upset this last week, not surprisingly, by the comments made by the moderator-elect of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly. Awful comments saying that she wanted to use her year as moderator to promote gay marriage.

Well, don't despair. The future of the church is not in the hands of people like that. I don't actually even know her name. In a year's time, nobody else will either. Now, the future is in our hands.

All of us. It's all of us who are God's children who have responsibility for the future of the church. It's tempting to blame leaders and these sorts of people.

[7 : 07] And, of course, leaders do have responsibilities. But the New Testament places the responsibility for the future of the faith in all of our hands. And we all have to contend.

And in verses 20 to 25, Jude just spells out for us how delightfully simple that really is. Like all things in the Christian life, it's not easy.

It's often very hard. But it's not complicated either. It's very simple. It's very straightforward. Jude tells us that there are three things that we need to do. First of all, in verses 20 and 21, he says you have responsibility for yourselves, for one another.

You have to look in with faith to one another. You have to rebuild on the true foundation of the one unchanging faith. Then, in verses 22 and 23, he says you have responsibility for others.

You have to look out with love. You are to rescue to the one true foundation of the unchanging faith. In verses 24 and 25, he says we have responsibility to God.

[8 : 13] We are to look up constantly with hope. We are to rejoice in the foundation of the one true and unchanging God. Tonight, we're just going to look at the first of these, verses 20 to 21.

It's all about rebuilding and going on building on the true foundation. Jude says, but you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith.

I was mentioning the authorised version last Sunday morning. Well, the authorised version gets it absolutely right here. The ESV has it wrong. It's to build on.

One translation has build on the foundation of your most holy faith. And that is exactly the image that Jude is giving us here. Quite literally, he's speaking about constructive Christianity.

Building with strength and endurance. Building a bulwark of faith to restore the Christian witness in the face of the subversive and subtle dangers that are coming upon it.

[9 : 17] We're to build ourselves up, he says. That's the command. And then, if you look carefully, you'll see that he gives three specifics that tell us in practical terms what that means in our daily lives.

We're to pray in the Holy Spirit. We're to keep ourselves in the love of God and we're to wait for the coming of Christ. That's how we're to build ourselves up. But first then, let's look at the general command, the summons that he gives us.

And that's a command, build. It summarises all of those things together. Now, notice how active and how energetic Jude's language is.

Look at how he understands this business of contending for the faith. It's not just a defensive thing, is it? Contending for the faith is not just being on the back foot, it's being on the front foot.

We're to build up on the foundation of the most holy faith. Not just to tear down and fight against falsehood and perverse Christianity.

[10 : 19] That's very important. When an ugly and useless building needs disposing of, well, demolition is only stage one, isn't it? It's just preparatory.

I don't know if you've seen, there's been an exceptionally ugly building being demolished just recently down on Bothell Street. I see it every time I come off the motorway and I'm driving to church. And I've been watching week by week as more and more of it has disappeared.

Now it's completely gone. It was an ugly building. And now it's lovely because as I drive in I see behind it a beautifully proportioned Victorian building built in the days when they knew how to build nice buildings.

Of course, the other side of it is it's also brought into view the most repulsive building that looks as if the whole thing's covered in tinfoil. I don't know if you know that one. I hope you didn't design that one, Kenny. But anyway, there's a great big space left where that building was.

And that may be better than the eyesore of the building that used to be there, but it's not much use, is it? And if the boards and the hoardings just stay up around that space and it's left, well, pretty soon it'll be full of weeds and waste and goodness knows what else and pretty much good for nothing.

[11 : 29] To really use that space it really needs a good building to be built on solid foundations and hopefully with a decent imaginative architect.

Demolition was merely the necessary negative work to clear the ground to clear the ground for positive construction. And we need to remember that in the church, don't we? We won't build up the church in the most holy faith only by exposing and recognizing error and by fleeing error.

It's possible as Christians to be obsessed with demolition of error. But at the same time to have no interest at all in construction.

No interest in building up that which is useful and active and beautiful. And it's no good us just demolishing false Christianity.

It's no good even just being content to put it out of the way and then defend only just the bare foundations. Foundations, when they're cleared away of all the rubble and all the rubbish, foundations are meant to be built on, aren't they?

[12 : 42] And so it is to be with our Christian lives and with our Christian churches, says Jude. That's what we have to do if we're going to be effective, if we're going to be a fruitful people in propagating the true faith, the faith that is once and for all delivered to the saints.

We're to be on the front foot, we're to be growing, we're to be building, he says. In 2 Peter chapter 1, Peter puts it in exactly the same way. He says, make every effort to add to your faith, that is to build on it, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness and so on.

And that, he says, will keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you see, that's what contending for the faith involves.

Building strong and effective and fruitful Christian lives. and Christian churches. Churches and lives that are on the front foot. Not stagnant ones, not ineffective and fearful ones on the back foot, always on the defensive.

But of course, a building like that can only be built, can't it, on rock-solid foundations. Foundations are critical.

[13 : 53] That's why we've had so many people burying holes and drilling holes underneath the church here and all round about it as we think about our building project. No good having lovely plans, is there, if we don't know what's underneath, if we don't know if there's a foundation.

You remember what it's like when we have an earthquake and you see all these awful pictures. Remember the Pakistan earthquake and that one a year or two ago in Turkey.

And when the earthquake comes, it exposes these buildings that look magnificent, but actually, they had no proper foundations. They hadn't been built properly. And they crashed down.

And the New Testament tells us that the church is the building of God. It's the temple of God. Remember Ephesians chapter 2? It's built, says Paul, on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.

Well, we need to ask, is that the foundation of your Christian life? Is that the foundation of mine? There are many people today who say, well, I build my life on Jesus Christ. But, you can't build your life on Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, without recognizing that that means to build your life on the apostolic gospel of the New Testament in its entirety.

[15 : 12] That is the most holy faith. That is the only sure foundation. Anything else, anything that says, well, I don't want this stone or that stone or the other stone, but I'll have this one and that one just, that's hopeless, isn't it?

That's disaster in the making. The earthquake will level that kind of building. And of course, as we know, that is what happens very often, isn't it?

When troubles assail a Christian life that hasn't been built on the right foundation collapse. We must be clear that it's the true gospel of God that we're building our lives on, not some truncated thing, not some perverted gospel.

But on the other hand, as well as having the right foundation, we must also build. That's what Jude's telling us. If you read 1 Corinthians 3, Paul talks there about building, doesn't he, on the one foundation.

There is no other foundation, he says, but Jesus Christ. But we must build on it. And whether we have built on it with gold and silver and precious stones, things that are of value and of worth, or with wood and hay and straw, useless things, well that will be revealed on the great earthquake of the last day when our work is judged by fire.

[16 : 32] You see, we have a great responsibility on us to build, to grow, to be fruitful, to serve the kingdom constructively. And that's the only way that the church will survive, that it will penetrate into the world, that it will penetrate into the next generation and the generations to come if we're building.

And that's why construction work, building, edification, is such an emphasis in the New Testament. It's a church that isn't focused on building, building on strong gospel foundations and building for fruitful lives of Christian service, growing mature and active Christian soldiers, training people, discipling people, as well as just evangelizing.

A church that isn't even building like that will very quickly fall into decay, into disrepair and ultimately lead to death. And that is the explanation, isn't it, for the barren landscape of so many churches in our land today?

Either it's that they've abandoned the true foundation of the apostolic gospel, they've been building on falsity and it's led to a collapse, or they may have kept the right foundation, but they've abandoned any building on it, nothing constructive has been going on.

In the end, that's equally deadly. No, says Jude, you are to take responsibility for what you've been given just because you have been given it. You're to build yourselves up, build one another up, and you're to do it on the foundation of the faith once delivered, the true gospel.

[18 : 16] That's true Christianity, that's part of what it means to be in the faith. It's a faith that contends, it's constructive, it's always building. And it's our responsibility, but see what a wonderful responsibility actually it is.

We build only because such a wonderful foundation has been laid by God's grace in us. Look at verse two, mercy and peace and love have been multiplied to us who are in Christ.

And therefore we can respond and we can build for God's glory and we must. But Jude doesn't want to just leave us with generalities, let's get down to specifics he says.

He gives us now three commands that explain to us what this building on the true faith really means. And see just how wonderfully rich and personal this really is.

There's nothing dry and intellectual about this. It's not about theological degrees and diplomas. It's not about knowing everything there is to know about God or about his word.

[19 : 24] Although of course there's nothing wrong, there's something very good about that kind of theological education. No, but the real building that Jude is talking about is building a deeper and deeper knowledge of God.

It's relationship with God. It's knowing God that he's talking about. It's knowing the personal God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. See what he says here in verses 20 and 21 has at its heart knowing God better.

Knowing God better as you respond to the knowledge of himself that he has given to you in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look back at verse 1 of the letter.

You see how verse 1 speaks of God's sovereign grace in the gospel. See how Trinitarian it is. Just notice that. We're called. Well, that is by the Holy Spirit.

We're called to the new birth. Through the love of God, the Father. We're kept for Jesus Christ his Son. Do you see? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[20 : 32] That's God's sovereign work of grace revealing himself to us. That's God reaching out to save us in our helplessness. He is the sovereign God.

Well, now look at verse 20 and 21. It's just our response, the natural response, to God's sovereign salvation. Do you see? We pray in the Spirit.

He calls us and now we call out in the Spirit to God. We keep ourselves in the Father's love, the Father who has loved us. And we wait for Jesus Christ with a patient longing.

We wait for the one who himself keeps us. We grow, we build on the foundation of our most holy faith. We become mature, we become fruitful as we respond day by day to the grace of God in the gospel that comes to us.

It's that simple. It really is. And isn't it practical? What are we to do to contend for the faith by building Christian lives and Christian churches that are fruitful for God?

[21 : 43] What are we to do? God just gives us these three things through Jude. First of all, he says, we are to encourage one another in living lives of intimacy with God, praying in the Holy Spirit.

That's what we are to encourage in one another. That's something every Christian can do. In fact, it's the very defining mark of what it means to be a Christian, isn't it? To be in prayer.

Do you remember in Acts chapter 9 when Saul of Tarsus has been converted and God gives a command to Ananias to go and see Paul? And he says, go and see him because he's changed.

A total transformation has come over him. Behold, he is praying. Well, Saul of Tarsus has said his prayers all his life. He was a religious zealot.

He was a Pharisee. But he'd never prayed in the Spirit before. Because at heart he'd been an enemy of the true God. But now he's praying because he's a believer.

[22 : 45] There's no magic about this. There's nothing special about this kind of prayer. Praying in the Spirit is actually the only kind of real prayer that there is. It's the mark of being a child of God, being a true Christian.

Christian. We need to be very careful because there are people who would teach that unless you're praying in a particular way, in some special way, ostentatiously, or in a particular language, or maybe in tongues, or using thee and thou in the language of the past, or whatever it might be, unless you're doing something some particular way, that's not real, special prayer in the Spirit.

Well, that's just nonsense. It's dangerous nonsense. Prayer in the Spirit is just the simple intimacy of real relationship with God our Father.

And every believer has this. Listen to Paul in Romans 8, verse 14. Listen, For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry Abba, Father.

You see? That's prayer. Every true Christian has the Holy Spirit. Every true believer has intimate access to God through prayer. Nothing to do with flamboyant utterances or anything like that.

[24 : 11] The enemies of the gospel have plenty of that. Jude's told us that, hasn't he? Lots of thunder and spectacle and crashing waves. But they can't be having real prayer, Jude says.

They can't. Because, well, why? Verse 19 says they're devoid of the spirit. And that's the first characteristic of building on the true foundation.

It's fostering and building prayer, intimacy with God. That's the first answer to apostasy and error in the church. Real prayer from real Christians. That might seem very, very unimpressive to the outsider, to the onlooker.

When Martin Luther said, the prayers of the saints are the decrees of God beginning to work. The first answer to defending the faith. Somebody in one of our elders' meetings, when we were talking about these presbytery battles to come, they said, don't despair, remember, we will be praying and they won't.

That's exactly right. We do have prayer, we have intimate access to a heavenly father who is sovereign. But of course it's not passive, is it?

[25 : 22] It's active. We are to pray. Of course that's where the problem comes, because praying is hard, isn't it? But it is easier if we do remember that it's a response in the Spirit to the Spirit's work in us, revealing gospel grace to us.

Interestingly, the only other place in the New Testament where this phrase praying in the Spirit is used is in the gospel armor section in Ephesians 6. And there it's intimately linked to the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit. And it's no accident that prayer in the Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel are intimately connected, because it's the gospel that touches our hearts and causes us to respond to God.

That's what draws a response of real prayer from us as we respond to the grace of God in the gospel as he reveals it to us. And we know that's true, don't we?

When we have our hearts filled with a sense of what God's done for us, his mercy, his love for us, that's when we want to respond in prayer. And our intimate prayer then will be focused, won't it, on God's own intimate heart's desire for the glory of his Son and for his worship in the world.

[26 : 49] Well, says Jude, are you building? Are we encouraging one another in intimacy with God through prayer, evoked by the gospel and focused on the gospel?

If perhaps you are feeling that in your Christian life you are slipping back into fear and frustration, maybe because you're not building that intimacy with God.

Or it may be that perhaps you think you are praying, but it's not real gospel praying, it's self-centered praying. It's all about you, it's all about your problems, it's all about your wants and your needs, not God's.

It's very, very easy for us to slip into that, isn't it? I certainly find that. Well, the solution is just to stop it. To stop praying for yourself.

Instead, pray in response to the gospel, focus on God's gospel. That's a great cure for self-absorption. We can trust God that he knows what our needs are. We very rarely have to bring our own personal needs to God more than once in prayer.

[27 : 57] You can leave them with him. But focus in our prayers, especially on the cause of Christ and his gospel in the world. And pray with other people.

Remember that Jude is writing here to the church, not just to a collection of individuals. He's saying, all of you pray. In fact, if you read the New Testament, every single command to pray implies corporate prayer.

It's in the plural. And that's right, because we're a family. We share the same concerns. But you know, it's also so practical, isn't it, to focus on praying with other people.

Together, as a church, as we pray, it's so much easier to really pray in the spirit. to pray in such a way as we are shaped by the gospel. If you never pray with others in the church family, or with the whole church family, it's much harder to be really building that kind of gospel-driven intimacy with God.

Our church prayer meeting every fortnight on a Wednesday, I can tell you, is the last thing that I want to go to at seven o'clock on a Wednesday evening. I've usually been in my study since eight in the morning.

[29 : 07] I've rushed straight to the train, I've come to the lunchtime service. After that, we've had a staff meeting. I've spent the rest of the afternoon maybe seeing people. And about seven o'clock, I've sat down with some of the others who are there and stuffed my face with a very large pizza.

And all I want to do at ten past seven on a Wednesday is fall asleep. The last thing I want to do is go downstairs and join with the congregation in prayer.

But you know, I've never ever reached the end of that meeting without being rejoicing and glad that I've been there. I've never gone home unblessed. I've never gone home without my concerns having diminished in all of their importance in my mind and the concerns of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the church fellowship and the love of Christ in the world being pushed right up into my consciousness.

righteousness. You can't build yourself up in the faith. You can't be fruitful if you don't pray. And our fellowship as a church, we can't build ourselves up to be effective defenders and promoters of the gospel unless we pray in response to the gospel for the right things.

It's as simple as that. No relationship can grow, can it, if it's only one-sided? There's never any response. There must be. I'm not talking here about some sort of legalistic bondage.

[30 : 35] I remember as a student getting utterly depressed reading diaries of John Wesley and trying to emulate him and get up at four o'clock every morning and pray and all the rest of it. I worked myself into total depression and near nervous breakdown.

Jude's not talking here about getting up at three in the morning and having a five-hour quiet time every day. I love that verse in Psalm 127 which I quote to anybody who tries to talk about that sort of thing.

In vain you rise up early and stay up late. The Lord grants sleep to those he loves. He's not talking about some kind of super spirituality. He's talking about what's natural.

Any time, any place we can respond to the Lord. But it is a response, isn't it? And the more that we cherish and love the gospel of God, grace of God to us, the more we'll find we want to pray.

And the more we want to ensure that we have a discipline of prayer, that we are able to be committed to pray together with others so that we can help one another. I have to go to the prayer meeting, I'm the minister.

[31 : 42] I like that joke about the person who was in their bed in the morning on a Sunday and wouldn't get up and refused to go to church. And his mother kept saying to him, you've got to get up, you must go.

And he said, why do I have to go? You must go. I don't want to go. You must go. He said, why? Well, you're the minister, you've got to go. I often feel like that on a Sunday morning and on a Wednesday evening.

But it's a glad discipline, isn't it, that we want to submit to. The more we take in and understand the grace of God in the gospel, encourage intimacy with God, praying in the spirit.

Second, Jude says, we're to encourage one another to build lives of obedience to God. We are to keep ourselves and one another in the love of God.

We are beloved of God, he's told us, and we are to keep ourselves in his love. That's our response to God's steadfast love, his covenant love. But it's not about anything emotional, it's not about anything sentimental here.

[32 : 43] Once again, it's very practical. It's all about obedience to God. Obedience to our only Lord and Master. That's the right response to the covenant God.

You go right back to Deuteronomy chapter 6, the famous prayer, the Shema. The Lord our God is one God, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and might.

What does that mean? Next verse. These words I command you today shall be on your heart. You'll teach them to one another and to your children, you're going out and coming in and so on.

As simple as that, you see. Do you want to be built up as Christians? Do you want to be built up as a church, kept in the love of God? Well, encourage one another to build lives of obedience to the commands of our Lord and Master.

Jude is just repeating here the plain teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to turn up John chapter 14 and John chapter 15 with me just to see this. It really helps to make it clear. There's so much confusion today about the love of God, what it means to love God.

[33 : 51] In fact, one of the things we're constantly hearing from the rebranders of the faith is about how it's love that's the only thing that matters. And yet they can talk about love of God and loving God in the same breath as they're promoting disobedience to the commands of God.

But look what Jesus says, John 14 verse 15. If you love me, you will keep my commands. Even more clearly look down to John 15 verse 8.

By this is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to me by disciples. Well, that's exactly what Jude's urging, isn't it? Building ourselves into faithful, constructive Christians.

Well, how do we do that according to Jesus? Let's look at verse 9. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love. Keep yourselves in my love.

And verse 10, what does that mean? If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. You see? It's all about obedience.

[35 : 02] That's how you abide in his love, because that's real faith. Remember, we looked in Hebrews chapter 3. Disobedience in the Bible is unbelief. Unbelief is disobedience.

So if you're feeling that, well, I'm not growing as a Christian, you need to ask, am I keeping myself in God's love? Am I walking in daily obedience to the commands of God, to his absolute lordship?

It's that that brings joy to Jesus. Look at verse 11, John 15. These things have I spoken to you that my joy might be in you, and that your joy will be full.

See, it's easy to deceive ourselves, isn't it? To say, well, my Christian experience isn't as it ought to be. And it's because, well, I don't understand this doctrine or that or the next thing.

Or it's because I don't have this gift or that gift or the other thing. But Jesus says, if you're experienced in your Christian joy, isn't it as it ought to be?

[36 : 10] It might just be something much more simple. Are you abiding in God's love? Are you obeying me in your daily walk? I don't know about you, but for me, certainly it's true that my biggest problems are not with the things in the Bible I can't understand.

The things I can understand, but I don't like and I don't want to do. That's my biggest problem. And so we need one another's help, don't we? To build lives of obedience to God.

And that's the way to joy. That's the way to maturity and to strength, but it is also the way of joy. Build lives of obedience, says Jude. Third, and finally, we need to help one another to build lives of patient endurance and contentment.

Waiting, says Jude, for the mercy of our Lord Jesus that leads to eternal life. And again, that's a response, isn't it, to God's promise to us in Christ. Our common salvation, the faith once delivered, is a future hope.

We wait for the mercy. We're saved in hope. Only Christ's return will prove ultimately all his promises to be true. We've entered life now, of course, but it will be that day that proves God's promise is true.

[37 : 29] And until that day, our experience will be dominated by battles. There's many, many things that we long for, that we desire, that we feel we desperately need, that simply will not be fulfilled in this life.

life. And that's very hard. Sometimes very hard. To be denied the bodily health that others have.

Or the fulfillment in our profession, our occupation, or whatever it might be that we wanted but denied us. Or to be denied the life companion that we've never found or that we've lost and has been taken from us.

Or that we can't have because something in our makeup and our personality means that normal sexual relationships could never be for us. Or whatever else it might be, this is a fallen world.

To dying in a disordered world, it always will be. And that means that there are troubles that we're going to face, deprivations that we'll have to endure, bereavements that we will have.

[38 : 48] Trials and tribulations abound in life and, friends, listen to this, for the Christian believer, these are added to, not subtracted from, because of our faith.

There will be persecution, slander, hatred, says Jesus, for my sake. That's a gospel promise. But Jude says, remember, Jesus is coming.

He's coming. He's coming with mercy that leads to eternal life for all who wait for him. That word wait means eagerly await. It's used in Hebrews 9 when it says, he will appear to save them that eagerly wait for him.

And an essential part of building on a true and solid foundation, building Christian maturity, building churches and Christians who really can and will contend for the faith, is to help one another to live lives of patient endurance, contentment, waiting eagerly for that great day, focused on that great day much more than on the lacks of this present day.

Putting our hopes there, not here, for the ultimate answer to our hurts, our pains, our trials, whatever they might be. And you know, unless we can do that, it's going to be so, so very hard for us to be really, truly constructive Christians in this life, in a fallen world.

[40 : 26] Only that true gospel perspective can really detach us from the burdens of this world and free us to serve the kingdom with all our might, to contend for the faith of the gospel, whatever the circumstances are for us personally and collectively.

We're naturally wired, aren't we, to focus on ourselves and on our lives now and on our needs and our wants and so on. That's the effect of sin in us. It's removed our vision of glory.

And so we find it hard to wait with patient endurance. So we need to help one another, says Jude, build lives of patient endurance, focused on the Lord's coming, waiting eagerly for it.

If you like, we need to foster discontent in one another, the right kind of discontent. Paul says in Romans 8 that we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we were saved.

And that's the right kind of discontent, isn't it? Eagerly awaiting Christ's coming in glory. The very opposite of the kind of grumbling malcontent that verse 16 speaks about that we saw last week.

[41 : 44] It's a contented discontent. Content in this world's material terms but discontent waiting for the coming glory. And that's the way that we tell if we have been building our lives on the true gospel foundation, isn't it?

Or on a false one. The one is full of discontent about what we have in this world in material terms, even in spiritual terms.

It's grumbling. Seeking more and more in this present time. But giving little thought to the future, to the Lord's coming, quite happy really with the status quo.

And the other is quite different. It's increasingly content and at peace with their lot in this life. Whatever deprivations there may be, but a growing discontent and a longing, eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Somebody said to me after the last Sunday evening service, the one is gratefully humble and the other hatefully grumbles. angels. Wish I could think of clever things like that, but it sums it up very well, doesn't it?

[43 : 03] But only the one is liberated ever to truly contend for the gospel, for the faith, for the kingdom of Christ. Isn't that right? So Jude says to us, what kind of Christian life are you building?

What kind of Christian church are we building together? Are we getting things into the proper perspective about the ills of this world and the struggles and the disappointments and the setbacks?

So that as someone put it, we can see clearly that they may hurt, but they can't harm us. For they're simply introductory, a kind of preface to the main theme.

They're not at all what the real story is all about. Do we know what the real story is all about? Are we growing in our understanding of that? Well, Jude says that's one of the first steps in contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

That's rebuilding on the one true foundation and going on building lives of prayer, lives of obedience, lives of endurance and contentment, eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord Jesus.

[44 : 13] That's the mark, says Jude, of a healthy growing Christian. That's the mark of a healthy growing Christian fellowship. So, Jude says, is that your life?

Is that the direction that you're heading? Is that our church? Is it the direction that we're heading? Well, if we want to be contenders for the faith, says Jude, that must be.

Praying, obedience and endurance. Well, let's be praying and energetically working to make sure that that is true for us as we live our lives together.

Let's pray. We thank you, Lord, for the simplicity of your word to us. You've given us your great grace.

You've shown us the way to grow. And you've given us one another to encourage us on that road. We pray that you would help us to be praying always in your spirit, keeping ourselves obediently in your love and waiting, longing for the coming of our Savior and the eternal life he brings.

[45 : 26] Help us, we pray, to be Christians and a church thus contending for our great salvation. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.