

Recognising the road to ruin

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you turn up the letter of Jude, and these verses 16 to 19 are concerned this evening.

And they're all about recognizing the road to apostasy or spiritual ruin. Tonight we reach the end of the main section of Jude's letter that began, as you can see, at verse 5 and ends at verse 19.

A long section dedicated to the exposure of the enemies of the true Christian faith and the true Christian gospel. Enemies that are within the church in Jude's day and also within the church in our own day.

Now, the fact that we're getting to the end of this long list may make you breathe a hefty sigh of relief. I can tell you it most certainly makes me breathe one. I've had verse 20 in my sights for weeks now.

Can't wait to get to it. Something that seems so much more positive. But you build yourselves up in the most holy faith. But of course, I didn't write the letter of Jude.

[1 : 1 3] And although you or I might think that we could have done a better job and written a nicer letter, Jude didn't write it that way and he must have had good reason for that. He clearly felt he needed to write as he did.

And in fact, obviously the Holy Spirit inspired him to write as he did. And the Holy Spirit has caused this letter to be preserved in the scriptures for us. So we must need it.

It must be full of lessons that we do need to focus on today. And hard as it is, that's what we have to do. So for the last time tonight, we must focus ourselves clearly on the enemies of the true faith that are exposed to us here.

In all their unpleasantness. As Dr. Jude teaches us, the art, as he's been doing, of making these spot diagnoses. Becoming alert to the symptoms and the signs of spiritual pathology in all its forms.

Verse 17 is a very important verse, doesn't it? It signals, as you can see, that verse 17 to 19 end the discourse that began at verse 5 with that word remember.

[2 : 2 0] Do you see verse 5? I want to remind you. Verse 17, but you must remember. Same word there. Just translated a little differently. And also, very importantly, verse 17 links everything that Jude has said backwardly to referring to the Old Testament times with the present time and also with the future, do you see, as predicted by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's all one story, he's saying. I'm not telling you anything new, Jude says. This has been the fight of faith right from the very beginning. Just read the Old Testament.

And it's going to be the fight of faith right till the end. Remember what the apostles said. This is what they said was going to be characteristic of what they called the last time, the last days.

That is, all the days until the Lord Jesus Christ comes. Now, verse 5 began this long section with a rather sober warning. Jude was telling us, be careful.

The God who saves is also the Lord who afterwards destroyed those who did not believe. Verse 17 and 18, in a way, end with something more of a comfort.

[3 : 34] What he's saying is, don't panic. All of this is to be expected. God hasn't lost control, so neither must you. This is the life of faith. You're just reliving the struggles that are the age-old struggles of God's true people of faith.

And now, you're reliving them with even greater intensity, because you're living in the last days. That's what the apostles said.

So, don't fear. Have faith. Keep trust in the God who, as verse 24 says, is able to keep you for the great day of glory. Don't panic. So, it's an encouragement.

But, there's also a warning here, even in the encouragement, isn't there? Because he's saying, you must keep trust. It's clear in verse 21 there, you must keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for that day.

There's no room for passivity in our faith. That's why the New Testament letters are so full of warnings to faithfulness. That's why Jesus' teaching himself was so full of warnings to faithfulness.

[4 : 38] It's not that God is not sovereign and God can't keep us. Of course he's sovereign. But, this is the way he does keep us. He gives us warnings, as well as comfort. He helps us to keep ourselves in the love of God.

Because, Jude's telling us, you see, you have to realize that all of this perversion of the gospel, all of this ungodly rejection of the life of holiness, it all begins somewhere.

It all begins, well, unnoticed. It begins subtly. And it begins within the professing church.

And even before it becomes established as a focus within the church, it starts off way back there, deep in the hearts of otherwise and hitherto healthy Christians.

And so, these verses that we're looking at tonight, verses 16 to 19, they challenge us to see where all of this begins, and how it all begins.

[5 : 46] Some of Jude's descriptions we've seen are lurid, they're grotesque, it's the full flowering of the error of these ways. We looked at that last week in verses 11 to 15, in these graphic images.

But no doubt at all, all of these things began much more subtly, much more subversively, taking root within the church of Jesus Christ, until, at last, it became as flagrant and as obvious as it now is.

So it's very important that we don't just look at all of these things as though Jude was speaking about something that's just out there, in other churches, or in our denomination, or in other people, other Christians, but nothing that could be possibly, well, in here, in our own fellowship, in our own hearts.

Once upon a time, Jude is telling us, all of this kind of attitude began, well, right here, in the heart of people who otherwise, previously had been, well, just like you and me, normal, healthy Christians.

And Jude is teaching us that the road to apostasy often begins just with a very, very slight change of direction from the way of truth, from the way of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 04] The Bible is very clear about that in many places, isn't it? But the problem is, often, it's only when the path has diverged so far that we can't be brought back again that it really becomes obvious.

And then it's too late. And Jude, you see, wants us to put ourselves, as it were, into a screening program, rather like a screening program for cancer. He wants us to spot the very first stages of the pre-cancerous condition so that it can be picked up, so that the pathology can be dealt with while there's still time, while it's still possible.

It can be avoided. And these verses tonight, verses 16 to 19, are a bit like that. They point us, first of all, to some of the characteristic signs and symptoms of spiritual danger, and what it really is that this signifies.

And then he points us to the pathology, to the disease that actually underlies these and produces these, where they're coming from. And then finally, in verse 19, he points us to the very serious prognosis to the place that this road will actually ultimately lead to, if drastic measures are not taken to put things to right.

And again, it's so important that we do take Jude's diagnosis seriously. It may not seem so serious to us. We may just feel these are minor symptoms, he's talking about, things we don't really notice.

[8 : 27] We often do that, don't we, in our own lives when we have minor medical symptoms. We think, well, that's just nothing, I won't bother about that. But no, says Jude, they're actually very serious.

Look at verse 16. These symptoms seem to be pretty minor to us, don't they? Grumbling and discontent. But listen to Jude.

See what it really is, he says to us. It's actually scornful resentment against God. And see where it really comes from.

It really comes from a sinful resistance to the true gospel. and see where it ends up if it's unchecked. It really ends up in spiritual ruin both in the church and in our Christian lives.

So first of all then, we must see what it really is. And it is scornful resentment against God. These, says Jude in verse 16, are grumblers and malcontents.

[9 : 34] Well, nobody likes a persistent moaner. Nobody likes the kind of person that's always complaining about everything. You know, the kind of person that makes Eeyore seem like an optimist. Nobody likes that kind of person.

But actually, that's not really what Jude's talking about here. It's not a constitutional thing. He's actually talking about something much more serious. He's talking about an attitude of heart that manifests in a spirit of grumbling, a spirit of discontent.

Discontent about all sorts of things in life. All sorts of things, well, perhaps especially in the church. The kind of complaining that often actually those who do it think it's because they, in fact, are really the spiritual ones.

They're the discerning ones. They're the ones really sensitive to God and they're grumbling and complaining about other people. But in fact, says Jude, they're grumbling actually as a manifestation of deep-seated resentment against God himself.

And that is where the road to spiritual ruin often begins, isn't it? It's clear that Jude is speaking about this kind of thing because of the language he uses.

[10 : 46] It comes hot on the heels of all his other references to the Old Testament, especially verse 11 to Cain and Balaam and Korah. And grumbling, as we saw when we read in Exodus and in Numbers, grumbling is almost a characteristic word for the people of God in their journey from Egypt to the promised land.

We just read some of those verses there. But in Exodus 15, it's right after God's glorious deliverance from Egypt, just three days on into the desert after that magnificent redemption.

And all the people are grumbling. Just a week or so later, even while they've still got the sweet waters of Elam on their palates, all the people of God are grumbling.

Saying, wouldn't it have been better if we died in Egypt? Even when they reach the very doorstep of the promised land, they've got the promise of a land of milk and honey in front of them.

They're still saying, let's go back to Egypt. All the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron. They said, let's choose a leader who'll take us back to Egypt. And it seems extraordinary to us when we read that, doesn't it?

[11 : 59] And yet, the Bible is very clear. It wasn't just that generation who were grumblers. If you read into the New Testament and read into Acts chapter 7 and Stephen's speech that summarizes in a way the whole of the history of the people of Israel.

Stephen says, you were all grumblers and you still are. He tells his first century listeners, you're just the same. You're a stiff-necked people. As with your fathers, so it is with you.

He says, your forefathers had the living oracles of God from the mouth of Moses. But they refused them. They turned them aside to turn their hearts to Egypt.

They said to Aaron, make us the kind of God that we want. Make us the kind of God who will give us what we want. No. And they made the golden calf. And Jude is telling us, you see, that that spirit of grumbling and of discontent is still something that can so often plague the Christian church today.

Causing real damage. Causing real damage in the life of people and in the life of the congregation. Persistent discontent with your lot now.

[13 : 07] That's what he's speaking about. Despite a wonderful redemption. Despite a glorious future hope that's far more wonderful than the hope of just a land flowing with milk and honey.

and many, many, many blessings all along the way that God has given us. Not least his very presence in our midst. Not least his Holy Spirit within our hearts to comfort us, to keep us.

And yet, despite all of these things, isn't it true? That's what Jude's saying. In amongst our ranks so often there's a spirit of grumbling, of malcontent.

And it's easy to be like that, isn't it, in Jude's day? It's easy to be like that in our day. It's easy to be discontented because despite what God has promised us we haven't yet got it all.

Because we still have to walk by faith and not by sight. Because all of his promises lie still in the future. Isn't it true that because faith is hard, because it often feels like we are on a great desert trek, isn't it true that the pleasures of Egypt can loom so large in our eyes because of the promise of satisfaction that they give us now?

[14 : 25] It's so easy, isn't it, to forget about the bondage and the misery and the slavery of Egypt. And it's so easy to remember the fleeting pleasures of sin. All these things that suddenly seem so much more substantial, so much more tangible to us as we struggle along following Jesus in a hostile world, in a world of faith.

We want a different kind of God and a different kind of gospel. A God that makes the way easier for us. A gospel that gives us more of what we've been promised now.

We lose sight of the promised land. We lose sight of the great appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ and the hope of glory that Jude speaks about. the glory of an eternal life that's to be revealed when Jesus comes.

We lose sight of that and so it becomes very easy to grumble because we just look at now. We look at what we don't have. We look at what we'd like to have.

Isn't that true? That when we lose our focus on the great and glorious future and when we begin to focus on the present, on our life now, today, what we have, what we don't have, isn't it so easy just to become a grumbler, to become malcontented?

[15 : 47] I certainly find that. It's easy to be a discontented grumbler about our expectations about life now, about our expectations of church life, perhaps.

Perhaps especially church life. Significant, I think, that in Numbers and when Stephen speaks in Acts chapter 7, he speaks of the congregation in the wilderness, the church in the wilderness.

The church in the Bible is almost defined as the home of grumbling. And it's sad but true, isn't it, that if you ask most people about their church, where they go, it won't be long before they tell you about all the grumbling that goes on.

You name it, people in the church will complain about everything. It doesn't matter how trivial it is. Well, we laugh about it, don't we? It's best that we do laugh about it, otherwise we might weep about it. But so often we find that that's the way we are.

It's one of the things actually that new Christians often find very difficult to understand. A number of new Christians have said that to me. They can't understand some of the grumbling and griping amongst Christians.

[17:00] It's something that they think that they've left behind. And I guess that's because we were speaking about it this morning, weren't we? It's because for them the thrill and the joy of that redemption is still very fresh.

And the wonder of God's promise to them is still so fresh. But we forget so quickly, don't we? Just like the people of Israel. And we grumble. But you see, Judah's warning us very seriously that that is the seedbed of the beginning of a road to ruin.

Look at verse 19. Look where it ends. It's the way of division. It's the way of worldliness. It's the way away from the Holy Spirit of God. And it is so serious, you see, because you're not just grumbling against thin air.

You're not just grumbling against one another. No, it's grumbling against God. Do you remember we read that in Numbers 14? They grumble against me. And it is still God who is the real object of that kind of grumbling in the church.

And Jude's quite plain. They're loud-mouthed boasters. Better to translate that, they utter arrogant words. He's not speaking about boasting about themselves. He's speaking about arrogant words spoken against God.

[18:12] That expression there in the original language is exactly the kind of expression you find on the lips of the boasters against God in the book of Daniel that we studied not long ago.

Antiochus Epiphanes. It's the very same words that you find on the lips of the Antichrist in Revelation chapter 13 verse 5. Boasting against God most high.

And Jude's saying to us that's how serious a grumbling and a discontented spirit is. It's anti-God. It's Antichrist. It's contemptuous arrogance against God.

It's scoffing as he says in verse 18. Do you see the parallel there between verse 16 and 18? Verse 16. Grumblers following their own sinful desires.

Verse 18. Scoffers following their own ungodly passions. Now Jude you see is describing the open, the flagrant, the shameless end product of that attitude.

[19:16] But it all begins somewhere doesn't it? And usually it's subtle, it's subversive, it's thoughts in our hearts, it's grumbling, it's complaining, it's discontent of what God hasn't yet done for us.

Or the struggle that we're facing in life just now and we think we shouldn't be facing. Or it's the way of life we have, or it's something in the church that isn't as it ought to be, or whatever it might be.

And that's where it starts, you see, but it builds up. And it ends up as a growing, scornful resentment against God. And if that's unchecked, Jude says, that can ruin your Christian life.

And it can cause untold damage in the Christian church. And it's a real warning, isn't it? Jude is pretty serious with us. And he wants us to ask, well, is this screening test showing up anything in your own heart?

I have to tell you, I've picked up some evidence of this here in our own church from time to time. In fact, just this week, I've had to have a lot of words with a particular individual who is in danger of becoming a dangerous grumbler, a malcontent.

[20 : 29] And somebody who has caused, who caused great potential harm in our congregation here. Grumbling, he was, against the church fellowship not being everything it ought to be, complaining about the ministry, about certain things in the congregation, certain individuals.

I've actually found this person very difficult to deal with this week because I know that they've got potential to cause great damage in the church if that grumbling isn't repented of. That kind of grumbling does need to be repented of, you know, wherever it comes, because, not just because of where it leads, it's who it's against.

It's against God. And I feel that for your own good and protection, I need to name this person publicly. So that you'll be careful not to be drawn into that same spirit of grumbling that could hurt the church.

And that might seem shocking. I mentioned Yodea and Syntyche the other week in a bit of a joke, really. But it has to be done for the good of our fellowship. I had to ask the session clerk to be involved with counselling this person this week.

I've spent many hours praying with him and talking sins to him. And he said, it is a man, and for your good and for his good, and because he needs your help, I'm going to tell you his name.

[21 : 47] Or perhaps for decency's sake, I'm just going to give you his initials. W-J-U-P.

Yes, friends, Dr. Jude has been teaching me this week. He's been teaching me that I'm a grumbler. He's been teaching me that I must repent of it.

He's been teaching me that there's things in my life, things in my ministry, things in our church that I've been discontented with. I've tried to tell myself it's justified, but I've been resentful about it.

And actually, I've been grumbling against God. I've forgotten his great redemption far, far too quickly. I've lost sight of the joy and the crown that he's promised for us.

I've wanted him to do everything now. I've wanted him to do everything according to my way, according to my timetable. In fact, I have to confess, that's not just true this week. I've always been like that, all my life.

[22 : 52] And unchecked, I'll always be like that. And that could ruin my life, it could ruin my ministry, it could ruin this church. But just maybe that could be true of you as well, couldn't it?

See, grumbling and discontent, what is it? Well, at heart, it is a scornful resentment against God. It's something that we need to be so careful of. When it's full grown, it can really lead us to be speaking words openly and fragrantly against God himself.

Remember the progression in Psalm 1. If you begin with the counsel of the wicked, it leads you ultimately to the path of sin. And you will end up, at the end of the day, sitting in the seat of mockers and scoffers.

And you can be a grumbler, and I can be a grumbler, I am a grumbler. And we need to help one another to root out that grumbling, to turn our eyes back to the great glory of the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ, and forward to the great future of glory when the Lord Jesus appears, to reorientate our whole way of thinking, so that we don't become like the people of Israel, grumbling, malcontented, always looking for what God ought to have given us, but hasn't given us.

Where does this grumbling come from? Well, that's Jude's second thing. He tells us it comes from, actually, a sinful resistance to the true gospel. These attitudes, he says in verse 16, follow our sinful desires, or to put it even more bluntly in verse 18, he says they follow our ungodly passions.

[24 : 41] That is, the thinking that Jude is speaking about, and the views, and the theology, and the teaching of these people, they're driven by powerful desires within us, to have satisfaction now, to have fulfillment now.

It's the natural desires of our fallen human natures. It's the desires that we all will seek to satisfy, if we're not focused on and driven by the far greater desire of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

The burning desire for the glory of Christ, for his presence when he appears. And the key question for us is, what are the real desires, the real ambitions that shape us, the real things that drive us?

That's the key question, because whatever the desires of our heart are, they will dictate and drive the kind of life that we lead, the kind of church that we want, the kind of ministry that we'll desire.

And Jude says, these attitudes of grumbling, of discontent, are arrogant scorn of God, and they come about because our motivation is all wrong. It's not the great salvation we share, the faith once for all delivered to the saints, the gospel of God that speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 59] Christ. It's not that. It's life now that's driving our desires, if we're grumblers. He's speaking about leaders in the church who are like Balaam, who are seeking gain for themselves.

They have sinful desires for all sorts of things now, and that's why verse 16 says they show favoritism to gain things for themselves. That is, their wrong desires for earthly glory shape their teaching, and shape their ministries.

They give people what people want so that people will give them what they want. This is what Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4. There'll be people with itching ears, and they'll gather around them teachers to suit their own passions.

They'll turn aside from the truth. They'll wander off into myths. Well, we're seeing plenty of that, aren't we, in the wider church today, in our own denomination, sadly.

But Jude doesn't want us to exclude our own hearts from the spotlight, do you see. It all begins somewhere, doesn't it? Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, in the last days people will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

[27 : 11] Doesn't that just describe our society that we live in today? And so when Paul warns Timothy that the true gospel means faithfulness in the midst of hardship and of suffering, it's very tempting, isn't it?

To want something much more pleasurable. I find myself seeing that all the time. Anything for a quiet life. And it's so easy for these desires to begin to shape our thinking, our teaching.

The kind of teaching, the kind of ministry, the kind of church that we want. But we need to ask ourselves the question, does the gospel, does the faith once for all delivered to the saints, the true gospel, focused on a living hope of the glory still to be revealed at Christ's coming?

Does that gospel really shape my motivation and my desires? Or is it a fantasy gospel? A gospel that I've invented that sounds similar, uses similar words, but actually is all about satisfying me now.

Do my aspirations and desires for the present life shape the kind of gospel and the kind of ministry and the kind of church that I want?

[28 : 23] That's a vital question, isn't it? Because our desires, unless they are constantly shaped by the eternal gospel, our desires are sinful desires. We tend by nature to godless passions, not to godly ones.

At least I certainly do. And I guess you're the same. It begins, well, a bit of grumbling, a bit of discontent. But Jude says it leads ultimately to scoffing against the one true God and his son Jesus Christ.

It's very subtle at the start. It can be cloaked in all kinds of pious language. People can grumble about this or that or the next thing. It sounds very pious. But often, too often, it just cloaks the fact that they're not getting what they want.

I want this or that for me or for my children or for my family or whatever it might be. So what are the real desires that are shaping my thinking?

That's the question I have to ask myself all the time, isn't it? And if our clear focus is on the gospel so that our overwhelming desires for our life and for our church life is that of verse 21, do you see?

[29 : 36] Keeping ourselves for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. And verse 24, being kept from stumbling so that whatever this life may hold, we will be found blameless before the presence of his glory.

If that's really our goal, if that's what shapes our life and our message, what do you think will be really so prone to be taken up with grumbling, with being discontented about our lot in life now?

About our imperfect church full of people who irritate us with this and that or the next thing? I don't think we will, will we? But that's the real issue, isn't it?

What am I a Christian for? What am I in the church for? Is it really for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or is it actually, in the last analysis, really for satisfaction of myself and my desires?

You see, the irony, of course, is that when we really do grasp the true gospel of Jesus Christ, we discover that the greatest possible satisfaction is in his glory.

[30 : 46] That's what John Piper loves to keep on repeating, isn't it? God is most satisfied in us. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. We discover that in him is the greatest satisfaction.

But isn't that often our problem? We're not most satisfied in God, for God's sake.

Actually, most of the time, isn't it just God's gifts that we're after? Remember when I was a young child and my father used to be away, sometimes speaking at things and sometimes for some time.

And of course, when he came back, he'd be desperate to see him. And always in the suitcase, I knew there would be something brought back from the trip. And of course, it would be, hello, Dad, but let's get into the suitcase and see what's there.

Well, it's only since I became a dad and on returning from trips, find that my children say, hello, Dad, what's in your suitcase? You begin to realize that playing second fiddle to a bag of Maltesers is a bit depressing.

[31 : 57] Began to understand, perhaps, how my father used to feel. But isn't that often how it is with us and the Lord Jesus and God our Father? I think it is.

I think it is for me, anyway. We don't really desire our Lord Jesus. We don't really desire and long for his appearing and the glory to be revealed.

We don't really desire, above all things, that on that day, regardless of what I have or have not got in this life, I will stand blameless before him. And it's because that's not my greatest desire that I'm a grumbler, that I'm discontented.

But look finally at verse 19, where Jude tells us where it all leads if we don't prevent the progression of this disease. It leads to the spiritual ruin, he says. To division in the church, it is these who cause divisions, and to disaster in Christian life.

Do you see, worldly people devoid of the Spirit. I must say, in one way, I find Jude's words in verse 19 a great comfort. It is these, these who swerve from the truth of the once for all delivered gospel.

[33 : 18] It's these who are the dividers of the church, Jude says. We evangelicals are always being blamed for division. Why do you insist on being so inflexible on your doctrine, people say?

Why are you so primitive in your theology, so unsophisticated, so fundamentalist, so this, that, or the next thing, so unaccommodating? You're so divisive. That's the charge.

Why can't there be room for everyone? Well, that sounds very good, but usually what it means is room for everyone except the likes of you. But no, says Jude, it's they who divide the church.

It's they who are worldly. It's they who claim great things by what the Spirit is saying to the church and where the Spirit is leading us in the church today. It's they, says Jude, who are devoid of the Spirit.

They reject the gospel of God. They reject the word of God once for all delivered to the saints. And that is the very mark of someone who is devoid of the Spirit of God. That's what Jude says. It's plain.

[34 : 19] So don't be cowed or unnerved or concerned at this charge. Oh, you evangelicals, you're divisive. It's not true. No, says Jude.

That's the mark of scornful resentment against God. It's the mark of those who sinfully resist the true gospel. They are divisive. But again, we've got to be careful lest on a personal level we don't develop the same spirit in our own fellowship.

We can have a grumbling spirit from misplaced affections. We've got to be careful that we're not just cloaking grumbling under a cloak of piety.

That we're not just seeking desires which aren't really gospel desires. These attitudes, when they're full grown, these are the attitudes, says Jude, that do lead to divisions in churches and congregations.

Sometimes serious ones, sometimes grievous ones in the body. We must help one another not to be grumblers going down that path. They divide the church.

[35 : 27] But it's not just divisions in the church that Jude points to. He also says it spells disaster in the Christian life. Do you see? These last words, they're very chilling, aren't they? Worldly people, devoid of the spirit.

Clearly he is describing settled unbelief. And again, it's easy to see, isn't it, on the wider church scene. Many even in leadership who think they're greatly enlightened.

But they scorn God's word. They scoff at his eternal gospel. And Jude's assessment of that is very plain. Not advanced. Not sophisticated. Devoid of the spirit of God.

And friends, many of these such people that we have in our churches today, many of these people, alas, began their lives in vibrant evangelical churches.

Many of them had vibrant evangelical ministries. But now, they're among the most bitter of scoffers. It's a tragedy to see that. We all need the warning.

[36 : 33] Jude is describing the end of the road to apostasy. Apostasy. But he does so because he wants none of us ever to begin footsteps on that road. And clearly, we all can be in danger, can't we?

We're all too aware of the grumbling spirit that can develop within our own hearts. And we know in our lives and in our churches that it's possible, as Paul says to the Ephesians, it is possible to grieve away the spirit of God.

And that's why Jude writes to us like this, because he doesn't want that in our churches. Next week, hooray, we're on to verse 21. But you. But there is a reason that Jude writes these preceding verses.

We all need to recognize these enemies. We need to recognize them when they're still subtle, subversive influences just deep within our own hearts. And we must put them to death.

God loves us. That's why he warns us. That's how he will keep us. That's how he promises to do so. By challenging us to see all the access roads to the road to apostasy, whatever disguises they might have.

[37 : 48] And to flee from those roads and to go the other way, to go the way of true grace, to go the way of our only Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. So don't be naive, says Jude.

All of us here tonight, every one of us, we're all vulnerable. Just as long as we're in these sinful bodies, in a world of sinful desires, we are vulnerable.

But at the same time, he says to us, don't fear. God is in control. It's always been this way, walking with him, right from the beginning. It always will be this way. Remember what the Apostle said.

That's why we have both the comfort and the warnings that he writes to us. They're like our rod and our staff along the way as we walk. So Jude says, recognize the road to ruin.

Recognize it at its first little fork. Flee from it. And instead, keep walking the way with Jesus, with our only Lord and Master.

[38 : 50] Keep your eye on the goal of his coming in glory and of the great joy of being presented blameless before him. Keep that as your goal. And if you let that be your focus, you will always know that you're on the right road.

And however hard it may feel at the time, the destination will never, ever disappoint. Because that is the road to glory. And he is able to keep you from stumbling on that road.

He is able to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. Keep that in your sight. And you'll find it much, much harder to be a grumbler.

Well, let's pray.